

Examining Creativity and Cultural Production: Screen-Based Media and the Current Research into Creativity

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Abstract:

This paper presents an overview of the current research into creativity, contrasts this with some common sense assumptions about creativity, and explores what the implications are for media practice in the light of what that research is telling us (McIntyre, 2012). In doing this the paper concentrates on some of the issues that apply to an understanding of the ways the products of screen based media, in particular television and film, come into being. It specifically focuses on so called confluence approaches to creativity and cultural production, including the systems model of creativity developed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1988, 1997, 1999) and combines this with the comprehensive approach to cultural production put forward by Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1990, 1993, 1996). The argument being presented is that it is the combined action of multiple interacting factors that enables creativity to emerge in film and television.

Key words:

Creativity, creative practice, cultural production, systems, screen-based media, film, television.

Introduction

Creativity, that seemingly elusive thing we all depend on to bring our works to the screen, is not what most people think it is. What the current research into creativity is indicating, including the empirical research coming out of psychology, sociology, literary theory, and communication and cultural studies, is that there is overwhelming evidence that most areas of human activity, ranging from the sciences to the arts, are dependent to some extent on human creativity.

Yet there is a common and popular set of ideas that underpin much thinking on creativity, as Sternberg (1999) Boden (2004), Sawyer (2006) and Kaufman and Sternberg (2010) variously point out. The common connotations and assumptions centred around the Platonic ideas of the *inspirationist* school of thinking and the related *romantic* frames of reference (Sawyer 2006, pp. 18-27) are, of course, rooted in discourses peculiar to Western culture (Niu & Sternberg 2006, pp18-38; Runco & Albert 2010, p. 5) and these discourses tend to inform most popular thinking on creativity (Sawyer 2006 15-27). If these frames of thinking are uncritically drawn on by those who valorise art and culture, as they often are, we can continue to assume that the creative process is largely irrational, inexplicable and mysterious (Sternberg 1999, p. 5; Sawyer 2006, p. 177-260). However, as cognitive psychologist Margaret Boden argues:

These [inspirational and romantic] views are believed by many to be literally true. But they are rarely critically examined. They are not theories, so much as myths: imaginative constructions, whose function is to express the values, assuage the fears, and endorse the practices of the community that celebrates them (2004, p. 14).

Given these arguments then, how do we now set about understanding creativity? A thorough perusal of the research literature will reveal a good starting point. We can derive from the many definitions and arguments about creativity in the literature that there are some commonalities to the way creativity is thought about in research terms. These are based on the notion that this phenomenon is a productive activity whereby objects, processes and ideas are generated from antecedent conditions. Leaning heavily on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (1960) we can also say that this creative action comes about through the agency of someone whose knowledge to do so comes from somewhere. Furthermore, the resultant novel variation is seen as a valued addition to the store of knowledge in at least one social setting. So how is it that the research world has arrived at these conclusions about creativity?

Surveying the Research into Creativity

Starting with the research that has occurred in psychology we can discern a general trend away from a hyper focus on individuals toward an approach that encompasses a good deal of the work that has gone on in the past sixty years. This work has emphasised the neurological, cognitive and behavioural aspects of creativity but has steadily incorporated social personality approaches, group psychology and broader historiometric work that looks at larger social and cultural formations that effect creativity. For summaries of these approaches see, for example, Kaufman and Sternberg (2010) or Keith Sawyer's book *Explaining Creativity: The Science of Human Innovation* (2006 and 2011).

As Beth Hennessy and Teresa Amabile from Harvard University claim, after perusing the work being done on creativity to this point for their contribution to the *Annual Review of Psychology* in 2010, that 'research into the psychology of creativity has grown theoretically and methodologically sophisticated [but] investigators in one subfield often seem unaware of advances in another' (2010, p. 569). They go on to suggest that a 'deeper understanding requires more interdisciplinary research, based on a systems view of creativity that recognizes a variety of interrelated forces operating at multiple levels' (ibid). Systems or confluence-based approaches now seem to be the norm rather than the exception.

A similar conclusion appears to have been drawn by sociologists who have also been looking closely at creativity and cultural production. However, this area of disciplinary research activity has tended to concentrate its efforts on the arts. We can isolate some of this research here. Firstly though, we can divide thinking in sociology into a broad framework that ranges from structuralist to social action perspectives. The first exhibits a largely macro-deterministic view looking at society as a whole while the latter prefers to think in terms of agency and the micro and examines individual action and small social groups (Haralambos and Holbern 1994, p. 868). Within the structuralist approaches there are two broad camps. These include the conflict or functionalist perspectives. Within the social action group there are those who could be labeled symbolic interactionists and, of course, there are those labeled phenomenologists. In terms of the structuralists Janet Wolff (1981), for example, takes as her starting point the Marxist assumption that all art is a social product. In her book *The Social Production of Art* (1981) Wolff, however, nuances this assertion by also investigating the importance of agency in relation to the larger social forces at work. We shall return briefly to her work shortly.

Howard Becker's (1982) early work on *art worlds* where he argues that all art works come about through the concerted efforts of many individuals, not just those sole individuals we instinctively seem to attribute them to, has also been very influential. He is representative of the symbolic interactionist approach. Becker's ideas have also been central to what has become known as the *production of culture* approach which itself has been centered on the works of American sociologist Richard Peterson (1982). Peterson argues, and presents empirical evidence to support his reasoning, that the law, technology, market forces, organizational structure and the demand of occupational careers constrain creativity and if these factors weren't in place creative action would not occur as it does. Most of this work, and more, in sociology has been ably summarized by both Vera Zolberg (1990) and Victoria Alexander (2003).

While psychology and sociology have obviously been busy, as disciplines, with this research the most radical critiques of many highly romantic assumptions, those often associated with the notion of genius, have come from the poststructuralists. Roland Barthes, for example, insists 'on the complete removal of the concept of authorship from analysis' (Wolff 1981, p. 118). For Barthes 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of author' (Barthes 1977, p. 148). While Barthes was largely engaged in a rhetorical exercise Michel Foucault also argued the concept of 'author' needed to be re-appraised. Foucault accepted that the liberal-humanist notion of the fixed subject that underpinned the concept of individual genius was no longer valid, however, the use of the individual author's name does serve a function and this is most often in the service of a legal judicial framework (think copyright here).

However, the central question of Foucault's analysis was the problematic nature of who or what an author actually is. What Foucault was trying to do was deprive 'the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator, and of analyzing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse' (Foucault 1977, p. 158). While this project had its merits it cannot be claimed, as some extreme versions of this argument do, that cultural works, in our case television programs and films, 'give birth to themselves by some parthenogenetic process' (Zolberg 1990, p. 114). In essence, understanding producers of creative works, what they do and how they do it, is still as important as understanding cultural consumption.

Trying to also resolve one of the central philosophical problems within his field, that is the relationship between agency, a person's ability to take action, and structure, those things thought to determine a person's actions, empirical sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1986, 1993 & 1996) took what has now become known as a confluence based approach and elaborated on it. He argued that it is the interplay between a *space of works*, the heritage of all pre-existing cultural work in a certain area of cultural practice, which presents possibilities of action to an individual who possesses the necessary *habitus*, a predisposition to act in certain ways, that is partially composed of personal levels of *social, cultural, symbolic and economic capital*, that then inclines these agents to act and react within particular structured and dynamic spaces called *fields*. The essential point to be derived from Bourdieu is that it is the interplay of all of these factors that gives rise to cultural production and creative practice.

In a similar way psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1988, 1996 and 1999) proposed that there were three major factors, that is, a structure of knowledge manifest in a particular symbol system (*a domain*), a structured social organisation that understands and uses that body of knowledge (*a field*), and an individual agent (*a person*) who makes changes to the stored information that pre-exists them, that are necessary for creativity to occur. Each factor operates within and is part of a system of creativity that has no fixed starting point indicating the systems essential nonlinearity. Each component factor in the system is equally necessary but not sufficient by itself to enable the emergence of creativity (see Fig 1 below). Each is as equally important as the others as each 'affects the others and is affected by them in turn' (Csikszentmihalyi 1988, p. 329).

This way of thinking begs the same question that Bourdieu tried to resolve. What then is the relationship between individual creators and the social and cultural structures they work within? This is not just a question of a person working within a context, as from this perspective the context allows the action and the action constitutes the context. This is not such a difficult proposition to resolve however, as Janet Wolf has argued, if we realize that:

Everything we do is located in, and therefore affected by, social structures. It does not follow from this that in order to be free agents we somehow have to liberate ourselves from social structures and act outside them. On the contrary, the existence of these structures and institutions enables any activity on our part, and this applies equally to acts of conformity and acts of rebellion...

All action, including creative and innovative action, arise in the complex conjunction of numerous structural determinants and conditions. Any concept of creativity which denies this is metaphysical and cannot be sustained. But the corollary of this line of argument is not that humans agents are simply programmed robots, or that we need to take account of their biographical, existential or motivational aspects...practical activity and creativity are in a mutual relation of interdependence with social structures (Wolff, 1981:9).

This position comes up again and again in the literature. Bourdieu, for one, had claimed that creative choices are made from ‘an ensemble of probable *constraints* which are the condition and the counterpart of a set of *possible uses*’ [italicised in original] (Bourdieu 1996, p. 235). Anthony Giddens also asserted that ‘structure is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling’ (1984, p. 25). Similarly, Margaret Boden argued that constraints, ‘far from being opposed to creativity, make creativity possible’ (1994, p. 79). There are, then, two sides to this same coin. But what, I hear you ask, has all this got to do with screen-based media and how it’s produced? As it turns out quite a lot.

Television and Film

Just as one example, the position is often put that internalising a set of rules or skills may be ‘inhibiting to creativity because they confine one to habitual and mechanised modes of operation’ (Bailin 1988, p. 87). Todd Gitlin in his celebrated study into television production in the United States, *Inside Prime Time* (1994), argued that ‘all modern organisations aspire to order, regularity, which make for efficiency and control’ (1994, p. 56). Bill Ryan uses this basic argument in his book *Making Capital from Culture: The Corporate Form of Capitalist Cultural Production* (1991). But the fact Ryan assumes creativity to be largely irrational (1991, p. 153) while characterising it as a process that ‘presumes the free flight of the imagination unbounded by non-artistic considerations’ (1991, p. 154) indicates that while he is very familiar with an Adornoesque neo-Marxist view of art practice in culture industries he appears largely unfamiliar with the research devoted specifically to creativity. In making the assumptions about creativity that he does Ryan uncritically assumes a romantic view of this phenomenon, a view that has been contested a number of times in the literature (Petrie 1991, Sternberg 1999, Boden 2004, Sawyer 2006 & 2011). Consequently, with this belief as a major part of his epistemology, Ryan can’t help but argue that rules, formats and control from those other than so called ‘creatives’, who should be by this account free to express themselves fully, constrain or inhibit creativity.

But Sharon Bailin (1988), for one, challenges the notion that rules, skills and knowledge, the kind stored in form or structure, are inhibiting to creativity. She argues that the reverse may be true. She suggests that ‘artistic creation, even of the revolutionary sort, is usually less radical a departure from the existing framework than we tend to believe. The rule-breaking model underestimates the importance of adherence to the rules of specific frameworks in creative enterprises’ (1988, p. 89).

The structures that television creators work in are certainly rule governed. Television has a particular form. It is that form which makes it television and not film. Television is also characterised by genres and there are formats to adhere but it must be said that quite often ‘innovation is meaningful only because the innovator continues to operate within the context of rules which are substantially unchanged’ (Bailin 1988, p. 89).

There are, of course, nuances to this position. It is argued from a systems perspective that the domain as well as the field of television provides the space for bending and extending the rules of the form of television and ultimately creative growth. But in order to do so one must understand the rules, forms and structures of the domain of television and understand them extremely well. That famous, some would say notorious and ubiquitous television producer, Quinn Martin, suggested something similar but in more anecdotal terms:

I have found, in my lifetime, a couple of people who were marvellously talented guys who didn't know their craft. They had this attitude that if they dug into the craft they would lose their creativity. And I say nonsense. It's just the other way...You have to know the rules before you break the rules. I'm a big believer in being steeped in education, the right way to do things. And then you can use your individuality (Martin quoted in Newcomb & Alley 1982, p. 75).

As Negus and Pickering also assert;

Creativity doesn't emerge out of a vacuum, but builds on one or more existing cultural traditions. This is true of poetry, architecture, filmmaking, styles of singing and any number of other examples. In this sense creative talent requires a tradition so that it can learn how to go further within it or beyond it. Innovation should be understood by rejecting those approaches which set it squarely against tradition and established cultural practice (2004, p. 91).

Dawson and Holmes (2012) take a slightly different perspective concentrating on the field more than the domain of television. In their recently edited book *Working in the Global Film and Television Industries: Creativity, Systems, Space, Patronage* (2012) they and their co-writers argue that ‘media workers are producers of cultural meaning and that creativity is not the preserve of an elite’ (2012, p. 5) while presenting evidence from across the globe to support the idea that all workers in television and film contribute meaningfully to the creative products brought into being in these industries.

In a manner reminiscent of Howard Becker’s (1982) work on art worlds this includes not only producers, directors, writers and actors but also gaffers, electricians, stills photographers, grips and so on. They argue that ‘the practice of drawing sharp distinctions between above-the-line and below-the-line workers needs to be interrogated and that we need other ways to understand creativity in an industry with a complex social division of labour involving large numbers of people working cooperatively’ (2012, p. 14). In summarising Linda Marchant’s work, Dawson and Holmes recognise that the works of television and film only become possible through the collaboration of many workers both inside and outside the various departments, on and off set, who all contribute their unique part to this creative activity. As they argue, ‘creativity, then, is not a quality possessed by individuals but a characteristic determined by the social nature of production’ (2012, p. 15). Horace Newcomb and Robert Alley had taken this further when they asserted that out of all the choices being made across all departments none were more or less primary than the others. This possibly essentialising proposition needs to be seen in the light of the power relationships that exist across the industry where some operatives may have the transformative capacity to dominate others, as Giddens argues (Haralambos & Holbern 1995, p. 904), which itself might lead to an imbalance in primacy.

Dawson and Holmes also argue in their book *Working in the Global Film and Television Industries: Creativity, Systems, Space, Patronage* (2012), similarly to Howard Becker (1982), that:

the practice of drawing sharp distinctions between above-the-line and below-the-line workers needs to be interrogated and that we need other ways to understand creativity in an industry with a complex social division of labour involving large numbers of people working cooperatively (2012, p. 14).

Newcomb and Alley's view is seen in their assertion 'that there are no strict lines, finally, that separate the artistic from the financial from the technical from the social. Economic choices are symbolic choices. Symbolic choices must be expressed technically' (1982, pp. 77-78). To me many of these authors seem ripe to take on board the systems view of creativity. Film studies appears to have been moving in this direction as well.

As Susan Hayward (1996) pointed out, in relation to the development of film studies, the view of the way creativity worked in the production of films was firstly thought about in a romantic way, then progressed to thinking about film in structuralist terms, followed by a period where it could be described as poststructuralist. It appears to have been minimally influenced by what can be called 'production studies' of the type taken up by John Caldwell in his book *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (2008) and those recent studies of media industries exemplified by Holt and Perren (2009) and Mayer (2009).

The romantic view can be largely found in the historical propositions of auteur theory which was primarily an attempt by early figures such as Andrew Sarris to search for genius figures, the supposedly central personalities of the creative process, to enable film to be ascribed with the honorific 'Art' (Buscombe 1981, p. 23; Jarvie 1987, pp. 199-200). It was, to say the least, a problematic way to look at the way films are brought into being especially given the later exposes of the industrial and collaborative nature of film production (e.g. Dawson & Holmes 2012). Nonetheless, it is an idea that dies hard. This conception of film as art has been described well by Dean Simonton (in Kaufman & Sternberg 2011, p. 509) and it can be seen in the title of texts such as Bordwell and Thompson's *Film Art* (2004) and the way certain writers such as Arnheim (1957) and Cardullo (2004) approach this phenomenon. Its first counter proposition, adapted from auteur theory *Alien* style, was that of auteur structuralism.

As Arthur Berger (1995) argues some theorists began to look not at personalities, but at films as texts. They wanted to examine the structural properties, 'the structure underneath a corpus of films' (Berger 1995, p. 93) of the work of a screenwriter, actor, producer or director, not individual films. Critics like Peter Wollen used this approach to find the underlying principle that generates themes and that might also produce variations of them (ibid).

This approach has its antecedents in the structural anthropology associated with Claude Levi-Strauss and the semiotic turn initiated by Pierce and de Saussure. It was no surprise then to see poststructuralism, a sustained reaction to and extension of structuralism (Weedon in Storey 1994, p. 172; O'Shaughnessy & Stadler 2002, p. 298), gain ground in film studies as a way of explaining where meaning was created in films. It cut loose a concern with production and, instead, focused on the relationship between the text and the audience and how the interplay between them produces meaning. This movement of thought is the same one identified above in the literature on creativity. It had the same problem at its core. As Dawson and Holmes ask 'if we are all producers of culture what makes media workers distinctive?' (2012, p. 5). There are, as a matter of existential fact, some people who put texts in place so they can be interpreted. In this case Keith Negus and Michael Pickering recommend that 'we may then need to bend our thinking about the active audience back towards a notion of conditioned frames of improvised action, though we should not do so at the expense of a creative sense of agency' (2004, p. 154). So where does this leave film and its relationship to creativity?

Screen-based Media as a System in Operation

Of course what we have been working towards is seeing film and television production as a system in operation. The systems approach, described above as a nonlinear system, suggests that individuals don't make films. They are necessary but not sufficient. Each factor in the system, domain, fields and agents, is necessary but also not sufficient, by itself, to bring about creativity. From this perspective the creative acts that constitute screen-based media emerge from the actions of a collaborative system at work. In this case creativity emerges at the point where the domains, fields and agents intersect (see Fig 1 below).

There are now a limited number of authors beginning to apply this model to screen-based media production. Csikszentmihalyi (2004, p. 2) has himself applied the systems model to film. Although from some perspectives it could be seen in its entirety as a somewhat simplistic understanding of the film industry, his purpose was to outline the model in expansive terms, using film as an analogy of a broader philosophical idea. In doing this he suggests that:

To be creative one must have a domain from which one can learn a cultural tradition. For instance, a person interested in movies may want to become a director, screenwriter, cinematographer, actor, film editor, or maybe a producer. This person will turn to the already existing domain of cinematography and bring to it something new that may change that domain. The individual learns from that domain and tries to produce a novelty in it. Depending on whether the novelty is accepted by the field of cinematography, the person will be recognized as someone creative who has contributed to the domain (2004, p. 2).

There have been other sustained and detailed analyses using this model. Phillip McIntyre has applied the systems model, using various methodological approaches including ethnography, experiment and practice based enquiry, to songwriting (2008), record production (2008a, 2012), the mastering process (McIntyre & Paton 2008) and the creative activity of sampling producers in the UK (McIntyre & Morey 2012). Importantly for this paper McIntyre has expanded on the relationship between the system of creativity and screen-based media in his book *Creativity and Cultural Production: Issues for Media Practice* (2012, pp. 118-147). In terms of television he examines *The West Wing* and how this production was ‘created’ by Aaron Sorkin but was in reality a production that ‘would not exist without the continuation of the symbol system itself, found in part in televisual form, as well as the ongoing existence of the field of television, found most often in corporate or large institutional settings’ (McIntyre 2012, p. 131).

Similarly McIntyre examines the life and career of Steven Spielberg noting that his working life was typified by crucial and ongoing interactions with the field of movie making and his grasp of the domain of film making was reliant on his life-long immersion in that knowledge system. In this way, McIntyre claims, evidence of the systems model in application reveals an intricate account of cultural production which goes some way to ‘providing an analytical tool to account for the collaborative process of film-making’ (2012, p. 146).

One specific study focused entirely at film making, by Eva Redvall (2012), also comes to mind. Redvall used the systems model developed by Csikszentmihalyi as a framework for ‘analysing collaborations between screenwriters and directors when working on turning original ideas into final screenplays’ (2012, p. 65). She coupled this with problem solving tools developed by Isaksen and Treffinger (2004):

to show how models from the field of creativity research can provide useful tools for analysis of film and media production both in terms of understanding the overall systems in which creative work is taking place and in trying to break down concrete processes, including the important front end of project development, which has often received very little attention (2012, p. 69).

In undertaking this study Redvall researched the way one script came into being and a particular film project developed out of it. Redvall was primarily concerned with ‘knowledge of how practitioners’ intentions arise, develop and change, and what choices end up being influential in the development of a specific product’ (2012, p. 69). Among the many factors identified by her in her case study Redvall identified how ‘the National Film School of Denmark was highly influential in educating screenwriters with a professional identity’ (2012, p. 65) and how this carried over into the attitudes and decision making of those film commissioners who populated the Danish Film Institute. It became ‘clear that certain types of projects were having a hard time finding financing’ (ibid) and this may be attributed to the prevailing attitude that was resident there. Redvall concluded her in-depth study by stating that approaching film work from a systems perspective and looking at the micro functions of problem solving and problem finding ‘brings the practitioners and their choices into focus’ (2012, p. 69). This approach allows this creative action to resonate with the idea that what ‘what people are collaborating on is of course not just any product but a very specific text meeting very specific demands from experts in the field, influenced by the existing works and ideas of best practice in a domain’ (ibid).

Similarly, Susan Kerrigan (2010, 2013) has also applied the systems model to the production of screen-based media. Prior to her academic career Kerrigan worked as a producer, director and a writer, and in supporting production roles in filmmaking and television production for well over a decade. Her years at ABC television also informed her practice based research where she undertook and analysed the creation of a DVD and online documentary. Applying a Practice Based Enquiry (PBE) methodology (Murray & Lawrence, 2000) her cross-disciplinary creative practice research project drew on ‘the fields of psychology, sociology, cultural production, communication and documentary studies’ (Kerrigan 2010, p. 1) and specifically applied the systems model of creativity to her own creative practice based research, *Using Fort Scratchley*.

With her self-reflective research examining ‘creative practice in relation to documentary production process’ (ibid) Kerrigan demonstrated the possibility of using the systems model to extract ‘the social and cultural interactive and embodied aspects of an agent’s creative documentary process’ (2010, p. 13). Kerrigan identified the fact that a documentary practitioner’s creative practice is both internalized as well as being observed externally through the practitioner’s creative actions. Coupled with the accumulated verification of the actions of both the domain and field of documentary practice, both critical components of the system in action, she argued that ‘the evidence seems to suggest that, in line with Csikszentmihalyi’s own understandings of creativity, there is less linearity and a more iterative and recursive process at work’ (Kerrigan 2010, p. 13). In short, creativity is systemic.

Kerrigan coupled the systems model of creativity with the work developed by Paul Paulus and Bernard Nijstad in their book *Group Creativity: Innovation Through Collaboration* (2004). They presented a graphic model of the way they believed group creativity, typical of screen based media, worked but:

While the [the Paulus and Nijstad] diagram appears superficially to be quite different to the systems model of creativity, it can be seen that the movement of ideas, knowledge sharing and critical feedback on processes and products is comparable to the systems model in that it also identifies individual, field and domain interactions necessary to produce artefacts (Kerrigan & McIntyre 2010, p. 125).

In coming to these conclusions Kerrigan adapted the graphic representation of the systems model, as Csikszentmihalyi had set it out in his various publications (1988, 1999). Instead of the tripartite representation of it that is typically reproduced in the literature (e.g. 1988, p. 329), Kerrigan used a Venn diagram to locate the act of creativity firmly and more obviously at the central point where the domain, field and individual agent intersect particularly in regard to screen based media.

This representation outlines exceptionally well, in comparison to other ways the model has been respresented (e.g. Sawyer 2006, p123; Csikszentmihalyi 1988, p. 331), the system’s essential non-linearity and, most importantly, clearly and obviously indicates that creativity is not a function of individuals alone but is more accurately seen as the emergent property of a system at work as demonstrated and argued a number of times above.

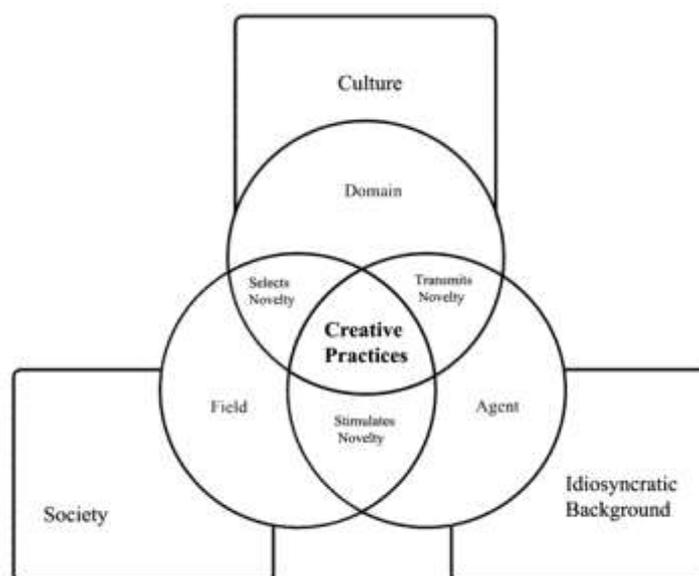


Figure 1: Revised Systems Model of Creativity in Kerrigan (2013 p. 114), p. 114.

Importantly, Kerrigan takes the individual out of the centre of creative action to produce, as Csikszentmihalyi hoped would happen, a less Ptolemaic and more Copernican perspective (1988, p. 336). In doing so she ‘shows it is possible to use the systems model of creativity to extrapolate the social and cultural interactive and embodied aspects of an agent’s creative documentary process’ (Kerrigan 2010, p. 13) and has demonstrated its applicability to the production of screen-based media.

Conclusion

The implications of examining the current research into creativity and seeing creativity as an emergent property of a dynamic system at work is that we as researchers can no longer claim that individuals alone bring screen-based media into existence. Screen based systems of production, of which individuals are one necessary but not sufficient part, do. Furthermore, if we take the idea that a creative agent may be seen as an individual person, a group or an organisation, we can readily argue that it is the system of media production, both collective and collaborative, which brings screen-based media productions into being. It then becomes sensible to argue that the creative action of bringing television or film into being comes about through an agent, be that an individual or collective agent, whose knowledge to do so is derived from a pre-existing set of forms, codes, conventions and knowledges and the resultant novel variation, a unique television program or film, is seen and accepted by the field as a valued addition to the store of knowledge that constitutes screen-based media.

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