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Educating future journalists: defining journalistic creativity and developing a creative culture in journalism and journalism education

Submitted by:

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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City St George's, University of London

The Department of Journalism and the Department for Learning Enhancement and
Development

Declaration

I, Johanna Michaela Payton, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Johanna Michaela Payton', with a stylized, cursive script.

Johanna Michaela Payton

Abstract

This thesis contributes to a growing interest in the deficit between demand for journalistic creativity and supply. 21st-century journalism and journalism education are continually affected by change, but journalism education is informed by 20th-century practice and norms. Industry requires creative, agile practitioners who can innovate, mitigate future disruption and withstand precarious work. In response to this problem, this study is guided by the overarching question: what does a creative culture in journalism and journalism education look like and how can it help 21st-century journalists cope with the realities of the profession? Investigating how a creative approach to journalism pedagogy could encourage journalism students to flourish and better prepare for industry, this project also suggests how creativity could help journalists sustain their careers and find fulfilment in their practice. Previous journalism studies have shown that journalism is a creative industry; this research adds to the literature by exploring the impact creative output has on journalists, and the effects of creative culture on their work and wellbeing. Several studies have investigated creative approaches in higher education more broadly; this research focuses on the contribution creativity makes in the discipline of journalism. The thesis explores three sub-questions: interrogating the role and meaning of creativity in journalism; exploring how we can equip journalists for the future by facilitating a creative pedagogical culture in journalism education; and examining the associated possibilities and risks. These questions offer insight into journalistic creativity, its relationship with journalists and students, and its potential for positive change. To answer them, the research uses a sociocultural constructivist framework to support a qualitative, phenomenological, practice-led methodology. Reflexive accounts throughout the thesis acknowledge the insider researcher's perspective. Thematic analysis is applied to data collected from semi-structured interviews, a creative digital activity and focus groups with journalists, educators and students. The findings of this study highlight how journalistic creativity is facilitated, the way journalists experience creativity and the creative barriers they face, particularly journalistic orthodoxy. The research reveals the implications of creative practice, suggesting how creative pedagogy and creative culture can initiate profound

personal development and a sense of wellbeing, helping educators engage students, enhance their experience and ready them for industry. Overall, this thesis contributes to understanding how to build a creative environment in journalism schools and industry. This knowledge and the methodology used in the research are not limited to journalism education and can be applied to other disciplines.

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Glossary

Constructivist pedagogy

A learning theory suggesting that individuals build knowledge through experience and reflection, rather than receiving it passively from instructors. This thesis applies a sociocultural variant (see below) emphasising the role of social interaction and cultural context.

Creative risk-taking

The willingness to embrace uncertainty and challenge norms within one's practice, particularly relevant to journalistic innovation.

Co-construction

A pedagogical approach where students and educators collaborate in designing the curriculum, fostering ownership, engagement, and creative thinking.

Creative confidence

A learner's belief in their ability to take creative risks and solve problems in new and unexpected ways.

Culture (in education)

The social and psychological context within which learning takes place. Educational culture encompasses shared beliefs and norms that influence learning and teaching, and how an educational community behaves and communicates, from teaching styles and classroom expectations to student interactions with peers, tutors, and knowledge.

Culture (in journalism)

Shared norms and practices that shape how journalists produce work and interact with their audiences and sources. Journalistic culture encompasses values (accuracy, ethics,

etc.), the conventions, structures and dynamics of the profession, and the way journalists behave in the workplace.

Definition of journalistic creativity

Chapter four of this thesis proposes a definition of journalistic creativity, informed by the literature, that integrates personal and social aspects of creativity, the potential of journalistic work to create change, and the balance between creative freedom and core professional skills and knowledge. An updated, student-facing version of the definition, informed by the empirical research in this study, is also included in chapter nine.

Ecosystem (in education)

A network of interactions inside and outside the classroom that influence and shape learning and may include teachers, students and peers, other educators, community organisations, digital technologies and external stakeholders.

Eudaimonia

A Greek term often translated as ‘human flourishing’ or ‘living well’. In philosophy, it refers to a fulfilling life achieved by living with values, purpose, and reason. Distinct from happiness, it reflects a deeper sense of wellbeing and meaning, developing one’s full potential.

Human skills

Often referred to as ‘soft’ or ‘people’ skills, human skills encompass empathy, self-awareness and adaptability. Facilitating effective communication, understanding, and positive interactions with others, human skills contribute to building strong relationships and leadership, and they help people to navigate complex social dynamics.

Innovation

A process where ideas are implemented, in industry and education, building on human creativity to produce tangible outcomes.

Journalism education

The formal and informal teaching and learning of journalism skills, values, and practices, often situated within higher education or vocational training programmes.

Neoliberalism (in education)

An economic and ideological framework that influences education policy, prioritising market-driven values such as competition, standardisation, employability, and cost-efficiency.

Ontological assumptions

A term used in this thesis to describe the underlying beliefs that shaped the research focus and design of this project.

Pedagogical risk-taking

An educator's (or learner's) willingness to experiment with unconventional or uncertain teaching and learning methods.

Phenomenology

A qualitative research approach that seeks to explore how individuals experience and make sense of phenomena in their lives. This study adopts a phenomenologically informed perspective: it focuses on participants lived experiences and meaning making around creativity.

Play (in education)

An exploratory, improvisational mode of learning that encourages creativity, curiosity, and intrinsic motivation, valuable in higher education contexts.

Practice-led research

A methodology in which the researcher's own professional practice plays a central role in shaping research questions, methods, and interpretation.

Precarity (in journalism)

A condition of insecure, low-paid, or unstable work increasingly common in journalism, especially for freelancers and early-career professionals.

Reflective practice

The ongoing process by which individuals examine their actions and experiences to improve future practice. In journalism education, this encourages critical self-awareness and deeper learning from creative or ethical challenges.

Reflexivity in research

The process by which a researcher actively and critically reflects on their role, positionality, and impact on the research process and outcomes.

Sociocultural constructivism

A learning theory asserting that learning occurs through cultural tools, language, and social interaction. In this thesis, it underpins both creative learning and professional knowledge-building in journalism.

Transformative learning

An active process that involves challenging existing beliefs, or ways of working, leading to a meaningful shift in perspective, feelings, behaviour, values, and how individuals understand the world. Transformative learning can occur in personal, educational, and professional environments.

Chapter one: introduction

1.1 Introduction: educating future journalists

Journalism is an industry beset by perpetual change and transformed by technology. Deuze (2019a) argues that creativity may answer the profession's most pressing problems, yet the discussion of journalistic creativity in academia, and the application of creativity in journalism education, is limited. Collaboration, innovation and problem-solving skills are all essential in the workplace, and creativity could be considered a 21st-century survival skill (Puccio, 2017), but there is a gap between creative demand and supply in industry. This gap is amplified by the mental health, social and behavioural issues students experience (Haidt, 2024), reducing their creative confidence and resilience. To address these problems, this project's overarching research question explores the concept of creative culture in journalism and journalism education, investigating how it could help 21st-century journalism students to thrive during their training, and better cope with the realities of the profession.

The introductory chapter to this thesis presents a project rationale that explains why the issue of creativity in journalism and journalism education is worthy of research. It summarises the continual state of crisis in journalism that led to a demand for creative practitioners. It also explains how this demand was compromised by the challenges of 21st-century higher education and the needs of its students, compounded by the prevailing orthodoxy in journalism schools. The rationale also states my insider position as a working journalist and journalism educator, describing my motivation for researching the meaning, possibilities and risks of journalistic creativity and creative journalism education.

This chapter then outlines a gap in the literature on journalistic creativity in industry and in journalism schools. It explains the aims of this PhD study, which are to better understand how creativity can play a role in journalism and journalism education. It also outlines the theoretical framework of sociocultural constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1996) interwoven with Tsai's (2015) creative education model and Runco and Beghetto's

(2019) primary and secondary (PSC) model of creativity. This introductory chapter also summarises how the qualitative methodology, which includes practice-led (Smith and Dean, 2009) data collection and thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), leads to findings that contribute to the body of research on the role of creativity in journalism and could influence the emerging area of creative pedagogic practice in journalism education.

Finally, this introductory chapter provides an overview of the thesis structure.

1.2 Project rationale

This project rationale summarises the need for a study on creativity in journalism and journalism education. It outlines the pressures on 21st-century journalism and explains how the practice has become more aligned with other creative industries, and expects graduates to have creative attributes. It then lays out the challenges facing universities, and the need for change and creative practice in the delivery of journalism education. To conclude the rationale, this section includes a short, positional account of my insider perspective as a journalist and journalism educator.

1.2.1 The journalism ‘permacrisis’

Journalism is a profession with a constantly changing professional environment (Malmelin and Virta, 2016), its workers operating within a ‘permacrisis’, going from one professional plight to the next (Kavanagh, 2024). In the first quarter of the 21st century, publication closures and organisational restructuring became the industry norm, as did a sense of job insecurity (Ekdale *et al.*, 2014; Reid and Ghaedipour, 2021). The economic strain on journalism models caused by the shift to digital media intensified (Franklin, 2014; Kaye and Quinn, 2010), along with the struggle to monetise content (Kaye and Quinn, 2010), and the ‘attention economy’ diverted readers from traditional news consumption. The volume of freely available news content took its toll on media revenues, and the energy crisis, fueled by the war in Ukraine and post-Covid-19 pandemic economics, sharply

inflated publishers' costs (Borchardt, 2022). The rise of generative AI (Cools and Diakopoulos, 2024; Shi and Sun, 2024; Van Dalen, 2024) stoked fears that large language models could undermine the profession, bypassing the 'human touch' that makes journalism an integral part of society (Hill, A., 2024). The trustworthiness of journalism was also called into question (Freedman, 2019), and public consumption of traditional news shrank (Carlson, Robinson and Lewis, 2021). The Digital News Report 2024 (Reuters Institute, 2024) found that selective avoidance of news was growing, especially in young people, with journalists and legacy media challenged by independent news creators and influencers. In the UK alone, interest in news almost halved between 2015 and 2024 (Newman, 2024b) and in a global Statista survey only 31 per cent of UK respondents said they trusted the media (Watson, 2024).

Within this particularly turbulent period, the rise of social media shifted the power dynamics of media and journalistic norms (Broersma and Eldridge, 2019). In the 2000s, user-generated content boomed, and independent bloggers challenged the notion of journalism as an estate (Newman, 2009). Social media platforms adopted many functions of traditional news media but allowed consumers to shape and reinterpret the news (Hermida, 2018). The public used digital platforms to disparage journalists and threaten their security (Westlund, Krøvel and Orgeret, 2024) and, under pressure to maintain a public profile, journalists were left exposed (Wolfe, 2019; Waisbord, 2020). Online violence became a new frontline in the safety of journalists, particularly for women (Posetti *et al.*, 2020). The constant stream of news on social media also contributed to mental health issues in the industry, with journalists overburdened by a 'chaos of information' (Shukla, 2023). Trauma reporting, where journalists are first responders to violent news events, takes a particular toll (Seely, 2019), but the fast pace of work, long hours, job insecurity, low pay and public hostility, strained the mental health of all journalists (Shukla, 2023). The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated journalists' mental health (International Federation of Journalists, 2021) and they reported struggling with fatigue, isolation, lack of sleep and depression (Deuze, 2023). 'Burnout' became an increasing factor in journalists' decision to quit the industry (Verma, 2021).

Journalists love their work, with 70 per cent saying they would pursue the same career again (Tameez, 2022), but the ‘permacrisis’ endures: in 2023 alone, Press Gazette tracked the loss of over 7,900 jobs at UK, US and Canadian media outlets (Aberneithie and Tobitt, 2024). Journalism needs innovative solutions to inspire growth and sustain its business model, and resilient, agile practitioners who can withstand the turbulence of a precarious workplace. The industry has already shifted in line with other creative industries, taking place in a broader range of settings (Burns and Matthews, 2017) and moving towards creative models of storytelling including experiential journalism (Pavlik, 2019), immersive audio journalism (Wincott, Martin and Richards, 2021) and smartphone video storytelling (Montgomery, 2018). The requirement for journalists to have a ‘mobile-first’ mindset, and to counter AI with an unmistakably human approach to their storytelling, has also emerged (García, 2024) with the industry seeking fresh approaches to workflow, and revenue streams (Hawkins-Gaar, 2017). The quality and success of journalism depends on the ‘novel and creative ideas of the people’ that produce it (Porcu, Hermans and Broersma, 2024, p. 1), and Lopez *et al.* (2022) highlight the vital and ubiquitous role that creativity plays across journalists’ ‘human information behavior’ (Lopez *et al.*, 2022, p. 1446). While the politics of journalistic creativity must be debated – Markham (2012) points out that the rise of creative self-expression in the context of journalism could be characterised as ‘therapy culture’, for example (Markham, 2012, p. 192) – understanding and harnessing journalism’s potential for imagination and creativity could contribute to the health of the industry and future society (Deuze, 2019b). The literature suggests that 21st-century journalism graduates need higher level ‘human skills’ (Sinek, 2021) to be better prepared for industry, but it is not clear if the traits they need to become creative, collaborative and innovative are prioritised during their journalism education.

1.2.2 Journalism education: the creativity question

As demand for innovation filtered through to higher education, journalism educators were themselves navigating a turbulent sector reeling from a ‘long-term experiment’ in market-based educational provision (Brackley, Leaver and Yates, 2024). As universities

competed for students, grants and other income sources, they came to rely on visiting lecturers, imposed workload increases on academics, and abandoned caps on student numbers. Course fees were worth 30 per cent less in 2024 than in 2012 (Wyness and Murphy, 2024) and over 60 institutions announced severance or redundancy plans in 2024 (Brackley, Leaver and Yates, 2024). As pressure mounted to retain students (PR Newswire, 2023), the fallout from financial and staffing crises had a negative impact on educational quality and student experience (Brackley, Leaver and Yates, 2024). While universities made successful efforts to rebuild community and in-person provision post-Covid-19, the recovery was undermined by the financial hardship students were suffering (Wyness and Murphy, 2024); a 'cost of learning crisis' led to reduced engagement with university life as students were forced to work long hours in part-time roles (Cook and Brabner, 2024).

Wider social issues also had an impact on students. Referring to an 'anxious generation', Haidt (2024) argues that the rise of smartphones has 'rewired' childhood and can be linked to increased rates of teenage mental illness (McBain, 2024). In the early 2020s, students arrived at university with social, behavioural and psychological problems that had already tested their school and further education teachers (Bajwa *et al.*, 2023; Hill, J., 2024; Hill *et al.*, 2024). Data suggests that mental health issues are the main reason students drop out of their university courses (Bryson, 2023), and student resilience can also be eroded by the mercurial nature of higher education (Marshall, 2024). By 2025, journalism educators were struggling to engage their students (Marshall, 2024), encourage their critical thinking (Golden, 2023) and develop their resilience (Markovikj and Serafimovska, 2023; Šimunjak, 2023). Their students were coping with the additional weight of inequitable unpaid internships (Bell, 2023) – a feature of the 'network environment' that became the norm in the 21st century's new creative economy (McRobbie, 2016, p. 6) – and the impact of global conflict and protest on their student reporting (Ogunyemi, Orner and Galpin, 2019; Habib, 2024; Raccanello *et al.*, 2024).

While a degree is not a professional necessity for aspiring journalists, data shows that almost 90 per cent of journalists have one, compared to 48 per cent of the population overall. Around 11,500 people are enrolled on a UK journalism course each year (News UK and Edwards, 2022); Evans (2014) says there is a role for the journalism course as an extender of knowledge through ‘exposure to people, ideas and experiences beyond the traditional subject area’ (Evans, 2014, p. 83) and Frost (2018) says that students need the critical, analytical and tactical skills to ensure they can keep up with, and predict, change. The norm in journalism schools, however, is maintaining journalistic orthodoxy (Broersma and Singer, 2020).

Journalism pedagogy is rooted in 20th-century tradition, but the need for agile and human traits, including curiosity, storytelling, persistence, passion, empathy and creativity, has intensified (Evans, 2014; Bradshaw, 2020; Frontline Club, 2025; NCTJ, 2025). The industry demands graduates who create change and attract younger audiences (Broersma and Singer, 2020) and journalism education must cope with, and adapt to, the fast pace of industry change (Deuze, 2006), producing graduates with the creative aptitude to set them apart (Deuze, 2019a). As Frost (2018) suggests, journalism graduates must be adept at dealing with innovation, skills and change on a scale beyond even sci-fi imagination: ‘training simply for today’s world is no longer good enough and lets our students down’ (Frost, 2018, p. 153).

The literature stresses the need for journalism graduates to be innovative and agile, but the evidence of students feeling stressed and anxious, and dealing with a range of social issues, is also abundant. Therefore, a study that helps educators to understand the potential of journalistic creativity in the curriculum, and the implications that it might have for enhancing students’ resilience, is needed.

1.2.3 Researcher perspective: a 21st century journalist and journalism educator

As a freelance journalist and journalism educator, I have experienced the pressures of both industry and higher education environments. My career as a freelance journalist

started in 2000 and writing digital content for the fledgling BBC and Guardian websites (Meek, 2006) were among my first commissions. As my career progressed, the features I wrote became more diverse, the commissions more creative and the available platforms for publication increased, including image galleries, videos and infographic stories. Although I started as a writer, with no particular passion for technology, in the first decade of my journalism career I worked on everything from commercially sponsored podcast series to paid fashion blogging. I embraced the unpredictable and varied nature of the job. I also experienced the precarity of the industry. Many of my editors were made redundant over the years, publications closed, staff turnover was high, and freelance budgets and rates of pay were either stagnant or reduced. Throughout this time, my creativity and resilience were fundamental to my professional survival.

I started teaching journalism in 2011 and was struck by the lack of journalistic creativity in the classroom. While I learned to navigate and respect the academic environment, I wondered if the fixation on grades and assessment, the dynamics of lecture-based teaching and the sterility of the campus, which had none of the personality or creative energy of an art school or magazine office, was fostering a culture that would benefit young journalists once they entered the world of work. I realised that higher education was in a period of upheaval and the risk of teaching to the test (Volante, 2004) in journalism education appeared to be rising. Like other educators, I feared that the quest for academic perfection was ‘ironing out’ the human traits (Nerantzi *et al.*, 2021) that help journalists cope with the realities of the profession.

Against this backdrop, I continued to engage in creative journalistic activity with my industry clients and editors, and developed a student-centred (Lea, Stephenson and Troy, 2003) pedagogical approach underpinned by creative, playful and holistic learning (James and Nerantzi, 2019; Warren and Payton, 2021). I was also influenced by Kolb’s (1984) work on experiential learning, Curzon-Hobson’s (2002) ‘pedagogy of trust’, Bush’s (2011) mindfulness in higher education, and Barnett’s (2009) concept of ‘becoming’ in higher education. I continually met journalism colleagues, students and educators who were interested in creative learning and teaching but I felt it was lacking in journalism schools, inspiring me to research this topic. Approaching the research from this insider

position, I decided to investigate the possibilities and risks of developing a creative culture in journalism and journalism education, and how beneficial it might be in preparing 21st-century journalism students for the realities of the profession.

1.3 Original research

This section summarises the gap in the literature this thesis aims to fill, the goals of its empirical research and the three research questions that have been investigated. This section also indicates the theoretical framework used for the project and its methodology.

1.3.1 Journalistic creativity and creative journalism education

Studies on creativity and journalism are available, but they are limited (Nylund, 2013; Malmelin and Virta, 2016). This project contributes to the knowledge in this field. The literature available to inform this thesis suggests that journalism is an essentially creative industry and a creative practice (Keeble, 2007; Borghero, 2017; Ricketson, 2017; Koivula, Villi and Sivunen, 2020), but that it must also actively embrace creativity to survive and evolve (Killebrew, 2003; Fulton and McIntyre, 2013; Deuze, 2019a; Pérez-Seijo and Silva-Rodríguez, 2024). Scholars have shown that creativity and autonomy are essential for developing meaning in journalism (Gynnild, 2013), and that when journalists use creative skill, they produce novel work (Fulton and McIntyre, 2013) and harness creative opportunities amid disruption (Borchardt, 2022; Franks *et al.*, 2022; Floreani, 2023; Humayun and Ferrucci, 2022; Ntamadaki, 2023). Although central to the practice of journalism, the literature highlights that creativity is underappreciated (Ricketson, 2017) and that a definition of journalistic creativity might help to clarify its role and meaning in the field. The literature supports the need for industry to reduce creative stigma, avoid conflating creativity with the arts, and embrace innovation (Witschge, Deuze and Willemsen, 2019). It also supports the notion that journalists want to innovate, and that creativity has transformative potential for journalists (Gynnild, 2013; Malmelin and Virta,

2016). Research that interrogates what creativity means to journalists, and how journalistic creativity encourages journalists to thrive, and to stay, in the profession, is needed, and this project aims to contribute to this area of study.

The link between creativity in industry and creative journalism education is also worthy of exploration (Deuze, 2019a; 2019b). There was a keen interest in the field of creative higher education in the early 21st century, and the literature reviewed for this thesis is largely from the period 2000-2025. Although a range of scholars explore the potential of creativity across university learning and teaching (Jackson *et al.*, 2006; Cropley and Cropley, 2009; Livingston, 2010; Robinson, 2017; Deuze, 2019a; Lovegrove, 2023), an agreed definition of creativity in higher education was not available when this research was conducted (Fox and Smith, 2023). Research is also needed to understand how educational environments can support creativity (Patston *et al.*, 2021), and although the context of this project is journalism education, some of its findings on creative culture may be useful to other disciplines. The literature provides some understanding of what creativity looks like in higher education, illustrating a social, collaborative and process-rich environment that facilitates idea generation, risk-taking and mistake-making (Baillie, 2006; Clegg, 2008; Jackson, 2015; Barnett, 2020; Dau, 2018; Ismayilova and Bolander Laksov, 2022; Han and Abdrahim, 2023). While there is no overarching creative approach used in higher education, academics can draw from a range of creative pedagogies including co-creation of curriculum (Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2018; Bovill, 2020), teaching with compassion (Waddington, 2021), experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) and reflective practice (Ashwin *et al.*, 2020).

Literature that examines journalism education and creativity specifically is scant (Chan, 2022) and where journalism education studies are conducted, they tend to be informed by journalism research practices, rather than educational resources (Solkin, 2022). This project aims to fill that gap by focusing on journalism education in a study that is informed by the literature on journalistic creativity and creativity in higher education. It uses a theoretical framework that fuses the social learning theory of sociocultural constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1996) with Tsai's (2015) framework of creative education and an integrative model from the creativity researchers, Runco and Beghetto (2019), on

primary and secondary creativity. The research in the project also uses an original definition of journalistic creativity informed by theoretical perspectives that can be meaningfully and pertinently applied to journalism and journalism education. The definition harnesses the work of prominent creativity scholars including Csikszentmihalyi (1997), Robinson (2006; 2010; 2017) and Gauntlett (2013; 2018). The definition tries to summarise the way journalists interact with both everyday, personal creativity and externally focused, social creativity that connects with an audience. The definition also tries to capture the transformative potential of journalistic creativity and the impact it can have on individuals and society.

1.3.2 Research aims and objectives

The primary aim of this thesis is to explore what a creative culture in journalism and journalism education looks like, and how it can help 21st-century journalists to cope with the realities of the profession.

After reviewing the literature, establishing a theoretical framework, and defining creativity in the context of journalism and journalism education, qualitative research methods were used to investigate the experiences and perspectives of early career journalists, journalism students, journalism educators and senior journalists, to understand how creativity is taught and fostered at university, and what value and meaning is attached to creativity in both industry and education. By better understanding journalistic creativity, and the relationships and interactions journalists and students have with it, this project outlines the possibilities and risks of creative culture and indicates how it could be facilitated in journalism and journalism education. It also aims to make a contribution to journalism pedagogy by proposing a conceptual model that indicates how a creative culture could be facilitated, and be of use to students and educators, in educational environments.

1.3.3 Research questions and methodology

To explore this topic within the theoretical framework and objectives stated above, the three research questions this project investigates adopt the ontological position that the journalism industry and its workforce are inherently creative, and that learners develop through experience, social interaction and culture. The three questions are as follows:

Research question 1 (RQ1): *What is the role and meaning of creativity in contemporary journalism?*

Research question 2 (RQ2): *How can we equip journalists for the future by facilitating a creative pedagogical culture in journalism education?*

Research question 3 (RQ3): *What are the possibilities and risks of creative culture for journalists and journalism students?*

To answer these questions, this study adopted a practice-led approach in its methodology (Smith and Dean, 2009), incorporating my creative practice, and the creative practice of the participants, within the research process. The methodological approach took an interpretivist epistemological position and used a phenomenological strategy. Mixed data collection methods were used in a two-stage process. The first stage included semi-structured interviews, and a creative digital activity, conducted with early career journalists in the first five years of their professional journeys. The questions explored participants' interpretations of journalistic creativity and how they manifest in their work, their interactions with creativity in industry and in education, their reactions to the definition of journalistic creativity proposed in this thesis, and their thoughts on the future of journalism in the context of creativity. The second stage of research, inspired by the Delphi method (Dalkey and Helmer, 1963), included three focus groups with journalism students, journalism educators and senior journalists, respectively. A summary of findings from the first stage of the research was presented in each focus group, with participants invited to add their own perspectives and sense-check the data.

As the methodology includes different data collection methods and various data sets, thematic analysis was used for the data analysis. Thematic analysis was well suited to this project due to its flexibility and recognition that researcher subjectivity is part of the process in qualitative research projects (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2022).

1.4 Thesis structure

The thesis for this doctoral research is structured across nine chapters, including this introductory chapter.

1.4.1 Literature review

The literature review is divided into two chapters: chapter two reviews the literature on journalism and creativity, and chapter three provides an overview of the scholarly work on creativity and education.

Chapter two looks at a body of work that explains why journalism is a creative practice and the constraints on journalistic creativity. Literature that considers both the creative solutions to journalism's problems, and the risks of creativity in the context of journalism, are also critically reviewed. Exploring journalistic creativity in more depth, the chapter then looks at journalists' creative processes, output and creative culture in the industry, and reviews literature that considers the role of creativity in the future. In acknowledgement of my role as an insider researcher, a short final section reflects on my experiences of creativity as a journalist.

Chapter three looks at literature that is concerned with creativity in higher education. It focuses on the UK, where this project is located, and largely reviews literature published after 2000. Divided into three main sections, the chapter first explores the value of creativity in the sector and the challenges creative education faced in the UK after a turbulent political period in the first quarter of the 21st century (section 3.2). Section 3.3

considers creativity in the classroom, including creative culture, creative teachers, and creative pedagogy. Section 3.4 turns the focus to creativity in journalism education, reviewing literature that assesses the need for creativity in this subject area. The chapter concludes with a short reflective account of my experiences with creativity as a journalism educator.

1.4.2 Theory

Chapter four, the theory chapter, includes a theoretical framework, an original definition of creativity in the context of journalism, and a conceptual framework for the project. It also outlines other theoretical frameworks that were considered for the project. The final section of this chapter includes a short reflection explaining how the theoretical framework chosen for this project also applies to my pedagogic practice, and it presents a conceptual framework that brings the theoretical framework and definition of journalistic creativity together.

1.4.3 Methodology

In chapter five, the project methodology is explained, describing the research philosophy and strategy, time horizon and sampling process. This chapter also presents a methodological map summarising the choices made for this study.

Section 5.2 explains the interpretivist research philosophy (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016; Pervin and Mokhtar, 2022) and introduces an inductive (qualitative) approach to uncovering patterns in the data (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016; Woo, O'Boyle and Spector, 2017). The methodological approach was also influenced by creative qualitative research methods, and this informed a phenomenological (Flick, 2007), practice-led (Smith and Dean, 2009) field research strategy. This section also includes information on the cross-sectional time horizon, purposive sampling strategy (Vehovar, Toepoel and Steinmetz, 2016), and the ethical implications of this work.

Section 5.3 explains the mixed data collection methods used: semi-structured interviews, a creative *Future Journalists* digital activity and a stage of focus group research inspired by the Delphi method (Dalkey and Helmer, 1963). The benefits and limitations of these methodological choices are discussed in this section. Section 5.4 outlines the data analysis, which uses Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage thematic approach.

The methodological limitations of the overall study are discussed in section 5.5 and the options that were considered and rejected for the study are also outlined here. Finally, a short, reflective section discusses my role as a creative researcher and explains how the methodology for this project is intertwined with my professional practice.

1.4.4 Results

The findings of this project are presented across two chapters. Chapter six includes the findings from the semi-structured interviews and digital activity, including the 'avatars' designed by the online participants. Chapter seven presents the results from the three focus groups.

Both chapters are structured thematically, grouped under the headings: 'skills, knowledge and journalistic creativity', 'facilitating creativity', 'experiencing creativity', 'creative barriers' and 'the future of journalism'.

1.4.5 Discussion and conclusion

The inductive discussion in this thesis, presented in chapter eight, includes an interpretation of the research results across all the data collected. This chapter links to the literature throughout and addresses the research questions directly.

After summarising the main findings, this chapter approaches its interpretative discussion using the same thematic structure as the results chapters and concludes by outlining an emerging theory on creative culture in journalism and journalism education. The chapter

also includes three thematic maps that illustrate how the main themes and sub-themes were named and grouped and then refined. These maps inform the conceptual pedagogical model presented in the final chapter, which also includes the implications and limitations of this study, its original contribution to the field and reflections on the project.

1.5 Conclusion

This introductory chapter presented a rationale explaining why a study on developing creativity in journalism and journalism education is necessary. It states the aims of the study, and the theoretical framework and methodology used to explore the three research questions. This chapter also provided an overview of the thesis structure.

To lay the foundations for this PhD research project, the next chapter includes a review of literature pre-dating this study that considers the role of journalistic creativity and the constraints it faces, journalists' creative processes and output, and evidence of creative culture in the journalism industry.

Chapter two: literature review part one

2.1 Introduction - journalism and creativity

The literature review for this project is divided across two chapters. This chapter looks at journalism as a creative practice; chapter three summarises the literature on education and creativity before homing in on creative journalism education.

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The first section of this chapter addresses the question of whether journalism is creative, looking at a growing body of scholarly work that supports the concept of journalism as a creative industry and ‘inherently’ creative practice (Keeble, 2007; Ricketson, 2017; Koivula, Villi and Sivunen, 2020).

The chapter then considers why creativity is relevant and important to journalism, and what constraints are being placed on it. The literature acknowledges the turbulent nature of the industry, the economic challenges it faces, the rise of social media, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the personal safety and mental health of journalists.

As well as constraints on creativity, creative solutions to the challenges journalism faces are also explored, including the creative potential of AI and social media use, and benefits for journalists’ wellbeing, and their role and responsibilities as communicators and storytellers.

The pitfalls of creativity in the context of journalism are also examined, including the risks of novelty, the potential for exploiting a creative workforce, and the question of whether journalists can be creative and impartial.

The chapter then explores journalistic creativity in more depth, considering three distinct areas: the creative process, creative output and creative culture.

The penultimate section considers journalistic creativity in the future, assessing the potential benefits and drawbacks for journalists, and then a short, reflective section outlines my position as a journalist in the context of creativity.

2.2 Is journalism creative?

Many journalists consider their practice creative but calling them 'creative' is not necessarily seen as a compliment, even 'raising hackles' in a newsroom (Ricketson, 2017). The perception of creativity as 'invention' or art can be problematic in a practice assumed to be based on fact and objectivity (Fulton, 2011a); what these terms mean in practice, and how realistic they are as standards to uphold, is explored later in this chapter. Beyond the scepticism on the ground, the literature supports the concept of journalistic creativity. Grey (2014), for example, suggests that the demand for novel storytelling in a disrupted and challenging market means that journalism may be one of *the* most creative professions in contemporary society.

Journalism is distinguished from other media activities by its service to the public interest (Burns and Matthews, 2017), but journalists are not machines. Whilst dealing in facts and lived experience, their imaginations must be engaged in deciding when, where and how to tell a story. The accounting of facts is not enough (Ricketson, 2017). Treating journalism as a media-based form of expression, Adam (2004) defines the practice as a literary and moral craft. Rather than mechanically gathering facts and sharing them, unfiltered, with an audience, journalists continuously use their creative, as well as moral, faculties. In Adam's view, all journalists 'engage in the functions of fact gathering, storytelling, and analyzing or arguing' (Adam, 2004, p. 254). From a fascination with human interest (Keeble, 2007) to the increasing use of artistic forms and values, 21st-century journalists share much in common with artists (Postema and Deuze, 2020). Whether it is the use of infographics, or the urgent and emotive language of a news reporter, engaging and informing an audience requires creative tricks and tactics (Chan, 2020); to 'hook' a 21st-century reader, journalists need a toolkit more commonly

associated with a creative writer (Lucente, 2020). Fulton (2011a) argues that contrary to society's understanding that creativity must be free of all rules and restraints, a print journalist is a creative producer of media texts. In the journalism industry, creative expression is not necessarily 'free' rather it is 'alternately structured' (Markham, 2012, p. 187). And although the ideology of journalism, to serve an audience in the context of public interest, does not alter, vast changes foisted on the industry by the development of digital technology in the first quarter of the 21st century caused the practice of journalism to shift in line with other creative industries: it took place in a broader range of formal and informal settings (Burns and Matthews, 2017), and moved at pace towards more creative models of storytelling including experiential journalism (Pavlik, 2019), immersive audio journalism (Wincott, Martin and Richards, 2021) and smartphone video storytelling (Montgomery, 2018).

While journalism and media content sit on a foundation of storytelling (Pavlik, 2019), the profession of journalism itself is held in relatively low academic and literary regard (Keeble, 2007). Journalism, however, has a rich tradition of producing novelists (including Charles Dickens, George Orwell, Ernest Hemingway and Edna Buchanan) and many journalists aspire to 'higher' forms of writing; Underwood and Bagwell (2006) found that the newsroom is compatible with reporters' literary ambitions. The novel evolved in tandem with the pace and ethos of periodical news (Sommerville, 1996) and several journalists, including Dolly Alderton (Parker, 2024), have channelled the power of a newspaper column into careers as novelists. Former Guardian journalist Charlie Brooker received global acclaim as a hit television show creator (Clark and Mustafa, 2021), providing another high-profile example of the journalism industry serving as a springboard for creative evolution. The characteristics of journalism that are considered 'valuable' by its audience – recognition, learning something new and increasing mutual understanding (Costera Meijer, 2021) – are certainly shared with other creative industries, including publishing, television and filmmaking.

Although journalism's status as a creative industry is contentious, the diversity of the journalistic imagination helps and inspires most practitioners (Keeble, 2007). Creative thinking contributes to the generation of stories, allowing journalists to discover new

associations as they gather information (Maiden *et al.*, 2020). Creativity, autonomy and innovation, essential for the survival and growth of any industry, are closely interlinked for journalists who must explore, challenge, and develop meaningful journalistic approaches within their practice (Gynnild, 2013). Franks *et al.* (2022) characterise creative journalism as the deliberate search and discovery of topical information, followed by the generation of ideas to produce stories. Generating new angles, or stories that challenge existing rules, takes this everyday creative journalistic thinking further. Creativity and human verification are embedded throughout news story creation (Lopez *et al.*, 2022), with creativity giving something extra to every news story (Deuze, 2019a). Journalists, who are cognisant of both the creative tools at their disposal and the requirements of their field, can produce content in their professional practice that is novel and appropriate (Fulton and McIntyre, 2013).

If we accept that journalism *is* creative, as the literature suggests, we might ask why it is not only necessary in the industry but also desirable. At a local level, creativity helps to boost journalists' morale and teamwork, but on an industrial level, new ways of storytelling to engage changing audiences, fresh ideas around organisational structure, and experimentation in generating revenue streams are all needed (Hawkins-Gaar, 2017).

2.3 Journalism in crisis: the role of creativity

As outlined in the introductory chapter, journalism is both a dynamic workplace (Alexander, 2016; Koivula, Villi and Sivunen, 2020) and a 'perpetually unstable' industry (Carlson, Robinson and Lewis, 2021). It has a history marked by 'continuous eruptions of crisis' (McNair, 2009) including the professional competition created by generative AI (Cools and Diakopoulos, 2024; Shi and Sun, 2024; Van Dalen, 2024).

In this stressful and continually disrupted environment, journalists may struggle with creativity, and their morale. Witschge, Deuze and Willemsen (2019) used creative

research methods to tap into the dissatisfaction of working journalists, generating a composite resignation letter to the profession. In the letter, they refer to the pressure of competition with colleagues, job insecurity, unfair pay, and stress, to explain why journalists had had enough. The letter also describes a desire for the profession to be 'more open to different perspectives and dialogue, to sharing ideas and enthusiasm to explore new ways of doing things', and a need for the industry to meet ideas with 'excitement rather than cynicism' (Witschge, Deuze and Willemsen, 2019, p. 973), in other words, a call for creativity.

2.3.1 Constraints on creativity

There is no doubt that a confluence of pressures causes creative constraints in the journalism workplace, particularly debilitating workloads, deadline pressure, and a lack of team playing (Malmelin and Virta, 2016). Journalists practising under threat of intimidation and harassment, even in democratic countries (Nilsson and Örnebring, 2016), are put under extreme pressure. Carlson, Robinson and Lewis (2021) acknowledge a narrative that has painted journalists as victims, working long hours, receiving low pay and risking their safety; and a counter narrative, that grew in popularity during the 2017-2021 Trump era, of journalists being dishonest, in the pockets of advertisers and working to promote their political agendas. While threats exist in the field and on social media (Huda and Azad, 2015), creative constraints also come from within. A culture of bullying and intimidation is portrayed as the norm in popular media, from the publishing dynasties that informed the TV show *Succession* (Morris, L., 2021) to the unreasonable editorial behaviour depicted in the *Devil Wears Prada* (Das, 2021). This characterisation is borne out by evidence of authoritarian management and power dynamics in the journalism industry that compromise ideas, expression and innovation (McNally, 2012; Greenslade, 2013; Kanter, 2021; Smith, 2021).

While people and politics can restrain journalists' creative potential, a heavy reliance on generative AI and social media also curtails creativity, with newsrooms succumbing to

overproduction because technology makes it possible to do so (Borchardt, 2022). Koivula, Villi and Sivunen (2020) found that open communication enables idea sharing and development, but technology is also a source of uncertainty due to the fear of inaccuracy and a sense of heaviness around daily communications. The introduction of ChatGPT in November 2022 adversely affected journalists' creative processes, allowing financially motivated content creators to publish poorly researched and badly written AI-generated articles and blogs (Hill, A., 2024). Post-Covid-19, the culture of remote working saved media owners' money on operational costs but reduced opportunities for creative collaboration and a loss of shared cultural references (Prevett, 2024); journalists understand that creativity comes from the exchange of ideas with colleagues (García-Avilés *et al.*, 2022).

When resources are stretched and journalists' mental health is under duress, the space and culture in which creativity thrives are compromised.

2.3.2 Creative solutions

While perpetual instability and pressure constrain creativity, such a precarious and troubled environment can also be a breeding ground for innovation. Each threat provides an opportunity for new platforms of journalistic work. Thanks to the internet, for example, 'the cultural and institutional vitality of journalism is being sustained' (McNair, 2009, p. 22). Although financially challenged in the early 21st century, digital native news organisations with a creative approach to journalistic output, including BuzzFeed and HuffPost, survived within an altered journalistic landscape (Wahl-Jorgensen *et al.*, 2016). Indeed, the industry's survival appeared to hinge on journalistic creativity (Chan, 2020).

The potential benefits of artificial intelligence may also outweigh the perceived risks. The idea that generative AI will make journalists obsolete when they are in the business of human interest seems unlikely. AI in journalism requires human oversight to ensure that trust between the public and the industry is not eroded (Borchardt, 2022). AI also has huge potential as a creative assistant: it can improve accessibility by transcribing audio

content, generating image descriptions, or facilitating text-to-speech delivery (Floreani, 2023). The INJECT newsroom innovation (Franks *et al.*, 2022) offers a case study of computational technology that increases the volume of creative stories in the newsroom.

As social media evolves, so do creative opportunities. TikTok, for example, provides a platform for new forms of journalistic storytelling, from vertical video content to sharing hyper-local stories with a global audience (Ntamadaki, 2023). Launched in 2017, Substack allows journalists to share and monetise their long-form content; freelance journalists describe the platform as a ‘game-changer’ for their investigative reporting (Van Sickle, 2023). Social media continually offers new avenues for creativity, branding and the disruption of journalistic norms (Humayun and Ferrucci, 2022), as illustrated by the New York Times’s *NYT Games app*. With over 2.5 million daily users by 2024, the NYT’s innovative ‘bundle’ includes access to podcasts and news sites, as well as a gaming platform. Designed to appeal to the traditional New York Times reader and offer better value for money, games encourage potential subscribers to think differently and holistically about the way they consume media (Klein, 2023).

As well as creative funding models, creative ways of working increased in the early 2000s, including an expanded form of ‘entrepreneurial’ journalism (Burns and Matthews, 2017). The distinction between freelance journalism and other creative fields blurred, with freelancers regarding their domain as a showcase for their engaging writing skills and specialised knowledge (Joseph and O’Donnell, 2023). Having a freelance status offers journalists the scope to manage the paradoxical relationship between playfulness and hard work (Coffee, 2011).

Creativity also has a transformative impact on mental health, promoting cognitive, emotional, physical, and social wellbeing, and influencing emotional regulation and social connectedness (Jean-Berluche, 2024). Creative and expressive art therapies are used as non-invasive approaches in adult mental health care, reducing anger and anxiety, and alleviating negative mood states (Smriti *et al.*, 2022). The contradiction here is that while creative work can be therapeutic, when pursued professionally it can become a crux for

one's mental health (Frazer-Carroll, 2021). Finding a balance, and nurturing the creative work journalists engage in, may be key.

Carlson, Robinson and Lewis (2021) suggest that journalism's 'crisis of relevance' provides an opportunity for journalists not just to defend their role and importance, but to confront their shortcomings, consider the way they represent their community and develop new ways to tell stories. What journalism needs, the authors suggest, is to find a more authentic moral voice which allows the individual journalist to practice as an 'embodied actor' whose social background, ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity, and life experience play a part in their reporting. The authors suggest a far more creative, and trust-driven approach is needed for 21st-century journalism to be relevant; journalists must 'carefully investigate and understand, even relationship-by-relationship, the values, needs, and cultural contexts of the communities they serve, to a degree previously unexplored' (Carlson, Robinson and Lewis, 2021, p. 197).

2.4 The problem with journalism and creativity

Creativity may be intrinsic to journalistic practice, and offer solutions to industry challenges, but it is not without its issues and detractors.

While there appears to be an urgent need for creativity and creative solutions in the industry, we cannot blindly accept creativity as an entirely positive force. As Markham (2012) suggests, creativity can be used as a cover for the exploitation and casualisation of the workforce. Free labour in the form of unpaid internships is, as in many creative industries, the norm (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Gollmitzer, 2021). A 2022 NCTJ report revealed that, due to the industry's reliance on hiring university graduates who tend to be from wealthier backgrounds, journalism is failing to recruit working-class people, and the industry is becoming less accessible to those without means (Kersley, 2022), a problem that persists in other creative industries, including filmmaking, for example (Bakare, 2024).

Although ‘creativity’ has been a political buzzword since the 1990s, people have been encouraged to be creative and entrepreneurial whilst state support systems for the arts and its workers have been dismantled (Deuze, 2019a). Markham (2012) acknowledges that creativity offers an alternative to the routine of office life, but describes it as a fuzzy concept that may in fact expose journalists’ lack of power and agency. Indeed, young people may be motivated to become journalists because they perceive it as a creative industry and are drawn to the prospect of varied and lively work (Hanusch *et al.*, 2016), but if they land a job where ‘churnalism’ is the norm, working under pressure to publish content fast, without interacting with primary sources, they may soon become disillusioned (Wheatley, 2020). Creativity cannot be a force for good in the industry if it results in unstable, temporary and ‘atypical’ forms of labour (Deuze, 2007).

Creativity for creativity’s sake is another risk factor. Berglez (2011) notes that journalistic creativity might have a ‘negative effect if one deviates too far from the norms of media logic’ (Berglez, 2011, p. 452). Story structure and format must make sense, and resonate with an audience, to be worthwhile. Whilst novelty is linked to success and survival, the pressure of the new can force journalists to adopt inappropriate or meaningless creative practices or output. Novelty is associated with increased sales (Ho and Liu, 2015) but providing a valuable news experience is also profitable, so serving audience attentiveness must be balanced with truth telling, accuracy and sincerity (Costera Meijer, 2021). Egregious creative output will only fuel the inverse snobbery attached to journalistic creativity; as Keeble (2007) points out, academic commentary on the media is already highly critical, calling out sensationalism and stereotyping. If journalistic output is novel for the sake of it, the criticism could intensify.

Creative passion can also be problematic for journalists’ mental wellbeing. Deuze (2023) says it causes journalists to ‘overinvest’ their time, energy and commitment, blurring the boundaries between personal and professional life. And while there are initiatives including the MediaStrong conference, addressing mental health in the field (Hoggan, 2024), there is evidence to suggest that the way journalists report on mental health issues may fuel their negative attitudes towards seeking help and support (Aoki *et al.*, 2013).

Another significant issue is the notion that creativity challenges a journalist's objectivity. While objective newsgathering is a pillar of the profession, impartiality (reporting facts without bias) has never been a given. Following a partisan history, when newspapers were openly political or aligned with specific interests, journalistic impartiality emerged in 1920s America as a tactic to appeal to a broader audience (Pressman, 2018). Its appeal had faded by the middle of the century when American journalists were operating as stenographers, simply reporting the words and deeds of powerful people without analysis (Pressman, 2018). As Muñoz-Torres (2012) says, 'brute facts' are meaningless if they are not connected to concepts and notions through subjective interpretation.

In the British context, the ideal of impartiality is often assumed. Professional notions of independence and fair play held greater sway with 20th-century British journalists, but impartiality was accepted as a corporate norm at organisations including Reuters and the BBC. Still, scholars of British media, and many working journalists, appear to confuse objectivity and impartiality and assume that the latter has always prevailed in the British press (Hampton, 2008). In actuality, the concept of due impartiality, when the impartial stance is appropriate to the output, can be so vaguely defined, and the dualism between facts and values so easily confused, that a positivist premise becomes unachievable (Muñoz-Torres, 2012). McNair (2009), who regards literary journalism in the 1950s and 1960s as the first threat to the dominant journalism model of delivering objective and impartial content, argues that objectivity must be re-evaluated in a digital era of 'post-factuality' (McNair, 2017).

Some aspects of storytelling necessarily involve a degree of subjectivity, but creativity in a journalist's practice should never stand in the way of objective truth. The forms that journalism can take extend far beyond news reporting, but as examined in this literature review, the very act of selecting a story, choosing sources, and framing narratives involves making choices that can be influenced by personal, social, and cultural biases. As part of knowing (and reporting on) the world, subjectivity is 'intractable' (Chong, 2019). Whether or not a journalist is operating creatively, or in a creative context, rigid impartiality in journalism is an 'impossible ideal' (Muñoz-Torres, 2012, p. 566) and so the argument that creativity is the enemy of objectivity appears redundant.

2.5 The creative process

As the literature shows, creativity has drawbacks when considered in the context of journalism, but by examining the way it manifests in industry, through process, product and people, a better understanding of its importance and potential can be gleaned.

While largely underappreciated, creativity in the journalistic process is central to it (Ricketson, 2017), with multiple scholars suggesting that the practice, or process, of journalism is inherently creative (Keeble, 2007; Ricketson, 2017; Koivula, Villi and Sivunen, 2020). The ad-hoc nature of breaking news, and the unpredictability of the journalism job market, means that the journalistic process is never smooth or well-organised; it is, necessarily, shaped by a sense of chaos, and ‘messy realities’ (Deuze, 2019b, p. 2) that harness creative ways of working and require a flexible, agile and creative mindset.

Creative practice manifests in cerebral, practical, multidimensional ways, with many interpretations and applications (Malmelin and Nivari-Lindström, 2017), from creative research methods to innovative production processes and types of audience engagement (Nylund, 2013; Deuze, 2019a). Journalists demonstrate an imaginative approach from the time they respond to the day’s news by generating a story idea with a novel angle that will provide readers with new and relevant information. The creative process persists through the way journalists utilise their determination, detective skills, moral courage and persuasive powers to track down their case studies, and then convince them to be interviewed (Ricketson, 2017).

The journalistic process combines creative thinking, which is not separate from but part of everyday work (Franks *et al.*, 2022), and creative observation, starting with the five ‘W questions’ (who? what? when? why? where?) of news writing. The process ends with the ability to break established patterns of thinking. It has been suggested that the single trick to changing the journalistic pattern into a creative technique is to add the word “else” to each of the W questions: who *e/se?*; what *e/se?*; when *e/se?*; why *e/se?*; and where *e/se?*

(Grey, 2014). The creative journalistic process is as much about asking questions as it is about answering them.

The literature offers many models from which to extrapolate the journalistic process, but there is no consensus. One thing most journalists do have in common in their process is that they search for stories. Ricketson (2017) suggests that the act of discovery is itself analogous to creativity and that while art and creativity are not synonyms, there is a significant overlap. Much like an artist, the creative process is not linear for journalists. Innovation happens at various moments, and in various places, initiated by various people (Wagemans and Witschge, 2019). Projects are fast-paced, teams shift from story to story, networks spill outside institutional boundaries, and practitioners work through the journalistic process together, conversing and co-creating (Deuze and Witschge, 2018). The dialogic nature of early 21st-century journalism, which has its roots in the American penny press of the 1930s, is a fundamentally collaborative process, steeped in creativity. Journalists are in dialogue with their editors, their interviewees, the imaginary audience they communicate with as they create their output (Hornmoen and Steensen, 2014), and the audience they share their work with, who can converse with journalists via comments below the line in a creative exchange of feedback, ideas and differences of opinion.

The continual introduction of new technologies to the journalistic process provides further evidence of its creative nature. Journalists are often early adopters of technology, and, by 2024, many news organisations in the US and Europe were making extensive use of AI products and infrastructure (Simon, 2024). As new platforms became more integrated with news production, journalists adapted their working processes to include emerging technologies, such as virtual and augmented reality, in their storytelling (Doherty, Johnston and Matthews, 2022). Many high-profile 21st-century journalists harnessed the power of podcasting as a vehicle to reach new audiences; notably former BBC journalists Emily Maitlis, Jon Sopel and Lewis Goodall, whose *News Agents* podcast marked 100 million downloads in August 2024 (Lang, 2024).

As creative media producers, journalists make decisions, act and interact with individual, social and cultural structures (Fulton, 2016). Journalism can be seen as designing output

that responds to public concerns (Doherty, Johnston and Matthews, 2022); the 'craft' is telling compelling stories that matter to people's lives (Deuze, 2019b). Exploring the social structure of print journalism, Fulton (2011b) highlights creativity in journalists' everyday news practices. Dispelling any romantic notion of an individual as the 'centre' of creativity, Fulton provides evidence that social influences support the production of creative texts, and that models of creativity can be applied to the domain of print journalism. During research into the nature of creativity through freelance journalism, Coffee (2011) used practitioner-based enquiry to compare her own creative experience of writing profiles to that of other cultural producers. Coffee recognises the importance of working within the established rules and structures of journalism (in this case, feature writing), as well as acknowledging the influence of gatekeepers in determining the activities a creative practitioner can engage in. Coffee also discovered similarities between her experience and the creative practitioners she was writing about – they all interacted with a domain and field and engaged in a rational process that could be learnt, practised and improved.

Fulton and McIntyre (2013) reject an understanding of the creative journalistic process that is conflated with the arts, discussing the topic within a rationalist framework. They argue that by being an 'active agent' a journalist can produce creative text in any field, including print. Their analysis found that journalists need to be creative to capture an audience and hold its attention and to generate story ideas. The authors conclude that journalists learn the structures of journalism to produce novel output within those conventions. The concept of journalistic creativity operating within the established structures of the industry is reflected in the definition of journalistic creativity proposed in chapter four of this thesis.

2.5.1 Creative output

A common view in industry and education is that creative journalism happens when the product is perceived as creative: literary, arts, narrative or lifestyle journalism, for example. Creativity, however, manifests in a much broader range of journalistic output (Ricketson, 2017). This section explores journalistic output on the basis that all products of journalism are in some way creative, but that a spectrum of creative output, or ‘form continuum’ (Postema and Deuze, 2020), exists, from the basics of the NIB (news in brief) to the most innovative pieces of long-form and interactive journalism.

All journalistic output has a style and voice, usually using a vocabulary shared with public discourse, but it can also capture complexity (Keeble, 2007). Plain language is important for broadcasters (Alexander and Stewart, 2021) but is no less creative than the more complex linguistic delivery of their literary colleagues. Language is an essential journalistic tool, and being able to use it with creativity and style often marks out an exceptional journalist. Always evolving, the language used by journalists is social; it represents the identity of the journalist and/or the publication; it denotes agency and power, and it is political (Smith and Higgins, 2020). The ability to work with language, often using it to manipulate a reader’s emotions, gives journalists their creative heft.

Products that might immediately be perceived as creative can be found across the journalistic spectrum, including long-form journalism, documentaries, podcasts and multimedia (Ricketson, 2017). As examined in the previous section of this chapter, every journalism product has a creative process behind it. Contemporary news ‘oozes with imaginative expression’ (Postema and Deuze, 2020, p. 1309) and this is enhanced when a journalist applies their ‘artistic voice’ to the output (Postema and Deuze, 2020, p. 1310). When, as consumers, we look at journalistic products, we can spot the creativity at a glance; every news story, no matter its length, has a headline. Headlines must attract people to a story, and require time and talent to construct – they can be considered as creative short texts (Mendes and Oliveira, 2020). Alexander and Stewart (2021) say the

best storytelling in broadcast journalism is about people, pointing out that broadcasters can learn techniques from novelists, who often frame events through the experience of a character. The editing of every television or radio news package also offers space for creative treatment, which could be the use of music, audio filters, compelling close-ups or cutaway shots. These creative elements are easily identified in any journalistic output. The rise of viral news (or networked news stories that spread on social media) demands creative, short-form output that can tap into audience emotion, as well as trends and the element of surprise (Al-Rawi, 2017).

Features may appear next to news on the creative continuum. Whilst still using journalists' core reporting and writing skills, features introduce the possibility of colour (descriptive content), a range of perspectives and emotions. Journalistic features strike a balance between facts and the boundaries of a creative approach: 'facts are the bedrock of a feature, but emotion is the fuel that ignites the prose' (Martin, 2021, p. 123). Balancing fact with emotion and narrative devices is a complex and intricate task that results in meaningful, creative, and sometimes award-winning, features (Martin, 2021). Steensen (2011) writes that the 'featurization' of contemporary journalism has led to a family of feature genres dominating publications, including reportage, profiles, background stories, lifestyle stories, and personal columns. Although journalists and scholars often label features as 'soft news', Steensen suggests that we should move beyond this dichotomy, appreciate the diversified nature of journalism and start to value output that is consumer-oriented, intimate and fiction-inspired. Preger (2021) agrees that 'soft news' factors, such as conversation value, have become more important, and that creators now want to deliver stories that readers, viewers, listeners or users enjoy consuming.

Long-form journalism builds on the foundations of feature writing to offer creative output similar to artistic output. In longer forms of journalism, the writer's voice can be paramount (Keeble, 2007). Certainly, first-person narration and the 'dramatic' elements of the single voice are distinguishing devices of literary journalism, facilitating immediacy, spontaneity and intimacy with the audience (Tulloch, 2014). Long-form journalism in the digital environment offers new possibilities, including multimedia elements that can enhance the quality of the output and move text-based stories into the realm of public discussion

(Lassila-Merisalo, 2014). Mascaro (2018) considers long-form documentary journalism as 'literary engagement', arguing that television documentarians work with purpose, responsibility, and morality in presenting choices for their generation, much like their literary counterparts. Podcasts commonly feature long-form journalism and soared in popularity in the early 21st century. From 2018 to 2023, staff at the BBC reported a 139 per cent growth in the number of hours British audiences spent listening to podcasts (Maher, 2024). According to the Pew Research Center (Stocking *et al.*, 2023) around 38 per cent of the top-ranked podcasts used 'deep reporting' (or in-depth analysis), 18 per cent used an innovative format, such as soundscapes, and of the 451 top-ranked podcasts analysed, over half were longer than 20 minutes per episode. Not only are podcasts long-form storytelling platforms, but they also allow an audience to immerse themselves in the content on their smartphones, giving them global reach (Preger, 2021).

Innovation journalism is perhaps at the highest end of the creative spectrum. Slow journalism is one example. A term that means more than just temporality in production, Le Masurier (2014) explains that slow journalism in the digital age is not scoop-driven; it avoids sensationalism and herd reporting; its sources are verifiable and traceable by the audience via methods of transparency; it can facilitate active co-production; and the work tends to be relevant to a particular community with a focus on local stories. Often published by small, independent platforms, and in an age of 24-hour news cycles and 'information overload', Le Masurier says that slow journalism is an innovation that could be considered 'a practice of responsible citizenship' (Le Masurier, 2014, p. 149). The evolution of news games is another example of innovation journalism. Emerging from puzzles, quizzes, and interactives, this type of digital journalism includes fully-fledged immersive video games, open-world designs, virtual reality (VR) and mixed reality (MR) experiences. The use of entertainment media forms, and their narrative methods, adds new and potentially more powerful meaning to news than traditional formats (Dowling, 2020).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, journalists may not always see themselves as ‘creatives’, but when they are asked to reflect on the products of their journalistic work, they tend to appreciate how creative it is. Magazine professionals, for example, feel that ‘successful creative effort leads to higher quality content and products’ (Malmelin and Nivari-Lindström, 2017, p. 341). Creative journalistic output can also make a significant contribution to society. Berglez (2011) says, for example, that journalistic creativity could present the climate issue as something visible and tangible, without frightening audiences. Creative output affects journalists in a more personal way, too. As Markham (2012) suggests, creative production is not only judged on the ability to communicate world events whilst meeting professional standards, but also on personal integrity and likeability. It’s no surprise, then, that journalists engage in the performance of self to their audience. 21st-century journalists are expected to blog, have a social media presence, and produce visual and audiovisual content; Markham says that many journalists ‘actively enjoy the dynamism this brings to their routines and increased interaction with their readers’ (Markham, 2012, p. 187).

With journalists producing such diverse output, all of which could be considered creative, it follows that journalists operating in any media field, and with any media format, need to be in touch with their creativity.

2.5.2 Creative culture

Creative culture within journalism has not been investigated as widely or forensically in the literature as journalistic process and product. Under an umbrella definition, culture is the way of life of a particular group of people (Linton, 1938); as the literature reviewed in previous sections of this chapter shows, the way of life can be particularly hard for journalists who work long hours, struggle to separate their work and home lives, must constantly keep up with new technology and endure anxiety over their job security. The literature also suggests that culture itself is a creative process, playing a role in every

level of creativity, from the personal to the world changing (Helfand, Kaufman and Beghetto, 2016; Glăveanu, 2021).

Whilst the challenges journalists face may not stop them from being inherently creative practitioners, there are countless reports of a 'toxic culture' in newsrooms, with predatory behaviour, bullying, intimidation, abuse and discrimination all reported at major media outlets in the 2020s (Tewari, 2022; Sky News, 2023; Dumas and Doherty, 2024; Milligan, Farrow and Welch, 2024; Women Press Freedom, 2024). Crowley (2023) points out that news organisations make great efforts to attract young, diverse talent, without considering how to retain it. After young reporters cross the threshold of industry, Crowley says, many of the newsrooms they encounter have intense, toxic environments.

Viewing journalism as a 'high emotional labour' profession, Šimunjak and Menke (2023) say that journalism textbooks accentuate a macho, 'thick skin' culture in the industry, with employers lacking a holistic approach when it comes to supporting staff and looking after their wellbeing. The authors say that newsroom culture, and managers who lack understanding of the pressures of the job, hinder social support systems; rather, journalists rely on personal resources, such as psychological capital and emotional literacy, to manage. Šimunjak and Menke say that the emotional pressures in the job are incompatible with how journalists are trained and socialised. Bélair-Gagnon *et al.* (2023) say there is a need to address the challenges facing the news industry in terms of journalists' happiness, helping them to bridge the gaps between their professional ideals, news practices, and personal lives. The authors suggest that culture in the journalism industry requires urgent reform so journalism can improve as a community of practice, a public service, and a business, allowing practitioners to be successful and flourish simultaneously. Crowley (2023) admits that changes in newsroom culture cannot be tackled overnight, but a new approach to empathising with journalists could 'move the dial' (Crowley, 2023, p. 188).

Journalistic creativity, autonomy and innovation develop faster when deliberately fostered (Gynnild, 2013). Borghero (2017) agrees that organisations should embrace creativity with a positive set of behaviours and ways of working: employers should recognise that

the workspace plays a central role in encouraging the creative process, and a culture of creativity. Journalistic workspaces can be fluid. News work takes place in media offices and newsrooms, but also at home, in shared editorial collectives and startups, and free Wi-Fi café environments (Hartmann, 2009). Rather than at the water cooler, journalists may develop their workplace culture over digital platforms like Microsoft Teams, and social media; this phenomenon has not been studied extensively in the journalistic context, although Papanagnou (2021) provides a case study of relationships in the networked era at the Guardian, where journalists trade opinions, work, and values online, and then network offline at parties and events.

There is evidence to suggest that journalists recognise the benefits of a creative culture at work. Malmelin and Virta (2016) found that journalism professionals wanted to make meaningful progress in their working lives through innovation and ideas. They found that teamwork was becoming more important as a facilitator for creativity through collaboration. The participants in their study considered inspirational, informal meetings and gatherings, as well as mutual learning, to be crucial to their creativity. The authors conclude that managing creativity is closely linked to changes affecting industry and that creating new practices and processes motivates journalists' creative work. Journalists share a sense of camaraderie (Crowley, 2023) and collaborate with colleagues on an interpersonal level in a newsroom environment. In contrast to a historically competitive media culture, newsroom collectives emerged in the early 21st century, with organisations pooling resources, co-investigating global issues, tackling huge data sets, and even banding together to enable local news outlets to survive (Quackenbush, 2020). One collaborative example is Hostwriter, a Berlin-based network that facilitates cross-border collaborations among its members in 154 countries. Media labs, 'organisationally mandated spaces or processes for innovation and creation' (Bisso Nunes and Mills, 2021, p. 654), provide further evidence of creative culture, with journalists reporting that labs help to change mindsets, create new ways of working and provide physical and mental space so people can develop. Labs expanded rapidly between 2015 and 2025, leveraging people, technologies, ecosystems and networks. Although media labs develop technologies, their main contribution is 'catalysing cultural change' (Bisso Nunes and Mills, 2021, p. 672).

In *Creativity, Inc.*, a bestselling book about pursuing creative excellence at Pixar Animation Studios, author Ed Catmull (2023) claims that people are more important than ideas. Far from being singular, ideas contribute to a greater whole, and Catmull's advice for any successful creative endeavour is to focus on people, their work habits, values and talents. If you can find, develop and support good people, the author says, they will find, develop and own good ideas. This strategic, and person-centred, approach could certainly be applied to the journalism industry, where creative people, and creative collaboration, play such compelling roles. As Gynnild (2013) puts it, an innovation-oriented mindset is crucial among the people working in the field; journalistic will and skill can put good ideas into action to benefit society.

Based on the available literature, whether most journalists would agree that the culture they work in supports and nurtures their creative potential seems unlikely and this feeds directly into *RQ1* (what is the role and meaning of creativity in contemporary journalism?) and *RQ3* (what are the possibilities and risks of creative culture for journalists and journalism students?) of this project. Perreault (2023) suggests that while research is needed to explore why journalists leave the industry, not least the toxicity of the culture, research is also required to understand what encourages journalists to stay. Journalism's salvation, Perreault says, might rely on giving journalists the opportunity to report on the topics that bring them joy (Perreault, 2023, p. 31).

2.6 A creative future for journalism?

As the literature shows, creative solutions may play a part in the future of journalism. Due to the extent of early 21st-century disruption, Russial, Laufer and Wasko (2015) say that making predictions for the future of the industry becomes impossible and is better defined as speculation, but as Killebrew (2003) suggests, adapting the 'creativity factor' and overcoming scepticism in the journalism industry is possible, and could play a role in its evolution (Killebrew, 2003, p. 45). Innovation has been identified as key to the very survival of the industry (Pérez-Seijo and Silva-Rodríguez, 2024).

McNair (2009) says that the future of journalism can be conflated with a particular medium; journalism students often cite the decline of print as the reason they are worried about their future career prospects. The literature, however, contains much optimism, particularly if media managers can understand creative processes and how creative people work (Nylund, 2013). Fulton and McIntyre (2013) say that encouraging creativity in the journalism workplace will enhance the prospects of news organisations; Deuze (2019a) appeals for journalists to embrace creativity, shaping and nurturing their professional identities and harnessing a 'broad-spectrum creativity' to foster a more diverse industry (Deuze, 2019a, p. 132).

While Russial, Laufer and Wasko (2015) ask if the future of journalism will be characterised by 'digital technologies of creation', Witschge and Nygren (2009) consider whether new processes used in the newsroom could change professional values, as well as content. They identify a demand for multi-skilled journalists who can use digital tools for new creative possibilities. The rise of mobile journalism ('mojo'), for example, caused traditional news organisations to apply strategies for novel production tools, encouraging staff to adopt a 'mojo mindset' and to keep creating innovative content in new formats (Salzmann, Guribye and Gynnild, 2023).

Hearn (2020) says that the rise of 'robo-journalism' (also known as automated, or algorithmic, journalism) prompts critical questions for the future of journalists' work, notably whether automation will free up journalists' time to engage in more creative and critical writing. Franks *et al.* (2022) suggest that digital tools are integral to journalistic practice: computation will help journalists find new story angles, evaluate journalistic output, and inform editorial decision-making in the future. With a huge volume of digital information, such technology could help journalists focus on valuable information and produce more novel results. Pérez-Seijo and Silva-Rodríguez (2024) stress the importance of investing in research and human capital, particularly an audience-centred approach, as well as technology. The authors advise journalists to approach the innovation process gradually and thoughtfully, lest they get 'carried away' by the emotion these changes can generate. Caution must also be exercised in the future to avoid

market-driven novelty serving promotional purposes, rather than harnessing creativity to produce superior news tools (Ferrucci and Perreault, 2021).

Looking at the phenomenon of dispersed journalistic teams, working remotely via communication technologies, Koivula, Villi and Sivunen (2020) warn that the factors that enable creativity and innovation through technology can also constrain it, making creative work seem laborious. The authors suggest that remote journalistic teams should work consciously to alleviate such challenges in the future by engaging in intentional idea sharing and development, as well as facilitating a psychologically safe communication climate to encourage journalists' creative endeavours. The growth of media labs, which often include dispersed teams, may help. Described as 'one of the building blocks in creating the future of journalism' (Bisso Nunes and Mills, 2021, p. 673), media labs seek to create profitable, effective, and impactful organisations and journalism, blurring the boundaries between functional, technological and creative innovation.

If creativity is seen as a process in which any and every journalist can engage, the future workplace – whether a newsroom, TV studio or podcasting booth – can facilitate and encourage the creative process and a culture of creativity (Borghero, 2017). This literature review shows that problems persist in the culture of the journalism workplace. If creativity is encouraged, however, the literature suggests that journalists might build the resourcefulness, confidence, resilience, flexibility, and spontaneity to help them withstand the future pressures of a complex industry in constant turmoil.

2.7 Reflection: creativity from the perspective of a working journalist

In concluding this chapter, I am aware that, as a working journalist, I have always considered my practice creative. As a freelancer, I viewed creativity as a fundamental trait that was somewhat intuitive but could be developed with every piece of work. Every idea, commission and interview materialised through a process of imagination, curiosity, new perspectives and the original construction of storytelling through words, speech and images. No two stories I worked on involved the same creative process. No two projects

included the same team of people. Based on my experience, I believe that working with colleagues on features, brainstorming ideas, searching for unique stories, and finding original angles and storytelling vehicles, are inherently creative activities. Ideas and originality are the most valuable currency for freelance journalists, rewarded by paid commissions, front pages and audience engagement.

I became a journalist because I loved to write. As my career progressed, I needed creative skills in every aspect of the work. I used my creativity to generate story ideas and match them to publications, pitch editors, source case studies and experts, conduct interviews and craft and edit articles before filing my copy. As the industry evolved with the digital world, I harnessed my creativity for blogging, storyboarding, making video content, photography, and podcasting. Creating digital content demanded flexibility, versatility and resilience, all traits I consider creative. Creativity formed the core of my journalistic practice and, when I moved into journalism teaching, it informed my practice as an educator with the same combination of instinct and the desire to learn and develop professionally.

I have also experienced negative reactions when describing journalistic work as ‘creative’. Fellow journalists have suggested that my practice is creative only because I have engaged in arts and lifestyle reporting; having spent over two decades covering health, wellbeing, crime, business and relationships, as both a staff member and freelancer, I would strongly argue that creativity is present across every aspect of my practice, and the practice of any working journalist.

I also feel strongly that the creative elements of my work have enhanced my resilience and brought me the most pleasure, career sustainability, and financial reward. In media offices and remote teams where the culture was creative, I found the most fulfilling working relationships and meaningful support for my reporting. This literature review shows that only a limited amount of research explores the role of creative culture in journalism, and this project aims to contribute to this area of study.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted how journalism is in a perpetual state of flux, always evolving, always unstable (Giga, Hoel and Cooper, 2003; McNair, 2009; Malmelin and Virta, 2016; Carlson, Robinson and Lewis, 2021). Journalists must be increasingly resilient due to a complex and pressured workplace environment. With resources limited, and abundant threats to their safety and mental health in evidence, the time, space and culture they require for creativity to flourish can be compromised.

The literature suggests that a creative approach could help to improve the storytelling skills, resilience and confidence of professional journalists, as well as increasing trust between them and the public (Carlson, Robinson and Lewis, 2021; Borchardt, 2022). From the novel use of social media and innovative funding models to social wellbeing and improved mental health, there is some evidence that creativity can have a transformative impact on journalists, and that creativity can be seen in the process, product and people engaged in the profession. The literature supports the notion that being creative is no more a threat to impartiality than being human is; there is no reason to think that creativity and truth cannot coexist.

Creativity is not a magic bullet, however. As the literature shows, innovation can be used as an excuse for excessive promotional activity (Ferrucci and Perreault, 2021) and seeking audience attention must be balanced with truth and authenticity (Costera Meijer, 2021). The risk of creativity being used to exploit journalists is also real (Markham, 2012), as is the tendency for journalists to spend too much time and energy on their work because, like so many creative people, they love and care about what they do (Deuze, 2023).

The literature does not explain how journalistic scepticism towards creativity can be overcome. Calls have been made for creativity to be embraced within the industry (Nylund, 2013; Fulton and McIntyre, 2013; Deuze, 2019a), but the literature does not yet indicate whether a creative approach to journalism education could be an appropriate response to the challenges journalists continue to face.

Although the literature suggests that the media can be regarded as part of the creative industries, creativity in media organisations is an ‘overlooked’ research area (Malmelin and Virta, 2016), with ‘strikingly’ scant studies available on creativity and journalism (Nylund, 2013). Deuze (2019a) argues that we should understand journalism as ‘distinctly and intrinsically creative’ (Deuze, 2019a, p. 130), but while creativity has become more prevalent in the industry, it is not yet studied extensively and explicitly in journalism education. It appears that the impact of creativity on the industry, and the implications for its future, merits further investigation.

Having reviewed the literature on journalism and creativity, the next chapter of this thesis will look at creativity in the context of higher education, with a final section on journalism education and creativity.

Chapter three: literature review part two

3.1 Introduction: education and creativity

Part two of the literature review for this project focuses on education and creativity, looking at the value of creativity within the higher education sector and what challenges it faces; the way that creative learning and teaching manifests in the classroom of British universities; and how journalism education intersects with creative pedagogies.

This chapter has three sections. Section 3.2 explores the value of creativity in the higher education sector, how it is defined (or not) and the leading academics that champion it. It then examines the challenges associated with creativity in higher education, reviewing the relevant political events and policies that have shaped the contemporary sector, from the Dearing Report and New Labour government in 1997, to the period in which this thesis was written (2020-2025). Finally, the section examines how a turbulent political period affected creativity on the ground in higher education.

Section 3.3 reviews creativity in the classroom. The section first examines creative culture in higher education, looking at how an institutional or departmental ethos can affect the creativity of its teachers and how creative culture at universities becomes evident. Then it profiles creative teachers, looking at how they develop their creativity and inspire their students. It also considers the role that academic scepticism might play in deterring teachers from adopting creative methodologies in their practice. Finally, it reviews creative pedagogy as an approach and links emerging themes to established methods and practices currently used in higher education.

Finally, section 3.4 looks specifically at creativity in journalism education, reviewing the need for creativity in this discipline, uncovering examples of creative practitioners in the 21st century and exploring how creative pedagogies and approaches might enhance the education of future journalists. This section is shorter, with research in this field more limited, and it follows that this is the area in which this thesis can fill a gap in the available literature and make an original contribution to knowledge.

I have also added a short section of reflection, touching on my experience and ethos as a journalism educator in the context of this literature review.

To keep this chapter as relevant as possible to the research questions, most of the scholarly work reviewed here was published after 2000. There is also a focus on the UK higher education sector, where the original research in this study is located, although the global context of creativity and higher education is also considered.

3.2 The value of creativity in higher education

Bridging education and working life, university educators can help their students to develop core creativity skills, neglected since childhood, giving them ‘the joy’ of creative expression, as well as building skills and traits for the rest of their lives (Lovegrove, 2023). Deuze (2019a) says that educators prepare students for the creative work ‘that lies ahead’ (Deuze, 2019a, p. 132); Livingston (2010) says that creativity develops content knowledge and skills in a culture fuelled by investigation, cooperation, connection, integration and synthesis; Cropley and Cropley (2009) say innovation is vital in many organisations, including higher education, with effective novelty being generated via creativity; and James (2019) encourages educators and their students to play, not just to relieve stress, but to become better at the ‘complex, challenging, horizon-stretching work that a university needs to do’ (James, 2019, p. 18).

During the early 2000s, two high-profile British academics were champions of creative pedagogy: Sir Ken Robinson and Professor Norman Jackson. Robinson was the author of *All Our Futures* (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, 1999), a report arguing that a national strategy for creative and cultural education was essential for the future of the UK’s economic development and social cohesion. The report recognised that the key industries of the future would include communications, technology and entertainment, and that a creative educational approach to teaching for those

industries was lacking. The report highlighted the need to ‘galvanise teachers, schools, colleges, universities, enterprises, other bodies, young people and other individuals into taking the recommendations forward’ (Muller, 2000, p. 146).

Robinson spread his influence on creativity and education to a wider audience and became synonymous with the idea that creativity is as important as literacy. His seminal TED talk, *Do Schools Kill Creativity?* (Robinson, 2006) has been viewed over 72 million times. Robinson argued that schools and universities needed to broaden their curriculums and treat their teachers as creative professionals (Sandomir, 2020). Robinson (2017) believed that ‘a kind of mania’ had taken over educational policy, with a ‘tired mantra’ around traditional academic standards (Robinson, 2017, p. xvi). His efforts to dissuade successive governments from prioritising literacy and numeracy, however, were largely ignored by politicians (Bates, 2020).

In 2000, Professor Norman Jackson was invited to contribute to the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN), an initiative established to co-ordinate the enhancement of teaching and learning in tertiary education. Jackson launched a community-based development programme to enable students’ creative development (Jackson, 2015) and, over four years, commissioned research studies, disciplinary surveys, and community events. In 2006, Jackson’s Imaginative Curriculum Project (Jackson *et al.*, 2006) was received as a ‘valuable overview of creativity practice in higher education’ (MacLaren, 2012, p. 161). In 2011, Jackson established the Lifewide Education network to help educators develop approaches towards lifelong learning, personal development and achievement (Lifewide Education, 2023) and founded Creative Academic in 2015, championing creativity ‘in all its manifestations in higher education’ (Creative Academic, 2022).

Robinson and Jackson were pioneers in the field, but literature on creative practice in higher education was scant in the first quarter of the 21st century. Fox and Smith (2023)

claim that a definition of creativity in higher education does not exist and that creativity in universities has not been valued in the output field of high-ranking research. Ismayilova and Bolander Laksov (2022) say that most definitions of creative teaching come from school education; in this context, Patston *et al.* (2021) say that creativity can be defined as having two core components, originality (or novelty) and task appropriateness (or usefulness). In their qualitative study into creativity across international curricula, the authors say there are many misconceptions about creativity, mainly conflation with the arts. They also say that a working definition of creativity is lacking, along with an understanding of how an environment can support creativity. Similarly, writing predominantly in the school context, Craft (1997; 2013; 2015) does not offer a singular definition of creativity, but differentiates it from intelligence, situating creativity as an everyday, embodied and lifelong process with problem-finding and problem-solving capabilities, characterised by 'possibility thinking' and 'possibility play' which can be stimulated and supported by a 'creative teacher' (Craft, 1997, p.8).

The value of creativity in 21st-century higher education has been investigated to some extent. In 2007, the European University Association (EUA) creativity project aimed to identify good practice, providing higher education institutions and governments with 'operational recommendations on how to foster creativity' (European University Association, 2007). The EUA report recommended embedding creative activities in the curriculum to encourage originality, forward-thinking, and problem-solving abilities (Collins *et al.*, 2011). Similar ideas were advocated in the United States. Livingston (2010) lobbied for a rejection of traditional pedagogies, calling for universities to 'forge decision makers who see creativity as an art form, as the instrument by which one becomes not only an able responder to, but also an agent for change' (Livingston, 2010, p. 62). In Australia, a 'radical re-engagement in pedagogical work' was advised for creative enterprise in higher education (McWilliam and Dawson, 2008, p. 634), and Sandri (2012) argued that creativity is essential for sustainable learning. China also increased its emphasis on creativity in education, adding value to its economy by moving from a focus on 'made in' to 'designed in' (Spier, 2021). Li (2011) says creativity is essential for the renewal of Chinese society and suggests the Communication University of China has 'a

curriculum, approach and educational philosophy to provide a teaching model for other Chinese universities' (Li, 2011, p. 61) with courses in creative media, international cultural trade and cultural industry management.

3.2.1 Policy and politics

Barnett (2020) says universities are confined by, and called upon to serve, different masters in fulfilling political agendas. Politicians and policy makers, particularly in the UK, send the sector mixed messages on creativity, sometimes coming into conflict with disciplines that prepare students for the creative industries. In 2021, the UK Secretary of State for Education approved a 50 per cent funding cut for arts and design courses with money redirected to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) courses, affecting subject areas including media studies and journalism (Harris, 2021). In April 2024, government ministers prepared to make further funding cuts to performing and creative arts courses, with the Strategic Priorities Grant (formerly known as the Teaching Grant) increasing by just two million pounds. Gordon McKenzie, chief executive of the GuildHE group of small and specialist universities, claimed that the government 'repeatedly makes policy and funding decisions that damage the creative talent pipeline on which [creative] industries depend' (Parr, 2024).

In the first quarter of the 21st century, the sector strained under financial pressures, reduced student numbers (particularly lower international applications due to tightening Home Office regulations) and the impact of 'culture wars', with terminology such as 'low-value courses', being applied to arts and humanities by politicians (Williams, 2024); Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, for example, used the term 'Mickey Mouse degrees' to refer to creative courses, including media studies (Evans, 2024). Tensions between the government and the creative higher education sector appeared to peak in the early 2020s, but its roots can be traced back to the late 1990s.

3.2.2 Back to the 1990s

Education and creativity always intersect with government reports, policies, commentaries, and advice (Patston *et al.*, 2021). Kernohan (2018a) says the Hale report (The National Archives, 1964) was a serious look ‘under the bonnet’ of university teaching, but points to the Dearing Report (Dearing, 1997) as a landmark for higher education. Dearing’s report made 93 long-term recommendations, many designed for lifelong learning (Birch, 2017), which is tied to creative communities (Sahlberg, 2009).

The Dearing Report coincided with Tony Blair’s incoming New Labour government, which described education as a ‘number one priority’ in its manifesto (Labour Party, 1997). Instigating a ‘third way’ approach to education (Muschamp, Jamieson and Lauder, 1999), New Labour promoted lifelong learning. Established in 1998, the UK’s National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) also promoted investment in learning and models to support talent, innovation and creativity (Smith-Bingham, 2006), signalling that New Labour believed in a more creative society (Jackson, 2006). But Oakley *et al.* (2014) say that what started out as a civic organisation, embracing innovation, switched its focus to economic growth.

The introduction of tuition fees in 1998 fuelled speculation that neoliberal ideologies, favouring privatisation, deregulation and globalisation, had infiltrated higher education. The phenomenon of ‘student as customer’ created tension between higher education for positive change, and higher education for market gain (Gibbs, 2001; Radice, 2013; Ingleby, 2021; Mintz, 2021). Neoliberal values focused on high-level skills for future managers, professionals and entrepreneurs, promoting beliefs and attitudes that ‘shape the practices of the ruling élites’ (Radice, 2013, p. 411). Describing the neoliberal university as an ‘edufactory’, Troiani and Dutson (2021) say that academics were working on a ‘conveyor belt’, processing student work and students in an efficient but possibly ‘unhuman’ manner (Troiani and Dutson, 2021, p.12). Gormley (2018) argues that creativity is ‘co-opted into neoliberal themes and processes of financialisation that prioritise workplace readiness’ (Gormley, 2018, p. 325).

Neoliberal values had some positive impact. The research university model, or 'ivory tower', for example, is redundant compared to entrepreneurial institutions with a broader mission towards innovation (Etzkowitz, Dzisah and Clouser, 2022). But Kalin (2018) warns that teachers and students must seek more than economic advantage, working together against creativity's takeover by business. Similarly, McRobbie (2016) points to the rise of 'enterprise culture' a phenomenon that emerged at the same time as the expansion of higher and further education from the mid-1990s. This created a sense of ideological 'middle-classification', with young people *feeling* middle class and aspirational through the entrepreneurship so common in the creative industries but bypassing mainstream employment and the benefits of welfare and trade union protection. McRobbie refers to this process as 'labour reform by stealth and without even drawing attention to the old ways of organized labour' (McRobbie, 2016, p. 13).

3.2.3 Quality control and the rule of STEM

The Dearing Report sparked a host of widening participation initiatives and a greater focus on students' learning skills (Thompson, 2017); it also kick-started the professionalisation of teaching in higher education, including the introduction of postgraduate certificates and courses in professional academic practice. The report proposed an Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, later absorbed into the Higher Education Academy and known as Advance HE at the time of writing this thesis. Launched in 2000, the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTF) signified excellence in university teaching. Although quality assurance can focus more on easy-to-measure metrics than learners (Almadani, Reid and Rodrigues, 2011), Barrett and Donnelly (2008) argue that professional development opportunities can help educators to nurture student creativity. The authors say that cultivating creative attitudes and practices can be done through a professional framework, such as the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF), introduced in 2006 to improve teaching quality (Advance HE, 2024). The UKPSF, which became The Professional Standards Framework (PSF) in 2023, recognised over 169,000 staff in 100 countries through its Fellowship scheme (Advance

HE, 2023) with educators using it to reflect on their teaching and support student learning. Most British universities also use the scheme as a requirement for academic promotion.

Arguably less conducive to facilitating creativity in higher education, the controversial Higher Education Act 2004 ended fee remission for low-income students, and more than doubled tuition fees to a maximum of three thousand pounds in 2006-07, with new loans launched to cover the cost (UK Parliament, 2010). This financial model, particularly the language of 'fees and loans' applied to a system that is essentially a graduate tax (Kernohan, 2018b), promoted the idea that students were 'customers', rather than learners. In 2005, the first round of the National Student Survey (NSS) began, heightening concerns that higher education was being marketised. However, the NSS does provide creative opportunities for educators. Engaging students through listening events or feed forward sessions (where students look at previous NSS data and provide suggestions) is a proactive approach to developing quality and managing student expectations (Robinson and Sykes, 2014).

In 2010, under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition, the Browne review gave the first indications that STEM subjects were being prioritised. The report recommended that the government could remove funding from non-priority (non-STEM) subjects and its recommendation to remove caps on student numbers caused institutions to become more competitive, further fuelling the marketisation process (Hillman, 2016).

The Conservative's 2015 general election manifesto had a continued focus on literacy and numeracy – and the Education Secretary advised young people against studying the arts and humanities (Hytner, 2017). In 2016, Theresa May's stint as Prime Minister followed the UK's decision to exit the European Union, which adversely affected creative opportunities in higher education: exchanges, collaboration, and partnerships with EU universities become more difficult, for example (Gromek Broc, 2020). May also reinforced a commitment to technical education through 'T-levels' (Tiplady, 2023). Last (2017) describes the creative disciplines as being 'under attack' at this time, with the UK's creative industries tradition, supported by a robust arts education system, in danger of fracturing (Last, 2017). With an 'accelerated move away from creative subjects in state

schools' (Hytner, 2017) entries for GCSEs in arts and creative subjects fell by eight per cent in 2016.

The establishment of the Office for Students (OfS) in 2018 offered some encouragement to creative educators with its focus on non-prescriptive student engagement (Dandridge, 2019). But the 'narrow metrics' the OfS used to evaluate degrees, looking at professional employment rates, for example, was thought to disadvantage creative subjects, which tend to produce freelancers (Brown, 2023).

3.2.4 A creative comeback?

Cutting funding for arts courses by 50 per cent in 2021 sent shockwaves through the creative education community, but it also triggered a concerted pushback. The Creative Education Coalition launched in 2023, publishing an eight-point, creative education manifesto demanding that STEM and the arts and humanities are valued in equal measure and that 'a talent pipeline of creative and cultural arts students into higher education and beyond' is sustained (Wilson, 2023).

After weathering decades of political tension, a British Academy study found that media and communications courses make a vital contribution to the UK's 108-billion-pound creative industries (Weale, 2024). In 2024, under the incoming Labour government, an independent review launched to assess arts and creativity in the education system, and the Department for Education said it would establish a 'broader, richer, cutting-edge curriculum' that improves school standards (Puffett, 2024). With questions looming over the university funding model, staff pensions, student mental health and freedom of speech (Wonkhe, 2024), the government's higher education 'in-tray' did not appear to prioritise creativity courses and pedagogies. Incoming Prime Minister Keir Starmer, however, pledged to use the creative industries as a form of soft power to re-establish Britain's influence on the global stage (Morrison, 2024). To achieve such a feat, investment in creative courses, creative pedagogies and creative culture is required.

3.2.5 Political ripples: creativity on the ground in HE

In turbulent times, educators facilitated creativity against financial, legislative and pedagogic constraints (Grove-White, 2007). Spier (2021) identifies three policy drivers that affect the UK's creative education: graduates entering the creative industries as freelancers may not reach repayment thresholds for student loans; the continued focus on STEM subjects, even though automation could eventually replace traditional roles in STEM-related fields; and investment in further education at the expense of creative courses. Spier warns that disincentives to offer creative subjects impact the cultural industries and put the UK's innovative national advantage at risk.

In such a climate, a culture of risk-taking and rule-breaking is difficult to achieve. Creative university educators must balance the unpredictability of idea generation with the requirements of tradition and established meanings of knowledge and learning (Lund and Arndt, 2019). Thornhill-Miller *et al.* (2023) say that 'future-oriented change and development' may face significant resistance from traditional educational establishments (Thornhill-Miller *et al.*, 2023, pp. 23-24). Given the financial pressures universities face, institutions are risk-averse, which is at odds with the controversial ideas and critical thinking that emerge from a creative culture (Twidale and Nichols, 2013). Creativity and conformity are competing forces affecting higher education at policy and managerial levels. Students can experience academic values as rigid and 'more concerned with producing 'clones' than supporting new ideas' (Oliver *et al.*, 2006, p. 54).

Although universities have an 'obvious fascination' with creativity, it is not included in daily academic discourse (Kleiman, 2008, p. 216). Clegg (2008) says that creative academics must operate within an ambiguous framework, caught between academic rules and conventions, external agencies, conflicting ideologies, and the creative concept of a humanistic education that attempts to free students' minds. Langan (2022) claims there has been a 'fetishisation' of metrics in a competitive higher education sector due to the power of league tables and self-reported student ratings, notably the NSS in England and Wales. Metrics can detract attention from the core business of creative practitioners, to provide rich, meaningful and innovation-driven environments.

Reward systems, particularly summative grades, allow universities to meet performance objectives, standardise curricula and increase recruitment, measuring performance for external audiences, dominating student motivation and driving the culture in contemporary universities (James and Brookfield, 2014; Chamberlin, Yasué and Chiang, 2023). This system may stifle creativity with its focus on convergent thinking (Lohiser and Puccio, 2021). Knesek (2022) says students have become more interested in extrinsic motivators than in learning, 'the true purpose of education'. Knesek says that the current, grades-based paradigm means students focus on 'the possibility of failure' which leads to fear of speaking up, asking questions, and making mistakes. Chamberlin, Yasué and Chiang (2023) say that grades could have negative effects on student wellbeing and learning opportunities, adversely affecting their relationships with faculty. Knesek (2022) believes that most educators do not think the current system works, championing an intrinsic motivation model with 'learning labs' that allow students to become more creative and self-directed. Tackling the thorny issue of creativity and assessment in higher education, Kleiman (2008) discusses non-conformist, highly creative students who struggle with academic regulations and procedures, putting them 'at severe risk of failure' (Kleiman, 2005, p. 1). Kleiman champions a 'negotiated' assessment process for practical work that values creativity but meets the requirements of quality and standards frameworks.

At a fundamental level, creative culture at an institution is a response to the demands of societal change, which require creative innovations at every level (Lund and Arndt, 2019). The political landscape of the early 21st century was not always conducive to creative pedagogy, but a movement among creative higher educators was growing. The next section of this review examines what creative pedagogy looks like in practice.

3.3 Creativity in the classroom: creative culture, people and pedagogy

Educators using creative methods may be encouraged by an institution or department's ethos. Culture, like policy, plays a pivotal role. Practical support, such as resources, training and time, make a creative classroom more viable (Ismayilova and Bolander Laksov, 2022), but what does creative culture look like in higher education? In business, artefacts (from the office layout to the colour of the furniture) may indicate a creative culture, but shared, basic assumptions about creativity – that creativity is a process, involves constantly evolving teams, and that failures are learning opportunities, for example – provide a much stronger indication of creative culture (Burkus, 2014). This is also the case in higher education. Jackson (2015) describes creative learning environments as 'process-rich' with an emphasis on developing students' self-regulation as their confidence and resourcefulness grow. Learning surpasses the pursuit of grades as a motivator. Within a creative culture in higher education, an atmosphere conducive to idea generation is equal to selecting an appropriate teaching technique (Baillie, 2006). Han and Abdrahim (2023) say that creativity in higher education is a social process that interweaves with the surrounding environment, influencing students' and teachers' development. Fostering a culture of curiosity (Dau, 2018) is another important aspect, encouraging students to experiment and make mistakes. Clegg (2008) says we must understand the whole context of the creative process in terms of every psychological, social, political, economic, environmental and aesthetic aspect, but the author questions whether there is intellectual space at university to develop authentic social engagement and to act as a 'midwife' to students' creativity.

Universities can also facilitate a creative environment including partnerships with local businesses and organisations (Clegg, 2008), with plentiful opportunities for networking and collaboration. The creative university 'opens new spaces for itself, whether intellectual, curricula, pedagogical, environmental or reflexive' (Barnett, 2020, p. 16). By taking lessons from the design industry and design education, universities can become a vital part of creative industry (Matheson, 2006). Conceptualising the relationship between education and industry as 'a virtuous cycle' can feed into creative university culture, encouraging industry partners to share opportunities, collaborate with students and

engage in creative workshops and activities. Creativity is seen as an increasingly important graduate attribute (Georgiou *et al.*, 2022), and Thornhill-Miller *et al.* (2023) suggest that a focus on the '4Cs' (creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication) allows educators to meet future employment challenges. The authors do not think it is possible to teach towards one of the 4Cs without involving one or more of the others, and suggest they are assessed together.

Although it appears that creativity can enhance employability, students may not appreciate this during their time at university. Watson (2018) coined the term 'deferred creativity' after investigating the impact of an arts-based learning experience on former education students' professional practice. Two of Watson's key findings were that creative educators need to develop a deeper understanding of their own creativity, and that while creative undergraduate experiences had a positive impact on future professional practice, 'the true value of the creative process was only realised after they had graduated' (Watson, 2018, p. 206).

Nizar and Muhammad (2021) suggest another interesting proposal for creativity in higher education, saying that a new student retention model for academic settings could be based on the interaction between creativity, emotional intelligence and learner autonomy. Taking the profile of contemporary British undergraduate students into account, who may be older, working alongside their studies, and often have caring responsibilities, the authors suggest that the competing commitments of work and family may be countered by a holistic model that increases understanding of human behaviour in academic settings. The authors say that by providing creative ways to do serious tasks and enhance student interactions, focusing on students' emotional intelligence to establish good, healthy relationships, and prioritising functional learner autonomy, educational institutions can improve student retention.

3.3.1 Creative people: the creativity of teachers

There are gaps in the literature regarding how teachers develop their creativity. Han and Abdrahim (2023) suggest that a naturalistic and in-depth qualitative study that examines the process of teachers' everyday creative practice would be useful. The authors' literature review, to assess the role of teachers' creativity in higher education, suggests that creative teaching involves the use of imaginative approaches by teachers to enhance engagement and effectiveness of learning in the classroom. They distinguish 'creative teaching', which focuses on teachers' creative behaviour, from 'teaching for creativity', which develops students' creativity. Both play an essential role in developing creative culture and creative pedagogies.

To facilitate creative culture, Owen (2008) says that academics need their own learning spaces based on 'open space technology', to review their learning, explore problems and find creative solutions. When Fryer (2006) asked National Teaching Fellows for their views on facilitating creativity in higher education, 86 per cent thought that the capacity to be creative prepares students for the wider world; 90 per cent aimed to develop student creativity using a variety of approaches, including stimuli for imaginative thinking. Fryer concluded that the interviewees were 'highly motivated and keen to develop students' creativity' (Fryer, 2006, p. 87). Clegg (2008) suggests that creative academics may need to challenge the dominant ideology of neoliberal marketisation to facilitate critical thinking and 'release' student creativity. He suggests that academics can use their networks, from the university coffee shop to international conferences, engaging in a moral and intellectual discourse to protect the concept of creativity in higher education. An academic department with teachers who work in a collective environment, providing encouragement, collaboration, and support, can enhance creative teaching and help students to succeed (Ismayilova and Bolander Laksov, 2022).

Although creative learning and teaching differ according to academic discipline, there are overarching similarities. Ismayilova and Bolander Laksov (2022) interviewed 14 university teachers across disciplines. Their perception of creative teaching converged around new solutions and ideas to solve problems in challenging situations and delivering their

teaching to engage students in learning. Some agreed that creative teachers could think in a way that leads to innovative and novel outcomes in their teaching.

A small number of studies look at the impact of personality on creative pedagogy. Ismayilova and Bolander Laksov (2022) say that the manifestation of creative teaching *depends* on the teacher's personality. The authors find that the characteristics deemed necessary for creative teaching were problem solving, being a reflective practitioner, and thinking imaginatively. Being less experienced may also result in creative teaching practices. In a study with trainee teachers in creative learning environments, Ayyildiz and Yilmaz (2021) found that creative personality traits (defined as being task-oriented, having internal motivation and self-confidence, and taking risks) directly affect creative thinking dispositions. The authors point out, however, that teachers with creative personality traits will not necessarily develop students' creative thinking; rather, they advise teachers to build and actively engage learners in a creative learning environment. Although creative qualities such as being reflective or imaginative could be considered innate, they can be developed through training, classroom experience and professional development (Ismayilova and Bolander Laksov, 2022).

Creative academics often encounter scepticism. Adult playful learning, for example, helps to liberate ideas, overturn obstacles and find new approaches to persistent challenges, but is often dismissed as 'trivial' (Pelletier and Kneebone, 2019). Students can also be sceptical about new or unfamiliar learning techniques (Hartt and Hosseini, 2019), particularly if they involve risk, trust or experimentation. In higher education, creativity is often equated to innovation, and innovators are perceived as disruptors. Creative practice challenges the traditional educational order, questions knowledge, and changes the status of teachers and lecturers. Creativity can, therefore, present a symbolic threat, becoming stigmatised (Lohiser and Puccio, 2021).

Although creative teachers reap altruistic rewards, many higher educators see that colleagues who spend more time on research and scholarly work enjoy prestigious spoils, such as academic promotion (Ismayilova and Bolander Laksov, 2022). Issues including rigid management structures, assessment strategies and having planning time for

creative activities (Egan *et al.*, 2017; Ismayilova and Bolander Laksov, 2022) can become immovable barriers to creative practice. This creates division among tertiary educators, with some even perceiving creative classrooms as ‘entertainment’ rather than learning spaces (James, 2019).

3.3.2 Creative pedagogies

Given the challenges, and associated stigma, educators who are committed to developing creative pedagogic practice may question how this will manifest in their work, and which educational theories they should use. In a systematic review of creative pedagogies used in schools, Cremin and Chappell (2019) acknowledge that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all creative pedagogy’ (Cremin and Chappell, 2019, p. 300). They categorise creative pedagogies by group, including idea generation, autonomy, playfulness, problem-solving, co-construction and collaboration, and recognise the role of the teacher’s own creativity. Looking at higher education, Robinson, Schaap and Avoseh (2018) say that creative pedagogy in higher education is affected by four themes: administrative impact, praxis and environment, content learning and student independence. The authors recommend that educators who wish to practice creative pedagogies align themselves with universities that make creative pedagogy an institutional goal. Putri, Quinton and Selkrig (2023) present a mandala of creative pedagogies for higher education with similar themes including new ideas, autonomy, teamwork, problem-solving, risk-taking, and reflective actions. The mandala is described by the authors as a framework for analysis and a teaching tool that can accelerate skills acquisition, including global and local knowledge. ‘Creative Teaching’, the first element of the mandala, includes nine features linked with Creative Teaching that ‘express the common lens of academics’ creative approaches in teaching’ (Putri, Quinton and Selkrig, 2023, p. 2082). Four of these features are related to changes in material-economic arrangements; two features are social-political arrangements that promote higher order thinking and analysis; and three features involve changes to the academics’ cultural-discursive arrangements. In the second element of the mandala, ‘Teaching for Creativity’, the authors identify features that support students’

being and becoming with suggested learning outcomes for educators to promote: 'critical thinking, risk-taking, curiosity, self-confidence and persistence, autonomy, creativity, collaboration, innovation, and problem-solving' (Putri, Quinton and Selkrig, 2023, p. 2086). The authors also discuss a theme of 'enhancing resilience' across this element of the mandala. The third and final element, 'Creative Learning', has five features that illustrate the ways that academics stimulate creativity for themselves and their students', achieve deep learning, and facilitate learning as becoming: providing meaningful learning for student needs and interests; giving space for self-initiated learning; offering varied learning activities; reflective learning; and building a connection with lifeworlds or co-correspondence (Putri, Quinton and Selkrig, 2023, p. 2089). The mandala illustrates strategies that may help academics to change and adapt their teaching approaches to promote creativity.

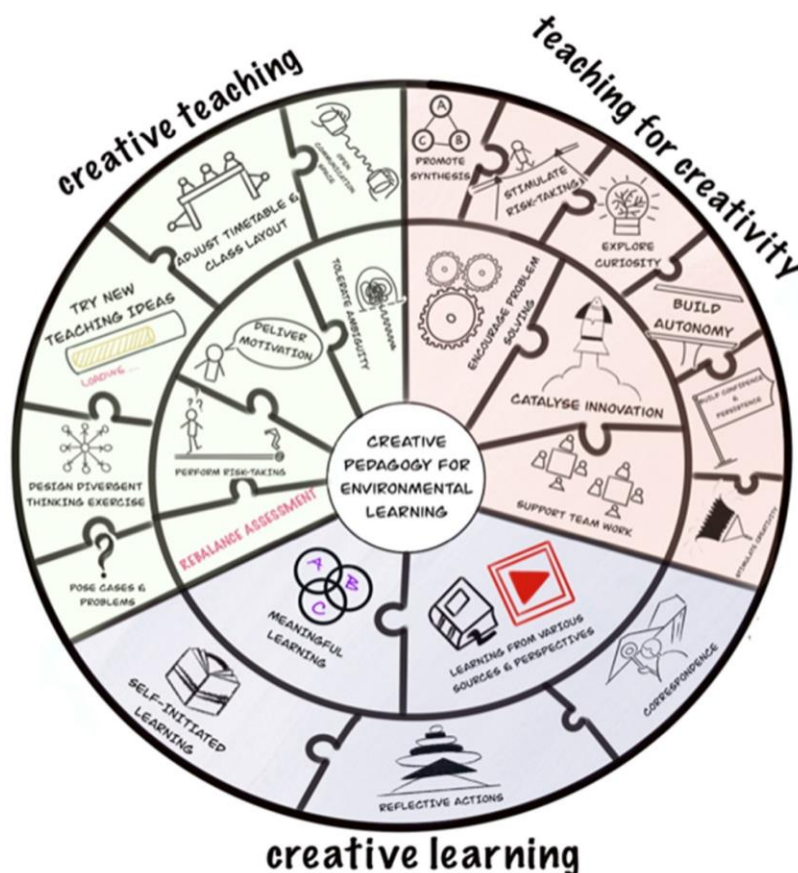


Figure 1. Mandala of creative pedagogy: both an analysis and exploration framework
 Putri, E. I. G. A. P., Quinton, W. H. and Selkrig, M. (2023) 'Reshaping teaching in higher education through a mandala of creative pedagogies', *Teaching in Higher Education*, pp. 1-20. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2023.2193665>

Following the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, Mitchell (2021) says that the pedagogical redesign for creative undergraduate disciplines allows creative educators to actively demonstrate creative ways of working. Schwittay's (2021) critical-creative pedagogy also encourages students to imagine alternative futures and includes experiential, emotive and whole-person learning, practical learning, imagination, and design and arts-based education.

3.3.3 Exploring creative pedagogies

Early 21st-century literature on creative pedagogies suggests that practitioners tend to construct their own approaches, but common, transdisciplinary themes emerge:

- *Collaboration and conversation*
- *Playfulness*
- *Hope, confidence and transformation*
- *Critical thinking and problem solving*
- *Compassion, care and trust*
- *Experiential and practical learning*
- *Reflection and mindfulness*

These themes link to established pedagogies used in higher education. The following descriptions attempt to summarise each approach, using scholarly sources from the decade preceding this thesis, to keep the educational theory and practice relevant to this research. Although each pedagogy has a distinct purpose and style, there are elements of each approach that intersect with the others.

Collaborative pedagogies

There are two main strands of collaborative pedagogy. The first facilitates students' peer-to-peer collaborative learning and includes group working and dialogic learning. Qureshi

et al. (2021) describe collaborative learning in higher education as designing activities and environments that encourage interaction, social presence and student engagement. When collaborative learning takes place, students learn actively, they share ideas, perspectives and opinions, they build powerful concepts and ideas through group discussions and they contribute to their own learning in a way that will benefit their professional lives.

The second strand of collaborative learning considers students as partners in the creation of curriculum. There are many ways students can act as co-creators, including co-assessing work, co-designing assessments, participating in joint research projects, and providing feedback on teaching and educational activities (Bovill, 2020). Lubicz-Nawrocka (2018) suggests that co-creation encourages shared responsibility, respect and trust. Staff and students may see transformational results, with students experiencing a sense of respect and value, and increased confidence. Bovill (2020) argues for a whole-class approach to co-creation, with opportunities made accessible to all students for 'more democratic forms of education' (Bovill, 2020, p. 1034).

Playful pedagogies

Playful pedagogy can speed up the socialisation process and community building, as well as helping students 'use their resourcefulness, imagination and creativity for their personal well-being' (Nerantzi *et al.*, 2021, p. 8). Lubbers *et al.* (2023) propose that adult play and playfulness offer ways of experiencing life motivated by positive emotions, humour, and engagement in activities that promote relationships and positive mental health outcomes. By making learning environments fun and joyful, Leather, Harper and Obee (2021) say that play as pedagogy in higher education is invented by the player, focuses on process not product, and requires active involvement. It is voluntary, experimental, safe and relaxed. Whitton (2022) suggests that playful pedagogy in adult learning may include role play, game-based learning (traditional play), digital play, gamification (the use of game mechanics in non-gaming contexts), and post-digital play,

which could include tactile approaches to learning such as the LEGO® Serious Play® methodology. Buckley (2015) says that LEGO emphasises the inherent playfulness of learning and allows educators to take an interpretative approach by using it to physically represent ideas.

Nerantzi and James (2015) explore the applications of play in a variety of higher education settings. The authors argue that play is a sophisticated way in which humans learn, develop and grow at every age, and that more play is needed to produce ‘thinkers and doers’ who are creative and critical (Nerantzi and James, 2015, p. 5). Leather, Harper and Obee (2021) argue that playful pedagogy can lead to fulfilling university teaching, giving students the opportunity to reclaim their creative, playful selves. The authors also stress that while they may be playful in their practice, they are very serious about their educational intent and purpose.

Transformative pedagogies

Transformative pedagogy, most closely associated with Mezirow (1991), is concerned with change through critical reflection and new experiences. An activist pedagogy, it can empower students to critically examine their existing beliefs, values and knowledge, developing an appreciation for multiple perspectives, and a sense of critical consciousness; transformative pedagogy focuses on the processes of learning, rather than the accumulation of knowledge, and develops graduates who can improvise, adapt, innovate, and be creative (Khedkar and Nair, 2016). A transformative approach involves appreciating the human capacity for change and unlocking transformative potential within the educational environment (Yacek, Rödel and Karcher, 2021). Transformative pedagogy is posited as an alternative to the status quo and is something of a buzzword; Yacek, Rödel and Karcher (2021) question whether the volume of discussion around transformative education makes it rhetorical, becoming a tool for traditional competencies. But when applied with ‘philosophical grounding’, and facilitating the complex phenomenon of self-change, the authors suggest that transformative education challenges the

epistemic boundaries of students' understanding, confronting them with integrity, courage, foresight, and compassion, questioning their values and social responsibility (Yacek, Rödel and Karcher, 2021, pp. 532-533). Showing how creative pedagogies often intersect, Nerantzi *et al.* (2021) say that connections, collaborations and learning communities can provide an effective path towards transformative learning and teaching practices.

Problem-based pedagogies

Problem-based learning typically involves a shift in key dynamics, switching from lecturing to coaching or facilitating and treating students as active problem-solvers, rather than passive learners. It can be used to stimulate curiosity, inquiry, self-directed learning and collaborative learning (Tan, 2021). Problem-orientated or inquiry-based pedagogies have been used in higher education as a strategic response to the demand for innovative, student-centred learning (Acton, 2019). These pedagogies often use complex, real-life problems as a starting point, involving students in a collaborative investigation of a situation with a focus on knowledge development, and often in authentic (e.g. workplace simulation) learning environments. Problem-based learning is a pedagogical approach that can support interdisciplinary learning spaces and help students explore real-world issues that may affect their futures (Jensen, Stentoft and Ravn, 2019). The problems being investigated can be located within an unstable aspect of the world, taking in the views of politicians, experts, scientists, citizens and other professionals. If students are encouraged to frame the problem 'differently', choosing their own theoretical perspectives and investigative methods, the possibility for innovative approaches, imagination and creativity increases (Jensen, Stentoft and Ravn, 2019, p. 17). Through 'possibility thinking', described by Craft (1997) as 'the basis of creativity' (Craft, 1997, p. 8), students can use imagination to navigate a problem, and ask lots of questions, including 'perhaps if' and 'what if' (Craft, 1997, p. 9).

Compassionate pedagogies

Claiming that compassion is vital to human survival, Waddington (2021) says that compassionate pedagogies value systems that teach and research compassion, teach with compassion, and encourage collaboration at all levels. Waddington stresses that everyone learns by developing empathy, compassion, and sharing experiences through interpersonal interactions and narratives (communicating lived and living experience in storied ways), and suggests that compassionate pedagogy may address rising levels of stress and anxiety among academic faculty, as well as students.

Referring to a potentially 'care-ful' and ethical educational future, Campbell, Dyer and Nash (2024) explore care and creativity in higher education, viewing it as a form of resistance. The authors acknowledge that the environment and conditions in the current educational system, rather than the people, leave staff and students feeling 'depleted or dispossessed or isolated' (Campbell, Dyer and Nash, 2024, p. 259). Cultivating care requires recognition, at an institutional level, that collective and collaborative action is needed; the authors say that care can be seen as a political act due to the challenge it presents to the status quo.

Similarly, Anderson *et al.* (2020) argue that teaching in higher education should be recognised as cognitive, emotional and embodied work. The authors encourage educators to see students as more than consumers because students see 'good teachers' as highly influential and inspiring people who care about education, the world and people. The authors' data on 'teaching as care' shows that safe learning spaces may be helpful for everyone because they facilitate the willingness and capacity of all students to take risks. Hamilton and Petty (2023) also advocate for universal compassion in higher education but note that compassionate pedagogy may be particularly helpful in enabling neurodivergent thinkers to flourish 'within and beyond higher education' (Hamilton and Petty, 2023, p. 1). They propose a compassion-informed approach where educators notice distress, listen actively, are curious and empathic, are mindful of implicit biases and barriers, and work with students as partners so they experience belonging. It is worth mentioning that after years of speculation over the links between neurodivergence and

increased levels of creativity, research now supports this concept (Blair, 2022). Therefore, compassionate pedagogies may be particularly relevant and useful for educators who teach creative disciplines, including journalism.

Experiential pedagogies

Experiential pedagogy is learning through experience; in experiential classrooms, students learn by doing and engaging in practical activities (LaCroix, 2024). To improve student engagement, educators have introduced creative, experiential initiatives including community-based learning, study abroad programmes, community immersions, project-based learning, and work-integrated learning experiences (Lovett, 2022).

Proposing a revised version of Kolb's (1984) seminal experiential model, Morris (2019) puts forward five pedagogical actions for contemporary learners: they are involved, active, participants in their learning; knowledge is situated in place and time; learners interact with novel experiences involving risk; learning addresses specific, real-world problems; and critical reflection is a mediator of meaningful learning. In a reflective case study that demonstrates experiential learning for students studying applied creative skills, LaDuca and Ausdenmoore (2022) say that the students learned to work effectively with alumni from their course (acting as 'influencers') and peers from other disciplines to develop a shared learning experience. The authors say that critical thinking, complex problem solving, and collaboration were the primary measures of impact, rather than project deliverables showing, as with all creative pedagogies, that process is paramount.

Reflective pedagogies

Reflective teaching involves the continual re-evaluation and review of educators' practice to enhance student learning experiences, the quality of education, and professional development (Ashwin *et al.*, 2020). It is also a pedagogical tool that encourages students to reflect on their own progress. Critical reflection as a pedagogical strategy in a time of

populist, reactionary discourses can foster the development of students' personal, intellectual and political capacity, enabling students to question their preconceptions and develop awareness of social injustice and power inequities (Morris, C., 2021). Developing their voices can be empowering, particularly for marginalised students, and it allows students to contemplate their own privilege and positionality. This is essential for journalism students who may report on diverse communities they have never encountered. Reflective practice may also be mindful. Brendell and Cornett-Murtada (2019) say that many colleges and universities have embraced mindfulness to promote health and wellness, with enterprising professors integrating contemplative practice.

While no definitive creative pedagogy exists, the methods and practices in this section illustrate the common themes, goals and outcomes that creative pedagogies share. Like Putri, Quinton and Selkrig's (2023) mandala of creative pedagogies, the methodologies explored here facilitate creativity through collaboration, co-creation, interaction, and communication between academics, students and their disciplinary contexts.

3.4 Creativity and journalism education

Having reviewed creativity in higher education, and how creative people, culture and pedagogy manifest in institutions and classrooms, the final section of this literature review summarises the scholarly work on creativity and journalism education. Chan (2022) says that a focus on creativity in this field is lacking but that due to the political environment, journalists' motivations, media professionalism and employability issues, creativity deserves to be better understood in journalism education. Although there is growing interest in creative learning and teaching more broadly across higher education, facilitating a creative culture across journalism departments is not yet commonplace, and the literature in this area is sparse. In thematic analysis of the literature on 21st-century journalism education, Solkin (2022) found three distinct strands of inquiry: the standard model, derived from ideas about professionalism and journalism as a practice in a stable, democratic free market system, recommends refining existing approaches and structures; the reformist model recognises that journalism is under threat and needs to develop, particularly in response to changes in technology and the marketplace; and the third, more radical model, recognises that journalism education operates in diverse ways depending upon context, serving many communities. Creativity in journalism education is not addressed and Solkin notes that the literature he encountered draws heavily on journalism itself for inspiration and theoretical frameworks. Few scholars use educational resources or research. References to professional or experiential learning, building curriculum or continued professional development are rare (Solkin, 2022, pp. 454-455). This gap in the literature is explored through this project's primary research question: what does a creative culture in journalism and journalism education look like and how can it help 21st-century journalists cope with the realities of the profession?

Arguing strongly that creativity is an 'essential' trait of journalists and journalism, Deuze (2019a) says that students, scholars and educators must 'prepare journalists-to-be, not only for the creative work that lies ahead, but also for the kind of creativity necessary to find their own way and voice both within and outside of the industry' (Deuze, 2019a, p. 132). There is evidence that some creative educators are preparing students for industry

by developing creative culture in their classrooms. A summary of these 21st-century examples is included in this section.

3.4.1 Developing journalistic creativity at university

The history of tertiary journalism education in the UK is short, with the UK's first university journalism course proposed in 1908 (Herbert, 2000). In 1919, a Journalism Diploma launched at London University, but without lecturers or journalism teaching. At King's College London in 1935, a full-time director of practical journalism was appointed and curated a liberal, arts-based course. In 1970, the University of Wales launched postgraduate diplomas in print, and later broadcast journalism, with an emphasis on academic journalism studies. By the turn of the century, 21 tertiary institutions in the UK offered undergraduate degrees that included journalism, alongside several postgraduate courses.

21st-century journalism is now a profession that expects its workforce to take part in formal journalism education (Deuze, 2006); given journalism is an increasingly creative industry, how creative are contemporary courses? Departments tend to shape their curricula and content in response to the challenges of the day, such as the latest technology, and prioritise employability outcomes in line with political trends, as explored earlier in this chapter. Whilst these responses may work well in the short term, they do not address the unpredictable and unstable future of the industry, as explored in chapter two. Blom and Davenport (2012) say that sweeping changes to teach multimedia skills and improve digital literacy could become redundant as students become familiar with the hardware and software before entering college. Such strategies may not develop the character and resilience of future journalists, either. As Russial, Laufer and Wasko (2015) suggest, we can only speculate on the future challenges of journalism – but there *will* be challenges. Tumber (2005) argues that the education of journalists matters, but it needs to be in tune with the professional environment we are training students for.

Journalists want to be creative (Witschge, Deuze and Willemsen, 2019), and Fulton and McIntyre (2013) say that perceiving the industry as creative is a major motivator for students who choose journalism courses. Of the journalism students surveyed by Hanusch *et al.* (2016) the opportunity to 'be creative' was the most strongly expressed motivator for studying a journalism degree; similarly, Coleman *et al.* (2018) found that most students choose journalism because they see it as an interesting, creative and altruistic career that speaks to their love of writing. The desire to be creative is mirrored in journalism students' attitudes towards innovation and entrepreneurship in the industry (Singer and Broersma, 2019), although it is important not to conflate entrepreneurship and freelancing with innovation and creativity, as these fields are distinct (Solkin, 2022).

Bradshaw (2020) regards creativity as a 'habit' of successful journalists and teaches students the creativity of ideas (strategies for generating good story ideas), creativity in problem solving (including role-playing some of the most common issues journalists face), and creativity in storytelling (exploring multiple platforms, different formats and new genres). Having reviewed the available literature in this field, however, a progressive and creative approach like Bradshaw's would appear to be the exception. The literature also shows that student journalists express dissatisfaction with courses that are incompatible with contemporary practice and technology (Ercan, 2018) and, as Hanna and Sanders (2007) observe, 'news purists' among journalism educators may be disappointed to learn that individuals who want to specialise in 'soft' journalism fields, including sport and lifestyle, make up a high proportion of UK journalism students. Such fields lend themselves well to creative activities. Galatsopoulou and Kenterelidou (2020), for example, designed an experiential university course in travel journalism and communication to foster student creativity and collaboration. Activities on the course included a world cafe game, role-play, peer-assessed travel photography, and culinary experiences including gastronomic walking tours. These learning strategies, particularly experiential activities and play, encouraged students to engage, collaborate effectively and share knowledge when solving problems.

Not only lifestyle journalism courses can embrace creative pedagogy. Educators who teach traditional and news-focused elements of journalism can play and innovate, too.

Neumark Jones (2012) uses Victorian parlour games to develop flexibility and creativity in grammatical constructions, with students reporting how much they enjoy the confidence-building sessions. Advocating for ‘an education of inquiry’, Mensing (2011) says that journalism education should encourage self-reflection, critical evaluation and productive experimentation, with journalism educators fostering the same spirit of creativity in themselves that they want to see in their students, and industry. With a more holistic and creativity-focused education, journalism graduates could enter the workplace with more transferable skills including investigation, analysis, and communication skills that will help them to become ‘networked journalists’ – journalists might then better engage with the world, putting themselves and society into perspective, and being more curious (Van der Haak, Parks and Castells, 2012).

Creative methods and activities can advance curiosity and engage student journalists with pressing issues, and innovative solutions. In a paper on social media use in higher education (Allen *et al.*, 2012), Caple shares a case study of using Wikis within a media, society and politics course; Adams and Cooper (2022) invite journalism students to turn their final projects into live theatre. If journalism educators are worried that the assessment of creative work is too challenging, there are examples to draw upon. For example, Smith (2017) developed a rubric for a digital portfolio evaluation as a foundation for objectively assessing creative and performance-based work at course or program level (Smith, 2017, p. 34).

Although examples of creative pedagogy in journalism education are limited, creative work may be happening without being documented. Many journalism teachers are practitioners, rather than researchers, and just as the creative nature of journalism practice can be taken for granted, creative pedagogy may be taking place under the radar in journalism departments. At the Association for Journalism Education 2024 conference, themed around ‘transformation’, many creative pedagogical initiatives were presented including empowering journalism students through a conference experience, enhancing employability through student-led assessments and using AI to facilitate experiential learning (Association for Journalism Education, 2024). With such creative approaches in

action, and a limited volume of literature, more research into the creative practice of journalism educators is warranted.

3.4.2 Towards a creative future for journalism education

Deuze (2006) identifies two distinct positions that journalism education can take in society: either journalism schools use a 'follower' approach, where journalism training simply reflects the needs of the profession, or they follow an 'innovator' approach, where journalism training prepares and develops students 'for a changing future rather than a static present' (Deuze, 2006, p. 25). Bromley, Tumber and Zelizer (2001) discuss a zero-sum game of choosing between training reporters (teaching the practical skills required to practice journalism) and educating journalists (taking a more academic and knowledge-based approach). The authors say that the move by some universities to realign journalism education with traditional arts and animation will intensify this debate. Many UK institutions are already taking the leap, placing their journalism departments in schools with broader arts and culture education. At the time of writing this thesis, examples included Arts, Media and Creative Technology (Salford), Journalism, Media and Culture (Cardiff), and the School of Communication and Creativity (City St George's, University of London). BA and MA courses in Journalism also run at the University of Arts London. When there is pressure on universities over student recruitment and employability, linking journalism more explicitly to the creative industries may be a positive step. Analysis from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport shows that the gross value added to the UK economy by the creative industries (which includes film, TV, radio, photography, advertising, marketing and publishing) in 2022 was 126 billion pounds, 12 per cent higher in real terms than in 2019 (Evennett, 2024). In the same year, 2.4 million people were employed in the creative industries. As discussed earlier in this chapter, these statistics suit a neoliberal agenda that tethers creativity to economic outcomes; it also provides creative journalism educators, and their students, with an opportunity to take advantage of the benefits of creative pedagogies and culture, whilst improving employability outcomes. Gillmor (2016) says that traditional journalism jobs are rapidly disappearing

and urges journalism educators to recognise the realities of the 21st century. During the programme admissions phase, Gillmor encourages colleagues to emphasise that journalism courses are great liberal arts programmes and that journalism education is the ideal foundation for many careers, only one of which is journalism. The British Academy's 2024 report on the impact of studying media studies at university found that as well as being highly popular with young people, subjects including journalism support a globally leading cultural sector, address global issues, including the use of AI tools, and support the continued prosperity of the country's creativity (Weale, 2024). Connecting students with alumni in creative ways points to another experiential way of bringing these concepts to life. Hunter and Nel (2011), for example, highlight a workshop-based approach that connects journalism students with journalism graduates in the industry. The authors' workshops are in the form of a Dragon's Den-style entrepreneurial activity grounded in journalism practice, a workshop exploring the role of social media in journalism practice, and a workshop focused on the creative skills and enterprise required to be a successful freelancer. Valencia-Forrester (2020) provides a typology of traditional and increasingly creative approaches to practice-based learning in journalism education, including pop-up newsrooms (temporary, citizen journalism-style mobile news operations run by student journalists), online simulations (digital newsrooms or radio stations), and event-themed, shared spaces where professional journalists, students and educators work together. Such workplace-integrated learning in journalism education can meet industry needs and ensure that 'future journalists have the graduate capabilities necessary for employment in a dynamic media landscape' (Valencia-Forrester, 2020, p. 709).

Emerging areas of journalism also demand creative approaches from educators. Uskali and Ikonen (2020) found that immersive journalism is rarely taught despite new technologies' potential for storytelling. Ideas they discussed with interviewees on teaching immersive journalism relate to 'innovation pedagogy, which emphasizes exploration and risk-taking' (Uskali and Ikonen, 2020, p. 174). Pavlik (2023) urges journalism educators to consider how to incorporate the topic of generative AI in their courses and curricula, train students to use it, and study the threats it poses, including ethical concerns and potential bias. Educators who take a creative approach to this topic may find their students

develop more confidence and understanding of technology, rather than simply fearing it will take their future jobs.

Positioning journalism as a creative subject is not without issues. In the previous chapter, the literature confirms that many journalists reject the 'creative' label. Many journalism educators do so, too, not least due to the stigma attached to creative education following years of political acrimony, and the symbolic threat it can present to the more traditional, knowledge-focused lecturer (Lohiser and Puccio, 2021). Media ethics and law, reporting, multimedia and storytelling will always be core components of journalism education, but once students understand good news judgment, they can adapt their skills to other media; Blom and Davenport (2012) suggest combining journalistic skills with content creation for the most comprehensive education.

Keeble (2007) says that journalism education 'needs to encourage the creative spirit just as practitioners need to acknowledge and further explore its creative possibilities' (Keeble, 2007, p. 2). Given that student experience is a crucial factor in a post-pandemic era, with students struggling to engage with their studies due to competing demands including part-time work, journalism students tend to enjoy the creativity in journalism, which enhances their motivation (Chan, 2022).

3.5 Reflection: creativity from the perspective of a journalism educator

As described in chapter two, as a journalist, I have always considered my practice creative. Similarly, as a journalism educator, I gravitate towards creative pedagogies. When I became a visiting journalism lecturer in 2011, I was surprised to teach in sterile classrooms, more reminiscent of my state comprehensive school than the colourful and stimulating journalism environments I was used to. I was also teaching stressed-out students, juggling their studies with part-time work and motivated mainly by the pursuit of high grades. My instinct was to introduce creativity and playfulness to my practice: I used games, activities, role-play, field trips and creative approaches to assessment. The

feedback I received through module evaluations suggested that the students' experiences were more active, engaging, fun and meaningful, as a result.

I was far from alone in my creative pedagogic endeavours. Over the course of my first decade as a lecturer, I discovered that many colleagues and initiatives supported creative and playful practice in higher education, and a growing number of scholars were engaged in research to support creative learning and teaching, many of them included in this chapter. Anecdotally, I hear fascinating, progressive and innovative ideas from fellow educators, many aligning with the creative pedagogies described here.

Like James (2019), facing suspicion and cynicism from colleagues is something I experience. I have assured many colleagues that when I teach journalism students creatively, I am not (necessarily) engaged in improvisational theatre; when I am teaching creative skills, I am certainly not teaching students how to concoct fake news. I also agree that the tensions created by teaching creatively whilst fulfilling other procedural demands, particularly administrative tasks, can be difficult to navigate. Therefore, I strongly agree that having a collective and supportive academic department is crucial for creativity to flourish (Ismayilova and Bolander Laksov, 2022). In my experience, engaging meaningfully with like-minded colleagues has provided support, encouragement, access to resources, and bountiful ideas for creative pedagogic practice.

Having taught journalism students for 15 years at the time of completing this thesis, my experiences have made me passionate about the benefits of creative pedagogies; this literature review provides evidence that creative pedagogical culture is useful across journalism schools. I propose that educating journalism students creatively *and* teaching towards journalistic creativity, as defined in the next chapter, may contribute in some way to a long-term response that promotes the sustainability of the profession, and of journalism schools.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the evidence that creative disciplines, creative pedagogy, creative learning and creative culture have value and potential in tertiary education. Since the late 1990s, there has been interest in creativity (and some investment) at governmental and institutional levels. However, while there has been recognition that the UK's economy and society will rely increasingly on the creative industries, the rise of neoliberalism in education, the prioritisation of STEM subjects, and the culture of 'student as customer' (Gibbs, 2001; Radice, 2013; Ingleby, 2021; Mintz, 2021) has been counterintuitive, with cuts to public funding, and the creative disciplines 'under attack' (Last, 2017, p. 1).

During the same period, teaching within higher education has been professionalised, with enhanced quality and teacher training across institutions and the introduction of metrics to measure student satisfaction and employability outcomes (Almadani, Reid and Rodrigues, 2011; Langan, 2022). The resulting risk aversion in higher education (Twidale and Nichols, 2013; Barnett, 2020) has created challenges for creative educators, but the literature shows that these colleagues remain committed to developing their students' creativity, providing them with opportunities to design their own learning and reflect creatively on their work, negotiating their own assessment, experimenting through their coursework, and adopting playful learning approaches.

Models for creative pedagogy were explored in this chapter, along with popular methodologies employed in higher education. They share characteristics with creative learning and teaching approaches, namely collaborative, playful, transformative, problem-based, compassionate, experiential and reflective pedagogies. While no universal creative pedagogy exists (Cremin and Chappell, 2019), educators can choose elements of these flexible approaches that best suit their discipline, curriculum and student cohorts.

Finally, this chapter looked at journalism education in the context of creative pedagogy. Although literature is limited, a small body of scholarly work explores whether creative learning and teaching in journalism higher education is in step with students, industry and

the future. The available literature also indicates that journalism students choose their courses motivated by the desire to be creative and to innovate throughout their careers; it is not yet clear from the literature if journalism graduates feel adequately prepared to be creative practitioners after completing a university journalism programme. In the process of this literature review, only a limited number of creative interventions in journalism education were identified, and the available examples tended to rely on the actions and innovations of individuals rather than wider strategic responses across teams or departments.

Deuze (2006) says that journalism education and training have been much debated but rarely researched. The author proposes that any study of journalism education embedded in the curriculum and the mission of a school or programme could potentially yield globally relevant insight. Deuze's conviction is that studying the education of journalists also influences how journalism gets done. Within this thesis, I aim to identify whether a wider cultural approach to creative journalism education can inspire teachers and their students towards meaningful change in terms of their personal development and professional practice. As Deuze suggests, this study could contribute to understanding the impact of creativity in journalism education, and how journalists of the future might flourish.

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The literature reviewed in this thesis, on both journalistic creativity and creative journalism education, indicates that there is space for research that looks at the role university education can play in producing future journalists who are equipped to thrive in a complex workplace, as well as enabling enhanced creative practice in the industry. Aiming to fill the gaps identified in the literature, the original research in this thesis examines how journalistic creativity is relevant to the industry and its future, and whether a culture that embraces these concepts in journalism education can better prepare students for the 21st-century workplace. To enable this research, the next chapter outlines an original theoretical framework and a novel definition of journalistic creativity.

Chapter four: theory

4.1 Introduction: framework and definition

This chapter introduces theoretical and conceptual frameworks for researching creative journalism and journalism education, including a theoretically informed, working definition of creativity in the context of journalism and journalism education.

This project employs an overarching theoretical framework of sociocultural constructivism, largely influenced by the learning theories of Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1996). After discussing the ways in which these broader learning theories frame the primary research question (what does a creative culture in journalism and journalism education look like and how can it help 21st-century journalists cope with the realities of the profession?) this chapter highlights two more models used in the context of this work: Runco and Beghetto's (2019) primary and secondary creativity (PSC), which helps to explore *RQ1* (what is the role and meaning of creativity in contemporary journalism?) and *RQ3* (what are the possibilities and risks of creative culture for journalists and journalism students?); and Tsai's (2015) framework of creative education, which helps to answer *RQ2* (how can we equip student journalists for the future by facilitating a creative pedagogical culture in journalism education?)

Using this theoretical framework, the next part of this chapter proposes a definition of journalistic creativity informed by the literature from creativity scholars and leading psychologists, to further frame this research. Proposing this definition helps to answer research questions across the project, but particularly *RQ1*.

The final section of the chapter includes a short reflection and a conceptual framework that illustrates how the theoretical framework and the definition of creativity provide a schema to investigate the research questions.

4.2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical approach to this project is influenced by the same theories that underpin my pedagogical practice: Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of cognitive development, and Bruner's work on the culture of education (1996).

4.2.1 A sociocultural constructivist framework

Throughout this project, and in my practice as a journalism educator, I assume that learners can be supported to become active participants in the learning process; they are influenced by the people and culture they learn from, and learning with meaning is created through experience in educational and workplace settings. I never assume that the teacher, or institution, is the expert, or the keeper of 'correct' knowledge. I use the core principles of constructivist learning theories, including student-centred learning and active learning. With so much emphasis placed on learning through interaction, discussion and collaboration in higher education in the early 21st century (Holmes, 2019), socio-constructivism became a widely accepted pedagogical approach. UK university students studying journalism are encouraged to build their individual interpretation of the world through group work, seminars and practical assessments. Similarly, in the workplace, journalists learn through their daily experiences of interacting with colleagues, interviewees and audiences. Constructivist learning theories lend themselves particularly well to educational research and practice that recognises the role and importance of critical, creative and innovative problem-solving (Kiesler, 2022), and although it centres on child development, Piaget's (1964) separation of knowledge and learning is relevant to my research and teaching in that I treat creativity as a phenomenon, or process, experienced by students and journalists, rather than a structure of knowledge.

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural constructivist approach is also apt to my practice and research, particularly the importance placed on community and social interaction in the

creation of knowledge and meaning, which is discussed and assumed throughout this project. Journalism students work with and learn from their peers and tutors throughout their courses, just as journalists work within a community of peers, editors, publishers, interviewees and audiences. Vygotsky proposes that culture determines how success is defined. Vygotsky's sociocultural construction of meaning implies that learners and early career professionals require challenge, support in the form of narratives, and social interaction between learner and educator (Kiesler, 2022). These elements could all contribute to understanding and facilitating a creative culture within educational and professional settings.

Bruner's (1996) focus on the culture of education is also highly relevant to my approach to teaching and the framework of this project. As well as preparing learners to live and work within a culture, Bruner views education as a 'major embodiment' of the culture it exists within. The author says that education is not simply about the processing of information, the application of learning theory, or testing knowledge. Rather, in a cyclical process, education fits a culture to the needs of its members and shapes the individual minds of its members to fit the culture. Bruner's work suggests that culture is inherent in 'meaning-making' through encounters with the world in appropriate cultural contexts.

It is culture that provides the tools for organizing and understanding our worlds in communicable ways. The distinctive feature of human evolution is that mind evolved in a fashion that enables human beings to utilize the tools of culture.

(Bruner, 1996, p. 3)

Highlighting the importance of culture to cognitive development, Bruner's work appreciates how humans can make new mental connections to develop original, innovative solutions to problems – an inherently creative process. He also recognises the influence of emotion and feelings within education, in the process of meaning making, the formation of 'selfhood', and individual constructions of reality. In discussing culturalism, Bruner points to education as belonging to the 'continent of culture', and proposes that a

culturalist approach asks what role education serves in the culture and in the lives of those within it; how the placement of education in the culture reflects the distribution of power and status; and what resources and constraints are imposed on the process of education. Crucially, Bruner also recognises that education is 'risky' because it facilitates possibility.

But a failure to equip minds with the skills for understanding and feeling and acting in the cultural world is not simply scoring a pedagogical zero. It risks creating alienation, defiance, and practical incompetence. And all of these undermine the viability of a culture.

(Bruner, 1996, pp. 42-43)

In exploring the overarching research question of this project, Bruner's cultural approach is assumed. Learning and thinking are always situated in a cultural setting, and when examining the culture, the dynamics of power, distinction and rewards are acknowledged. Applying Bruner's theory to its framework, this study looks at the way the culture of journalism education mirrors the culture of the journalism industry (and vice versa), and how the culture of the industry reflects the culture of the society it serves. This study has a particular interest in asking if traditional structures of knowledge, and ways of thinking and being, can be left behind by the evolution of the culture.

In choosing this theoretical framework, Schoen's (2008) work on sociocultural constructivism was helpful. The author recommends sociocultural constructivism as a 'guiding philosophy for educational systems of the future' (Schoen, 2008, p. 26). Regarding sociocultural constructivism as a 'contemporary' conception of constructivism for 21st-century learners, and an 'extension' of social constructivism, the author says that whilst holding the same fundamental assumptions as constructivism, it extends its focus to social and cultural factors that can affect learning. Schoen describes sociocultural constructivists as being 'concerned in not only contextual variables affecting the learning

of individuals; but also those affecting the learning environment' (Schoen, 2008, p. 38) a position that is most pertinent for this project and its research questions.

It was also useful to look at Reusser and Pauli's (2015) work on co-constructivism in educational theory and practice. Although there is no accepted definition of co-construction, Reusser and Pauli point to shared concepts across constructivist theory including social interaction, collaboration, and seeking convergence, synthesis, intersubjectivity, or shared understanding. The authors suggest that co-construction takes place in a social and cultural space, created and shared by a learning community, and then distributed across individuals. Similarly to the constructivist framework applied to this research, Reusser and Pauli draw from Piagetian and Vygotskian perspectives, as well as considering perspectives from situated learning theory and linguistic discourse analysis. The authors highlight examples of co-construction across pedagogical practice including instructional dialogue (teachers leading the conversation) and peer-to-peer conversation in the classroom, collaborative learning (such as negotiation of meaning and reciprocal sense-making), tutoring (providing 1-2-1 support), and scaffolding (helping students make sense of difficult tasks). Through this lens, Reusser and Pauli see learning as a sociocultural interaction with classrooms containing communities engaged in co-constructive learning, an approach I strive for in my pedagogical practice.

It is also important to note that while its ideas are popular and have wide-ranging implications and relevance to 21st century educational policy, constructivism cannot be assumed in higher education. Holmes (2019) points to the fact that many of higher education's tenets do not embrace constructivism in practice; for example, learning outcomes and assessments are largely determined in advance, for whole cohorts of students, by academics, rather than being co-constructed and negotiated by learners. Holmes argues that pre-specified learning 'undermines' constructivist learning. Certainly, in the context of this research project, there are structures, policies and power dynamics (within education and industry) that challenge the notion of creative, student-centred learning and teaching. O'Connor (2022) also warns that there may be a limited interpretation of what constructivism entails for higher educators; focusing too strongly on the social elements of learning can neglect and devalue the epistemic by placing more

emphasis on student interactions than the ways students engage with knowledge. Mindful of the challenges that an overreliance on, or misinterpretation of, constructivist learning theories in higher education can create, this project acknowledges that epistemic approaches to journalism education have great value. Students and early-career journalists can be strongly encouraged to engage with knowledge within a sociocultural constructivist framework.

In summary, by using sociocultural constructivism as an overarching theoretical framework, this study explores what a creative culture in journalism and journalism education looks like, and how it could help 21st-century journalists cope with the realities of the profession, by accepting that:

- *Journalists and journalism students train, learn and develop in their education and career through experience, social interaction and culture;*
- *Journalists and journalism students invent, construct and develop their own knowledge and meaning;*
- *As they discover their own learning and develop their creativity in the context of journalism, their educators and trainers act as facilitators;*
- *Rather than passively learning their profession and conducting their practice in the same way as it has been done before, journalists and journalism students can think critically about their work, take risks, and have the potential to create new ways of thinking and doing in the context of the educational, social and professional culture they live and operate in.*

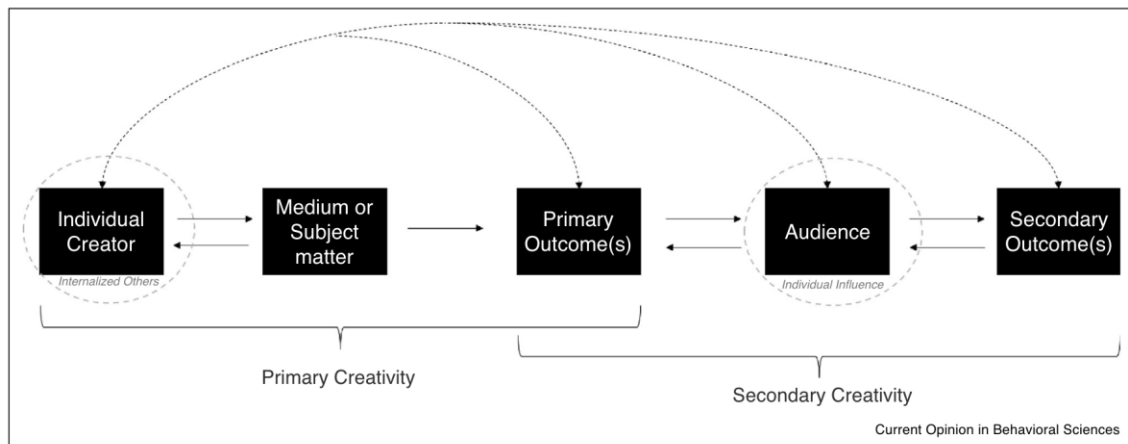
Whilst approaching my pedagogy and research through a sociocultural constructivist lens, I have also applied models aligned to creativity in journalism and journalism education in the theoretical framework for this study.

4.2.2 PSC model

The primary and secondary creativity (PSC) model included in this theoretical framework helps to explore *RQ1* and *RQ3*. Runco and Beghetto's (2019) PSC model describes a dialogue between creator and audience, with both contributing to the creative process; the fact that the audience is included in the PSC model makes it particularly relevant to a scholarly investigation of 21st-century journalistic practice. This framework also helps to avoid any conflation between art and journalism in the context of creativity, feeding into the definition of journalistic creativity in the next section of this chapter.

Runco and Beghetto argue that what counts as creative, and how it should be studied, reveals a dividing line between a personal and social view of creativity. This conceptual divide has become a key focus of debate and discussion by creativity scholars. The authors say that, in the context of creativity research, the divide can result in researchers either focusing solely on the individual at the expense of the social, or concentrating so much on the social that individuals are erased. The authors acknowledge that personal and social understandings of creativity tend to represent extremes, and they identify the need for a model with a 'blended' approach that is much more nuanced.

Figure 1



Primary and secondary creativity (PSC).

Figure 2: Runco and Beghetto's model of primary and secondary creativity
Runco, M. A. and Beghetto, R.A. (2019) 'Primary and secondary creativity', *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, 27, pp. 7-10. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cobeha.2018.08.011>

Runco and Beghetto's integrative PSC framework presents one process to explain both social and personal creativity. The framework shows that they both involve the same process, and that the personal influences the social, and vice versa.

The PSC model recognises that the individual has a socio-developmental history and is immersed in a sociocultural context. Within the parameters of this research into creative journalism and creative journalism education, a journalist is recognised as being immersed in both a vocational and wider social context; while the student journalist, and journalism tutor, are based in both an educational and wider social context, with the influence and engagement of the journalism industry also playing a part. The PSC framework sees creativity as starting with the individual. In the context of this project, this is the journalist or the student journalist. The individual is in dialogue with a medium (a newspaper, news channel or website, for example), or subject matter (journalism education). This dialogue leads to the construction of an original interpretation – this could be the angle a reporter decides to take on a story, a student's understanding of a

journalistic concept, such as becoming a critic, or the different ways in which journalists might report an election for different media platforms.

Within the PSC framework, the original interpretation is the primary creative outcome – and it may or may not take the form of a creative product. This is of critical importance. For the journalist, an original interpretation could lead to a feature or news package being published, but the interpretation could also end at the ideas stage when a journalist might consider a story, and conduct some research, but decide (for myriad reasons) not to pursue it. For the journalism student, the original interpretation could lead to a creative product in the form of a practical piece of journalism for an assessment, or the interpretation could be the learning and exploration of a new journalism theory or concept; whether a creative product is generated or not, this model suggests that primary creativity has taken place. The PSC framework accounts for the fact that personal interpretations are influenced by social and historical factors, but the individual is not necessarily concerned with an external social audience. Again, this is important in the context of this project because it is not concerned with the creative quality of the work generated by journalists or journalism students, but with the creative culture in which they are situated, and its potential for change and development. Put simply, it investigates whether conditions are ripe for primary creativity to take place in industry and in education.

Secondary creativity starts when an external audience enters into dialogue with the primary creativity. Runco and Beghetto say that this dialogue and interpretation involves the same process as primary creativity. The key difference is that the individual creator may no longer be involved. If a journalist publishes a feature, they may have no further influence or engagement with the audience. However, the dialogue *may* continue in a journalistic context, and the PSC framework supports this interaction. For example, the journalist may write a digital story for a newspaper website then engage with audience comments ‘below the line’. Even if the journalist does not engage directly with the audience, the readers’ interpretation of the creative product may affect a journalist’s reputation, and the broader success of their publisher. If a direct dialogue does not take

place, Runco and Beghetto say that it is still possible for the primary creator to have an indirect influence on the audience's experience and interpretation. This is also notable in the context of journalism where an audience is considered of utmost importance. Without an audience, journalism cannot exist. The authors do point out that there are times when taking an audience into account can undermine creativity, giving an example of when an individual feels that being highly original is too risky. In the context of journalism education, students produce work for assessment and their audience could be seen as their tutor, peers and/or external examiner. The tutor engages in the PSC process when they feedback on the work that has been generated, and this dialogue may continue when the student applies the feedback to their next piece of work (secondary outcome).

In this project, the research questions explore both social and personal creativity. In an industry context, this study considers the need and value of creativity, for both the audience (social) and the wellbeing and fulfilment of the journalist (primary). Although it certainly values the artefacts of journalistic creativity, it prioritises the creator, and how their experience of creativity can shape their personal and professional development. This study also explores how a creative culture in journalism education could better prepare an individual to work, develop and thrive when they graduate, and the PSC framework is also relevant here. Whilst the continuous assessment of practical work means that the creation of journalistic products (a broadcast package, audio bulletin or written article, for example) is a necessity for students to pass their course, this project considers the benefits of a creative pedagogical culture where personal (primary) creativity is facilitated and prioritised in order to unlock creative potential. In other words, a creative product does not always have to be generated for creative journalism education to be useful. Learning can take place whether the students are engaged purely in primary creativity, and/or secondary creativity. In this way, the PSC framework can be applied throughout this research into both journalistic creativity and creative journalism education.

4.2.3 Creative education model

To answer *RQ2* Tsai's (2015) model for creative education is applied throughout this project. Informed by much of the same literature on creative pedagogy as reviewed for this thesis, Tsai proposes a theoretical framework for creative education that synthesises existing research on creativity and education whilst facilitating educators to employ varied approaches to help students 'think differently and learn efficiently' (Tsai, 2015, p. 138). Tsai acknowledges that due to the strength of literature supporting the development of creativity in children and adults, effort and funding have increased creativity in policy, curriculum and educational reforms across the world. In adult learning contexts, creative activities have been used to enhance wellbeing, personal growth and development, and successful adaptation to learning environments. Looking at the United Kingdom, Tsai points to three pedagogical approaches recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (1999): creative teaching, teaching creatively, and teaching for creativity. The author also highlights the five key thinking skills that the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority of the Department for Education and Employment (1999) suggests that students should acquire: information processing, reasoning, enquiry, creative thinking, and evaluation skills. Tsai summarises similar trends in Taiwanese and Chinese educational policies.

Distinguishing creative education (creative ways of teaching, thinking and learning) from creativity education, Tsai views creative education from a pedagogical standpoint as a process that harnesses creative methods to promote student learning. However, Tsai also recognises that pedagogical and creativity scholars reach no consensus on the nature of creative education, what it might consist of, and what its role should be. The author argues for a framework synthesising existing research on creativity and education, an alternative creative education model that includes affective, behavioural and cognitive perspectives.

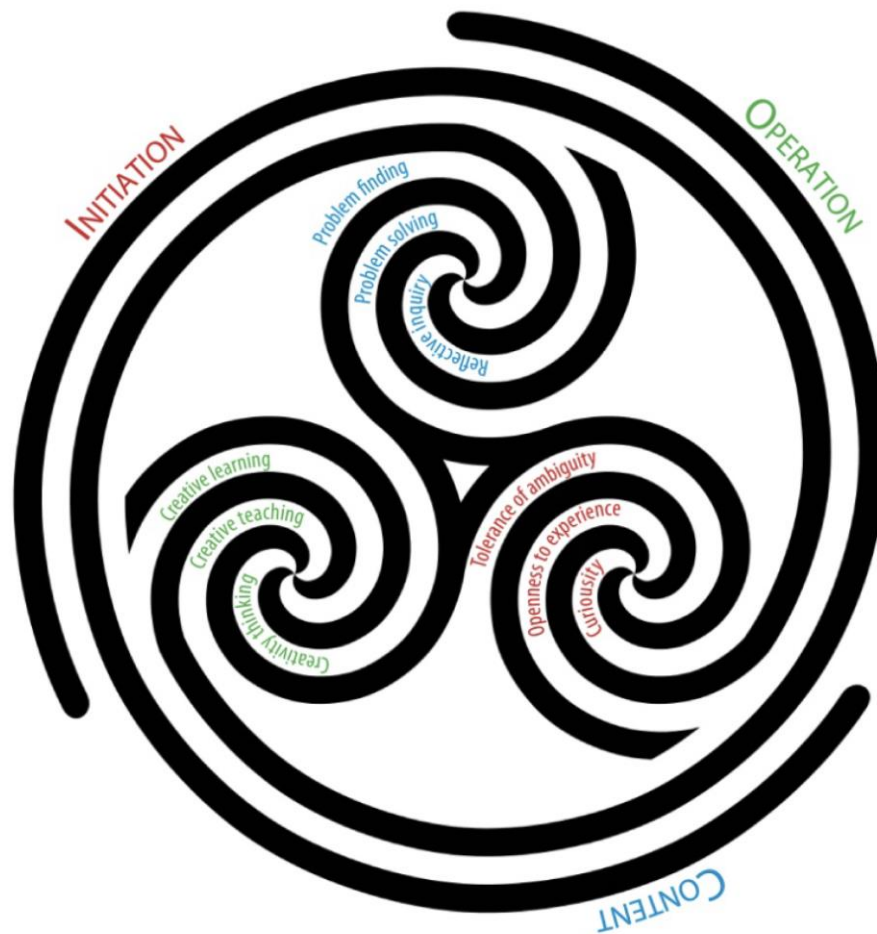


Figure 3: Tsai's model of creative education
 Tsai, K.C. (2015) A framework of creative education', *Education*, 21(1), pp. 137-155.

Tsai's infinity spiral model consists of three dimensions with three components in each: initiation (curiosity, openness to experience and tolerance of ambiguity), operation (creative learning, creative teaching and creativity thinking) and content (problem finding, problem solving and reflective inquiry). The initiation stage is designed to inspire learner interest through exploration and discussion. During the operation stage, creativity is both a process and 'product' (or result) of learning. In the content stage, Tsai suggests three skills that are applicable across disciplines: identifying problems, problem-solving and reflective inquiry.

Tsai's model captures many features of the creative pedagogies and practices discussed in chapter three of this thesis. The initiation phase recognises a longing for learning, the correlation between curiosity, playfulness, and creative production, increasing awareness and consciousness, and an educator's role in cultivating the conditions for possibility thinking. By being open to experience, learners assimilate essential knowledge that they can use to generate ideas. By tolerating ambiguity, a risk-taking attitude can be developed, while learners avoid jumping to conclusions, which enhances the quality of their ideation.

In the operation stage, there is space for exploring the variables that impact creative thinking, and the strategies that can promote it, taking both emotional and cognitive functioning into account. Creative teaching can operate within this model as an imaginative approach to make learning more exciting and effective, and for teaching in a way that develops learners' creative thinking; both approaches empower the learner and facilitate 'open adventures involving information and knowledge' (Tsai, 2015, p. 144). Creative learning puts the learner in the spotlight. It is interactive, experimental and playful. Tsai suggests that learners in this creative space should master analytical thinking, reasoning skills, creative thinking and critical thinking through practice, using artificial problems. They can then apply this mastery in real-life situations.

Finally, in the content stage, problem finding, rooted in originality in creative thinking and discovery-orientated behaviour, is of primary importance. Identifying problems is seen as essential to creative achievement. Idea generation and problem solving are crucial to the creativity agenda. Finally, reflective inquiry runs throughout this stage, encouraging learners to include evaluation continuously during the creative learning process. In Tsai's model, critical and creative thinking are complementary rather than contradictory.

By applying Tsai's model, this research accepts that it is not just the strategies educators employ that affect learners but also their attitudes. It embraces the idea that when students and teachers discover and take on new challenges, they can expand existing knowledge and ways of thinking. Tsai acknowledges that the model is a first step (the complexity of creative education means the model is incomplete), but it provides a highly relevant framework for research that looks at the reality, implications and impact of

creative educational curricula and culture. Tsai recognises that teaching and learning is a 'two-way street' and that teachers have a responsibility to nurture creativity for themselves and their students through their strategies and practice, a core tenet of this research project. Using the framework of Tsai's model, this inquiry seeks to explore how creative pedagogical culture can inspire positive learning experiences and facilitate problem identification, problem-solving and reflective inquiry.

4.2.4 Other theoretical frameworks considered for this research

The investment theory of creativity (Sternberg and Lubart, 1991) was considered for this project as it is highly relevant to journalism education. Describing a decision to buy low and sell high in the world of ideas, Sternberg and Lubart (1991) suggest that great creative contributions are often made in undervalued areas; in the context of UK higher education, this points to the arts, where funding was cut in favour of STEM and science courses (Weale, 2021). These funding cuts come despite the benefits arts and culture bring to the country, not least a 10.8-billion-pound contribution to the UK economy (Centre for Economics and Business Research, 2019). Sternberg (2006) says that creativity is a 'decision' that anyone can make, but people are discouraged by the perception of high costs. Society, however, 'can play a role in the development of creativity by increasing the rewards and decreasing the costs' (Sternberg, 2006, p. 97). Sternberg and Lubart (1991) say that investment in creativity requires intelligence, knowledge, intellectual style, personality, motivation, and environmental context. Alongside using these resources to invest in undervalued ideas as individuals, the authors call for investment in creativity, particularly in education.

The investment theory of creativity would be most useful as a framework for informing, supporting and implementing creative approaches to journalism and journalism education, which could be a goal beyond this research project. The theory concentrates on how people can generate or recognise undervalued ideas; in the context of this research, it would have been limiting in answering core questions about the role and possibilities/risks

of creativity in industry and education. Although investment theory is not included in its theoretical framework, by investigating creativity and journalism education this project could in itself contribute towards the goal of creative investment.

Csikszentmihalyi's (1988) systems model of creativity has been used before by journalism academics. For example, Fulton and McIntyre (2013) used the model for their investigation into the creative process of print journalists. The systems model prioritises social creativity and is better suited to scholars studying journalistic output rather than the culture in journalism industry and education. It suggests that rather than existing in an individual's production process, creativity is systemic and that three major and equally important factors are necessary for creativity to occur:

- *A domain or the structure of knowledge in a particular symbol system (cultural context)*
- *A field or a structured social organisation that understands that body of knowledge and can judge whether an individual contribution is novel and appropriate (social context)*
- *An individual who understands and uses the knowledge in the domain to produce a novel change in the field*

Csikszentmihalyi says that the only way to establish whether or not something is creative is through comparison, evaluation, and interpretation.

It is also worth mentioning Wallas's (1926) four-stage, conceptual model of the creative process, as it informed Csikszentmihalyi's systems model. Wallas attempted to uncover the 'natural' cognitive process of creativity, based on 'grades of consciousness', and identified the four-stage process as preparation (consciously investigating a problem), incubation (unconsciously thinking about the problem), illumination (perhaps best described as a 'lightbulb moment' of focal consciousness) and verification (consciously testing and perhaps prototyping the idea). More recently, Sadler-Smith (2015) highlighted

a fifth dimension of the model – intimation (fringe consciousness) – which Wallas had discussed in his work but did not include as a stage in the model.

Ultimately, for this project, Csikszentmihalyi's systems model does not provide enough scope for researching the primary creativity that takes place within individual and educational contexts, but does not necessarily lead to creative output. Runco and Beghetto's (2019) PSC model has an integrative approach that is better suited to this inquiry.

4.3 Defining creativity in the context of journalism

Defining creativity has challenged even the most eminent writers and thinkers. Most outline a process or way of thinking that produces original artefacts or ideas. But the concept of creativity itself, which, most scholars agree, veers into the territory of intuition, emotion and 'lightbulb moments', is so entwined with personal expression and the unique experience of individuals that it evades neat labels and measurement. Empirically analysing creativity becomes particularly challenging if one believes that it involves some form of sixth sense, not yet scientifically defined. Yet, human beings can be seen as inherently creative in all aspects and stages of their lives, from the playful, imaginative toddler to the adult navigating social relationships (Craft, 2015, p. 153). Creativity is a fundamental experience of the human condition, contributing to our very survival (Puccio, 2017), utilising different levels of consciousness (Wallas, 1926), and helping to promote human potential and wellbeing in the 21st century (Nakano and Wechsler, 2018).

To further frame and inform this research into journalistic creativity, definitions of creativity and the creative process and concepts used by renowned researchers in the field of creativity have been harnessed. The majority are psychologists with mainstream appeal as well as academic credibility, writing during a time period that mirrors an era of change in journalism. This period starts in the mid-20th century with the rise of 'new', contextual

and ‘Gonzo’ journalism, a style of reporting that places the reporter at the centre of the story in a highly personal and participatory way (McNair, 2009; Mosser, 2012; Fink and Schudson, 2014; Osteberg, 2024); it ends in the early 21st century with the advent of ‘clickbait journalism’, stories with sensational headlines that tempt a reader to click on a link, but often take them to misleading articles or even advertising (McNair, 2009; Frampton, 2015; Uskali and Kuutti, 2015; Wall, 2015; Lischka and Garz, 2021). Similarly, scholarly research and writing on creativity in the modern era traces back to the Cold War age of the 1950s (Ryhammar and Brodin, 1999; Sawyer, 2017) until it reached a mainstream audience in the early 2000s, particularly with Sir Ken Robinson’s seminal lecture, *Do Schools Kill Creativity?* (Robinson, 2006), which became one of the most popular TED talks of all time.

4.3.1 Defining creativity

To define creativity for the purpose of this research, I used theories and models that can be applied to journalism and journalism education to ensure the use of the term ‘creativity’ is wholly relevant. Applied throughout this project, the definition attempts to capture the importance of creativity to journalists; the difference between everyday and world-changing creativity; the transformative potential of creativity; the spiritual and intellectual properties of creativity; and the impact creativity has on people and culture. These themes are explored below.

4.3.2 Studying creativity

Given the ‘kaleidoscopic change’ in the world and the passivity of a culture-bound society, Rogers (1954) identifies a ‘desperate social need’ for creative behaviour (Rogers, 1954, p. 249). Rogers says that investigating the process of creativity, the conditions in which the process might occur, and the ways in which creativity can be facilitated, is of great importance.

Guilford (1967) suggests that the 'social consequences' of unlocking the creative abilities of individuals can be enormous. He acknowledges that the study of creativity was once sidelined by psychologists in favour of fundamental 'mental events' including sensation, behaviourism, and perception and memory. Guilford points to the Cold War as a turning point in the study of creativity, as a global contest of intellects required accelerating efforts: 'inventive brains were at a premium, and there were never enough' (Guilford, 1967, p. 6).

Abraham (2022) points to the importance of context when studying creativity. Suggesting that most contemporary academic research is less around creative people and more on how the human mind works when anyone tries to generate something new, Abraham asks to what extent such approaches help us to understand the creative mind and how much 'context' is considered. Abraham argues that considering context can help researchers understand the neural and psychological mechanisms of creativity and apply these mechanisms to any creative act or behaviour. Recognising the context of creative ideation, according to Abraham, is relevant, necessary, and viable when studying human creativity in all its manifestations. In this research project, the context of journalism and journalism education is fundamental, but that is not to say that this research would not be useful or applicable in other industries or educational contexts.

4.3.3 Seminal definitions of creativity

In their paper, 'the standard definition of creativity', Runco and Jaeger (2012) say that creativity requires originality and effectiveness. Although they acknowledge that these concepts were alluded to in the context of creativity before 1900 (even by, they suggest, Shakespeare), the two scholars they recommend citing within a standard definition of creativity both published papers in the 1950s: Barron (1955) and Stein (1953). The authors say that Barron defined originality, suggesting that uncommonness and adaptation to reality were the two required criteria. Stein offered a definition of creativity that discusses novelty, usefulness, social judgment, insight, knowledge, sensitivity to the

environment, problem-solving abilities and 'permeable cognitive structures' (Runco and Jaeger, 2012, p. 95).

The explanation Rogers (1954) outlines in his short, powerful statement on creativity is an enduring definition. Speaking as a scientist, Rogers says there must be something 'observable' attached to creativity, a product of creation. He defines the creative process as the emergence of a novel product from 'the uniqueness of the individual on one hand, and the materials, events, people or circumstances of his life on the other' (Rogers, 1954, p. 350). In other words, the creative process stems from the relationship between an individual, an experience and a medium; in the context of journalism, this might be the relationship between a writer, the story they wish to tell and the words and/or pictures they use to tell it. Rogers points out that this definition does not distinguish the degree of creativity, which is a variable value judgment. As the essence of creativity is its novelty, there may be no standard in existence with which to judge it. Developing ways in which self-evaluation and external assessment can be applied in a consistent way, to both the process and products of creativity, could help to guide and reassure students, practitioners, teachers and editors/publishers. In fact, Guilford (1967) warns that without self-evaluation within the creative process, the result may be unsatisfying.

Arieti's (1976) use of the word 'magic' feeds into the same concept of mystery that Rogers (1954) and de Bono (1977) allude to. A psychiatrist drawing upon clinical and research experience, Arieti attempts to provide a description of what happens in the human mind during the process of creativity. Discussing the individual and the cultivation of creativity, Arieti stresses the importance of flexibility, or being able to reject old forms of thinking, and pursue new directions.

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) defines creativity as 'the cultural equivalent of the process of genetic changes that result in biological evolution' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 7). Apart from a shared need to communicate through our creativity (or to show evidence of discipline) Rogers (1954) says, 'we cannot expect an accurate description of the creative act, for by its very nature it is indescribable' (Rogers, 1954, p. 355). Similarly, Bohm

(1998) finds that creativity is impossible to define in words. Gauntlett (2018) agrees that defining creativity can be a diversionary, frustrating task.

Gauntlett claims that a standard definition of creativity is usually concerned with outcomes: 'things or ideas which haven't been seen before, and which make a difference in the context in which they appear' (Gauntlett, 2018, p. 85). Gauntlett says that such a definition means that creativity cannot simply be identified when it is seen or felt and requires a detailed historical overview of everything that has been created before it. Such parameters mean that subject experts can only confirm creativity. Gauntlett suggests that an everyday, emotion-orientated and process-based description of creativity is needed to understand the contemporary creative world. Creating just because people 'want to' is a more plausible explanation for what creativity is, according to the author. For example, Gauntlett suggests that while an evening of television may provide a polished, professional and imaginative selection of media, amateur videos on YouTube provide a vast range of content for others to experience. This understanding of creativity is particularly relevant to contemporary journalism students who need to harness both the traditional, practical skills of the mainstream media professional, and the agility, courage and artistic freedom of the entrepreneur or enthusiast; as Markham (2022) points out, it was in the field of journalism that the rise of ordinary people making their own media 'really upset the applecart' (Markham, 2022, p. 254), adding a sense of authenticity and realness, as well as creativity, to the news.

Defining creativity as 'the process of having original ideas that have value' (Robinson, 2010, p. 67), Robinson (2017) also presents a key description of 'creative people' that feeds directly into the definition of journalistic creativity proposed in this study. While Robinson recognises that creative achievement is related to the medium, he also argues that it is not enough to just ask people to be creative. To be creative in any field, we need to master the skills required, and we need practice and guidance in these skills. Robinson argues that, to provide an environment that would nurture such practice and realise true creative potential in schools, organisations and communities, we need to release resources, think differently about others, and ourselves and 'give people back to themselves' (Robinson, 2017, p. 240). Robinson's holistic and person-centred

understanding of human creativity in an educational context is crucial to the research within this project.

4.3.4 Everyday creativity and world-changing Creativity

In reframing creativity, Gauntlett (2018) takes the focus away from celebrated outcomes and ‘high-powered’ creativity. Describing creativity as something that is experienced without the need for external expert verification, he offers an everyday, or ‘common sense’, definition of creativity:

Everyday creativity refers to a process which brings together at least one active human mind, and the material or digital world, in the activity of making something which is novel. The activity has not been done in this way by this person (or these people) before. The process may arouse various emotions, such as excitement and frustration, but most especially a feeling of joy. When witnessing and appreciating the output, people may sense the presence of the maker, and recognize those feelings.

(Gauntlett, 2018, p. 87)

Gauntlett’s description of recognition or ‘mirroring’ in this definition is particularly interesting in the context of journalism. Journalists write and create for an audience; they look for the human-interest angle in any story, to evoke emotions including shock, curiosity and empathy from the reader. Whenever they create, journalists actively seek the ‘mirror effect’, deliberately pursuing the reader’s ability to sense the presence of the creator, which could be both the subject of the story and the storyteller in this context. If journalists are creators, as well as communicators, Gauntlett’s message of making, sharing and collaborating, and the value he places on a ‘making and doing’ culture, chimes with the 21st-century landscape that journalists must navigate. Journalists use creativity every day in the pursuit of producing journalism that can change the world.

Arieti (1976) called for creativity to be distinguished from originality, and for creativity itself to be viewed on a spectrum from ‘ordinary creativity’ (the widely accepted concept that every human being is born with the ability to be creative) and ‘great creativity’, which fuels

humanity's greatest achievements and social progress. Arieti also distinguished creativity from spontaneity (or spontaneous thinking, based on past and present experiences) and originality. He disagreed that originality could be classed as the largely positive and productive 'divergent thinking' that Guilford (1967) proposes. Arieti describes original thinking as a broader category that includes divergent and 'completely spontaneous thinking', and claimed that 'the qualities of uniqueness, originality, and divergence are frequently recognised in the thinking of mentally ill persons' (Arieti, 1976, p. 8). Similarly, in his work, Robinson (2010) attempts to separate imagination from creativity.

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) describes the contribution of creative individuals as a link in a chain. He echoes Arieti's (1976) concept of ordinary vs. great creativity, by distinguishing small 'c' creativity (everyday, individual acts that spring from creative thinking) and Creativity (a process that results in a symbolic domain changing in a culture). Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) expand on Csikszentmihalyi's work by proposing a Four C model of creativity, adding the idea of 'mini-c' creativity, which they see as inherent in the learning process, and 'Pro-c', representing professional-level expertise in any creative area. For journalists, any product of journalism that is created and distributed within a society or culture can be considered a 'big C' Creative act. Journalism continually changes the direction of public discourse. Similarly, in Csikszentmihalyi's definition, Creativity changes culture and exists throughout society, not only in the thoughts, actions and products of individuals.

Bohm (1998) debates the difference between the creative genius and the 'ordinary' creative human being. The author argues that the ability to learn something new applies to all human minds and does not depend on special talents or special fields, such as art, music or science; but when it does operate 'there is an undivided and total interest in what one is doing' (Bohm, 1998, p. 6). This hypothesis chimes with Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) concept of the 'flow' of creativity. Craft (2013) adds another dimension, fusing two conceptualisations of everyday creativity: 'humanising creativity' (becoming) and 'wise creativity' (ethics). Highly relevant in the context of journalism, Craft's 'wise humanising creativity' focuses on collective rather than individual action, and being ethically, rather than market driven. Using this form of everyday creativity to harness pluralities,

playfulness and possibilities, 'wise, humanising creativity attends to meaning making and personal journeys within the collective' (Craft, 2013, p. 132).

The discourse around everyday creativity and social creativity is particularly relevant to Runco and Beghetto's (2019) Primary and Secondary Creativity (PSC) model which is concerned with providing an integrative framework that can reconcile the divide between the personal and the social, with one overarching process of creativity to explain both personal and social judgments.

4.3.5 Creativity as change: a transformative process

Robinson (2010) says that imagination may be needed for the process of creativity – but being imaginative is not creative or transformative in itself. Being creative means putting the imagination to work to make something new. Guilford (1967) also refers to the 'mysterious' label of imagination and de Bono (1977) agrees that there is a mercurial sense of talent and intangibility about creativity. The author's concept of 'lateral thinking' was proposed as a way of losing the mysterious aura and being able to see the creative process as a way of using the mind, instead. De Bono provides a step-by-step approach. Lateral thinking is proposed as a deliberate process to facilitate creativity. De Bono says that too many definitions of creativity concentrate on the description of a result, whereas lateral thinking describes a transformative process.

Rogers (1954) also compares the 'mainspring' of creativity to the directional trend of human beings to reach their potentiality. He describes the transformational and fundamental human urge to expand, develop, and mature, with creativity facilitating the process of making new relationships with our environment to be fully ourselves. He describes three conditions that exist within people to allow them to be creative: being open to experience, possessing an internal locus of evaluation, and the ability to play with elements and concepts. Rogers says that if these conditions exist within an individual and can emerge with a sense of psychological safety and freedom, a person may create something constructively.

Summarising the interest in creativity demonstrated by psychologists in the 1950s, Guilford (1967) says that distinguishable abilities believed to be most relevant to creative thinking could be placed into two categories: divergent production abilities and transformation abilities. Where divergent production relies on the media a person is working with, and how talented they are at manipulating that media (for example, how well a journalist can choose and structure words to create a feature), transformation abilities occur when a person can revise, or reinvent, established forms or patterns. The journalist who invents a new *type* of feature – the listicle or infographic, for example – is using their transformation abilities.

Distinguishing lateral thinking from ‘vertical thinking’ (a linear, traditional way of thinking), de Bono (1977) defines lateral thinking as primarily being about generating new ideas. Thinking laterally leads to change and progress, but de Bono stresses that lateral and vertical thinking are complementary. Vertical thinking helps to prove or develop concept patterns; lateral thinking allows us to restructure such patterns (insight) and produce new ones (creativity). The author recognises the need for a continual flow of new ideas in the workplace: ‘new ways of doing things, new ways of looking at things, new ways of organising things, new ways of presenting things, new ideas about ideas’ (de Bono, 1977, p. 53). De Bono sees that vertical thinking could inhibit this flow of ideas, but by using lateral thinking to challenge assumptions, and to act as an ‘attitude’, it could change arrogant and rigid perceptions of the past, providing a deliberate route towards greater human creativity.

It can be argued that the traditional journalism model represents a mode of vertical thinking; stories are written, printed and sold to the public in the form of a newspaper or magazine, or recorded and broadcast on terrestrial radio and TV channels. Digital journalism, however, epitomises lateral thinking, a continual flow of stories, created by journalists, story participants, observers and public commentators, and consumed from a spectrum of multimedia. As de Bono observes, lateral thinking does not embrace chaos at random. Lateral thinking acknowledges the usefulness of order and of pattern but stresses the need for bringing these patterns up to date and making them even more useful. In the contemporary journalism industry, this concept can certainly be recognised.

Gauntlett (2013) believes that technology has disrupted media industry practices, but sees the internet as an enabler of creativity, particularly in the way it allows people across the world to connect, see each other's work, and be inspired. Gauntlett argues that digital has not replaced traditional media, but that content made by enthusiasts and non-professionals has disrupted the media ecosystem, changing the economies of traditional media publications and how they are distributed, changing advertising models, and raising expectations about the interactive nature of media products. Audiences now spend their time differently, with young people spending more time on the internet than watching television. There is also a change in 'psychological orientation' because non-professionals can now make and share their own content, rather than relying on 'elites' to produce it. The traditional mass media outlook has also changed; with so much choice in consumable content, audiences have become fragmented. Gauntlett argues that connection and collaboration have instigated the biggest and most important change. When creative material and ideas are shared, discussed and networked on the internet, the status quo is challenged and transformed. Rather than a case of replacing traditional media, novel ideas and practices spur transformation throughout the environment, changing people into active participants in the media, rather than taking the passive 'watch and listen' approach that, as Gauntlett points out, was only popular for a relatively short period during the 20th century.

Arieti (1976) also supports the theory that creativity leads to transformation, acknowledging that it can be seen as 'discovery', or that an original act or artefact is created from a realm of possibility: 'it evokes emotions and ideas that were latently in us' (Arieti, 1976, p. 406). In describing the creative process, Arieti points to a 'longing or search for a new object or state of experience or existence that is not easily found' (Arieti, 1976, p. 6), but he also claims that creativity imposes restrictions. He says that while creative methods move outside the realm of ordinary thinking, the result must be something that ordinary thinking will eventually be able to understand, accept and appreciate, otherwise the result would be 'bizarre', rather than creative. Markham (2022) echoes this sentiment in the context of creative media content, which 'ends up being plain weird' if the creator thinks too far outside the box (Markham, 2022, p. 285).

Any creative product, Arieti says, must be considered as a 'unity', in itself, and as part of a culture. This certainly holds true in the field of journalism, where creativity can feel restricted because the production of news and features must be based on facts and events – but ordinary thinking can be challenged in the way that journalists choose to tell stories and the models and platforms they use to communicate them, which may eventually become part of journalistic, and social, culture.

Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) concept of 'the flow' of the creative process has been widely accepted by contemporary creative people and acknowledges the transformational potential of creativity. Csikszentmihalyi proposes that while creative people can be very different, they all love what they do. He says that the process of discovery involved when something new is created seems to be one of the most enjoyable activities a human can experience. His nine-point definition of the flow process captures an 'optimal experience' of enjoyment that is an 'almost automatic, effortless, yet highly focused state of consciousness' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 110).

Linking to Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) flow concept, Robinson (2010) says that having a flow experience provides a way to feel deeply connected to our sense of identity. He also claims that creative work reaches into our intuitive and unconscious minds deeply, as well as into our hearts and feelings. Robinson says that 'being creative is about making fresh connections so that we see things in new ways and from different perspectives' (Robinson, 2010, p. 77).

Bohm (1998) says that scientists are seeking something much more significant than pleasure when they become deeply interested in their work. And it is not simply something new and novel they are looking for. Bohm believes that the scientist 'wishes to find in the reality in which he lives a certain oneness and totality, or wholeness, constituting a kind of harmony that is felt to be beautiful' (Bohm, 1998, p. 2). In this respect, Bohm suggests that the creative process – or purpose – across disciplines, including art and science, has much in common. Bohm also describes the creative state of mind as being open to learning what is new, leading to new orders and structures. He stresses that narrow personal aims, such as enjoyment, career advancement or celebrity are petty and may

limit creativity; they do not align with the 'harmony, beauty, and totality' of creation (Bohm, 1998, p. 21).

4.3.6 Creative potential: creativity and intelligence

Miller (2009) defines intelligence quotient (IQ) as a way of quantifying the variability of human intelligence from person to person, measured either with formal IQ tests or assessed through informal conversations and observations with experts. Miller acknowledges that intelligence predicts objective performance and learning ability, and Charlton (2009) goes further by saying that IQ is highly predictive of educational attainment. Charlton argues that because IQ is hereditary, and remains stable throughout an adult lifetime, educational interventions may not have any significant and lasting effect on a person's level of intelligence. Because most students gain admission to university based on exam results, which can be viewed as a form of psychometric testing, and are then assessed continually at university, Charlton sees the current education system as being more about selection than enhancement. The author regards qualifications as a device used to quantify hereditary attributes. Writing from this perspective, Charlton suggests that educational systems should discourage increasing numbers of students from attending university as this may waste their time, and that post-16 formal education should be functional or vocational. Emphasising emotional intelligence and creative potential, rather than focusing on a fixed hereditary intelligence quotient, could make the university experience more fulfilling and useful in terms of employability and personal development. As Robinson (2010) suggests, creativity is 'the strongest example of the dynamic nature of intelligence, and it can call on all areas of our minds and being' (Robinson, 2010, p. 70). Craft (1997) draws on the notion of creativity as 'multiple intelligence' and says that educators should broaden their awareness of the different intelligences that can be fostered, becoming 'more geared towards individuals, their passions and their capabilities' (Craft, 1997, p. 10).

In discussing the relationship between IQ and creative potential, Guilford argues that the cognitive focus of IQ sets 'an upper limit on creative potential' (Guilford, 1967, p. 9). Taking Charlton's (2009) view into account, it is also possible that young people with abundant creative potential, but a lower IQ, may be rejected or overlooked by the educational system; those with a high IQ may be discouraged from exploring other aspects of their potential, including emotional and creative abilities. For Guilford (1967), the urgent educational question is whether 'creative underachievers' can be helped to reach their creative potential in educational settings. Although the author described this question as a great educational challenge for the future, the early 21st-century education system continued to focus on IQ – or a student's academic success – as the main goal of university education. Guilford suggests that research in the field of education and creativity needs to explore the process of creative thinking and the conditions that influence it. The author concludes that creative education could empower 'a self-starting, resourceful and confident person, ready to face personal, interpersonal and other kinds of problems' (Guilford, 1967, p.13).

Zohar and Marshall (2000) highlight the same limitations as Guilford (1967) around IQ and creativity. They propose the concept of SQ, or 'spiritual intelligence', based on the brain's 'third neural system', which they suggest is needed when humans are spontaneous, flexible, or visionary. The authors define IQ as the ability to learn rules and follow them; EQ (emotional intelligence) as the ability to sense a situation and respond to it; SQ, however, 'allows human beings to be creative, to change the rules and to alter situations' (Zohar and Marshall, 2000, p. 5).

4.3.7 Creativity: people and culture

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) explores the creative personality and chooses the word 'complexity' to describe how a creative person is distinguishable from others. Claiming that creative people show tendencies of thought and action, segregated in most people, Csikszentmihalyi compares the creative personality to the colour white, which includes

every hue in the spectrum and brings together an entire range of possibilities. The author describes how a complex personality has the ability 'to move from one extreme to the other as the occasion requires' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 57). Such people can experience extremes, such as aggression and cooperation, with equal intensity, but without inner conflict. Perhaps a complex personality of this nature is advantageous for a contemporary journalist. To succeed as a storyteller in the 21st-century workplace, a journalist calls upon a wide range of personal qualities: they need courage to cover conflict, putting their physical safety at risk; they embrace lifelong learning and mental agility to understand new technology and software in their environment; they need empathy when dealing with sensitive human stories; they need to be assertive when seeking interviews with challenging people, or dealing with difficult editors; and resilience is required when dealing with a suspicious public that mistrusts the media.

Robinson (2017) says that many highly trained people can be skilled without being particularly original. Robinson questions if these people are working in their optimum medium, suggesting that 'facilitating creative development is about finding a balance between exploring new ideas and acquiring the skills to realize them' (Robinson, 2017, p. 138). The tension between constructivist learning and the epistemic is highlighted in the first section of this chapter and is particularly relevant to journalism education. As the literature shows, journalism students need practical skills for industry, but graduates also need to find new ways of thinking and working, and to have the personal qualities needed to withstand the pressures of the job.

Another question for the journalism industry and journalism education is whether they facilitate a creative culture. Arieti (1976) explored the concept of the 'creativogenic' society, a society that enhances creativity. Arieti proposes that creativity occurs when a person lives or works within a creativogenic culture, existing in a 'rapport' with it. The author acknowledges that while some societies enhance creativity, others inhibit it; even if human creativity is a fundamental trait, the culture we live, work and study in can foster and influence our creative personalities. Although he agrees that freedom, and fair and just laws, provide positive economic and psychological conditions, leading to a beneficial environment for creativity, Arieti acknowledges that any society would benefit from these

conditions. Arieti outlines characteristics that cultures could adopt to become specifically creativogenic: the availability of cultural and physical means (free access to archive journalism and journalism technology and materials, for example) and openness to cultural stimuli; an emphasis on becoming, not just being (promoting an awareness that creativity grows and develops, and is not just about instant gratification); access to cultural media for all, without discrimination (making sure that students from all backgrounds have access to the same media, for example); exposure to different and contrasting stimuli (encouraging students to take a global approach to their journalism studies, for example); tolerance and interest in diverging views (creating safe spaces in universities for students to share their lived experiences and opinions); interaction and collaboration; and the promotion of incentives and awards. Although being creative brings a reward in itself, Arieti acknowledges that external incentives strengthen motivation and reinforce creative work. Arieti's creativogenic society can exist in the culture of a journalism workplace, or a journalism school but – to be truly creativogenic – its characteristics must be embedded in an institution or organisation, rather than added in a piecemeal fashion (through token creative activities at university, or ad-hoc creative initiatives in the workplace, for example).

4.3.8 The darker side of creativity

So far, creativity within this discussion is presented as a predominantly positive concept; a human trait enriching lived and psychological experiences, presenting the opportunity for personal and societal improvement, changing lives and the world. Zohar and Marshall's (2000) work even suggests a spiritual dimension that chimes with eastern religious philosophy and practice. This focus on creativity and 'humanism' corresponds with themes of wellbeing and purpose that are common in 21st-century schools and workplaces in the west. Wellbeing became a particular buzzword in universities, where a sense of crisis around student mental health, particularly after the Covid-19 pandemic, led to a heightened focus on student experience, in both the university environment generally, and embedded in the curriculum (Upsher *et al.*, 2022). If creativity can give an

individual a greater sense of purpose and wellbeing, it could be crucial to educational models that aim to improve and support student success.

There is another aspect of creativity that deserves attention, however. Cropley (2010) agrees that creativity often leads to certain advantages, but he also explores the darker side of creative output and behaviour, such as advertising unhealthy products, acts of terrorism, gaining unfair advantages at work, or developing weapons of mass destruction.

Cropley also suggests that the creative process itself can be problematic. Divergent thinking, Cropley suggests, can automatically lead to disruption, introducing intolerable levels of uncertainty. Highly creative individuals may be too divergent to fit into society. Like Arieti (1976), Cropley reminds us that cognitive and mood disturbance are linked to qualities associated with creative thinking.

Cropley says that the essence of creativity means going against the crowd and that this process can go awry, becoming pathological. While Cropley suggests that creativity with morality is helpful to combat its darker side, he also says that 'the moral goodness or evil of effective novelty is not a clear-cut matter' (Cropley, 2010, p. 10). With the journalism industry perceived to be a precarious place for job security, an individual's ability to fit in and be compliant (by following direct orders from an editor or publisher, completing death knocks, or winning a place at competitive press junkets, for example) can be as much of an asset as their ability to think in divergent ways. In exploring the possibilities of a creative culture when educating future journalists, it is also necessary to be realistic about the limits on creativity, particularly in the traditional journalism workplace, including national newspapers and terrestrial broadcasters. Considering Cropley's discussion of negative creativity, it is apt to promote positive moral creativity in the context of journalism and journalism education, and when working with the concept of creativity, its aims and outcomes should always be interrogated.

McRobbie (2016) reinforces the need to interrogate the cultural and economic contexts in which creativity is promoted in education and industry. Presented as a liberating and empowering force, packaged in the 21st-century parlance of 'self-discovery' and 'self-

care', McRobbie argues that creativity has become a disciplinary ideal under neoliberal capitalism, placing responsibility for success and failure on the individual and removing demands for welfare rights and social protection from the discourse. The author describes how precarity, semi-employment, and under-employment are masked by the tantalising language of passion and autonomy. Insecurity is 'seen as part of the adventure' (McRobbie, 2016, p15). In this sense, creativity becomes a conduit for intensified economic pressure and instability under the guise of increasingly de-politicised creative freedom.

We could say that contemporary neoliberal values seek to extol the importance of entrepreneurial activities in the cultural and creative sector as a means of re-stratifying sectors of the educated middle classes so that this group are weaned off reliance on the public sector, which used to provide a 'job for life', while also seeing their seeming privileges maintained through the idea of pleasurable or self-expressive work, even when this entails a shift to dependency on over-stretched family economies as part of the new rhetoric of human capital.

(McRobbie, 2016, pp. 161-162)

McRobbie's critique is particularly relevant in the context of journalism education and employment where, as described in chapter two, young people are encouraged to be entrepreneurial and innovative while working under insecure, poorly paid, and competitive conditions, even expected to juggle unpaid internships (Bell, 2023) and freelance work with full-time education and zero-hour contracts (Lancaster University, 2024). McRobbie's work reinforces the need to examine who benefits from a renewed focus on creativity in education and the workplace, and at what cost, and the importance of ensuring 'a connectedness in the process of becoming creative' (McRobbie, 2016, p16).

4.3.9 A novel definition of journalistic creativity

After reviewing creative process, purpose and product and the creative personality within the theoretical framework adopted for this project, I can now propose the following, novel definition of journalistic creativity:

Creativity in the context of journalism and journalism education is mastering the skills required to be a journalist whilst being open to new experiences and fresh connections; challenging established rules to explore new ways of thinking, acting, and doing, making a difference to ourselves and others.

Journalists can use – and feel – the process of everyday, personal creativity as a means of ideation and communication, whilst working on social and potentially transformative Creative output that connects with an audience and mirrors human experience in new ways and from different perspectives. Journalists engage in primary creativity when they generate ideas for stories and storytelling, and secondary Creativity, when an audience consumes and interprets their observable, original products. When journalists engage in both personal creativity and social Creativity, they experience a sense of flow and enjoyment.

Journalistic creativity, when used in a context of positive creative morality and social and economic connectedness, can encourage resourcefulness, confidence, resilience, flexibility, and spontaneity, pushing individuals and the industry in new directions.

By making investments in original ideas, and encouraging a creative journalistic culture, media companies and educational institutions can inspire individual and societal transformation.

4.4 Reflection and conceptual framework

The sociocultural constructivist approach to pedagogy in higher education and industry that underpins this research into journalistic creativity and creative journalism education matches my experience as a journalist and journalism teacher. My journalism crosses many subjects and mediums, and Runco and Beghetto's (2019) PSC model is particularly resonant because it recognises the connection between creator and audience. As a practitioner of journalism, while the act of primary creativity is personally rewarding and stimulating, creating a dialogue with an audience is critical. As a journalist, my primary motivation is to communicate stories to others, to raise awareness of an issue and create change. I also agree that creating content with an audience in mind (often the historic audience expectations that editors and publishers are wedded to) can also constrain creativity.

My pedagogical practice embraces active, student-centred learning, interaction, discussion and collaboration, including the co-construction of curriculum. I apply Tsai's (2015) model of creative education in my courses and classes, particularly in creating challenges that I can tackle alongside my students to develop new ways of thinking and learning about the practice of journalism.

The definition of journalistic creativity presented in this chapter is informed by the literature, but I also sense-checked its development using my own experience as a journalist and educator. It captures my understanding of journalistic creativity in practice, professionally and pedagogically. I also explored the meaning, importance, possibilities and risks of creativity with my research participants in a concise, transparent way through sharing and discussing this definition, and they suggested, and helped to shape, a student-facing version of the definition (see section 9.4.1) – an example of how the participants became co-researchers (Janesick, 2001). As there is no broadly agreed definition of creativity in the context of journalism, I hope the definitions proposed in this thesis will prove useful beyond this project. In addition to sharing the student-friendly version in my own seminars and workshops, I would like to share the definition with colleagues more widely across industry and education.

With the foundational theory of this project outlined, and a working definition of creativity in the context of journalism proposed, I can now present a conceptual framework for this thesis:

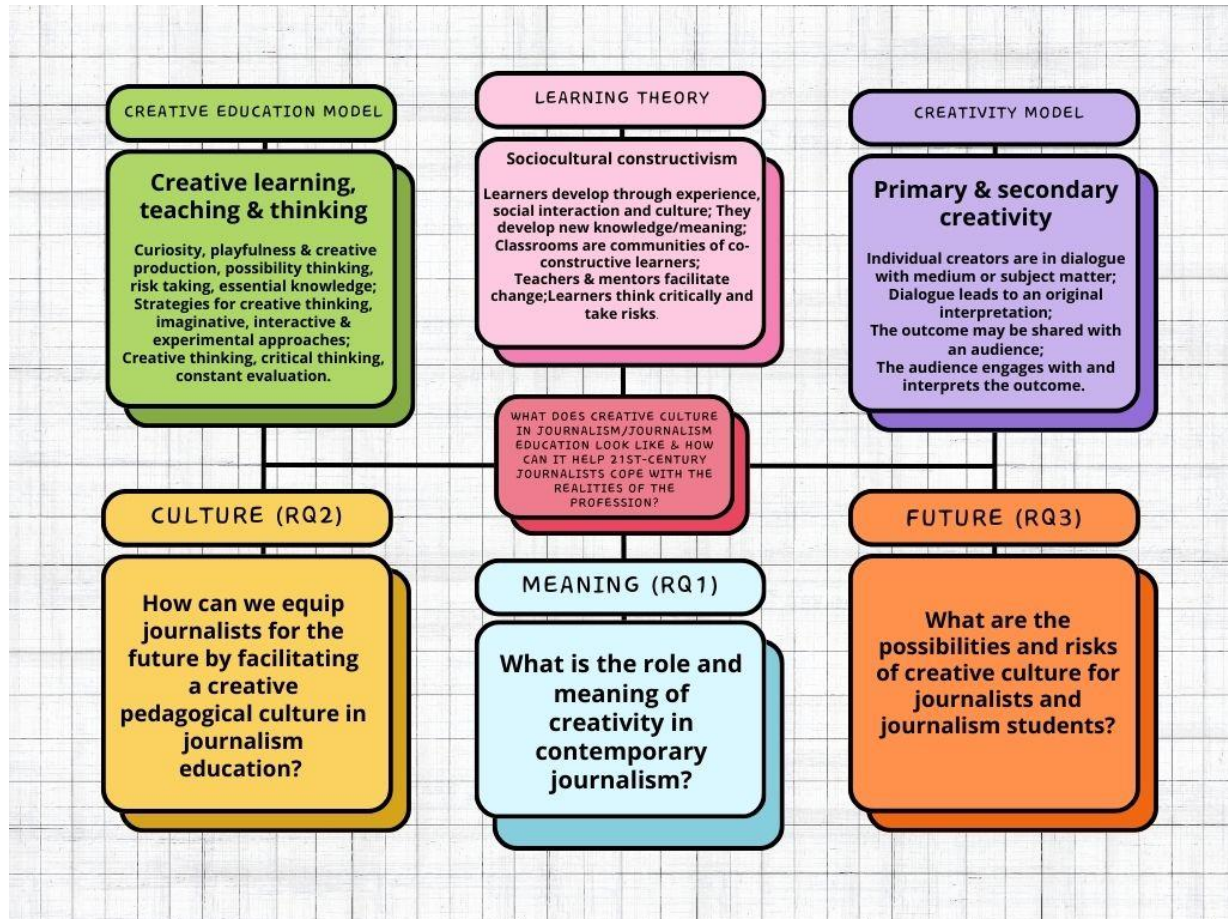


Figure 4: A conceptual framework for exploring journalistic creativity

The conceptual framework shows how the major theory of sociocultural constructivism, and the two theoretical models – Tsai’s (2015) creative education model and Runco and Beghetto’s (2019) primary and secondary (PSC) model of creativity – alongside the definition of journalistic creativity presented in this chapter, support and contextualise the primary problem explored by this project (shown in the centre of the framework) and the three research questions.

In the framework above, the theory is summarised in the context of the project and linked directly to the research question it is most closely related to, but the theory, models and definition are relevant to all aspects of the project.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter detailed the theoretical framework for this project. The overarching framework of sociocultural constructivism outlined here is influenced by Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1996), and it accepts that journalists and journalism students train, learn and develop through experience, social interaction and culture; invent, construct and develop knowledge and meaning; discover learning and develop their journalistic creativity, facilitated by their educators and editors; and that they think critically about their work, take risks, and have the potential to create new ways of thinking and doing.

The framework incorporates Runco and Beghetto's (2019) integrative primary and secondary creativity model, which explains personal and social creativity as happening within the same process, with individual creative acts, creative artefacts and audiences influencing and interacting with each other, and Tsai's (2015) model of creative education, which encompasses an initiation stage, including curiosity and openness, an operation stage that involves creative learning, teaching and thinking, and a content stage for problem finding/solving and reflective inquiry. Tsai's model is particularly relevant for a theoretical framework that supports an inquiry into the implications and impact of creative educational curricula and culture.

The definition of creativity in the context of journalism proposed in this chapter draws upon the work of prominent social psychologists from the mid-20th to the early 21st century, with theories and models included that relate to journalism and journalism education to ensure the relevance of the definition to the topic of this study. As well as drawing from seminal interpretations of creativity, this original definition takes in everyday creativity and world-changing Creativity, creativity as a transformative process, creativity

and intelligence, creative people and culture, and it also acknowledges the darker side of creativity.

By proposing an original definition of journalistic creativity that intersects with the theoretical framework, the research questions in this project could be clarified, and creativity could be explored with research participants transparently. The resulting conceptual framework, shared in the reflective section above (section 4.4), provides a theory for how students and young professionals learn and, supported by the literature review in chapters two and three, defines what creative journalism and creative education means, and how it operates. Supported by the theoretical framework described in this chapter, chapter five details the project's research methodology, including an interpretivist research paradigm, qualitative approach and phenomenological research design that work within the conceptual framework.

Chapter five: methodology

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a theoretical framework for this thesis, including a definition of creativity in journalism. Using sociocultural constructivism, Tsai's (2015) creative education model and Runco and Beghetto's (2019) primary and secondary (PSC) model of creativity, the aim of this project, to explore what a creative culture in journalism and journalism education looks like and how it can help 21st-century journalists cope with the realities of the profession, was clarified and situated within the overarching theory and concepts. The three research questions below are shaped by the underlying ontological assumptions, established through the literature review and theoretical framework, that the journalism industry and journalists are inherently creative and that learners develop through experience, social interaction and culture:

- *RQ1: What is the role and meaning of creativity in contemporary journalism?*
- *RQ2: How can we equip journalists for the future by facilitating a creative pedagogical culture in journalism education?*
- *RQ3: What are the possibilities and risks of creative culture for journalists and journalism students?*

To answer these questions, the empirical research undertaken for this project included two stages of data collection: in the first stage, early career journalists shared their perceptions and experiences of creativity in education and industry through semi-structured interviews and an innovative, online *Future Journalists* activity, designed specifically for this project; in the second (follow-up) stage of the inquiry, three focus groups took place with current journalism students, journalism educators and senior journalists to discuss the results from the first stage of research, a process inspired by the Delphi method (Dalkey and Helmer, 1963).

In this chapter, the methodology behind the research process is explained, detailing its interpretivist philosophy, inductive approach and phenomenological, practice-led strategy,

as well as the time horizon, sampling and ethical considerations. The data collection process is then explained in detail, including the benefits and limitations of each method, before the thematic approach to data analysis is outlined.

The methodological limitations of the overall study are discussed in section 5.5 before a short, reflective section touches on my role in becoming a creative researcher. The conclusion includes a methodological map summarising the choices made for this project's empirical field research.

5.2 Research philosophy, approach and strategy

This section outlines the methodological approach for studying creative culture in journalism and journalism education, including its research philosophy and strategy, its time horizon and sampling process.

5.2.1 Interpretivist research philosophy

The research philosophy for this project guides how its data is gathered, analysed and used. Given the theoretical framework outlined in chapter four, and the creative topic under investigation, the paradigm used for this project is interpretivist.

An interpretivist research philosophy accepts that human experience shapes social reality and society, so it is compatible with research on human behaviour in the context of sociocultural issues (Pervin and Mokhtar, 2022). Interpretive research aims to understand individual interpretations of social phenomena, rather than trying to discover universal, context and value-free knowledge and truth (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016). Interpretivist philosophy accepts that if research is trustworthy, if it reflects and resonates with participants, and if it is useful and adheres to quality criteria, a single case study with a small number of participants is as worthy of exploration and scrutiny as a large-scale study (Rapley, 2017). In this project, an interpretivist paradigm scaffolded an investigation

into how early career journalists perceive, value and interact with creativity and how they reflect on their journalism education in the context of creativity. Like Rapley's work, small sample sizes and personal interpretation underpin this socially constructed methodology, recognising the subjectivity and multi-realities of its research participants.

5.2.2 Inductive (qualitative) approach

In developing a detailed understanding of the meaning of creativity in contemporary journalism and its role in journalism education, this project used an inductive (qualitative) approach to uncover patterns in the data under broad themes to understand the phenomenon (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016). A qualitative research type is appropriate because the analysis explores and generalises the results beyond the direct interviews and observations that took place (Woo, O'Boyle and Spector, 2017).

Denzin and Lincoln (2013) describe qualitative research as a field of inquiry in its own right, crossing disciplinary fields and subjects. The authors' definition, an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world, is accepted in this project. Allowing for the studied use of materials, including interviews and personal experience, qualitative research deploys a wide range of interpretive practices to understand an issue, and more than one is usually used in a single study, as is the case for this project. Qualitative research works within the context of human experience. It recognises that meaning is constructed based on people's understanding of their worlds (Bhattacharya, 2017) and that there are no universal truths or categories for human experience (Pilarska, 2021). Bhattacharya (2017) links qualitative research with the study of culture, which is particularly relevant to this project. Understanding culture within a group involves more than ethnicity or social class: it encompasses shared values, beliefs, rituals, language, and clothing. This study of creative culture in the journalism industry and journalism education includes these elements.

Given the nature of this inquiry, its qualitative methodology drew inspiration from creative qualitative research approaches, methods and data analysis. The methodology includes

creative, mixed data collection methods, with a particularly innovative and unique online activity, and a creative research strategy that blends phenomenology with practice-led research, placing me, as an insider (teacher and journalist) researcher, at the core of the research, but also engaging the participants with practice-led research activities.

The story told in this thesis, and the words I have chosen to tell it, tapping, intuitively and creatively, into over 25 years' experience as a professional writer, are paramount throughout (Janesick, 2001). Meador, Hunsaker and Kearney (1999) write that the evolution of creativity research demands techniques that broaden our perspectives. Researchers must 'take license to utilize all data collection options available and rely on their own creativity in information gathering' (Meador, Hunsaker and Kearney, 1999, p. 257). Within this project, I have applied my creativity in the design of each data collection method, using my journalistic creativity (as defined in chapter four) to make the semi-structured interviews, online activity and focus groups look and feel practice-driven and professional, helping the research participants to experience an environment that is both familiar and creatively inspiring. By approaching this research in two stages, and harnessing the Delphi method (Dalkey and Helmer, 1963), I used a creative research strategy that facilitates the inclusion of stakeholders' (journalism students, journalism educators and senior journalists) in the research process, meaning that their opinions and ideas can be considered in the context of the research questions, discussion and recommendations.

Deacon (2000) agrees that there is space for innovation and creativity in the research process. Actively creative methods can be used to collect and analyse qualitative data without diminishing their rigour or systematic approach. With a sentiment that seems highly relevant to this project, Deacon says that the creativity of qualitative researchers can make research 'more engaging and exciting for everyone involved', and 'place high value on the stories and feedback of research participants' (Deacon, 2000, p. 1). I designed each data collection method in this project with these goals in mind, striving to reach beyond traditional methods, such as surveys, structured interviews and questionnaires, to create spaces of collaboration (online semi-structured interviews), imagination (online *Future Journalists* activity) and feedback/feedforward (focus groups).

The methodology of this project flows logically, but it also tried to reflect the issues and values of creativity in journalism and journalism education, using ‘multi-dimensional methods’ to study a multi-dimensional, living system and build the trustworthiness of the research (Deacon, 2000). Konecki (2019) defines a creative qualitative research approach that involves ‘creative thinking’, a detailed description of the researched phenomenon, an interpretation in context and ‘individual experiences of phenomenon by individuals’ defined at a group level (Konecki, 2019, p. 9). The author insists that what is conventional is not creative in the research context and that research questions should be answered in the most versatile and unconventional ways. Using an innovative, visually driven and digital data collection method, and including a second stage of research where stakeholders contribute to the knowledge, evidences the versatility of this project’s methodology, and its unconventional nature. I was also encouraged by Konecki’s advice that creative researchers should use phenomenological and contemplative approaches consciously to promote creativity. This advice links directly to the phenomenological, practice-led strategy outlined in the next section.

This inquiry into creativity in journalism and journalism education strives to take a creative qualitative approach. I treated the participants in both stages of data collection as co-researchers (Janesick, 2001) who unlock new ways of looking at the research questions throughout the process.

5.2.3 Phenomenological, practice-led strategy

In line with the research philosophy and approach detailed in the sections above, this project used a phenomenological, practice-led strategy. Phenomenology allows researchers to examine human experiences through the descriptions provided by research participants (Flick, 2007) – in this case, creativity from the perspective of journalists, journalism educators and journalism students – with the phenomenological goal of describing the meaning that creative experiences have for the subjects. As with most phenomenological studies the data collection included interviews, guided writing,

and other forms of media (Burns *et al.*, 2022), with respondents asked to describe their experiences as they perceive them (Flick, 2007). The phenomenological strategy of this study also facilitated thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), as described in section 5.4.

Phenomenology assumes a degree of intersubjectivity within groups and helps to develop an understanding of complex issues that are not immediately obvious in participant responses (Goulding, 2005). As phenomenology demands reflection as an integral part of the process, it is particularly well suited to the approach of this project, which includes continual reflexivity. As with all phenomenological research, this project does not make specific, standardised recommendations for practice (Burns *et al.*, 2022) but offers a detailed discussion of creativity in industry and journalism education and provides overarching recommendations for practitioners, rooted in the data.

Due to the topic, and my role as a practitioner in the field of research, the strategy used in this process combines phenomenology with an innovative approach led by practice. Practice-led research, a creative arts methodology, usually involves practice that leads to research insight (Smith and Dean, 2009). Researchers who wish to incorporate their creative practice within a study also use it (McNamara, 2012). Foregrounding practice as the locus of research activities, the researcher is deeply embedded in the research, with knowledge production occurring through the generation of artefacts, processes, and techniques (Hamilton and Hansen, 2024).

Smith and Dean (2009) suggest that practice-led research, like any creative endeavour, must be 'open to transformation' (Smith and Dean, 2009, p. 23). In the context of this study, it supported the evolution and creativity of the research process. Hamilton and Hansen (2024), who write about practice-led research in the higher education environment, suggest that this agile, dynamic and highly reflexive methodology 'cultivates a practice of openness that prioritises student success' (Hamilton and Hansen, 2024, p. 5). The authors say that as well as including symbolic forms, other than words, practice-led research follows 'the messiness of practice' with the methods and languages of practice becoming the languages and methods of research (Hamilton and Hansen, 2024,

p. 10). The authors also add that practice-led research could be used with other research approaches, as with this methodology.

In this study, as detailed in the sections below, the nature of the data collection (semi-structured interviews, online *Future Journalists* activity and focus groups) is all practice-led, immersing participants in situations, conversations, environments and activities that were designed to replicate their experiences of work and education, and to stimulate their creative practice. Elements of my own creative practice, as an interviewer, writer and teacher, are also embedded in the tools and techniques engaged for this inquiry.

5.2.4 Cross-sectional time horizon

Taking place over 18 months, the field research in this study had the three distinct characteristics of cross-sectional research: its observations refer to one point in time; there is a focus on existing differences rather than change following an intervention; and participant groups were selected based on existing differences (early career journalists, current students, journalism educators and senior journalists) rather than random allocation (Hunziker and Blankenagel, 2024).

Participants took part in semi-structured 1-2-1 interviews on Zoom between January 2023 and September 2023. During the same timeframe, another small, selected group of individuals were invited to participate in a *Future Journalists* activity online. This timeline was dictated by logistical reasons, particularly the part-time nature of this study, rather than being designed as a longitudinal study. Individuals were only involved in the research process on a one-off basis, at one point in time.

Similarly, when the focus groups took place over spring and summer 2024, with a different group of research participants, this was to allow time for the results to be processed and summarised, rather than observing any changes over time.

A cross-sectional design worked well for this study as it was time-efficient for the research participants. It also allows for every research question to be explored in depth, using

mixed data collection methods. As Spector (2019) writes, cross-sectional design is of value when the underlying processes being studied have already occurred (in this case, early career journalists, students, educators and senior journalists reflecting on their experiences of creativity in education and industry) and ‘the final state of the system’ is being studied (Spector, 2019, p. 130). Spector also says that ‘retrospective event history’, where participants are asked to recall specific events, including participants’ explanations and interpretations, is a cross-sectional technique that can be applied to qualitative research methods including focus groups, interviews and surveys (Spector, 2019, p. 131).

5.2.5 Sampling

For this qualitative research project, only the experiences, perceptions and opinions of journalists, journalism students and journalism educators are relevant to the topic of inquiry, so a random (or probability) approach to sampling would not have been appropriate in answering the research questions. Short, anonymised profiles of the participants are included in Appendix B.

For the first research stage, I used my judgment and ideas to find a ‘representative’ sample, also known as purposive sampling (Vehovar, Toepoel and Steinmetz, 2016). 24 journalists in the first five years of their careers took part: 16 journalists attended a 1-2-1 Zoom interview, and eight completed an online activity. Both data collection methods are explained fully in section 3 below.

To select and contact the journalists I used social media, particularly X (formerly Twitter). The Cision 2024 State of the Media Report (Reynolds, 2024) finds that 97 per cent of journalists use social media for work, including publishing or promoting content, sourcing information, and interacting with their audiences. I went through my 6,000 X followers to look for early career journalists and searched for leads through the ‘follow lists’ of colleagues in journalism and journalism education. Journalists in the first five years of their careers could readily recall their experiences with creativity in higher education. They could also comment on their professional encounters with and perceptions of journalistic

creativity. To understand educational experiences across the UK, an even spread of graduates who studied journalism at institutions in England, Scotland and Wales and graduated between 2017 and 2022 were invited. I taught four of the participants personally at different institutions (two of the Zoom interviewees and two of the digital activity respondents). I included them in the research to compare their thoughts and experiences with individuals I had never taught or met before.

To represent the three main career strands of 21st-century journalism, an even mix of print, broadcast and digital journalists were invited to take part. The journalists worked for regional, national and international media companies at the time of the interviews. When selecting potential participants to invite to the study I paid explicit attention to diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, neurodiversity and disability, and geographic location in the UK. This diversity is not reflected in the journalism industry. According to the NCTJ's 2023 Diversity in Journalism report (Spilsbury, 2023), 88 per cent of journalists come from white ethnic groups, and 72 per cent have a parent in one of the three highest occupational groups, compared to 44 per cent of all UK workers. Annual government figures on widening participation in higher education (UK Government, 2023), however, show that, at 63.5 per cent (up from 44.1 per cent in 2009/10), the number of Black pupils entering higher education in 2021/22 had substantially increased. The highest-ever number of pupils eligible for free school meals progressing to higher education (29.2 per cent) was also recorded. Therefore, the diversity of the participants in this study reflects the diversity of the UK's student population. As this study is focused on the future of industry and education, and the potential of its workers and students, it aims to reflect the incoming workforce, rather than the industry status quo.

The second stage of research included three focus groups, with three sets of stakeholders. The first focus group was at a UK university and included 11 journalism students on a mixture of BA and MA Journalism courses. The BA cohort included first, second and third years. I contacted students through my teaching network, using my judgment to select the combination of participants, most of whom were known to me. I was not actively teaching any participants at this stage of the academic year, which was hugely important; I did not want a power dynamic to influence the results of the session.

The second focus group, with journalism educators, took place at an academic conference. Convenience sampling (Vehovar, Toepoel and Steinmetz, 2016) was used in selecting this group. The conference provided a valuable opportunity to invite six journalism educators to participate in an in-person focus group when and where they had already gathered. The organisers promoted the focus group to conference attendees before the event and booked a room for the session. I also recruited participants when I arrived at the event, ensuring that the group represented six different institutions for a mixture of professional experience.

The third and final focus group took place on Zoom. Again, I used purposive sampling, exercising my judgment to find and contact six senior journalists, a mix of broadcasters, digital and print journalists in news, arts, food and tech who had experience across editorial and commercial briefs. Diversity and balance in gender, age and ethnicity were considered in the sample selection to reflect a range of experienced journalists and editors in the UK. Zoom was the forum for this focus group; coordinating the diaries of six busy and experienced journalists for an in-person group session would have been very challenging, and there was no budget to cover their travel expenses.

5.2.6 Ethical considerations

The main ethical considerations for this project were protecting anonymity and confidentiality. As discussed in the literature review, journalism is a precarious profession, and by inviting participants to talk about their work and transition from university to industry, it was crucial to be cognisant of the sensitivity around job security and career progression. An environment where participants could talk and write about their work and education freely and critically, without worrying that it would jeopardise their careers or relationships, was essential.

In the first stage of the study, I assured participants of complete anonymity and that any names or identifying information would be removed from the transcripts so they could share honest opinions without fear of harm to their careers or reputations. Consent forms

(see Appendix A) covered participation in one-off research activities (1-2-1 interviews and the online *Future Journalists* activity) and consent for anonymised data from the activity to be included in this thesis and any subsequent academic publications.

The participant information sheets for the online *Future Journalists* activity and 1-2-1 interviews (see Appendix A) included logistical information so participants knew how much of their time it would take and what technology they would need (i.e. a Zoom account), as well as information about the likely content of the interviews. For example:

During the conversation you will be asked to share your honest opinions about the course you completed and how successful it was in preparing you for the journalism industry. You will be asked about the culture at the institution you studied at and about the role creativity played in your training. You will not be asked for any opinions or information on individuals (peers or tutors) and any identifying information will be omitted from the results of this study.

The right for participants to withdraw from the study until the point of interview or activity completion was included in the consent form, but I reiterated this option at the start of every Zoom session in case they felt uncomfortable during the interview. In facilitating the interviews, I also outlined the structure and sample questions at the beginning, mindful that they might not have read the participant information carefully. In this way, interviewees were fully briefed and prepared for the exchange. I was conscious of being an empathetic and transparent interviewer at all times. Given that I was interviewing young people who interview others in their journalistic work, modelling best practice was crucial. Aware that journalists are routinely involved in difficult and stressful interview situations, I also pointed out that the interview style would be relaxed and conversational, rather than confrontational (Sedorkin *et al.*, 2023). I also outlined the purpose of the research and, particularly as participants were not paid for their time, I highlighted the importance and value of their contribution. The participants were made aware that the Zoom interviews were being recorded for transcription purposes only; the video recordings were deleted immediately after the interviews. Transcriptions were checked against the audio recordings for accuracy, and then the audio recordings were deleted.

Before participants took part in the online activity, they received step-by-step instructions via email (see Appendix C). They knew what type of activities to expect and how much time they would take. Participants were not asked to provide their names or any identifying information when completing the activity. I stressed the importance of their contribution in email and social media exchanges, and every participant was thanked once their responses to the online activity had been logged. Participants were assured that once the data had been collected from the server hosting the activity and recorded by the researcher, it would be deleted.

The second stage of the research included three focus groups. Participants in the groups were asked about their reactions to anonymised data from the first stage of data collection. They asked questions, probed and challenged the emerging themes, and enhanced the study through their expert consensus. In these focus groups, as confirmed in the corresponding consent forms, participants were not asked about their lives or work experiences or to share personal information, name their employer or institution, or identify/discuss individuals.

The student focus group was scheduled for the end of the term, when the students' timetable was less hectic. I explained to participants that the session was completely unconnected to their coursework and studies. The conversation was recorded digitally, and I informed participants that the recordings would be destroyed as soon as the transcription was complete. Although the participants were not offered payment for their time, soft drinks and snacks were provided for the 90-minute session. We also discussed the importance of their contribution and the project's potential for wider dissemination. Similarly, in the focus groups for journalism educators and senior journalists, the focus was solely on the presentation and discussion of anonymised research results. At the start of the sessions, I assured participants that we would not be discussing their personal experiences, colleagues, clients or employers.

Throughout the research process, for ethical reasons, anonymity was assured, participation was treated in confidence and all data included in this thesis has been carefully anonymised. All participants had the option to be informed of the study results and for their contact details to be retained for that purpose only. Research participants were treated with respect during every interaction and inclusive, non-discriminatory language was used verbally and in writing throughout the process (Collins, 2019).

5.3 Mixed data collection methods

Mixed data collection methods (Kara, 2020) were used in this two-stage, creative and qualitative research process. Each stage is summarised below and then explained in detail in sections 5.3.1, 5.3.2 and 5.3.3.

In the first stage of research:

- *16 participants took part in semi-structured 1-2-1 interviews on Zoom*
- *Eight participants completed an online 'character creation' activity at futurejournalists.com*

In the first stage of research, early career journalists, all in their 20s, provided empirical data about their interactions with creativity at university and in the workplace. They also shared their opinions on current and future creative culture in both environments.

In the second stage of the research process, three focus groups were facilitated:

- *11 journalism students on BA and MA programmes at a UK university*
- *Six journalism educators from institutions across the UK*
- *Six senior UK-based journalists*

So that at least two students from each year of an undergraduate cohort, and students from a range of MA Journalism courses, could be included, the student focus group was larger than the educators' and journalists' groups.

The focus groups included an overview of the results from stage one of the research process. Participants discussed the information presented to them as well as taking notes, or doodling, throughout the sessions to record their reactions to the data.

5.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

The best way to know how people understand their world is to talk to them (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Considering the design of this study, and to probe interviewees about their interactions and perceptions of creativity, this study used semi-structured interviews as a research method. The 16 guided conversations allowed for a good level of flexibility, and while the structure helped to frame the interview, extract detailed information from participants and facilitate the thematic production of knowledge, creativity was not lost in the process (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023). The personal nature of the interviews provided the scope for investigating participants' motives and feelings (Collins, 2019).

Given this study's phenomenological, practice-led strategy, interviews were a natural fit. Interviewing is a craft of qualitative researchers (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) but interviewees, and the information gathered from them, are also critical to the role of a journalist (Sedorkin *et al.*, 2023). The goal of the semi-structured interviews was to learn rich, detailed information that could be rigorously analysed, and the creative, practice-led approach also facilitated an exchange that could be exciting, emotional, inspiring, challenging and meaningful. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) note, different forms of

interviews serve different purposes. Through interviews, journalists record and report important events, therapists seek to heal, and researchers produce knowledge. Distinctions between these forms are not always rigid. Journalistic and research interviews are closely related, and some researchers 'depict their interview practice as a therapeutic process of instigating change in people's lives' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 2).

The interviews took place in 2023, after the Covid-19 lockdowns when journalists, and students, had adjusted to working on video platforms. Journalists were routinely conducting interviews on Zoom (Mahon, 2021; McGrath, 2021) so, in keeping with the practice-led strategy, and to make the 1-2-1 meetings easier to manage logistically, the participants in this study were invited to join video calls. Research shows that Zoom is a useful method for conducting qualitative research interviews with advantages including facilitating rapport with researchers, convenience (including time and budget), user-friendliness, and robust security features (Archibald *et al.*, 2019). The written transcripts generated automatically by Zoom were also hugely useful and saved time, although they always required careful proofreading and editing.

11 questions were prepared (see Appendix D) for the semi-structured interviews, asked during each 45-60-minute Zoom session. The questions were designed with enough flexibility for participants to talk at length about the topics they felt most passionate about, and with space for follow-up questions and discussions within every session. Each question was designed to contribute thematically to knowledge production, and to spark a positive and insightful interaction (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 131).

The questions were divided into three thematic categories:

- *The first five questions were about experiences and perceptions of creativity in the workplace*
- *Questions six-10 were about experiences and perceptions of creativity at university*
- *The final question was about the future of journalism and creativity*

After question nine, participants read the definition of journalistic creativity posed in chapter four of this thesis and shared their reactions to it. It was important to share the definition towards the end of the interview, so it did not influence participants in the way they answered the first nine questions, during which they referred to their own definitions of creativity.

In facilitating these practice-led interviews, I harnessed my experience as a journalist to set an informal, relaxed tone where the conversation felt like a natural, creative exchange between two journalists, rather than a researcher and an interviewee, or an academic and a student. I wanted the interviewees to feel safe, respected and heard, and to experience the interview in a creative, thought-provoking and stimulating way. Inspired by Ellis and Berger (2001), I framed the interview as a space for collaboration and, where appropriate, shared my own insider experiences in journalism and journalism education to build trust, pose follow-up questions and engage the interviewee in 'dialogic moments', free from power structures (Plesner, 2011). Plesner (2011) writes about 'studying sideways' – situations where researcher and research participants share a professional background to some degree, as in this study. As the interviewees were early career journalists, there was a risk they would feel intimidated being interviewed by an older journalist who works as a university lecturer. Without consciously making an effort to create a 'sideways' exchange, the interviewees might have felt pressured to answer questions to please or impress, which indicates respondent bias (Collins, 2019). To counter this, although every effort was made to facilitate positive and creative interviews, space existed for appropriate challenge and disagreement because, as Plesner (2011)

points out, confrontation can create more surprising accounts and enhance the quality of research.

Aiming to achieve best practice in journalism, and research culture, I ensured the semi-structured interviews were well prepared and kept to time whilst giving participants ample opportunity to talk openly and explore their perceptions and opinions at length (Collins, 2019).

Benefits and limitations

The semi-structured interviews were essential to this project because taking an active approach (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) by engaging directly in empathy, challenge and collaboration with participants was congruent with the project's theoretical framework and methodological choices.

Although Zoom does not facilitate the same level of interaction and rapport as in-person interviews, the convenience and flexibility of the platform made it much more likely that potential respondents would agree to participate, and no cost was incurred. The disadvantages compared to in-person encounters, such as observing body language closely, were not relevant to this study, and I established a warm and productive level of interaction and rapport in every session.

The semi-structured interviews were familiar journalistic spaces for the participants and I. Although the same questions were posed in each interview, the conversation was free flowing and there was ample space for conversation and connection; each interview contained authentic moments of sharing lived experiences (talking about deadline pressure, for example), enjoyment (sharing our experiences of creativity and creative accomplishment) and collaboration (some participants made helpful suggestions for the future of this research, for example).

Finding research participants for the semi-structured interviews was more challenging than expected due to users leaving the X (formerly Twitter) platform following Elon Musk's

takeover in October 2022 (Clayton and Hoskins, 2022). Some journalists I wanted to invite to participate had deactivated their accounts. I contacted them via Instagram or found alternative participants who were still using X.

5.3.2 Online *Future Journalists* activity

The second method used in this first stage of field research was more innovative and unusual than the semi-structured interviews. Given the creative nature of the topic under investigation, designing an innovative, creative and practice-led research method was integral to the project. Rather than including a leftfield idea for the sake of novelty, *Future Journalists*, an online ‘character creation’ activity, was designed to harness the wisdom of tried and trusted research methods, without being bound by that knowledge. The activity was designed when initial versions of the research questions emerged and aimed to be ethical, linking the project’s theoretical framework to practice (Kara, 2020).

While the semi-structured interviews focused on the workplace and contemporary journalism education, the online activity was designed to focus on the future. Rather than hosting an online questionnaire, the online activity was designed to stimulate thinking, feeling and imagining the future through an arts-based research method (Gannon and Naidoo, 2020).

The activity was inspired by Witschge, Deuze and Willemsen’s (2019) composite ‘resignation letter’, designed as a response to the lack of creative methods of collecting, analysing, and presenting data in journalism studies. At an event, the researchers asked 33 journalists to write an imaginary resignation letter to the profession of journalism. With an approach that treated the journalists as partners, rather than objects of study, this creative method provides insight into the emotions, motivations, and frustrations of the participants, providing alternative and more personal access to lived experience. Similarly, the *Future Journalists* platform invites journalists to tell stories creatively, flexing their journalistic practice and imagination.

The main goal of this data collection was to find out if young journalists see the future of journalism as creative. The online activity invited them to 'build' a future journalist, dressing them and choosing their accessories, before describing their imaginary career trajectory and the culture they worked in. As well as stimulating their journalistic practice and creativity in the moment, asking participants how they felt about participating at the end of the activity generated additional data about their attitudes towards creativity.

In the three short sections below, each stage of developing *futurejournalists.com* is outlined.

The idea

The intention of this data collection method was to investigate how research participants imagined the future of journalism. Giving respondents the ability to create a visual representation of a future journalist, rather than just imagining or describing them, means that knowledge can be extracted from each character's appearance. Additionally, research participants could describe the career and workplace of the future journalist with a tangible character to write about, an activity more aligned with journalism practice, which is based in observable truth.

This activity was inspired by 'paper dolls', a popular plaything from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century. The two-dimensional dolls appeared in newspapers and magazines as cut-out-and-keep toys and vehicles to illustrate current fashions (National Women's History Museum, 2016). As well as capturing a playful practice that is closely associated with the media, inviting research participants to create a visual representation of a future journalist taps into the concept of inquiry through creative practice, which privileges play, intuition and imagination as resources for 'making sense' (Kara, 2020).

At first, I envisaged participants using actual paper dolls during the semi-structured interviews. However, in 2021, during this project's ideation phase, Covid-19 lockdowns were still being enforced and finding a way to incorporate physical and observable

creative activities in a Zoom interview did not seem feasible. Inviting participants to create a digital avatar was more appropriate, although it presented challenges.

First introduced to popular culture in 1999 by the ‘virtual’ band Gorillaz, digital avatars now appear routinely in business and personal applications (Lu, 2018). Digital avatars are mostly used by gamers as they navigate and interact with a virtual world. Evidence indicates that gamers project elements of themselves into a game world through their avatar (Szolín *et al.*, 2022). The literature supports the concept of avatars as a representation of self; avatar design choices provide information about the person behind them and their motivations (Bélisle and Bodur, 2010; Kafai, Fields and Cook, 2010; Baylor, 2011).

In keeping with a practice-led strategy, I harnessed my journalistic experience by treating fashion as communication (Barnard, 2002) in the research context. By curating the choice of clothes for the future journalist to wear, participants could experiment with, and illustrate, their vision of the future; their journalist might wear a suit (indicating a formal office culture), or choose to make a political statement with a slogan t-shirt (suggesting independence, freedom of thought and a relaxed, workplace culture), for example. I analysed participants’ choice of clothing using my practice-led expertise in fashion journalism.

The technology

Most avatar creators are either based on cartoons or anime art. In the practice-led context of this study, I looked for a playful design that would be taken seriously by the journalist participants. The Character Creator (Character Creator, 2024) is an existing avatar design platform with a professional look and feel that was inspired by kisekae, an electronic version of paper dolls originating in Japan. The screengrab below illustrates the style and usability of the platform:

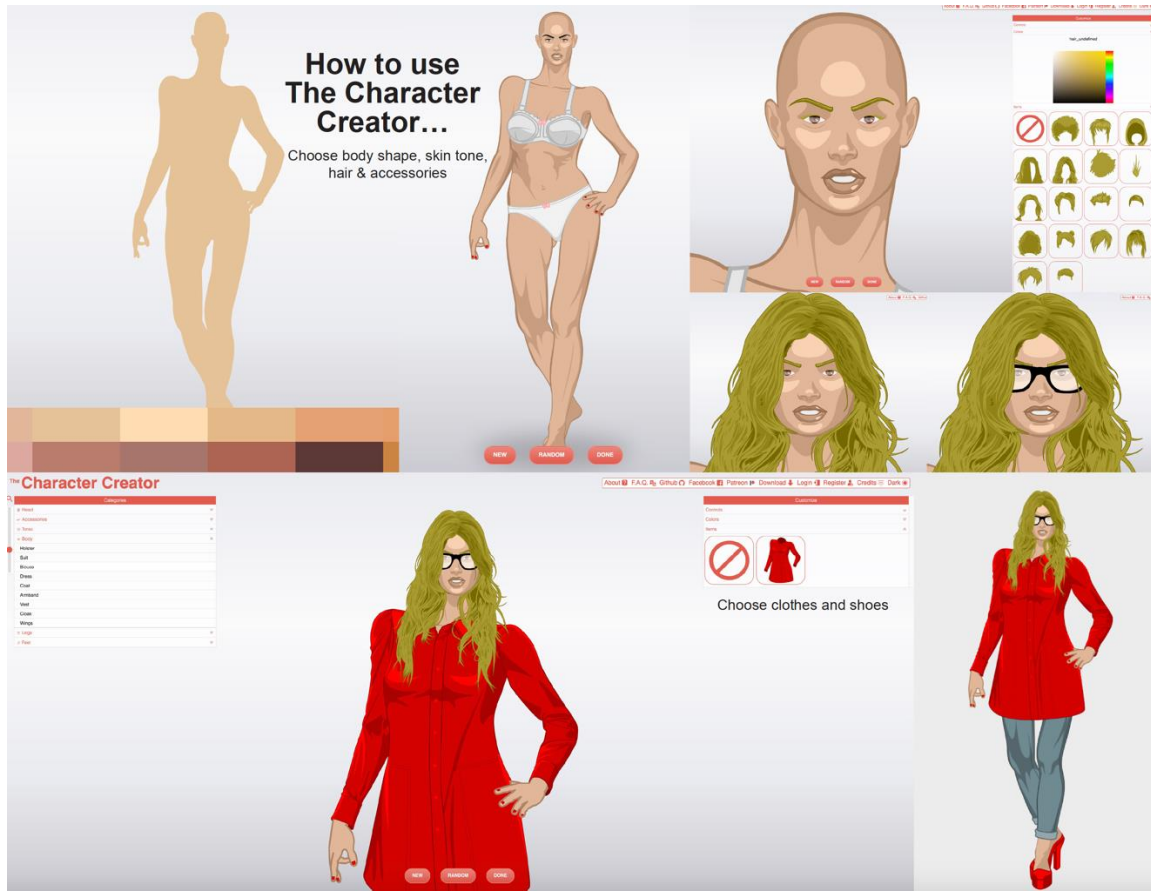


Figure 5: The Character Creator platform
 Screengrab taken from The Character Creator. Available at: <https://charactercreator.org/> (Accessed: 7 February 2025)

By customising this existing avatar creator, I could specify the options and dimensions I wanted to retain, decide on additional data capture, and have everything saved to a database for processing. The founder and developer of the Character Creator, based in Quebec, Canada, agreed to collaborate on the project. The developer hosted the research platform at <https://futurejournalists.com/>. Although participant information and consent were integrated into the first page of the site (see Appendix F), I also sent information to research participants via email. After activity completion, the developer collected the anonymous choices and responses and securely sent the data for analysis.

Developing the Future Journalists platform

As well as designing an avatar, the *Future Journalists* platform included two additional tasks. The first invited participants to complete a newspaper-style profile, including an image of their unique future journalist (see Appendix F). Participants filled in the gaps using their own words. In the spirit of practice-led research, I wrote the profile template using my journalistic experience and read a range of published journalists' profiles for inspiration including pieces on Emily Maitlis (Waterson, 2019), Louis Theroux (Dawson, 2020) and Beth Rigby (Cooke, 2020). Practice-led methodology was used in the task design and the activity was practice-led for participants; journalists are professional 'word weavers' who apply their creative vocabularies to the templates of their trade (Aitchison, 2007). By including this exercise, participants could bring their future journalists to life using their own vocabulary and imagination, whilst the task structure is instantly recognisable as journalism. This creative, practice-led exercise provides another data set illustrating participants' aspirations and ideas for the future.

The third and final task (see Appendix F) invited participants to complete a short piece of creative writing describing the culture in the workplace of their future journalist. This short activity engaged participants' journalistic skills by setting a simple brief and inviting them to structure an answer using their imaginations. It encouraged participants to think in more detail about the future and engage more deeply with the research activity.

At the end of the three-step process, a feedback page invited respondents to share their emotional reactions to participating in the activity. As this research platform was unique, understanding how participants reacted to it was important. In addition to indicating how journalists feel about creative work immediately after doing it, the responses to this question may also encourage colleagues to consider similar, creative research methods in their own work.

Benefits and challenges

Asking participants to design a digital character produced creative symbolic data (Hamilton and Hansen, 2024) that helped to answer the research questions and provided a unique, independent and engaging task for participants to try remotely, at their convenience. Designing the platform and collaborating with a comic book artist was fun and creative; the whole process felt innovative and exciting, and the participants genuinely seemed to enjoy taking part. *Future Journalists* could inspire future researchers to experiment with more creative and unconventional data collection methods.

The working process with the developer (see Appendix E) resonates with Kara's (2020) recommendation that researchers who want to work with arts-based methods but lack the necessary skills or expertise in the methods concerned, can bring arts professionals onto a research team to provide support. As Kara suggests, this collaborative approach provides a 'middle way'; I could ensure the quality of the technology and artistic skill whilst using the methods most likely to help answer the research questions (Kara, 2020, p. 24).

Collaborating with a developer was an exciting learning opportunity, but the process of developing the platform was slow, taking several months to complete. Email communication was intermittent, with distance and time differences compounding the situation. Once the platform launched, some participants' designs and data were not downloaded to the server, and it would not have been appropriate to ask them to complete the task again. There was no budget to fund an investigation into the problem and it was never resolved.

Ultimately, complete data was only collected from eight participants, and it took a great deal of time and effort to design and launch the platform for a relatively small sample size. Some customisable elements I would have liked to create, offering participants a non-binary character, for example, were not feasible given the limited budget. If I were to use a similar data collection method in future, I would collaborate with a colleague or student in my institution, or at a partner university, so I could have regular in person meetings with

them and play a more active role in the research design. This would give me more control over the data collection and help me to develop my technical skills.

5.3.3 Focus groups

The idea to use focus groups as an additional data collection method evolved after the first round of research. Being flexible and open-minded as a researcher, allowing the research problem to be 'defined and redefined' and engaging with other methodologies as a creative inquiry unfolds (Hamilton and Hansen, 2024) is a characteristic of the practice-led approach. Discussing the stage-one results with stakeholder groups added another layer of multi-perspective, qualitative data to the study. Acknowledging the project's phenomenological strategy, the focus groups also balance the hermeneutic position that, as the researcher, I am an active, subjective participant in the interpretive process. Hearing other perceptions and opinions at this stage allowed me to sense-check my interpretations.

This research stage takes inspiration from the Delphi method (Dalkey and Helmer, 1963), a technique that involves facilitating group interviews to gather the collective opinion of experts (Amos and Pearse, 2008). The Delphi method is used in educational settings to form guidelines and standards and predict trends. Green (2014) writes that the Delphi method has been useful for educators in developing curricula and learning experiences, determining training and staffing needs, and collecting data from students and alumni regarding the curriculum. In this project, the technique was applied when the expert focus groups discussed and evaluated the 'headline' results from the data collected in the initial round of research. This triangulation, which allows for multiple participant perspectives, and the comparison of findings from primary and secondary data collection, helps to ensure the study is 'believable, credible and trustworthy' (Collins, 2019, p. 170). By inviting people to take part as experts, the focus group participants are also treated as co-researchers (Janesick, 2001).

Three expert focus groups were held including three groups of stakeholders:

- *The first group included MA and BA Journalism students at a UK university and took place in April 2024*
- *The second group was with journalism educators and was held during an academic conference in June 2024*
- *The third focus group was online in August 2024 and included six senior journalists*

In the tradition of moderated focus group design, which usually includes six-10 participants, the primary motive of these groups was to encourage a variety of opinions on the topic in focus (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). It was also, in line with the Delphi method, designed to reach consensus on some of the implications of the results, providing ideas and input on how these implications might be reflected in recommendations for students, educators and journalists.

Each focus group had a similar format. After briefly explaining the topic and research questions, I presented initial findings from the first round of research using PowerPoint slides (see Appendix G). Each PowerPoint deck was tailored to the appropriate focus group, and I chose a bright, colourful template, containing concise and punchy information to keep the session light and engaging. Each slide contained headline information from the first stage of analysis (see section 5.4 below) and included a related question posed to the focus group. I also experimented with generative AI at this stage, using the ChatGPT platform to create a composite future journalist profile from the raw data collected, and to describe the culture in the future workplace. The AI-generated information was used solely for the purpose of the slides (see Appendix G, slide 25), but it was interesting to see how it differed from the composite profile and description I compiled manually for inclusion in the findings (see chapter six). The AI generated text was rather more grandiose than the composite profile created through thematic analysis, and it made for an interesting discussion with the focus groups.

The feedback mechanism differed slightly from group to group according to the demographic, as well as logistics. In the student group, participants discussed the answers (the discussion was recorded and transcribed), but they were also invited to doodle, draw or make notes on paper with coloured pens. Students do not always feel comfortable speaking in group settings, so the option to make notes gave every participant a chance to contribute in the most comfortable way for them. Providing coloured pens and paper also gave the session a creative feel, which was important given the topic and the methodological approach. In the educators' focus group, time was limited as the session took place during a conference lunch break. Participants were invited to make notes in response to the research results, rather than entering into a discussion; this kept the session on schedule and participants could focus on providing their answers. The final focus group, with senior journalists, took place online and the conversation was recorded and transcribed.

The focus groups were chosen as part of the methodology to provide a snapshot of how the data from the first stage of this study would be perceived by students, educators and journalists, helping to refine the thematic analysis and adding different perspectives to the research. The focus groups also offered the opportunity to discover interesting patterns within the responses of stakeholder groups. The delivery of the focus groups also captures this project's practice-led approach. I ran the groups using the presentation and facilitation skills I use as a journalist and educator, and the groups were reminiscent of seminars (the student group), faculty meetings (the educator group) and editorial conferences (the journalist group).

Benefits and challenges

Adding this stage of research was rewarding and innovative. It allowed me to gain an insight into stakeholders' reactions and interpretations of the initial data before working on the discussion, final reflections and conclusions in this thesis; it was an inclusive way to work, as well as making the research more robust. The focus group members were

interested and highly engaged with the data I presented and had strong opinions about every topic. Although I did not pay the participants, being able to share the advice that the early career journalists had given to their 'student selves' and their tutors, with current students and educators (see Appendix G slides 28, 29 & 35), was valuable and powerful.

The student focus group took place on campus, and there were no limitations to this method. The educator group had huge logistical advantages because it took place during a conference, but due to the busy event schedule, the focus group had to take place over lunch, within an hour. The logistics of setting up, getting the participants to the room on time and ensuring they could pick up lunch on the way, made the session challenging to deliver. One of the participants was late as she was moderating a prior session that ran over, and one had to leave five minutes early to prepare for his afternoon presentation. On the day, I instructed participants to record their responses in writing because, given the tight time frame, if the conversation became tangential or unwieldy there would not have been time to complete the presentation. The data collected is extensive and detailed and makes a significant contribution, although in future I would ensure that the focus group was not conducted under so much time pressure. Advertising the session before the conference, and talking about my research during the event, also provided a valuable opportunity to disseminate my work and meet colleagues with a shared interest in creative practice, although the participants in the focus group had a diverse mix of opinion and experience regarding journalistic creativity.

The journalists' focus group made another valuable contribution to the data set. The limitations of Zoom were more evident in this group session, as some participants spoke more than others and dominated the discussion. I did not want to pressure participants by asking them to contribute more, and there was not enough time to ask every participant to answer every question; I also wanted the discussion to feel natural and conversational. Every participant made a valuable contribution to the conversation, however, and as the group comprised experienced journalists, I knew participants would make themselves heard when they had strong opinions.

5.4 Thematic data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data collected in this project. The flexibility of this research tool, which recognises that researcher judgement is necessary and that analysts are both cultural members and cultural commentators, facilitates a rich, detailed and complex account of data collection, particularly when working across different methods and with various data sets (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

To analyse the data corpus (all data collected for this project) I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis:

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Figure 6: Phases of thematic analysis
Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), pp. 77-101.

With every data set included in this project, I started to identify patterns during the collection phase when I would notice repeated ideas of interest, and potential coding schemes, and record my reflections. This reflection continued at every stage and was, as Braun and Clarke (2006) note, a recursive process, with back-and-forth movements throughout the phases. During the immersion stage of the process (phase 1 in the table above), I carefully edited every transcript, listening back to the audio several times to maintain accuracy, and allowing my interpretations to form. I actively read the data

repeatedly, searching for patterns, but also coming to know the data in an even more familiar way to stimulate the creation of meaning.

Thematic analysis allowed me to move flexibly across not only the data set but data corpus, which was particularly useful given the two-stage data collection process and methods used. The coding for the interpretive analysis was performed manually, using colours to highlight potential patterns (see Appendix I). I initially separated and grouped the semi-structured interview transcripts by question to make the data more manageable. The data from the online activity was less voluminous and I could derive patterns and themes by looking at the data set as a whole. Although the online activity generated visual data (the *Future Journalists* characters), I made notes on respondents' fashion and editorial choices and then used thematic analysis with the same coding scheme on this data. Once a long list of codes had been identified across each data set, the analysis was refocused on the main themes emerging.

In stage two of data collection, I presented the initial results and emerging themes to three focus groups. I then returned to analysis, with the new data sets available. Keeping an open mind, I checked for additional sub-themes from each focus group and then produced an initial thematic map (see Map #1, chapter eight) to define the relationship between codes and themes across the data corpus. After refining the sub-themes further, a second thematic map (see Map #2, chapter eight) helped me to organise the results for both stages of data collection, and to prepare for their interpretation.

Moving into phase 6 of Braun and Clarke's (2006) model, I produced a final map of thematic analysis that illustrates an emerging theory on the shape and impact of creative culture in journalism and journalism education. The final map supports an inductive discussion that engages with the literature and highlights the new knowledge uncovered by this work (see chapter eight). It also informs a model for future journalism education presented in the thesis conclusion (chapter nine).

In line with the inductive research approach applied to this methodology, the data collected in this project was coded without a pre-existing coding frame or analytic

preconceptions. After the familiarisation process, the coding was not necessarily related to the questions respondents were asked and although the analysis addresses the research questions, the questions were not used as themes explicitly; themes came from the data collected and the analysis evolved within the theoretical framework presented in chapter four. Themes were also identified at a 'latent level' (Braun and Clarke, 2006); the interpretive analysis aims to identify and theorise the underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualisations that shape the data, looking at the sociocultural contexts and conditions that influence and enable the individual responses.

5.5 Methodological limitations and considerations

In an academic environment that prioritises quantitative and statistically driven research over practitioner-centred and creative approaches, this qualitative study could be accused of lacking the reach and rigour of a quantitative survey. However, creative research can contribute to a 'renewed approach to education' (Hamilton and Hansen, 2024, p. 9) and the participatory and reflexive nature of this project has the potential to create change, interrogating new knowledge structures 'through creative action' (Hamilton and Hansen, 2024, p. 14). With 47 participants in total, each providing a unique and significant perspective on the phenomenon under investigation, the sample size is substantial enough to reveal repeated patterns and themes for analysis, adding to the value and significance of the work.

Although a creative qualitative approach was taken, the innovation could have been pushed further. As Silverman (2013) points out, many qualitative researchers restrict their research to the methods espoused by quantitative researchers, namely by using interviews and placing participants in focus groups. Both of those methods are used in this project. Originally, I considered conducting detailed case studies of 'creative media brands' in addition to surveying young journalists via an online questionnaire. I concluded that, in addition to being time-consuming and challenging in terms of accessing data, defining what constitutes a 'creative media brand' is a separate research project.

Selecting the case studies, whilst being practice-led and creative to an extent, would have also risked involving my industry biases at an early stage of the project. I also felt that giving a standard online survey to young journalists did not fulfil a creative or practice-led approach. It would have been cold and impersonal, and I would not have been able to interact with the research participants as collaborators. Focusing the first stage of my research on early career journalists, and collecting data in participatory and creative ways, seemed much better suited to this inquiry.

I also considered a stage of action research (Stringer, 2008) with students. After the semi-structured interviews and *Future Journalists* activity was completed, I had planned to use the data to design creative classroom interventions, trialling them with students. When I was conducting the literature review and working on the definition of journalistic creativity, however, I realised that the scope of this PhD study was not to recommend specific classroom content. While using aspects of the data to design specific activities is something I will do in future, the questions that this project explores concern creative culture in university departments and industry workplaces, the meaning of creativity in these spaces, and the implications of creativity. While important, and creative, I concluded that action research would not have helped to address the research problem or answer the three research questions within this methodological design.

The semi-structured interviews and focus groups I facilitated were not solely chosen for convenience or reliability. Given the practice-led approach (Smith and Dean, 2009; Hamilton and Hansen, 2024) of the strategy, and with research participants who are journalists, student journalists and journalism educators, the data collection methods were intuitively appropriate; treating participants as co-researchers yielded human-centred and creative outcomes. Adding the inventive *Future Journalists* online activity also enhanced the creativity of the data collection. It was pivotal to this project because it is innovative, within the available budget and illustrates how a creative research method can affect research and research participants positively. *Future Journalists* complemented the more traditional research methods used and provided exciting and

creative data about the future of journalism. Like Witschge, Deuze and Willemsen's (2019) 'resignation letter', it provides an example of creative data collection, analysis and presentation in the field of journalism studies. Similarly, the second stage of this research enabled the inclusion of stakeholder voices, and the use of focus groups, inspired by the Delphi method (Dalkey and Helmer, 1963), ensured that the overall methodological strategy of this project was creative, experimental and inclusive.

5.6 Reflection: becoming a creative researcher

The methodology for this project, particularly the practice-led strategy, is closely interwoven with my professional and academic practice. As a journalist and creative academic, I designed a methodology that might make a contribution to journalism studies and unlock my route to becoming a creative researcher.

The methodological philosophy facilitates my vocational experience, background and worldview. As a journalist and journalism teacher exploring the careers and education of other journalists, I was extracting meaningful knowledge through a personal and subjective lens. Interpretivism allows for self-reflexivity as it acknowledges and reflects the identity of the researcher and research subjects (Collins, 2019), but I also chose an interpretive approach because I am an interpretive journalist.

Various conceptualisations of interpretive journalism exist, but most conceive it as moving beyond descriptive, fact-based journalism, putting a greater emphasis on the 'meaning' of news (Salgado and Strömbäck, 2012): interpretive journalism is associated with the presence of the journalist in the story; explanation and/or analysis; the evaluation of actors or events; and speculation about the future (Soontjens, 2018). In my journalistic practice, I often wrote 'op-eds' (Washington Post Staff, 2022), or first-person narratives, about my life experiences and interactions with the world, and conducted interviews with 'real life' case studies (human participants) to suit the style and audience of the publication. I checked facts, sought expert opinion and consulted legal frameworks, but my

methodological approach as a journalist was, as per the interpretivist research paradigm, socially constructed, complex, and subjective (Pervin and Mokhtar, 2022).

The interpretivist approach can also be applied to my teaching. Looking at a philosophy of higher education and interpretivism, Davids and Waghid (2021) describe academic activism as a form of dissent raising doubts about educational issues of public concern. The motivation for this project was triggered by evidence that school curriculums had 'expunged' creativity from their curricula (Puffett, 2023), while the journalism workplace demanded creativity and creative people (Hawkins-Gaar, 2017). It was unclear to me if journalism courses in higher education were going far enough to prepare students for a workplace that expects creative practitioners. Seen as the work of an academic activist, with an interpretivist approach (Davids and Waghid, 2021), this research looked for truths in which disagreement manifested, used scepticism of the status quo as a tool to resist rigidity of thought in university settings, and is helping me to become, through my practice and research, a 'change agent' (Davids and Waghid, 2021, pp. 12-14). Davids and Waghid also encourage activists to focus on the importance of reflection, saying that academic activism 'demands a pause' (Davids and Waghid, 2021, p. 14) so that new understanding and learning can be realised. I believe that, in the context of academic activism, this thesis represents a reflective pause in my practice.

In the context of becoming a researcher, I also acknowledge that I perform a role in observing the world and recognise that I cannot distance myself from my background, values, morals and life experiences as a journalist, an educator, and a human being. These factors inevitably affected every stage of the research process. Although I deliberately went beyond the parameters of my own practice in the goals and purpose of this project, and my practice is certainly not the sole focus of this inquiry (McNamara, 2012), I did wish to incorporate elements of my work as a journalist and journalism educator in the methodology, hence the decision to use practice-led research, alongside phenomenology. However, I used bracketing (Flick, 2007) routinely during the research design, data collection and analysis, putting aside my feelings and beliefs about creativity and journalism to keep from biasing my observations.

I am passionate about creativity in my practice and went into this study believing that university education was not creative enough. By putting this belief aside during interviews and analysis, I discovered an alternative perspective from people who have lived the experience of training to be journalists in the 21st century.

In combining creative, qualitative data collection methods, and taking a phenomenological, practice-led approach that mirrors my professional and pedagogical ethos, I feel confident that I have taken the first steps towards becoming a creative researcher.

5.7 Conclusion

With an interpretivist philosophy, inductive (qualitative) approach and phenomenological practice-led strategy, the collaborative and creative design of this methodology reflects the project's theoretical framework, research questions and topic of inquiry.

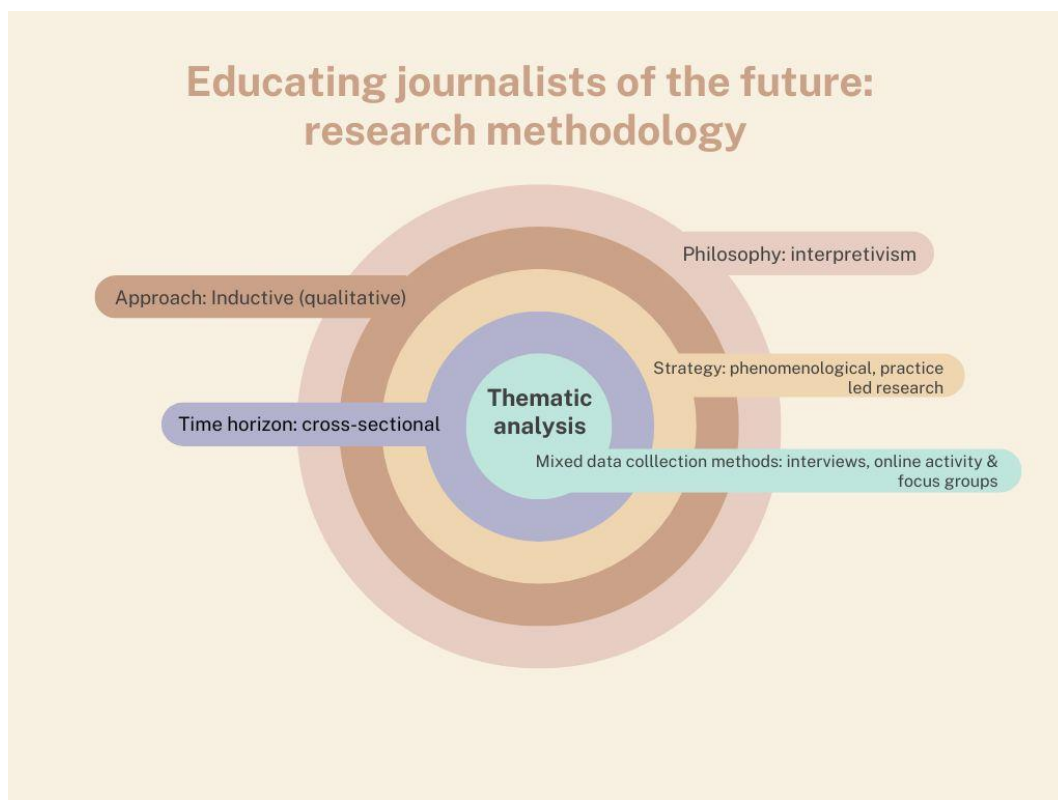


Figure 7: A methodology for researching creative journalism and creative journalism education

This chapter presented the methodological choices summarised in the figure above. The interpretivist philosophy applied to the methodology fits within the project's theoretical framework as it accepts that human experience shapes social reality and society. The inductive approach allows for themes to be explored beyond the data collected, and the qualitative methodology facilitated a creative study within a phenomenological, practice-led research strategy. The cross-sectional time horizon refers to one point in time and research participants were selected based on their status as journalists, educators and journalism students.

Section 5.3 of this chapter explains the mixed data collection methods in detail. This includes the first stage of research, 1-2-1 interviews on Zoom where participants discussed their perceptions of creativity in industry and education, and the digital *Future Journalists* activity in which participants designed an avatar and then wrote about the character's life and career. The next chapter (chapter six) presents the results from this stage of the research in full.

This chapter also outlined the second stage of research, which harnessed the Delphi method (Dalkey and Helmer, 1963). Three focus groups took place including journalism students, journalism educators and senior journalists, to discuss a summary of the anonymised stage one results, explore potential themes and sense-check the data. The results from this second stage of research are presented in chapter seven.

The methodological limitations outlined in this chapter are mainly concerned with its qualitative nature. The data collected in this creative, practice-led process, however, contributes to meaningful inquiry and interpretation of creative journalism and creative journalism education, presented fully in the next chapters of results, discussion and conclusions.

Chapter six: results part one

6.1 Introduction: stage one research

This chapter shares findings from the first stage of field research: semi-structured interviews and the online *Future Journalists* activity.

The interviews and online activity with 24 early career journalists were designed to explore what creative culture in journalism and journalism education look like, and how creative culture can help 21st-century journalists cope with the realities of the profession. The questions in the semi-structured interviews were about the participants' encounters with creativity in industry (*RQ1*: what is the role and meaning of creativity in contemporary journalism?) and during their journalism education (*RQ2*: how can we equip journalists for the future by facilitating a creative pedagogical culture in journalism education?), with a focus on the possibilities and risks of creative culture for journalists and journalism students (*RQ3*: what are the possibilities and risks of creative culture for journalists and journalism students?). In the online activity, participants were asked to imagine the future of journalism, helping to put the findings from the semi-structured interviews into context. The participants, who were all in their 20s at the time of interview/online activity and working in their first or second industry roles, are profiled in Appendix B.

This chapter is structured thematically. It presents findings from the interviews about the knowledge and skills that young journalists consider essential (6.2), as well as exploring what creativity means to them and the wider industry (6.3). The next section (6.4) details participants' descriptions of the environmental factors that facilitate creativity, followed by their reflections on experiencing creativity in industry and education. Section 6.5 includes findings on the barriers participants have encountered to creativity. The final section (6.6) outlines predictions for the future of journalism from the semi-structured interviews and the online activity.

Findings from the second stage of research with three focus groups are presented in chapter seven.

6.2 Skills, knowledge and journalistic creativity

Creativity for me is one of the pillars of journalism, even though obviously every publication, every newspaper, has their own rules and exceptions...you still have to have rules and guidelines, but you don't have to limit [journalists'] creativity (Participant 15)

Participants in this study were unequivocal about the importance of their journalistic training, learning about the profession and mastering the core skills required to practice journalism. They also shared their own interpretations of journalistic creativity; every participant agreed that journalism is, to some extent, a creative industry, and they shared examples of their creative work.

6.2.1 Building blocks

The tried and true methods are there for a reason. But then, obviously, being open to new experiences is branching out and bringing in...that slightly different element. It doesn't have to be something crazy. But that is exactly what you see in the newsroom (Participant 8)

When discussing creativity in the semi-structured interviews, every research participant stressed the importance of “foundational” journalistic skills and knowledge. Each was clear that creativity in journalism and journalism education requires knowledge of journalistic convention.

Participants talked about building their practical “non-creative” skills and learning “the limits of what you can and cannot do”. Most said they had been taught journalistic skills on their courses that allowed them to be creative. The feeling was that “everything was

useful” in terms of practical skills and that their training had allowed them “to be open to new experiences”:

They had given us all the training, all the guidelines, and we could finally use all of that, and then bring our ourselves, our own creativity, to the table (Participant 1)

To be creative, you need a very good grounding in what is good in the first place. To gain confidence in who you are as a journalist, you just need fucking good training (Participant 5)

Participants acknowledged that their desire to be creative was strong at university, but that they needed to be “patient”, learning the rules before they could break them. They said they understood the need for structure and that, according to Participant 5, “you can be wild and as creative as you want, but you need to find formats that work”. They also recognised that structures and conventions were essential when talking to an audience, and that truth and clear communication were paramount. Some participants said they had felt “restrained” or “blocked” in moments during their education but that, looking back, it was “all necessary”. Most said that taking time to learn and become “comfortable” with their skills was crucial to their development as journalists:

Not everything comes immediately, and it takes time to master those skills, and then creativity can be applied (Participant 1)

It’s about perseverance...you need to build skills first. You need to learn how to write first and how to structure the sentences in the right way, and then the creativity comes (Participant 9)

In industry, participants recognised that there was a place for legacy media and that “there will always be demand for it”. Although they said that audiences were reducing in number, they agreed that no one will “totally rip up the rulebook”. Echoing what they said about their time at university, in their early career roles they talked about establishing “what is the norm” before trying to break down any barriers:

I'm taking on board company policy, and what the company stands for, and integrating that into...what would allow me to produce the best work (Participant 3)

When discussing gaps in their training, participants talked about employability skills, including marketing oneself as a freelancer, developing a niche, understanding how journalism works internationally, and learning the realities of the working world. Some participants had missed out on experiences due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Most participants pointed to at least one specific skill they were missing and although Participant 1 mentioned a lack of copyright training, most were connected to “video packages” and social media, particularly TikTok which participants agreed is an “important creative vehicle for storytelling”. The tendency of courses to prioritise hard news was a trend mentioned by some participants:

News writing was not helpful if you wanted to write about lifestyle and be a bit more creative with your language. I wouldn't say that I necessarily feel like there were gaps and stuff I didn't learn, but I think more time could have been spent on things that, for me, would have been more valuable (Participant 4)

Although most said they had more freedom to be creative at university than in industry, around a third of participants expressed dissatisfaction with the level of creativity in their departments. Participant 6 said that creativity was “never mentioned in three years” and described the culture as “defensive, not creative”. Participant 4 said they were taught “a right or wrong way of doing things” which discouraged their creativity. Other participants said that journalism departments were “rehashing what had come before” or focusing the content of the course on “the basics” and that to genuinely teach creativity, they should focus on idea generation and how to “find a scoop and your own original stories”. Where courses were seen as formulaic and traditional, participants were frustrated:

[The course] didn't teach me all those little quirks like how to write for a brand, how to change your tone...how to be flexible, and all that stuff. It taught me how to write a headline in 25 words. It told me that the most important information goes first...it taught me shorthand (Participant 6)

I don't think I came out of uni ready for [generating ideas regularly]. I was prepared for the practical things. I've always been a really good audio editor. I'm comfortable handling the hardware. But the ideas, development and the creativity was not something I was quite prepared for in terms of just the quantity and the quality that was needed [in industry] (Participant 2)

Although they said they struggled to be creative during their time at university, one participant thought that the situation was changing:

I saw myself as a creative person, but I found it hard at first to express it in journalism. I saw people doing social media and it was just Twitter and stuff like that. And I sort of shook it up a little bit and thought 'let me just do a reel or a little video'. And people really encouraged that. I think now they're a bit more on it when it comes to creativity in uni (Participant 7)

6.2.2 Essential skills

It was so useful to learn different skills...photography, and broadcast journalism and everything like that...the whole multimedia package. And learning about how to create a TV package or a podcast or creating a website - the website I still use (Participant 13)

The journalistic skills the participants regarded as essential were digital and multimedia. Most mentioned social media as a field of increasing importance, with Participant 7 saying that social media has “allowed journalism to be a bit more creative”. Many participants said journalism courses should put increased emphasis on teaching social media skills:

Things like TikTok...that's the direction we're moving in and having those creative skills and editing and ideas when it comes to TikTok and social media (Participant 12)

When they were asked about any skills gaps in their training, they pointed to specific areas. Participant 3 said that learning more about user-generated content would have benefited their job as a video journalist. Participant 5 said that learning how to use Reddit, Discord and Honesty Rumble to find case studies for features would have been useful. Participants also talked about the importance of “softer skills” such as discipline, which Participant 5 said “actually lets you be more effectively creative”. Participants agreed that technical skills allowed journalists to be creative but relying on them was unwise:

Don't just let [students] rest on technically good laurels [with] stories that aren't necessarily brilliant...Why not make them technically brilliant and creatively brilliant?
(Participant 2)

Apart from Participant 6, who said that restrictions were imposed on their creativity during their early-stage career and that only senior people were given creative tasks, every interviewee said that creative skills were important to contemporary journalists. The most common creative skills respondents mentioned were linked to technology (particularly visual mediums and social media), and they stressed how important it was that contemporary journalists stay on top of the latest developments. Regarding communication as “a form of creativity”, the participants agreed that journalists needed to be creative people. They talked about creativity giving contemporary journalists the opportunity to break boundaries and innovate, and to allow their personality and unique journalistic approaches to emerge:

There definitely has to be some sense of creativity there. And that really is a skill that I've seen in a lot of reporters and correspondents (Participant 7)

They should have those [creative] skills in the background. I think it's industry standard. And if you don't, I think you're going to be left behind (Participant 10)

6.2.3 Creative output: examples

You're not coming up with things which are like fantasy or out of thin air. You are reporting on things as they are. But how do you get people to care about things? Or how do you tell people something they don't know, so they get it (Participant 16)

During the semi-structured interviews, participants talked positively and proudly about their creative work (see Appendix G, slide 13, for examples). When they had been immersed in the storytelling process, and experienced something firsthand, it tended to make them feel creative. They said that looking at stories from different perspectives was creative, and when a story was interactive, engaging readers in new and innovative ways, they used it as an example of creative work. Many examples involved multimedia and had visual aspects, whether photography, video, infographics or other digital media. Other examples involved some form of experimentation and implied that risks were taken. Most participants talked positively about their creative process saying they experienced fun, enjoyment and pride.

Many of the examples provided involved some of the biggest topics of the time including 'Big Pharma', the pandemic, global conflict and the Royal family. One particularly innovative example was an interactive game designed to engage readers with a topic they were feeling overwhelmed by, but most respondents shared examples that fused recognisable journalistic structures with innovative ideas.

6.2.4 Defining creativity

Creativity to an extent will always be the lifeline of journalism (Participant 6)

Every participant had an individual interpretation of creativity, but most agreed that the 2020s was an era during which journalistic creativity was "booming". Participants talked

about creativity in terms of freedom, pushing boundaries, journalistic imagination, being on the “cutting edge” of industry by using and creating new platforms or technology, and making change by “doing things differently”. They said that creativity in journalism concerned storytelling, and finding new ways to tell stories, and that a creative journalist should strive to be unique and innovative, working in collaboration with others:

You start to realise, maybe it's the person that brings that newness to the story. And maybe their angle, and how they view it, sometimes brings a different element to a story. Or the people they interview, it's the people that really bring that creativity to the story (Participant 8)

The participants said that creativity allowed contemporary journalists to create impact and success, to meet audience demand and reach new audiences, and to stay relevant, evolving and learning throughout their careers. Many respondents said that contemporary journalists should be multi-skilled and flexible in their approach “always finding new and creative ways to send a message”. Participant 7 compared journalistic creativity to acting because “you have to convince someone”. They said that journalists must come up with new ideas constantly and were “actively on the lookout for different ideas, different stories, different features”.

If you want your work to have an impact and be read widely [creative] skills are hugely important (Participant 13)

I think [creativity is] growing in importance, especially the whole attention deficit – people not being able to pay attention to stuff – means it's more even more important to find creative ways to tell stories and to try and find something new for audience engagement (Participant 1)

When talking about the journalists who inspired them, participants gave examples of professionals who worked in unique ways, operated independently and produced work that fused a contemporary style of presentation with strong investigative elements:

I think the best people I work with in journalism, the ones I always admire, are the ones whose approach, and the way they see [the events they report on] is so different. And the way they express it is so different. And those are people I just look up to (Participant 16)

When they read the definition of journalistic creativity (see chapter four), none of the participants rejected it and most enthusiastically supported it. Some said that it resonated with them, or that they could “relate” to it; some said they “really agreed”, “definitely agreed” and “100 per cent agreed”. Participant 4 said it was “spot on”. Participant 13 said the definition “illustrates just how important creativity and developing creativity, especially in young journalists, is.”

Two participants had a more mixed reaction. Participant 6 said that while they “would agree with most of it” that challenging established rules is not something that most media companies would want their journalists to do. Participant 9 said that while the definition was “all well and good” only journalists who have “the luxury of time” could exercise flexibility and spontaneity:

I completely agree with this, and I think it's the right way of describing it, I suppose, but also in reality, I don't think many journalists can employ creativity. I think a lot of them value it, but until the industry has more money or more jobs, I don't think many will be able to actually use it (Participant 9)

Another participant suggested that journalism educators could benefit from discussing the definition of journalistic creativity:

It's not just the students who need help and guidance in terms of thinking about creativity, but the staff as well...sometimes the staff think of creativity being fake news. Or just think of it being artistic (Participant 13)

6.3 Facilitating creativity

Keep pushing us to do what we enjoy, because that's when your ideas flow, when you know there are people behind you, pushing you to do your best (Participant 12)

To facilitate creativity in the journalism industry and journalism education, participants said that a culture of belonging, diversity and freedom that provides resources to realise ideas and initiatives, must be in place. In such environments they were encouraged to contribute ideas and “be as creative as possible”. They experienced a sense of freedom and believed they had choices within their role. When discussing creative environments, they were positive in their terminology and tone and talked about “feeling” creative and being able to experiment, take risks and work flexibly. Many participants equated using technology, multimedia platforms, social media, and visual storytelling techniques with a creative culture in work and education.

6.3.1 A sense of belonging

They've appreciated how I've put my ideas forward and [shown] initiative. I feel like I've changed the landscape of [my employer's] reporting...and done it in more of an innovative way. They've appreciated that I've really pushed it, and they've encouraged me, and praised me for it, too (Participant 12)

When respondents discussed creative environments, they described how their colleagues, editors and lecturers had inspired them, making them “feel like a creative person” through sharing ideas and opinions. They had the sense that they were “part of something bigger” and talked positively about camaraderie in industry and education. Participant 4 said their team was “very open-minded to covering new topics”; Participant 8 said their “very close-knitted newsroom” had a focus on learning new skills, which had

given them the opportunity to grow creatively. Participant 5 talked about their “bloody, passionate” lecturer playing a major part in developing their confidence and encouraging their creativity. Although they recognised that tutors have different ways of teaching and giving feedback, in a creative educational environment many participants said their lecturers were “helpful and encouraged creativity”, inviting them to “think outside of the box”:

When I was young, I had this idea that the more senior you are, the more you don't want to mentor people and you're happy in your position, and that's it. But that mentorship and treating you as a peer and bonding with you was so helpful, I think, to grow my confidence (Participant 3)

In industry, journalists working in digital-first environments were most likely to describe creative environments:

The biggest teams at [digital platform]...are all content teams; all teams where people are creating and crafting. So, I think, inherently the kind of people and the kind of culture is very creative. There's definitely a vibe (Participant 16)

[As a video journalist I can] go completely above and beyond what I thought was even possible back in my uni days, being able to delve and tackle subjects that have always intrigued me, but maybe seemed quite out of reach. Having those people that I can connect with and collab with now is really allowing me to actually tell these stories (Participant 3)

In university and workplace environments, participants stressed how important feedback was in encouraging their creativity. They talked about how feedback made them feel “part of the team” and that sometimes even a “strict” editor or tutor could demonstrate their openness to creativity and ideas by offering constructive feedback. Collaboration was also cited frequently as signifying a creative space. In industry, Participant 13 said that “hearing other people’s views and trying to work together was really beneficial” and that the editors with a “less formal, but more approachable” style were easiest to collaborate with. Talking about university, participants said that lecturers who worked alongside their

students as collaborators had done the most to encourage their creativity – experienced journalists “treating you like a peer” in university spaces was particularly meaningful to them:

Realising ‘okay, these [lecturers] are willing to help you get your career going and giving you their time, and really honing your skills and believing in you’...that was just so, so helpful (Participant 3)

[My final project] was like a collaboration slash mentoring kind of thing. [My tutor] has all of that industry knowledge, and I could really pick her brain about stuff. And she always gave me really interesting tips, and people to check out for inspiration (Participant 1)

Participants also talked about engaging with their audience. They said that journalistic creativity “connects with the audience in a unique way” and agreed that it encouraged audience engagement. They also said that feedback was crucial in developing relationships with an audience:

Engagement on social media and TikTok...is a big feedback loop, because if an audience engages with a story, you make more of that story (Participant 10)

I was doing [Substack] every week...like a fixed, scheduled routine, and I think the good thing about that was that you have a constant feedback loop in your life. People were reading it, people would get back to me, which was really good to have (Participant 16)

Bonding and collaborating with peers, in education and the workplace, was also referred to repeatedly when the participants discussed a sense of belonging:

We would go to the park, and we were just reading poems, or even painting and experimenting things with news. I think in general so many people were passionate about creativity, and we just loved coming together, even if it was outside of lectures (Participant 14)

I think the more important skill is for a journalist to know what the rest of the team, and what the rest of the people around them, can do, because that can honestly be more valuable. As long as they're open to working collaboratively in these new ways, that's the main thing (Participant 11)

When participants talked about being encouraged, receiving feedback and collaborating with others, they also mentioned the importance of experimenting with ideas and making mistakes. Participant 9 said, “being human is to make mistakes”, and stressed how important mistake making was as a learning experience. They also said that professional mistakes could be positive, going viral and attracting more interest in the news.

Experimenting, you're always going to make some mistakes; allowing for that to happen is an important part of the process and trying to figure out how to embrace this...and be as creative as you possibly can (Participant 13)

[At university] we were encouraged to think about things as widely as possible, and it didn't necessarily matter if it didn't end up working as long as you'd had the thought process of what you wanted to get done (Participant 11)

6.3.2 Diversity

Everyone will take the same story, or take the same idea, and digest it in many different ways, because everyone comes from completely different lives. And they bring with them culture, perspective, personal experiences (Participant 3)

Diversity, in all senses, was a recurrent topic most participants discussed. They said that difference in terms of age, ethnicity, neurodiversity, nationality, gender, sexuality and career history was conducive to creativity in any journalistic team or university department. They talked about needing “different perspectives” to bring about change in an “outdated” industry, and said that “diversity of thought”, or the different ways that journalists approach

the same story, made journalism distinctive and unique. Participant 14 talked about being encouraged because of their diversity as an international student and said that being advised to use diversity as “an opportunity” enhanced their creativity.

Participants also talked about the importance of diversity in their output, saying that the more diverse the work was, the more creative:

When we tell stories of people who are neurodiverse, or just generally disabled people, there is the importance of giving them their own voice, the type of language we use, and the way we approach those stories...creative diversity is the simple way of putting it (Participant 2)

They also said that increasingly diverse audiences want to consume content in diverse ways, which requires creativity in the way stories are communicated:

Different audiences come to different platforms for different reasons; people come to [our] website for a different reason than they engage with [our] TikTok. They watch a video because they want to just sit and watch it. They don't have to read it. Then other people come for our long form journalism...because it is a different kind of journalism (Participant 10)

I don't love reading about politics. I think it's important, and I try. I found Semafor, and they have this Daily Newsletter, which is just very well designed. It's compact...they would have put in so much thought and effort into figuring out that people like me, at this age group, would want something like that (Participant 16)

Participant 6 expressed the most dissatisfaction with their journalism course and said that creativity was not mentioned, valued or encouraged throughout the programme. They related this directly to a lack of diversity in the department:

[The lecturers] weren't creative with themselves. I received a lot of racism there. I [struggled with] their treatment of minority students. It was not a creative place to learn, and it turned me off news writing (Participant 6)

Participant 7 had similar experiences at university and said that a lack of diversity in the industry hampered their creativity:

There's a cultural aspect as well because at uni...there is a lack of diversity. I couldn't exercise a lot of my ideas because of the subjectivity of newsworthiness. And I noticed the same thing at [national broadcaster]. In a way, it stunted my ideas, and the doubt kept coming back again 'can I do this, as a Black journalist?' Sometimes we don't do foreign stories because it makes the newsroom very uncomfortable. [My colleague] was saying that 'diversity makes the newsroom uncomfortable'. It took me back to uni (Participant 7)

6.3.3 Freedom

[Creativity is] being given the free reign to do things that I enjoy doing that push the boundaries and really home in on my interest (Participant 12)

Most participants said they equated creativity with freedom, particularly freedom of expression and freedom of choice. When they talked about their experiences at university, the majority said that they felt they had more freedom, and more opportunity to exercise their creativity during their time in education, than in industry. They talked about reaching “the peak of creativity” when they had the freedom to choose the topics for their assessments which, in turn, shaped their portfolios. They also valued being the creative directors of their final journalistic projects.

At university, you've got more freedom as a young person, you know. Everything was there. The equipment was there. The teachers were there to teach you, because you can literally ask anyone, and they'd be there to help you, even if they weren't on your course (Participant 8)

Any idea I had [at university], they never made me feel like it wasn't good enough. Obviously, they pointed me in the right direction, or we worked together. But again, everything was possible. Nothing was off the table. And I think that gives you confidence (Participant 14)

Participants also talked about a sense of freedom in industry, where they felt their jobs were creative. Participant 3 explained that their employer had created a new position for them, “a blank canvas” with the “freedom to figure out what the job might be.” Others talked about having the freedom to express themselves through their work, particularly as freelance journalists:

I think I have always liked the idea of being freelance, just because of the independence you get, and the freedom to write about whatever you want for wherever you want, and the flexibility really appealed to me (Participant 13)

Magazines...give you more freedom. They let you express more, especially on the arts side. So you can express with writing, but if you're assisting on a photo shoot, you can have complete freedom on that as well (Participant 15)

6.3.4 Resources

Creativity within journalism to me would mean having the time and energy to be able to come up with articles you want to write. They're a bit different. The original ideas (Participant 9)

All participants agreed that certain resources are required for journalistic creativity to thrive – and most participants said that time was the most important. Participants said that the more time they had to work on their output, the more creative it was. Participants said that the most interesting creative projects in journalism took time to develop, but most

agreed that it was worth the investment, resulting in better quality and higher impact journalism:

More often than not [the editors and writers are] very happy for us to take more time, because they know that their words are going to be much more appreciated if it's in the format that's slightly different. If it's something that people are sharing on social media. If it's something that the editor-in-chief is highlighting in her newsletter or in her staff emails (Participant 11)

Really interesting creative projects in journalism often take months, years, even. That's not to say that short things can't be creative. But I guess it's just different kinds of creativity. And I'm speaking from the point of view of someone who wants to get into long form stuff (Participant 3)

When time was limited, whether in their journalistic roles or during their time at university, participants agreed that creativity was harder to achieve, and that the pace of news, and the profession in general, demanded a juggling act:

Having the time in the day, and having to sacrifice something else...It's trying to strike that balance between being really creative and putting loads of time in it, versus getting everything done that you need to do (Participant 12)

There were modules that focused on the effectiveness and the speed you can deliver news, and that doesn't allow for creativity because creativity takes time and thought (Participant 15)

As well as time, participants also said that technology was a crucial resource to invest in, allowing journalists to be more creative in their work and attracting audiences with new approaches. Participant 11 explained how developing a new app had given their employer a distinct edge over the competition. Idea generation is another resource participants talked about, remarking that employers who provided time, space and trust in ideas were investing in longer-term success.

We are now being given time out of our regular work schedule, a half day every two weeks – not an insignificant amount of time, especially because we’re short-staffed – to develop ideas. They don’t have to be for a narrative podcast or pitch coming up, it can literally be anything (Participant 2)

Sometimes we do pieces which are far more interesting, which could be about acid attack survivors in India who run a cafe, and even though we know it’s not going to do well, and it doesn’t do well, we still feel as though we’re moving the dial of what we want our journalism to be about (Participant 5)

6.4 Experiencing creativity

It’s really hard for me to pin down what [creativity] means to me, but I guess that extra bit of magic. That extra bit of exploration and not trying to come to the norm and how it’s usually done. Trying to bring your own little magic to it (Participant 1)

When respondents talked about their experiences of creativity, they said their efforts to produce something “worthwhile” often brought out their creativity and made them feel “super passionate”. They talked about creativity in relation to their wellbeing and the wellbeing of others, and said that experiencing “newness” or novelty, was part of the process. When they talked about their creativity and creative output, they used terms that expressed their satisfaction and success.

6.4.1 Wellbeing and impact

If people are able to be creative in their jobs, they're going to have a sense of self-worth rather than just 'churnalism' (Participant 10)

Participants referred to their wellbeing when talking about their creative work. Participant 14 said: “creativity is almost like therapy for me.” Reflecting on their university experiences, Participant 12 questioned if students could do their best academically without “nurturing” their creativity. Participant 1 “treasured” creativity during their university years. Participant 10 talked about their employer’s creative approach to running a media business and said it had been “good for people’s wellbeing and mental health”:

They're trying to be a publication that changes what journalism is, but also what businesses are. We have a lot of benefits, like free 24-hour mental health access. There's definitely a culture of innovation - trying to do things differently. Even just in the way that the business is run internally (Participant 10)

When participants described how their experiences of creativity in work and education had made an impact on them, some used intangible terms including “joy” and “magic”. Participant 12 said: “you should be creative in your journalism and get enjoyment out of that”. In creative environments, participants said they could go further with their ideas than they “thought possible”. Participant 9 said, “to be exceptional, you need to be creative”. Others talked about the way that using their intuition, and being authentic in their work, had an impact on their confidence and their journalism:

If you bring up an idea and you just base it off your own guidelines, it boosts your confidence. And it still means being creative because you're not following anyone's ideas, you're just following yourself, following your own way of writing, of thinking (Participant 15)

Something that's really valued these days is authenticity, being true to yourself, and that reflects in the content, even if you're just being authentic by the way you present

yourself. It easily comes across, especially with social media journalism, it feels like that is so important it easily links with creativity in my mind (Participant 1)

Participants also talked about having a significant impact on others with their creative work. Participant 12 said it could “make a difference to the people around you and the people that you represent”:

Maybe I’m naïve, but I always think journalism, the endeavor is to have a positive impact, either through educating, changing someone’s opinion, showcasing something they will have never seen before...If you do things in a creative way, reach people in a different way...that creates societal transformation (Participant 10)

Every journalist wants to make some kind of change and some kind of impact...It’s interesting to figure out how you can...use your own creativity and your own drive to bring about bigger change (Participant 3)

University programmes that encouraged students to discover their passions and niche subjects were cited as examples of courses that had a positive creative impact. Participant 1 said they looked back at their university experience with “joy” and said that bringing their “creative traits and skills to actual journalism, to mash it up together...felt fun”.

In both educational and industry settings, participants said that working creatively in a way that represented them had the most meaning. Some described their ambition to be more creative in the future by taking inspiration from journalists who had influenced them:

When I listen to [broadcast] packages, it is quite creative because the writing, especially the good reporters, they have really, really good writing skills. I can only dream to be like that, or to find my own way, my own style to be able to communicate that way. I’m learning, as I’m watching and listening (Participant 7)

I just really, really like independent journalists, and it feels like they are getting more and more traction, and I think what draws them is creativity, and that they’re able to bring their contemporary style and be a little bit more flexible (Participant 1)

When you see someone on screen breaking those little boundaries and trying something new...it encourages you as a person, but also you can then be more excited to tell someone younger than you to do journalism as well (Participant 8)

6.4.2 Novelty

It's important for young journalists to learn, but also just be given the space to be experimental...trying to push the boundaries more instead of sticking to a very strict formula of an article or a piece of journalism (Participant 13)

Participants said that when they experienced creativity, they often pushed boundaries and experimented. Novelty could mean utilising or finding new formats, often harnessing technology, or using social media, and finding new platforms for journalism. Participant 7 said that “bringing something new” was all they wanted to do in journalism. Most agreed that creativity meant doing things differently by finding new perspectives, in the form of interviewees or angles, or identifying a new audience to communicate with:

It's just trying something new and adapting what's already there to make it more...exciting. Creativity is actually the little things that you can add, you know the little extras. It doesn't have to be too big. It doesn't have to be too grandiose, but it's just the little things that can bring a little bit of excitement or newness (Participant 8)

I think a lot of the time creativity is a synonym for being different and doing things that are different. And I think that with my journalism, it's trying to think 'what's the different way of doing this that other publications are not?' (Participant 10)

While Participant 10 said that the endeavour of journalism should be to “step outside the bounds of what a publication is expected to be and do”, Participant 2 said that asking novel questions “that no one else really thinks they want to know the answer to” is one way that human journalists can distinguish themselves from artificial intelligence:

What is hard to reproduce with AI and other tools like that is the creativity to see the questions people haven't thought to ask, tell the stories that people aren't really talking about or looking for (Participant 2)

6.4.3 Satisfaction and success

The most creative, imaginative pieces are the ones that are really successful (Participant 13)

Participants said that being creative through their journalism gave them a sense of satisfaction. They also related this to a feeling of achievement and Participant 4 described creativity itself as “a marker of success” on their MA course. Others talked about the way that success, whether through a personal sense of achievement, work that had been recognised by their colleagues/lecturers, or journalism that attracted high audience engagement had given them pride and confidence:

I'm always so shocked and surprised when something that's formed in your mind, a little kernel of an idea, has then sprouted and grown into this huge piece of work, and I'm always so proud when it's finally published and gone out there, and that came from a seed of an idea (Participant 13)

I've come a long way since the beginning of my career, and I can see that confidence. The company helps but...because I'm being more creative, and because I'm working on stuff that I'm interested in, I think that's where that confidence comes from, because I'm able to feel like, 'OK, I know what I'm doing' (Participant 3)

For many participants, having support from their lecturers, particularly when it came to generating ideas, taking risks and developing self-belief, had given them a sense of achievement:

I was always told I was lazy, and that I couldn't do many things in life...I was not thriving in that environment. I was surprised when my lecturers told me 'you can get a first class degree'. Then I had what people would call success, but the real success was them supporting me. I discovered all these things thanks to them. I had no idea I was creative. I had no idea at all (Participant 14)

I did get at uni that I needed to have a bit more self-belief in everything I did. I thought I was quite confident as a person, but they thought otherwise, that I needed to really believe in what I was doing. I was producing such good stuff that they thought I just needed to believe that more (Participant 12)

In industry, participants related creativity directly to success. According to Participant 4, “for people to still want to engage with [brands and publishers] they have to evolve all the time” and many participants talked about the concept of evolution in terms of innovative and successful ways to engage audiences:

We tried to think of new ways that we could tell [climate change stories] and new ways that we could get that message across. We've won numerous awards for that. And people just really, really engage with it. People liked it because it wasn't just a different format. But it also wasn't necessarily all bad news. I think that combination of the two things was something that readers really engaged with (Participant 11)

It's like trying to twist the angle in terms of my journalism to how can we engage people in a different way with a topic. Consequently, stuff like that, that kind of news coverage, would then go on to TikTok and Instagram. For example, one of my colleagues did a story about [an LGBTQ+ sports group] and that's done massive numbers for us (Participant 10)

Participants also said that focusing on the process of creativity, and investing in it, was important in terms of achieving success:

[My previous employer was] purely focused on getting the newspaper out the next day without any real thought about the long term. At [my current employer] if you

say to the editor, 'look, it's going to take me another week to do this', they're very receptive to that and they know that you're just trying to make the product the best possible...It's going to reflect well on them because they're going to be seen as someone that's a team player and someone that wants to elevate their work as well
(Participant 11)

You've just got to enjoy doing the work and learning as much as you can, and don't necessarily have to always think about achieving the highest mark or the grade
(Participant 13)

6.5 Creative barriers

A lot of importance is placed on meeting deadlines and trying to churn out a lot of work, and breaking news, and getting the exclusive, and sometimes not enough time and space is given...just to embrace creativity (Participant 13)

When participants discussed the barriers to creativity in education and industry, they talked about inflexible ways of working and resistance to change, pressure, the feeling that it wasn't safe to make mistakes and lacking confidence and resilience in a workplace or university setting. They discussed the fundamental restrictions of a business (ideas and innovation only being welcome when they lead to increased sales or traction) and said that smaller teams or universities tended to have a more creative culture. Some participants said that creative content had to be produced in their own time and was not encouraged on their course or in their workplace.

6.5.1 Rigidity

The world has changed. But journalism hasn't changed that much...It's just because there's this idea of journalism. It's one way and it can't change. If you do it differently, it's not journalism. I don't know why. It's either like Watergate or nothing (Participant 14)

Most participants talked about rigidity in an environment being a major barrier to their creativity. Participant 15 said that journalists needed to “reevaluate their thinking and concede that creativity is a fundamental part of journalism.” Participant 11 said that to get newspapers to think creatively “you’ve almost got to reset how people think”. Others talked about feeling “restricted” and said that some of the rules and formats they adhered to had curtailed their creativity.

Participants said that “old-fashioned” structures and hierarchies in the industry presented another challenge to journalistic creativity:

It's quite interesting to work somewhere where there is an editor-in-chief who has the final say on everything. I didn't realise how much the work you do goes into pleasing them. Before I worked at [national newspaper] I was under the impression that it was a collaborative thing, when in reality it's more [about] keeping the editor happy (Participant 11)

Lots of people abusing the hierarchy and using the low [employees] as well. Like, taking advantage of that (Participant 6)

Participants talked about “bullying” bosses whose behaviour is deemed acceptable, and the competitiveness and precariousness of the industry making it difficult to push back against editors who make inappropriate demands. According to Participant 5: “there are literally 100 grads at any given point that are willing to fill your place”. Participants said that in “big and old” organisations the reluctance to change could “stifle creativity”, or make “true creativity” impossible to achieve, and that being such a “traditional industry” meant that inflexibility was the norm across the workplace and journalism education.

Participant 6 said that, depending on where you work, the industry could be “an awful place”.

People forget why they do journalism, and why it's important to be creative, and why they're actually doing what they're doing and to explore that further (Participant 12)

[The university] imbued this feeling, like this is the way that things are fundamentally done. And it's not a changeable industry. It's not like marketing where you need to constantly update, or big tech or generative AI, where companies are constantly [changing and updating]. But journalism actually needs to be like that because it's a product. It's literally a product (Participant 5)

Participants also referred to a generational gap and said that it could be a barrier to creativity with “the different characteristics” of older journalists and lecturers favouring a more “formal” way of working than their younger colleagues. Many participants reported a sense of senior people being “removed from the creative process”, even if they understood its importance. Participant 6 said that their university lecturers’ experience in industry was “decades ago” and that their teaching was now “irrelevant”. Participants suggested that senior people should be more open to hearing young journalists’ experiences and opinions:

Obviously, a 40-year-old who's accrued a bunch of industry knowledge is going to know more. But it's about just listening to Gen Z a little bit more, because we know the platforms that you're worried about, we know how to use them. It's not 'now we're going to run the company and you're not'. There just needs to be more of an ideas share (Participant 5)

I had massive imposter syndrome all the time. And I was very fortunate to be sat down by a senior colleague who I really respect, and he worded it really nicely, but frankly, which is what I needed. He said, 'you need to come to these ideas meetings...with at least two or three things in your pocket'. That was a big jump, and I don't think the department I was in was quite ready to teach [its employees] all the ways it was changing because there were colleagues that have been there a while

that just hadn't kept up with the growth of narrative podcasts - about 50 per cent of what we make now is narrative podcasts (Participant 2)

On some “formulaic” and more traditional journalism programmes, participants experienced creative blockers. This included their ideas being “discouraged” and being told that they could not be creative in their news gathering and reporting, even though, as Participant 15 says, they understood that “you have to think of ways to get the news that is different from other people, and your style, your language, shines through it”. They believed that expressing their creativity at university would have been shut down:

One of my [university] mentors was asking us [which] words define journalism and I said 'creativity'. And my mentor said that was wrong, because there's no place for creativity in journalism. Obviously, in journalism that is based off the old standards: so, working in a newspaper, writing facts, facts, facts – there's no space for creativity within that. And I still couldn't agree with her. I get the point of facts not being creative, but you can still use them in a creative way (Participant 15)

Sometimes the students feel like we have to take on the role of being like a 47-year-old or 50-year-old journalist. And being in that news environment, that didn't really suit me, it didn't really fit me. I've always wanted to be a trendsetter: I've always believed in a shift in journalism in terms of the audience it appeals to (Participant 7)

6.5.2 Excessive pressure

When you're in that very pressured environment, it's quite hard to be creative there. I mean you can still be creative when you have a short amount of time to create something, but it is much harder to really work on that (Participant 13)

While participants agreed that pressure could often produce excellent work, and be a motivator, they cited excessive pressure, at university and at work, as being a barrier to

creativity. From being forced to create content for clicks, to dealing with the fast pace of the profession, participants said that excessive pressure could downgrade their creativity and have a negative impact on the quality of their journalism:

You do raise questions about why they're pushing video content, for clicks and views as opposed to the actual creative element of it. Sometimes they'll be saying 'oh, grab a quick 10 second clip' because that will benefit the story, as opposed to putting together a beautiful video package (Participant 12)

At such a big organisation you're just fed content and stories all the time. You've just got to pick the one that either makes the most money or is the most interesting to the viewers. There's not much freedom in that sense (Participant 9)

At university, most of the excessive pressure that participants discussed was related to assessment. Some said that the stress of aiming for high grades had taken the “enjoyment” out of the university experience. Participant 13 said that university lecturers should place more importance on creativity in journalism than “the grade at the end of the assignment”. Participant 16 said they had stopped creating work they trusted and believed in at university, simply doing what their lecturers wanted to secure a higher grade. Participants recognised that creative work is challenging to assess, but said that some of the pressure could be lifted at university if lecturers were more flexible around assessment:

Of course you have to mark, it's an academic course, it does come down to that. But I think that did, at points, get me a little bit worried, especially creativity-wise...how can you really mark creativity? It's my idea, how can you say it's good or bad? (Participant 3)

Encourage us in a way that is not judgmental, and evaluate our work in a way that is not academic based, more on subjectivity, more on the basis of how engaging, how playful, how smart an article is, and not just 'does it cover all the requirements?' (Participant 15)

6.5.3 Risk aversion

The problem is that journalism is a business; you just do what works. And what you know is going to work. Like why would you spend time being creative, which will take more time and risk? (Participant 14)

Most participants described creative barriers that indicated risk aversion in industry and education. They talked about editors being wary of creative ideas because they did not want to “trivialise” or “sensationalise” serious topics, but they also referred to editorial nervousness and “short-term thinking” around new ideas and innovation, and editors lacking trust in younger colleagues. They said that “towing the line with advertisers” could also be restrictive and that creativity was only valued if it was explicitly linked to increasing audience share or profit:

It's the same in any big company. It's very numbers driven, and sometimes that means we'll be put in a position where, if we have a bad month or so for traffic, the message from higher up will be 'just do what has won in the past – don't try anything new because we need to get these numbers back up' (Participant 4)

[Editors] want to make sure that everything is done on deadline, but they're not thinking 'well, if we actually spent an extra week on this, yes we might lose out on maybe being the first with that, but we'll actually get this great product and a much better piece at the end of it' (Participant 11)

6.5.4 Lacking confidence and resilience

I wish they'd told me how to be more assertive, because the journalism industry can be very tough, and sometimes if you're too kind, it can be seen as a sign of weakness for some reason. That's something I had to learn. And yeah, I wish they taught that at uni (Participant 14)

Confidence and resilience were seen as key traits for creative journalists. Participants talked about needing resilience to “keep pushing when you get those rejections” – particularly understanding that having a pitch turned down was “not a personal rejection” – and said that resilience, agility and spontaneity were skills that universities needed to focus on, particularly as the industry was so challenging:

Not having resilience saps creativity, because you just point blank don't want to be a journalist anymore. If I hadn't got this job at [digital media company] I would have thrown the towel in like a lot of my friends on the course who aren't journalists. A lot of people quit since we graduated, and went on to do PR, or comms, or consulting, or literally anything else. So, I think that [university could] better prepare you for needing genuine resilience to earn no money and work really shit hours (Participant 5)

That sense of spontaneity is something that university could prepare you more for. Maybe doing more experiences...where you don't know what's to come, could better prepare you...if I'd had more experience in being more spontaneous and flexible, maybe I'd be a bit better at that side of things and that side of creativity (Participant 12)

They also talked about the impact of hierarchy on their confidence. Participants said that they worried about their ideas not being “good enough” for their editors and lecturers, which affected their creative confidence. While they did not think journalists necessarily had to be “extroverted”, they said that it was important to have enough confidence to “push your ideas” and know that “your voice is worth being heard in a room full of people”. They stressed the importance of prioritising creative ideas at university, which they said helped to build confidence generally, something they said was lacking in contemporary graduates:

Someone who found a story and did it ambitiously enough that it got picked up by local news, would get far more praise than someone that did something a bit more

creative and unusual. I actually don't think that it was necessarily the best preparation for creativity. It certainly didn't help my confidence (Participant 2)

People come out of uni after three years, or even longer, and still can't pick up the phone and speak to people (Participant 12)

6.5.5 The impact of creative barriers

They can say 'oh we believe in impactful journalism and Pulitzer Prize winning journalism, and agenda-setting journalism'...they're lying. What they really need is the page views. They don't get the page views, they don't get the money, and the business fails. So I feel like creativity will always be second, it will never be first (Participant 6)

Where respondents had experienced barriers to their creativity, they expressed frustration, with many saying they were trying to be creative at any opportunity. Participant 14 said they appreciated how their newspaper role was structured but “honestly felt depressed” without any space for creativity in their work. Participant 1 said that the inflexibility of the industry had “narrowed” their approach. Some participants said that if their ideas were ignored, they questioned the point of being in the job. Some had left previous roles because they were not creatively fulfilled.

[My previous] role was really not creative, and it was sucking me down. That really narrow minded 'we must do this to get clicks' just didn't work for me. I just needed that interesting slice of magic...just to really freshen things up and get to bring some of me to the table (Participant 1)

[In my previous job at a national newspaper] my boss said: 'God there's nothing worse than video journalists who are aspiring film makers'. Occasionally we would pitch our own stories, and if they did let you do them, you'd have to do them on your own time. It was the least creative job. It literally sucked my soul out (Participant 5)

They also talked about peers leaving jobs after having negative experiences. Participant 11 said many of their course mates had given up on journalism due to the “stress and the quick turnaround stuff”. Participant 6 said that, in a previous role, they “struggled” to find anyone who had been there for more than two years. Participants said that traditional publications risked losing talent to more progressive organisations.

We really do have to make stuff that is good and creative, because otherwise people will leave...they will go elsewhere. There are more options for people now. There aren't just two or three broadcasters that people can go and work for. There are podcast-first companies and things like that. So it's a mix of letting people flex [their creativity] and having to survive (Participant 2)

You have all these young, super vibrant, journalists who have all these original ideas, and you don't give them the time to do that because you're so focused on monetary production on YouTube. I just think that companies that don't have new and exclusive ideas will just end up falling by the wayside (Participant 5)

6.6 The future of journalism

The world is evolving, and creativity is at the base of everything. To evolve, you need to change whatever you do. So being able to put creativity in journalism is a thing I look forward to (Participant 15)

To explore the future of journalism, participants in the semi-structured interviews were asked whether they thought creative skills and character traits would be important going forward. The eight participants in the online activity were asked to design an avatar to represent a future journalist, complete a profile piece about them and then describe the culture in their workplace. Results from the digital *Future Journalists* activities are also presented in this section.

6.6.1 Time for change

There will always be an audience who just want to read the news and like reading it in a certain way from a certain paper. But that audience is going to dwindle, and places won't survive unless they think about how to do things in a new way (Participant 11)

Throughout the interviews, participants referred to the urgent need for change and said that creativity could play a significant role in the future. Participant 14 said that “journalism needs a complete overhaul” and faced an existential threat if it resisted change. According to Participant 11, “what’s been coming over the horizon for a while is just how these places will exist in five, 10, 20 years”. Participants said that they understood why younger audiences did not consume “toxic” news (Participant 14 said they “would avoid the news” if they weren’t working as a journalist) and that transforming “facts and statistics into something that’s enjoyable” and reporting in a way that was “more personal and more subjective” would encourage younger people to engage with journalism. They acknowledged that change would not be easy, but said that creative platforms, formats and styles of journalism would “shake-up the industry to new standards” and that creativity was being “demanded” by contemporary audiences:

When I'm talking to some of the younger people in the newsroom...we probably don't watch the news as often [as we should]. The most current reason is that it's not catering to our audience. So maybe something new and creative needs to be done to it, like something completely radical. But that is hard to bring (Participant 8)

Even if there's no AI in the picture, even if they keep going the same route, just exploring news, telling news, writing news in the same old style, that just prevents people from being free to express themselves. I think it's just terrible (Participant 15)

6.6.2 Participant predictions

I think we do have to move with the times. But luckily that does mean that we need to be more creative, whether it's because of competition, or just to stand out (Participant 3)

Participants in the semi-structured interviews agreed that the industry was in a state of flux. Acutely aware that they represented the future – “the new generation” – they agreed that creativity would play a significant role in years to come:

It's always changing. It's going to be different in 10 years. It's different than it was 10 years ago, five years ago. You need to be able to change and adapt and develop...creative skills are at the heart of that (Participant 10)

Creativity now just needs to really explode within the newsroom...because especially my era, my age, colleagues, we are all just consuming news on social media (Participant 8)

The need to find “new ways to tell stories” was discussed frequently in the interviews. Participant 11 said that publishers needed to “start thinking quite flexibly about how they can tweak what their model is to keep relevant and to keep profitable.” Participant 5 speculated that the news-scape would become “far more solutions based, so less depressing” and predicted that in 10 years it would look “very young and very different”.

Participants forecasted a pivotal role for social media and anticipated “a content creator’s world” where journalists would meet their audience “where they actually are”. Participant 12 talked about contemporary journalists who connected with their audience on social channels: “the way they use social media, and have linked it with journalism, has been pivotal”. They also speculated on the role journalistic creativity could play to counter the challenge of AI:

As an industry, if we're not creative, we won't survive because there's so much fake news on social media and so many illegitimate publications that...thanks to AI, churn out absolute nonsense content that looks realistic. If we're not creative, if we're not innovative, if we're not pushing the boundaries of how we can tell stories and engage audiences, we're not going to be relevant (Participant 10)

A lot of people will be hiring AI or using AI rather than hiring writers, and I do think there are parts of the human brain that a computer can't replicate. And even just knowing that a human's written it makes it a bit more special. They've wrestled with ideas before formulating a final product. So, I think creativity is still important (Participant 9)

6.6.3 Journalists of the future

The time has come to make room for new voices...shaping new narratives...capitalising on the wealth of ideas and experiences that diversity brings (Participant 24)

The journalists of the future designed by the *Future Journalists* online research participants are dressed casually in relaxed, practical outfits. A sense of their quirkiness and non-conformity is immediately evident. They chose neutral colours or dark clothes and are either dressed for home working or prepared for fieldwork in outerwear. Just two future journalists are wearing smart-casual business wear, although Participant 23's character chose baseball sneakers, and Participant 18's is wearing low heels. Apart from Participant 18, who chose a feminine silhouette, the overarching look of the future journalist is androgynous and echoes early 21st-century 'street style'.



Figure 8: Composite image of 'journalists of the future': avatars designed by the participants of the online 'Future Journalists' activity

Participants 20, 21 and 22 picked the same or similar casual jackets, and boots or baseball sneakers are the most popular footwear. None of the journalists chose shirts, ties or any of the formal options available on the Character Creator. Participants 19, 20, 21 and 22 all selected a companion animal. Five journalists accessorised their look with glasses.

Only two journalists (Participants 18 and 19) opted to have a wireless headset. Of the essential journalism accessories available, three journalists (Participants 18, 20 and 24) chose the contacts book. Two journalists chose the notebook and pen. Participant 17 chose the data-filled iPad. Participant 23 chose the video camera, while 19 chose the boom mic. None of the participants chose the camera or the AI accessory.

After designing their avatars, participants of the online activity completed a newspaper-style profile about their character. The following is a composite version to summarise the results of this activity:

Light years ahead: meet the journalist setting a course for the industry's future

*As rising journalism star **J. Journo** is announced as the shiny, new editor of Global News Live(s) we look back on their meteoric route to media fame*

*Agile, bold, affable and full of character: the stellar profile of a hungry and trail-blazing young journalist set to dominate the industry. Since graduating from a renowned British journalism school, **J. Journo** has contributed dynamic content and ideas in culture, current affairs and business to lifestyle magazines, broadsheet newspapers and talk radio. Their passion for fact-based storytelling in the public interest and creative, 'can-do' attitude play a significant role in their success.*

Their love of writing, music and news was inspired by a combination of visiting a local newspaper, reading books and the influence of journalist and TV presenter Lizo Mzimba. Born in London, they were passionate about tackling social injustice, creative writing and illustration at school and first saw their work commissioned by the Times, an early win they describe as "a prophetic lucky break". As well as creating films, video games, artwork and a news blog during their teenage years, they secured an exclusive interview with Oprah Winfrey for an A level project. They also connected with one of the UK's most esteemed broadcast journalists via social media, describing their own journalism as "the future" in a direct message.

Their journalism training was rigorous, and included all forms of journalism, interviewing techniques and "several full-blown mental breakdowns". When an entry-level role became available at a digital arts platform, they submitted a unique

application: “It was a slightly arrogant stab in the dark but a truly awesome story,” they said.

In their first job, learning was a priority. They refined their style, broke exclusive stories and made contacts across the industry, raising awareness on issues including safety at gigs, feminism, green washing and the dangers of the new incel movement of the 2030s. They harnessed the latest technology to debut 8k vision into a news studio with real-time fact checking.

After two years, they “cut all ties” and went freelance, developing “their contacts, knowledge and eye for a scoop”. They also researched stories about homelessness and their parents’ home country. “It ignited my interest and gave me conviction and purpose,” they said. As their career developed, so did the emergence of a skillset including podcasting, mentorship and on-air confidence.

Now turning 30, their latest challenge is set to rock the media establishment. Speaking about their unexpected (in some quarters) appointment, they said: “It’s time to reverse the hierarchies of journalism and make the profession more accessible.” The reaction to their editorship has been mixed, with established journalists describing the move as “bold”, “dangerous” and “high risk, high reward”. Their contemporaries see the news as “refreshing”, “savvy” and “joyous”. One colleague described their unique style of storytelling as “colourful, chaotic and empathetic”.

This future-facing journalist proudly describes their career as “eclectic and turbulent”. When it comes to the future? “I intend to be myself, change the industry and prove the doubters wrong,” they said. “Expect stories from the forgotten corners of society, with dynamic and invigorating news from a bigger community of journalists. Hold onto your hats because this ship hasn’t got any brakes.”

6.6.4 The future workplace

21st-century journalists are expected to be able to do it all! (Participant 17)

Participants in the online activity were also asked to describe the culture in their future journalist's workplace. The following is a composite version to summarise the results of this activity:

The culture in the media workplace is relaxed, warm, friendly and welcoming. You're free to approach anyone. Empathetic, human and hopeful, mental health, mentorship and reducing workplace pressures are prioritised. In this collaborative and sociable environment, people pool their talents to promote societal change, amplify worthwhile stories and draw in new audiences. A nurturing, innovative and encouraging ethos balances the invigorating, electric and fast-paced atmosphere, where hard work is rewarded. Young, hungry journalists feel like they can break down barriers, engage in credible, dynamic, creative storytelling and use their talent to innovate. The newsroom deals with the merit of the story rather than pushing out content for revenue. The motto is: journalism over everything.

6.6.5 Taking part in a creative activity

Thinking about career progression is always valuable, and it made me consider what I want the most from my work: to do something valuable, to write for the biggest audience possible, to get great stories before everyone else. I also reflected on the way I write my journalism and allow time for creativity (Participant 21)

At the end of the digital activity, participants were asked how they felt about taking part. Most said it made them feel reflective and piqued their curiosity about the future of the industry and their own careers. They described the activity as thought provoking, as well

as “fun”, “hilarious” and “hopeful”. One participant said they enjoyed being able to “flex” their creative thinking. Two participants said the activity made them feel “grateful”.

6.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, findings from the first stage of research were presented in sections determined by thematic analysis. This analysis will be discussed in chapter eight.

This chapter evidenced the research participants’ views on journalistic skills and knowledge, in particular, the building blocks they said they needed as a foundation for their creativity, which included essential journalistic skills. They also defined creativity in their own terms and talked about the need for change in the industry, and how journalistic creativity might play a role. They then discussed the conditions they deem essential for creativity to take place, including having a sense of belonging, particularly through support and encouragement, a diverse workplace or educational environment, creative freedom to some extent, and resources, particularly time. In reflecting on their experiences of journalistic creativity in the workplace and education, they talked about wellbeing and the impact their creativity had on them and their audience, the novelty they had experienced through creativity and their perceptions of success and satisfaction. They also discussed the barriers to creativity they had encountered which included the rigidity of their employers and lecturers, excessive educational and commercial pressure, the inherent risk aversion in industry and education, and how a lack of confidence and resilience contributed to a lack of creativity. Finally, they shared their views on the future of journalism including a visual representation of the journalist of the future, with a fictional profile of their life and career, and predictions for the future journalism workplace.

The next chapter presents findings from the second stage of research in this study, asking three stakeholder focus groups for their reactions to the stage-one data.

Chapter seven: results part two

7.1 Introduction: stage two research

This chapter shares findings from the second stage of field research: three focus groups with journalism students, journalism educators and senior journalists.

The previous chapter included the results of interviews and an online activity with 24 early career journalists. Presented thematically, the stage-one participants talked about journalistic skills and knowledge, facilitating creativity, their creative experiences, barriers to creativity and their views on the future of journalism.

This chapter continues to explore the themes above in the context of the three research questions, with a particular emphasis on *RQ3*:

- *RQ1: What is the role and meaning of creativity in contemporary journalism?*
- *RQ2: How can we equip journalists for the future by facilitating a creative pedagogical culture in journalism education?*
- *RQ3: What are the possibilities and risks of creative culture for journalists and journalism students?*

Inspired by the Delphi method (Dalkey and Helmer, 1963) this chapter includes the results from three ‘expert’ focus groups: the first with 11 students studying BA and MA Journalism at a UK University; the second with six journalism educators from university journalism departments across the UK; and a final group with six senior journalists from across the UK industry. The participants are profiled anonymously in Appendix B. The purpose of the focus groups was to sense check the analysis emerging from the semi-structured interviews and online activity, allowing the opinions and reactions of stakeholders to be aired before full data interpretation took place (see chapter eight).

In the groups, attendees were shown a short summary of the results from the first stage of research (see Appendix G) and asked for their reactions and opinions. This chapter presents selected quotes from the focus groups using the same thematic structure as chapter six.

The findings in this chapter cover the importance of foundational journalistic knowledge and creative skills, the environmental factors that facilitate creativity, the meaning of creative experiences, barriers to creativity, and predictions for the future of the industry.

7.2 Skills, knowledge and journalistic creativity

Creativity is such an intrinsic part of what I do. But journalism is probably my key skill and that is telling stories accurately, to the best of your knowledge, and in a way that the audience is going to swallow...is palatable (Journalist R)

All three focus groups agreed that creativity is “part of the deal” for journalists. According to Journalist U, “creative skills are very important for journalists, especially for the journalists of tomorrow”. Journalist W said that creativity was a skill, rather than a talent, and something that “people can learn in the newsroom”. Each group discussed the importance of journalistic standards and foundational knowledge, shared their own definitions of creativity and reacted to some examples of creative work that the stage-one participants had shared (see Appendix G, slide 13).

7.2.1 Building blocks

You've got to know the structures and the rules. But then the sprinkling of creativity that goes over the top of it is probably what marks you out from the rest of the journalists in your newsroom, if you do things with a certain flair or a little bit of a difference (Journalist R)

The focus groups agreed with the stage-one research participants that journalistic creativity required a foundation of practical skills and subject knowledge. The journalists stressed that journalism was an industry with a “heavy rule book”, particularly with regard to media law. Journalist W said that while there was an assumption about rules and creativity being diametrically opposed to one another, “rules and creativity coexist very well”. Journalist R agreed: “rules are actually going to make your product better”.

The core skills...are the things that you have to get right, and you need to have in place before you can start being unique and innovative and pushing boundaries (Journalist W)

I think there has to be the structure and the rule book of journalism with creativity being assumed (Journalist R)

The student focus group talked about the importance of learning practical skills at university, and stressed their significance:

I think if you're not able to do anything practical, then you're not going to learn. If you're doing everything by theory or by the book, what are you learning? (Student E)

One thing that drew me to [my university] was that we could do so much practical learning. I was looking at other universities and it was all sit-down classroom work, whereas here we have newsdays, we go into the studio to

*practice, we go out and create packages and I think that's really important.
It encourages us to be more creative (Student G)*

While Journalist S said that photography was a key skill for contemporary journalists, noting that many contemporary publications “won’t pay for photography”, all three focus groups agreed that social media skills were essential for 21st-century journalists. Student H said that TikTok and social media trends allowed traditional outlets to experiment and connect with Gen Z, and that this was “constantly expanding”. Educator L agreed that social media “encourages [students’] imagination”, and Educator P said that the emergence of the ‘TikTok generation’ was “changing journalism”.

*Mobile journalism is a massive thing that future journalists can't ignore.
Whether they like TikTok or not, unfortunately it does exist, and it will impact
their career. It's an optimistic thought that I could be a journalist and not
have to use my phone for my career. I don't think that will be the case
(Student G)*

The journalists said that, while social media could help journalists to be more creative, editorial processes were more important than ever as they could protect journalists from damaging their own, or their publication’s, reputation:

*Someone who's doing a TikTok video can say, 'well, I am doing freedom of
expression and pushing boundaries'. But have they reported to an editor in
any way? Or have they talked to somebody who actually knew their stuff
historically? And most of the time it's not the case, sadly (Journalist U)*

In the journalists’ focus group, the issue of facts and accuracy was discussed repeatedly. The journalists said that because social media bred disinformation, a “rigorous process” of fact-checking must be followed in the newsroom to avoid inaccuracy. Journalist R warned that if a young journalist thought the industry was all about creativity, they might “miss the purpose of journalism, which is to convey fact”. Journalist T agreed, saying that

they were “concerned” about the involvement of creativity whether in “news, weather, interviews or longer features”. Journalist U, however, argued that there was room for creativity in the foundation of a journalist’s practice:

Fact, obviously, is the baseline...to make sure the facts are communicated correctly. But the creativity goes into how you do that. You’ll hear certain people on radio who sound very dry, and then you’ll hear other people who sound very vibrant and interesting. And that’s what people tune into (Journalist U)

When discussing the foundation of journalism training, the educators and journalists said that a creative journalism department was one that “breeds responsibility into its graduates”. They also talked about how much can be learned from older journalists and educators in this regard.

7.2.2 Creative output: examples

I’d like to make something really simple that people don’t pay attention to into a big story that people will think about it. I think that’s really nice (Student C)

In each focus group, attendees read a selection of the stage-one participants’ examples of creative work (see Appendix G, side 13). The student group was impressed by the work, with attendees saying they would like to write and develop similar pieces. They also commented positively on the examples where audience engagement was described. Student G said that “creativity comes in different forms, and I think all of them should be accepted”. Student B said that all the creative examples described were collaborative. This point also came up in the educators’ group, when educators P and O said that the examples provided evidence of collaboration and “create conversation”.

The story about cooking a simple ingredient four ways, with original photography, was the most-discussed piece in every focus group: the students were inspired by it and the educators thought it was a “fun” if recycled idea. The journalists said it was a story that had been written too many times before, since the days of “frying eggs on the Fleet Street pavement in hot summers”.

I think the [food] one is really funny because creativity in journalism is a lot about adapting the way you present it. For you to make a story [out of something so simple] and make it really engaging and something that people remember...is a really important skill (Student C)

Journalist W described the examples as “lovely” but said they could imagine a journalist from 20 or 25 years ago producing similar work. Journalist R agreed, referring to the examples as “slightly old-fashioned”. Educator L said that while platforms had changed “there’s a lack of ambition here” and Journalist V described the examples as “depressing” and “undercooked”. They said the young journalists were approaching their work in a “familiar way” but that “they don’t seem to have advanced very much from what many of us were doing five, 10, 15, 25 years ago”. Journalist W said that advances in technology always relate to formats:

You can see from looking at some of these examples what we can do now, that we couldn’t do back then. [Technology has] been used for good creative ends (Journalist W)

7.2.3 Defining creativity

We use a word like creativity and we think it's something quite magical or ethereal, but it is the verb create, which is just to make...it's to make things (Student A)

When they defined creativity in their own terms, Educator Q said that “creativity is in our DNA” and Journalist R agreed that journalism should be creative at all levels. Journalist U said that breaking boundaries and innovation happened when journalists were creative with their output “whether it’s on television or on social media”. Journalist V, referring to their 30-year career in print and digital journalism, said that creativity had “changed massively”:

[Creativity is] not the same as it was. I think it's much more about chasing audiences these days, building audience, finding new ways to engage an audience, rather than perhaps the idea itself, and that has shifted the very nature of being creative in a newsroom (Journalist V)

The student focus group said that many definitions of journalism do not embrace its creative nature and said that their lecturers tend not to recognise the creativity in their work:

When a lot of people think of what journalism is, it's Watergate, and those types of journalism. They think we're sat in a newsroom, typing on a typewriter all day, every day (Student B)

I want to see more creativity, and a definition of creativity, within assignments. I feel as though they're marked without an open mind (Student K)

Looking at how the stage-one participants had defined creativity, Educator Q thought that their understanding of creativity was “orientated to goals, rather than becoming a certain kind of person”. To them, creativity meant trying new things, considering a “leftfield

approach” and “opening up to the world”; they feared that a “narrow” definition of creativity would be difficult to apply to journalism.

The focus groups also talked about the way journalists define themselves. Journalist R said, “when you’re deciding to be a journalist, it’s always your perception of what a journalist is, rather than what the industry might need at the time” and Student B said that definitions were fluid in the context of creativity:

There’s quite a crossover between photography [which is] considered a very creative career, and photojournalists. The only difference between them is how they define themselves. A photography exhibition...is telling a story, it’s a format of journalism. It’s just about finding what format you identify with as a journalist (Student B)

When the focus groups discussed the definition of journalistic creativity proposed in this thesis (see chapter four) they broadly supported it and provided feedback. Journalist W said that the publisher they worked for would see the definition as “a very accurate description of what creativity is and how it manifests”. They said that journalistic creativity, as per the definition, was “mandated” for the journalists they work with. Educator L said the definition could empower students if it was shown to them when they had enough “confidence in their skills”, while Educator P said the definition should be introduced to students “as early as possible”. Similarly, Student D said they would have liked to see the definition “in the first week of the course...or at the very beginning of the year”. Student B said that the definition should be “at the forefront of every journalism course, because journalism in every sense requires creativity”.

When I got to this course, I heard a lot of talk that ‘journalism is dying’ and it’s really hard to get into the industry. I want to be creative and if it’s hard for the traditional [journalists], imagine for me. I think if I had seen [the definition] it would have given me more hope because the creative side of journalism will never die (Student D)

7.3 Facilitating creativity

These are young people who crave companionship, belonging and purpose (Educator Q)

Each focus group talked about the benefits and risks of facilitating creativity in the way that the stage-one participants had outlined. This included feeling a sense of belonging and the importance of collaboration, the role of diversity, having the freedom to be creative and having access to resources including time, money and technology.

7.3.1 A sense of belonging

“I’d love my students to be involved in a workplace that gives them a sense of belonging, especially post-pandemic” (Educator M)

All three focus groups agreed that fostering a sense of belonging could facilitate creativity, although they said that most environments do not offer students and journalists this experience. Educator L said “peer support is key” and that they “love seeing [students] help each other”. The journalists also said that encouraging young people with their original ideas was rewarding and enjoyable. Journalist V said that encouraging journalists to move outside their comfort zone could also lead to more innovative outcomes:

You get more creative if you’re forced out of your comfort zone or your personal interest, and to go and do some original research and find an interest in the subject that you’re writing about (Journalist V)

Journalist U said that, in their own experience, the clients they were most encouraged by were the ones who gave them an opportunity to contribute their ideas. Journalist T recalled that they “hated” working for an editor who would not listen to their ideas and

simply issued orders; they liked the idea of being able to pitch their ideas and have their voice heard in a supportive environment.

All three groups talked about the difficulties associated with fostering a sense of belonging. Educator P said that although they encouraged students to be as creative as possible, they often took time to adjust “because of the [formulaic] news content they repeatedly see”. The student focus group identified negative issues at all levels of undergraduate and postgraduate study. Student K said a lack of encouragement was “one of the main issues” they had at university: “even if my ideas are not the best, I would still want to feel supported and that I’m not being forced into certain stories”. Student H expressed a similar opinion, saying that their ideas had not received support until they were fully formed:

I'd like to have support from the beginning. Sometimes it's not enough for you to just believe in it yourself especially in a workplace environment where you can come off as being stubborn (Student H)

Educator Q said that the kind of support the stage-one participants talked about indicated that they were probably not “entrepreneurial journalists” who needed to be far more self-sufficient. Journalist U agreed that support and encouragement was harder for freelancers to access, particularly if they were working from home, but recognised its importance:

When somebody treats you really nicely, and you feel like you're being rewarded, it does work for you. I think it's nice that you're able to give them that [support] at university level. Whether they'll get it in real life, in the workplace, I don't know (Journalist U)

7.3.2 Collaboration and mentorship

Collaboration is the key to a creative journalism workplace (Journalist U)

In the focus groups, when discussing the stage-one participants' perceptions of creative environments, collaboration and mentorship was much discussed. Educator N said that a creative journalism department fostered collaboration and Journalist R said the same about the newsroom, where talking about ideas was “where creativity often comes from”. Journalist U described working for a digital platform where collaboration happened continuously and said that in other industries, such as tech, collaboration was encouraged, and creativity flowed.

It is only through discussion and spaces of society that students and educators can imagine something different, take risks and experiment (Educator N)

You've got a whole bunch of people who know about the industry or the beat we're writing about, and you should be listening to them and engaging with them. It's not just a one-way process (Journalist T)

The journalists talked about the importance of in person collaboration, particularly post-pandemic. They said that public spaces improved creativity, leading to “genius” collaborations. The educators talked about collaborating with students, and Educator O said that a “student-led” approach would help with creativity. The students agreed that working together, ideally in person, was crucial for creativity.

Collaboration is really important on a creative project because it allows multiple ideas to happen at the same time. People [can] bounce off each other and that's definitely the type of workplace that I want and would expect to be involved in, in a journalism career (Student B)

In creative workspaces...an email chain is not as good as sitting around and talking and throwing ideas around (Student A)

The students also talked about barriers they had faced to collaboration at university. While Educator P said that “cross department cooperation” led to new ideas being formed, Student A said there was a “lack of open-mindedness” to collaboration across their school and wider university. They described “a massive divide when we should all be in the same family”. The student group agreed that they would have benefited from being able to collaborate more with peers and staff across their institution and being encouraged to interview faculty and students outside their department for their practical journalism work, something they said they “couldn’t do”.

7.3.3 Diversity

I think it’s important to realise everyone does things differently – but that’s not a bad thing (Student K)

Again, the three focus groups agreed on the importance of diversity, and how it could facilitate creativity, but all participants said that more work must be done to achieve it.

Student K said that the variety of staff and courses was “super important at university but described the reality as “one minded and limited”. Educator O said their department was “working hard to be inclusive and diverse” but more needed to be done.

We are all ex [national broadcaster] staffers on the practice side and white middle class. Do [the students] see themselves in the teachers? So much more needs to be done. Too much is ‘pale, male and stale’ (Educator L)

Student B said that diversity, in terms of the practical skills and work experience lecturers had, could be inspiring for students. Student I said they felt discouraged in the first year of their degree when they were told that there were “barely any Black people in journalism”.

Student B said that their brain would “stop” having creative ideas when staff focused on structure, particularly conventional ways of writing. Student F said that a lack of understanding regarding neurodiversity was also an issue in the workplace:

A workplace should be more inclusive. I'm autistic, so my verbal expression is not so good and usually, at the morning news conference, I just can't speak much. I'd prefer to work in a place that recognised my limitations and can give me another mode of working that would make me feel more comfortable (Student F)

In the industry, Journalist R said that every member of staff offered a diverse life experience and “we’d be daft as employers not to listen”. They said that learning from everybody – younger and older – “makes us wise”. The educators pointed to a lack of diversity, particularly in sports journalism. Journalist U said that by appealing to broad and global audiences, publishers were changing and becoming more diverse. They also said that experience and skillsets still trumped diversity in the newsroom:

If you try to mirror a university where there's lots of foreign students...students from China, students from India...you can't make the newsroom look exactly like that. There will be presenters...from different backgrounds, but people who are making the news, the newsmakers, the editors, are generally not as diverse, and it's mainly down to skillsets and how much experience those people have (Journalist U)

7.3.4 Freedom

To me, creativity means I can work freely without judgement (Student K)

Freedom of choice was a talking point in the students’ and educators’ focus groups. The students agreed that when they had more choice with their projects and elective modules,

usually towards the end of their courses, there was more opportunity for creativity. Student H said that if they had been given more choice earlier in the course “there would be more room for me to develop and grow”. Student C said that they wanted to be a documentarian, but their chosen career path had not been discussed, and they knew “nothing about it” after a year on the course. Student K said that encouragement and freedom were “important aspects that I expect from a workplace”.

You can learn to follow the basic structure and blend in, but if you are a creative person, and you have the freedom and choice to do things the way that you want to, you really are more likely to find new avenues and new ways to do things (Student H)

Educator P said it would be good for students “to have a little more freedom” and Educator M agreed that choice fosters creativity. Educator L said that journalists having their voices heard, while feeling free and confident, was key to the workforce. They said that students needed “the freedom to fail at university” and should be encouraged to “have a go and see what happens”.

Educator M said that students should have module options from other creative fields, such as graphic design. Educator O said that giving students choice and control over their final projects allowed them to explore their passions.

It’s a challenge to strike a balance between structure and freedom in terms of creativity. Students do seem to value freedom but also appreciate boundaries (Educator N)

Educator Q expressed concern that “just doing what you want” is how students would define creativity. Student K confirmed this fear: “that is what creativity is – doing what I want”. The educators stressed the importance of telling students that journalistic creativity is not “creative writing”, or “writing about what they get up to with their mates”.

Educator P said that they asked students to “write about their interests” but to make it more creative by using new technology and storytelling platforms. Similarly, Educator O

said they enjoyed watching students when they had the freedom to use new software to tell stories.

7.3.5 Resources

You can see [creativity] in those publishing houses where there's money and time (Educator O)

The focus groups agreed that time was a key resource for facilitating creativity. Student G said that without time, creativity was “a lot more difficult to accomplish”. Educator M said that time constraints were “restrictive”, adding to the stress journalists and students experience. Educator N agreed that a limited time frame “stifles creativity”. Educator O said there was less creativity in big media brands that worked on tight turnarounds, producing mass content, and that there was “huge time pressure on journalists at the moment”. The journalists also discussed this time pressure:

There is literally a churn now, with 24-hour news, that's why so many guests are booked to be on TV and radio, because it's easier to get a pundit on than it is to actually set a journalist time to pull together some considered piece (Journalist R)

The focus groups also agreed that money and technology were essential resources in enabling journalistic creativity. Educator O said that whilst they would love students to be “in a creative and collaborative workplace” they were worried that the funding cuts they had seen across the industry would limit this. Journalist R said that money had always been a barrier to creativity and continued to be so. Student C said that being creative should be recognised by “higher management” by way of fair remuneration. They said that journalists needed to make a living, and that creative people deserved to be paid for what they produced.

Educator Q questioned whether all students had equal access to creativity: “is it a privilege? Do you need financial security to be creative?” Student B agreed that “creativity is expensive” and said that when young people decided to go into a career in the arts, people assumed that they “don’t want to be rich”.

If you’re struggling to have money in the industry...a freelancer, for example...you can’t afford to be creative because you know that if you do a creative piece it’s going to take a while, you’re going to need some time. Creativity is so nice but it’s for the elite – for people who can afford to have creativity, which is really sad but is unfortunately the reality (Student C)

The educators’ focus group was particularly keen to mention that technology was an essential resource for facilitating creativity in journalism departments. Educator P said that “having the most up-to-date equipment helps”, and Educator M agreed that technology was “vital” in the creative classroom.

7.4 Experiencing creativity

“Creativity has lots of positive connotations for young people involving wellbeing, autonomy and individuality” (Educator Q)

The focus groups were presented with findings from the stage-one research about participants’ encounters with creativity and how creativity made them feel. They discussed wellbeing and impact, particularly on audiences, the meaning of novelty and discovery, and the effect of creative success on journalists.

7.4.1 Wellbeing and impact

You can lose sight of what should be at the heart of [your work as a journalist], which is creativity and doing something that feels good and is good (Student A)

All three focus groups agreed that creativity was a positive trait in journalists, fostering a sense of wellbeing. The journalists' focus group talked about happiness, saying that to be creative, and generate "blue sky thought" a journalist must be relatively happy – something that would be unlikely in an environment where jobs were being lost, or morale was low.

If you can walk into the office, and people are having a laugh and they're interested, and they're curious, and they're bantering. There's far more likelihood for a germ of an idea to grow (Journalist R)

Journalist U said that mental health "was not even in our vocabulary 20 years ago" but was pleased to see the emphasis the younger journalists had placed on it. Student H said that mental health in the workplace was "very important", and Educator O liked the fact that participants wanted to see "an emphasis on mental health" in the future.

Some educators and journalists felt strongly that personality and personal expression was not relevant to journalism, and that graduates needed to concentrate on fitting in. Educator O, however, said that creativity "allows the personality of a journalist to shine through". This was echoed in the student forum, where Student A said that being a journalist was about "finding your voice".

Our students seem to see creativity as personal expression. They love space and time to explore their own interests and to put their personal touch on the work they produce (Educator N)

I like the idea of letting [a journalist's] personality emerge because it is important to still be a person, even if you are a journalist, and to be yourself.

It would make me feel like I'm [more] than just a number. It's nice that there's a person behind [the words] and an opinion and that still counts (Student D)

Attendees in the educators' focus group agreed that creativity created impact when it engaged a wider audience. Educator P said, "the emergence of the TikTok generation is pushing creative boundaries because they know and understand their audience". Educator L agreed that while breaking boundaries in journalism was key, "knowledge of audience" was needed.

The student group discussed impact in terms of making a difference to a niche audience. Student C stressed that journalists did not need to set their sights on changing the world, but that changing their own lives could make a difference to others. They also said that their lecturers often rejected their ideas for being too narrow, but that reaching out to niche groups was important:

I've watched documentaries that aren't necessarily going to drive societal change, but they've significantly benefited my own opinions and mindset. Targeting works to people that need them is also important and it doesn't have to be momentous [if] the story has benefitted someone in some way. There's definitely a space for niche media (Student G)

Journalist U talked about the impact of a leading podcaster, with "millions of people listening to him". They said that, as well as being approachable and advocating for mental health, having a "robust team of people who knew what they were doing" around him made all the difference in terms of his impact. Journalist R said that having empathy, and understanding an audience, was also crucial.

7.4.2 Novelty

“I love helping students discover what kind of journalist they want to be – that drives me as an educator” (Educator N)

When discussing novelty and discovery, Educator Q said that there was a connection between creativity and openness to new experiences “because creativity is about our relationship with the world around us”. Educator N said that students seemed to feel most creative when they were doing something new outside their regular or traditional activities, “like playing a game or going out in the field”. Educator O was also impressed that the young journalists wanted to push boundaries and try new methods of storytelling, “making a lasting impact and shaping future storytelling”.

I want students to tackle new subjects not the same boring ones that are obvious, such as homelessness, fast fashion and mental health. They need to explore out of their comfort zone. That’s where we come in – empowering and encouraging their creativity (Educator L)

Student B wanted to distinguish between discovering meaning in the subject and “discovering you are more than just a journalism degree”:

Maybe you’ll complete a journalism degree and go into a career and maybe people won’t refer to you as a journalist, they’ll refer to you as something else. I think discovering meaning...it’s a personal meaning (Student B)

The educator and journalist focus groups also talked about novelty “for the sake of it”. Educator L said that the need for “quirky angles” sometimes got in the way of storytelling, and the journalists said that the pursuit of newness and quirkiness could be problematic:

The pure drive [at my company] is to be doing something that somebody else is not doing. It engenders these ideas that don’t necessarily work or

don't necessarily make sense, but we just have to be seen to be doing something that no one else is doing at the moment (Journalist S)

Anybody who has a phone can publish anything they like... YouTube, TikTok, anywhere they like. And I think the blasé nature of that publication means that their search for fact and their craving for truth, and their view that they mustn't damage their own reputation, is put behind their desire to be first, quirky and something else (Journalist R)

7.4.3 Satisfaction and success

Along with creativity comes passion. If you're really passionate about things it won't necessarily be money that will drive you, or other assets, it will be just the fact that you truly believe in something (Student H)

In the journalists' focus group, Journalist R talked about success usually being measured in terms of output and editorial recognition but said that success *should* be determined by "calls to action...it's about moving people to behave differently". Journalist U said that measuring success through metrics was a PR habit, but that the viral success of influencers had contributed to the challenge posed to traditional journalists. To face that challenge, Journalist U said that broadcast journalists could use their personality to achieve success in the field. They said that personality "comes through when people either see you on TV or hear you, and there's a certain uniqueness to the way you communicate". Journalist U also said that collaboration created success, providing an example of the way a specific and successful digital platform worked:

It's a very open-plan office. People can go over to someone else's desk and say, 'hey, can we do this?' And [it] seems to work really well for them because they are getting a lion's share of people viewing them online (Journalist U)

Journalist S believed that success was “personal” to contemporary journalists and said that it could be “problematic for us old-timers in that there’s a much stronger drive, especially with people who see themselves as content creators”. Journalist S warned that the pursuit of personal success could make creativity through collaboration harder to achieve.

The focus groups also said that the most successful individuals were flexible, open to creativity and striving to create impact. They said that impact kept journalists “relevant”, “evolving and learning”.

That’s a great thing about journalism now – people are much more flexible and open-minded to stuff going in completely different directions (Student A)

[Young people are] obviously thinking out of the box...they use people’s emotions to generate the stories that they’re putting out there, and it makes them very successful (Journalist U)

7.5 Creative barriers

One of the things [at university] I don’t get enough of is being the type of journalist that I want to be. I feel like there’s one focus on being a generic journalist, going into a newsroom and doing all the same things...they don’t give us that creativity to do what you want to do (Student J)

When the focus groups discussed the barriers to creativity identified by the stage-one participants, they talked about rigidity, pressure, risk aversion and the impact of low confidence and a lack of resilience. The discussion on generational gaps was extensive, and sits in its own sub-section, below.

7.5.1 Rigidity

Could there be an age gap between what older, more experienced journalists might think is bread and butter stuff, and what people coming into this business hope it will be? (Journalist R)

The student focus group said that journalism was a subject where the traditional ways of doing things were persistent. They said that “old-fashioned” ways of working were presented as being “more successful” than innovative solutions.

I think holding on to a traditional way of working would make you feel less creative because you have to follow a formula that's there and you don't have space for your own creativity (Student G)

I always think it's a bit weird when certain journalists say “oh, we're not creative’ Well, we are creative...you are making something – hopefully something good. And that's just creativity (Student A)

Student K described the way that having their ideas rejected made them “close down” and Student B said that although all forms of journalism were creative, requiring innovation and unique ideas, the first year of their BA journalism course had not made them feel as creative as it could have:

When you are speaking to lecturers, they have this idea of what journalism is, especially if they are academic lecturers or your lecturer is in [politics]. There's not a lot of room for creativity in something like that (Student B)

I see that it's important to be able to imagine, to think about ‘what's the story here? What's the narrative?’ That's a perfectly valid journalistic skill. But I can see why some people might go: ‘you can't be using your imagination

you're just reporting!' I can see why some people would resist that (Student A)

Some similar opinions about the rigidity of education were shared by the educators, particularly in the context of assessment where they said there was a need for more flexibility. Educator O agreed with the stage one participants that “strict marking criteria could stifle creativity” but said that: “it takes us a while to change an assessment due to the process”.

Not enough assessments foster individual growth and reflection, giving [students] the opportunity to find their own voice and their path, rather than 'groupthink' and traditional ways of working (Educator L)

When the journalists discussed rigidity in industry, they agreed that short-term thinkers were bad bosses. They said that rigid employers could make an environment “very unpleasant to work in”, but Journalist U said that young journalists had to learn to work with unpleasant managers:

If they want to become a journalist, they need to be able to report to their editor. Some editors are horrible. But for the most part an editor is trying to help you do your job better. I'm sure a lot of the younger journalists, or journalists to be will have an issue with this stuff, but it is essential. If they don't want to do history at uni, and instead do journalism, they do have to work around all of this (Journalist U)

While the educators discussed how “formulaic” news coverage had become, Journalist R said that there was little room for creativity in the newsroom: “I'd really rather a news bulletin be written the way I'd like a news bulletin written than to be like a Mills and Boon”. Many stage-one research participants talked about self-expression and personality playing a part in improving news coverage and engaging new audiences, but some of the educators and journalists talked about personality being “redundant” in journalism. Educator L said that they didn't think personality was key to creativity because it should have “universal appeal”. Journalists V and R went further:

I think journalists should be banned from writing or doing stories about personal interests. That's the stuff of blogs and it encourages a mentality that we need to drum out of them (Journalist V)

You've got to be humble enough to realise that no one cares who you are...the other thing is, when you're 17, 18, 19, you think every idea you have is great and new, because you just haven't got the experience of life to know that someone else has already come up with it five years ago (Journalist R)

Educator O acknowledged that young journalists might struggle if they were trying to “tackle a traditional editor who cannot see the point or value of creative ideas”. Journalist T, who said that getting creative ideas across to management was a challenge, echoed this:

When Twitter first came out, I was at [a UK financial publication]. They said, 'no one will use social media to promote anything'...they were scared shitless, possibly because it didn't go through lawyers first. They believed in a subscription only model and they thought this was possibly evading subscription because people were getting it for free. They were deeply, deeply conservative and getting over that management wall is a big challenge for creative ideas and enthusiastic new journalists who want to say, 'look, we ought to be doing this' (Journalist T)

The concept of the industry becoming less rigid was also discussed, with the journalists saying they had experienced more space for innovation, and a change in hierarchical structures:

I've been in the technology, telecoms and computer press all my life, in trade papers, and that was very rigid when I started. You had to [use] a certain number of pages, a certain number of stories. Now, you can innovate. You can think of all sorts of different ways of telling the story, reporting the news, or reporting an interview (Journalist T)

When I started, I could really understand the hierarchy and got a lot from people at the top of the tree. And this is the route that you needed to follow to be in that position. That has completely broken now. I don't think there is a value for experience, because there are limitless examples of people who haven't had the experience, who have somehow amassed a lot of success very quickly, so there's not the same kind of respect for how it works (Journalist S)

7.5.2 Generational gaps

There's a fundamental difference in the way you work when you're over 50, and the way you work when you're 25. As I experience [regularly] where I work, the work ethic is just different. There's a different drive, not saying either one is wrong or right. But there is a difference in the way people work, and that can make it quite hard to be creative and to be collaborative, because it doesn't always naturally come together (Journalist S)

Generational gaps were discussed by most of the participants across all three focus groups. The students described lecturers as “out of touch with the growing industry” and said that journalism “will never be the same as it was in the 20th century”. Educator P said this was also true in industry: “a lot of old school journalists are afraid of creativity”.

We shouldn't get our ideas shut down just because a lecturer won't read it when they are not the target audience for the idea (Student G)

The journalists said that senior colleagues would “resist” the creative ideas of younger journalists, and Journalist R said that a “gate keep on innovation” was required so that it did not “spiral out of control”. Journalist U said that young journalists who “believe in being unique” might struggle to balance their individuality with the demands of the profession:

They've been patted on the back by people all through their lives telling them they're amazing. But actually, they don't have a framework that is giving them the real life skills, and that's definitely an issue. They don't like having too much pressure. They don't like rules. Traditional ways of working are not something they want to do (Journalist U)

Although generational challenges were highlighted, all three focus groups stressed the importance of journalists of all ages working together and learning from each other. The journalists were surprised that mentorship did not emerge as a stronger theme in the first stage of research and stressed its importance:

Having those older editors in the newsroom is still very important...and if they don't have those people, things start to crumble, because then you are relying on a Gen Z who turns up at whatever time they want to turn up, and they're not able to make the news in that way (Journalist U)

When you don't have those old timers in the newsroom [there are no mentors], they can't nurture the young person's skills, so they can't guide all these fresh, lovely ideas that come in when a new person arrives in a place. But they do need to be shaped, and that's often something that educators can't do entirely in university. It has to be done within newsrooms (Journalist R)

The students and educators also talked about the positive role of cross-generational relationships and skill sharing in the workplace:

I feel [young journalists] need older journalists still to help with diversity and their range of skills (Educator O)

I've just read a book about an older magazine columnist and it's about the team kicking her out because she doesn't know how to use TikTok. Actually, her core fundamental ideas are inspiring and important, and they are based

on human connection. Also, people who are younger than 30 have very valuable ideas to contribute (Student B)

Some of the educators and journalists said that the responses of the stage-one participants had made them, in the words of Educator L, “feel very old”. Educator L was also “sad that they focus on soft news that relates to them”, saying that this highlighted their worries about “political apathy”. When discussing the creative examples, Journalist R admitted that they would need the young journalists to explain, or translate, their ideas, and Journalist V said that they were “slightly depressed” that they didn’t understand many of the words in the examples.

It’s all very well a 17 or 18-year-old coming up with an idea. But if you’re broadcasting to a load of people over 40, they just won’t get it.... A lot of the people like me, old timers who’ve been working in newsrooms for up to 25 years, took redundancy, and we took it because it was a lovely big, fat payoff in a world which seemed to be changing faster than we were able to change. I was not necessarily able to keep up with TikTok this, that, and the other (Journalist R)

7.5.3 Excessive pressure

People work creatively at different speeds, whether that is under pressure or no pressure (Student H)

Some of the students described how pressure had a negative impact on their creativity. Student J said that “too much pressure at university” made it hard to follow their heart and “do an assignment in a creative way”. Student H said that “creative burnout” happened if they were not working in an environment with “encouragement and space”. Similarly, Educator M said the industry could be more “sausage factory” than creative and Educator

Q recognised that the pressure on students made creativity “too risky” but pointed out that the pressure came from “external forces” outside educators’ control.

The marking and assessment part...it sucks but you can't really avoid that. It's just part of life, I guess. For me, in terms of being discouraged, it was the pressure of having to do subjects that I don't really like. I know you have to do it because you have to experience it, but at times I wanted to be creative for my projects. Being a first-year student, I couldn't get to do what I wanted [because the lecturers] kept turning it down (Student C)

Referring to the industry, Educator P said that the pressure of deadlines was exacerbated by clickbait. The journalists agreed that the commercial race for audience engagement, created by the large number of outlets in the market and the short attention spans of the audience, was intensifying the pressure. Journalist W said that while journalists were pushed to be imaginative, unique and innovative “they also have targets to meet, KPIs to fulfill at the same time”. The students were already aware of these pressures:

For me, the biggest issue would be having to increase the sales and do something that's going to have loads of clicks and engagement...some of the stories [I want to tell] might not do that but they need to be told. If you're in a workplace where they don't want to look at those stories, because it's not going to benefit them, you're going to feel completely stuck. You'll end up having to do stories that don't feel personal to you at all and you're not going to have the passion. For me that is the worst-case scenario (Student C)

Pressure was not seen as a negative by all the focus group attendees. Journalist R said that journalists must learn to “tolerate pressure” and that pressure could create a space for bonding:

Camaraderie in journalism invariably comes from the most high-pressure moments when you are helping your colleague because you're up against a deadline in 10 minutes, and you have to write that copy and someone's

helped you out. That's the moment where you go: 'I'll take you for a glass of wine after work' (Journalist R)

Educator M also said that “pressure can be a good thing” and Student B agreed that a manageable level of pressure was helpful in their creative work:

Sometimes when I feel under pressure that's when my mind works creatively because creativity for me is also about problem solving: 'how am I going to get this done in a way that I want it done before the deadline'. Creativity without a direction is good for the soul, but it can't produce that much. You can't go through life without having any deadlines, but you do need to get the amount of pressure right (Student B)

7.5.4 Risk aversion

Sometimes it's hard to take risks with work, or do something that's more fun, because you might be focused on traditions in journalism. Since there's a lot of change and modern forms of journalism, for example, interactive stories, it would help people to come up with more ideas that are different (Student C)

When they discussed risk aversion, Educator L said educators could support students with taking risks by “making them do the things they don't think they want to do” and being encouraged to move out of their silos. Student E agreed that allowing students to fail was crucial and could be facilitated by experimentation: “That's how you learn, by not being scared of failing, trying”.

Educator Q described how they started newsdays by describing the environment as a safe place to make mistakes: “I want them to stop worrying and ‘play’”. Educator O agreed that students need to be assured that they can “think outside the box” and “tell stories in

different ways” at the start of their courses. Student H stressed the importance of knowing that if something goes wrong “it won’t be the end of the world”.

While Educator Q said that “neoliberal, market-driven assumptions about competition stifle creativity” and that we “have to minimise the risk to the self”, Educator L said that the fear media owners have of politicians, and the control they have over their agendas, should be mentioned as a barrier to creativity and individual growth.

I think freedom of expression is really important, but it can be difficult to achieve it, especially if what you write needs to align with the publication’s political agenda...that can limit your creativity. It’s depressing to achieve in the current industry (Student F)

Educator Q also pointed out that “risk-taking costs money”, which made it less likely in education and industry.

7.5.5 Lacking confidence and resilience

You’ve got to have a sense of resilience about what you’re doing...it’s tough out there. It’s hard to keep that intact because it’s a really tough business and it’s never been harder to try and keep focused on that creative urge rather than just feeling like a machine, churning it out (Student A)

To counter the risk posed to creativity by a lack of resilience and low confidence, Educator M said that lecturers needed to build students up to increase their confidence enough for them to explore and find their passions. Although the educators all agreed that journalistic confidence was essential, they acknowledged that standing up to editors was never easy. According to Educator P: “ultimately, they will all probably have to comply and lose some creativity”.

Journalist W talked about resilience in the context of audience engagement. They said that journalists who expected positive interactions in their day-to-day work were looking through “rose-tinted spectacles” and needed resilience to cope with the realities of audience engagement, particularly if their work involved pushing boundaries:

What they're dealing with in terms of the social side is often a wave of abuse and harassment, and we have policies and staff and processes in place to deal with that. We can publish an amazing exclusive or investigation and it will lead to lots of buzz and talk from more audience online, and the journalist would experience a sense of flow and enjoyment. But a lot of the time it's just the opposite, sadly (Journalist W)

7.6 The future of journalism

[Young journalists] want to be change makers...they want to shape the future, not just be shaped by it (Educator Q)

In the focus groups, the discussion touched upon how education and industry were already evolving, as well as what needed to change. While Educator M said their department was always developing to stay relevant and that emerging practice was “vital”, the educators also talked about the way 24-hour news coverage had become “formulaic” and staid and was not inspiring to students. They said it needed to change.

Given this need for change, Journalist W said: “publishers can’t afford to be rigid and short-term thinkers”. Journalist R believed that audiences were changing at a slower pace than journalists, who were being forced to adapt their practice quickly, and struggled to keep up with the pace of change.

Doing things differently and being unique and innovative are the massive drivers where I work (Journalist S)

[Creativity] is not optional now with journalism and how it's changed. These skills or these drives, are essential to success (Journalist W)

One issue the journalists added to the conversation was the need for “real collaboration” between educators and employers, particularly regarding the rapidly changing skill sets of contemporary journalists. They said that universities must use industry partnerships to “stay relevant” and “teach the right stuff” based on the journalism jobs of the future:

There needs to be far more of a synergy between universities and the workplace...the general feeling at [a national broadcaster] is that people coming out of journalism college are just not fit for purpose, and there aren't the elders in the newsroom to shape people and take them one step further, which is perhaps the schooling that we had (Journalist R)

When the focus groups discussed the stage-one participants' predictions for the future, the students were encouraged and inspired. Student K was not surprised by the avatars of the future journalists saying, “that's what they already look like to me”.

With these [future journalist avatars] you see that you can't stereotype a journalist anymore. Sometimes people do stereotype the profession. I've told people I am studying journalism and they'll be sceptical and I don't like that – does it mean there's some kind of negative stereotype of the media? (Student G)

The students also discussed the challenge of AI and how creativity might counter it. Student B felt strongly that “AI cannot be creative” and Student D said that AI cannot “reproduce the human experience, so people need to be reminded of that”. Student A made the point that facilitating personality and self-expression in journalism is a way to mitigate the threat from AI:

If we're ever going to defeat the AI beast, we've got to really remind people that you follow journalists and the great journalists in history were individuals with their own voice (Student A)

Some of the educators and journalists reacted positively to the stage-one participants' vision of the future. Educator M said the future sounded "hopeful and confident" with a focus on "activism, crusade journalism and niche" and a sense of the "glass ceiling breaking".

*It sounds really hopeful and that there is a place in the future for journalism.
It's our job as educators to help students live that vision...most importantly,
the future workplace should always feel inclusive (Educator N)*

Some reacted positively to the ideas that were put forward by the stage-one participants, but doubted that their vision would ever come to fruition:

This is the kind of workplace I would want them to be involved in, but the reality is often a bit different (Educator P)

*Water cooler moments, camaraderie and openness...fun and friendly vibe.
We all wish that this is our workplace, right? This looks and sounds amazing.
It's not necessarily accurate (Journalist U)*

Some journalists and educators had a more cynical view. Some educators thought the predictions for a future workplace were overly optimistic, with Educator O describing them as "utopian". Although they could see the positives in the description of the future journalist, Educator M said that the stage-one participants' vision of the future workplace was "delusional", "unrealistic" and sounded like they were describing "Google in a Hollywood movie".

*Sorry to be a cynical old bore but what snowflakes! Lots of buzzwords here
and it's idealistic. I would prefer more focus on empowerment and the
facilitation of creative ideas (Educator L)*

Journalist R also had reservations about the predictions and said that the individual aspirations of journalists were not important to industry:

What people want to be is secondary. You want to be a journalist. Great, you be a journalist – the way journalists need to be today, not the way you fancy being a journalist in five years' time writing your blog. That's not what it's about (Journalist R)

All three focus groups agreed that the social elements described in the future workplace were positive and encouraging:

The young people, at least the ones who want to become journalists, are looking at [socialising with colleagues] as being a very important part of their lifestyle. In my early days, when I finished university and started work, those beers after work and lunchtime meetings, those are the things that I still remember very fondly. And it's nice to see that these young people are looking at the same sort of thing (Journalist U)

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter included the findings from the second stage of research in the same thematic structure as chapter six (stage-one research findings) with two additional sub themes on collaboration and generational gaps; these sub themes were apparent in the first stage of research but were much more prominent in the focus group data.

The findings include the focus groups' views on journalistic skills and knowledge, in particular the importance of accuracy, fact and editorial oversight, which the journalists' focus group wanted to emphasise. All groups agreed that training in practical skills and journalistic knowledge creates a foundation for journalistic creativity, and they stressed that social media skills should be treated as essential. The groups had mixed reactions to the creative examples provided by the stage-one participants, and while they all supported the definition of journalistic creativity proposed in this thesis, the students said that creativity is underappreciated in education.

When they talked about facilitating creativity, the groups agreed that while a sense of belonging is ideal, it is not always evident in education and industry. Collaboration emerged as a sub-theme in this stage of research, with mentorship, particularly from older journalists guiding younger colleagues, discussed. The groups also talked about in-person collaboration being important, post-pandemic. The groups talked about how much work is still needed on diversity and the educators and students agreed that more freedom would be beneficial at university. In terms of resources, all the groups discussed time and also agreed that money and technology is crucial for creativity. The groups considered the impact that creative journalism had on audiences and the individual wellbeing of journalists, but the educators and journalists had different opinions to the early career journalists and students when they talked about personal expression and personality in journalism. The groups all discussed the risks of “novelty for the sake of it” and talked about success in both personal and commercial terms.

When discussing barriers to creativity, rigidity was a topic all three groups agreed on, and generational gaps emerged as a strong sub-theme. All groups talked about pressure as both an aid and a risk to creativity, and all agreed that risk aversion, and lacking confidence and resilience, creates a barrier to creativity in industry and education.

When the groups discussed the future, the students talked about feeling inspired and hopeful; the views of the educators and journalists were mixed, with some expressing their own hopes for a future as bright as the stage-one participants’, and others seeing the predictions as “unrealistic”. In future, the journalists wanted to see more synergy between industry and education.

The next chapter includes a discussion of the results from both stages of the research, including an interpretation of the data in relation to the literature.

Chapter eight: discussion

8.1 Introduction

This chapter includes an interpretation of the research results presented across chapters six and seven. The inductive discussion in this chapter addresses the primary research aim of this project, to explore what a creative culture in journalism and journalism education looks like and how can it help 21st-century journalists to cope with the realities of the profession.

Linking to the literature throughout, this chapter analyses the foundational, practical and creative skills that are seen as essential for the future by contemporary journalists in the context of education and industry, and the description participants gave of a supportive ecosystem that facilitates creative work and behaviour. This interpretation aims to explain the role and meaning of creativity in contemporary journalism (*RQ1*).

By exploring the creative experiences research participants described, and its ‘eudaimonic’ impact (a phenomenon explored in this chapter) on their careers and personal growth, the analysis in this chapter also suggests how journalists can be equipped for the future by a creative pedagogical culture in journalism education (*RQ2*).

In analysing the experiences of creative barriers in the data, this chapter elucidates a set of attitudes and behaviours that produce a journalistic orthodoxy that inhibits creativity. It also interprets the research participants’ predictions for journalism, and future journalists, in the context of creativity. This analysis helps to highlight the possibilities and risks of creative culture for journalists and journalism students (*RQ3*).

The key findings are presented using the same thematic structure as chapters six and seven, also shown in the three thematic maps included in this chapter, which illustrate how the research themes were refined and situated for the purpose of this discussion, and to inform a conceptual pedagogical model – *Educating Future Journalists* – included in the conclusion to this thesis (chapter nine).

The analysis presented in this chapter uses the theoretical framework and definition of journalistic creativity outlined in chapter four. It also comes from a reflexive perspective (Braun and Clarke, 2022); as an ‘insider researcher’, my experiences and interactions with journalism, education and creativity have undoubtedly influenced the way I coded the data and generated the thematic analysis presented here.

Within this discussion, the research participants from the first stage of research (semi-structured interviews and online *Future Journalists* activity) are referred to as ‘early career journalists’. Participants in the second stage of research (focus groups) are referred to as ‘students’, ‘educators’ and ‘senior journalists’. When the discussion refers to ‘research participants’ this includes participants in every cohort.

8.2 Key findings: summary

After data collection, five main, overarching themes were generated from the coding and analysis: skills and knowledge; the facilitation of creativity; experiencing creativity; creative barriers; and the future of journalism. Sub-themes were also proposed and are shown on the initial thematic map (Map #1), with the primary research question at the centre:

THEMATIC MAP #1

Analysis showing five main themes



JOHANNA PAYTON, 2024

Figure 9: Thematic map #1 - five main themes and emerging sub themes

The initial map provides an indication of the project's key findings. In the context of *RQ1*, the analysis suggests that students and young journalists were overwhelmingly positive about the role and meaning of creativity in their workplace and educational experiences. This supports the theory that journalists regard their work as inherently creative and see themselves as creative people. The analysis suggests that journalistic creativity enhances wellbeing, impact, novelty, success and satisfaction, illustrating some of the possibilities that creative culture offers journalism students and journalists (*RQ3*).

The data analysis also shows that when creative resources are available, including time, money and technology, and the environment fosters a sense of belonging, collaboration, diversity and freedom, a creative culture is facilitated, helping journalists to enjoy, succeed, and sustain their work. The importance of journalistic knowledge is also reinforced, with the data suggesting that practical skills and journalistic convention are necessary for creativity to occur. The data also supports the concept that journalistic creativity could play a part in the future, helping to counter the challenges contemporary journalists and journalism students face by contributing to a more human, supportive, social and rewarding educational and workplace culture. Creativity might also help journalists to mitigate professional competition from generative AI, build their confidence and resilience, increase public trust, and counter the impact of disinformation; this analysis helps to answer *RQ2*.

The data indicates that senior stakeholders in the industry, including editors and educators, see creativity as a risk because they are not certain it can co-exist with fact, accuracy and objectivity. There are also concerns that creativity is expensive. The data also posits the idea that senior figures conflate 'soft news' and creativity and treat 'hard' and 'soft' news as opposing forces (*RQ3*). When creative freedom and fulfilment in industry and education is lacking, however, the data suggests that journalists and journalism students feel demotivated and discouraged. Individuals in this environment encounter rigidity, excessive pressure, risk aversion and low levels of confidence and resilience. The data analysis suggests that this results in job dissatisfaction in industry, which can lead to young journalists leaving an organisation, or the profession of journalism altogether. At university, it leads to a sense of dissatisfaction that could

influence student experience, levels of retention, course evaluation and transition to industry. This aspect of the data analysis highlights the risks of operating a journalism workplace, or journalism school, without considering or cultivating the benefits of a creative culture.

8.3 Thematic data interpretation

In this section, the key findings from the data are discussed in relation to the literature. In Map #2, a refined version of the initial thematic map, the structure of the discussion is shown. This is the same thematic structure used to present the results in chapters six and seven. Map #2 shows the new names (in parentheses) that help to define the main themes, as well as the final sub themes:

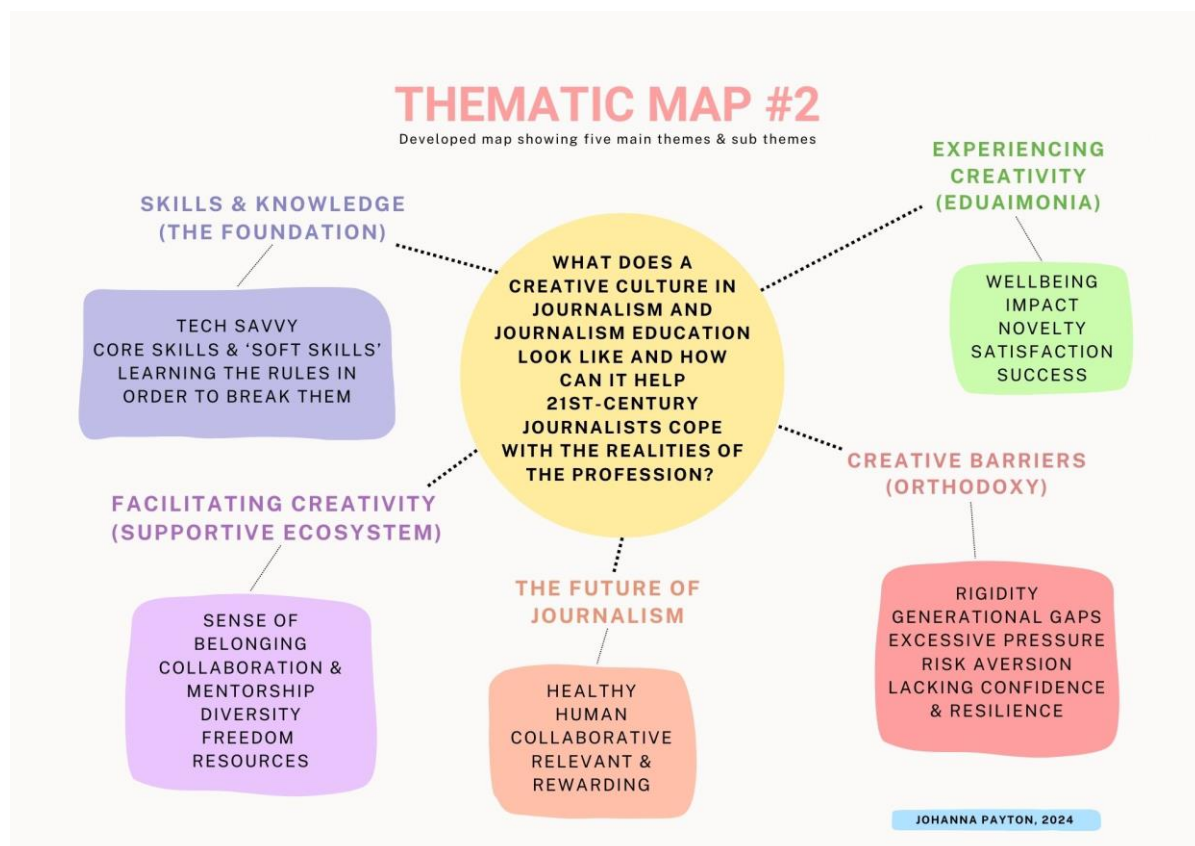


Figure 10: Thematic map #2 - five main themes and sub themes

8.3.1 Skills, knowledge and journalistic creativity: the foundation

The data points overwhelmingly to the role and importance of journalistic knowledge to journalists, educators and students. The research participants believe that a foundation of studying journalism heritage and mastering journalistic skills is needed for creativity to take place.

The early career journalists were unequivocal in their respect and appreciation for the practical application of journalism and its traditions. Like Fulton and McIntyre (2013), they reject the conflation of journalism and the arts and their responses, particularly when asked for examples of their most creative work, align with the authors' assertion that a journalist can produce creative work in any format. Fulton and McIntyre say that journalists produce novel output within the structures of journalistic convention. This concept of 'learning the rules' to underpin journalistic creativity was shared by the early career journalists and journalism students who spoke enthusiastically about learning practical and time-honoured skills and structures, including fact checking, media law and ethics, before experimenting with their own ideas. The educators and senior journalists agreed that rules and structure enhance creativity. It is important to note Markham's (2012) point that learning the rules also allows journalists to appear more authentic, and the role authenticity plays in creative work was espoused by the early career journalists. As Markham says, however, the rules come more naturally to some than others, suggesting the potential for tension between students with a natural aptitude for knowledge-based learning and those, like the non-conformist but highly creative students Kleiman (2005) describes, who struggle with regulations, procedures and authority.

All research participants agreed that developing so-called 'soft skills' – perhaps more appropriately called 'human skills' (Sinek, 2021) – including resilience and confidence, should play a part in a journalist's foundational training. Like Deuze (2023), participants appreciate that journalists must learn and adapt to new technology; becoming tech-savvy is paramount in their description of essential skills and knowledge.

Journalistic creativity as a foundational skill

When discussing journalistic creativity, most research participants across the data corpus agreed with Keeble (2007), Ricketson (2017) and Koivula, Villi and Sivunen's (2020) view that journalism is a creative industry and an 'inherently' creative practice. They regard creativity as a fundamental element of the 'foundation' of journalism. Like Pavlik (2019), they believe that creative methods of storytelling are at the heart of their journalistic work. Interestingly, in contrast with Ricketson's (2017) hypothesis that journalists reject the 'creative' label, the early career journalists described themselves as creative people without hesitation. They were proud of their most innovative work, suggesting a generational shift in attitudes towards journalistic creativity. They described creative workplaces where ideas are treated as currency and individuals are expected to contribute creatively towards shared goals and projects. The journalism students seemed less confident in their creative abilities and the educators, who recognised that students were struggling to take risks, echoed this. The educators wondered if students' risk aversion was due to the formulaic nature of the news they see, indicating that media brands are not taking Dowling's (2020) advice and utilising creative narrative methods to add new and powerful meaning to traditional news formats, or if such innovative news media does exist, it is not on the students' radar.

Social media as a foundational skill

All research participants in the study agreed that social media skills are now essential for journalists. The data gives the impression that educators and publishers must embrace new and creative ways of using social media as a journalistic tool to engage audiences and stay relevant. As Alejandro (2010) predicted, the research participants, particularly the early career journalists, believe that social media helps industry be transparent, accountable and connect with a wider range of voices and views. While the early career journalists spoke with passion about social media, supporting Ntamadaki's (2023) view on the opportunities it presents for journalists, the educators and senior journalists talked

with a mix of despair and frustration, with some expressing concern that social media trends were leaving them behind. Understandably, and echoing the work of Huda and Azad (2015), they also discussed the threat of abuse and professional stress posed to journalists by social media engagement, which is certainly a risk of creative practice in the digital age.

The competition to journalists from bloggers and influencers (Newman, 2009) was keenly felt. Although the educators and senior journalists admitted that social media skills contribute significantly to the building blocks of journalism training, some senior journalists were particularly despondent about keeping up with it and it seems clear that they would benefit from support in this area. Chapman and Oermann's (2020) work on supporting quality journalism through media and information literacy training and tools, regardless of age and experience, could be helpful in this regard.

Having patience

Although enthusiastic and appreciative of their foundational training, the early career journalists indicated that being patient learners and taking time to understand the rules before attempting to break them, particularly at university, was frustrating. This was borne out by the journalism students, particularly the first and second year BA students, who said they lacked creative opportunities; traditional learning and teaching was prioritised on their courses. The early career journalists and journalism students also agreed that journalism courses are weighted towards 'hard news' writing and reporting, possibly due to the 'news purists' among journalism educators (Hanna and Sanders, 2007). This suggests that journalism educators are not achieving the balance of teaching established knowledge with the facilitation of creativity (Lund and Arndt, 2019). It may also be that journalism students do not appreciate how creative their courses are until they leave university. Most early career journalists looked back on their tertiary education as a creatively fulfilling period which chimes with Watson's (2018) theory of 'deferred

creativity'; whilst creative undergraduate experiences may have a positive effect, individuals may not appreciate their value until after they have graduated.

The foundation

Across the data corpus, the research participants described an essential and evolving base of journalism knowledge and practice that must be in place for creativity to flourish. Perceived by the research participants as a body of knowledge that underpins the education of future journalists, this research theme is defined on the thematic map as 'the foundation'.

Lohiser and Puccio (2021) write that creativity can present a symbolic threat to knowledge, becoming stigmatised. The data collected for this project shows that whilst young journalists value knowledge as keenly as their tutors and senior counterparts they see creativity as a rudimentary component of the foundation, not as a threat to it. According to the data, the foundation supports convention, but can also embrace innovation, including social media storytelling. The data indicates that the foundation must be studied and mastered in industry, as well as education, to produce confident and forward-thinking journalists. If the foundation is enmeshed with orthodoxy, however, creativity can be compromised (see section 8.3.4, below).

8.3.2 Facilitating creativity: a supportive ecosystem

When the research participants discussed the workplace and educational environments that had fostered their creativity and creative work, the same sub-themes repeated across the data: a sense of belonging, collaboration and mentorship, diversity, freedom and resources, including time, technology and money.

Sense of belonging

The sense of belonging participants described was cultivated through social bonding and encouragement in both workplace and university settings. Having the confidence and opportunities to make decisions, be offered choices and pitch ideas, made them feel appreciated, respected, part of a team, and fuelled the sense of camaraderie they talked about with energy and fondness. When early career and senior journalists had experienced a sense of belonging, they described receiving empathy from editors and peers; as Crowley (2023) observed, a new approach to empathy in journalism can ‘move the dial’ on professional wellbeing. Papadopoulou and Siapera (2023) discuss a similar notion of belonging in the journalism workplace, describing a community of practice that defies the stereotype of the ‘lone wolf’ journalist, instead fostering strong social connections that satisfy a journalist’s need for self-esteem, emotional stability and belonging. The research participants suggested that such a community offers a breeding ground for journalistic creativity.

Receiving constructive feedback plays a key role in a culture of belonging. The descriptions of interacting with editors, colleagues, tutors and audiences also reflect the crucial role of dialogue in journalism (Hornmoen and Steensen, 2014). The benefits participants described through receiving feedback from audiences also emphasises the role of secondary creativity (Runco and Beghetto, 2019) as outlined in the theoretical framework used for this research. The senior editors, however, drew particular attention to the negative impact audience feedback can have on journalists, reflecting the work of Wolfe (2019), Posetti *et al.* (2020) and Waisbord (2020) on the risks of digital interactions, including trolling and online violence.

Discussing their university experiences, the early career journalists were particularly inspired when their tutors worked alongside them as peers, bonding with them, as well as offering tutelage. This points to the benefits of collaborative pedagogies and the co-creation of curriculum (Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2018; Bovill, 2020; Qureshi *et al.*, 2021). There was much discussion in the higher education community about the meaning of ‘belonging’ following the Covid-19 pandemic. Ahearne and Anderson (2024) argue that high living

costs, the instability caused by global conflicts and low rates of student engagement demand a radical shift in thinking. The authors say that 21st-century teachers will be dealing with traumatised young people for the rest of their careers and that higher education must change, creating a 'treasured' space on campus for social interaction and transformation. They suggest that this will create a sense of belonging, encouraging skills, networks and confidence to develop, a sentiment supported by the research participants. Compassionate pedagogies could also play a major role, helping students develop empathy, compassion and shared narratives (Waddington, 2021), supporting caring educators who inspire their students to change the world (Anderson *et al.*, 2020) and promoting a curious, empathetic and inclusive approach to encourage students of all backgrounds and abilities (Hamilton and Petty, 2023). In such an environment, students might feel safe enough to take risks and move away from the fear of failure and extrinsic motivator of grades that Knesek (2022) sees as a 'misguided' understanding of educational motivation. As Nerantzi *et al.* (2021) remind us, higher education is 'about human beings, us, our relationships with each other, communities, society and the world, and how the interaction between these can empower us to make a positive change' (Nerantzi *et al.*, 2021, p. 2).

Collaboration and mentorship

Collaboration and mentorship were themes the educators and senior journalists felt particularly strongly about. During the semi-structured interviews and online activity with early career journalists, comments about these topics were interwoven with descriptions of 'belonging', but the strength of feeling about collaboration and mentorship in the focus groups was such that an additional sub-theme was defined. The educators and senior journalists were adamant that creativity would only surface through group work/workplace collaboration, supporting research by Malmelin and Virta (2016), Lubicz-Nawrocka (2018), Bovill (2020), Quackenbush (2020), Qureshi *et al.* (2021), Waddington (2021), Ismayilova and Bolander Laksov (2022) and Thornhill-Miller *et al.* (2023). The educators and senior journalists also extolled the benefits of strong mentorship, particularly the idea of students

and early career journalists working with elders to share skills, learn, and garner honest feedback. The insistence, however, that older, more experienced people should be gatekeepers of ideation, using their own wisdom as creative and commercial barometers, echoes Mensing's (2011) view that a top-down, industry-centered model of curriculum, work experience and mentorship reinforces outdated conceptions of what journalism is. The 'we know best' model was certainly reinforced by some of the educators and senior journalists and may stem from a desire to defend their status. If a mentor's role is primarily to tell younger journalists that their ideas won't work, as suggested by the senior journalists, this could be perceived as orthodoxy (see section 8.3.4) rather than an expression of support.

The broader literature on journalism and journalism education includes some research on mentorship, but in the context of journalistic creativity, it appears to be an unexplored strand of investigation. While the Covid-19 pandemic did not emerge as a prevalent topic with the early career journalists, the senior journalists regarded it as a defining factor in industry. Their discussion reflected an International Federation of Journalists' report (2021) on the 'unprecedented strain' of the pandemic on journalists' mental health. For collaboration and mentorship – and consequently creativity – to flow in the future, they championed the benefits of in-person working. The journalism students, and many of the early career journalists, also supported the use of physical spaces for collaboration and team working. Like García-Avilés *et al.* (2022) the research participants felt strongly that creativity comes from the exchange of ideas with teams and colleagues, and that opportunities for creative collaboration are more prevalent in shared physical spaces (Prevett, 2024).

Diversity

As a powerful sub-theme in the data, student journalists, educators and early career journalists consider diversity to be an essential precursor to creativity. They talked enthusiastically about increasingly diverse audiences, the creative potential of diverse

content, and the importance of being in diverse environments. The *Future Journalists* avatars provide a useful, visual snapshot of the diversity that young journalists represent. A lack of diversity appeared to shut down their creativity, particularly for students and early career journalists of colour, who shared their experiences of discrimination, discouragement and feeling forced to report news through a subjectively white-western lens. The educators agreed enthusiastically that diversity was beneficial in facilitating creativity but admitted that their faculties did not reflect the diversity of the student body. The senior journalists discussed the benefits of age diversity at length but said that skills and experience will always trump other areas of diversity, such as ethnicity, in industry.

Although Keeble's (2007) recognition of the diversity of journalistic imagination is included in chapter two of this thesis, and neurodiversity is discussed in chapter three (Blair, 2022; Hamilton and Petty, 2023), diversity did not appear to a great extent in the literature on creativity in journalism and journalism education pre-dating this thesis, highlighting another important gap that warrants attention.

In other industries, the role of diversity in the context of creativity has been recognised. For example, Catmull (2023) advocates for the inclusion of all types of people in creative companies to enhance and enrich workplace culture, and the creative work itself. Catmull says that if nurturing creativity is the goal, diversity, including gender, race, ethnicity, lived experience, disciplines and viewpoints, is essential. Similarly, Friedman, Friedman and Leverton (2016) say that once an organisation removes all forms of discrimination and truly diversifies its workforce, creativity will increase dramatically. Diversity creates tension as opposed to groupthink, which the authors describe as a 'creativity-killing phenomenon of too much agreement and too similar perspectives' (Friedman, Friedman and Leverton, 2016, p. 14). There is, though, evidence that a move towards diversity in the journalism industry is happening; for example, Cooper-Fiske (2024) reports that the BBC will invest 80 million pounds annually in creative diversity projects.

Freedom

Having freedom was seen as a crucial element of creativity across the early career journalists, journalism students and educator groups, with participants agreeing that offering more freedom in higher education would be a positive move. Lovegrove (2023) agrees that experiencing ‘the joy of creative expression’ at university benefits students in the long term.

Markham (2012) observes that creative expression in the journalism industry is ‘alternately structured’ rather than ‘free’ (Markham, 2012, p. 187), but educators and senior journalists felt strongly that students and younger journalists conflate creative freedom with doing whatever they want, without rules, constraints or structure. There was certainly evidence that the students desired a ‘complete’ sense of freedom and may struggle to balance structure with self-expression. To minimise the risk that creativity veers them too far from journalistic convention, they may need extra support from their tutors and mentors, and this should be flagged as a major risk of creative culture in journalism education. While the early career journalists enjoyed expressing themselves in their work, however, there was evidence that they understand Markham’s point regarding journalistic parameters. Overall, the data supports the concept of journalistic expression as a growing trend. As Josephi and O’Donnell (2023) observe, freelance journalists enjoy flexing their creative freedom, ideas and writing skills; Postema and Deuze (2020) say contemporary journalism is full of imaginative expression; and Adam (2004) suggests that when journalism is practiced as a form of expression it can be defined as both literary and moral. The presence of self-expression and freedom in the data is clearly evident in the informal, quirky, characterful and unconventional look and style of the characters created in the *Future Journalists* activity, and the composite profile of the future journalist.

The perpetuation of journalistic dogma and authoritarianism was seen as the biggest barrier to freedom in education and industry. The early career and senior journalists provided evidence that outmoded power structures and dynamics endure in industry, suggesting that hardline bosses and figures of authority continue to suppress ideas,

expression and innovation, as discussed by McNally (2012), Greenslade (2013), Kanter (2021) and Smith (2021). While the senior journalists seemed to accept this and suggested that younger colleagues would simply have to get used to it, early career journalists described alternative, more progressive working environments where their ideas were appreciated, and they felt freer to express themselves. There is evidence, including Allison's (2024) report on bullying at a New York newspaper, that the culture is shifting, with bad editorial behaviour likely to be exposed, and younger journalists rejecting environments where creativity, encouragement and career progression are not the norm. The early career journalists interviewed for this project expressed a strong sense of autonomy and discussed the way that they, and their peers, have left jobs, or the industry altogether, if they faced intimidation, excessive stress or suppression of their creative freedom.

Resources

The idea of investing in creativity was an important factor across the data corpus. The early career journalists said that managers they had encountered who valued creativity recognised that it was good for business, encouraging engagement, impact, uniqueness, differentiating a publication from its competitors and offering sustainable solutions. They tended to think that time was the most important resource and agreed that the more time they had to spend on a piece of work, the more creative it could be. The senior journalists felt that technology was a more important resource and discussed the way that new technologies have facilitated journalistic creativity. Hearn's (2020) work on automated (or 'robo') journalism, and Franks' *et al.* (2022) research on AI, bring together these factors, suggesting that investment in the latest technology will give journalists more time to engage in the creative aspects of their work. Although there is widespread apprehension about AI across the creative industries, a post by Jeary and Gajjar (2024) for the UK Parliament suggests that AI could be used as a storytelling tool to co-create media with humans, and that CreaTech offers unlimited opportunities to grow the creative and digital industries.

Money was an important factor for the student journalists and educators. The students felt that creativity is only for “the elites”, and this concern was reflected in the educators’ comments. The students worried about making a living as journalists, and the educators agreed that, with budgets being slashed at publications, and universities under immense financial pressure, journalistic creativity was hard to achieve. The literature corroborates this position. Twidale and Nichols (2013) suggest that financial pressure has contributed to an inherent risk aversion in higher education; Prevett (2024) notes that remote working compromises creativity but saves media owners money in the post-pandemic era; Deuze (2019a) says that state support systems for creatives have been dismantled; and Pérez-Seijo and Silva-Rodríguez (2024) say that journalists and scholars have noted a lack of investment in human capital and business model innovation. Thomas (2024) says that British media executives, artists and designers called on Keir Starmer’s incoming 2024 Labour government to invest urgently in the sector to avoid losing the UK’s reputation as a creative industry ‘superpower’. There is evidence to suggest that investment in creative industries can and will contribute to the growth of the economy (Bazalgette, 2024; Clover, 2024; Gill and Maddox, 2024).

A supportive ecosystem

When research participants talked about the conditions in which creativity thrives, they agreed that they needed to feel a sense of belonging and collaboration, to be mentored and guided in their creative work, to work with diverse colleagues and ideas, to experience freedom of expression and for their institution or employer to invest in creativity. They described a system of supportive relationships and environments, and the many non-material benefits this system had created including cognitive development, good mental health, the sharing of human skills, reflection including constructive feedback, bonding, profound emotional experiences and a sense of enrichment. This is best described as a ‘supportive ecosystem’.

In naming this theme, de Bernard, Comunian and Gross's (2021) work on cultural and creative ecosystems was particularly helpful. The authors note that there is a growing use of ecological language in relation to the cultural and creative sectors within research and policymaking. They suggest that using the language of cultural and creative ecologies and ecosystems (CCEE) reflects a wider concern with the relational nature of human activities, including environments and power; concerns that underpin this project, and are evidenced throughout its empirical data. Encouraging researchers and policymakers to consider human interdependence, and the interconnectedness of many kinds of cultural and creative activity, as a guiding principle, de Bernard, Comunian and Gross suggest that using CCEE language can allow researchers to focus on their specific concerns (in this case, journalistic creativity and creativity in journalism education) while 'locating their work and findings within a bigger systemic picture that they can engage with and contribute to' (de Bernard, Comunian and Gross, 2021, p. 349).

8.3.3 Experiencing creativity: eudaimonia

When talking about creative journalists, or their own creative experiences, the research participants described confident, healthy, resilient professionals with an ability to make their voices heard and have an impact on audiences and colleagues. Their human skills, particularly in handling rejection and communicating with others, were strong. Good communicators and frequent collaborators, they constantly generated ideas and used their journalistic instincts to get to a story, in person or using their networks remotely and creatively. Novelty was intuitive and ever-present in their practice, and they gained a sense of satisfaction and success from their creative work. Some of the language used (such as "magical", "joy" and "treasured") indicates an ethereal dimension, reminiscent of Zohar and Marshall's (2000) concept of 'spiritual intelligence' (SQ). The participants across the research did not link their encounters with creativity to material gain, but the intangible experiences and success they described pointed to a state of wellness, discovery, fulfilment, excellence, having a positive impact on others, and reaching their potential.

Wellbeing

The creative wellbeing described by the early career journalists had a therapeutic element; they talked in positive terms about improved self-worth, good mental health and enjoying their work. As well as taking professional pride in their output, there was a sense of personal growth and enhanced individual worth. Like Costera Meijer (2021) and Carlson, Robinson and Lewis (2021), they value authenticity, and described how their creative work allowed them to be truer to themselves, and their audiences.

While the senior journalists and educators were cautious about the idea of journalists finding themselves, and their unique voice, through their work, they unanimously supported the importance of good mental health and recognised that the wellbeing of journalists was not paramount at the start of their own careers. Aoki *et al.* (2013) and Deuze (2023) are among the scholars to highlight the impact a career in journalism can have on mental health. In their work on mental health resilience in the journalism curriculum Markovikj and Serafimovska (2023) stress that emotional education, mental health education, and trauma literacy should be compulsory in any journalism studies curricula.

The data suggests that encouraging a creative culture may help institutions and organisations improve the wellbeing of their staff and students. The literature also supports this notion, showing that journalistic creativity and creative pedagogies can have a transformative effect, encouraging productivity alongside mental, emotional, physical, and social wellbeing (Malmelin and Virta, 2016; Borghero, 2017; Robinson, 2017; Brendell and Cornett-Murtada, 2019; James, 2019; Anderson *et al.*, 2020; Carlson, Robinson and Lewis, 2021; Leather, Harper and Obee, 2021; Morris, C. 2021; Waddington, 2021; Yacek, Rödel and Karcher, 2021; Hamilton and Petty, 2023; Lovegrove, 2023; Jean-Berluche, 2024).

The literature, like the data, also points to the fact that many media and educational environments do not always do enough to support and encourage wellbeing, particularly in the light of additional stressors including mental health problems, societal and political

upheaval, and the risks posed by digital publicity (Wolfe, 2019; Waisbord, 2020; Bélair-Gagnon *et al.*, 2023; Šimunjak and Menke, 2023; Hill *et al.*, 2024). While Bélair-Gagnon *et al.* (2023) explored the role of joy and happiness in overcoming harmful institutional issues and promoting journalists' good mental health, exploring how journalistic creativity can be used purposefully and explicitly to enhance journalists' and journalism students' wellbeing appears to be under researched. This thesis may offer a small contribution to this important work.

Impact

Having an impact on others is a main motivator when students choose journalism as a vocation. Coleman *et al.* (2018) found that students who select journalism degrees because they want to improve the world and have a career that others respect and admire are second only to those who want to gain personal fulfilment and promote their talents. This altruistic ideal of creating impact was reflected across the data with research participants indicating the importance of promoting change, making a difference and telling stories with meaning. These very human acts were closely linked with their experiences of creative work, particularly the student journalists and early career journalists who believe – passionately in some cases – that their creativity elevates the impact of their work, on themselves as well as others. When they feel they have made an impact, they describe transformation, confidence and a sense of joy. Connecting with an audience by using empathy, intuition and authenticity was identified as a key creative experience. The literature shows how important audience engagement has become to 21st-century journalists, and that creative practice can enhance it, increasing interaction in new and innovative ways (Fulton and McIntyre, 2013; Nylund, 2013; Al-Rawi, 2017; Hawkins-Gaar, 2017; Montgomery, 2018; Deuze, 2019a; Pavlik, 2019; Chan, 2020; Preger, 2021; Wincott, Martin and Richards, 2021; Ntamadaki, 2023; Van Sickle, 2023). The data collected for this study suggests that having creative impact as a journalist feeds into a sense of personal accomplishment and worth, as well as being good for business.

Novelty

The early career journalists who felt encouraged to be creative at university described a sense of discovery, whether identifying journalistic role models or new skills, and suggested that their horizons had been broadened; they discovered what kind of journalist they wanted to be, and what kind of journalism was possible. Their descriptions of 'becoming' were in tune with transformative pedagogies that focus on new experiences, change, empowerment, innovation, social responsibility and the process of learning (Mezirow, 1991; Khedkar and Nair, 2016; Yacek, Rödel and Karcher, 2021).

Most of the early career journalists described university as a place of novelty, somewhere it was safe to experiment, make mistakes and try something new. They talked about experiencing a culture of curiosity, much like the one described by Dau (2018), where they developed the confidence to experiment and make mistakes. In industry, they were clear that novelty is not always groundbreaking. Their descriptions of everyday journalistic creativity aligned with the definition proposed in chapter four of this thesis and depicted a driving force of innovation that motivated, inspired and excited them. This reflects Gynnild (2013), Le Masurier (2014) and Wagemans and Witschge's (2019) work on journalism innovation.

Taking intellectual risks, making mistakes and dealing with the uncertainty of discovery is essential for novelty to be experienced in any context (Barrett and Donnelly, 2008; Tsai, 2015; Ricketson, 2017; Anderson *et al.*, 2020; Beghetto, Karwowski and Reiter-Palmon, 2021; Beghetto and Jaeger, 2022) and as long as novelty is not being pursued for novelty's sake, another risk of journalistic creativity and creative learning and teaching that must be underlined, the educators, senior journalists and student journalists agreed that experiencing the new is both a motivator and a way to connect with the world, leading to discovery of meaning in the self, as well as stories and people.

Satisfaction and success

The satisfaction and success described by the participants were not material in nature. None of the early career journalists discussed financial reward as a marker of their creative, or more general, prowess. When talking about university, none of the participants mentioned their degree classification, and most did not refer to the grades they achieved. While the grades-based paradigm (Knesek, 2022) may be a preoccupation during their time in higher education, on reflection, as working journalists, they could see that the value of their course was in their interactions with peers and faculty, the creative process and the work they produced. With hindsight, they could see the impact of the learning process, providing evidence that supports the creative, process-rich university environments promoted by Baillie (2006), Clegg (2008), Jackson (2015), Dau (2018), Barnett (2020) and Han and Abdrahim (2023).

Some early career journalists referred to audience engagement as evidence of impactful work, but most of their experiences concerned personal achievement. Several accounts suggested that the primary and secondary creative process itself (Runco and Beghetto, 2019) – seeing an original idea turn into a published piece of journalism – illustrates success. They were more concerned with their growth as practitioners and altruistic aims, such as making a difference to their communities, than how many clicks their articles received. This may allay the fears of the senior journalists, who were concerned that digital metrics and viral audience engagement would be the main motivators for young journalists. The senior journalists were also worried that the personal markers of success adopted by younger colleagues were self-serving, bound up with their social media profiles and personality driven content, a position that could be detrimental to collaboration, and therefore to creativity. The early career journalists, however, spoke much less about their personal profiles and more about the impact they had on others, suggesting they were driven by the need to communicate compelling stories that matter to people (Deuze, 2019b) and make meaningful progress through innovation and ideas (Malmelin and Virta, 2016). Given how aware the early career journalists and student journalists were about the financial limitations of a journalism career, perhaps the next

generation of journalists are less motivated by material gains than their predecessors, and see success in terms of creativity, altruism and the pursuit of meaning.

Eudaimonia

When Papadopoulou and Siapera (2023) analyse what it means to be happy as an engaged journalist (Bélair-Gagnon, Nelson and Lewis, 2019), they search for signs of deep professional satisfaction, recognising that the personal and professional lives of journalists are intertwined. Rather than ‘happiness’, they suggest that journalists, who are routinely invested in traumatic stories and exposed to danger, seek a sense of contentment to flourish. Much like the data on creative journalistic experiences collected in this project, the authors describe a continual process of becoming, building social bonds, developing self-understanding, engaging meaningfully with an audience and remaining true to one’s personal and professional values. This description echoes the sub themes that emerge in this chapter; they do not point towards a definition of ‘journalistic happiness’.

Even when a creative culture is facilitated, the nature of working in an unstable and stressful industry, working under pressure, facing threats to one’s safety and security, navigating hierarchies and dealing with potentially hostile and aggressive digital audiences (Giga, Hoel and Cooper, 2003; McNair, 2009; Huda and Azad, 2015; Malmelin and Virta, 2016; Wolfe, 2019; Posetti *et al.*, 2020; Waisbord, 2020; Carlson, Robinson and Lewis, 2021; Westlund, Krøvel and Orgeret, 2024) makes the concept of ‘happiness’ an unlikely, perhaps unachievable, prospect for journalists, no matter how creative they are. The outcome of journalistic creativity, however, does point to a way of feeling that encapsulates the pursuit or experience of integrity, personal growth, self-actualisation, flourishing, excellence, and meaning, something that can be defined as a state of ‘eudaimonia’ (Huta, 2013).

Sometimes used as a term to describe the contemporary notion of wellbeing, and often confused with happiness, wealth or hedonism, the concept of eudaimonia was used in

ancient Greece and popularised by Aristotle. Huta (2013) separates conceptions of eudaimonia into two categories: a way of behaving and a state of wellbeing. As a behavioural concept, the pursuit of eudaimonia includes striving for excellence; acting authentically and in line with one's true self and deepest values; evolving personally and reaching individual potential; utilising the full range of the self, including unpleasant emotions; serving a greater good beyond the immediate moment; being deeply immersed in one's work and the world; seeing the means or process as an end in itself; contemplation; and the acceptance of working with reality, oneself, and others as they are. In terms of wellbeing, the themes Huta identifies are meaning, elevation (inspiration and enrichment leading to a higher level of functioning), awe, connection, aliveness, fulfilment and mastery in life's important domains. These themes are present across the data when participants describe the experiences and outcomes of their creative work and creative selves.

While there are some parallels with Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) theory of 'flow', which contributes to the definition of journalistic creativity proposed in chapter four, eudaimonia is not about a temporary state of mind or absorption in a given moment. The flow state may be achieved within the creative process and can contribute to the mastery of skill and maximisation of productivity, but eudaimonia can be seen as the broader outcome, or goal, of the work that is produced in that flow state. An ambitious goal if pursued consciously (Oldham, 2022), eudaimonia may have profound outcomes including forms of psychological wellbeing, insight, moral development, sustained attention, increased skill, the ability to cope with trauma (resilience), and even to foster the wellbeing of one's community and environment (Huta, 2013, p. 210).

In naming this theme and proposing the concept of eudaimonia as both an aim and outcome of journalistic creativity, the many challenges of this vocation, from death knocks to conflict reporting, are recognised for being as difficult and upsetting as they can be rewarding and fulfilling. Journalists run towards danger; indeed, the profession has been posed as the fourth emergency service (Bradley and Heywood, 2024). As described by The School of Life (2017), eudaimonia accepts that while the most worthwhile pursuits and projects in life will sometimes be at odds with happiness or contentment, they are

well worth pursuing. Journalism, and journalistic creativity, cannot make its practitioners cheerful every day, and aiming for a pain-free existence is futile in this occupation. Its challenges will be exhausting, even wounding at times, but a eudaimonic journalist may have the skills, traits and disposition to see the value in every difficult or traumatic encounter. A eudaimonic journalist has a grander aim for their future than happiness; they endeavour to make a difference. The research in this project suggests that if educators and editors, institutions and industry, could work towards creating the conditions for those in their tutelage or employment to experience eudaimonia, students and journalists could achieve improved wellbeing and resilience, have enhanced impact on audiences, and experience personal growth, the joy of discovery, and a feeling of satisfaction and success that transcends material wealth.

8.3.4 Creative barriers: orthodoxy

Throughout the research, a set of barriers to creative practice was discussed. These sub themes were the same across education and industry: encounters with rigidity, generational gaps, excessive pressure, risk aversion and a lack of confidence and resilience. These factors were described by the early career journalists, journalism students and most of the educators as suppressing their creativity, even leading to them, and the peers they discussed, pursuing non-journalism/non-media careers after graduation, changing their jobs in journalism, or leaving the industry altogether. In the focus groups with senior journalists and educators, however, the creative barriers discussed in the first stage of research were sometimes reinforced, or described as being 'normal' industry practice. There were strong suggestions that young journalists should accept creative barriers as useful guardrails, follow the guidance of their elders, and learn to conform to existing journalistic dogma. Perhaps, if the industry was in rude health, this protective position would make good business sense, but given journalism's parlous, disrupted 21st-century state (Kaye and Quinn, 2010; Aoki *et al.*, 2013; Franklin, 2014; Hermida, 2018; Broersma and Eldridge, 2019; Freedman, 2019; Witschge, Deuze and Willemsen, 2019; Wolfe, 2019; Posetti *et al.*, 2020; Waisbord, 2020; Carlson, Robinson

and Lewis, 2021; International Federation of Journalists, 2021; Perreault and Perreault, 2021; Verma, 2021; Williams and Cartwright, 2021; Borchardt, 2022; Deuze, 2023; Shukla, 2023; Aberneithie and Tobitt, 2024; Cools and Diakopoulos, 2024; Hill, A., 2024; Newman, 2024a; Reuters Institute, 2024; Shi and Sun, 2024; Van Dalen, 2024; Watson, 2024; Westlund, Krøvel and Orgeret, 2024) this viewpoint seems prohibitory.

Rigidity

Senior journalists and educators value journalistic convention highly but their responses provide a much more rigid impression of journalism than the perceptions of the students and early career journalists. Although they said that creativity was assumed and intrinsic to journalism, some of the educators and senior journalists describe their work as an archaic craft with fixed, right and wrong ways of being practiced. This is reinforced by the early career journalists who talked about the rigidity of hierarchies, inflexibility of management mindsets and inappropriate, bullying behaviours of senior staff, which is also reflected in the literature (McNally, 2012; Greenslade, 2013; Kanter, 2021; Smith, 2021).

When talking about education, the early career journalists had experienced a similar form of rigidity, feeling that the study of journalism, unlike related creative industries including big tech and marketing, was “unchangeable”. The student journalists supported this position, describing how they had been taught that tradition was more important than innovation, and that experimentation was discouraged. Indeed, the literature acknowledges that higher education can be preoccupied with producing compliance over innovation (Oliver *et al.*, 2006) with educators struggling to balance creative unpredictability with established knowledge (Lund and Arndt, 2019) and institutional resistance to ‘future-oriented change’ (Thornhill-Miller *et al.*, 2023).

Although the consumption of traditional news is shrinking (Carlson, Robinson and Lewis, 2021) only one senior journalist vehemently argued that media brands could not afford to be rigid. While the educators seemed more open to change, there was still a sense of

rigidity in some responses, particularly on the value of hard news, as opposed to the so-called 'soft' subjects (lifestyle and sports journalism, for example) and contemporary practice and technology, areas that appear to have the most value to 21st-century journalism students (Hanna and Sanders, 2007; Ercan, 2018).

Generational gaps

During the focus groups, a generational rift, alluded to in the research with early career journalists, was described more emphatically, particularly when the senior journalists discussed core skills and journalistic creativity, and emphasised by their defensive language. Despite their scepticism about the need for early career journalists to be creative, the senior journalists and educators were highly critical of the creative examples of work, accusing them of being too safe, old-fashioned and lacking creative ambition. This suggests a paradox; experienced stakeholders do not think young journalists should aspire to be creative but, simultaneously, they do not think that young journalists are creative enough.

The senior journalists, and some of the educators, seemed not to take their younger peers/students seriously, and were suspicious of their motives and abilities; at several points they mentioned how "old" the conversation was making them feel, which seemed to make them uncomfortable. They suggested that creativity was earned, not something young people should expect to engage in at the start of their careers. With a significant skills shortage reported in the creative industries (Jowett, 2024; Seaford, 2024), allowing young journalists to contribute their original ideas and exercise their creative muscles from the start of their careers and during their training, may encourage their participation in industry. The early career journalists who talked about having the space, resources and support to be creative in their jobs evidences the positive potential of such activity when it comes to recruiting, encouraging and retaining talent. Similarly, early career journalists who were taught by educators with up-to-date skills, and whose tutors could relate to their generational experiences and concerns, had a much more positive view of

their training. Rather than any overt ageism in the data, there was a sense of frustration with senior colleagues and tutors. The early career journalists and journalism students suggested that figures of authority from older generations might listen to younger people more, learn to accept change and new ways of working, and to embrace creativity. Age should be no barrier to addressing these requests.

The senior journalists suggested that journalistic wisdom is the preserve of older people, and they seemed to assume that students and younger journalists do not value traditions of truth, accuracy and impartiality, particularly when they are interested in creative practice. The data gives a strong sense of senior journalists and educators struggling to accept that creativity and truth can co-exist, particularly in the context of commercial competition, echoing Costera Meijer's (2021) warning that the quest for audience attention must be balanced with truth and authenticity. As with Hampton's (2008) findings, there appeared to be a conflation of objectivity and impartiality, with an idealistic definition of impartiality being assumed by the senior journalists and educators, although most of them have worked for commercial employers. There was, however, no evidence in the data to suggest that early career journalists and journalism students have any less respect for the tenets of journalism, including media law, accuracy and ethics, than their more experienced peers.

Although the senior journalists agreed that journalism is creative and largely supported the definition of journalistic creativity, they also discussed areas of interpretation that were very different to those of the early career journalists. While the early career journalists talked about freedom, breaking boundaries and journalistic imagination, the senior journalists talked about creativity in many negative ways. They said that creativity lacked integrity and encouraged journalists to rely on or promote their personalities. They conflated younger journalists with social media influencers and gave the impression that young, creative journalists posed a threat to the status quo. It is interesting then, that Broersma and Singer (2020) found that students know change is needed in journalism, but envisage any change being in the form of using existing digital technologies within the traditional field. While the senior journalists in this study seemed to think that their younger colleagues wanted to reinvent the industry in their image, the participants in Broersma

and Singer's study did not generally see themselves as becoming disruptive innovators. Perhaps, if the senior journalists are correct in their assessment of the early career journalists' creative work, that it is too safe and derivative, Broersma and Singer's research is now being played out in industry. This indicates a stalemate; senior journalists know that change is needed but, fearing disruption by their successors, they reinforce the notion of journalism that existed when they entered the industry. Students and early career journalists also know that change is needed, but are taught to operate within the established parameters of the industry's doxa. For meaningful change to happen, a shift in this stalemate may be required.

Excessive pressure

While respondents across the data corpus agreed that pressure is both inherent in the profession and higher education, and often a useful motivator, they mostly agreed that excessive pressure could also limit creativity. The senior journalists felt strongly that journalists must accept and tolerate high levels of pressure; their strength of feeling suggests that expecting journalists to cope with excessive pressure contributes to conservative notions of journalism.

In industry, job insecurity, debilitating workloads, the 24-hour news cycle, homeworking, professional competitiveness and the threat of intimidation and harassment (Huda and Azad, 2015; Malmelin and Virta, 2016; Nilsson and Örnebring, 2016; Witschge, Deuze and Willemsen, 2019; Verma, 2021) can cause an excessive form of pressure that crosses personal boundaries and becomes a creative inhibitor. In education, the pressure of student recruitment, performance objectives, quality assurance and the consequent obsession with metrics in higher education (Almadani, Reid and Rodrigues, 2011) can create excessive pressure on students, as can the grades-based paradigm (Knesek, 2022; Chamberlin, Yasué and Chiang, 2023). While the data in this project does not suggest that creativity can directly reduce excessive pressure in the short-term, working towards journalistic eudaimonia could help students and journalists to cope with it. In the

longer term, innovation may provide solutions to some of the problems that create the excessive pressure so prevalent in industry and 21st-century educational environments (Deuze, 2006; Cropley and Cropley, 2009; Sahlberg, 2009; Gynnild, 2013; Le Masurier, 2014; Malmelin and Virta, 2016; Deuze and Witschge, 2018; Lund and Arndt, 2019; Wagemans and Witschge, 2019; Bradshaw, 2020; Uskali and Ikonen, 2020; Bisso Nunes and Mills, 2021; Etzkowitz, Dzisah and Clouser, 2022; Franks *et al.*, 2022; Pérez-Seijo and Silva-Rodríguez, 2024).

Risk aversion

Participants talked about the real and perceived financial implications of risk-taking, and how they feared failing at university if they were too experimental with their work. However, they all agreed that risk-taking, which is key to creativity, should be encouraged across education and industry, as it provides a route to growth (Hawkins-Gaar, 2017).

When they discussed risk aversion, the contributing factors the early career journalists described included commercial pressure from advertisers and audiences, business insecurity and a lack of trust in, and willingness to invest in, younger colleagues. Some said that when things were going well in a media business, creativity and risk-taking were encouraged, but whenever there were issues such as declining audience figures or reduced budgets, editors were more likely to rely on tried and trusted methods. Others suggested that editors paid lip service to creative ideas, talking about creative solutions, but then avoiding the risk that is associated with implementing fresh ideas. One of the educators stressed that media owners who play it safe from fear of upsetting politicians present an urgent threat to creativity. Similarly, universities, preoccupied with the continuity of courses, departments and research institutes across many years, or even centuries, perpetuate systems that are designed to be slow, inflexible and risk averse (Twidale and Nichols, 2013).

The majority of senior journalists, and some of the educators, saw creativity as a luxury. In business, however, a lack of innovation is known to precipitate failure. Companies need

to update their business models to thrive, particularly by harnessing technological advances (Miller Cole, 2019). Evidence shows that risk-taking is a highly important driver of innovation (Giaccone and Magnusson, 2021) and while a radical focus on risk-taking may be unlikely in a turbulent social period, for the journalism industry and journalism education to prosper in the years ahead, a focus on risk management rather than risk aversion may be helpful, particularly given the rapid rise of AI in the context of content production and distribution (Newman, 2024a; 2024b).

Lacking confidence and resilience

As one of the early career journalists put it, lacking resilience “saps creativity” because without resilience, one cannot be a journalist. The discussion around confidence and resilience across the data presents another paradox. The research participants agreed that confidence and resilience are essential factors in journalistic creativity, but the power dynamics, tasks and pressures that students and young journalists are expected to endure may erode those human qualities.

If creative activities can promote good mental health, emotional regulation, social connection and self-esteem, reducing stress and anxiety (Smriti *et al.*, 2022; Jean-Berluce, 2024), it stands to reason that a lack of confidence and resilience act as a barrier to creativity. Active coping strategies, including good mental health and resilience, may facilitate creativity, but they are also regarded as essential tools to help journalists cope with the harsh realities of the news industry; by the 2020s, resilience training was a mandatory requirement on NCTJ courses (Granger, 2023), for example. As with each barrier to creativity that the research participants described, overcoming these obstacles not only fosters journalistic creativity, but can also contribute to a stronger, healthier, more resilient industry and educational environment.

Orthodoxy

The accounts of creative barriers point to a set of attitudes, beliefs, generational rifts and indoctrination that are distinct from ‘the foundation’ of journalism education discussed in section 8.3.1. It seems paramount to distinguish the two. If orthodoxy creates barriers to journalistic creativity, it should not be enmeshed with the foundational training that journalists need and value so highly.

The word ‘orthodoxy’ has religious connotations and seems particularly appropriate for this theme because there was an element of faith and belief in journalistic custom and defined ways of working that came across in the data. When the senior journalists, and some of the educators, talked about creative barriers, they tended to be dogmatic, regarding young, potential change-makers as unwieldy and unqualified, prone to malpractice and in need of control. Unlike the journalistic traditions and structures that provide a foundation for creativity and innovation to occur, the characterisation of orthodoxy in this section appears to stifle journalistic creativity and the potential for eudaimonia to occur. While eudaimonia indicates positivity and fulfilment, mastery and autonomy, self-awareness and authenticity, and the pursuit of virtue and excellence, professional orthodoxy can be linked to anachronistic belief systems, organisational irrelevance and the slowing down, or prevention of, change and diverse viewpoints (Sriram, 2021). Unorthodox thinking – or thinking outside the box – was continually posed as essential for creativity by the research participants, so it follows that orthodoxy is in direct opposition to this act.

The orthodoxy described in this section presents a stark tension between the need for change, which is necessarily driven by innovation, and the collective will of the industry to resist it. The senior journalists alleged that graduates are “not fit for purpose” and insinuated that they did not have the correct, if contradictory, mix of ambition and subservience, creativity and orthodoxy. Although they agreed that training journalists for an outdated workplace was fruitless, they also suggested that young journalists must know their place and save their creative contributions for an undefined, latter career stage. This strongly indicates that work is required to educate senior figures in industry and

education about the possibilities of cultivating a supportive ecosystem to facilitate eudaimonia throughout a journalist's education and career. The depiction of orthodoxy in this data also highlights a major risk of creative culture in journalism and journalism education; with so much scepticism, and if perceived as disruptive, creativity can become, as Lohiser and Puccio (2021) describe, stigmatised, with the potential to be hugely divisive, particularly between colleagues of different generations.

8.3.5 The future of journalism: healthy and human

Waisbord (2024) suggests that, given the fluidity of journalism, the debate about the future must recognise that journalism is plural and cannot be boxed in singular categories. Waisbord encourages researchers to think about differences, drivers of change, options, and comparisons, rather than a common future. In this discussion, the future of journalism is seen through the lens of journalistic creativity, and the largely positive impact the cultivation of such creativity might have on students and practitioners in the coming years, as well as its potential for driving positive change in industry and education.

When the early career journalists were asked for their future journalism predictions, their outlook was optimistic. They unanimously anticipated the onset of major change, using terminology that implied a complete transformation, from the continued impact of AI to the ascendancy of their generation in the newsroom, where they envisaged using their cultural habits and attitudes to influence the way news is consumed. They regarded the failure of stakeholders to master social media as a frustration and were keen to guide them. They saw mental health as becoming more important along with authenticity, autonomy and collaboration. They predicted a future where they will be rewarded, not necessarily in financial terms, but by being respected, heard and enabled to create societal change. The educators and senior journalists were encouraged by this vision of the future, but much more downbeat in their own predictions. While some believed that helping students “live that vision” was part of their role as educators and mentors, others regarded the early career journalists' outlook in far more cynical terms. While the shape

of the future may lie somewhere in between hope and incredulity, it seems more productive, particularly for educators, to consider ways of achieving a healthy, human, collaborative, relevant and rewarding future for the next generation of journalists than to admit defeat, accepting a status quo that sees an industry in decline (Tobitt, 2024; Waldman, 2023). This situation was put into sharp focus by the 2024 US presidential election campaign, which highlighted both the power of the influencer-led media landscape and contemporary media ownership issues (Easley, 2024).

Like Deuze (2019a) and Pérez-Seijo and Silva-Rodríguez (2024), early career journalists and student journalists regard creativity and innovation as a key feature for the future, in the way stories are told, the way journalists practice their craft and the way business models evolve. They appreciate the existence of legacy media and want it to survive; many of the research participants were working for legacy brands when they took part in this project. Like Waldman (2023), however, they see the need for transformation across the sector, driven by innovation at every level. They consider creativity to be a human trait that can mitigate disruption from AI, help them to connect with their audience, facilitate their passions and personalities, and drive the business innovation that will future proof their careers. For journalists and journalism educators with many years of their careers ahead, the participants' forecast could be helpful in shaping future creative practice.

8.3.6 Creative culture in journalism and journalism education: an emerging theory

In Map #3, the final thematic map included in this chapter, the themes are fully refined and renamed in line with the discussion above. The map shows an emerging theory on the nature of creative culture in journalism and journalism education. At the time of this research project, a pattern was observed whereby journalists learn their foundational skills, then may either move into a supportive ecosystem, or an environment of orthodoxy, depending on the outlook of their teacher, institution or employer. A supportive ecosystem appears to facilitate a creative culture, consequently leading journalism students and

journalists towards eudaimonia, a state of fulfilment where they may reach their potential whilst being challenged as a professional. This path may make the future that young journalists aspire to – healthy, human, collaborative, relevant and rewarding – more likely.

Orthodoxy, however, may lead to dissatisfaction, with students leaving their courses, or deciding not to pursue journalism as a career, and journalists changing their jobs, or leaving the profession.

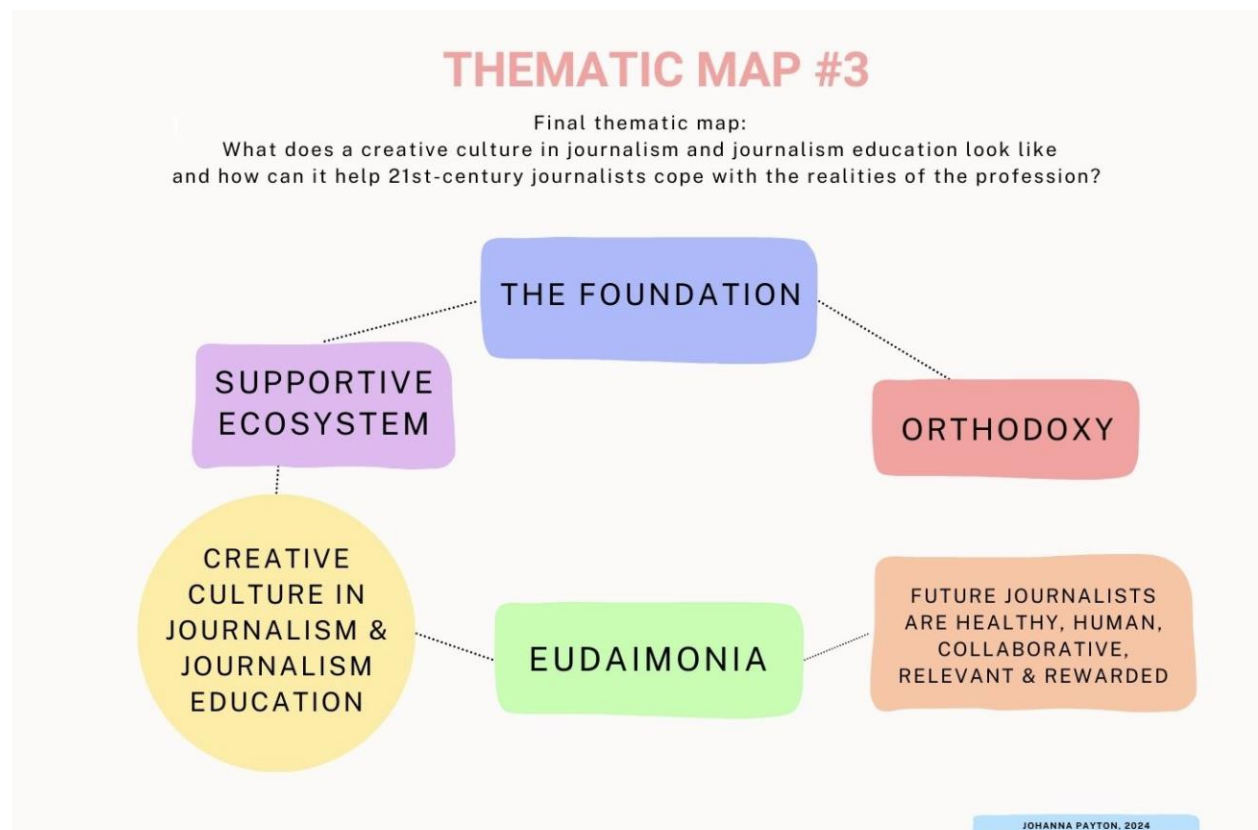


Figure 11: Thematic map #3 - what does a creative culture in journalism and journalism education look like and how can it help 21st-century journalists cope with the realities of the profession?

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented a discussion, informed by the literature and the data collected for this project, on the shape of creative culture in journalism and journalism education and how it can help 21st-century journalists to cope with the realities of the profession.

Including three thematic maps that show how the findings were refined, grouped and named, this discussion explored the findings using the same thematic structure as the results that were presented in chapters six and seven, and in the context of the three research questions:

- *RQ1: What is the role and meaning of creativity in contemporary journalism?*
- *RQ2: How can we equip journalists for the future by facilitating a creative pedagogical culture in journalism education?*
- *RQ3: What are the possibilities and risks of creative culture for journalists and journalism students?*

The inductive discussion presented in this chapter informs the reflections, implications and conclusions presented in the next, final chapter. The conclusion to this thesis also includes a proposed model for educating future journalists that is underpinned by the thematic maps and analysis presented here.

Chapter nine: conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This chapter details the original contribution this project makes to the fields of journalistic creativity and creative journalism education. It summarises the qualitative research undertaken for the study, the implications of its empirical findings, and the project's aims and limitations. The three research questions are answered, and questions for future research are proposed. In keeping with the project's reflexive nature, and its relationship with educational development, this chapter also contains a personal reflection on my overall learning experience using Gibbs' (1988) reflective cycle.

9.2 Original contribution to the field

This project examined creativity in journalism and journalism education. It explored the impact creativity has on the industry and its workforce, and the implications for its future, particularly how journalists, educators and journalism students might use creativity as a tool within their response to adversity, from the everyday to the existential. Providing fresh insight on creativity and journalism, and creative journalism education, which are 'overlooked' research areas (Nylund, 2013; Malmelin and Virta, 2016; Deuze, 2019a; Deuze, 2019b), this project used an original approach by applying educational contexts and methods to journalism/journalism education research, which is rare in the field (Solkin, 2022).

The learning experiences shared by the research participants in this study highlight the potential of creative culture to contribute to an enriched journey through tertiary journalism education. This thesis adds to the growing interest in creative learning and teaching across higher education, with a novel focus on journalism pedagogy. The study aligns with Solkin's (2022) reformist analysis of journalism education, which recognises that journalism is under threat and needs to develop, particularly in response to changes in

technology and the marketplace. Understanding exactly how an environment can support creativity is lacking in education (Patston *et al.*, 2021), and this project contributes to developing that knowledge.

There is demand for creativity to be embraced within industry (Nylund, 2013; Fulton and McIntyre, 2013; Deuze, 2019a), and this study highlights the ways in which journalistic creativity operates in both workplace and education, and how it can have a transformative impact on practice and people. It contains empirical evidence that illustrates the positive effect creative practice and culture can have, and new perspectives on the potential of creative pedagogies for journalism educators and their students. This study, therefore, offers new insight that could contribute to overcoming journalists' and journalism educators' scepticism regarding creativity, doubts that were reinforced through the data collected here.

Whilst studies predating this thesis provide an understanding of what creativity looks like in higher education more broadly, this project aims to reveal the role – and potential – of creativity in journalism education. It illustrates that journalism education enables students to exercise their creativity to some extent, and that their creative encounters at university are highly valued. The data also suggests that the phenomenon of deferred creativity (Watson, 2018) may be at play; whilst at university, students may not feel creativity is being encouraged, but when they enter industry, and reflect on their educational experiences, they see university as a creative environment. The data collected here emphasises the importance that young journalists attach to creative work and suggests that industry attitudes towards creativity are changing. Creativity was a label many journalists rejected in the past (Ricketson, 2017), but this study suggests that future generations of industry decision-makers may embrace, value and use creativity within their skillset to advance their careers, keep the industry relevant and reinforce their resilience. This study contributes to understanding how these future stakeholders can develop their creativity during their journalism education, and in the early stages of their careers.

A generational gap in terms of the way creativity is valued and experienced is highlighted by this study. The data contributes to understanding why this gap is prevalent; journalists and educators who trained in the pre-social media era appear to conflate creativity with inaccuracy, subjectivity and bias. The study also illustrates a generational paradox. Senior journalists and educators expect students and young journalists to be creative but see creativity as something that is earned during one's career, and to be used cautiously. The data suggests that understanding how and when to develop and nurture journalistic creativity has been a grey area, but by analysing early career journalists' interactions with creativity, and their emotional response to creative work, this study points towards an informed pedagogical approach to creative journalism education.

The analysis in this study posits that journalistic encounters with creativity result in a state of completeness, wellbeing and fulfilment, distinct from happiness, in which journalists can reach their potential whilst being challenged and tested as professionals. This is classified as 'eudaimonia' and by promoting a creative culture individuals may experience this rewarding human state. This thesis proposes that journalism education with eudaimonic goals could contribute to making the healthy, human, collaborative, relevant and rewarding future that the young journalists who contributed to this research aspire to, more likely.

In illustrating these links, this study has produced knowledge that suggests how journalism educators could enhance their students' preparedness for industry, encourage their engagement and deepen the meaning of their learning experiences at journalism school. By highlighting the consequences of risk aversion, excessive pressure and orthodoxy in journalism education and industry, this study contributes to anticipating the likely risks that will be encountered when developing a creative culture. By outlining the risks that creative culture itself poses, including novelty for novelty's sake, the abandonment of convention, and the threat to the status quo caused by creative disruption, the data collected in this project could also help to empower educators and journalists who wish to apply creativity to their practice in the future, but seek greater awareness of both benefit and risk.

9.3 Summary of the research

The qualitative study undertaken for this project involved 47 research participants across the UK's journalism industry and journalism education, but its implications widen the relevance to a broader community of journalists, journalism educators and journalism students.

In the context of industry, the literature reviewed in chapter two supports the concept of journalism as a creative field (Keeble, 2007; Ricketson, 2017; Koivula, Villi and Sivunen, 2020) demanding innovative storytelling skills, journalistic confidence and the rebuilding of trust and engagement with the public (Borchardt, 2022; Carlson, Robinson and Lewis, 2021). This project also aligns with studies that depict journalism as an evolving, unstable profession (Giga, Hoel and Cooper, 2003; McNair, 2009; Malmelin and Virta, 2016; Carlson, Robinson and Lewis, 2021) demanding resilience and creative thinking. The data collected for this project confirms the position that digital technology and social media have changed the industry dramatically, resulting in a constantly changing workplace environment (Malmelin and Virta, 2016). The participants across this research agree that disruption and professional competition is caused by generative AI (Cools and Diakopoulos, 2024; Shi and Sun, 2024; Van Dalen, 2024) and will continue to cause disruption in ways that are difficult to predict.

The literature reviewed in chapter three reflects the value of creative education (Jackson *et al.*, 2006; Cropley and Cropley, 2009; Livingston, 2010; Jackson, 2015; Robinson, 2017; James, 2019; Lovegrove, 2023) against a backdrop of an educational culture that views students as 'customers' and prioritises recruitment, student satisfaction and employability outcomes (Gibbs, 2001; Almadani, Reid and Rodrigues, 2011; Radice, 2013; Ingleby, 2021; Mintz, 2021; Langan, 2022). Like the literature, the data collected for this study suggests that while creative experiences enrich higher education, a sense of risk aversion is prevalent in the sector, filtering down to the journalism students who said that creativity is not valued highly enough on their courses. This thesis finds that research into creative journalism education is limited, even though students tend to choose journalism because they want to innovate (Fulton and McIntyre, 2013; Hanusch

et al., 2016; Coleman *et al.*, 2018; Witschge, Deuze and Willemsen, 2019). This is the gap in the field where this study sits and contributes new knowledge.

This study explored an overarching research question: what does a creative culture in journalism and journalism education look like and how can it help 21st-century journalists cope with the realities of the profession? To help answer this question, chapter four outlined a theoretical framework of sociocultural constructivism influenced by Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner's (1996) learning theories, fused with Runco and Beghetto's (2019) theory of primary and secondary creativity (PSC) and Tsai's (2015) framework of creative education. The original definition of journalistic creativity proposed in chapter four intersects with the theoretical lens in contributing to a conceptual framework that indicates how journalism students and young professionals learn, what creative journalism and education might mean, and how it might operate.

The literature review and theoretical framework established this project's underlying ontological assumptions that the journalism industry and journalists are inherently creative and that learners develop through experience, social interaction and culture. This understanding shaped the three research questions that are answered within this concluding chapter (see sections 9.4, 9.5 and 9.6, below):

- *RQ1: What is the role and meaning of creativity in contemporary journalism?*
- *RQ2: How can we equip journalists for the future by facilitating a creative pedagogical culture in journalism education?*
- *RQ3: What are the possibilities and risks of creative culture for journalists and journalism students?*

The methodology used to answer these questions (see chapter five) had an interpretivist paradigm, an inductive approach and a phenomenological, practice-led strategy. Mixed data collection methods were used in a two-stage process, the first with early career journalists and the second with journalism students, journalism educators and senior journalists. As well as explaining the choices made, chapter five also discussed the

methodological limitations of the study, including its qualitative nature in an academic environment that prioritises quantitative and statistically driven research, and the relatively small sample size.

Thematically structured, chapter six outlined the results from the semi-structured 1-2-1 interviews on Zoom, where participants discussed their perceptions of creativity in industry and education, and the *Future Journalists* digital activity, where participants designed an avatar and then wrote about the character's life and career. Designed to address the research questions directly, the semi-structured interviews explored the participants' encounters with creativity, with a focus on the possibilities and risks of creative culture for journalists and journalism students. In the online activity, participants were asked to imagine the future of journalism, helping to put the findings from the semi-structured interviews into a forward-facing context. Using the same thematic structure, chapter seven presented the findings from the second stage of research. Inspired by the Delphi method (Dalkey and Helmer, 1963), three focus groups took place where participants discussed a summary of the anonymised stage-one results, explored potential themes for analysis and sense-checked the data.

Linking back to the literature throughout, the inductive discussion of the findings (chapter eight) looked at the foundation of journalism education, the practical, technical, human and creative skills seen as essential by contemporary journalists, and the description participants gave of a supportive ecosystem that facilitates creative work and behaviour. The creative experiences described in the data are defined as 'eudaimonic'. The discussion points to a theory that explains how journalists tend to learn their foundational skills first, then may either move into a supportive ecosystem, or an environment of orthodoxy. Distinct from the foundation, journalistic orthodoxy is described in the discussion as a collection of dogmatic attitudes and behaviours that inhibit journalistic creativity.

With references to this emerging theory, the next three sections of this concluding chapter answer the research questions and include a conceptual pedagogical model developed

from the data analysis that suggests how journalism educators and trainers could situate their teaching in a creative culture.

9.4 What is the role and meaning of creativity in contemporary journalism?

This section answers the first research question (*RQ1*): what is the role and meaning of creativity in contemporary journalism?

The early career journalists who took part in this study were positive about the role and meaning of creativity in their industry and educational experiences, regarding their work as inherently creative and seeing themselves as creative people. Creativity is a foundational element of journalism training because its role in industry allows journalists to generate ideas, innovate and react to changing situations with agility and confidence. In industry contexts, young journalists are proud of their creative work and discuss its' potential to stimulate change and offer personal and professional rewards. The data in this study suggests that the stigma around the role of journalistic creativity (Ricketson, 2017) is lifting, and that early career journalists understand creativity as distinct from the arts. Journalists relate the role of creativity to problem solving, resilience and reward. The role of creativity is described in the data as a currency, unlocking opportunities and relationships. Employers expect young journalists to be innovators and creative thinkers, and demonstrating creativity in the workplace helps journalists to enjoy, succeed and sustain their work.

When research participants in this study described the meaning of creativity, their accounts were of enhanced personal wellbeing, positive impact on others and experiencing novelty, satisfaction and success. This suggests that journalistic creativity results in a form of eudaimonia. This state of fulfilment allows an individual to reach their potential at the same time as experiencing professional stressors, which is particularly apt for journalists.

9.4.1 Implications

The answer to this research question suggests that by working creatively, and potentially experiencing eudaimonia, journalists could develop a healthier, more resilient disposition, with the developed human skills needed for innovation. Working consciously towards the goal of eudaimonia could, therefore, contribute to clarifying the role and meaning of creativity in journalism and journalism education, demystifying the creative process and helping educators to facilitate it.

When the working definition of creativity proposed in this thesis (presented in chapter four) was shared with research participants, they stressed the importance of sharing the definition with students at an early stage of their journalism education. They also made suggestions for how the definition could be shaped to be less academic and better understood by student groups. Using this empirical data, and elements of the thematic analysis from this study, an updated student-facing version of the definition of journalistic creativity can now be proposed:

Journalistic creativity is mastering practical skills – but with an open mind. Creative journalists are ready to break rules and make a difference, to themselves and the world.

Journalists are creative in their everyday work, but everyday creativity does not always turn into a product of journalism; personal creativity happens when journalists have ideas for stories they want to tell and consider how and whether to tell those stories. Even if they don't make a product, their creativity is still valuable.

Social creativity happens when journalism does turn into a product and reaches an audience, through published stories or news packages, for example. Every person who reads or reacts to a story does so in their own way, taking part in the creative process with the journalist. Social creativity might also break new ground – telling a story in a new way, or from a different perspective, for example. This has the potential to make a difference to the lives of others, or to the whole of society.

When journalists engage in any kind of creativity, they can experience a sense of ‘flow’ and enjoyment, and creativity helps them to develop traits including resourcefulness, confidence, resilience, flexibility, and spontaneity. This pushes them – and the industry – in exciting new directions.

If journalists have enough time, space and resources to work on their original ideas, and are working positively and ethically within a creative culture, they can change and grow as professionals and people, even experiencing ‘eudaimonia’, a state of fulfilment, wellbeing and reaching their potential.

9.5 How can we equip journalists for the future by facilitating a creative pedagogical culture in journalism education?

This section answers the second research question (RQ2): how can we equip journalists for the future by facilitating a creative pedagogical culture in journalism education?

The industry disruption and pace of change evidenced in the literature, and reflected in the data collected for this project, suggests that creative pedagogical approaches could help to produce journalists who feel a sense of belonging to the craft, industry and community. These journalists would be good collaborators, they would appreciate mentorship (and understand how to provide mentorship to others), learn well in diverse environments, have a sense of freedom in their practice (particularly with regard to generating and contributing ideas), and would be able to access appropriate creative resources, including technology. These elements could combine to better prepare them for work in an industry beset by constant change and challenge.

Rather than following a linear process, whereby students or trainee journalists are first taught practical skills and journalistic knowledge and may only experience the benefits of a supportive ecosystem once the foundation is complete, the data analysis in this project suggests that we can facilitate a creative culture in journalism education by embedding

the foundation *within* a supportive ecosystem. By doing this, journalistic knowledge, practical skills, technological skills (including social media) and human skills would be equally weighted. The term ‘human skills’, as opposed to ‘soft skills’, is used deliberately: in the age of AI, referring to ‘human skills’ is gaining traction in the business world (Sinek, 2021; Kowal Smith, 2024; Whitmarsh, 2024) and could be adopted in the vocabulary of journalism education to support their equity in the curriculum.

The data in this thesis suggests that building a supportive ecosystem, which could happen within courses and modules, and across journalism schools, with the conscious goal of achieving eudaimonia, could contribute to equipping journalism students for the future. The experiences of the research participants illustrate the benefits of immersing students and young journalists in a culture where they feel welcome, can learn to work with others, engage with their lecturers and trainers as mentors, recognise themselves in the people who teach and advise them, and develop the confidence to take risks earlier in their journalism careers. To achieve this ecosystem, the data suggests that journalism educators should be more aware of their orthodox attitudes, behaviour and practices, be open to change, treat their students as peers and people they can learn from, and question existing hierarchy and power dynamics in industry, rather than reinforcing them. According to the data, regular feedback, provided with empathy, is essential, as is the opportunity to contribute and experiment with original ideas. Participants who had experienced elements of a supportive ecosystem had been taught by journalism educators who developed compassionate mentor relationships and gave students a sense of control over their work and learning experiences. Being aware that the industry they are teaching for is not the same as the industry they worked in, particularly when educators have been in academia for a substantial amount of time, was seen as crucial to developing a creative culture and better preparing students for industry.

If the foundation of journalism training is confused or enmeshed with journalistic orthodoxy, a supportive ecosystem could be compromised. As the data in this project suggests, rigidity, excessive pressure, generational gaps, risk aversion and young journalists who lack confidence and resilience are not conducive to creative activities and experiences. Where the research participants encountered orthodoxy in their education

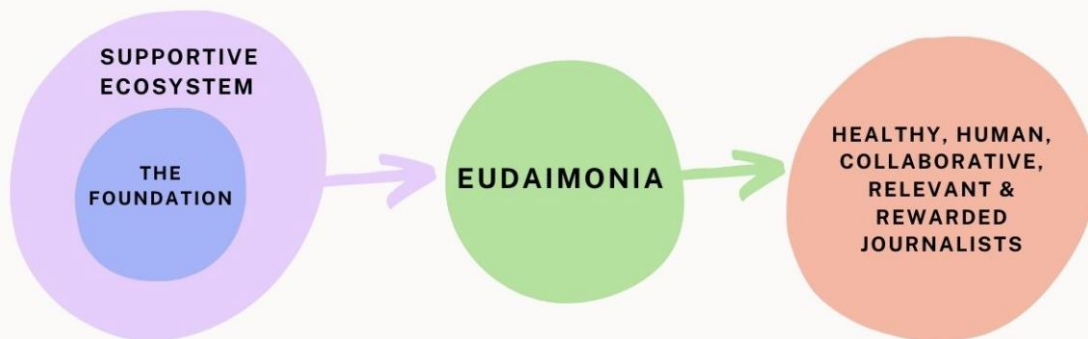
and careers, they were disheartened and discouraged. Alternatively, the characteristics of a supportive ecosystem allowed them to develop the skills and character to counter the tensions inherent in the profession through a creative culture that encouraged and respected them, as well as challenging them intellectually.

9.5.1 Implications

A conceptual pedagogical model for *Educating Future Journalists (EFJ)*, informed by the data and hypothesis in chapter eight, illustrates the implications of the answer to this research question:

EDUCATING FUTURE JOURNALISTS (EFJ): A MODEL

Facilitating a creative culture to generate eudaimonia and produce future journalists better able to cope with the realities of the profession



JOHANNA PAYTON, 2024

Figure 12: Educating future journalists: a model

The analysis in this project suggests that if educators develop a creative culture by facilitating a supportive ecosystem, their students are more likely to develop confidence,

resilience and curiosity, finding significant stories and developing new platforms from which to tell them. This suggests that rather than preparing young journalists for structural norms, a creative culture could help educators to nurture change makers. Given the positivity and promise of creative culture, supported by the literature and the data in this project, developing a creative culture could contribute to improving student engagement, experience and satisfaction at journalism school.

9.6 What are the possibilities and risks of creative culture for journalists and journalism students?

This section answers the third and final research question (*RQ3*): what are the possibilities and risks of creative culture for journalists, journalism educators and journalism students?

The possibilities offered by developing a creative culture in journalism and journalism education range from the personal (enhancing enjoyment, resilience and a sense of achievement), to the broader, institution-wide benefits that could result from enhanced student satisfaction and increased journalistic innovation.

Across the data, participants in this project talked about the need for creativity and innovation in industry. It is seen as a means of connecting meaningfully with audiences, increasing audience engagement, and helping media brands stand out in a competitive market. Reflecting literature that explores the need for creativity in journalism (Witschge, Deuze and Willemsen, 2019; Chan, 2020; Carlson, Robinson and Lewis, 2021), the data in this project reinforces the links between creativity and relevance, and the survival of publications. Creative journalists are seen as having the tools and traits to both deal with a precarious, high-pressure industry and contribute to its durability and growth. According to the data, creativity is not optional for journalists and has the potential to reinvigorate an industry in ‘permacrisis’ (Kavanagh, 2024). This thesis also reveals that young journalists anticipate the continued rise of social media journalism, which they closely relate to journalistic creativity. Creativity also shows promise in terms of responding to generative

AI; the data suggests that by investing in creativity, and enhancing human skills, AI's impact on the reliability of information and content generation can be mitigated.

The elements of a supportive ecosystem that participants had experienced and described in this study, including diversity, mentorship and creative freedom, had contributed to their mental wellbeing. In educational contexts, mental health initiatives and inclusion can be approached as one (Capper and McVitty, 2022), and mentorship schemes can be designed to develop journalists' efficacy, optimism and hope (Šimunjak, 2023). A process-rich educational environment could also encourage students to engage with the learning process, rather than focusing on end products, which can hamper creativity.

Alongside the possibilities, this study has also highlighted a range of risks associated with creative culture for journalists, educators and students. Students and journalists abandoning convention and doing 'whatever they want' in the name of creative practice is one major risk. As the data in this project suggests, the biggest fear many educators and journalists have is that pursuing novelty for the sake of it devalues the profession and its credibility. Journalists are working under the additional pressure of having to produce novel ideas and are aware that creativity could be used to exploit journalists (Markham, 2012) and disrupt an industry that is already subject to regular upheaval. While the data reinforces the strong links between creativity and social media that young journalists ascribe, and the potential for such creativity to increase meaningful audience connection, it also highlights the risks of engaging with the public in the secondary phase of creativity (Runco and Beghetto, 2019). Described by the senior journalists as toxic and harassing, increasing audience engagement 'below the line' (in comments sections or on social media) may expose journalists to a greater risk of abuse.

In education, the process-oriented approach supported by the data may not sit easily within the grades-based paradigm that dominates most curriculums (Knesek, 2022). Assessment is fundamental to 21st-century tertiary education, and as creative culture could be disruptive in this context, it is a risk that creative journalism educators need to

navigate. 'Deferred creativity' (Watson, 2018) is another risk associated with creative culture in education. As illustrated by the participants in this study, young people consider rules to be creative curbs, and the realities of assessment cloud their perception of creative freedom. If students only appreciate creativity in hindsight, educators who need the support of student partners in building a creative culture could struggle to gain momentum and convince other stakeholders it is a worthwhile pursuit. Gaining buy-in from stakeholders will certainly be a challenge, particularly if educators, journalists and students are wary of creativity and value journalistic orthodoxy highly in their practice, attitudes that are demonstrated by research participants in this study. Although the early career journalists and journalism students in this research were largely enthusiastic about journalistic creativity, creative pedagogical practice will undoubtedly attract scepticism. It is apparent in the data from the focus groups with educators and senior journalists; as creativity demands risk and courage, and many young people are terrified of getting things wrong (Betts, 2023), creative culture poses a particular risk for students, too.

9.6.1 Implications

The possibilities of creative culture may have measurable impact on strategic priorities, particularly in an educational context: improved scores on module evaluations and the National Student Survey, for example. The data suggests that building a creative culture could contribute to helping journalism students feel welcome, bond with each other and their peers, and develop the confidence to be ambitious and take risks in their work. As universities continue to focus on widening participation and recruiting international students, this could be particularly helpful. Entering a creative culture within higher education could also give trainee journalists the opportunity to adjust to the realities of the profession in safe learning spaces, contributing to student retention. As reflection, personality and creative responses to tasks appear to contribute to creative culture, feeding these elements into assessment briefs could help to mitigate the threat posed to traditional essays and written assignments by generative AI (Rudolph, Tan and Tan,

2023). The data also suggests that facilitating a creative culture at university could enhance the human skills that make contemporary graduates more employable.

If innovation is a requirement for young journalists, graduates who are used to operating within a creative culture could contribute to the evolution and growth of industry. The data suggests that creative journalists who work with empathy, compassion and sensitivity can develop a deeper sense of connectedness with their audience, which could also help media brands and publications to grow. The data also reminds us, however, that closer relationships with an audience can expose journalists to trolling and abuse.

Creative culture in education and industry has the potential to create change, and this is reflected in the data. Although the transformative experiences of the participants in this research were positive, it is important to note that transformative education carries its own risks. As transformative education involves deep psychological restructuring on the part of the student, educators need to prepare for the ethical implications (Yacek, 2020). The data suggests that discussing journalistic creativity and understanding what it means from the start of a course, including how it might change one's work and outlook, may be helpful.

9.7 Aims and limitations

This study aims to contribute to the literature on journalistic creativity and creative journalism education. It has offered an understanding of what journalistic creativity is, informed by theory and literature and used the findings from its empirical research to propose a theory to explain how journalism students tend to be taught, and how creativity is facilitated in their training. It also presents an alternative, conceptual pedagogical model to indicate how a creative culture could operate in educational environments. This project has addressed its aims in better understanding the role and meaning of journalistic creativity and exploring the possibilities and risks of developing a creative culture in journalism and journalism education.

In terms of its limitations, the qualitative research methods used in this study would be difficult to replicate. I played a central role in generating the data, using my journalistic and educational networks, my experience as a reporter and teacher, and my own creative ideas and input. Comparing this data with other studies is also challenging because the literature on creative journalism education is limited, and where it does exist, it tends to be qualitative and unique. There are, however, examples in the literature review that speak to the work of this thesis.

By working as an insider researcher, I was immersed in the project and struck up a positive rapport with my research participants. I was aware, however, that researcher bias could affect the results, and the credibility of the project, and made every effort, at every stage of this research, to avoid influencing participants and to be aware of my own subjectivity, particularly during the interview and interpretation phases. I am confident that the interview questions were consistent and high quality, producing significant and insightful results. Given that journalism education is a relatively niche area, I do not believe the small sample size is an issue in terms of broadening the findings to a wider community of journalists, educators and students, but the fast pace of change in both journalism and higher education puts this study at risk of becoming outdated, quickly.

In researching creativity, I wanted this project to be creative in its own right. The limitations of a doctoral research project, including having no budget and studying part-time, curtailed my ambitions. This project certainly has innovative elements: it is multi-disciplinary and practice-led; the structure of the thesis, including its colourful maps and models, and narrative voice, are somewhat unconventional; it uses an original theoretical framework that fuses journalistic and educational perspectives; its mixed data collection methods include a unique digital research activity and a focus group stage; and the project is reflexive, using a structured debrief in the next section (see section 9.8 below) to close the reflexive practice loop. In future research, however, I will strive to use creative methods that are more rewarding for research participants, will inspire other researchers to use creative research methods, and can help to answer complex contemporary questions (Kara, 2020).

9.8 Reflection

As I completed this project as an insider researcher, Gibbs' (1988) six stage cycle, designed for reflection and learning, is used to structure the final reflection. Using this debriefing process, which helps learners to systematically unpack experiences and derive meaning from them towards future improvement, has helped me to consider the professional and emotional outcomes of this learning experience and reflect on this project from a more objective perspective.



Figure 13: Gibbs' reflective cycle (adapted from Gibbs, 1988).

Dutta, S., He, M. and Tsang, D. (2023) 'Reflection and peer assessment to promote self-directed learning in higher education', *Journal of Educational Research and Reviews*, 11(3), pp. 35-46. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.33495/jerr_v11i3.23.111

The structured reflection that follows, using Gibbs cycle as shown in figure 13 (above), illustrates my learning process and anticipates how I might approach similar research in

the future. It includes an action plan that outlines the project's implications for my pedagogic practice and the practical steps that will follow this work.

9.8.1 Description: what happened

This project was co-supervised by one professor in the Journalism department and one in the Learning Enhancement and Development department. Having supervisors in two different departments is considered innovative within my institution. I completed the project over five years as a part-time doctoral student. During this time, I worked as a senior journalism lecturer at a UK university and accepted occasional freelance work as a journalist, media trainer and broadcaster.

9.8.2 Reactions and feelings

Adjusting to doctoral level research was challenging. Unlike journalism, which I find intuitive, understanding research through a theoretical lens and using academic language was a difficult shift. I could not use my journalistic style of writing and thinking, particularly in the early stages of the project. Applying my journalistic skills to the practice-led methodology renewed my confidence, and gradually I became familiar with other aspects of research. Becoming a researcher has been transformative. I care passionately about education and the future of journalism, and the prospect of contributing something useful to the field is rewarding and powerful. I have experienced the exhilaration of knowledge and developed a stronger sense of belief in both my ability to research, and my creative pedagogy.

9.8.3 Evaluation: what was good and bad

Working on this PhD part-time could feel limiting due to my competing academic responsibilities. Taking a practice-led approach (Smith and Dean, 2009) and using reflexivity (Stîngu, 2012) countered this issue. I learned that every hour on campus

contributed to my research and provided stimulus in the context of this project. Turner (2023) finds that part-time PhD student satisfaction is increased through an internal locus of control, including framing doctoral work within the context of solving practice-based problems, and my experience is compatible with this theory.

Given I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) model for my thematic analysis, I also used the authors' updated advice for good practice in becoming a reflexive researcher (Braun and Clarke, 2022). The authors embrace researcher subjectivity as a resource and reject the notion that coding can ever be 'accurate'. They remind us that coding is an interpretative practice, and meaning is not fixed within data. The themes put forward in this thesis did not 'emerge', nor were they 'discovered' in the data. I generated them from my own immersion in, and coding of, the data which was applied through the subjective lens of the theoretical framework and definition of journalistic creativity outlined in chapter four, and my own perspective as a journalist, educator and researcher. Accepting this has been a crucial learning point.

Having reflexive supervision sessions also allowed me to consider and develop my scholarly work and teaching practice (Stîngu, 2012), a process well suited to the topic of this study. There were times when differences in the two disciplines (journalism and education) generated dynamic discussions. For example, using Gibbs' (1988) reflective cycle in a journalism thesis is unusual, but it is a staple framework for educators. When these issues emerged, they were far from divisive. Drawing from both disciplines, and finding balance, when necessary, has enriched this research process.

Treating my research participants as co-researchers (Janesick, 2001) also enhanced this study. During the first semi-structured interviews, for example, the participants said that seeing a definition of creativity would have been helpful when they were still at university, so I added a sub question to the remaining interviews, exploring when and how the participants thought this would be useful. The idea to investigate the 'closed loop news cycle' (included in section 9.9.3 below) also came directly from the focus groups I facilitated.

9.8.4 Analysis: making sense of this experience

Although my personal and professional experience informed this study, I engaged deeply with the data and searched beyond obvious or superficial ideas to find meaning. I acknowledge that another researcher, using an alternative framework, may have proposed different thematic conclusions from the same data set. The analysis and theoretical perspective in chapter eight, and the pedagogic model in this chapter, therefore, are open to interpretation.

I declared my position as an insider throughout the project. On reflection, I am confident that I conducted it using similar guidelines to those applied by Berkovic *et al.* (2020) during their insider research; I did not assume to understand the lived experience of my participants and tried to remain impartial. I occasionally shared my opinion or experience in impromptu exchanges with participants but kept this to a minimum to avoid swaying them. I collected rigorous data via semi-structured interviews, online activities and focus groups that posed the same, probing questions rather than engaging in general conversation, and remained aware of my emotional investment in the topic throughout.

In making sense of this process, I believe that my position as an insider researcher produced insightful and relevant data that directly addresses the research questions. The focus groups added a robust layer of data, giving this qualitative study more credibility. Using thematic analysis allowed me to present the findings with a compelling narrative that I hope other journalism educators will relate to. Throughout the research, issues that colleagues and I have encountered in our practice and that motivated this topic choice, including the demand for creativity in industry, students' lack of resilience, behavioral issues and mental health problems, and increasingly diverse cohorts, became more acute, putting an increasing amount of pressure on students and the academic staff teaching them. I am confident that the research in this project could contribute in some way to addressing these issues.

9.8.5 Conclusions: what else could I have done?

While it was important and congruent to use creative methods to research this topic, I could have pushed much further with the innovation. I wanted to avoid using creative methods erroneously and ensure that my research was rigorous and methodical, as well as original. I am confident that I achieved a balance of creativity and intellectual discipline, and will always seek this equilibrium in my approach, but with more experience and confidence as a researcher, I could have used an even more innovative methodology to investigate journalistic creativity. If more time had been available, I would have also conducted action research in the classroom (Stringer, 2008) to test the *Educating Future Journalists (EFJ)* model in practice. This would have allowed me to evaluate how staff and students interpret and adapt to a supportive ecosystem, how the experience of eudaimonia affects them, and to assess the pedagogy's potential impact on industry. Understanding how to build a creative culture in the classroom in practical terms, with examples and case studies for educators to draw upon, could be useful in the future.

9.8.6 Action plan: implications for my practice

The action plan I have developed from this project highlights the implications for my practice as a journalism educator and researcher.

After completion of this project, I will:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the *EFJ* model in my practice through action research;
- Continue to develop a network of colleagues who are interested in the potential of creative pedagogy for journalism education and share the *EFJ* model with them;
- Identify opportunities to present the *EFJ* model to journalism educators across my department, at other institutions, and through academic conferences, to

disseminate the research and encourage colleagues to experiment with the model on their modules and courses;

- Redesign a core, first-year journalism module using the *EFJ* model, changing the emphasis from studying UK media structures to locating the students within them, exploring the human skills and creative traits they will need to thrive in the journalism industry;
- Propose a learning and teaching strategy in my journalism department that encourages a process-rich learning environment, shifting assessment away from 'end products', to counter AI and facilitate a supportive ecosystem;
- Embrace co-creation of curriculum (Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2018; Bovill, 2020), working with students as partners across my practice, as well as working more closely with industry;
- Include more time in workshops for students to bond through activities and dialogue. As friendships enhance students' sense of belonging (Capper and McVitty, 2022), and there is evidence that students do not necessarily socialise off campus (Steadman, 2019), more space for discussion and reflection in classes, and time to explore the impact of creative practice (Yang, 2017), will be beneficial;
- Redouble my efforts to be an inclusive practitioner by giving students practical advice and guidance on sourcing diverse case studies (Canter, 2023), covering underreported stories (Pulitzer Center, 2020) and identifying potential employers with strong track records in equality and diversity, and inclusive recruitment strategies;
- Counter 'deferred creativity' (Watson, 2018) by working more closely with alumni who can talk to students about the impact their creative experiences at university have had on their careers;

- Introduce more active, collaborative techniques into the classroom including one-minute papers, the fishbowl technique and the jigsaw classroom, to encourage team working (City St George's, University of London, 2024);
- Take advantage of Open Educational Resources (OER) including digital textbooks, videos and other free resources to encourage student creativity in workshops (Explorance, 2024);
- In addition to the opportunities for future research outlined in section 9.9 of this chapter (below), I would like to develop a new digital research platform that engages participants in creative activities, using everything I have learned from this project. Ideally, I will work in partnership with a student or colleague who has digital development expertise. By managing the project 'in house' there will be more control over the operation of the research platform. I will also explore options for funding so there is more scope to invest in the development and direction of the activity.

9.9 Future research opportunities

During this project, several areas of research interest have come to light and have been grouped into three areas: journalism education, creativity and students in higher education, and journalism studies.

9.9.1 Journalism education

- *Creative journalism education in practice*: this project identifies a gap in the literature concerning existing creative practice in journalism education. Identifying case studies and talking to educators about the creative activities and interventions they use in their practice would help to build a more detailed picture of creative culture in tertiary journalism education. Working with existing communities of

practice, including #creativeHE and the Association of Journalism Education, would enrich this research. It would also be interesting to fill a gap in the literature by talking to educators about what inspires and facilitates their own creativity in their teaching practice.

- *Impact of diversity on journalistic creativity at university:* the data in this project suggests that a lack of diversity in educational environments has a profound effect on creativity. It would be interesting to speak to journalism students from underrepresented groups about their experiences of creativity, and to find out how beneficial diverse environments are to their creative confidence and output.
- *Trauma-informed journalism education:* good mental health was a primary focus for the research participants in this study. Research into the factors that create mental health issues for journalism students, and relating these issues to trauma in the field, could be used to inform trauma literacy teaching – which is more common post-Covid-19 due to increased hostility towards journalists (Seely, 2020; Miller, 2022) – and improve the provision of journalism education.

9.9.2 Creativity and students in higher education

- *Smartphones, behaviour and creativity:* the impact of social media and online culture is a thread throughout this project. Targeted research is needed into the impact of excessive smartphone use on human skills and creativity in university students. Educators in further and higher education inherit the challenging behaviour that schools deal with (Bajwa *et al.*, 2023; Haidt, 2024; Hill, J., 2024), and the research in this project suggests that creative pedagogies might help to counter it. A research project that investigates this topic directly could help academics who are struggling to engage and communicate with their students in journalism education and beyond.

- *Creativity in schools*: researching the link between creativity in UK school education and students' creative attitudes and abilities when they start university could help creative educators design courses and programmes to better support students' critical thinking and the development of their human skills when they transition to higher education. A comparative study looking at creativity in UK school education and other countries could also explain how interactions with creativity at school affect the creative confidence of young adults. Research into the impact of teaching to the test at schools (Sellgren, 2017), and perhaps whether elements of teaching to the test are limiting creative learning and teaching opportunities in higher education, could also feed into this strand of investigation.

9.9.3 Journalism studies

- *News fatigue and news aversion*: these two topics came up across the data. It would be interesting to explore creative solutions to news fatigue and news aversion in more detail, thinking about new ways to build, engage and retain audiences, particularly in younger consumer groups.
- *Closed-loop news cycle*: in the senior journalists' focus group, participants talked about the way stories are generated on one legacy media platform, then covered by others. For example, a tabloid headline will inform a segment on breakfast television that then informs an interview on talk radio. No research appears to exist on this self-fulfilling media practice. Looking at a 'closed-loop' approach to journalism, and how it lands with younger audiences, would be interesting to examine.
- *Impact of mentorship on journalistic creativity*: the data also suggests that researching the impact of informal industry mentorship on journalistic creativity could be worthwhile, particularly as mentorship can be a key practice for underrepresented groups including women (Kenny *et al.*, 2021) and Black

journalists (Somani and Tyree, 2021), potentially leading to increased diversity, as well as creativity, across the industry.

9.10 End note: educating future journalists

Deuze (2006) said that journalism education and training are rarely researched and suggested that such studies have the potential for globally relevant insight and influencing industry practice. By identifying how creative culture can play a role within industry and at journalism schools, this study has attempted to make a worthwhile contribution to this aspiration. The claims this thesis makes, including the need to situate core journalism training within a supportive ecosystem, the role and risks of journalistic orthodoxy, and the promise of facilitating journalistic eudaimonia, have relevance to both higher education and industry. Although my enthusiasm for creativity and creative education is apparent in this project, its empirical research offers evidence that goes beyond the opinion of a single researcher; it illustrates how creative culture could help journalism educators to engage, support and bond with their students. This shows promise in terms of enhancing student experience and could be rewarding for colleagues. With an original theoretical framework, a definition of journalistic creativity for colleagues and students, and innovative data collection methods, this project illustrates the potential of creative approaches in research, as well as practice.

If there is any scope for the *Educating Future Journalists* model to contribute to journalism students feeling connected to, encouraged in and inspired by their chosen career path, better coping with the realities of the profession when they become working journalists, this project will have been a success.

Appendices

Appendix A: ethical approval

Ethical approval was formally granted by the Journalism Departmental Research Ethics Committee at City St Georges, University of London before each stage of the research took place. Both stages of research were defined as 'low risk'. In line with GDPR regulations, participants' contact information was only retained if they wished to be advised of study results and any connected publications in which the data appears. Evidence of ethical approval is presented below along with an example participant information sheet and example consent form:

Ethics applications: Ms Johanna Payton

Create new application

Application	Project	Date submitted	Date of outcome	Status
ETH2324-1620	Educating future journalists: developing a creative culture in journalism and journalism education	12 Mar 2024	15 Mar 2024	Approved
ETH2021-2156	Educating future journalists: developing a creative culture in journalism and journalism education	19 Jun 2021	12 Jul 2021	Approved



Dear Johanna Payton

Reference: ETH2021-2156

Project title: Doctoral Research Project: What does it mean to be 'creative' in 21st century journalism - and could a definition inform a novel pedagogical approach for journalism education?

Start date: 12 Jul 2021

End date: 31 Dec 2023

I am writing to you to confirm that the research proposal detailed above has been granted formal approval from the Journalism Departmental Research Ethics Committee. The Committee's response is based on the protocol described in the application form and supporting documentation. Approval has been given for the submitted application only and the research must be conducted accordingly. You are now free to start recruitment.



Dear Johanna Payton

Reference: ETH2324-1620

Project title: Educating journalists of the future: a creative pedagogical culture for a creative industry

Start date: 15 Mar 2024

End date: 31 Dec 2025

I am writing to you to confirm that the research proposal detailed above has been granted formal approval from the Journalism Departmental Research Ethics Committee. The Committee's response is based on the protocol described in the application form and supporting documentation. Approval has been given for the submitted application only and the research must be conducted accordingly. You are now free to start recruitment.



THE FUTURE OF JOURNALISM AND CREATIVITY: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

REC reference number: ETH2324-1620

Date: March 2024

Version of information sheet: 1

Title of study: The Future of Journalism and Creativity

Name of principal investigator/researcher: Johanna Payton

Taking part in this survey

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study on the future of journalism and creativity. Before you decide whether you would like to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please contact me (johanna.payton@city.ac.uk) if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information before taking part.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study is part of my doctoral research, being completed over the next two years, looking at the role creativity plays in journalism and how journalism programmes at university can help to give future journalists the creative skills and attributes they need to succeed in the industry. My research method is to use a practice-based approach, which means that you will be asked to take part in an anonymous activity within this study, rather than simply being interviewed.

Why have I been invited to take part?

I am running three focus groups at this stage of my research: one with current BA and MA journalism students; one with journalism educators; and one with industry professionals. All three groups will be treated completely anonymously. As this research is qualitative, I am personally inviting six-eight participants to each focus group.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. You can withdraw at any stage whilst doing the activity and if you do not complete the activity, any data you have shared will be destroyed and will not be used in the study. If you decide to take part, you will be asked to indicate your consent by completing a consent form and agreeing to attend a focus group with Johanna Payton. Once you have completed the session, you can no longer withdraw your anonymised data.

What will happen if I take part?

If you would like to take part in this study, you will be asked to attend a focus group with Johanna Payton where Johanna will present a summary of her research to date and ask for your reactions and opinions. The session will take up to 90 minutes of your time. The conversation will be recorded and used for transcription: as soon as the conversation has been transcribed and the resulting study has been written and approved, the recording will be deleted. If you attend an in-person focus group you will also be provided with pens and paper to make any notes, doodles, drawings etc. that you want to.

Participation in this activity is anonymous, and you will **not** be asked to provide your name, age, location or any other personal/identifying information. During the focus group, you will not be asked for any opinions or information regarding individuals (peers/tutors/colleagues, etc.) and any identifying information will be omitted from the results of this study.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

The focus group will take up some of your valuable time, but there are no risks incurred by taking part in this activity.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

I hope you will find the presentation and conversation interesting. It's a chance to freely share your thoughts on creativity in journalism and journalism education. Your participation will contribute to the future education and employability of journalism students at City, University of London and, potentially, to a wider community of future journalism students and graduates.

Data privacy statement

City, University of London is the sponsor and the data controller of this study based in the United Kingdom. This means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The legal basis under which your data will be processed is City's public task.

Your right to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in a specific way in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personal-identifiable information possible (for further information please see <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/lawful-basis-for-processing/public-task/>).

City will use your name and contact details to contact you about the research study as necessary. If you wish to receive the results of the study, your contact details will also be kept for this purpose. The only person at City who will have access to your identifiable information will be Johanna Payton. City will keep identifiable information about you from this study for 2 years after the study has finished.

You can find out more about how City handles data by visiting <https://www.city.ac.uk/about/governance/legal>. If you are concerned about how we have processed your personal data, you can contact the Information Commissioner's Office (IOC) <https://ico.org.uk/>.

What will happen to the results?

As well as contributing to my thesis, the results of this research may also be included in a paper/papers that will be submitted to academic journals in the field of journalism and the media, education and creativity. The anonymity of all research participants will be maintained.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been approved by City, University of London Journalism Research Ethics Committee.

What if there is a problem?

If you have any problems, concerns or questions about this study, you can contact me at any time (contact details below). If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this through City's complaints procedure. To complain about the study, you need to phone 020 7040 3040. You can then ask to speak to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee and inform them that the name of the project is The Future of Journalism and Creativity.

You can also write to the Secretary at:



INFORMED CONSENT FORM – THE FUTURE OF JOURNALISM AND CREATIVITY

Principal investigator/researcher: JOHANNA PAYTON, CITY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

REC reference number: ETH2324-1620

Title of study: THE FUTURE OF JOURNALISM AND CREATIVITY

Please tick or
initial box

1	I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information dated March 2024 (v1) for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions which have been answered satisfactorily.	
2.	I understand that my participation in a recorded in-person focus group with Johanna Payton is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw without giving a reason without being penalised or disadvantaged.	
3.	I agree to the focus group being conducted in person and the conversation being recorded (audio only).	
4.	I understand that I will be able to withdraw my participation until the focus group has taken place.	
5.	I agree that direct, anonymous quotes from the focus group may be used in Johanna Payton's thesis and in academic papers/publications that will be made open access in order to disseminate this research. The data will only be reused in studies which have been given ethics approval.	
5.	I agree to City recording and processing this information about me. I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose(s) explained in the participant information and my consent is conditional on City complying with its duties and obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).	
6.	I would like to be informed of the results of this study once complete and understand that my contact details will be retained for this purpose.	
7.	I agree to take part in the above study.	

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

[When completed, 1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher file.]

Appendix B: participant profiles

Semi-structured interviews:

Participant 1: Male journalist, home student, graduated in 2018 from a Journalism BA and works for a digital business platform.

Participant 2: Male journalist, home student, graduated in 2018 from a Journalism BA, works for a national broadcaster across radio and television and identified as neurodivergent.

Participant 3: Female video journalist, home student, graduated in 2018 from a Journalism BA and works for a national news organisation.

Participant 4: Female features editor, home student, graduated from a Journalism BA in 2018 and from a Journalism MA in 2020 works for a digital news and lifestyle platform.

Participant 5: Female journalist, home student, graduated from a Journalism MA in 2020 and works for a digital news platform.

Participant 6: Female journalist, home student, graduated from a Journalism BA in 2018 works for a digital news platform and is a Person of Colour.

Participant 7: Male journalist, home student, graduated from a Journalism BA in 2018 works for a national broadcaster (TV) and is a Person of Colour.

Participant 8: Female journalist, home student, graduated from a Journalism BA in 2018 works for a national broadcaster (TV) and is a Person of Colour.

Participant 9: Female journalist, home student, graduated from a Journalism BA in 2018 works for a national broadcaster (radio) and identified as neurodivergent.

Participant 10: Female journalist, home student, completed a vocational journalism training course in 2018 works for a digital news and lifestyle platform and identified as LGBTQ+.

Participant 11: Male journalist, home student, graduated in 20 from a Journalism MA and works for a broadsheet specialising in journalism.

Participant 12: Female freelance journalist, home student, graduated from a Journalism BA in 20 and works for a local newspaper.

Participant 13: Female freelance journalist, home student, graduated from a Journalism BA in 20 and specialises in international affairs, humanitarian issues, politics and culture.

Participant 14: Female freelance journalist, international student, graduated from a Journalism BA in 20 works for national broadcasters and newspapers.

Participant 15: Male freelance journalist, international student, graduated from a Journalism BA in 20 works for news outlets and fashion magazines.

Participant 16: Male freelance journalist, international student, graduated from a Journalism MA in 20 works for news and sports platforms and is a Person of Colour.

Online activity:

Participant 17: Female print and radio journalist under 25 working as a magazine editor. Graduated from a Journalism MA.

Participant 18: Female digital journalist under 25 working as an online content journalist. Completed a vocational journalism training course.

Participant 19: Female broadcast journalist under 25 working for a radio station and studying on a vocational journalism training course. Graduated from a Journalism and BA.

Participant 20: female senior reporter aged 26-30 working for a digital platform. Completed a vocational journalism training course.

Participant 21: Male print journalist aged 26-30 working as a reporter for a digital platform. Graduated from a Journalism MA.

Participant 22: Male multimedia Journalist under 25 working as a lifestyle magazine editor for two publications. Graduated from a Journalism BA.

Participant 23: Male radio journalist aged 26-30 working as a reporter for an international features agency. Graduated from a Journalism MA.

Participant 24: Male multimedia journalist aged 26-30 working as a news editor and producer for broadcast and digital clients. Graduated from a Journalism BA.

Focus groups

Focus group 1: journalism students

In this focus group, four participants were People of Colour and two were neurodiverse, one was a mature student.

Student A: Male MA home student

Student B: Female home student in first year of BA Journalism

Student C: Female international student in first year of BA Journalism

Student D: Female home student in first year of BA Journalism

Student E: Male MA international student

Student F: Female MA international student

Student G: Female home student in second year of BA Journalism

Student H: Female home student in third year of BA Journalism

Student I: Female home student in third year of BA Journalism

Student J: Female home student in second year of BA Journalism

Student K: Female home student in third year of BA Journalism

Focus group 2: journalism educators

In this focus group, each participant was from a different UK university.

Educator L: Female associate professor

Educator M: Male lecturer

Educator N: Female senior lecturer

Educator O: Female course leader

Educator P: Male lecturer

Educator Q: Female senior lecturer

Focus group 3: journalists

Journalist R: Male radio presenter and producer working for national and regional stations.

Journalist S: Female print and digital journalist working as an editor for a commercial client.

Journalist T: Male technology and telecoms journalist for a digital platform.

Journalist U: Female freelance presenter and broadcaster and is a Person of Colour.

Journalist V: Male features editor working for a newspaper.

Journalist W: Female director working for a media brand, leading on

Appendix C: instructions for online activity

Before participants took part in the online 'character creation' activity, completed independently, they received step-by-step instructions via email:

Hi XXXXXXXX,

Thanks so much for connecting on Twitter last week and hope you had a good work trip!

As discussed, I'm researching journalism education and creativity for my PhD, and I've designed an online research activity that I would love to invite you to take part in.

It's designed to be fun and creative, and it doesn't take too long (20-30 mins max). You can login and do it on your own / in your own time. You basically dress up a 'future journalist' avatar, complete a profile about their career and then imagine what their workplace would be like.

It's best done on a laptop/Mac, rather than on mobile.

I've attached the participant info sheet so you can see exactly what this research is for: this information is also available to download from the site.

To take part you just need to login using the details below and then click the green 'agree and proceed' button at the bottom of the first page.

<https://futurejournalists.com/>

username:

password:

If you could let me know when you've done it, so the team managing the site know to download the results, that would be really helpful too.

Please let me know if you have any questions, and huge thanks in advance for doing this.

Best wishes,

Jo

Appendix D: semi-structured interview questions

The following questions were asked during the semi-structured interviews:

WORK

Please tell me about your career path since leaving university.

1. What does creativity mean to you now as a journalist? Has your understanding of creativity changed since graduating? If so, how?
2. Could you provide examples of when you have been 'creative' in your current or recent role?
3. Do you think the culture in your current (or recent) workplace is creative? How is it/is it not creative?
4. How important do you think creativity is to your editors/employers?
5. Do you think creative skills are important to contemporary journalists? Do you think contemporary journalists need to have creative traits/characters?

UNI

6. What did 'creativity' mean to you at university?
7. In what ways did the course at university encourage/discourage you from being creative? Did it make you feel more confident in your creative abilities?
8. Did you think the culture in the Journalism Department was creative? In what ways was it/was it not creative?
9. Do you think there were any gaps in your journalism training?

SHARE DEFINITION (record reactions to definition)

The sub question "do you think a definition like this would be useful for students to see and explore and at what stage in their learning journey would this be most helpful" was added after the first three interviews because the participants all mentioned that they would have liked to see the definition while they were at university.

10. Thinking about creativity in the context of journalism, if you could go back and give your student self and your journalism tutors some advice, what would it be?

FUTURE

11. Do you think creative traits and skills will be important in the future for journalists and why?

Appendix E: creative process, *futurejournalists.com*

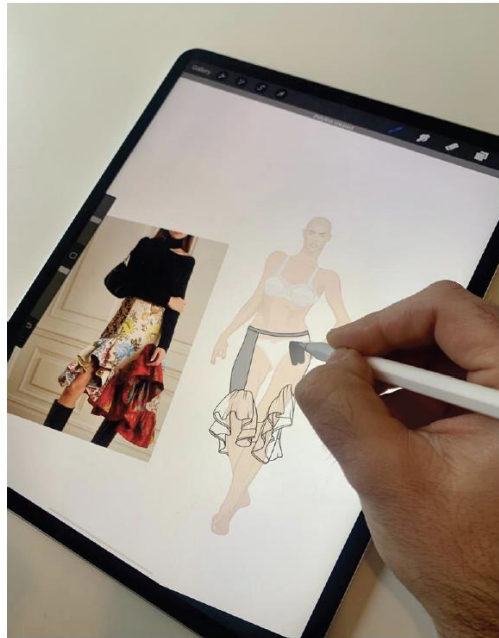
To build the avatar-based research platform, I worked with a programmer and webmaster based in Character Creator platform was already established, and I approached him to build a bespoke version of the existing platform to collect data for this study.

During spring 2021, in initial meetings we established that the Character Creator platform could be customised for my research. As well as developing a special version of the Character Creator, and web-hosting the activity (at *futurejournalists.com*) from his server, agreed to work with my husband, Matthew Swan, a commercial artist, to develop some new fashion items and journalism-related accessories that could be offered as choices for the research participants. As a former comic book pencil artist, was happy to work with a traditional artist on new designs. The images below illustrate this creative process:



The future journalist may want to express herself through high fashion. (Image of high-fashion skirt sourced from net-a-porter.com)

Our artist hand-draws his own version of the skirt onto the blank Character Creator avatar using the iPad Pro Procreate tool.

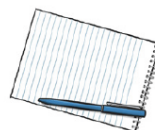


The skirt is coloured with a neutral palette along with shadows and highlights to match existing content on the Character Creator.

The item is then sent electronically to our developer to be vectored and added to the bespoke version of The Character Creator.



Our artist also designed a choice of seven journalism accessories to represent audio journalism, video journalism, photo journalism, networked journalism, written content, data journalism and AI.



We also agreed to extend the activity beyond the participants simply designing avatars, so that I could gather additional data using creative, practice-led tasks. [redacted] agreed to add a 'newspaper profile' activity that I designed, where participants would fill in the missing words, and a page where participants could imagine the workplace of their future journalist character. [redacted] also agreed to add a page where respondents could record how doing the activity had made them feel. Appendix F shows the step-by-step user experience on the platform.

Once the platform had been developed and tested thoroughly, I invited participants to complete the activity. After agreeing to participate, they received the URL and a password to access the site. They could complete the activity using a desktop or mobile device (desktop was recommended for ease of use) at their convenience and they were advised to contact me if they had issues accessing or using the platform.

As webmaster for the activity, [redacted] collected anonymous data once participants had completed the survey. Once I had confirmed secure receipt of the anonymous data collected, [redacted] deleted it from his server.

[redacted] work on this project was funded by a research grant from the Journalism Department Research Committee at City St George's, University of London. The funding was declared in the Ethics application for the data collection.

Appendix F: character creation activity step-by-step

The following screenshots illustrate the user experience for participants of the *futurejournalists.com* activity.

WELCOME TO THE FUTURE OF JOURNALISM AND CREATIVITY STUDY. PLEASE READ THE INFORMATION BELOW CAREFULLY BEFORE CONTINUING.

YOU HAVE BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART IN A RESEARCH STUDY ON THE FUTURE OF JOURNALISM AND CREATIVITY. BEFORE YOU DECIDE WHETHER YOU WOULD LIKE TO GO AHEAD, PLEASE DOWNLOAD AND READ THE PDF BELOW: IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU UNDERSTAND WHY THE RESEARCH IS BEING DONE AND WHAT IT WILL INVOLVE FOR YOU.

[DOWNLOAD PDF](#)

BY CLICKING "AGREE AND PROCEED" AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS PAGE YOU ARE ACKNOWLEDGING THAT YOU HAVE READ THIS INFORMATION STATEMENT AND WOULD LIKE TO PROCEED TO THE CREATIVE ACTIVITIES AND TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY.

NEXT, YOU WILL BE ASKED TO COMPLETE THREE SHORT CREATIVE ACTIVITIES ON THIS WEBSITE. THE ACTIVITIES SHOULD TAKE BETWEEN 30-60 MINUTES TO COMPLETE IN TOTAL, BUT AS THEY ARE CREATIVE TASKS, YOU MAY COMPLETE THEM IN LESS TIME – OR DECIDE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SPEND MORE TIME ON THEM. YOU WILL RECEIVE INSTRUCTIONS AS YOU GO THROUGH THE SITE. BUT IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT JO

AGREE AND PROCEED



ABOUT YOU

PLEASE INDICATE YOUR AGE

☐ 18-25 ☐ 31-35
☐ 26-30 ☐ 35+

YOUR JOB TITLE/ROLE

WHAT BEST DESCRIBES THE TYPE OF JOURNALISM YOU PRODUCE?

TICK ALL THAT APPLY

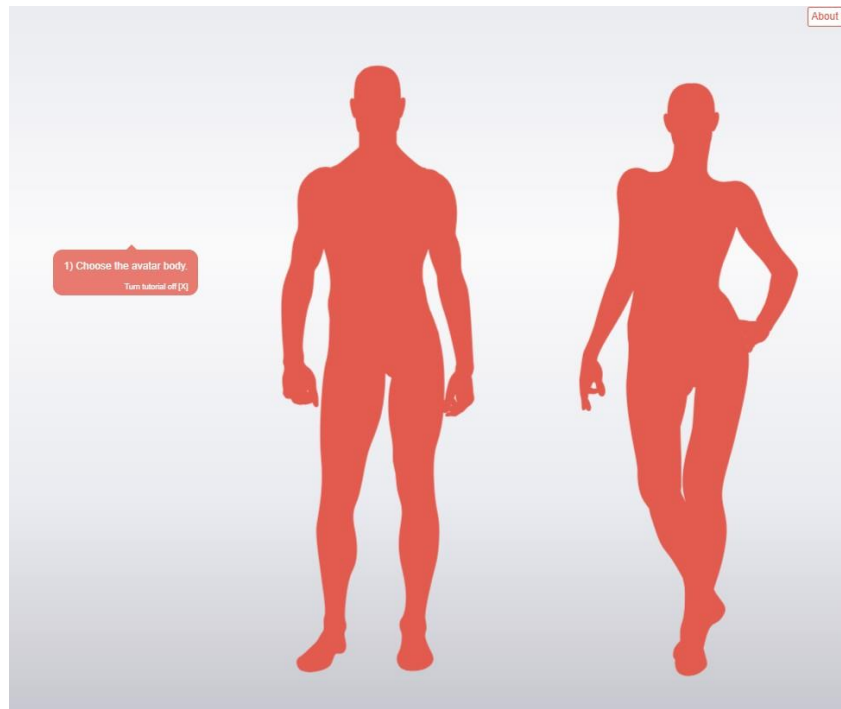
☐ PRINT ☐ BROADCAST
☐ RADIO ☐ DIGITAL

PLEASE BRIEFLY DESCRIBE ANY FORMAL JOURNALISM TRAINING YOU HAVE HAD

PLEASE BRIEFLY DESCRIBE YOUR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

PLEASE BRIEFLY DESCRIBE YOUR CAREER ROUTE TO DATE

**SUBMIT &
PROCEED**





TIME TO CREATE YOUR FUTURE JOURNALIST'S PROFILE

PLEASE FILL IN THE EMPTY BOXES BELOW TO COMPLETE THE PROFILE OF THE 'FUTURE JOURNALIST' YOU HAVE JUST CREATED

LIGHT YEARS AHEAD: MEET THE JOURNALIST SETTING A COURSE FOR THE INDUSTRY'S FUTURE

AS RISING JOURNALISM STAR _____ IS ANNOUNCED AS THE SHINY, NEW EDITOR AT _____, WE LOOK BACK ON THEIR METEORIC ROUTE TO MEDIA FAME:

_____, _____ AND _____, THREE WORDS THAT DESCRIBE THE STELLAR CAREER OF A _____ YOUNG JOURNALIST WHO IS SET TO DOMINATE THE FUTURE OF THE INDUSTRY.

SINCE COMPLETING THEIR JOURNALISM TRAINING AT _____, THEY HAVE CONTRIBUTED DYNAMIC _____ IN THE FIELDS OF _____ AND _____ TO PUBLICATIONS INCLUDING _____, _____ AND _____, BUT THEIR PASSION FOR _____ AND _____ ATTITUDE PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THEIR SUCCESS.

AT JUST _____ YEARS OF AGE, THEY SHOWED AN EARLY FLAIR FOR _____, INTRODUCED TO THE IDEA OF WORKING IN THE MEDIA BY _____, THEIR LOVE OF _____ WAS INSPIRED BY _____ BORN IN _____. THEY SHOWED A PASSION FOR _____ AT SCHOOL AND FIRST SAW THEIR WORK COMMISSIONED BY _____ WHILST STILL IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION, AN EARLY WIN THEY NOW DESCRIBE AS "_____".

AS WELL AS CREATING _____ IN THEIR FREE TIME DURING THEIR TEENAGE YEARS, THEY WERE ABLE TO SECURE AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH _____ FOR AN A LEVEL PROJECT DESCRIBED AS 'GROUNDBREAKING' BY THEIR FORMER ENGLISH TEACHER.

AFTER FINISHING SCHOOL, FINDING A MENTOR WAS A PRIORITY, AND THEY CONNECTED WITH ONE OF THE UK'S MOST ESTEEMED _____ JOURNALISTS VIA SOCIAL MEDIA, CONVINCING THEM TO TAKE AN INTEREST BY DESCRIBING THEIR JOURNALISM AS "_____ " IN A DIRECT MESSAGE.

THEIR JOURNALISM TRAINING WAS _____, AND INCLUDED _____.

WHEN AN ENTRY-LEVEL ROLE BECAME AVAILABLE AT _____, THEY WASTED NO TIME IN SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION THAT BRIMMED WITH ORIGINALITY. LOOKING BACK, THEY REMEMBER THIS INNOVATIVE APPLICATION AS MORE THAN JUST A CALLING CARD. "IT WAS _____," THEY SAID.

IN THAT FIRST JOB, THEY WERE ABLE TO _____ MAKING CONTACTS ACROSS THE INDUSTRY AND RAISING AWARENESS ON ISSUES INCLUDING _____ AND _____. THEY ALSO ROSE TO THE CHALLENGE OF HARNESSING THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY GIVING THEIR AUDIENCE _____ FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME.

IN SPITE OF THEIR TENDER YEARS, THEIR INFLUENCE IN THIS EARLY ROLE WAS PIVOTAL BUT, AFTER TWO YEARS, THEY MADE THE DECISION TO _____ USING THE REST OF THEIR 20S TO DEVELOP _____.

AT THIS POINT IN THEIR CAREER, THEY ALSO STARTED RESEARCHING STORIES ABOUT _____. "IT IGNITED MY INTEREST AND _____," THEY SAID.

AS THEIR CAREER DEVELOPED, SO DID THE EMERGENCE OF AN EXCITING SKILLSET THAT INCLUDED _____ AND _____. REFLECTING ON THESE TALENTS, NOW SEEN AS ESSENTIAL FOR ALL 21ST CENTURY JOURNALISTS, THEY SAID: "_____".



JOURNALISM SCHOOL OF REPORTER JOURNALISTS, THEY ARE: _____

NOW TURNING 30, THEIR LATEST CHALLENGE IS SET TO ROCK THE MEDIA ESTABLISHMENT. SPEAKING ABOUT THEIR (UNEXPECTED, IN SOME QUARTERS) APPOINTMENT, THEY SAID: " _____"

THE REACTION TO THEIR EDITORSHIP AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE HAS BEEN MIXED, WITH ESTABLISHED JOURNALISTS DESCRIBING THE MOVE AS " _____" AND " _____", WHILE THEIR CONTEMPORARIES SEE THE NEWS AS " _____" AND " _____".

ONE JOURNALIST, WHO HAS WORKED EXTENSIVELY WITH THEM, DESCRIBED THEIR UNIQUE STYLE OF STORYTELLING AS " _____", AND SAYS THAT THIS INFLUENTIAL, NEW POSITION IS LIKELY TO GIVE THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE THE KIND OF SHAKE-UP IT SO DESPERATELY NEEDS.

AS THEY SETTLE INTO THEIR NEW ROLE, THIS FUTURE-FACING JOURNALIST PROUDLY DESCRIBES THEIR CAREER TO DATE AS " _____". WHEN IT COMES TO THE FUTURE? "I INTEND TO _____" THEY SAID.

WITH A BURNING DESIRE "TO DO SOMETHING BIGGER" THEIR LATEST ROLE MAY OFFER THE PERFECT PLATFORM TO SHAKE UP THE JOURNALISM INDUSTRY. AND IF YOU'RE WONDERING WHAT TO EXPECT, THEY HAVE SET OUT THEIR AMBITIONS IN THE MOST ELECTRIFYING TERMS: " _____"



SAVE PROFILE
AND GO TO
NEXT STEP

IN THE BOX BELOW PLEASE DESCRIBE THE CULTURE IN THE WORKPLACE OF THE JOURNALIST YOU HAVE CREATED

SUBMIT AND COMPLETE

YOU'VE COMPLETED THE RESEARCH ACTIVITY... BUT THERE'S ONE MORE QUESTION:

HOW DID THIS CREATIVE EXERCISE MAKE YOU FEEL?

CLICK TO
FINISH



THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS ACTIVITY

ALL YOUR RESPONSES HAVE BEEN RECORDED

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE NOTIFIED WHEN THE RESULTS OF THIS SURVEY ARE PUBLISHED, PLEASE CONTACT JO DIRECTLY.

YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS WILL BE STORED EXPLICITLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF INFORMING YOU ABOUT THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY AND WILL BE KEPT ON FILE UNTIL MY THESIS IS COMPLETED (APPROXIMATELY 4-6 YEARS). THE ONLY PERSON AT CITY WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO YOUR IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION WILL BE JOHANNA PAYTON.

TO BE NOTIFIED OF THE RESULTS, OR IF YOU HAVE ANY OTHER COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS RESEARCH, PLEASE CONTACT ME AT JOHANNA.PAYTON@CITY.AC.UK OR YOU CAN CONTACT MY SUPERVISORS: SUZANNE.FRANKS.1@CITY.AC.UK AND JANE.SECKER@CITY.AC.UK.

Appendix G: focus group presentations

At each focus group, I presented initial analysis from the stage one research using PowerPoint slides. The images below show example slides from the focus group with journalism educators, plus examples from the slides presented to the student group that included 'advice' from the initial research participants:





The Delphi Method

I am now sense checking my results & analysis so far
with three focus groups made up of expert stakeholders:
you are the second group (following the students, who had to come
first!)



3



Creativity and the journalism industry

I started by asking the young journalists about their experiences so far in the industry...

10



“WHAT DOES CREATIVITY MEAN TO YOU?”

- × Freedom of expression;
- × Pushing boundaries;
- × Finding new formats;
- × Doing things differently;
- × Using our imagination;
- × Storytelling;
- × Being unique and innovative.

QUESTION: *Is this how you see creativity?
Is this what you’ve experienced in the industry?*

11

Examples of creative journalism



Examples of creative journalism

Please read the following examples and see if you think they match what you would consider to be creative journalism...

12



"Writing about the Metaverse with an immersive intro that took place inside a [film] inspired, virtual world"

"Covering the story of [refugee artists], stranded in [a capital city], and including descriptions of what it was like to see them [perform] in the studio, with the beautiful music playing. It became much more than just 'here are some...refugees'."

"A quirky story about four ways to cook [a simple ingredient]! I'm very proud of the tone I used and I took all the images for it."

"Creating an interactive...game themed around [a global issue]. Our audience was overburdened with bad news about this topic, and weren't engaging with [those] stories – they really engaged with this activity. We've heard stories since about... teachers using the game with their pupils."



"I did a 'big pharma' story about a [prescription medication] in the US and we filmed it in a really creative way - all these cool jump cuts and transitions - and we made it with the 'hippo method', where you hook the story on something totally different and interesting."

"I covered [a Royal family event] by collaborating with colleagues across different time zones and, from my footage and interviews in London, we made this super-engaging video with voiceovers and fun little doodles and graphics all over it."



13



Creativity and journalism education

Next I asked the young journalists about their experiences at university...

17



What does a creative journalism department at university look like:

- ✕ Variety/diversity in staff and course content;
- ✕ Receiving encouragement, help, useful feedback and support;
- ✕ Bonding and collaborating with peers.

QUESTION: Is this what a creative department would look like to you?

21



The future of journalism

In this part of my research, I asked young journalists to take part in a creative online activity about the future of creative journalism.

23

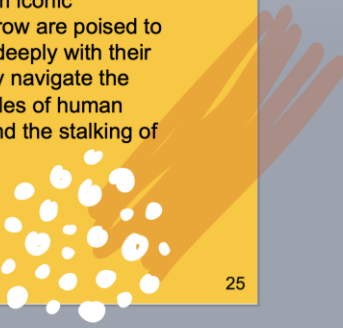




The shape of the future

I asked AI to translate the answers the young journalists gave into a statement that paints a picture of what the future of journalism looks like...

In the ever-evolving landscape of journalism, the future appears to be a kaleidoscope of creativity and authenticity. Drawing inspiration from iconic publications like Vogue and Rolling Stone, the journalists of tomorrow are poised to unearth groundbreaking discoveries and tell stories that resonate deeply with their audiences. With a focus on music, culture, and entertainment, they navigate the complex web of global news networks, bringing to light inspiring tales of human interest while confronting pressing issues such as safety at gigs and the stalking of celebrities.



25

Sharing advice

I asked the journalists what advice they would give to their student selves if they could go back in time...

- x *"Just to be open to new skills I'm gonna learn and have patience, but eventually I'll get there. I think that it's quite easy to get frustrated when stuff doesn't go to plan. I remember writing pieces in really chunky paragraphs and being really disappointed when I got bad grades but being like 'oh, wait, that's not how journalism works'. So just being patient to learn skills and not everything comes immediately, and it takes time to master those skills, and then creativity can be applied."*

28

Sharing advice

I asked the journalists what advice they would give to their university tutors if they could go back in time...

- x *"Maybe putting students under less pressure, if that could be possible. But I understand that tutors just want students to do their best, but maybe encouraging students to be more creative, and having something like [the definition of creativity in the context of journalism] to show students, and placing more importance on creativity in journalism instead of on the grade at the end of the assignment."*

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Sharing advice

I asked the journalists what advice they would give to their student selves if they could go back in time...

- ✕ *"Try everything. I know it's so simple, honestly, but it is: try everything. Now is the time to make mistakes. Like, it really is, because you're so guided by the lecturers, and it was the time where I could grow: maybe try YouTube, try TikTok. Try... just try it and just see where you land, because once you've got [famous media company] attached to your name, it's a bit scary, because now you're not just X: I'm now X who works at [big media company]. So I would say, just try everything. Make the legal mistakes before [you're at] a big company who needs to worry about that. So that your lecturer can be like, 'usually we wouldn't do that as professional journalists' or something like that. But yeah, that's what I would say."*

35

Thank you

For your support at this stage of my research

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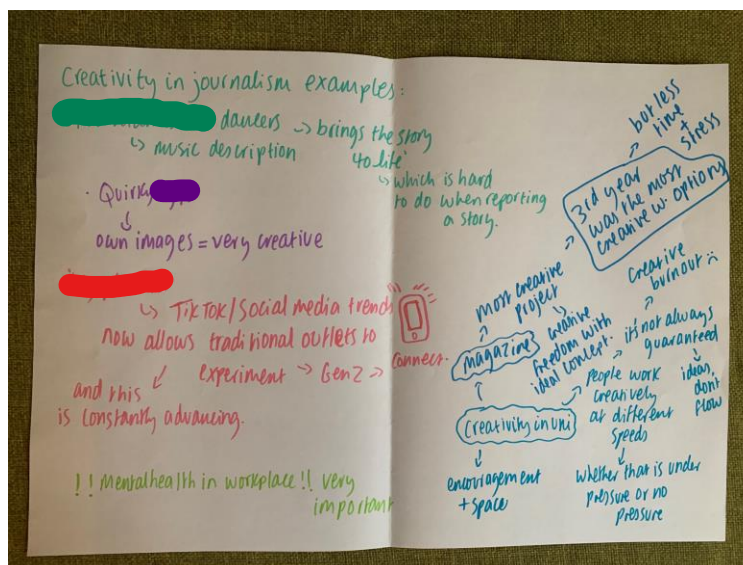
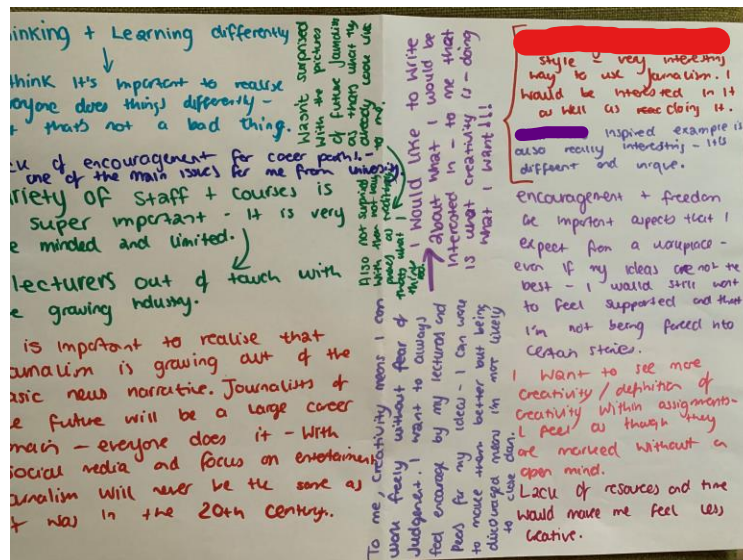
Credits

- ✕ Original research by Johanna Payton, 2024
- ✕ Presentation template by SlidesCarnival

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Appendix H: examples of participants' creative responses

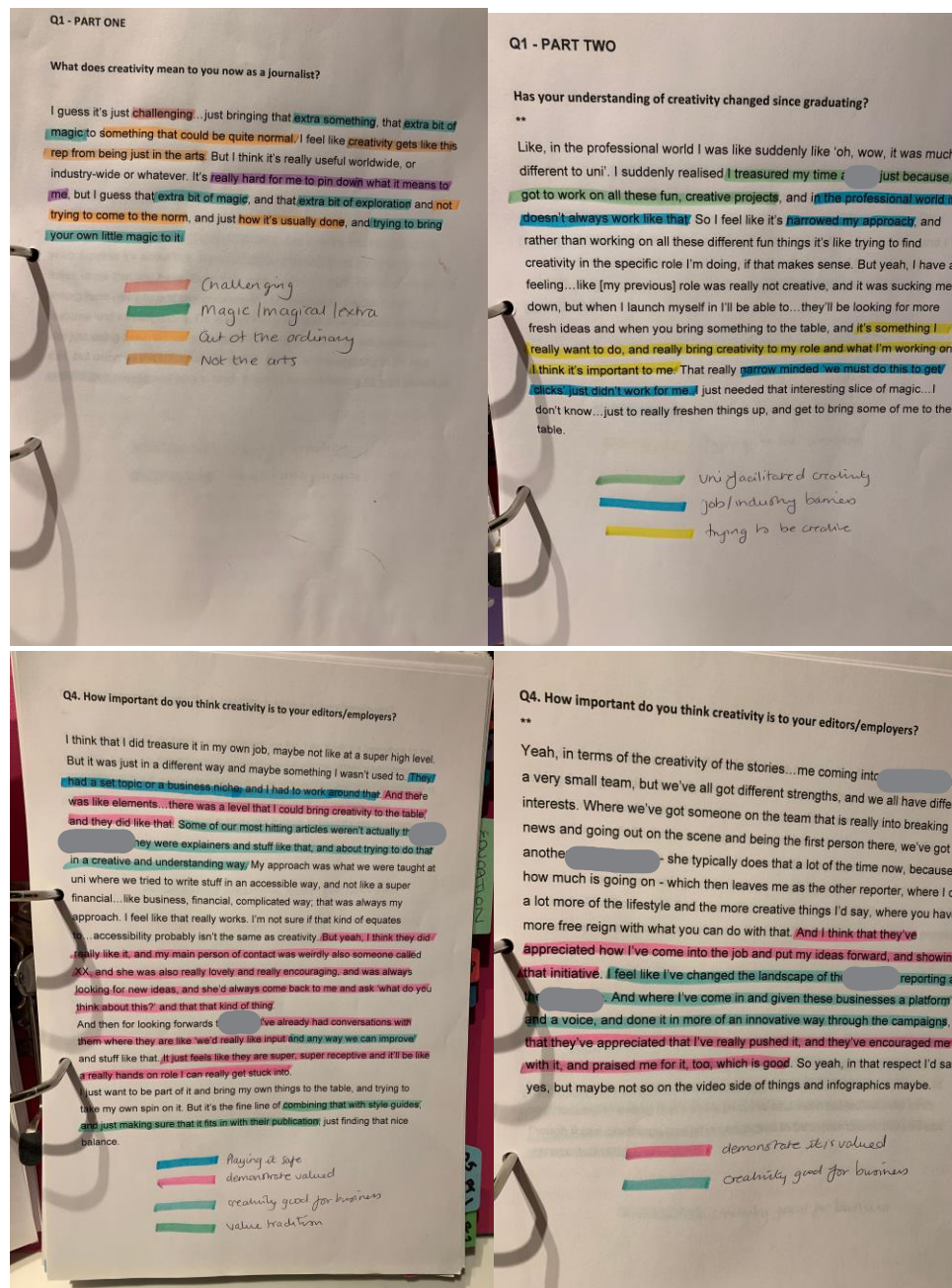
In the focus group with students, participants were invited to make notes, or doodle, as well as taking part in the conversation:

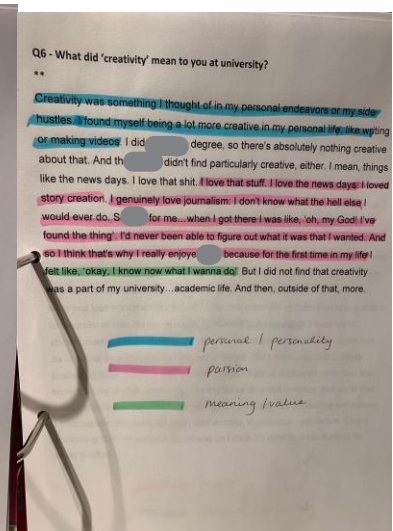
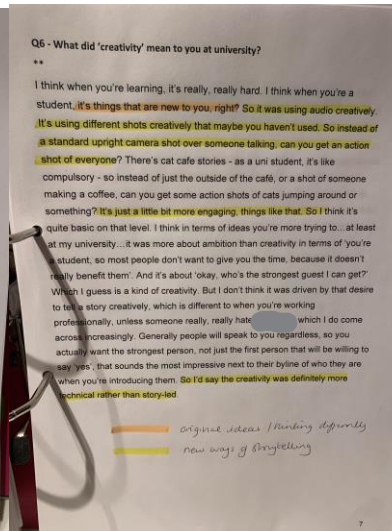
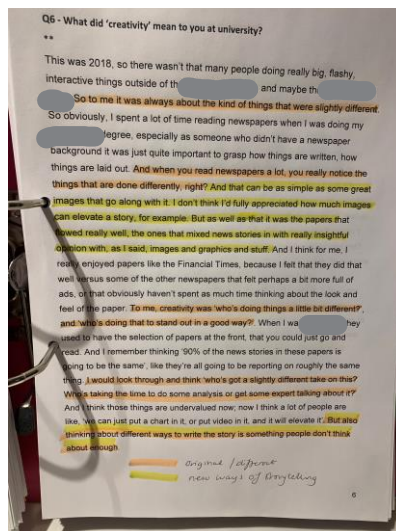
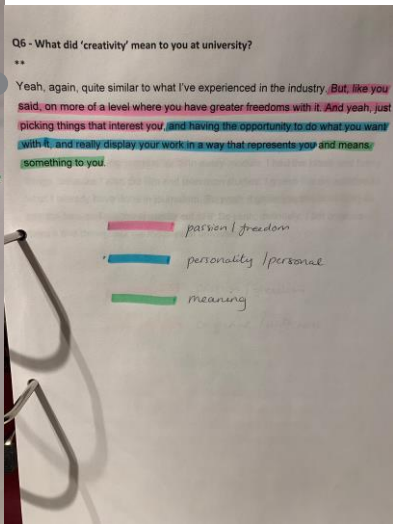
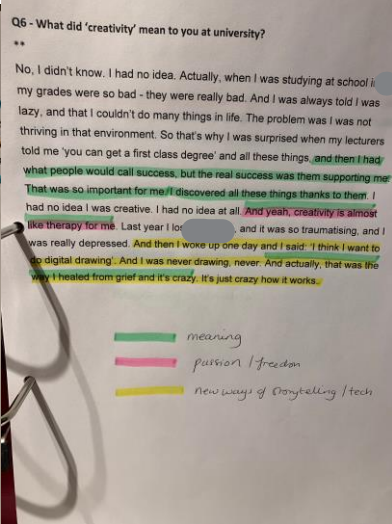
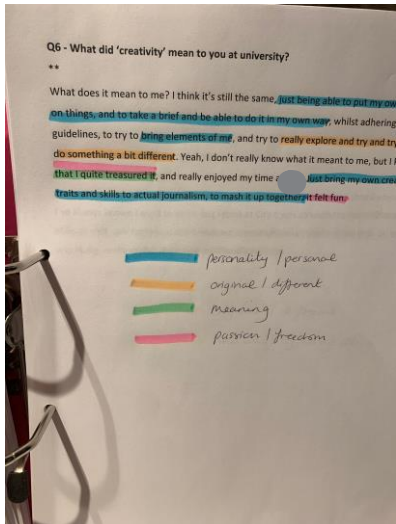




Appendix I: thematic coding

The examples in this appendix show how the manual thematic coding was conducted. Answers from each question asked in the semi-structured interview were grouped together and then colour coding was used to pull out initial themes:





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