PROFESSIONAL CREATORS UNVEILED:
SCREENWRITERS' EXPERIENCES COLLABORATING IN MOTION PICTURE DEVELOPMENT TEAMS

A dissertation submitted

by

BROOKS FERGUSON

to

FIELDING GRADUATE UNIVERSITY

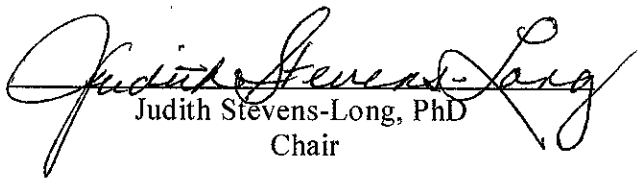
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

HUMAN AND ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS

This dissertation has been
accepted for the faculty of
Fielding Graduate University by:



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Professional Creators Unveiled:
Screenwriters' Experiences Collaborating in Motion Picture Development Teams

by

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Abstract

Professional creators are responsible for generating and implementing innovations in organizations. Despite innovation's criticality for organizational survival and growth, very few studies in the creativity, innovation, or business literatures address this population. This study investigated the little-understood phenomenon of creating with others in a professional setting. The research question was, *How do professional screenwriters experience working with a team on their screenplays?* Eight interviews with active screenwriters in the major U.S. motion picture industry were evaluated for insights into professional creators' unique experiences. The study findings revealed thoughts, feelings, words, and actions of a critical population whose voices are conspicuously absent in the scholarly conversation. The data from this study established a small yet significant baseline understanding of how professional creators' experiences align with prevailing group creativity and team innovation theories. The findings also provided a rare glimpse into the film business—a multi-billion-dollar industry that provides filmed entertainment to almost every country in the world—whose inner workings are closed to outsiders. Participants illustrated 13 practices for achieving security, sanity, harmony, respect, and success in their creative collaborations with motion picture development team members. A polarity between individualism and collectivism emerged across the findings, capturing the dynamic tension between the self and others in creative collaboration, an unsubstantiated given in many related

studies. Ideas for future research were offered. An intervention designed to help teams manage polarities was suggested to explore how the findings could be addressed in organization development practice.

Key Words:

Professional creator, creativity, group creativity, team innovation, creative collaboration, motion picture, screenwriters, writers, polarity management.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To endings… Blake, Frederick, Craig, Magnolia, Charlie, Edie, Reno, Simon, and Mary Ellen.

To beginnings… Liza, Landon, Sean, Aleksandra, Logan, Emmy, Hudson, and Clare.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Innovation is touted in the popular press as one of the most critical competencies for the Western workforce. The call to develop our creativity follows warnings of organizational decline and even death should we fall behind in the global innovation race. In his January 2011 State of the Union address, U.S. President Barack Obama sounded the rallying cry:

> The first step in winning the future is encouraging American innovation. . .What we can do — what America does better than anyone else — is spark the creativity and imagination of our people. . .In America, innovation doesn't just change our lives. It is how we make our living. (National Public Radio, 2011, para. 22)

In this epoch of rapid change, industries like advertising, music, film, and digital media are gaining new salience in the scholarly literature (see Beck, 2002; Davis & Scase, 2000; Flew, 2012; Lash & Urry, 1994). The business and popular literatures make similar claims about the rising importance of these "creative sectors" as shepherds of the new economy and the "creative class" of knowledge and information entrepreneurs (see Florida, 2002; Leadbeater, 2000). Yet, while an internet search for scholarly works published within the past 10 years on "innovation" yielded 1.13 million results, a similar search on "professional creator"—the people at the source of this work—produced only 33 results. Why the dearth of scholarly literature on professional creators?

Creativity is the production of novel and useful ideas (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996). Professional creators are responsible for generating those ideas and implementing them with others in organizations. As creativity is at the core of their individual processes, the creativity literature usually focuses on the individual

act of creating and not on creating *with others*. Especially successful, or eminent, creators have long been of interest to researchers and laypeople alike (see Allen, 2011; Goertzel & Hansen, 2004). However, using creative as a moniker to describe non-eminent creators is often discouraged in both popular and scholarly works so as not to separate some as more gifted than others. More recently, researchers are capturing elements of everyday creativity and how they relate to one's health and self-actualization (Runco & Richards, 1997). Suggestions on how to recapture one's creativity lost from childhood do not sufficiently reflect the needs and pressures of professional creators. The literature that does directly apply to innovation processes in professional settings relegates the work of professional creators to skilled problem-solving (see Basadur & Gelade, 2006). Creating professionally for payment and with others is assuredly different from creating alone and for the sake of one's enjoyment. Similarly, research illustrating the childhoods, personality traits, and work habits of highly gifted, famous creatives does little to help us understand the experiences of the many people who—well known or not—create for a living. This study will explore the world of professional creators, who have been almost entirely ignored by the academy. It is my aim to help fill the gap in the existing creativity, innovation, and business literatures with data that speak to specific experiences original creators find supportive and challenging when working in innovation teams.

Innovation in this study is not a product, something we can attain or at which we can strive to arrive in response to an organization's directive like "we need more innovation." Innovation is a series of activities that professional creators engage in day-to-day to successfully implement their ideas within an organization. Their

sponsoring organizations can support these activities, and they can suppress them. Creativity is often used interchangeably with innovation, but in scholarly circles, creativity is defined as the individual act of creating something. Innovation is the social act of bringing one's creative ideas to fruition through industry. Fine arts are generally the result of individual creativity, in which the creator creates, and then presents the finished creation to others. Yet however artistic a professional creator may be, the role is to utilize his or her creative abilities—with others—to develop a product larger than the sum of its parts. The synthesis of these individual creative acts occurs in *collaboration*.

"Creative collaboration" is not clearly delineated in the scholarly conversation. A layperson would likely recognize the phrase to mean working together on something new and useful. Because it is not a unified research area, it is challenging to extend the existing literature. Creative collaboration studies within developmental psychology explain why many practical inroads have been made in educational curricula for children. Creative collaboration research's origin in cognitive psychology shows a clear path to the extensive research on creative outcomes of individuals acting in groups. Social psychology provided scholars with familiar laboratory experiments and quantitative methods against which to analyze the social and cognitive processes of a group of people focused on a common, short-term task (Paulus & Nijstad, 2003). Team innovation research on topics such as brainstorming (Osborn, 1957), with its emphasis on practical application, provided researchers with processes that aid in structuring creative collaboration. The notion of information-processing—typical for cognitive psychology—is extremely influential in most of the models of group creativity. Smith,

Gerkens, Shah, and Vargas-Hernandez (2006) proposed the individual cognitive model for creativity as an analogue for "collective" creativity. Their cognitive model of group creativity lists the cognitive structures that support individual creative expression and suggests that group members carry out the functions of creative cognitive systems as if operating as a collective mind. Within the cognitive approach to studying team creativity, Kurtzberg and Amabile (2001) agreed that most theories have not distinguished between creativity that originates in the individual mind from "ideas arising from creative synergy, in which ideas are formed, shared, adapted, and inspired simultaneously by more than one person" (p. 289).

Team innovation scholars, whose work is also of a cognitive orientation, attend more closely than their group creativity counterparts to the cyclical nature of people's interactions when collaborating creatively. Unlike groups, teams "have interrelated roles and are part of a larger organization" (Paulus, Nakui, & Putman, 2006, p. 70). Innovation, as already discussed, includes both the idea generation associated with creativity and the implementation of the idea associated with industry. While group creativity research has been primarily concerned with experimentally comparing individual performance with group performance, team innovation studies have used mainly non-experimental methods to understand how creativity can be enhanced in teamwork (Paulus, 2000; Paulus et al., 2006). Exemplary studies bridge the work of group creativity and team innovation scholars (see Amabile, 1983b; Paulus & Dzindolet, 2008; West, 2002). However, application of these theories to the work of professional creators is missing. Furthermore, despite pronounced differences in methodology and final aim, group creativity and team innovation subfields share a

similar epistemological position that lands them squarely within the sociocognitive approach. These theories do not capture what occurs intrapersonally and interpersonally when making creative decisions, particularly in an organizational setting.

The sociocultural approach to the study of creativity shows promise. It differs from the sociocognitive approach in that it holds the social—operating both inside and outside the person—as determining psychological function, not just conditioning it (Glăveanu, 2011). Recently, the myth of the lone creative genius is being confronted (Montuori & Purser, 1995, 1999) and the people and worlds surrounding these eminent creators further examined (John-Steiner, 2000). In her book *Creative Collaboration*, John-Steiner (2000) posited that even the casual observer could see the importance of collaboration in fields like film, music, and theatre as self-evident. She summarized well the inherent polarity within innovation teams of its members' need to stand alone and stand together: "Collaboration thrives on diversity of perspectives and constructive dialogue between individuals negotiating their differences while creating their shared voices and visions" (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 6). While the origins of fruitful creative collaboration are debated, central to both the cognitive and cultural research traditions is that creative collectives can produce outcomes that no individual would be able to produce alone, no matter how "creative" that person is confirmed to be.

Creative collaboration theorists have introduced a new vocabulary that may help us capture more precisely how professional creators experience working in teams. This vocabulary emphasizes "mutuality, sharing, negotiation of a joint perspective or shared meaning, coordination, and intersubjectivity" (Grossen, 2008, p. 248). Creative

collaboration research considers the cognitive dimension, and it also attends to the socioemotional, motivational, cultural, and identity dynamics sustaining it (Littleton & Miell, 2004; Moran & John-Steiner, 2004). The time and space in which the creative collaboration takes place and the content being created are also focal points in the creative collaboration literature (Glăveanu, 2011).

Much of the new product development (NPD) literature evaluates ideation processes as separate from implementation processes, which the next chapter will show. However, there is continual implementation within ideation, a trial-and-error process of sorts, around which the communication with others takes place. Therefore, the artificial distinctions between ideation and implementation in the scholarly literature further fragment a holistic understanding of innovation.

In summary, the literatures across disciplines have something in common. They discuss in detail elements that surround the innovation process or moderate innovation outcomes, but rarely do they explore what the professional creators are actually doing. Even after 20 years, Woodman, Sawyer, and Griffin's (1993) comment still appears to hold true: "After decades of theory development and empirical research, researchers still know surprisingly little about how the creative process works, especially within the context of complex social systems such as formal organizations" (p. 316). Gomes, de Weerd-Nederhof, Pearson, and Fisscher (2001), in their study on management support for innovation, also noticed the lack of direct attention to the participants: "Studies often seem to forget how the main actors feel and think. . .[and] this leads to an incomplete and context independent picture of the phenomena under discussion" (p. 235). Because we have not heard directly from professional creators about which

aspects—emotional, social, structural, financial, cognitive, spiritual—are most important to consider, assigning a research framework against which to analyze them forces a direction that has yet to be firmly established. This study will allow cross-disciplinary elements to emerge organically from the findings. The next section will introduce the study's purpose and question, as well as the organizational role and process I will investigate.

Research Study Introduction

As an organization development (OD) practitioner working in organizations, it is less useful for me to learn more about what professional creators are doing when they are working alone; what *is* useful is to learn how they collaborate well. I respect professional creators' need to maintain authenticity and integrity in their craft while collaborating. I also support the right of the companies who hire professional creators to make the most of their investment in them. The purpose of my research is to uncover professional creators' deep, underlying conceptions of their work so that I may better understand how to support them in their innovation work with others in organizations.

To achieve this purpose, I must first decide whom to ask. Professional creators in this proposed inquiry are not fine artists, who create something to be appreciated in its original form, often after completion. The population of professional creators consists of those pursuing individual inventions, like portraitists or mathematicians. There are also those pursuing *social* inventions, like choreographers, composers, architects, and screenwriters. This latter category of professional creators—those who must create with others in order to complete their work—are the subject of this study.

The participants in this study are screenwriters, the original creators of the blueprints for motion pictures. Among fellow collaborators, the screenwriter is perhaps most sensitive to the supports and challenges of the process. The ups and downs of filmmaking particularly affect screenwriters; they are often deeply attached to the writings they complete as an individual, regardless of how open they become to creating with others. Screenwriters collaborate with others on the screenplay or "script" to bring it to the point that it receives the approval for filming. Fellow collaborators can include non writers, such as producers, directors, actors, and those representing the film financiers. This phase of filmmaking is called the script's development process.

The screenwriter is uniquely suited to serve as the subject of this inquiry because he or she has two roles or "hats" in the process: writer of the script when alone, and evaluator of the same script when working with others. The development process is also an excellent forum to gain insights into team innovation because it involves ideation and implementation, both at the individual and team levels. The screenwriter continually thinks of ideas alone and talks them through with the development team members, who have ideas as well on how to evolve the script's story to come closer to their shared vision. They meet to discuss ideas, after which the screenwriter will privately execute them in the writing of the script. Upon the delivery of the next "draft" of the script, verbal and written evaluations from others on the team, including those such as actors who will speak the lines and the director who will film the script, eventually results in the blueprint for filming. It is a cyclical process, a spiraling

upward in which the script progresses further toward the ideal end-state that will hopefully result in a film.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the little-understood phenomenon of creating with others in a professional setting. My research question is, *How do professional screenwriters experience working with a team on their screenplays?* To learn what it is like for professional creators to work with a team of people on their creations, this qualitative study will explore interviews conducted in 2003 with a small sample of screenwriters. I completed two studies (see Ferguson, 2004, 2009) leveraging the same data as the current study that featured different research questions and research designs than those employed in this study. The 2003 interview questions, although open-ended in nature, examined 20 characteristics researchers have deemed critical in individual creativity and team innovation. In hindsight, that assumption required me to discard volumes of rich data that might provide deeper clues about the experience of collaborating with others. Findings from this study may yield new avenues of understanding as well as specific locations in the scholarly literature outside the traditional boundaries.

Organization of Paper

This dissertation features four additional chapters. In Chapter 2, the literature review, the context section describes the motion picture business and the roles and responsibilities required of screenwriters and those closest to them in collaboration. The existing literature section provides a review of literature that is relevant to professional creators. The potential significance of this study is then presented in light of the context and existing literature. In Chapter 3, I detail the study methods, and

include descriptions of the 2003 data collection and the current study's approach to analyze that data. Chapter 4 contains the findings, which consist of participants' interview segments organized into themes. The fifth and final chapter is a discussion of my conclusions and recommendations in light of the existing body of research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will situate the study within its industry and population, and within the scholarly conversation around professional creators. Although "pro-c" or professional creativity has been acknowledged among creativity researchers as different from "little-c" (everyday) and "Big-C" (eminent) creativity, professional creators and their working worlds are still not appearing as a subject of research. Therefore, I will present multi-disciplinary studies that feature professional creators working in innovation teams as its participants. Although these studies were not designed to capture professional creators' experiences from their point of view as this one does, they do bring to light the individual creator's complex dance within professional innovation teams. The scholarly conversation around feature film development and its participants, the subject of this study, is almost entirely absent. Only one of the studies to be discussed in the next section is set in feature film development. To supplement the missing literature, I will highlight studies in group creativity, team innovation, and creative collaboration bodies of research that surround, but do not directly address, the experiences of professional creators.

This chapter has five sections. The first two sections on the motion picture industry and its development process will orient the reader to the study's context in lieu of relevant scholarly research on these subjects. In the third section, I will critically evaluate five studies that directly feature and discuss the work of professional creators. Existing literature that relates to the five studies will be provided to supplement their findings' relevance to professional creators working in innovation teams. In the fourth section, I will present additional works that complete the review of existing literature

relevant to this study. Finally, the section on the study's significance will detail the contribution to scholarship, practice, and future research I am hoping to make.

Motion Pictures

This study's participant sample is comprised of screenwriters actively working in the U.S. major motion picture industry. Based in Los Angeles, the industry is a multi-billion dollar industry that provides filmed entertainment to almost every country in the world. According to the Motion Picture Association of America's 2012 Theatrical Market Statistics report, global box office receipts for all films released in the world—from the major studios and from independent distributors—reached $34.7 billion in 2012, up 6% from the prior year. It also reported that international box office receipts increased 32% over 5 years ago, driven by growth in various international markets, including China, Russia and Brazil; China's box office was $2.7 billion, a 36% increase in 2012 to become the largest market outside of the US and Canada box office receipts of $10.8 billion (Motion Picture Association of America, 2012).

In 2011, the films released in the United States by the "big six" studios—20th Century Fox, Sony (Columbia) Pictures, Paramount Pictures, Universal Pictures, Walt Disney Pictures, and Warner Bros.—grossed $8.7 billion domestically (Box Office Mojo, 2012) and an additional $13.6 billion overseas (Hollywood Reporter, 2011). The profit-minded corporations in the film business invest millions of dollars launching new products for public consumption. It is an open marketplace where buyers and sellers get together and exchange goods or services. Current research shows the average budget of a random sampling of 10 of the top 100 highest-grossing films distributed by major film studios in 2011 was $76 million (Studio System, 2012). And as Iglesias

(2001) said, “Because this is more a business than an art gallery, no one spends $80 million on a piece of art without expecting a return to recoup all costs and to make a profit in order to make more films” (p. 150).

Moviegoer attendance worldwide drives the motion picture market. In response to these numbers, exhibitors—owners of movie theatres—provide a number of screens on which to show films from all distributors. Distributors negotiate the number of screens for their films based on projected ticket sales and the attendance typical of the film’s genre and actors appearing in the film.

Each major U.S.-based motion picture studio plans a release schedule of films for the current year and beyond. This “slate” is based on each film’s budget range, the overall production budget for the fiscal year, and the slates and release schedules of their competitors. The primary responsibility of the six major film studios is to finance and distribute feature films proposed by the production companies created by producers, directors, actors, and writers. In order for studios to finance their films, production companies must collaborate effectively with the studio during the entire lifecycle of the film, or from the point at which the studio invests money in the project and beyond. This can include phases in which the film is in development through production and distribution to the release of the completed film. It may also cover ancillary markets for the film, such as international releases in other languages, television broadcast, and physical and digital home entertainment platforms. The next sections will provide overviews on the motion picture development process and the two most critical roles on the innovation team, the development executive and the screenwriter.

Motion Picture Development

Crawford and Di Benedetto (2011) reported that, in the hard sciences, about 55% of efforts in organizations with research and development (R&D) functions succeed to full implementation. The motion picture development process does not fare as well in comparison. Based on a 2-year average, the six major studios purchase an average of 57 projects per year for development and maintain around 350 projects on their development slate (Studio System, 2012). In 2011, each of the major studios released an average of 14.58 films, or 25.44% of those purchased each year and 4.29% of overall development inventory (Studio System, 2012). Whether the studio leaders are concerned about a 1:23 ratio of films released to those in which their companies have invested is unknown. However, it is clear from these statistics that something may break down during the process that, if improved, could affect profits.

Thompson, Jones, and Warhurst (2007) cited several works that explored the outcomes of work in the creative sector (see Caves, 2000; Hesmondhalgh, 2002). To mitigate against the high failure rate, creative industries will put many projects into play that never fully progress through development to production. One study of the music industry stated that only one in eight recorded albums released into the market was expected to recoup costs and make profit for the funding company (Negus, 1999; as cited in Thompson, Jones, & Warhurst, 2007). While the ratio of expected returns to expenditures in the music industry may be different from the motion picture business, the latter also accepts a significant initial investment in shepherding its stories to the movie theater screen and the inevitable failure of many of those stories. Leading innovation is a fashionable topic in the scholarly and popular literatures. However,

very few studies set in any creative industry provide clarity as to what management practices connect to the success or failure of a completed project in the marketplace (Thompson, Jones, & Warhurst, 2007).

Beyond the readily available statistics about the economics of motion picture releasing to the public, there is very little research to draw upon that features the development process for a film, the ideation phase involving the creation and refinement of the story for filming. The two available studies I was able to locate will be evaluated later in this section. To compensate for the lack of literature on motion picture development, I will draw from my own years of experience in supervising the major motion picture screenplay development process (see Appendix E) to provide readers with a general understanding of the process through the remainder of this section.

The initial ideation phase of a motion picture screenplay is generally conducted by the screenwriter, or writing partners, alone. The refinement of the idea continues through an incubation phase in which a script emerges. This phase is known as development. At the end of this phase, a decision to "greenlight" the script for filming, to render the project inactive, or to sell the project to another buyer occurs.

A film studio's executive on the development team must articulate to company leaders the reasons why he or she thinks they should film and distribute the finished screenplay. The studio's president of production will then examine the film's potential in terms of budget and "talent" (i.e., "stars" or a director) that they can attach to it. If the film's budget exceeds a certain level, perhaps $50 million as an example, then the president must pitch the project to the corporate chairperson of the board, who then has

to get the approval of the parent company. The process of greenlighting a film to production is often a long, laborious challenge. Many projects never come to fruition.

If the duration of this process from purchase to greenlight lasted 2 years, it would be considered very short. More often than not, the average time it takes from inception to completion is closer to 3 or 4 years, plus an additional year or more for production and release. After about 3 years, screenplays are said to be "languishing in development" and their chances of success diminish exponentially. Fresh, new screenplays have been purchased and demand the attention of busy executives. Many factors other than the script's quality weigh heavily on whether the development process leads to a greenlight for production: "Just because a film gets made doesn't mean it's the best script; it just means it's the script that got made" (Field, 1989, p. 92).

In Table 1, a list of the common roles people play and their key responsibilities in the motion picture development process is presented. A more detailed explanation of these roles and the ways they are compensated and credited is provided in Appendix A. In the next section, the roles and responsibilities of the motion picture screenwriter and of the studio executive, as a key representative of the larger group of individuals known generally as "development executives," will be presented.

Table 1

Common Roles and Their Major Responsibilities in the Motion Picture Development Process

Role	Major Responsibilities
Screenwriter	• Writes screenplay drafts, based on number outlined in contract.
Producer	• Guides overall creative direction; approaches talent to attach to script.
Producer's Development Executive(s)	• Guides screenwriting on behalf of Producer; suggests talent attachments.
Senior Studio Executive/ Studio Head	• Approves screenplay draft submissions based on agreed changes; makes final go/no go recommendation for script filming.
Studio's Development Executives	• Guides screenwriting and story on behalf of Studio; suggests talent attachments.
Director/ Director-Producer	• Guides script to align with his/her filming vision; leverages relationships with actors to attach them to script.
Actor(s)/ Actor-Producer	• Guides creative direction of role they have agreed to play & other key roles/characters.
Actor(s')/Director's/ Screenwriter's Development Executive(s)	• Guides screenwriting toward the film Director wants to make, role Actor has agreed to play, development of other key story characters, or script Screenwriter has agreed to write.

The Screenwriter

The *original creator* of a new product produces a blueprint to be implemented with an innovation team. The original creator for a motion picture screenplay is the screenwriter, whether working solo or with a writing partner. The creative interpreters include the producer, director, actors, and/or any development executives representing them or the funding studio. The original creator's blueprint is a "complex set of instructions" (Benton; in Engel, 1995, p. 34) used to communicate the creation to the innovation team. The innovation team, including the screenwriter and other creative

interpreters, will shepherd and wrangle the screenplay into what it hopes will be a finalized script for filming. This is the process in which this study takes place.

Screenwriters are independent contractors who sell their experiences, values, and ideas to the studios and then to the public. To secure work, screenwriters respond to the direction of their agents and managers, who converse regularly with producers and studio executives to determine what kinds of projects they are interested in buying on behalf of the studios. A screenwriter's ability to continue working is a direct result of the speed and quality of their response to the requests of the buyers.

To begin working on a project, screenwriters will require an attorney and/or an agent to represent them in negotiations with buyers. Once working with major studios, they join the Writers Guild of America, the union with which the studios are under contract. Some screenwriters will hire managers, publicists, business managers, personal assistants, and sometimes even development executives of their own to fortify and buffer them from the day-to-day business so they can focus on the creative process of writing. Screenwriters relinquish 10-50% of their pay to these service providers.

A film project can originate through a screenwriter; another member of the creative team (such as an actor, director, or producer); or a studio executive. A screenwriter may generate a project independently or be hired to write a project either from his or her own original idea, which may be in the form of a verbal pitch, a treatment for a screenplay, or a completed screenplay (aka "spec script"). Screenwriters also generate concepts for remakes of other films as well as ideas for adaptations of/or using source material from another form of media, such as novels, historical records, comic books, and video games. Occasionally, two (or more)

screenwriters will work together on a project or projects as permanent or temporary partners.

Screenwriters often talk about the double-edged sword of having a project in development. On the one hand, they want to be paid to write; on the other hand, what a writer ends up writing during the development process may have little relationship to the script he or she wanted to write. In general, if the screenwriter sold an original idea or piece of material, it is now the property of the buyer for the term specified. Beyond contracted content and project duration, the screenwriter has no legal rights to prevent it from being changed and no control over how it will be marketed unless it has been specifically negotiated into the contract.

A screenwriter is usually paid for a specific number of drafts of the screenplay. If the buyer is dissatisfied, that person or company will hire another screenwriter to work with the material. The goal of the new screenwriter is not only to be paid for the work, but also to be credited for that work onscreen, which requires changes to at least 50% of the existing material for, at minimum, a partial credit. Receiving credit raises one's status and pay as a screenwriter and is sometimes a primary motivator once the process has begun.

There is a pervasive and even celebrated dissatisfaction with the inefficiency of the development process, if not in its results. Screenwriters complain that it makes creating even more challenging. Robin Swicord, who wrote the 1994 film adaptation of *Little Women*, on which I was one of the development executives, said,

> My great disappointment was not understanding how unimportant the studio system of "perfecting" screenplays really was. A lot of the so-called "development" is really about buying time for the studio. It's more about trying this or trying that. They don't always view the writers as the dramatic experts in

> the room, and that's a mistake because you end up having really good writers taking notes from people who don't know what they're talking about. It's amazing to me that this process still goes on the way it does. It's not a system that works to make good movies. (Iglesias, 2001, p. 152)

Field (1989) wrote of the struggle to maintain originality in collaboration:

> When there have been six, eight, or ten drafts of the screenplay written, from one screenwriter or several writers, everyone seems to lose sight of what they originally responded to in the beginning. What's true in most cases is that the first draft is usually always better than the others. The people in Hollywood believe they are larger than the original material and want to make their contribution to the film. And of course, with so many fingers in the pie, they inevitably end up losing the original integrity of the screenplay, which is what they responded to in the first place. That's just the way it is. (p. 239)

The fact that each individual innovation team member is paid to deliver results further complicates their creative desires. If one's prescribed role is a guideline, the screenwriter will primarily defend the script's narrative and characters and the executives will most likely seek out changes to the script that they think will make the movie a commercial and critical success. Both are paid to uphold the responsibilities of their roles in the process and sometimes those inherent accountabilities create contradictions around what may be best for the product. Ideally, the various collaborators synthesize their ideas and interests into something more robust, as when the melodies of different musical instruments combine into one harmonious song.

The Development Executive

The members of the motion picture development team other than the screenwriter might be called the *creative interpreters* of the screenplay. They might include the producer, director, actors, and/or any development executives representing them or the funding studio. The development executives that work for the funding source—in this study, the studio—are the gatekeepers of the screenplay's passage into

production. The screenwriter's working relationships with the studio's development executives are perhaps those most critical at the development stage of the film. Thus, we will briefly explore the development executive's role in this section to help the reader gain deeper insight into the context in which the collaboration takes place.

The average size of the development department employed directly by a major studio is 13 executives (Studio System, 2012). They read scripts and listen to ideas to decide what to purchase. Usually in pairs of one senior executive and one junior executive, they track screenwriters' projects and progress and move projects forward toward production and release. The strongest executives are known to be passionate about film, have a good story sense, and an ability to evaluate screenplays for their quality and execution (Field, 1989).

Development executives are employed by the studio or hired by producers, directors, actors, and even screenwriters. Their job is to fill the pipeline with product to funnel to the studios. On a day-to-day basis, development executives working for a studio or other creative members are expected to know how to structure negotiations, attract talent to projects, and maintain relationships with a wide variety of creative community members. They must also have a sense of the projects in development at all major and mini-major studios, such as Relativity Media, The Weinstein Company, and Lionsgate Films.

Often a development team consists of a senior-level studio executive, a junior-level studio executive or two, a producer (who can double as the director), his/her senior-level and/or junior-level development executive(s), along with the screenwriter.

Often at later stages in the development process, a director is attached to the project and will begin implementing his or her vision for the film within the script.

Existing Literature

The abundance of gray literature on eminent creators and famous innovators, while insightful, are neither systematic nor holistic examinations of their professional practices. Similarly, the extensive publications focused on the world of filmmaking and screenwriting tend to be aimed at film fans or those aspiring professionals in need of tips on breaking into the business or writing a well-structured screenplay. The majority of popular business books related to this study are those prescribing solutions to executives who fear their companies will stagnate in the innovation race. While some of these books are based on popular trends in innovation research, their premises are commonly supported by anecdotal evidence and hypotheses. I do not seek to discredit these efforts, as their sheer numbers are strong evidence of our mutual interest in innovation. However, these resources will not be reviewed in this paper. This literature review will focus in on scholarly works on professional creators, which are those most germane to this study's purpose: to investigate the little-understood phenomenon of creating with others in a professional setting. My research question is, *How do professional screenwriters experience working with a team on their screenplays?*

While there is very little academic literature exploring the work lives of screenwriters or professional creators in any industry, there is a body of literature that provides indirect insights into the world in which professional creators work. The

purpose of this review is to extract from that body those studies most salient to the direct experiences of professional creators themselves.

Professional Creators

Five studies published in the last 15 years emerged as directly relevant to the experiences of creative professionals. Two of the five studies explored the professional identities of creative advertising workers. The first, entitled "The Trouble with Creatives: Negotiating Creative Identity in Advertising Agencies*"* by Hackley and Kover (2007), is of interest here because it was a phenomenological study that highlighted and explored issues leading to negative conflict and insecurity for professional creators. The second study is called "Pleasure at Work? Gender, Consumption and Work-Based Identities in the Creative Industries" by Nixon and Crewe (2004). It featured a London-based sample's experiences and surfaced problems around gender identity and pressures to belong. Another study entitled "A Study of Innovators' Experience of New Product Innovation in Organisations" (Cooper, 2005) explored how complex social interactions and structures in organizations affect the creativity of professional creators. Finally, I will critically evaluate two dissertation studies that examined the development of a screenplay or teleplay in the entertainment industry. Sandor's (2001) dissertation study, *From Screenplay to Motion Picture? Emergent Roles and the Hollywood Script Development Process*, presented case studies of three screenplay development projects to shed light on prescribed and emergent roles of professional creators. Pritzker's (1998) dissertation study entitled *Creative Differences: The Creative Decision-Making Process in Group Situation Comedy Writing* featured a case study of professional creators and others involved in decisions

surrounding their creations. It sought to explore the managerial, creative, logistical, group, and conditional factors affecting the process.

The sections that follow will explore each of the five works described above, beginning with Hackley and Kover's (2007) study about how advertising executives experience negative conflict.

Conflict as creativity killer. Advertising is a rich research forum that parallels the entertainment industry. Several studies cite the important contributions advertising executives make to the cultural landscape (Baudrillard, 1998; Cronin, 2004; Mort, 1996; Wernick, 1991). Bourdieu (1984) spoke of advertising creatives as "[cultural intermediaries] who assimilate cultural meanings into branded commodity-signs" (as cited in Hackley & Kover, 2007, p. 54). However, these studies do not seek to explore the richness of what it is like for these professional creatives to participate in the creative ideation process. Through a small, representative sample of U.S. advertising agency workers, Hackley and Kover did provide some signs of their experiences in a quest to demystify the enigma of the creative professional's identity.

Hackley and Kover (2007) surfaced an issue that common sense tells us would be difficult for professional creators: authorship. In advertising and other creative sector industries, it is common practice for organizations to build a network structure in which project teams are comprised of creative professionals from different firms, independent contractors, and entrepreneurs. Attributing authorship for a winning creative project is difficult because several professional creators contribute to the whole. The researchers connected this tension around authorship to unproductive conflict in these innovation teams. Their study captured the creative professional's

feelings, thoughts, and actions in light of this tension.

As Hackley and Kover (2007) suggested, substantial tension between one's art and the pressures from the sponsoring organization deserve attention. One's creative identity is in constant negotiation with the social pressure to belong to the team and produce a profitable outcome. Professional creatives compete for power over the concepts chosen for implementation so that they can more easily incorporate their ideas and so they can be personally associated with successful projects. When other ideas are approved over their own, professional creatives often must continue to participate in the implementation of the "winning" idea despite conceding to their own creative marginalization.

Hackley and Kover (2007) concluded that pervasive, unfettered conflict chips away at participants' sense of creative identity and personal security. However, they did not incorporate the substantial research on the benefits of conflict to team innovation. For example, De Dreu and Van De Vliert (1997) found that some conflict helps to thwart apathy and unresponsiveness. It would be useful to a more holistic understanding of professional creators had Hackley and Kover connected their findings about threats to personal identity to what is known about productive conflict in innovation teams (see also Somech, Desivilya, & Lidogoster, 2009; Varela, Fernández, Del Río, & Bande, 2005). Implied in Hackley and Kover's study, hierarchy in innovation teams is another rich area for further investigation. Within an organizational hierarchy, Eteläpelto and Lahti (2008), in their study of teachers and students, warned of the negative consequences of conflict and unequal power relations to creative collaboration.

Conflict management literature. This section will supplement the literature cited by Hackley and Kover (2007) by providing a review of prevailing conflict management literature and its connections to team innovation and collaboration literatures. Current research trends refer to conflict management rather than conflict resolution, a term that stemmed from negotiation practices. Within the business, organizational behavior, and psychology literatures, Kenneth Thomas (1974) made his mark as a well-known researcher in conflict management with his Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI). Thomas defined conflict as "a process that begins when one party perceives another party has or is about to negatively affect something the first party cares about" (p. 651). As is apparent in this definition, conflict is commonly thought of as a negative occurrence—the result of poor communication, a lack of openness and trust between people, or failure of leadership to be in touch with the requirements and struggles of their employees. This *traditionalist* view of conflict is consistent with attitudes about group behavior that prevailed in the 1930s and 1940s and attempts to improve group and organizational performance by attending to the conflict's causes and correcting its associated dysfunction (Robbins & Judge, 2011). For Thomas, collaboration, at which we will look more closely later in this chapter, is seen as the antidote for win-lose outcomes.

The detriments of unproductive conflict are well known: increased turnover, decreased employee satisfaction, operational inefficiencies, and labor grievances and strikes. It is one of management's major responsibilities to keep conflict intensity as low as possible (Robbins & Judge, 2011). Despite its origins as a predominantly negative occurrence, all definitions of conflict commonly consider conflict a perception

of incompatibility—however positive or negative the intentions behind it—by a person or group. Acting on this incompatibility starts the wheels of conflict in motion and its perception rises to the surface of consciousness (Robbins & Judge, 2011, p. 454).

More recently, researchers realized that some conflict helps to combat organizational atrophy around the need for change and also innovation (De Dreu & Van De Vliert, 1997) and even went so far as to assert that more organizations probably fail because of too little conflict (Robbins & Judge, 2011). Authors have written about the benefits of productive conflict in organizations as a means to solve problems, bring about radical changes, and even band a group together against external threats, from which the resulting intragroup cohesion can be drawn upon as a resource (De Dreu & Van De Vliert, 1997). This *interactionist* view distinguishes types of conflict in teams as productive or *functional*—including task or process-related conflicts—or as damaging to productivity such as is the case with relationship conflict, which has been shown to be unproductive or *dysfunctional* in an organizational setting (Gamero, González Romá, & Peiró, 2008; Jehn & Mannix, 2001; Yang & Mossholder, 2004). It appears that the friction and interpersonal hostilities inherent in relationship conflicts increase personality clashes and decrease mutual understanding, which hinders the completion of organizational tasks.

Conflict management interventions that derive from communication theory provide a plethora of options for teams to develop skills. However, it does not directly address the needs or processes of innovation teams. Given the importance of diversity in innovation team formation (see Amabile, 1997; Cabrales, Medina, Lavado, & Cabrera, 2008; Gebert, Boerner, & Kearney, 2006; Yap, Chai, & Lemaire, 2005) it

would be interesting to learn how to support team member tolerance for divergent views that could thwart relationship conflict and better facilitate task completion.

In general, it would be useful to learn how behaviors known to be critical to creativity are productive or unproductive when overused or underused in team innovation settings. For example, critical creative behaviors such as delaying closure, breaking performance scripts or formulas, and taking new perspectives on problems (Amabile, 1997; Woodman & Schoenfeldt, 1989) set the stage for productive conflict to take place. Individual personality traits of creative people would also affect whether conflict is constructive or destructive. For example, one's orientation toward risk, an internal locus of control, independence of judgment, and narcissism—all qualities of particularly creative people (Barron & Harrington, 1981; Woodman & Schoenfeldt, 1989)—would dictate how openly one may challenge a teammate's idea or discuss options. Similarly, an individual's tolerance for ambiguity, perseverance in the face of frustration, ability to delay gratification, and relative lack of concern for social approval (Amabile, 1997; Woodman & Schoenfeldt, 1989) would affect his/her behaviors when opposed.

At a team level of analysis, professional creatives are held responsible for the outcomes of their projects regardless of the many voices that weighed in during creative meetings (Burnett, 1960). Collusion with a team practice that does not honor the creative mindset often prompts "social splitting" in which other team members or subgroups are demonized (Nixon & Crewe, 2004). This division on the team can lead to latent or actual conflict. An individual who chooses to engage in conflict with others on his/her team accepts some degree of personal risk: of humiliation, provoking anger,

or even loss of team membership. Reaching agreements on goals, making good decisions about how to achieve those goals, and helping each other accomplish activities despite differences are critical to team effectiveness (Thomas & Thomas, 2004). To be a high-performing team, the ability to resolve conflict openly and constructively is paramount (Katzenbach & Smith, 2003). Although it is not apparent in the innovation literature, the cost of not encouraging productive conflict would likely be great as well.

Like the creative individual's need for an orientation toward taking risks, the organization must also provide an environment in which risk is accepted and encouraged and in which ideas are fairly evaluated (Cummings, 1965; Kanter, 1983). The expectation of threatening, highly critical evaluation was shown to undermine creativity in laboratory studies in children (Torrance, 1961) and adults (Amabile, 1979; Amabile, Goldfarb, & Brackfield, 1990), which included criticism of work that might be perceived as a "failure" (Amabile, 1997, p. 52).

The case for collaboration. Current management and organizational theory that informs much of the organization development practice literature predominantly leans toward collaboration as the most effective method for managing conflict. Collaboration, specifically, is the one communication style and methodology shown to be productive in both task-focused and relationship-focused conflicts. Some researchers posited that collaboration among those with clashing perspectives is likely the best method to harness that energy within innovation teams to produce the most novel, useful products (see Weiss & Hughes, 2005), but have yet to test these theories in depth. Collaboration is seen as a process that, by combining the best ideas of all

involved, can create something "new and creative, something transformational" (Morgan, 2001) and aligns philosophically and pragmatically with the supports for organizational innovation outlined in the previous section. Whetten and Cameron (2011) suggested collaboration as a preferred default behavior for supervisors of others, or, if that fails, to resort to compromise.

If a person adopts one of the more cooperative styles—accommodating, compromising, or collaborating—to address an issue, specific conflict-resolving techniques are still necessary to make use of their benefits. The majority of techniques that align best to more cooperative styles were outlined by several researchers in the communication and negotiation literatures: Walton's (1969) third-party peacemaking interventions; Fisher, Ury, and Patton's (1991) principled negotiations method; Stroh, Northcraft, and Neale's (2002) six integrative bargaining steps; and Johnson's (1992) five polarity management steps. Applied to innovation teams, perhaps these methods would help systemically encourage collaboration in necessarily tense conversations.

From the systems literature, conflict is not only to be expected as a healthy byproduct of learning and innovation, but also is a source of conversations that lead to learning. Improving dialogue is a key competency for organizations. Similarly, much of the conflict management team intervention literature assumes an ongoing conversation around common goals and dialogue where participants are open to what Bohm and Peat (1987) referred to as the "flow of a larger intelligence" (as cited in Senge, 1990, p. 239). In these interventions, participants are encouraged to learn new ways of looking at old problems, a building block for the learning organization and its never ending quest for mastery (Argyris, 1970; Senge, 1990). In the collaboration

process of *ringi* employed by some Japanese companies, consensus is built by mobilizing disagreement among a broad population toward innovative solutions in which the errors are worked out in the process; although time-consuming, the practice helps evolve the group to higher levels of collective intelligence (Morgan, 2007, p. 95).

The small group communication literature around collaboration and the negotiation literature focusing on dialogue (see Isaacs, 1999) and participatory decision-making (see Kaner, Lind, & Toldi, 2007) is ripe for applied innovation research. Their emphasis on collecting—often through brainstorming—the wisdom of the group and reforming it into something greater than the sum of its parts, however uncomfortable it may become, could be effectively adapted and applied to innovation teams. The next section will explore another input to group creativity that is related to how conflict is managed, and that is trust.

Trust. In an expansion of Paulus and Brown's (2007) cognitive-social-motivational model of group creativity, Paulus and Dzindolet (2008) brought together new aspects of team dynamics with many other well-documented group, task, and situational variables into one model. Their model incorporated group member variables such as personality, intrinsic motivation, and mood with group structure elements like knowledge/skill/ability overlap, leadership style, and cohesiveness. Their external demands category united variables that affect group creativity like mentorship, rewards and penalties, organizational structure, and performance feedback. It also integrated group climate variables such as psychological safety and shared norms and goals. Also in this category, the authors develop new connections in the literature around conflict and trust as inputs to group creativity. These variables feed the cognitive processes

used by the creative individuals to generate and evaluate ideas. The cognitive process works in concert with the group's internal and external motivators and social processes such as sharing of ideas, managing conflict, and collaborative problem solving. This recipe of variables can result in individual creativity and team innovation.

Team trust and collaborative culture support better communication, focus, cooperation, and information sharing (Calton & Lad, 1995; Larson & LaFasto, 1989; Littler, Leverick, & Bruce, 1995; Strutton, Pelton, & Lumpkin, 1993), all of which are inputs to team creativity. A study by Barczak, Lassk, and Mulki (2010) found that trust among innovation team members influenced their ability to be creative together. The authors found that teams with higher emotional intelligence were better able to inspire support and confidence in fellow team members. Members of these teams had the ability to monitor and regulate their emotions, and were better able to motivate themselves and build rapport because of their sensitivity to others' emotions (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000). Additionally, the researchers found that managing emotions enables innovation teams to handle conflicts without compromising common team objectives and focus; teams are more likely to be tolerant of diverging opinions thereby preventing discord from blocking progress on a common goal (Suliman & Al-Shaikh, 2007). This in turn, according to Barczak et al., helps create an environment free of negative criticism, ridicule, or fear, leading to better communication and reduced conflict (Rego, Sousa, Pina e Cunha, Correia, & Saur-Amaral, 2007). While the connections between collaboration, emotional intelligence, and trust that Barczak, Lassk, and Mulki (2010) made have merit, their associations to reduce negative conflict are inferences beyond the confines of their own study on emotional intelligence and team trust. Furthermore,

the authors' study participants were undergraduate students working in teams on creative projects, whose pressures are clearly different from those professional creators face when collaborating for payment. Still, the effects of conflict and trust on innovation teams are promising areas for further research.

Negative pressures. The second article in the critical evaluation of studies related to professional creators is by Nixon and Crewe (2004). They investigated the work lives of creative advertising executives in the United Kingdom in light of the industry's emphasis on glamour and style. Their findings showed that the culture of heterosexual masculinity determined which behaviors were tied to perceived performance. They posited that the pressure to express and/or support overt masculinity in behaviors and dialogue had an impact on them as people and thus the decisions these executives made.

More narrowly, Nixon and Crewe (2004) designed their study to understand how creative work informs "ideal of the self-expressive creative worker" (p. 129). However, in determining the relevance of the study to the current study, I was not convinced that the pressures of how executives were expected to behave in work-related leisure activities made a strong enough connection to how it affected their actual creative work. Like advertising executives, screenwriters' work is also consumer facing; if pressures to belong influence the stories they write, then moviegoers experience the results of those pressures. From a social-psychological perspective, it would have progressed the scholarly conversation in group creativity and team innovation had the authors tied rewarded behavior of advertising executives in their study to its effects on their advertising content.

Recent research on pressures affecting creative individuals engaged in organizational innovation showed promise in helping us understand what professional creators face in the course of work (Amabile, Hadley, & Kramer, 2002; Rodríguez-Escudero, Carbonell, & Munuera-Aleman, 2010). The evidence of the effects of pressure on creative teamwork suggests seemingly paradoxical influences. Some research has found that although workload pressures that were considered extreme—such as a large amount of work required in a seemingly short period—could undermine creativity, some degree of pressure could have a positive influence if it was perceived as arising from the urgent, intellectually challenging nature of the problem itself (Amabile, 1988; Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1987). Amabile's (1997) KEYS Instrument identifies two distinct forms of pressure: excessive workload pressure, which should have a negative influence on creativity, and challenge, which should have a positive influence.

West's (2002) work made a strong contribution to understanding pressures affecting creative groups in the area of external demands. He found that external demands will inhibit creativity that occurs in earlier stages of the innovation process, as evidenced by the plethora of studies around the need for creative individuals to feel free from pressure, feel safe, and experience relatively positive affect (Claxton, 1998; as cited in West, 2002; Amabile, Barsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005). External demands, West found, will facilitate innovations in the implementation stages.

It is surprising that the authors did not compare their findings to the extensive body of research already mentioned on how diversity of team membership affects innovation outcomes. Much of the literature around which the authors situate their

study is set in the advertising industry. Having chosen not to mine the many relevant studies in organizational theory—particularly team dynamics—and innovation studies, I believe Nixon and Crewe missed an opportunity to contribute to the much-needed literature around professional creators' experiences.

Organizational supports. In the third article evaluated, Cooper (2005) reported on conversations with new product innovators in commercial organizations about how they experience innovating. Interviews revealed the complex social settings and structures of participants' organizations, and how these settings and structures affected creativity and the overall climate for innovation. This study sampled participants who were identified and nominated by their senior management as successful innovators. Participants were selected from a wide range of companies in the technological sector, including defense and consumer electronics, software development, consumer electronics, telecommunications, and biotechnology. This phenomenological study set out to explore professional creators' worlds as participators in the organizational environment, and to uncover what this tells us about the innovation process.

Cooper's (2005) findings were aligned with those of earlier studies on organizational innovation. For example, organic, self-organizing working structures enable innovation at certain stages in the process more easily than hierarchical or bureaucratic structures (Damanpour, 1991; Damanpour & Gopalakrishnan, 1998; Pierce & Delbecq, 1977). Innovators described both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators as important to a positive experience (Ruscio, Whitney, & Amabile, 1998). Management practices that support innovation were noted, including establishing clear goals and providing regular feedback while allowing innovators autonomy around how the work

is done (Amabile, 1983b; Bailyn, 1985; Burns & Stalker, 1961). Informal networks were also found to be of value to participants, which contributes to the growing body of scholarly works on innovation networks (see Brass, 1995; Kratzer, Hölzle, & Gemünden, 2010; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003). Although he collected data on gender and tenure, Cooper may have missed an opportunity to increase the significance of his findings to existing research on those topics. This study also did not emphasize how leadership, organizational structure, networks, and motivation interrelate. Most obviously, professional innovators work on projects in teams, and Cooper did not connect his findings with those within innovation team studies. This disconnect is a common trend among team innovation studies: Elements from individual creativity research and organizational supports for innovation research are leveraged to explain team innovation outcomes and yet the activities of the team itself are ignored.

Cooper's (2005) well-designed study delivered on its intention to surface the voice of the professional creator, but the findings were not leveraged to benefit the academy. A phenomenological study comes alive through the words and expressions of its participants. Yet research fulfills its potential through the researcher's interpretation. Cooper represented the creative voice of his participants, and yet underplayed his interpretation of the results thus rendering them less impactful among innovation studies.

Emergent roles. The fourth of the five studies in this evaluation is Sandor's (2001) dissertation study on the motion picture development process, which made a promising step toward a more holistic view of the world in which professional creators live. Sandor argued that eight factors determine how the role of one innovation team

member in feature film development evolved. This study is one of only two (see Pritzker, 1998) that I was able to locate that focuses on professional creators' experiences of creating *with others*. Both of these studies investigated creative writers and executives involved in preparing the script for a television show or motion picture.

The purpose of Sandor's (2001) study was to contribute to organizational theory and film theory by showing that a team member's contribution to the script development process may vary from project to project, despite his or her prescribed role. Unfortunately, Sandor did not address how this evolution affects professional creators, innovation teams, or the organizations that employ them. Sandor claimed her study would provide us with a "more sophisticated understanding of collaboration during [the team ideation] phase," but she did not connect her findings to theories of creative collaboration or collaboration in general.

Perhaps Sandor's (2001) methods made it difficult to extend the literature on professional creators and innovation teams. Despite the large and varied sample, which represents multiple roles in and around the team innovation process, only one role was chosen for analysis through the data collected. Sandor presented her findings in the form of three project case studies on screenplay development; however, she based her findings on one film producer to whom she had the greatest access and subsequently generalized her findings to all roles, such as the director, screenwriter, and development executives. The producing team was the same on all three projects and was only comprised of two people, the producer and his development executive. The sample size and composition seem far too limited to render her findings generalizable even among the population of Hollywood film producers. Furthermore, in light of this study's goal,

the producer seems a weaker representative of professional creators on which to base an understanding of them, particularly because the producer's responsibilities can take him or her away from the creative collaboration more often than others on the team.

This study provided some insight into the experiences of professional creators. It indirectly offered information about the unfolding of a project in the ideation phase. The author did not quote her participants extensively and the case studies read as highly editorialized, so the participant voices were lost. Sandor's participation as an intern in the development of the projects she studied was effective for a general reflection on her topic. However, her involvement on the team may have thwarted the objectivity required for her to gain insights into participants' experiences.

Sandor (2001) found through case studies of three development projects that eight factors determined her film producer participant's emergent role: "The member's prescribed role; copyright ownership; the member's estimate of his or her prospective rewards; other team members' perception of the member's expertise; the team member's relationship to others on the project; the filmmaking team's control system; the filmmaking team's communication system; and the team member's marketplace reputation" (p. iv). Because Sandor did not explore the literature outside of film studies and role theory, she did not connect her findings to a wider body of research that may have exposed their significance to scholars in other fields. There are myriad earlier studies on creativity and innovation that focus on team member roles (Belbin, 1997); rewards (Hennessey & Amabile, 1998); interpersonal relationships among innovation team members (Aram, Morgan, & Esbeck, 1971; Jehn & Shah, 1997); and communication methods (Monge, Cozzens, & Contractor, 1992). Finally, a more

effective design might have provided the lens through which to see how all roles on an innovation team evolved over the course of a single project. The next section will present key studies on two of the topics in Sandor's framework: rewards and team composition.

Rewards. Rewards are a substantive topic to explore for their effects on professional creators. Research shows that engaging in an activity only to obtain a reward can undermine creativity. However, creativity can be enhanced when participants anticipate a "bonus" reward, a confirmation of one's ability, or an avenue to more relevant work in the future (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996; Conti, Coon, & Amabile, 1993; Hennessey, Amabile, & Martinage, 1989). Innovation teams, particularly those in the new product development space, often depend on the success of their work together to maintain their continued employment. The success of a new product could earn the creators a raise in status or pay, or a bonus for delivering the product early, as examples.

In the case of screenwriters, the most sought after reward is perhaps the ability to continue writing on one's project after it has been purchased. As was mentioned previously in this paper, the studio is required to pay for the number of script drafts it has commissioned, but they may dismiss the writer from the project at any time and seek another writer. The greatest reward for screenwriters is onscreen credit, which is determined in a sometimes-elaborate process designed to place the writer(s) names onscreen in the order that is commensurate with their contribution to the script; the exact placement and wording of the onscreen credit has significant monetary compensation associated with it.

Team composition. Innovation team composition, especially how homogeneity or heterogeneity of team members affects communication and desired outcomes, is another popular research area (see Henneke & Lüthje, 2007; Martinsuo, 2009; Perretti & Negro, 2007). Leaders must have the ability to form innovation teams that "represent a diversity of skills, and are made up of individuals who trust and communicate well with each other, challenge each other's ideas in constructive ways, are mutually supportive, and are committed to the work they are doing" (Amabile, 1997, p. 54). Along similar lines, team member diversity and mutual openness to ideas may operate on creativity by exposing individuals to a greater variety of unusual ideas, which has been demonstrated to affect creative thinking positively (Parnes & Noller, 1972; Torrance, 1961).

Constructive challenging of ideas and shared commitment to a project are likely to yield increases in intrinsic motivation, given that two of the primary features of intrinsic motivation are positive sense of challenge in the work and a focus on the work itself (Amabile, Hill, Hennessey, & Tighe, 1994; Harter, 1978; White, 1959). Additionally, some co-worker interaction may actually provide further motivation to these employees by stimulating wider interests, adding complexity, or introducing some competitive pressure to enhance the novelty, usefulness, or number of their contributions relative to their co-workers (Cummings & Oldham, 1997).

Innovation team collaboration. In the fifth and final study on professional creators in this evaluation, Pritzker (1998) detailed the creative collaboration between a writer and her development team during the writing of a single television episode. Like Sandor's (2001) work, this case study provided a rich description of how the

collaborative process unfolds and its many vicissitudes, particularly those affecting the writer, the original creator. It is a single case study, which the author believed had "revelatory possibilities" (Yin, 1994; as cited in Pritzker, 1998, p. 3) because he gained access to a work environment that is almost entirely inaccessible for scientific investigation. Pritzker's prior role as a situation comedy writer allowed him this access to an unknown population. My previous role as a motion picture development executive allowed me access to participants for this study that likely would have been difficult for an outsider to secure. While I assume there are professionals in the entertainment industry who are or have pursued advanced scholarship, it is peculiar that so very few appear to have published academic works exploring its inner workings.

Pritzker (1998) had five objectives. He hoped to understand management of the television show including the organizational climate and management style of executives. He examined creative factors that influenced the writing of the television series, as well as practical and logistical variables that affected writing decisions. He looked at group dynamics including interpersonal and intrapersonal factors, and finally factors that encouraged or discouraged conditions for creativity. While many of these aspects were visible in the descriptions of the project provided, I think the significance of the study is challenged by two design choices. First, the breadth of the study purpose described above was too wide to reveal substantive patterns. Second, the analysis of the findings did not make a deliberate attempt to connect them to the wide body of research surrounding the study objectives, which I will subsequently detail.

The most interesting aspect of Pritzker's (1998) study was the report of two emergent themes: gender and race. The author's descriptions of how these issues

unfolded throughout the writing of the teleplay were patient and nuanced. The fact that the writer on the development team was a Black female surrounded by White males in decision-making positions and was writing a story with a racial theme is provocative and rich. As was the case in Sandor's study described above, the author explored a great number of areas and was less concerned with creating greater clarity in an already muddy scholarly conversation. For example, given the power of female writers in early Hollywood motion pictures, it would have been interesting had he connected his findings to earlier studies on workers in similar roles (Beauchamp, 1997; Bielby & Bielby, 1996). More importantly, this study may have missed an opportunity to take a first step toward answering the questions: Whose creative voice is heard by decisionmakers? Thus, what characters' voices are *not* heard by our audiences?

Pritzker (1998) presented concrete data that leadership could be highly detrimental to the team's creative process, and especially the professional creator. These findings could have been explored in light of available research on management practices that support team innovation (see Amabile 1988, 1997). At an organizational level, lack of communication and collaboration as well as infighting and destructive criticism and competition were found to thwart creativity (Amabile, 1997). Researchers also found that rigid, formal management structures that emphasize conservatism and the status quo obstructed creativity in organizations (Amabile et al., 1996; Kimberley, 1981; Kimberley & Evanisko, 1981), among other elements of leadership that will be described below.

Leadership practices. There is significant interest in leadership practices that support or detract from team innovation (see Amabile & Khaire, 2008; Bilton, 2007;

Byrne, Mumford, Barrett, & Vessey, 2009; Gebert et al., 2006; George & Zhou, 2007; Somech, 2006). For example, Amabile (1997) found that creativity and innovation are fostered by project supervision that allows for a considerable degree of freedom or autonomy in the conduct of one's work. In addition, project supervision is likely to foster creativity when it is marked by goal clarity (Bailyn, 1985), good communication between the supervisor and the work group (Kimberley, 1981; Kimberley & Evanisko, 1981), feedback, and enthusiastic support for the work of individuals as well as the entire group (Delbecq & Mills, 1985; Orpen, 1990). Amabile (1979, 1983a, 1983b) suggested that these supportive supervisory behaviors affect creativity through similar mechanisms that are associated with fair and supportive evaluation, where creators are less likely to experience fear of negative criticism that can undermine intrinsic motivation.

Several researchers concluded that creativity is fostered when individuals and teams have relatively high autonomy in the day-to-day conduct of the work and a sense of ownership and control over their own work and their own ideas (e.g., Amabile, 1988; Bailyn, 1985; King & West, 1985; Paolillo & Brown, 1978; Pelz & Andrews, 1966; West, 1986). Creativity studies revealed that individuals produce work that is more creative when they perceive themselves to have choice in how to go about accomplishing the tasks they are given (Amabile & Gitomer, 1984). Supervisory behaviors perceived as controlling—such as making decisions without employee involvement; pressuring employees to think, feel, or behave in certain ways; or monitoring them closely—shift an employee's focus of attention away from his or her own ideas and toward external issues.

How leaders foster collaborative idea flow across an organization and promote participative management and decision making are considered important aspects of how organizations encourage innovation (Allen, Lee, & Tushman, 1980; Kanter, 1983; Kimberley & Evanisko, 1981; Monge et al., 1992; Zaltman, Duncan, & Holbeck, 1973). Creativity research has shown that the probability of creative idea generation increases as exposure to other potentially relevant ideas increases (Osborn, 1957; Parnes & Noller, 1972). Sam Kaner and his colleagues' (2007) work on participatory decision-making supports these findings. It features a facilitation technique for moving groups through a conflict-rich process of collaboration that drives them to better, more strongly supported solutions in the end.

When supervisors are supportive, they show concern for employees' feelings and needs, encourage them to voice their own concerns, provide positive and informational feedback, and facilitate their skill development (Cummings & Oldham, 1997). These actions promote employees' feelings of self-determination and personal initiative at work, allowing them to consider, develop, and ultimately contribute outcomes that are more creative.

Professional creators literature summary. As Nixon and Crewe (2004) pointed out, what counts as acceptable "team player" behavior can be detrimental to one's personal identity. This is the first study I have read that highlights the pressure felt among professional creators themselves. Social pressures surrounding professional creators in the entertainment industry are common knowledge and the accounts sometimes disturbing. Peer pressure among professional creators in culturally

influential industries such as advertising and film, as well as others like music and publishing, deserves further consideration in the academic literature.

Hackley and Kover (2007) also suggested that personal identity negotiation affects how effective a professional creator can be at his or her work. Conflict resolution in this sense is an internal polarity in which the person who is required to bring authentic expression to the work does not feel secure enough in one's self to do so effectively within the group. This study clearly articulated that subtle concept, but did little to illuminate the impact of such conflict on professional creators.

Sandor's (2001) dissertation study did not clearly expose experiences of professional creators, and it fell somewhat short in providing readers with the "more sophisticated understating of collaboration" that it intended. However, the author shed light on two factors in particular, reputation and copyright ownership—which Hackley and Kover (2007) addressed as *authorship*—not commonly discussed in the creativity or innovation research and that are intriguing areas for further inquiry.

Pritzker's (1998) dissertation provided a firm foundation from which to delve further into the working worlds of professional creators because it exposed for us what the collaboration process is like. This study tells an intriguing story about how a professional creator navigates the real-life treachery of balancing one's authenticity as a creative person, as a human being, and as a paid professional. As mentioned earlier, the findings around race and gender are provocative, particularly in light of the fact that Nixon and Crewe's (2004) study also revealed a gender facet to our understanding of group creativity. While research on racial and gender issues in the workplace has likely evolved in new ways since these two studies were published, further exploration of

gender and racial tensions within the creative process would be useful to researchers in team innovation as well as social justice, gender, and media studies.

Of the studies evaluated here, Cooper's (2005) study was the most solid example of a study that leveraged existing literature and shed light on creators themselves. Perhaps its emphasis on management practices, motivation, informal networks, and organic structures will be useful in analyzing this study's findings.

Innovation Team Processes

The purpose of supplementing the five primary studies on professional creators with relevant literature that their authors did not connect to their findings is to create a more holistic scholarly conversation within which to situate this study. To that end, this section, as in prior subsections, will present an overview of a substantial body of research that was not incorporated into the studies evaluated in the prior section. Within team innovation, there are many works around improving the processes teams use to develop ideas (see Basadur & Gelade, 2006; Paulus & Yang, 2000; Puccio, Firestien, Coyle, & Masucci, 2006). The best-known process in use in organizations is probably creative problem-solving (see Isaksen & Treffinger, 2004), originally developed by Osborn (1957), and popularized through assessments such as the Creative Problem Solving Profile (Basadur Applied Creativity, 2004a) and VIEW (CPSB, Inc., 2008) and the eight-step Simplex System for problem-solving (Basadur Applied Creativity, 2004b). However, these interventions do not thoroughly consider the non-process-related aspects of the team's interactions.

As previously mentioned, group creativity research began with comparisons of individual and group creativity and from these comparisons, one conclusion is still

debated today: Groups are bad for creativity (Paulus et al., 2006, p. 70). Recent studies explain why group brainstorming can backfire: social loafing (Thompson, 2004); social inhibition (Sawyer, 2007); social comparison processes leading to convergence (Larey & Paulus, 1999); and concerns about the evaluation of others (Paulus et al., 2006).

While adverse effects of group creative work were found in artificial laboratory conditions, real-life teams working together for a period of time had better chances of being innovative (Paulus et al., 2006; Milliken, Bartel, & Kurtzberg, 2003). As an antidote to the adverse effects of groupthink, De Dreu and West (2001) found that minority dissent on innovation teams stimulates creativity and divergent thought, which, through high participation and structured decision-making processes in place, result in innovation. This is aligned with the benefits of certain types of conflict already discussed earlier in this paper.

In an excellent summary of the social and cognitive factors that impact group creativity, Paulus (2000) grouped factors into two broad categories: social inhibition vs. social stimulation, and cognitive interference vs. cognitive stimulation. From combining these many factors into a single model, Paulus made several recommendations on structuring the team innovation process to minimize the production loss experienced by groups that creators do not experience working alone. For example, the use of facilitators to minimize premature evaluation and social loafing is helpful. Allowing group time for careful consideration of each idea and individual reflection before decision-making can help maintain high productivity levels. Organized procedures for discussing large numbers of ideas—usually believed to enable better quality outcomes (Osborn, 1957)—through writing or electronic

exchanges (Kayser, 1994; as cited in Paulus, 2000)—can leverage the benefits of individual ideation that can be lost in group process.

The search for ideas in associative memory model (SIAM) model presented by Nijstad, Diehl, and Stroebe (2003) starts from the clear assumption that "idea generation is essentially a cognitive or mental process that occurs within the individual group member's mind" (p. 144) but that is also affected simultaneously by the action of others through communication. According to SIAM, what takes place in a brainstorming context is a repeated search for ideas in associative memory where the contributions of others constitute search cues in the long-term memory. This process of idea generation based on memory searches takes place outside of group conditions and, when it happens in a group, it can be either stimulated or interfered with by communication with others:

> Stimulation occurs when the ideas suggested by others lead to the generation of ideas that would otherwise not be generated, and interference occurs when idea sharing disrupts the individual-level cognitive process of idea generation. Productivity losses (group members are outperformed by individuals) are found when interference is stronger than stimulation; productivity gains (group members outperform individuals) are possible when stimulation is stronger than interference. (Nijstad et al., 2003, pp. 153-154)

West (2002) distinguished between creativity and innovation implementation and attempted to attribute seemingly contradictory findings of past studies to confusion in nomenclature. While this attribution may seem convenient, West's is one of the more clarifying studies I have read in this review. West separated pure creativity—evident in the early stages of innovation—from innovation implementation, which is also creative, and at the same time unified the two phases as part of the same repeating cycle. To take it a step further, creative problem solving (Osborn, 1957) also suggests

that divergence and convergence of creative thought occur at every stage of the innovation process, from the more divergent phases of problem finding and idea finding, through the convergent phases of evaluation, selection, and implementation. Therefore, researchers can better compartmentalize the findings of group creativity (ideation) and team innovation (implementation) without separating them artificially, rendering them incompatible schools of study. Earlier I described the motion picture development process as a spiral-like process of continual ideation and implementation, in which the screenwriter must change hats to accommodate creative collaboration and back again to accommodate creative writing in solitude. West's insight corroborates this reality. West's separation of creativity required for ideation and that required for innovation implementation may account for the apparent dichotomy Amabile (1988) found around extreme workload pressures undermining creativity, which occurs in ideation phases and a degree of positive pressure arising from an urgent, intellectually challenging problem (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1987) occurring in implementation phases.

Because of its results, as well as its solid methodological apparatus, the sociocognitive approach became a fertile paradigm for research, illustrated by the numerous models it has produced over the years. The intensive research conducted by those such as Nijstad et al. (2003) and Osborn (1957) produced practical solutions that help bring together group creativity and team innovation researchers in designing and testing effective ways for the enhancement of creativity in various applied settings.

In summary, the models of group creativity within the sociocognitive approach are generally unified by the tendency to look at individuals and at groups as information

processors (Nijstad et al., 2003, p. 154). The main advantage of these conceptualizations rests in their capacity to produce and test hypotheses about the creative process and from them to conceive more productive group interactions. However, the sociocognitive stance is limited by a severe individualization of those participating in the group creative process. The whole process seems to take place more in the mind of each person than in the actual interactions between participants. Adopting such a position makes studies vulnerable to the risk of methodological reductionism, or the focus on intrapsychic processes to the exclusion of other levels of the phenomenon (Montuori & Purser, 1997). Exclusion of the social facets of group creativity is something that researchers promoting a sociocultural view struggle to overcome, as we will see in the next section.

These five studies provided important insights into how we can better understand innovation at the team level. And while all of these studies featured professional creators as the participants, none explored the experiences of creators themselves. None asked what the supports and barriers to innovation were *from their perspective.* The next section will present literature around creative collaboration that comes closer to this goal.

Creative collaboration. From a sociocultural perspective, creativity is considered social in nature and located in the space "in between" self and others. This standpoint does not deny the role of the individual mind in the creative process but, in agreement with Sawyer (2007, p. 74), envisions the human mind as more social than we imagine. The interdependence between self and other (person, group, community, society) is at the core of what became known as cultural or sociocultural psychology

(see Cole, 1996; Shweder, 1990). A sociocultural perspective of creativity looks at "processes of symbolic mediation through cultural artefacts, at the role of activity and social practices and the co-construction of knowledge and self through social interaction" (Glăveanu, 2009, p. 10).

Creative collaboration thrives in a culture that upholds values and norms of behavior around collaboration in general. Lopez, Peón, and Ordás (2004) describe a collaborative culture as one that values teamwork, communication, respect and empowerment, and leverages the knowledge of team members for organizational learning. Team members are encouraged to embrace change, offer differing viewpoints, and discuss problems openly. A collaborative culture encourages total involvement of team members because of the mutual respect, care, and support of each other (Bstieler & Hemmert, 2010).

Authors from the sociocultural paradigm may romanticize the social because of the feelings of symbiosis with others that it can engender (Sawyer, 2007, p. 7). This tendency, which could be qualified by sociocognitivists as falling prey to the illusion of group productivity, to some extent resides in the process-orientation of the approach. For example, the sociocultural approach looks at the fruitfulness of collaborations for both our psychological and social functioning as opposed to emphasizing the end product, its novelty and usefulness, and outcomes that are more or less creative. Authors of the sociocultural orientation have documented the types of problems faced in collaborations, especially those caused by impatience, ownership, conflict, and unfriendliness (Moran & John-Steiner, 2004) and the ever-present possibility of not being able to unify dichotomies (John-Steiner, 2000). Overall, sociocognitivists would

consider the research basis of collaboration studies as "weak" (Paulus & Nijstad, 2003) and often relying on interpretative inferences, like assuming psychological activity from discourse (Grossen, 2008).

The sociocultural approach to creativity re-emerged relatively recently and has yet to develop suitable frameworks for explaining how people are creative together. This situation made some researchers affirm that "what exactly is understood by collaborative creativity and above all, how it is examined, appears not to be the focus of well-founded analyses" (Sonnenburg, 2004, p. 254). However, there are some studies that explore creative collaboration, such as John-Steiner's (2000) work on pairs of collaborators in long-term working relationships and Creamer's (2001) exploration of intimate heterosexual couples who also collaborate in their work, and show promise toward helping us understand professional creators. Arnold's (2005) work on empathic intelligence among teachers helping students to learn provides some thought-provoking clues about what can occur in productive creative collaboration. Qualities such as enthusiasm, capacity to engage, and empathy itself occur in the dynamic tension between thinking and feeling: "Empathic intelligence is a way of using various intelligences and sensitivities to engage effectively with others" (Arnold, 2005, p. 19). Based on Arnold's work, a study of jazz musicians reported six modes of verbal and non-verbal communication that exemplify different levels of empathetic attunement that allow them to take creative risks (Seddon, 2005). While the sociocultural study of creativity in groups is nascent, the essence of these studies captures something that the sociocognitive approaches somehow miss: the unspoken exchanges among creative collaborators and how the spirit of the collaboration itself affects the outcome quality.

Existing Literature Summary

In this section, the motion picture development process was introduced to provide context for this study and to compensate for the lack of available research on the process. Five recent studies were critically evaluated for their scholarly contributions to our understanding of professional creators. Hackley and Kover's (2007) phenomenological study explored issues leading to negative conflict and insecurity for professional creators. However, they did not connect their findings to the conflict management literature and its ties to group creativity research. Therefore, I provided an overview of relevant studies around team conflict's effects on innovation. Within the conflict management literature are those studies that emphasize collaboration practices that benefit innovation outcomes. Finally, I cited some newer studies on trust within innovation teams, in which the researchers emphasized states that capture a positive spirit of collaboration.

Nixon and Crewe's (2004) study surfaced problems around gender identity and pressures to belong among professional creators. However, they did not connect their findings to either the extensive literature on team composition and diversity's effects on ideation or the studies on external pressures and extrinsic motivation in the individual creativity and group creativity literatures. A brief overview of these literatures was provided.

Cooper's (2005) well-structured study corroborated much of what we know about how organizational structures support or thwart individuals. However, this study missed an additional opportunity to make a significant contribution to innovation

research by connecting its findings to innovation team studies and extending the literature.

Sandor's (2001) dissertation study is one of the two studies evaluated that was firmly situated in the lifeworld of professional creators. However, because the study did not explore the literature outside of film studies and role theory, I cited several earlier studies on creativity and innovation that focus on team member roles, rewards, interpersonal relationships among innovation team members, and communication methods. The literature on how innovation team members are rewarded and the composition of their teams was provided and discussed should it be valuable to this study's findings.

Pritzker (1998) presented concrete data that leadership could be highly detrimental to the team's creative process, and especially the professional creator. However, the study findings were not aligned to the existing literature on leading and managing creative teams in organizations; thus, an overview of those studies was provided should leadership become a valuable foundation on which to evaluate this study's results.

Finally, a review of the innovation team practices literature was presented. These studies expand upon the notion of the individual mind in action with others and are aimed at finding ideal inputs and conditions in which groups of creative individuals can outperform the individuals alone. To close the review, I noted the emergent body of work on creative collaboration, which seeks to understand what occurs in the liminal spaces between creators when they are working together in groups. The next section

will detail the contribution to scholarship, practice, and future research I am hoping to make.

Significance

The purpose of my 2004 study for which these screenwriters were interviewed was built around a comparison of two participant populations known to have contentious interactions. The comparisons were made by evaluating the interview transcripts against a rather rigid conceptual framework extracted from creativity and innovation research. The 2004 study was valuable in light of the similar and different perspectives participants had on these concepts. For example, a tolerance for ambiguity is a known characteristic of particularly creative individuals. Evaluating screenwriters' expression of this trait alongside those of studio executives was the primary goal in the analysis. I did not design the current study to align with a conceptual framework, where I deemed its concepts important in advance. Therefore, the content of what screenwriters discussed with me when asked questions about their work during the development process was taken at face value. Perhaps new themes outside of those defined in existing creativity and innovation literature will emerge. I believe that many anecdotes screenwriters shared in these interviews that had little value against the prevailing theories anchoring the 2004 study will become highlighted in the current study. These highlights aim to provide an unadulterated exposure to an area the scholarly literature has ignored: what professional creators are thinking, feeling, saying, and doing when collaborating with others.

As already mentioned, I believe this study has the potential to fill a gap in the existing creativity, innovation, and business literatures. This study is unique in that it

directly presents, through participant interview excerpts, what a professional creator finds supportive and challenging when working in innovation teams *in his or her own words*. The data from this study, when connected to existing group creativity and team innovation theories, will establish a small yet significant baseline understanding of how professional creators' experiences align with prevailing literatures. In addition to the bodies of literature already mentioned, psychology, creative writing, and media studies literatures will benefit from rich description of professional creators that may reveal nuanced insights into this underrepresented population.

For practical applications, this study may better inform OD practitioners' intervention designs. The bulk of innovation interventions available to OD practitioners are designed either to incite innovation in a collection of people (see Bharadwaj & Menon, 2000; Hemlin, Allwood, & Martin, 2004; Martins & Terblanche, 2003) or streamline the group brainstorming methods used in NPD teams (see Joyce, Jennings, Hey, Grossman, & Kalil, 2010; Paulus & Brown, 2007). The tone of these interventions is more fun and exploratory rather than productive, which many executive sponsors funding organization development efforts may not find essential. These interventions do not capture the complexity of a professional innovation team, where innovation is imperative if the individual is to meet performance expectations, if the team is to meet revenue targets, and if the company is to grow. Better intervention design for professional creators and innovation teams would be highly significant given the absence of resources available to those of us working in the field.

As an OD practitioner, my primary employers are the six major creators and distributors of motion picture and television content. My consulting population

encompasses employees responsible for creating and distributing this content. The core processes involved in filmed storytelling are individual creativity in the ideation phases and team innovation in the implementation phases. I believe that interventions designed to improve the implementation phases can have the greatest positive impact on the innovators and our business. The results of this study would help me attend directly to my clients during the development of a motion picture and perhaps a television program. The next chapter will present the research methods for this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The sections below detail the study's research design, participant sample, data collection, data analysis, and design delimitations. Within each section, I will differentiate the decisions made in 2003 when the data were originally collected and decisions made to utilize this archival data for the current study.

Research Design

The purpose of this study is to investigate the little-understood phenomenon of creating with others in a professional setting. Professional screenwriters were selected as the participant population from which to identify important categories of meaning for professional creators and generate ideas for further research. This study was designed within the phenomenological tradition, which Patton (2002) described as

> exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness both individually and as shared meaning. This requires carefully and thoroughly capturing and describing how people experience some phenomenon – how they perceive it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it and talk about it with others. To gather such data one must undertake in-depth interviews with people who have directly experienced the phenomenon. (p. 104)

My research question is, *How do professional screenwriters experience working with a team on their screenplays?* Between September and December of 2003, I interviewed individual professional creators—motion picture screenwriters—using a semi-structured interview protocol and captured their reflections on what it was like to create with others in the motion picture development process. I originally collected the data for my master's thesis research project on the motion picture development process. The pilot conducted for the current study utilized this archival data from two of the

eight audiotaped and transcribed interviews with professional screenwriters. The final dissertation study utilized transcripts from all eight interviews with screenwriters.

While the original 2004 study featured an interview protocol designed against a conceptual framework, this present study will take a phenomenological approach and utilize thematic analysis of the interview transcripts. The original interview questions were written to elicit stories from participants about their recent and distant past, both what was said and done in the process of developing their work with others, and what they thought and felt about what was said and done. Participants' memories are necessarily selective. As Van Manen (2011) said, "The object of phenomenological research is to borrow other people's experiences. We gather other people's experiences because they allow us, in a vicarious sort of way, to become more experienced ourselves" (para. 2). He also noted that researchers do not use phenomenological inquiry to investigate the subjective reflections of participants purely out of interest in the individual's experience. We use phenomenology to extract the inherent meanings that surface from those experiences.

Participant Sample

Participants in the 2004 study included 8 screenwriters who were actively involved in studio-based film development within the 5-year period (1999-2003) prior to the collection of data. The 2004 study's sample also included 15 development executives employed by all of the major and three mini-major motion picture studios; results were organized to show alignment and misalignment between these two sample groups. Although the studio's development executives, like screenwriters, are professional creators involved in the process under investigation, I believe that the

original creator—the screenwriter—has more at stake personally and professionally and thus can paint a clearer picture of what it is like to collaborate with others on one's creations. Creative interpreters in the motion picture development process—the executives to the producers, directors, and actors—may internalize the experience of collaboration in different ways.

This sample of screenwriters included those individuals who, writing solo or in partnership, have been credited with a minimum of one domestically released film of any budget or genre developed in and distributed by a major studio. They must have significantly participated in the development of—not merely the sale of or credit for—at least one domestically released film, at a current or former employer.

I had no previous personal or professional relationship—other than possibly the briefest interaction—with any participants. To begin the selection process, I formed a Board of Directors among peers in a variety of roles and organizations in the entertainment industry who would introduce the research to, and solicit the involvement of, potential interviewees who met the selection criteria.

In addition to the above criteria for selection, every effort was made to compile a balanced sample group based on the following criteria: (a) years in practice, (b) gender, and (c) affiliation with the major studio entities in the film industry. Although demographic information was not captured to differentiate or group sample participants, the transcripts used in this study included 8 screenwriters, 7 males and 1 female. They were aged 26-51 years when interviewed, White, and actively engaged in motion picture development. They had between 4 and 25 years of professional (paid) screenwriting experience when interviewed, and in aggregate, had developed

screenplays with all six of the major motion picture studios. Two of the participants had permanent writing partners that were not included in the sample.

The 2009 Hollywood Writers Report from the Writers Guild of America showed that the percentage of males in their membership who were employed as screenwriters by the major studios and larger independent studios (hiring 40 or more writers per year) in 2003 was 82% of all working screenwriters. Women comprised 18% of the working screenwriter population. White screenwriters of both genders comprised 94.3% of the employed population of film writers and non-White screenwriters represented 5.7% in 2003. Screenwriters over 40 represented 52.6% of the working membership and those 40 years old and under comprised the remaining 48.4%. If a premium was placed on selecting a representative sample of study participants, this study's selected sample of 100% Caucasians (compared with 94.3%) who were 88% male (compared with 82%) and 38% over 40 years of age (compared with 52.6%) would not have been far afield.

Data Collection

Qualitative research is trustworthy when it accurately represents the experience of the study participants (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999, p. 333). Their reflections "reveal a dense connectivity in disparate details. . .[in which there is] a tight fit between their understanding, ideas, and statements about the social world and what is actually occurring in it" (Farrell, 2009, p. 12). It is important, therefore, to examine in some detail how the interview protocol for this study was created.

The 2004 study leveraged the same data to be used in this study. The data were collected using an interview protocol designed to answer this research question: *In what ways and to what degree do screenwriters and/or studio executives feel their personal*

integrity is in alignment or out of alignment with the creative process of feature film development? The present research question is not dissimilar in that it explores the feature film development process—personally, interpersonally, and organizationally—in detail. As was already mentioned in the Significance section above, the research design and broader research question for this study presents a greater opportunity for a wider interpretation of the data across multiple disciplines.

The process under investigation in this study is the same as that in the original research for which the data were gathered. The 2003 interview protocol focused on questions around development process effectiveness and participants' contributions. If I rewrote the protocol for the current study, I would use more language specifying interactions with other people (see Appendix B). However, upon careful examination of participants' responses, when asked about the development process and their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors within it, they directly and fully described what it is like to work with others on their creations.

The 2003 interview questions align to the phenomenon of interest in this study because they elicited rich descriptions of

1. How participants saw their careers unfolding;
2. How participants took action to meet their personal goals and what outcomes resulted;
3. How participants balanced personal openness and restraint/separation, and how they negotiated authenticity in the process;
4. The foundation on which participants operated and to which they returned when the process became challenging;

5. Approaches and behaviors when working with others on the innovation team;
6. Similarities and differences between what was most important to participants and what was most critical to innovation team health and effectiveness, and process success;
7. What participants wanted to improve most in the collaboration process.

From the Board formed to solicit participants, each member received an explanatory e-mail from me about the research project to forward to potential participants, should they wish to use it in their correspondence (see Appendix C). For those who chose to participate, Board members forwarded participants' preferred contact information. I then contacted each person by phone or e-mail to introduce myself, establish rapport, explain the project in greater detail, and address any initial questions. If they agreed to continue with the study, participants elected their preferences around scheduling interviews, confirming any schedule conflicts during the study's timeframe, and an address to which I was to send the informed consent letter (see Appendix D).

The informed consent letter expressly requested permission to utilize the data for future research purposes. Each participant received two copies of the informed consent letter, both signed by me, along with my biography and a self-addressed stamped envelope. Once a copy of the letter was signed and returned, I scheduled interviews between September 8, 2003, and October 31, 2003. To accommodate participants' schedules, the interview period was extended through December 5, 2003. I estimated that interviews would require approximately one hour, but requested that participants schedule interviews during 2-hour time blocks for greater flexibility. Following the

interviews, I reminded participants that I would follow up with them in the event that I felt a second interview was necessary. Although all of the participants in this research happened to live in the Los Angeles area, making in-person interviews possible, if a participant was unable to meet in person, I would have arranged a phone interview.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were reminded before the interview began that all mention of or allusions to particular people, projects, and organizations in the interview would be eliminated from the research report. I also assured them that their names would never be disclosed in conjunction with the research project.

My professional and educational biography was submitted to each participant before the initial interview so that he or she was aware of my formal affiliations in the industry. I believe that the formal approach to enroll participants—via the Board of Directors and the informed consent letter—helped to ensure security that I would not disclose their names in conjunction with their comments. With that security in place, my status as an industry insider helped pave the way for candid conversations with them when we met in person.

Finally, interviews took place at locations where we had privacy and were not likely to be interrupted and where the participant would feel physically and emotionally comfortable. In addition, a quiet location was important to guarantee high audio-recording quality.

In the evaluation of the findings, I was mindful of the strong temptation to apply my own experiences in the phenomenon under investigation to the words of my participants. The phenomenological approach to this research was a suitable design

decision to present the study results through direct quotations, allowing readers to more directly sense the participants' experiences in the purest form possible. I also made an effort to distinguish clearly the data-driven themes in the Results chapter from my own professional evaluation and reflections presented in the Analysis.

Data Analysis

This study employed thematic analysis to explore the similarity in and variety of ways that 8 screenwriters experienced working in development teams. All of the original 2003 interview data from screenwriters were analyzed for this current study; no segments or sentences from the interviews were omitted from analysis. The methodology for the study was qualitative and followed data analysis guidelines for developing a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and analyzing data using the phenomenological approach (Patton, 2002). This study employed the following steps:

1. Preparation
    a. Reflect, document, and reconcile my own prejudices, viewpoints, or assumptions regarding the phenomenon, which Husserl (1931) referred to as the Epoch (Greek, for a "cessation") Phase.
    b. Loaded transcripts of audio-recorded interviews into Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software program without any pre-defined codes or code-families.
    c. Input relevant demographic information for each participant's transcript.
2. Coding
    a. Listened to audio-recorded interviews while reading transcripts.
    b. Examined all comments made by participants within the transcript that represented a complete thought.

c. Located key phrases and statements that pointed directly to the phenomenon being studied: participants' experiences of the feature film development process.
d. Attributed a code—a tentative statement, or definition, of the phenomenon—for each highlighted quotation.

3. Refinement
   a. Reviewed all codes associated with full data set and when complete, merged codes or created new codes to represent emergent patterns in the data.
   b. Created and attributed code families to all codes that represent categories of themes.
4. Synthesis
   a. Wrote memos associated with codes as coding patterns emerged.
   b. Wrote memos associated with quotations as comments patterns emerged.
   c. Wrote bracketed memos to capture my interpretations of the meanings of emerging memo patterns.
   d. Inspected all memos for what they reveal about the essential recurring features of the phenomenon being studied.
5. Results Preparation
   a. Ran reports on code families with codes and associated quotations, noting the total number of quotations associated with each code and the associated participant transcript(s).
   b. Selected quotations that most clearly and richly described the phenomenon.
   c. Organized the results by code family (theme) and codes with selected quotations.

d. Ensured at least 80% agreement on the codes attributed to comments using two independent analysts for inter-rater reliability on 60% of coded data.

6. Analysis
    a. Selected quotations that provide both thick description of a cross-section of participants' experiences and that are representative of each code family (theme) and their respective codes (subthemes).
    b. Evaluated thematic interpretations of the data by code families and their associated codes for patterns.
    c. Evaluated the interpretation of themes by descriptive memos, both from the perspective of the participant, and from my own perspective, in aggregate for patterns.

Design Delimitations

The study design was confined to the process around one product: major theatrical motion pictures generated from, and theatrically distributed out of, the United States. Additionally, although participants may have had experiences with independent films and television, this study did not include data about the development processes in those scenarios, as the creative processes and distribution models are inconsistent with feature films generated by the major studios. This study focused on the feature film medium, not other forms of mass media such as news, journalism, radio, or television. The process under examination was confined to feature film development and the innovation team activities that screenwriters participate in during that phase. The sample was limited to screenwriters and did not include interviews with other potential participants in the development process, such as development executives, directors, and

producers. Other than comments made by participants about the continuing development of the script during what technically would be considered the pre-production period, this research did not focus on physical production (shooting of the film), nor were participants' views of physical production or other subsequent phases in the filmmaking process taken into consideration.

Although the conduct of the development process has not fundamentally changed in the past 10 years, one distinction of note is that the major studios are releasing fewer films now than when the data were collected in 2003. In 2002, major studios released 281 films, or an average of 40 titles per studio (Studio System, 2004). The average number of films released by the major studios dropped drastically in 2003 to 18 titles per studio (Studio System, 2004). In 2011, each of the major studios released an average of 15 films (Studio System, 2012). However, the number of active projects in development in 2012 still hovered around 350 for each of the major studios, the same average as in 2003 (Studio System, 2004). Film budgets are higher now than in previous years. The average budget for films that were distributed out of the major film studios in 2003 was $41.17 million (Studio System, 2004) to an average budget of $76 million for a random sampling of 10 of the top 100 grossing films in 2011 (Studio System, 2012). Both higher film budgets and lesser numbers of releases could be factors in how screenwriters today may qualify their experiences.

Finally, the interview data utilized for this study were captured in 2003 and represents participants' experiences at that time. If the same participants were to be interviewed again today on the same topic, the experiences they recounted may or may not be different from those supplied in the original interviews. In addition, how

participants attributed meaning to past events presented in this paper may be different if discussed today. However, qualitative research is less concerned with consistency of results; it is designed to elicit the responses of participants in a specific time and place as well as the context and relationship between the researcher and participants (Finlay, 2006).

Trustworthiness

Some qualitative researchers have replaced the quantitative research paradigms of validity, reliability, and objectivity with the concept of trustworthiness (Johnson, 1997). For this study, I considered four strategies to improve the trustworthiness of the study: *credibility, transferability, dependability,* and *confirmability* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

For the qualitative researcher, the construct of credibility has replaced the quantitative concept of internal validity. Morrow (2005) suggests several ways that credibility is achieved, such as prolonged engagement with participants, continual observation in the field, the use of debriefers or peer researchers, negative case analysis, and participants' checks. Given the sensitivity of this population and the great difficulty at gaining their confidence even as an industry insider, I felt many of these methods would impose undue pressures on them that might prevent their participation. I had to rely on my own reflexivity by frequently reflecting on my coding scheme and analysis throughout the study. Where my own bias was strongest, I carefully bracketed my assumptions so they could be appropriately utilized in

Chapter 5.

Credibility is achieved to the extent that findings are plausible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One way to determine if the findings are plausible is to compare them to previous research and literature in the same genre. It does not mean, however, if the findings from this study do not compare to earlier studies that this research is not credible, especially given the dearth of studies involving professional creators, much less the collaboration processes of screenwriters. The fifth chapter will argue for the relevance of this study's findings in light of the existing literature wherever possible.

Transferability, another qualitative construct of trustworthiness, has replaced the quantitative measure of external validity or generalizability. Morrow (2005) defined transferability as the extent that the reader is able to identify with the findings of the study. Both Morrow (2005) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) convey the difficulty of qualitative research achieving transferability due to the small sample sizes of the studies. I hope that the rich descriptions and quotations from participants allow readers to have an unadulterated opportunity to relate what they read to their own creative collaboration experiences.

A third qualitative paradigm, dependability, has replaced the quantitative concept of reliability. If the process through which findings are derived is made explicit and repeatable as much as possible, the study is considered dependable (Morrow, 2005). In the third chapter on research methods, I addressed this in two ways: first, by evaluating my original interview protocol against new questions to ensure alignment to the current study's research question (see Appendix B); and second, by detailing exactly how I worked with the data to arrive at results in the data analysis section.

A fourth concept to ensure trustworthiness of qualitative research is confirmability, which has taken the place of the quantitative measure of objectivity. Confirmability addresses the extent that findings represent the situation researched, rather than the beliefs of the researcher. In the section on data analysis in Chapter 3, I detailed my process of bracketing my perceptions both before analysis began and during the process. This four-step process of analysis provided the rigor within which confirmability could be better assured. Additionally, I chose to have two raters evaluate 60% of the coded data, rather than the suggested 20%, for agreement at 80% or more, rather than the required 70%, to strengthen the confirmability of the findings. I also selected two raters with distinctly different vantage points: One did not have knowledge of the industry or intent of this research and one knew both intimately. The latter rater—a former development executive and screenwriter—read the first four chapters of this study to contextualize my findings within the study's aims and to better inform her coding.

The next chapter will feature the results of the current study by organizing into themes the quotation excerpts from participants. These selections are presented with as little disruption to participants' complete thoughts as possible to improve transferability, where readers can relate their own experiences in professional collaborations with equal vividness and fullness to those of the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The purpose of this research was to arrive at an empirical understanding of what professional creators, namely screenwriters, are thinking, feeling, hearing, saying, and doing while collaborating with others on their creations. The screenwriters in this study described their experiences of working with innovation team members in terms of techniques they employ to satisfy five major *desires*:

1. *Security*: securing or sustaining paid work as a screenwriter;
2. *Sanity*: maintaining emotional health in the course of work;
3. *Harmony:* creating or supporting a positive working experience;
4. *Respect*: valuing the collaborative process and those involved;
5. *Success*: receiving approval to film the screenplay.

Screenwriters' descriptions are organized into themes that represent their predominant desires during team innovation work and the practices they employ to achieve those desires (see Table 2). For readers to learn some identifying characteristics about participants before reading their comments, Table 3 provides each participant's pseudonym, sex, age (which was approximated if unknown), and predominant screenplay project types.

Table 2

Coding Scheme: Predominant Desires of Study Participants during Team Innovation Work and the Practices They Employ to Achieve Those Desires

Desires	Practices
Security	Forge alliances Build reputation Work within business rules
Sanity	Practice depersonalization Find outlets
Harmony	Leverage alliances Communicate mindfully Navigate expertly
Respect	Seek integrity Be willing to walk away
Success	Focus on commercial aspects Build director partnerships Tip the momentum

Table 3

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Sex	Age*	Project Types
Alex	M	26	Broad, teen comedies
Brett	M	46	Family comedies
Dennis	M	41	Black family dramedy; quirky characters
Elliott	M	51	Dark, adult drama
Gordon	M	33	Commercial comedy, action-adventure
Jack	M	39	Blockbuster action-adventure, comic book adaptation franchises; strong female characters
Lilly	F	38	Blockbuster science-fiction, comic book adaptation franchises; historical drama; strong female characters
Murray	M	34	Broad comedy blockbusters for comic stars

* Age was approximated from other published sources, if unknown.

In the sections that follow, I will present examples of common practices used by participants during the development process that, taken together, make up the five

overall desires described in Table 2. First, I will present the results that pertain to a screenwriter's desire for career security: what they think, feel, say, and do to secure and/or sustain work as screenwriters.

Security

In Chapter 2, I mentioned two foundational elements of a screenwriter's business operation. First, a screenwriter needs a dedicated group of supporting service providers, such as an agent and attorney, who track and respond to buyers' interests on behalf of their clients. Second, a screenwriter must be able to respond to those interests quickly and with high quality stories. While these activities are very important to secure work, screenwriters achieve greater professional security in three other ways as well. First, screenwriters align themselves to the values, products, and/or people of the studios that hire them. Once identified as potential allies, executives affiliated with the studios are approached by screenwriters and their representatives to introduce the writers' work. The alliances built over time are the platform on which screenwriters are hired and retained to write. Second, one's reputation for working well with others becomes a form of currency that influences hiring decisions. Personality, affiliations with other industry members, past credits, genre expertise, and technical skills also affect reputation. Third, understanding the unwritten social rules of the film industry and finding ways to thrive within their invisible boundaries is paramount to working as a screenwriter. Specific examples of ways that participants described securing work are detailed in the following three sections, represented in Table 4.

Table 4

Practices Employed by Participants in Their Desire for Security

Desire	Practices
Security	Forge alliances
	Build reputation
	Work within business rules

Forge Alliances

A screenwriter must forge and maintain strong affiliations with a variety of people who have access to funding for screenplays, film production, and/or distribution. Building alliances in the film business involves the careful seeking out and selection of development executives, studio executives, other screenwriters, writers in other media, directors, and/or actors. Allies often share taste in material for movies; usually they share values about how to behave in creative and business processes as well.

When deciding with whom to align oneself, screenwriters will frequently seek out executives with similar taste in movies. For example, Brett said, "Over time, I learned to trust certain people and not others. There are different people who have an eye for all different kinds of projects and you need to know who those people are." Other screenwriters will try to locate executives who have a fundamental understanding of storytelling, as was evident in this comment from Jack:

> Eventually you find people in the development process who understand the core of the thing and are actually useful. . .because there are two kinds of development executives: those who really understand story and the other kind who work in the entertainment industry because they thought it would be fun.

Lilly spoke of rejecting a prestigious project because of the producer:

> You know [he's] a nightmare, everyone knows he's a nightmare and. . .a control freak. The only reason I'm successful? Because I avoid working with people

> that I know I will not get along with. It doesn't matter how good the project is. The project is not good if the people are bad.

Dennis chose to have a near-exclusive partnership with a producer, a constancy across projects he found comforting amidst many other moving variables:

> I've had great luck. . .For five years, I've just sort of closed out all of these other people and stuck with him and that has been a very happy association for me . . . .For the most part I think he has really good taste and really good instincts as well. I listen to him.

Elliott described two projects where weak alliances had a terminal effect.

> Everyone had signed off on it at that point and then the top guy changed his mind all of the sudden. I had never talked to him, but the other execs were well aware of what was going on. . . .Same thing on the previous script. . .the management had changed.

In summary, participants forged alliances by finding development executives with similar taste in movies and/or skill with story and by avoiding those who did not meet those criteria. In one case, a participant described his lack of alliances as a primary reason for project failure.

Build Reputation

The second subtheme in the Security category is about building one's reputation. Screenwriters and their representatives familiarize the creative community with their material and expertise in a genre, style, or script component, such as witty dialogue, strong female characters, or beautiful imagery. Participants spoke of how they are seen as professionals and how their reputation helps them secure work. Lilly spoke of her connection to the fans of iconic characters and classic stories that helped forge her reputation as a go-to writer for adaptations and particular genres:

> They needed somebody who thought that they knew what the movie would be, who had some connection to the fan-base. I have a very strong connection to the fan-base of the movies I write because I *am* the fan-base of movies that I write . . . .I like the movies that I am paid to write. I don't see them, as many people

do, as sort of necessary evils to make money.

In Dennis' case, his reputation as a quirky character writer did not help him sell his own highly touted screenplay, but earned him some rewrite work on more commercial projects. However, it was not until an executive asked the producer on that screenplay if he knew of any good scripts for a Black cast, and the producer called Dennis and asked him if he thought he could rewrite the script with a Black cast, which he did. The same script written for a White cast that buyers turned down for years was purchased immediately and Dennis, who is White, became the most sought after "Black" screenwriter in town. He described the unusual circumstances he found himself in as a result:

> If you sort of hang around long enough you tend to outlive executives. . .and so there's a whole new crop of executives that don't know you every five years and so [when the script he rewrote for an all-Black cast sold], of course everyone was reading it. . .Then I started getting bombarded with calls and [when I] walked in the door it was all over their face that they were expecting a Black writer. . . .Because [they had] a pile of Black projects on their desks that they were ready to talk to me about and now they didn't know how to proceed. . . . So I've functioned as a Black writer for quite some time now.

Murray's alliances with film industry heavyweights at the start of his projects caused an acceleration of the development process that very few screenwriters enjoy. Because these projects subsequently earned hundreds of millions of dollars at the box office, Murray felt more self-confident about expressing his opinions and disagreements with fellow collaborators:

> They pay me for my opinion, and I think that's frustrating to them. I do fight notes if I feel like they're not well thought-out or wrong, you know. I say, I don't think that's good. Not many writers do, and that's partly a status thing. I have a higher status in the comedy world, I get paid more, and I'm probably able to get away with that more.

Jack, who has many produced television and film credits, did not think his successful reputation affected the inherent power imbalance between the screenwriter and fellow collaborators:

> When I was kind of top of the world with [a TV show] thinking, Well, things are different now, I've got a name and people know me and they respect me, [but] in the movie industry. . . .the writer is the part of the totem pole that is in the ground to keep the totem pole from falling down and that is the very basic truth, it doesn't matter who you are.

The phase closest to production, when a screenwriter works with the director, is a more exclusive process usually enjoyed by a limited number of working screenwriters. Lilly was frequently selected for this coveted partnership, which she attributed in part to her ability to allow their creative needs to supersede her own:

> I've had a very—so far—good run in part because I'm very good at subsuming my personality to that of the very strong directors and delivering things that make them happy. . . .It's a combination of that and having an understanding of physical production, which a lot of executives don't.

In summary, participants cited different reputation sources as helping them secure and/or sustain work as screenwriters, though they all believed their power to be limited.

Work within Business Rules

The third subtheme in the Security category is about working within the rules of the film business. Learning the unwritten rules of the game—how to navigate them socially and how to survive them emotionally—is a significant task for a screenwriter to secure and maintain regular work. The interviewees described various experiences in which they showed their ability to accept and thrive amidst the vicissitudes of the film industry so that they could maintain a degree of security in their profession.

On average, for every 23 scripts a studio has in its development pipeline, only one of those scripts is made into a film (Ferguson, 2009). Screenwriters' acute awareness of these odds causes them to adopt practices that have an almost superstitious air. For example, Alex's sharp focus on the aspect of development that he felt he could control, as opposed to the aspects that he could not, was notable:

> Having an executive note exactly what they want is important. . .because I know that if they tell me exactly what they want that I can deliver what they are asking me for even if the movie doesn't get made, because that is out of my hands. Second, I can write the best script in the world and if it's not what they want the project won't move forward. . . .It's like sculpting a woman and [your script] may be the most beautiful sculpture of woman you've ever seen, but then you find out when you start developing the project that what they really wanted was a tractor.

Alex adhered to the personal rule of writing as closely to the executives' requests as possible. However, Murray found that executives often have not put enough effort into preparing for creative meetings to make well-informed requests. Thus, in lieu of clear direction, Murray subscribed to a rule about making collaborators feel heard:

> All you want to come out of a development meeting knowing is: How can I give them what they want, how can I get this to a level that makes a difference for them? And then there's a sub-question, Do I want to? [But] you don't even come out of it knowing what you need to do to solve this problem and that can be really frustrating.

To keep the work flowing on a project in spite of creative roadblocks, Lilly described resorting to subversive tactics to achieve a positive outcome:

> When you get a lot of bad ideas and you don't agree with them sometimes you just execute them and try to make them as good as they can be within the context of being dreadful ideas. . . .In the second draft [of a particular project], . . .I tried to make all of their bad choices read as well as I could and they loved it. . .so it was wonderful [laugh].

When writers are able to discover the essence of what their partners are asking of them, they consider it a triumph. Gordon focused on achieving the ideal, a "win-win" situation, in which those who hired him to write are pleased with changes that also make the script better:

> What's always satisfying is to make. . .the people who are paying you money . . .happy with what you've done. . .make them feel that you've listened to them . . .and at the same time to yourself feel like the script has gotten better, that's always a great combination, and I find that it happens a lot.

Although, even when the writer is delivering on the requests of his or her teammates, Murray noted that pressures to continually change and perfect the script can be disheartening:

> I don't think writers should be free, that every movie should be a quirky personal vision. . .but from my own perspective, I'm already delivering them an appropriate product. So I resent that they treat me the same way as everyone who hands in something that's not good or disorganized. . . .[as]if there weren't development executives, writers would write crazy, crazy [expletive] that couldn't be filmed.

Of all participants, Jack described most vividly his almost-daily vacillation between holding on to his ideal and emphasizing how to make a profitable movie for his employers. Jack described himself as a willing yet often rejected business partner:

> I want to make money for my partners. They must make money and they must be respected and I must give them something that by all reasons should be able to turn a profit. But many times I've seen them turn their back on me, and they don't make a profit anyway, but the degree to which quality and marketability can be the same thing is something that gets ignored and that always gives me the big rage.

All participants noted barriers to receiving the direct feedback that they desire. Several participants described fellow collaborators, specifically development executives, as "gatekeepers" rather than contributors. Jack felt that development could and should be useful, but was not as effective as it could be:

> There's a reason they call it development hell. It can be just completely maddening. And every now and then you work with an executive who really takes it to the next level, asks the right questions, examines the work, and makes it better. Because not every screenplay idea comes in fully formed and not everybody can see it through. [Screenwriters] do need help.

Yet, several participants cautioned against closing oneself off to the ideas of others, in spite of the flaws in the process. Jack said,

> It's always about. . .choosing your battles. . . .It's up to the artist to know the difference between autonomy and megalomania, the difference between freedom and a kind of moral laziness and it is very, very hard [but]. . .ultimately the work is up to the artist.

Murray went on to describe another set of issues to navigate when collaborating with "the talent," such as an actor or director, in which collaboration is further strained by the ego of and power imbalance between them and the writer:

> There is a massive power imbalance. I like that to be on the table. . .I don't like sort of pretending, I would rather him say, You know what? This is my movie, and on this issue I am overruling you. I would walk out of that with no feelings hurt. I don't like it when it's clouded.

Participants described the patience and fluidity with which they must react to the fluctuating pace of the process. Some described being pushed to deliver a project faster than they felt they could, only to be disregarded once they did deliver. Meetings to discuss a writer's latest draft may be delayed for weeks, or a writer may be called urgently and hired for an inflated sum of money to write for 2 nonstop weeks to change one aspect of the script that might get it closer to production. For example, when I asked Murray what his wishes were for the development process, if it could be improved, he said,

> Quicker decisions, [which] is just going to add up to less development. . . .You know after a draft or two, especially with one writer, whether you're going to make this. They spend the same amount of effort developing scripts that are

> clearly dead to everyone as they do films that have a good idea behind them, that have something going for them.

In some cases, participants described being pushed to write very quickly to meet a studio's decision to "fast track" a movie. The pressures associated with these projects they described as being intense and challenging, but exciting. Several participants spoke of the highly technical nature of screenwriting: the form of the script, the length of the film, the age suitability ratings and their link to certain audiences, the archetypal rules of certain stock plots that audiences enjoy experiencing, and budget constraints. For example, Dennis described an animated film that he was brought in to rewrite after some of the animation had already been completed:

> The characters had already been built [via computer-generated imagery]. When I walked in on the first day, the characters were up on the bulletin board and those were the characters we were writing for, you couldn't change them, they were already millions of dollars into it. . . .So little by little we hacked away on this thing. It was like constructing something like Frankenstein's monster out of the dead pieces of another screenplay.

Murray described that it can be enjoyable to have production-related constraints, because they can present a puzzle to be solved:

> I had this weird experience of being involved in. . .every casting and budget meeting 'cause [my writing partner] was also producer and we wrote to a budget, like, We can't get that set, but we can get a boat. What funny thing can we do with a boat? which I like more than abstract story meetings or notes meetings. I love those puzzle pieces of, We can do this, we can't do that, when it's moving towards production.

Participants complained about being treated poorly by their collaborators, complaints which seem to stem from the commoditization of their screenplays—and the relegation of the screenwriter's creativity as secondary—after they enter the development process. Yet, several of them were quick to concede that screenwriting is

a highly technical craft that does not deserve nor require the same creative freedoms demanded by writing novels or poems. Murray said,

> [Screenwriting] is about reaching an audience and making money . . . .Writing screenplays is pretty hideous, they're not fun to read, to me they're certainly not text in and of themselves. They really don't exist [until] you start building sets and having actors, then you have something.

Dennis, who is known for writing unique and human characters, spoke of the necessity to separate his personal writing process from his professional persona during the development process:

> I have a mindset about my job. . .a personal mindset and a professional mindset, [which] is much more service oriented than it used to be, because a lot of what I do is craft. I think screenwriting is very, very technical. . .[and] as a storytelling medium it's actually quite limited. I try to be in service of the idea for the movie.

As was evident in earlier quotes, Gordon's focus in the development process was to continually listen to collaborators, make them feel heard, and then do his best to translate their requests into changes to the script that will genuinely make it better than it was before. When asked to what degree he felt the betterment of the script accounted for its approval or greenlight for production, Gordon explained,

> The screenwriter has certain amount of ego, and you gotta check it at the door because. . .in an ideal world, the development process, the script would be the most important thing, always. . . .[But] you have to sit back and say, Their job is to make money. And the truth of the matter is that a lot of the movies they are making that are making a lot of money are not very good. . . .Whether a tremendous script would make more money is very debatable, so you kind of have to know you're in business.

In the community of screenwriters, a common debate is whether it is ethical to pursue opportunities to rewrite other writers' scripts. Jack felt that although the studio may resort to replacing writers too often, the strengths of different writers at different stages of the process could complement one another:

> I've done a lot of rewrites, and a lot of writers would say there should be no rewrites, there shouldn't be another writer put on a movie. . . .I would cut down on the number of writers, but I do not think the first writer on a script is sacred. And I read enough really mediocre scripts to know that we're not always the guy with the answer.

Ethics aside, participants surfaced one of the more interesting viewpoints on a career in screenwriting I have encountered, and that is accepting the near-legendary denigration of screenwriters as an opportunity for more writers to work. For example, Lilly suggested when financiers replace writers on troubled projects, there are benefits:

> If it weren't for development, far fewer writers would be writing, far fewer executives would be doing anything because there would be far fewer scripts to be making meaningless notes over. . . .I'm not one of these writers that says I never rewrite anyone else, I think that's silly. If you don't rewrite anyone else, then a lot of us are just not going to be working. I've worked on several projects that have had in excess of ten writers, and I've been in the beginning, I've been in the end, I've been in the middle. It really is just a paycheck at that point. You do the best you can to contribute to it, then you move on when you're done.

When asked if the development process was designed to achieve its desired outcomes, Lilly did not think the process was designed to develop the best movie. She again referenced development as a means to provide more jobs:

> You could say [the development process is] designed to create good scripts that can be made into movies, but that's not accurate, that's not what it's designed to do at all. You could also say it's designed to… [pause]…allow for the maximum, again best-case scenario, the maximum amount of experience to be brought to creating something. So, you know, two is better than one, so eight heads must be eight times better, [but] the reality of the development process . . .by and large, it's a jobs program. . . .Development is a monumental waste of time.

In rare circumstances, a buyer will buy a screenplay with the intention of taking it off the market because of its similarity to a script the buyer is already actively developing. This scenario can be devastating for a writer whose screenplay will likely

never be filmed. When this happened to Brett, he adopted a more business-like stance on the issue:

> I have found out later for a fact that they bought this thing for other kinds of reasons such as a studio developing a similar idea even when my script is great—it happens all the time. They cherry pick it from you. We are highly paid and this can be expected.

Gordon also spoke of the high pay for screenwriting as consolation for the emotional upset that can come from the buyers choosing to work with another writer. He said,

> There are a lot of bad writers out there [with] a great idea, so [their script] gets bought. And then these people get upset when they get rewritten. . .But you know, you just got paid two hundred thousand dollars for a bad script. . . .If you want to do something that no one else is going to touch, write a novel.

This section described how writers work with the business rules to secure and sustain screenwriting work. The quotations provided a sense of the attitude and behaviors writers adopted in order to maintain a practical viewpoint in spite of some unproductive and yet pervasive and accepted business practices. Several participants described achieving this by keeping separate their personal feelings and professional expectations. For example, personally, they found the business challenging because of the slow pace and lack of responsiveness coupled with the micromanagement by unqualified and/or ill-prepared executives working with them. Professionally, they seemed to accept many of the issues because first, screenwriters are well paid. Second, financiers changing their minds about the script allows for more writers to work than otherwise would. Third, the decision to move forward with production is based on many variables, of which the quality of the screenplay is only one.

In the prior subsections, participants' comments fell into three overarching practices designed to keep the flow of paid work steady. First, participants described how they forge alliances to help arm them against the inherent instability of the career. Second, participants confirmed the importance of maintaining awareness of and actively managing one's reputation. Lastly, to work with the momentum of the myriad unwritten rules of how business is done, most try to separate their personal feelings and professional expectations.

Sanity

Screenwriters described the many methods they use to feel good about themselves as people and as screenwriters, about the work of professional screenwriting and their career choice, and about those with whom they work creatively. More specifically, their descriptions of what they think, feel, say, and do to maintain mental and emotional stability were particularly rich. Participants' descriptions of what they do to maintain sanity are detailed in two sections below, starting with screenwriters' practice of depersonalization and finishing with the mental and physical outlets they find to cope with the process (see Table 5).

Table 5

Practices Employed by Participants in Their Desire for Sanity

Desire	Practices
Sanity	Practice depersonalization Find outlets

Practice Depersonalization

Participants described developing a screenplay with others as a completely separate process from that of writing the screenplay. They felt development calls for a different skillset and mentality altogether. They practiced "depersonalization" when involved in the collaborative process to decrease attachment to their creation. Some participants felt this emotional distancing was a necessary strength and required for an artist to be part of a commercial enterprise. Many felt it was a mental shift to protect themselves from the anger and disappointment that can occur when their work is rejected. They also used distance when others on the innovation team did not appear to have the best interest of the story at heart or did not have the skills or make the time to contribute effectively. Others felt that depersonalization, when it involved suppressing emotion or opinions, was a detriment to themselves and their scripts.

Brett described how his career outlook has changed for the better as a result of shifting his thinking:

> In the old days, I used to really cling to it and say it's great the way it is, you are the master of the page, it's perfect, but I've gotten a lot better. Now I focus on the experience of writing it. Now, once I write it and I enter the development process, I consider it a clean slate and anything goes. It's an obstacle course . . .to get something made, so it really isn't about me, it's about the project and the process. Development is a different skill [than writing] and I am having a lot more fun with it than I used to.

Alex adopted a similar attitude, changing his view of his scripts once the buyer purchases them:

> I am not married to my script once it enters the development process. My interest is in getting it made, in moving the project forward as best as possible. The kind of experience I want to have has to do with executing well in the collaboration, on what the executive is saying they want. . . .I can follow what they want me to do if they can express to me what it is they want.

Two participants in this study, Gordon and Alex, write in partnership with another writer. While Gordon rarely mentioned his partnership, Alex spoke of his partner as a supporter who further helped him depersonalize the development process:

> Once we sell it, we had to disconnect ourselves after that last read, after that moment that we think it's brilliant and that we have finally hit our mark. . . .We have the great ability to play off of each other and take care of each other and disconnect ourselves emotionally to the best of our ability after the script is sold.

Gordon's comments were consistent throughout the interview, in that he responded to questions about his personal desires with affirmations of the benefits of open collaboration in which all participants had a responsibility to be objective in making the script better:

> What other people bring is. . .an outsider's view. . .They've read the script for the first time and I've just spent the last three months with it, and often they see things that you don't. . . .I think it's good to have people there not as connected with the script involved with people that are very connected to it.

I subsequently asked Gordon how he reconciled differences with the studio, and he responded,

> [When you] realize what percentage of movies get made, [what I want versus what the studio wants is] something you can't really consider on a daily basis. You have to have this insane hope in your project or at least the potential for it to be made, [but] at the end of the day, they're the bosses. So if they say, I don't care what you think, I want you to do this. I mean, I guess you have two choices. One is to stop writing the script, the other is to do it. I mean, *I* would do it.

Dennis mirrored Gordon's depersonalization of the process when I asked him what was most important to him in the process. He described his difficulty in expressing his interests with potential employers:

> Because there's an inherent powerlessness that most writers feel going into the situation, for me to say what's most important to me, I mean I can tell you my wish-list of things that are important to me. . . .[Doing what I want] has so little

> to do with what I'm actually doing, it feels like, What do you want for Christmas this year? [laugh]

Dennis also confessed that he avoided the trade publications in order to maintain emotional control:

> On a personal level, I found [the trades] depressing. . .my friend says they should call the Hollywood Reporter or Variety. . ."People Who are Doing Better than Me." Because emotionally that's where it always puts me, because there's a huge party going on that I'm not invited to.

Jack refused to depersonalize the ups and downs of screenwriting, and embraced his strong emotions as creative fuel. He described a particularly negative experience of developing a script into "nothingness":

> When a particularly scumbaggery actor was just driving me completely insane . . .I was so angry, and somebody said to me, I was pretty young at the time . . .somebody said, . .Can you just [expletive] let go? Can you just be a grown up, can't you just get over it? And I was like, No, you can never get over it, 'cause you can't sit down at a desk and go, ah, here's something they can ruin! . . . .The naïveté and the outrage come together.

Murray's background as a comedy sketch joke writer prepared him to approach screenwriting technically. Throughout the interview, Murray wholly depersonalized the development process and emphasized what was best for the movie. Granted, he attributed his confidence that others may not have to the financial success of his films early in his career:

> It's being somewhat egotistical, but I have a lot of confidence in my own opinions, that probably helps. Getting started working on movies that were getting made, no development, and that were huge hits, in my mind makes me think I know more than I do. . . .None of these people [on the development team] have developed two $200 million comedies. So in some sense, well, my opinion should be the most valuable opinion in this room, depending on the room.

In summary, all but one participant described depersonalization as a means to maintain sanity during the development process. Several described shifting into a

different mindset to keep their emotions in check when collaborating. Others felt that only speaking out could help them stay saner. Next, we will look at the second subtheme in the Sanity category, the outlets participants found to comfort themselves to combat the inherent anxiety of knowing that even one's best efforts may not result in ultimate success.

Find Outlets

Screenplays are designed to be filmed; other than as a calling card for the writer's abilities, scripts have little life on their own if they do not result in a movie. Therefore, to combat the inherent anxiety of knowing that even one's best efforts may not result in ultimate success, screenwriters devise ways to comfort themselves so that they can maintain the basic confidence to continue working in the field. For example, participants wrote in other media forms where a writer has more control. Lilly spoke of returning to writing novels after she reached a certain level of screenwriting income. Brett spoke of how he used the time writing in another medium to reinvigorate himself for his career in screenwriting:

> I think I've been able to make this change because I took a year off and wrote other things, wrote for the Internet, wrote a column. . . .I was just trying to make a sale. . . .I feel so much better about the whole thing now, having taken the time off to find how to separate myself emotionally from the process in order to survive, to take a more business stance in the development process. I save my creative self for my individual process.

Early in their careers, screenwriters will sometimes join a writers group in which they can give and receive feedback and support on their colleagues work and career; some of these groups survive well into members' thriving careers. Along these lines, Brett spoke of working with other screenwriters to help him decipher, in a safe and supportive environment, what the innovation team—the development team—has asked

him to address during the rewrite process:

> I've had so many great experiences with scripts involving gurus, most of whom are fellow screenwriters who are semi-retired and who are now friends, . .someone who helps me figure out what "slow" means [in a script note from the team]—what do they mean by *slow*?

Several participants mentioned that to maintain sanity they focus on the luxuries of time or of financial security the work allows them, and for which they are deeply grateful. Several alluded to the idea that prostration to their employers and feelings of defeat during the innovation process was a fair exchange for their typically high pay. Elliott said,

> They hired you for a reason, to bring your best stuff to the table, so whether you're right or not, be open, and react honestly. You must get a check and that always keeps me present while being honest. I better write a scene the way they want it and meet yourself there, find a way to make it their idea when it is your idea and vice versa.

After listening to descriptions of several of Lilly's particularly trying experiences, I asked her how she really feels about her work given its emotional challenges, and she spoke of the gifts she receives in return:

> It's the job. How I really feel is that, honestly, is that I have two really wonderful children and I'm home all day every day and they see me and they do not experience me as gone. . . .And I have a husband who actually loves me and I actually love. . . .Everything that we have. . .I made, I paid for, I did myself. So I feel like the wages of the job are a certain level of extreme frustration. If you can't take it, it's a real bad job for you.

Several participants spoke of a potentially positive aspect or two of the process that they could keep in mind when starting on a project. Jack said,

> I'm incredibly naïve, and I enter everything going, This will go great, which you have to do a little bit. . .If you go in talking about what it might really be like, you won't ever develop anything.

Two participants spoke at some length about their own self-expression and personal growth as ways to channel their angst productively. Dennis learned to translate the anxiety of not knowing how he will approach each new project into a thrilling adventure:

> One of the reasons that I like writing and I continue to like writing is that I don't fully understand it. And there's still an element of mysticism to it to me. Because, really quite honestly, where do these ideas come from? . . .I literally enter into every project knowing nothing, which is a scary thing because I'm a paid professional. The only thing I know is that something will occur to me… that's a big jump.

Jack also considers his writing a growth opportunity, a way to channel his demons:

> I have enormous reservoirs of rage, I don't know a writer who doesn't. And that's not just from the [development] process, that's from whatever it was that made them become somebody who wanted to stay in a room by themselves for most of their lives, who wanted to live in worlds that don't exist, who wanted to work out their problems for mass audiences. You know, a writer comes to the table of pain. Scratch a writer and you'll find pain. . . .This is something one really has to not bundle up, but express elsewhere.

At times when the process was too painful, Dennis turned to his spirituality and prayed for guidance:

> I have kind of a spiritual base, and my prayer to God was, I always thought I was supposed to do this, to be a creative person, that I was supposed to make my living doing this, but if I'm wrong about this, no problem. . . .Suddenly everything was just so easy.

Whether through seeking spiritual guidance, channeling of one's rage, or a sharp focus on what is within one's control or the spoils of a successful career, all of the participants described in detail what they do outside of writing to maintain mental and emotional health during the development process.

To summarize, the intensity and number of participants' comments around how they emotionally stabilize themselves is strong evidence that the imperative to collaborate required some degree of emotional coping to achieve. In the next section, I will explore participants' desire to achieve harmony with others during the development process, and the practices they utilized to manifest it.

Harmony

Beyond a basic level of sanity during development, screenwriters and other innovation team members alike wish for harmonious collaboration that builds a positive work experience. Only a successful move forward by the whole innovation team moves the project closer to production. As has already been mentioned, the writer can be terminated at any point as long as there are funds to hire another, so maintaining harmony with others on the team is vital to staying on the project. Participants described three ways they maintain harmony in their work, which will be discussed in the sections that follow: how they leverage their alliances to keep things running smoothly, how mindfully they communicate with the team, and how they expertly navigate others' sensitivities and roadblocks to progress (see Table 6).

Table 6

Practices Employed by Participants in Their Desire for Harmony

Desire	Practices
Harmony	Leverage alliances
	Communicate mindfully
	Navigate expertly

Leverage Alliances

A screenwriter must build strong relationships with a variety of people who have direct access to funding for screenplays, film production, and/or distribution. Forging these alliances is one of the cornerstones on which a film career is built. In this section, we will explore how screenwriters leverage these people to achieve a harmonious development process.

Some screenwriters will partner with producers who they trust as having similar taste in stories and initiate a project together as a team. Lilly described how she brought in a producing team to mitigate the weakness of one studio's executive team:

> I brought extra people into the development process because. . . .I needed someone to protect me in the process and I could count on them to make the right creative decisions. Even if I disagree with them, I can still count on them to make good choices.

Elliott felt that ideally a writer would have one senior person on the team who has ultimate authority to approve or reject changes to the script, but that development is designed for everyone on the team to have a voice. Unfortunately, Elliott felt that very few of them contribute to the script improving:

> The development process is not trustworthy, and a very small number of producers can provide protection, [but there are] too many cooks in the kitchen. They all have ideas, they all want ownership, they all have agendas, and need to justify their jobs, so they need to open their mouths whether they have something important to say or not.

A practice that would be considered controversial by the hiring studio—and one that may be pervasive—is utilizing the development skills of friends who are executives at competing studios. Lilly described a pair of friends who make themselves available to her when her own project team members are not available or not desirable partners:

> You know, right now, I'm writing [a movie for a studio] and the pages went to [my development executive friends at other studios, who] are both competitors of the studio doing their best to make the other studio's product better. Because they understand the flaw in the system, which is that if you're going to [hire development executives] to interact and collaborate, [then] *interact and collaborate*, not when you feel like it, not when it's convenient, but when the writer needs it, because that's what your job is.

If a writer is suited to working with a partner on an ongoing basis, there are many ways they can benefit each other. They can share the writing responsibilities, leveraging each other's strengths and interests. They can also better manage the face-to-face collaboration as a unified "tag team" to juggle comments coming from sometimes three or more additional collaborators. When I asked with whom or what entity Alex identified with most in the development process, he responded immediately:

> My partner, because it is our livelihoods that are connected to each other. We are almost like one mind at this point, and I have to have his back and he has to have my back no matter what else happens. I have to preserve the importance of that relationship over all else.

Jack's spouse was his partner for feedback on his writing and for advice:

> [My wife is] not a writer, but she understands movies better than any executive I've ever met. . . .She always says, Just be careful. Always remember that while your ideas may be great and I have ultimate faith in your talent. . .never get to the point where you're not going to listen. You don't have to agree, but listen. If you ever get to the point where you're not listening, I'll know.

Murray felt an interested actor was imperative for his development projects to result in success:

> I look at my job in today's Hollywood. . .I have to write a script. . .to make development people happy enough. . .that they get it out to talent and try to get . . .a comedian to do it, 'cause that's when the process really starts. That's how I survive.

A common vision for the finished film often bonds innovation team members together. This vision also helps bring focus to the team when a wide array of ideas

threatens to pull the story off track. Gordon described finding those on the team with whom he shared a common vision so together they could fight for what they felt was in the best interest of the movie:

> [I will] form these bonds. . .an ally with the studio, with the production executive, the producers. It's like a rivalry in a way against whomever wants us to do things that we don't want to do. . .[I want to] make sure that those good ideas come out. . . .At the end of the day, I probably trust myself more than anybody else. . .so it's a matter of finding that dynamic that allows that to happen.

In summary, the comments in this section reflected how participants leveraged alliances to help create a more harmonious environment in which to develop a screenplay.

Communicate Mindfully

Participants described the nuanced ways in which they communicated with other innovation team members to maintain harmony during development. Several participants described preparing presentations of weaker script elements and preliminary ideas on how they might be addressed or what the ideal end goal would be in advance of meetings. This practice helps guide unprepared development executives and the conversation productively from the beginning. For example, Brett explained how he has incorporated this practice to improve his communication skills:

> I've learned to communicate much better than I did. It used to be like trying to speak another language to people who didn't speak it, saying it louder as if they will understand better [laugh]. The most important part of the job to me once I get in there is. . .to re-explain how I got there. [Then] I listen to them to hear how it can be better.

Alex also came into the process with ideas on how the script could be improved, but said his writing partner thought this tactic could backfire:

> My greatest strength is also probably my greatest weakness, which is my ability to look objectively at my own work. . . .Even if they've just bought the script I will speak about things that I would like to change or make better. . . .My partner is often angry with me for doing this.

Murray used his own notes as a defense tactic to guide the conversation in a direction he wanted it to, but felt disappointed that he should have to.

> I usually have a much higher standard for what's funny than development people do and for the most part, when I go into a notes meeting, I have more notes than they do. I know the flaws of what I've done and. . .how I've covered up the cracks in the plaster. And I usually come out of it going, Wow, they didn't notice.

Elliott described having to extract ideas from others on the team, who are more prone to presenting what they do *not* want to see in the script than suggesting ideas or outcomes for how they would like the script to evolve:

> Knowing what they want is hard, because they don't know what they want and/or how to tell you, and you have to pull it out of them, like a director pulls it out of an actor. Good ones know what they want and know how to tell you. . .[Most] know very firmly what they *don't* want.

Murray went further to say that the price of admission for innovation team members should be the ability to come up with good ideas, not just present problems:

> There could be a world, it seems, where they ask you, What do you think is strong? What do you think is weak? You give your answers and they say, We like that, that works fine, but we did have a problem here. . .let's all come up with some ideas or something about how to fix the issues. . . I think anybody who complains about something needs has to have an idea. [But] when they pay me, I don't think they need to tell me [how to write the idea].

Sometimes participants felt that silence and active listening could send a positive message of respect and willingness to collaborate. Gordon said,

> I like them to feel like I'm engaged in the discussion and not just kind of sitting there taking notes. I don't know if that will all the time garner you the most respect, but I do sit there sometimes and think, Should I disagree with this? I just disagreed with two other things.

Other times, silence will help the writer orient himself to the personalities he can expect to encounter and assess who will demand the dominant position on the project, as in Dennis' comment:

> It's nerve-wracking to go in. If it's a situation where I know no one. . .I tend to be sort of quiet while I try to assess the powers that be, because you don't have much power as a writer. . . .It's such a strange job. I sometimes believe that I'm surrounded by people who think they could do my job if they just had the time.

Development executives on the team have a common language they use to soften the impact of their verbal and written criticism. Murray, especially given his particularly technical and commercial approach to writing already described, finds this passive aggressive and ineffective:

> A lot of times [executives] won't want to tell you to cut this or that 'cause they probably think you'll dig in your heels. [Or they suggest changes in a way that try to] make you feel like it's your idea, which is really condescending. We're all grown-ups. . . .I'm always in favor of them saying, Look, at the end of the day, we're writing the check, that's what we want. But they won't.

Murray noticed, as did other participants, that other team members did not always communicate mindfully:

> Imagine the idea that you ask them to spend one entire work day reading your script, really work on their notes, read it three or four times, just for one work day. . . .They could never do it. They read it with three or four scripts the night before and a junior executive prepares them an outline. Getting notes out of that context is offensive.

Along similar lines, Murray felt the clarity of the message and overall strategy emerging from the studio and production executives on the team was often cloudy. So perhaps as important as open communication is accurate information to guide the process:

> No, no they never [talk about the strategy]. . . .They just know that their boss is not making an offer to someone for this film. . .And they're never going to say to their boss, You know, I think the screenplay is in good shape for where it is,

> and until we decide on an actor we probably shouldn't do anything with it because it's pretty good where it is. But they're not, because that makes them look stupid. They're going to say to their boss, Aha, here's what we're going to do to the script to fix it.

Unlike some of the other participants, Jack believes in open communication, even if it is perceived as defiance. He firmly described himself as an advocate for making commercial films that are "short enough for people to sit through and interesting enough for them to want to see," and thus the studio should trust his opinions to be in their best interest, which is to sell movie tickets:

> You have to be completely pig-headed about your work at all times. At the same time, you have to be completely open and you have to know what the difference is, 'cause there are a lot of great artists that became so pig-headed that nobody can say anything to them and they're making crap.

Lilly revealed vivid indictments of development executives' skill and, like Murray mentioned, their ability to dedicate appropriate time to development. This lack of time has reverberating effects on how well the team members are capable of communicating.

> Very few executives want to do what you should have to do in order to develop . . .you need to be available to the writers 24/7, you need to be able to read pages, you need to be able to read them without talking to your boss about them, you need to be able to be on the phone at 2am when someone's stuck. . . .If you want out of the writer a level of professional commitment, [a writer] that comes up with the best possible work that they can give you, then you have to give it back, and giving it back involves being available.

Lilly had a unique perspective on team communication I had not heard from others: she yearned for a process in which writers could work together on a project, even following the severance of one and the hiring of another.

> In a perfect world? Allow writers where they are interested and able to treat each other with dignity to maintain a relationship with the project after they're off it. . . .There's a lot of, kind of reworking and redoing, and time could be

> saved, and heartache as well, if [writers] could continue a relationship with the material.

In summary, participants described various forms of mindful communication as a means to achieve harmony in the development process through *balance*: when to speak up and when to stay silent. Although there were variations in how each writer struck this balance, their common goal was to protect the script, relationships with teammates, and what one feels is personally right for oneself and one's career track. They achieved this through staying open to good ideas while also suggesting proposed changes to their scripts as a proactive measure. Some encouraged active, open communication and direct requests from their teammates, rather than weakly presented criticism.

Participants wished for more time and attention from their teammates to contribute more fully and accurately to the process. They suggested better lines of communication with the wider team responsible for the film, including upper management at the studio and even perhaps other writers who have contributed to prior drafts of the scripts.

Navigate Expertly

Whether the goal is to keep the peace among team members, move the script through the process and closer to a potential greenlight, or circumvent issues that could stall the project altogether, screenwriters must pilot the emotional and political waters of their projects with facility. Participants described tactics to move the development process past barriers involving differences of opinion as well as the lack of time, energy, and expertise among innovation team members.

Lilly prepared artful criticisms of her work before turning it in to others to disarm them and focus their thinking in an effort to keep the process moving forward:

> I give my own notes every time I turn a script. . .as a preventative prophylactic measure because the vast number of executives don't know what to think, but they have to think something. . . .so you don't give them a lot of room to come up with dumb ideas.

In one case, Lilly devised a scheme with her producing partner to divert a studio executive's suggested changes to a script:

> So the executive calls [and requests a really major script change]. But you can't say to somebody like [this executive], You're a moron. . .It will not get you what you want. What you want is to *not* have to do this really dumb note. . . .So I [planned with my producers that I would] tell him that we decided not to do it, using [my producer's] name. . . .People back off of that. [The executive's] pleased because we've acknowledged his note and at the same time we've managed to, in concert, get rid of or divert an incredibly destructive idea.

Lilly went on to speak of her reasons for the maneuvering: a lack of technical skills and maturity in studio executives.

> It's a terminal weakness of the system that people don't know what they don't know. I have had notes from executives who are borderline illiterate, [who] can't make a subject and verb agree on a piece of paper.

Lilly described navigating innovation team members' motivations and personal issues during the development process. She felt that skill in developing stories required objectivity, some separation of one's own needs from those of the project:

> There is a psychology of what you do in a room and you have to be aware of your own and everyone else's. . . .There's an untangling to be done with what's happening with them, what's good for the script and what they do to try to make themselves feel good.

Several participants referenced creative meetings with collaborators as deciphering code: assessing what it is they want even if they have difficulty expressing

it clearly. Unlike Lilly's sense that few have the necessary skill to develop stories, Gordon gave his collaborators the benefit of the doubt:

> You find that even very smart executives may not have the facility for coming up with the right idea or knowing exactly what they want. . . .Your job as a writer in that situation is to interpret what they're saying, why they're responding this way. . . .You figure out a way to make it work and give them what they're asking for *and* keep the script strong and moving in a direction you think it should be moving.

Murray explained further:

> If there's a problem with script, it just may not be related to what they're saying, but you have to figure out *why* they're saying it. . . .I don't need to hear any more from development executives than, I don't care about this [character] enough or I don't like him enough.

Because of the demands on the writer to spend a significant amount of time and energy assessing the underlying needs of fellow collaborators, Murray described successful writers who have chosen to take a different tack:

> I know [a lot of writers who say] I'm going to get a ton of notes on a draft so they don't do any self-rewriting. As soon as they have any kind of draft they just turn it in. . .which I kind of hate, and then I really discover that they're right. . .If you turn in a first draft at 80% of where it needs to be, you'll get the same number of notes as somebody who turns it in at 50%. And it's worse because you're emotionally invested, because you know you made it better and it's still no closer.

Gordon found the flexibility in the many possible writing choices soothing:

> You make hundreds and hundreds and maybe thousands of choices with every script. And sometimes those are choices that will dramatically make the script better or worse, but a lot of times they're choices that you could probably go either way on and the script would be different but perhaps just as good. . . .If you don't see eye to eye with someone else. . . .there are a lot of lateral moves [that] don't hurt a script, if you can implement them effectively.

Brett described a script as a building, and that some requests would require them to "tear out the entire 13th floor." He expressed reluctance to tell executives that the whole script can become disassembled—the metaphorical building would fall down—and that it is a "very fine line" to walk when trying to be accommodating. Murray

made it a standard practice to verbalize the story impacts that some choices could cause:

> In every script and every creative endeavor there are no right or wrong answers, you sacrifice something for getting something. . . .Development executives hate making those choices. They ping pong back and forth. . . .[I] take them down the road of the compromises I have to make.

Gordon's Zen-like approach to navigating requests and making choices for the story mimics the other practices he described throughout his interview. He knew that not all requests can be honored and that a concerted effort to include some of them is usually acceptable:

> I find that if people give ten notes and you address six of them—as long as it was one of those four that you haven't addressed and they're insistent on, crazy about—then they won't care.

Dennis' acceptance that he function as a "Black writer," although he is White, bears repeating in this segment. He decided to accept the work people wanted to offer him, although he did not personally intend for there to be racial distinctions in his characters. It was a good example of expert navigation:

> It was a moment of decision, because I have had a couple of things that I was prepared to pitch, but I began to realize. . .that people couldn't make the [mental] shift [that I wasn't Black when] I came to the door. . . .And so I began to pitch Black projects and I sold two Black movies in a row.

In Jack's case, the emotions beneath his tactics may have been strong, but like other participants, he emphasized balance in one's responses to others so as to keep relationships intact and the process running smoothly:

> Know what is essential, what it is about the story that makes it the story so you know what can change even if it's not for a good reason, but will accommodate the people you're working with and not hurt the screenplay. . . .If you fight hard for something that you love, but isn't actually the essence of the piece, they'll come after you for the essence of the piece and you will have already fought them so hard that you will have already wasted you energy.

Whether as a willing listener or artful defender, all participants described ways in which they navigated the development process to maintain forward movement on their projects. Each participant's methods for sidestepping landmines or fighting head-on fell along a scale of extremely passionate to manipulative to calm and optimistic.

To summarize the findings around participants' practices to promote harmony, three major themes emerged: how they leveraged the alliances they built for group work, the ways in which they communicated mindfully with teammates, and methods for expertly navigating the process. The goal was to maintain good working relationships with teammates and make steady forward progress. All three themes featured descriptions of how participants balanced what they said and chose not to say in meetings, and subsequently what they chose to write when the meeting was over. This section on harmony, more than others thus far, contained rich commentary about the lack of skills of others on the innovation team, particularly development executives representing talent and/or the studio, to contribute effectively to the process. Therefore, efforts to maintain harmony in the collaboration were primarily a response to this perception, to protect the story from carelessness and ineptitude.

Respect

The word respect in the context of this study—a desire screenwriters have for their creative collaborations with others—brings to mind participants' wishes for better treatment at the very least, and high esteem for their craft at most, as we have read in their comments. However, another definition of respect emerged in the interviews as well: respect as thoughtfulness toward filmmaking as an art form and the care taken

when working with others. Two subthemes emerged in participants' desire for respect (see Table 7).

Table 7

Practices Employed by Participants in Their Desire for Respect

Desire	Practices
Respect	Seek integrity
	Be willing to walk away

The first theme refers to how participants sought integrity or wholeness in the process overall. Some comments pointed to a true love for the work and of movies, and the ways in which these participants strive to protect that adoration. Writers also have personal limits, the points in the process where they reclaim or exercise their control in what they *do* have power over. The second theme found in comments is developing the will to walk away from the work if necessary.

Seek Integrity

Participants described seeking out decisions that would contribute to the wholeness of the process *and* the people on the team. Defining one's ethical boundaries is an example. Doing right by others on the team is a part of having integrity. So is incorporating what is best for the particular project and even for the industry. Jack captured it well:

> I was going to choose one word in the entire world that is the most important, it would be [respect], and it is the thing that is most lacking: respect for the idea, respect for somebody who may not know what the idea is and they have to come to it, the people you're working with, even if you don't agree with what they're doing. If you can't get the energy of respect into the process, then the process doesn't work.

The screenplay, and ultimately the film of it, becomes its own entity to be cultivated, like the nourishment of a marriage or a child. Therefore, to *seek integrity* is a practice that captures the dynamic and elusive ideal of wholeness and completeness toward which collaborators strive. Three subthemes below delineate personal, interpersonal, and process integrity.

Personal integrity. Beyond basic honesty, many business professionals can probably cite one or two boundaries that they will not cross in their work. For Jack, that boundary was a passion for the story: "If [an idea for a script] doesn't move you, you shouldn't be writing it [because] you fall into the same trap, you don't know what [is important to you about it] to protect." Because screenwriters in the film industry are known to complain about poor treatment, it is necessary to explore the boundaries of these claims as separate from the myriad stories involving particular others or aspects of the process that break down.

There is a well-known story in Hollywood lore with which screenwriters like to identify. Writer Robert Riskin was an Oscar-winner and four-time nominee for writing a string of highly acclaimed films for director Frank Capra in the 1930s and 1940s. A new film genre sprang from audiences' love of Capra's films called *Capraesque* to describe films that had that "magic Capra touch." Riskin was apparently tiring of Capra assuming primary credit for their co-productions and, during what became their final collaboration, Riskin is said to have brandished a sheaf of blank pieces of paper in Capra's face and snapped, "There—give that the Capra touch!" (Gray, 1999, p. 11). Dennis recounted that infamous story before explaining the pride he felt knowing that,

of all other innovation team members, the writer alone begins the process for everyone with a blank page:

> One of the things that I like about my job is that I am the beginning, I am the alpha, and in an industry where everybody is dying for a job, I create jobs. . .No producer can be a producer without something to produce. . .you can't design a set if you have no scene to work off of, and you can't act a scene unless something has been created, unless some story is being told.

On the topic of professionalism, all participants found it acceptable to seek out work to rewrite the scripts of others. Brett regretted not making that decision earlier in his career. He said, "My biggest mistake in my career was being offered rewrite jobs and I would shun them, I would not pursue them at all. I didn't want to step on anyone else's script." They spoke of a certain code of honor among writers in which rewriting those who have been ousted is fair game, but within reason. When choosing work, participants described attending to how other writers were treated on a project before making a commitment. Lilly described one entanglement that caused her to withdraw from hiring consideration:

> [The producer came to me and said] it was a "tandem project:" you write it this way, [the other writer] writes it that way, and I said, "I don't think it's ethical," and he was like, "What do you want me to do, do you want to fire [the other writer?]" And I was like, "No, I want you to not hire me, you know I'm not going to do that. . .that's not acceptable to jack another writer out of a job, that's not ethical either."

Reclaiming one's power when pushed to the limit is an important ingredient in developing the resilience to continue a screenwriting career. When initially offered work, participants described rejecting an opportunity if it appeared to be mismanaged. Another method of exercising control over their destiny is to reject working with fellow collaborators who do not meet their standards, as Lilly described:

> She doesn't understand women in action and she's the executive on the project

> . . . .I've made it clear that I don't want to work for her again to my agents, because she just doesn't understand story, or the kind of story that I do.

Receiving credit is the ultimate acknowledgement of a writer's contribution to a script. And because the Writers Guild of America supervises the credit allocation process to see that those who made the most significant contributions are properly rewarded, writers consider onscreen credit the ultimate stamp of approval for one's work. That said, a writer who contributes to a script at any point during its sometimes-long lifecycle in development will very likely retain a concrete, copyrighted work that will always be associated with him or her. These scripts, whether or not the film is made and/or credit awarded, live on in the writer's portfolio of sample works from which buyers will make hiring decisions for years to come. It is not uncommon to hear writers proclaim that they want to feel that their scripts accurately reflect their talent if their names are going to be on them. Dennis describes this as a primary boundary:

> So much of every development situation is handed to you and so you walk in and you have to sort of assess the situation. . . .It's certainly very important to me, if my name's going to be on it, to. . .try to solve the [story] problems in such a way that I'm not going to be embarrassed by it later.

Interpersonal integrity. Approaching one's working relationships with other members of the innovation team holistically—to maintain the integrity of the collaboration—was the subject of several comments. Elliott looked defeated when he recounted his sense that most of his collaborators really did not want to collaborate, they simply wanted him to write what they wanted. As he put it, "It's just as hard to write a bad script as it is a good script." Jack appropriately captured the tone for how all of the participants, with varying degrees of optimism, generally felt about this process of partnering with others, which is widely referred to as "development hell":

> The development process is usually a kind of trial by idiots, it's a kind of hell that a writer goes through where a lot of people who shouldn't have jobs try and justify them by changing things that are already good. Now that sounds kind of bitter, but unfortunately it's largely true.

Yet, the willingness to endure the trials and tribulations of seeking support from and including others is required to move a film forward. Someone else other than the writer has to read the script and decide when and why it is ready for filming and the allocation of large sums of money. Dennis told a story that exemplifies the internal struggle that can accompany trying to create individually and also with others:

> I was asked to make a couple of changes by the producer in the first act and I . . . .had it all so prepared how to talk her out of her opinion and I had this sort of revelation: I've had it with this feeling. . .And I saw in my mind's eye the two changes. . . .They really. . .didn't help, but they didn't hurt it either. . . .And so by the time I pulled into her driveway, I already had the scenes written in my head, and so I rang the doorbell and she answered the door and I said, You know what? It's fine, I'll write them this afternoon. . . . She was completely floored and said, Really? . . .It was the beginning of my actually learning how to collaborate.

Elliott took the stance, as Gordon did, that every script can be improved somehow, and working with others is one way to achieve that.

> I listen well, I take direction well, and I am basically a gun for hire, and so my job is to figure out what they want. And you have to give it to them once you have figured it out, but you can't not write what you want to write. You have to find a way to satisfy both needs.

Jack concurred when he described ways he tries to include and support the commentary of others, and that sometimes that effort can help improve the script:

> Even if it's with somebody you don't necessarily respect, [you must try] to make that person feel like a collaborator. . . .You have to come in. . .willing to listen. And I will. . .say, You've gone off track. But I'll also come into every relationship and every meeting and conversation with something of an open mind, you just have to.

Mutual preparation for the work to be done together is an expression of interpersonal integrity as well. Comments cited in earlier segments on this paper have alluded to the disappointment writers feel with the lack of time that executives commit to preparing for creative meetings. Yet, executives are paid for their firm guidance and expert opinions, and so they must deliver direction to the writer, however unprepared they may be. For example, Gordon explained,

> Sometimes I go into meetings and people will say, I read the script three weeks ago, so I'm a little rusty. . .I haven't really gotten a chance to think about it that much. Then, well, why are we here? Are you going to give notes that are based on half recollections? So I think it would be nice if everybody was as invested in the thing you're doing.

Dennis shared one particularly shocking story:

> I believe he started the meeting thinking he was talking about a different project. . . .Early in the meeting it occurred to him that I was not the writer on project X that he was talking to. . . .But even when he did get to our story, he kept calling the lead character by the wrong name.

Lilly felt that the primary issue was not lack of preparation, but skill. She suggested better training for incoming executives:

> Everybody should have to write a minimum of three scripts and have those scripts critiqued by other executives. . . .[There should be] training programs for executives for developing material, to workshop scripts with writers and other executives in the room together. They should experience the difficulty of writing and. . .rewriting. . . .There is no way to substitute for that.

On one movie Jack wrote and then came back to polish in pre-production, the lack of respect for his contribution—and that of the screenwriter in general—was more egregious:

> In the case of [one movie I wrote] they invited me to the read-through [of the script with actors], so they sent me a script the night before and they had thrown out everything [I had written] except for a couple of lines. . . .I was just dazzled by the insensitivity of it. . . .I mean, people have driven me crazy, but they've never actually treated me that badly before.

The next set of comments are about who should have the ultimate authority over the process itself. Although there is presumably only one screenwriter on a project at a time, other members of the team—including executives, producers, actors, and directors—will dictate verbally or on paper, sometimes verbatim, what they would like the writer to write. The line of who has the final say on what is actually documented in the master draft of the script is very blurry. According to union rules set by the Writers Guild of America, only the screenwriter is entitled to write the words in the script. Dennis was politely indignant that this most basic differentiation of roles is often forgotten:

> I would take whatever we had done [together that day] and I would sit there until one o'clock in the morning, I would eat dinner and write and write and write . . . .The next day, they would be amazed, completely floored, and say, I can't believe that you have made a story out of this. . . .And I thought, Well that's my job, that's what I do, that's why you're paying me this money, it's not to sit here and [expletive] with you.

Murray felt that the writer should be the primary creative decision-maker, and others should make suggestions based on outcomes they would like:

> They pay us so much money and then let their executives determine what should be in the script. If you really think about that, it really doesn't make good sense. . . .I think the tie should definitely go to the writer more than it does.

Process integrity. Participants' comments in this final section on seeking integrity refer to what about the process itself contributes to and detracts from a full, rich experience for all involved in development. I asked Alex if he felt trusting of the process to accomplish what it is designed to achieve, and he replied that the team composition dictates the possibilities:

> Trusting? I don't think I would use that word. Perhaps respectful of what is required. I don't think that the process is or ever will be designed in a way that can ensure that it is a good and productive experience.

Dennis spoke of his best experiences as those in which a common vision for the final film held fast from the beginning to the end of the process:

> The really tortured ones I've been involved in, I had an instinct from the beginning that we were not all together. And the one [project] that went happy and smooth and everybody seemed to be pleased [was] when they saw the movie in their hands. The changes were minimal, people were talented, everyone was behind it and the whole process was not about morphing it into something new, but improving that central idea and making that shine.

Murray, who was one of the few participants with extensive involvement in the filming of his scripts, appeared to have developed many of his philosophies about how to best approach the process from the vantage point of the audience: What is going to play onscreen? He observed that development executives, who are often not involved in film production, have trouble visualizing the story as it is told by the camera and non-verbal performances of actors, as opposed to what is written on the pages of the script:

> They're not thinking about the baggage and background that a movie star brings to the part or how this will really play when it's up on the camera. If you have a whole scene about a guy feeling bad that his dad didn't play with him when he was a little kid. . . .If a character doesn't say that out loud, [the executives] will not get it, they will give you a note that it's not clear, and to me that is not visualizing what impact that film up on the screen is going to be for people.

Murray described an invisible collusion between some writers and development executives that has a long-lasting negative impact on the health of the process. He suggested that if writers behave authentically and disagree openly about things they disagree with, a healthier ecosystem—a natural system of checks and balances—is created that would help the system flourish in new ways:

> A big fault with the system… I know many, many, many writers, high-paid writers, who just. . .do every note [because] if you fight it, and do your own draft and care about it, you are going to get the same number of notes anyway, and that's how development people develop their scripts right on out of existing, [who] don't realize they're doing it, but they're getting their way in each of these small battles and end up with nothing. They think [it works] because the writers are doing it, [because] they pay them a lot of money and the writer validates them. . . .It blows my mind that a lot of executives would rather have that than dealing with me.

Gordon concurred when he said that, in the end, his drive for survival of the best script trumps his fear of being terminated from the project, but that he strives to balance his actions in both areas:

> Certainly you want to make a good impression. . .so you can stay on the project, but. . .I spent a lot of time on this and there are only certain degrees to which you can bend over backwards. . . .There certainly is an allegiance to making a good script that to some extent is separate from wanting to stay on the project . . .As close as those two things are together, the better the situation is.

Finally, participants described means to protect the integrity of the script itself, in spite of the personal wishes of those involved. It has been said by creative writers that characters take on a life of their own and begin to "write themselves" at a certain point in the process. The screenplay and the characters develop their own truth. Dennis spoke of defending one script's fidelity:

> [A new idea was proposed that] didn't fit the plot that we had just spent endless time trying to work. And they wanted me to just kind of layer this idea on top of everything. . . .[They said,] What are you complaining about? It's just a small change. It's not, you know, it's not a small change, particularly when it's something that sort of changes the [script's] fundamental relationship to the film.

Jack wished for one person who was singularly responsible for the final decisions on a project, primarily as a means of controlling chaos. But it was also his wish that this person be a skilled steward of the story:

> My magic wand wish would be that. . .there was somebody in the process who was responsible. Because there's a lot of buck-passing, like, The director wanted… The executive wanted… While the writer is in the process, [I wish] there was one person who says, This is the decision I am making and I have made it and I stand by it. And that that person should be somebody who is a storyteller.

In summary, the previous section on seeking integrity, or a wholeness to the experience for oneself, with others, and for the project, showed the various forces in dynamic tension with one another. These competing elements are perhaps the most complex and time-consuming for screenwriters to align as they seek to make respect a foundational value of their work.

Be Willing to Walk Away

As Peter Block (2002) said, "If we cannot say 'no,' then our 'yes' means nothing" (p. 28). Saying no to the writing opportunity may be the screenwriter's best method of exercising control over his or her career. Sometimes the refusal may come in the selection of projects or those with whom to work. Other times the dissolution is more confrontational, either at the conclusion of the contract terms or even midstream on a draft and the pay is returned to the buyer.

Dennis described ways he bolstered his resolve to work only on projects he felt were suitable for him, even if he inadvertently removed himself from consideration for some projects:

> If I wanted to stay in this business it was because I liked movies and [so I decided] that I should just go to the movies that I want to go see, not the ones I think I should see, or that are horrible movies, or that are big commercial hits . . . .I should be myself. . .develop my taste, develop my own voice, and gamble that there is a spot for me in this industry. And so far that's worked out.

Having made the decision to follow his own story interests, Dennis gained the courage to verbalize his doubts about a project's direction from the beginning, even before they had made the decision to hire him:

> I remember being in the room with them and being, for the first time ever in my life, fearless. I had no fear at all. It was a frank, open discussion about the project and the script. . . .And so on my thirty-ninth birthday, I got that job, literally that was the day that I got that call. And I went to work on that project and. . .it was a fantastic experience.

On the practical end of the spectrum, Gordon felt optimistic that he could make most requests work to his employers' satisfaction, but that there is always the choice to stop writing the script:

> At the end of the day, they're the bosses. So if they say I don't care what you think, I want you to do this. I mean I guess you have two choices. One is to stop writing the script, the other is to do it.

Murray set the bar high in his commitment not to write anything that does not meets his quality standards:

> I will quit the business before I sit and write something I don't believe in. You pay me to be good and that's not good, so I'm not going to do it. It's not integrity, it's. . .more self-centered than that. . . . .[If I didn't take a job,] my life would not be good for a few months, but I just don't want to do it. . . .But I know a lot of writers who are making money who still do that.

Dennis had developed a barometer of suitable stories for him to write. For example, some story genres—no matter how enticing the financial reward—were simply not possible for him, either because of his skill, sensibility, and/or interest:

> These agents would take me out to lunch and they would say, Can't you just [write this big commercial comedy idea]? You'll make a million dollars. Just do that, it's got to be easier than what you do, what you do is so dense and complex and funny and touching and you don't have to do any of that. . . .I would try to do it and I couldn't do it. I physically couldn't do it. I didn't have that sense of humor.

Dennis was subsequently reminded of his fervent commitment to be authentic in his choices of work:

> I could not try to sell myself on these rewrites or pitches on movies that I didn't think were funny. . .I wasn't going to do it anymore, because it was depressing and stupid. Show business has always been unbelievably hard. . . .I better goddamn well enjoy it.

A seasoned writer like Jack has likely seen his share of long, drawn-out development timelines and experienced its effects on his psyche. In response, Jack made the buyer's urgency to receive his writing work a criterion for choosing a project:

> So I developed a very, very specific complete pitch [and the studio said], Well, we've got [two big movies to make] next, so we really don't need it for a certain amount of time and. . .somewhere I realized I was about to get "into development". . .and I ran like a bunny. Even though I figured out an entire story I really, *really* cared about, I will not go through that process, 'cause it's too dispiriting.

Turning down work can make the writer even more desirable, and can be a bargaining tactic to help writers assume more creative control if they concede. As Lilly told the story,

> I got hired on [this one movie]. . .because I turned the job down so many times, that literally is the reason they hired me. . . . I told [them]. . .that this was a terrible idea and that I couldn't be associated with it, so I couldn't even do a polish for them, even though my name wasn't going to be on it. . . .I didn't want to see this movie and I didn't want to see this movie get made by anybody, me or anybody else.

Elliott seemed to be acutely aware of when he had done all that he could do on a script and went so far as to tell his employers to consider their next writer. He felt it was denigrating to work on a project when the team had lost faith in his ability:

> [After one particularly challenging development meeting,] I said, Well guys, you're gonna have to start calling other writers! That was a great meeting. The next writer they brought in did the notes the exec wanted that I laughed at . . . .When you run out of steam and ideas, much uglier blame comes from staying at the table too long.

To have "the perspective and the humility to know when to walk away, and also the arrogance to fight when it's necessary" was Jack's credo on this subject:

> [I must] know the heart of the thing, and not just so you can shape everything around it to satisfy other people, but so at some point you can just say, this is where I get off, this where we're talking about two different movies and if you want to make this other movie. . .Godspeed, goodbye.

Jack felt it was better to refuse work than to make fundamental compromises before even starting writing:

> One of the worst meetings I ever took [was one where someone] pitched an idea about a movie. . .[and] I said, I get why you're interested in this, . .but I can't find the heart, I don't really know what the *story* is. . . .And he said, Well, I assume if we were paying you to write it, I assume you could figure that out. The fact of the matter is, ultimately I probably could, and I wouldn't work with that guy in a million years, because I knew from my conversation with him if I found it, he wouldn't see it.

The willingness to walk away when necessary is a courage that participants developed for two reasons. First, they wielded this option to protect their feelings, especially given the frequency with which they are replaced, even if they rarely exercise it. Second, they held on to it to protect their artistry. Sometimes participants felt compelled to stay and fight for what they believed to be right for the story or for them. Sometimes, once they delved into the assignment and realized challenges they would face, they decided to do the best work they could and move on. Other times, participants picked up where another writer left off and tried moving it past where it stalled, and sometimes under less than ideal conditions. As a last resort, participants may not have accepted the work opportunity at all. In extreme cases, a writer may withdraw his or her services during the process and return or refuse further compensation.

To summarize the findings around participants' practices to promote respectable collaboration, two major themes emerged: (a) participants' quest for integrity for themselves, each other, and their projects; and (b) their willingness and courage to walk away from work when necessary. Seeking integrity, or wholeness, in the course of the collaborative work had three subthemes: personal integrity, interpersonal integrity, and development process integrity. This is the most detailed and lengthy section of this study's findings, perhaps because many other desires can seem to be in service of it. Without some standards against which to align the person, the team, and the process, it would be difficult to achieve any degree of security, sanity, harmony, or success. This possibility will be explored more thoroughly in the next chapter. But first, the next section will explore participants' desire for ultimate development success, which culminates in approval to film the screenplay.

Success

From these interviews, it occurred to me that there are essentially two development processes for a screenplay as it advances toward filming. Both of these development phases require continuous ideation and implementation among creative collaborators. These two processes—although not formally distinguished—became apparent to me when I noticed a change in participants' tone when talking about working with executives and producers earlier in the project and partnering with directors and actors later on, closer to filming. In the first phase, more people participate, some of whom are junior level. In prior sections, participants spoke predominantly of this phase, in which the focus is on protecting the script from too

many voices, staying on the project as the writer, and keeping the project itself alive. For example, Murray said,

> It's really just a matter of surviving the process and getting to getting your movie made. Because you know as soon as they have a star and a start date, three quarters of the notes go away. . . .You start showing the movie and one of the actors is great and that's your movie.

The second development phase when a director comes on involves a smaller subset of senior-level contributors in the director's inner circle: sometimes a new writer of his/her choosing, a senior-level studio executive, and perhaps his/her trusted producing partner. At this stage, other members of the innovation team are often relegated to other projects in earlier stages. It is only in the second development phase that the screenplay enters the possibility of being considered a true success: when it is approved for filming.

In the prior four sections of the findings—security, sanity, harmony, and respect—participants discussed development experiences in which a director was often not yet involved. The fifth and final desire—success, meaning greenlight of the script for filming—is presented last in this chapter because it occurs at the end of what is often a long, arduous process through which many scripts do not pass. Participants ascribed the successful crossing of their scripts into the second phase to three elements: (a) a focus on the commercial aspects of the business, (b) building partnerships with directors, and (c) tipping the momentum (see Table 8).

Table 8

Practices Employed by Participants in Their Desire for Success

Desire	Practices
Success	Focus on commercial aspects
	Build director partnerships
	Tip the momentum

When the financiers become active in discussions around how the screenplay will compete in the marketplace based on a projected release window, what stars are available and may want to play the roles, and the budget range set by the studio, participants described shifting their focus to more commercial aspects of the screenplay, the first subtheme. The second subtheme is about the partnerships screenwriters develop with directors to improve successful outcomes for their screenplays. As collaboration with the director begins, participants described the different skills and attitudes required of them. The director's strategy for choosing and filming the actors who will deliver the dialogue in the screenplay—as opposed to the perfection of the story for story's sake—comes into focus. Finally, in the third subtheme, participants described activities that tip the momentum of a screenplay to receive the "greenlight" to start filming.

Focus on Commercial Aspects

As a screenplay nears filming, the emphasis on the business aspects of production increases and aggressive, rapid changes to the screenplay are commonly required to meet marketplace demands. As already mentioned, the first phase of development is devoted to refining the story, waiting until marketing and financial conditions are favorable, and attracting production talent to the script. The second

development phase can begin once those first three criteria have been met. The emphasis of this phase is customizing the script to the tastes and satisfaction of the director, actor(s), and those who set the production budget. To get the movie made, screenwriters will make concessions at later stages of development that earlier, when there is greater emphasis on story and theme, they might not have considered. For example, Gordon spoke of the realities of writing when production is imminent: "I think that if you have [a major star] attached, the ultimate goal is to make [that star] want to make this kind of movie."

The people responsible for deciding that a project is ready to move into production—a combination of senior creative leadership, marketing, physical production, and finance staff— do not typically participate in the development process. The opportunities for disconnection between those on the innovation team, and those making the decision for the buyer, are plentiful. Therefore, screenwriters want to learn expectations of greenlight decisionmakers with as little filtering from those decisionmakers' direct reports as possible because, as Alex reminded me,

> no matter how good the script is or how connected the development experience is, if we don't have an accurate understanding of what the person greenlighting movies wants, the movie will not get made and it doesn't matter. We want a good experience, but more importantly, we want to see the movie all the way through.

Murray suggested that marketing staff be included in selecting projects to buy:

> They won't make it or sell it or cast it if the marketing people don't understand it, but the marketing people don't have a lot of input about the pitches or scripts that they buy, which is stupid I think, 'cause they do eventually provide a veto, so I'd rather hear my veto up front.

Jack enjoyed and leveraged the commercial elements of how a film will be sold in the marketplace and wished for better collaboration between him as the writer and the production decisionmakers:

> I thought of the trailer for [the movie] before I thought of the screenplay. If I don't have a title, I usually can't write 'cause I'm very particular about the way it will be perceived and how they market it. . .and the merchandise, all of that stuff is in my head. . . .I see many instances where I'm like, If you had just listened to me, ever, you would have made more money.

As already mentioned, Murray's early career exposure to production perhaps predisposed him to focus on how his writing will reach broad audiences:

> I have been told that I call them on [their bad ideas] much more than normal writers. I would never say, This is dumb or this is a waste of time or your jobs are meaningless. That tends to hurt feelings. I do say, Please try to keep in mind that while some of these nuances are legitimate or interesting, this concept in particular is something people in Malaysia can watch and understand with the sound turned down.

Participants approached their emphasis on commercial aspects to reach development success in different ways. Half of them began with the greenlight of the script for filming the end point toward which to write. The other half emphasized the story first with the notion that they could work toward a best commercial solution from the center of the story outward. In the next section, I will present ways in which participants described the building of partnerships with directors as a means to push the script forward to the next phase.

Build Director Partnerships

Innovation team members such as development executives representing the studio and the producer may only participate in the process up to the point a director becomes an active part of development. Lilly illustrated this creative disconnect that can occur between earlier and later phases of development: "Most development

executives will hire a number of writers one after another and most of those writers will never see a director. And most of the executives who are serially developing things will never actually interact with a director." A symbiotic working relationship between writer and director is not often easy to form and can be fragile even in the best of circumstances. When a director becomes directly involved, the tone of the process changes dramatically: It becomes more serious and more exciting. Two highly creative people with strong opinions and visions must collaborate. In a strange way, they are natural rivals: The screenwriter wants to protect his or her "baby" from the director, a new entrant who is looking for ways to brand the movie as his or her own. How participants navigated interactions with directors to reach a successful conclusion to development will be documented in this section.

Lilly's perspective was that the development process with the innovation team—before a director comes on board—is simply a challenge to be surmounted before reaching the ultimate goal of attracting a director:

> Development. . .doesn't really matter once a director comes on. [The director is] looking for something that they can take apart and make their own. Directors never, ever come on and shoot a script that's been developed the way it's been developed unless they are so powerless that they don't have a voice. . . .They only come on when the script reads well enough that they can destroy it.

Lilly made a clear distinction between the initial phase of development with producers and executives—where she does what she must to maneuver through it—and the second, more intimate development process with the director where she actively surrenders her wishes:

> A lot of writers feel that they are the authors of the film. I don't actually think that there is an author of the film. I think that the closest you come is the director, because it's such an all-consuming thing. . . .I'm comfortable with the fact that I am realizing someone else's vision.

Dennis also made a similar transition to a more agreeable and deferential stance when his scripts neared production:

> If the director has a particular way he's going to go anyway [laugh], whether I particularly like that idea or not, and I can help him with that, I try to, I do. I try to swim with that tide instead of against it and. . .eliminate any sort of judgmental thinking about it because it doesn't really matter what my opinion is.

Rather than realizing the director's vision, Alex felt that a mutual vision with the director, if not others in the development process, is something to pursue:

> Mutual respect [in the development process] is frankly not particularly important. . .[except] in the case of the writer with the director. At the point that the director becomes involved in the development process, I think this is very important to have a mutual understanding of vision. I don't need to respect the vision of a studio executive necessarily, I just need to know that I can execute on what it is they're asking me.

Alex continued on that he wished a director could be attached to the project at the idea stage so they could co-guide the process from the beginning, which might increase the script's likelihood of getting made:

> First, attach a director before any meetings take place in development so that his or her vision is included. Probably because this happened to me and my first project, I feel like it is an ideal to strive for.

The quality of the screenwriter's partnership with the director has a direct effect on whether the screenplay progresses to production. Those writers who are known for working well with directors, like Lilly, are likely to see more produced film credits on their resumes over the course of their careers. Lilly revealed two secrets to make this partnership successful: hand-pick directors whose work she always admired and express that admiration:

> Because I've only taken jobs from directors I've liked, I can generally be appreciative of their work in the way that makes them comfortable with me, in other words, flatter them. But in a lot of cases. . .like working for someone like [a very successful director she has worked with] it's not flattery. [This director] has redefined women in cinema, period. . . . .A lot of what works for movies, in my opinion, is based on what he's done.

Similar to Gordon's earlier comments about a script being a collection of possible choices, Lilly is prepared to relinquish earlier choices to those of the director:

> And I will say when I think something is a bad story, but the bottom line is that it is all choices. . .And that means that when you're faced with what the director wants versus what you want. . .and he wants to do it anyway, then you shut up and you do it.

Conversely, Lilly explains that there is a shadow side to her agreeableness: Some directors, in an apparent desire for *auteurship* as both director and writer (and often producer as well), will go to great lengths to eliminate her involvement in the process:

> It's the dichotomy of the job. . .Because I get along well with directors and am apparently nice, to some degree they assume I can be treated very badly . . . .[One director I've worked with]. . .wouldn't speak to me because he wants to be able to legitimately say, I have never met her, spoke to her, seen her, don't know what she looks like. She has nothing to do with this script. . . .He immediately started rewriting the script in its entirety by going through and changing the dialogue and description so people were saying the exact same things in the exact same order, but phrased differently.

Gordon described one scenario in which he wanted to make creative suggestions to the director during the filming of the movie. However, he had to devise an indirect way to approach the director because of their contentious relationship:

> So we had a bunch of notes on the cut, but. . .he would have been offended by it and it wouldn't carry much authority. So, we had our managers and producers put their name on the notes and send them over. It's kind of an example how at a certain point you have to find. . .certain small, subtly subversive ways to make things happen.

Murray also acknowledged that the director partnership can be contentious, but that the source of disagreement differs from that with other development team members:

> They have tons of bad ideas and you fight about them, but we're all on the same team. They don't go off and then start thinking about tons of other scripts . . .they're invested in the way you are and it's fine. And you lose a lot of those [fights], and that's fine too, but [developing with them is] a very different process.

Jack described director partnerships that have been very successful for him and have resulted in multiple collaborations. He described their mutual respect:

> [X] is the director that always treated me with the most respect and that's why [the first movie we did together] is the one thing where my work really got to see the light of day. . . .He really was in there saying, I can do my thing, you do yours. And I am forever grateful for that because it's so rare.

Jack noted that fellow collaborators are reluctant to approach directors with criticism, which can contribute to costly failures:

> They didn't do most of [my] suggestions 'cause [the director] had "a thing" he was trying to do. . .And [the studio is] not prepared to really go in and see that there's something wrong—there's too much money involved. Nobody will ever say the emperor is naked on a $200 million movie when it's in production.

In summary, partnerships with directors are coveted as they give writers an inside track to stay on their projects longer and to have a better chance at receiving onscreen credit, and therefore the payment associated with it. However, the partnership can easily be strained simply by virtue of their respective passions and visions for the finished film. Some participants sought to have more equal control, while others gladly deferred to the director for a number of reasons, including a desire to stay involved throughout production and out of genuine respect for the director's craft.

Tip the Momentum

There is a point in a screenplay's lifecycle where it is apparent to the innovation team that it will or will not be granted a greenlight. Whether the script's journey is winding and meandering or on a straight, fast trajectory, its journey involves a certain constellation of occurrences that, if they happen in the right order and at the right times, result in a movie.

Sometimes the momentum starts early on a project when there is interest from high-profile talent, which writers hope will fast track it through to production. Dennis described an experience of generating a movie idea that, inside of one week, was purchased by a studio:

> It came straight to my head and I had the whole movie in five or ten minutes . . . .I called the producer and I said, I need to see you for dinner. . . .And we sat down at dinner and I pitched him the movie and it never changed, the plot never changed, and we pitched it at [one studio], they bought it instantly on the spot.

Lilly explained that the script is likely not the primary reason for a greenlight, but rather the moment in which the first marketable actor becomes interested in a role within it:

> It is to a certain degree unique to the project, but it's *momentum*. . . .It just feels like there's a certain event casting cascade [of actors signing on] that goes with movies, because the green light always blinks before it turns green; it never goes from nothing to green. There's always sort of ramp, ramp, ramp, ramp, ramp, and it usually is some combination of the obvious factors. Script, I would put that lowest because you can write while you're filming, but it's very difficult to cast while you're filming.

Similarly, Alex felt that most of the discussion during development did not seem to have much to do with the final decision to greenlight the script:

> It's a lot of fluff about how much they love your project and how it's going to fit perfectly into their current slate and how they're going to attach talent to it right away and how they're going to make it. But I also know that often it is the

> attachment of talent or the whim of the studio head that really gets a project made.

The effort of studio executives along with the script's producers to package the script with talent can be a lengthy process. It largely depends on their relationships with agents and their persistence. Gordon suggested that many good scripts are shelved because they were not sold to talent well:

> The thing that determines most whether things get made in the development process is the different elements that are attached. I think that a lot of times there are a lot of great scripts sitting there that are not getting made because they didn't get to the right actor . . .[or] a big director.

On a more normally paced project, a writer will do what he or she can to ensure the script adheres to the known production-related variables, like intended audience and ideal actors for lead roles. Attracting the interest of someone in a role critical to filming will infuse the script with urgency and could double its chances of getting a greenlight for production. According to Gordon, talent attaching themselves to the story's roles likely does more to drive the script's approval for filming than the quality of the script itself:

> I don't know how much of a link there is between the quality of work you do and how much you write a movie that could get made. . . .That's out of the writer's hands and unless a writer can bring a director. . .or an actor that means something to the studio to the table.

For the scripts of Brett's that have been made into movies, he thought that what pushed them through the process to greenlight was his ability to discern effectively what the executives wanted:

> I have become a good mind reader. I think there's subtext to the notes and that's what I think I'm getting better at. I'm getting better delivering on what I think they want. It's not because I think they're trying to withhold the answer; if they know what they want to say, they do say it, but sometimes I think they know

> there's something wrong, but don't know how to fix it, don't articulate it exactly, which if they did, I would just write it.

Although Dennis' next comment did not refer to development per se, he aptly described the momentum created by the mutual passion that primary creative players have for the script once they are involved:

> From the director's point of view, his movie's being made. From the lead actor's point of view, her movie's being made, and from the producer's point of view, his movie's being made. It didn't really hit me until we were in production and I saw the emotion everybody brought to the table and how quickly everybody angered over everything—and it would blow over pretty quickly—but it was like a custody battle with seven parents, all who have legal rights to this child.

For Murray, like Lilly's comments in the prior section, the development process was more of a necessary evil to survive to get to greenlight:

> It's all just busy work until a movie star or very few directors say they like it. Then all those notes disappear. . . .And then it's. . .as much about an actor desperate for work or a producer cutting a check and making something happen as it is about anything in your script. And those notes are totally different, they're about pleasing a star or making a budget, making the marketing people happy, or whatever, and it is totally different than a development executive's agenda.

Murray went on to describe the excitement of starting with a go movie based on attached talent and a loose idea, and writing to meet the demand:

> This is why [this one successful producer] is popular with talent. . . .He developed scripts but never talked about scripts—it was like you were casting it instantly, the first draft was budgeted, there was tons of pressure, you're working on a movie that's gonna go. That's the best version.

One consistent theme among participants' comments was the excitement around fast-moving projects, even when they resulted in increased pressure on them. Speed became a form of respect for the process and a means of achieving higher quality

through a greater emphasis on the work before them. In one example of an accelerated project, Dennis found the lack of time for emotional expression refreshing:

> I came in to replace [another writer] and we sort of started over [with the script], and because it was under so much pressure we had to be very decisive. Once we had abandoned the particular plot, that was it, we didn't return to it. And because we had to move so quickly, there was no time to sulk about it, you had to really move through it. . .and let go of what you had planned.

Jack described an urgent request to fly to the set of a production in-progress:

> They flew me to New York where they were already filming and most of [what I wrote for her] they didn't use, which is. . .extraordinarily always the case. . . .I think I was there so that they could say, Hey we got an A-list strong woman beats guy, to [this famous actress] and then go about making the movie.

One participant, Elliott, was admittedly slow in his writing, but insisted that he did not waste his contractual steps by turning in drafts before he had done his best writing. Elliott also felt his reputation was "slow, but good. . .and why hasn't this stuff gotten made?" His approach is interesting in light of Murray's comments that there is little point in perfecting the screenplay before you have talent attachments. Elliott said, "I wish there was less emphasis on speed, let the writer take the time to get it right. We don't have to hurry to beat the trend. We are making good movies we hope, and they don't expire."

As a script nears filming, Lilly described a momentum that once it begins is very hard to stop:

> It's a question of reaching a point where things are sort of moving so fast that nothing can break it. And that is reached at a different point in every project that I can see. There's different dynamic to lower-budget projects because I don't do them, than there is to the larger more expensive things, which I know more about. And once the momentum starts, even when everyone has decided that something is a full-on absolute disaster, it almost never stops. . . .They *couldn't* pull the plug. It reaches a certain point where you know you can't.

Jack tries to increase his chances of getting a greenlight by putting particular effort into writing the stage directions in the script as descriptively as possible so that people reading it can more easily envision how it will be seen and experienced onscreen:

> It's very important to write things that read the way they will be seen. . .I write stage directions like I'm writing a novel. I want to make sure when you read it you can see it, so they can say, I get it, I'm there, I'm having the experience, I know what the experience is supposed to be.
>
> But honestly, getting something green lit it's an incredible crapshoot and you may find somebody who has a passion for your project and you may not . . . .[the] logic is based on a binary code that is unfathomable to any artist.

Jack had more credits on films that were ultimately produced than the other participants. He attributed his involvement at the later stages of development, when the writer has a stronger chance of receiving final credit, to a unique skill:

> I feel like I've been able to bring things home. I feel like I'm able to take whatever everybody else has and say, Okay, here's where we are, let's get to the end with it. People can't always do that. That's a specific talent. It's not the same as coming up with a good idea, it's not the same as writing good dialogue.

In summary, this section on success, more than those that preceded it, showed the shadow side of the screenwriting profession. Put bluntly, the director and actors are higher on the food chain than screenwriters, even highly paid and well-respected screenwriters like several of those who were interviewed here. Because of this fact, participants described a feeling of powerlessness to affect the destiny of their creations, regardless of how well they are able to secure desirable projects, stay emotionally stable, maintain harmonious collaborations, and respect themselves, others, and the process in the course of their writing work. The tipping point for a greenlight often occurred abruptly and mysteriously for participants. In most cases, participants had

very little to do with it. Thus, the formula dictating which scripts are granted greenlight over others remains an enigma.

Chapter Summary

The findings were presented in five meta-themes representing participants' desires for their collaborative work and 13 subthemes representing participants' practices in service of each desire. The data were coded first to capture participants' practices, from which fundamental desires were named (see Table 9).

Table 9

Summary of Findings: Predominant Desires of Study Participants during Team Innovation Work and Practices They Employed to Achieve Those Desires

Desires	Practices
Security	Forge alliances
	Build reputation
	Work within business rules
Sanity	Practice depersonalization
	Find outlets
Harmony	Leverage alliances
	Communicate mindfully
	Navigate expertly
Respect	Seek integrity
	Be willing to walk away
Success	Focus on commercial aspects
	Build director partnerships
	Tip the momentum

Before moving on to the ensuing chapter's discussion of the results, I would first like to mention a few distinctive differences between the coding scheme in the pilot study and the current study that exemplify how analysis of the interview data evolved. In the Security category, the practice "work within the business rules" was originally

titled "respect the business of filmmaking." The latter practice captured the more deferential comments the pilot study's participants made about the film business as a force to be obeyed. In the final study, it was clear that each participant defined for themselves what the "rules" to be followed were and the boundaries around them.

In the Sanity category, the pilot study results emphasized a practice of "find[ing] other outlets" outside of screenwriting to help quell some of the career's stresses and disappointments. In this study, each participant found "outlets" in myriad ways: in their families; by writing in other media; through expert mental gymnastics, a finely tuned philosophy, and spirituality. Therefore, the practice/code became simply "find outlets."

In the Harmony category, the practice "communicate openly" identified in the pilot study evolved into "communicate mindfully." *Mindfully* captures the care with which participants chose what to say and when to say it, if at all. Communicating openly captured speaking the *truth*, which became relative to what the project, situation, and people called for. The incredibly nuanced descriptions—and reenactments of conversations in many cases—that participants delivered in their interviews were a testament to how thoughtfully they planned their words when collaborating with others.

In the Respect category, comments in the full set of interviews revealed a broader definition of respect than simply what an employee would like from his employer in the conduct of work. In the pilot study, the category was titled "self-respect," as the first two interviews did not express respect between team members and in the process as a whole in addition to respect for themselves. Thus, the practice that

represented participants' protection of self was labeled "act ethically," rather than its final iteration as "seek integrity," which better captures this context's holistic definition.

In the fifth and final chapter of this paper, conclusions and implications will be presented and evaluated in light of their relevance to existing research and organizational consulting practice.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS

> I think the downside these days is thinking I can do this all on my own. Yes, you can do this on your own, but you'll be a much happier human being if you do it with other human beings. And I can guarantee you that. (Mick Fleetwood, on creating music; as cited in Grohl et al., 2013)

The research question this study attempted to answer was, *How do professional screenwriters experience working with a team on their screenplays?* The prior chapter presented to the reader, through participants' own words, what their experiences were of working with others on their creations. Up until this point, screenwriters' voices were entirely silent in the academic literature. The thoughts, feelings, words, and actions of professional creators themselves were ignored in the voluminous studies on individual and group creativity and team innovation. This lack of attention to the creators themselves has led to an "incomplete and context independent picture" of organizational innovation (Gomes et al., 2001, p. 235). By utilizing a phenomenological approach to studying professional creators, this study has made one small step toward connecting the deeply human experience of collaboration with prevailing theories, which are distinctly impersonal. It accomplished this step most clearly and simply by presenting professional creators' point of view through their own words.

My passion for helping my professional creator clients function more effectively as individuals and in teams informed my decision to learn what areas were most important to them rather than base a study on existing conceptual frameworks. The purpose of my research was to uncover professional creators' underlying conceptions of their work so that I may better understand how to support them during organizational innovation.

This chapter is organized in four sections. The Discussion will introduce a pattern in the findings through which their relevance will be explored in three subsequent sections. First, how the findings connect to key studies featuring professional creators and/or to group creativity, team innovation, and creative collaboration literatures will be presented. Second, I will make new connections between the findings, discussion, and literatures from fields unrelated to creativity and innovation, namely organizational conflict. The presentation of the organizational conflict management literature provides a gateway into suggestions for practical application of the findings through conflict management interventions, specifically polarity management. Finally, a summary of the Discussion will close the section.

The second section will present the study limitations. The third section will detail opportunities for additional research. The fourth and final section features a summary of my learnings about feature film development, where I will present my observations about specific areas in the practice of motion picture development process that came to the forefront from the study findings and conclusions. Each observation is bookended with a question that would be an ideal starting point for further inquiry. Finally, I will summarize my learnings about organization development consulting and life in general as a result of conducting this study.

Discussion

Participants' practices in the course of work pointed to underlying desires. At face value, these desires for one's work life are not unusual; common sense tells us that workers in a variety of positions, creative or not, want security, sanity, harmony, respect, and success. It is the web of practices that participants described to achieve

their desires that reveal the *stakes* beneath their choices. What do these screenwriters risk winning or losing? What is hanging in the balance for them?

Speaking of writers in general, what is at stake is making money writing. While working as a writer is an obvious goal, it is actually quite difficult to achieve in the entertainment industry. The market is relatively small and the competition among many would-be and professional screenwriters is fierce. In 2003, there were 3,507 screenwriter members of the Writers Guild of America West and of those, only 1,833 were employed to write scripts that year (Writers Guild of America, 2009). With the economic downturn in 2008, the number of theatrical films produced in the United States in 2009 declined 25.5% from 2007, from 909 to just 677 (Motion Picture Association of America, 2012). The relative scarcity of paid work undoubtedly raised the stakes for participants in this study.

Financial concerns are important, but creativity is closer to the heart. Creativity is an inherently individual process that stems from a constellation of elements with the individual: (a) antecedent conditions, (b) the emotional person, (c) cognitive style and ability, (d) personality traits, and (e) social and contextual influences (Woodman & Schoenfeldt, 1989). How can a professional creator be creative with others when his or her very individuality, where creativity resides, is at stake? Individuality is not paramount in the development process. Yet, when the team meetings are finished, creative direction has been set and decisions have been made. The screenwriters must still return to the privacy of their offices and be creative again with new constraints on their creations. This tension between individualism and collectivism accounts for the screenwriter's negotiation of self with the team. This tension is aptly described as a

polarity because solutions applied to one pole will create an imbalance in the opposite pole.

Polarities can look like problems at first glance, but addressing one pole triggers a perpetual cycle of resolving problems created by opposing solutions (Johnson, 1992). Theories aimed at prescribing solutions to innovation teams tend to focus on team behaviors and ignore the individuals. Theories about what characteristics in a person led to more creative outcomes, even if they *do* take into consideration social and contextual influences, do not frame the individual and social aspects as dynamic. Perhaps these theories co-exist in largely separate literatures and/or do not contribute to practical application because they do not consider innovation as a polarity to be managed rather than a static state to be achieved.

The cultural and political associations with the words individualism and collectivism are at the root of this polarity. Individualist cultures, such as those of the United States and Western Europe, emphasize personal achievement at the expense of group goals, resulting in a strong sense of competition. Collectivist cultures, such as those of China, Korea, and Japan, emphasize family and work group goals. So while the role of the creative maverick screenwriter is not counter-cultural in the US, the work processes that require them to collaborate with others are often counter to their individual impulses. Although collectivism is often seen as a political or economic philosophy described by Rousseau (1762) and advocated by Karl Marx, it is defined here as an emphasis on the needs of the group over that of a single individual. Individualism and collectivism co-exist; an overemphasis on one in a group process creates an imbalance that affects the other.

Thus, the most substantial pattern apparent in the findings can be stated simply: The individualism/collectivism polarity appeared to drive the practices participants chose to adopt in their collaborations with others. The structure of participants' responses to my interview questions provided the strongest clue to this polarity operating at the core of their comments: They dissected their interactions with fellow collaborators with a facility that led me to believe they had thought deeply of these activities for a long time. In every interview, participants replayed, often using impassioned dialogue between them and the other "characters," the vacillations between their points of view and those of others on the team. The content of these scenarios showed me, in striking real time, their determination to maintain balance in their collaborations. Balancing one's authentic expression with the necessary contributions of others is not a new struggle. However, it is unique to find a study that captures the essence of this struggle. Categorizing unsolvable problems, such as those described by participants here, as polarities to be managed is resonant for those of us in any field—creative or otherwise—who must balance our own needs with those of others. This polarity acknowledges my own familiar feelings as a professional creator within motion picture development teams and also within teams creating other products.

The potential significance of this study was presented in Chapter 3. The core purpose of this study was to investigate the little-understood phenomenon of creating with others in a professional setting. My research question was, *How do professional screenwriters experience working with a team on their screenplays?* The findings presented in Chapter 4 provided the beginnings of a greater understanding of what screenwriters experience when creating with others. Defining unsolvable problems,

such as those described by participants here, as polarities to be managed is resonant for those of us in any field—creative or otherwise—who must balance our own needs with those of others.

In addition to giving voice to an underrepresented population in academic research, it was my hope that the findings would show missing ties to the existing creativity, innovation, and business literatures that other researchers could use as starting points. Therefore, a significant portion of this chapter is dedicated to connecting the scholarly conversation to the study findings and discussion.

I also mentioned in prior chapters that I found the interventions aimed at stimulating or managing organizational innovation wanting. It would be significant to my own practice if more relevant learning and development designs for professional creators and innovation teams were available. Therefore, to close this next section, I tested the usefulness of one possible intervention from the conflict management literature that shows promise in helping teams manage polarities. To situate this intervention in the scholarly conversation, a review of the literatures on conflict will also be presented.

The first of the three subsections below connects the individualism/collectivism polarity apparent in the findings to theories of creativity and innovation within groups and teams. I will also circle back to the studies featuring professional creators presented in Chapter 2 where they align with the findings.

Creativity and Innovation Literature

The theories of creativity and innovation that were aligned with the findings will be divided between the following two sections: studies that support or highlight individualism and those that are more oriented to collectivism.

Supports for individualism. According to Woodman and Schoenfeldt's (1989) interactionist model of creative behavior, "Individual differences in creativity are a function of the extent to which the social and contextual factors nurture the creative process" (p. 87). The value of the interactionist perspective lies in its integration of the diverse perspectives presented in the personality, cognitive, and social psychology explanations of individual differences in creative behavior.

Personality traits. In this model, personality dimensions that are critical to creativity include several that point directly to a high degree of individualism. Self-discipline and an internal locus of control—the belief that good and bad events in one's life are caused by controllable factors such as one's attitude, preparation, and effort—are essential to creativity. My participants mentioned several strategies for maintaining their sense of control over their creations. Alex focused on executing exactly what was asked. Gordon created goodwill through listening and overall agreeableness, while Lilly manipulated the elements in her favor and Jack relied on forcefulness.

Nonconformity and dogmatism—the focused pursuit of one's vision without concern for approval of others—are characteristics of many creative individuals. However, as we read in the prior chapter, there is very little room for stubbornness and rigidity in the film development process; a premium is placed on writers with reputations for being friendly and agreeable toward others on the team. Both Brett and

Gordon distinguished themselves in their approaches to collaboration through agreeableness. As Jack said, even having an opinion can label a writer as "difficult." High self-esteem and narcissism are also common traits among creative individuals. In this context, participants' high valuation of themselves did support their perseverance in the face of frustration, another personality trait found in particularly creative people.

In general, creativity studies have revealed that individuals produce more creative work when they perceive themselves to have choice in how to go about accomplishing the tasks that they are given (Amabile & Gitomer, 1984). Several researchers have concluded that creativity is fostered when individuals (and teams as well) have relatively high autonomy in the day-to-day conduct of the work and a sense of ownership over their own work (e.g., Bailyn, 1985; Barron & Harrington, 1981; King & West, 1985; Paolillo & Brown, 1978; Pelz & Andrews, 1966; West, 1986). Supervisory behaviors perceived as controlling—such as making decisions without employee involvement; pressuring employees to think, feel, or behave in certain ways; or monitoring them closely—shift an employee's focus of attention away from his or her own ideas and toward external concerns.

Participants expressed many ways they balanced their desire for autonomy with the decidedly democratic format of innovation team meetings. Participants described suspending autonomy in the group setting in favor of active listening and interest in the ideas of others. Even those participants most frustrated by development, like Jack and Murray, admitted to the possibility that they might hear ideas worth using and implementing.

Addressing the input of others who have power over the script's fate when sitting down to write is a necessity to move a script closer to greenlight. Dennis described doing his very best to incorporate others' ideas, as did Gordon, based on the notion that others like to see their efforts and themselves reflected in the product too. As there are many ways to write a scene to accomplish the same outcome, participants would fold others' ideas into their work as a gesture of goodwill as long as it did not damage the story. This describes one of the nuanced ways in which participants—as representative of professional creators as opposed to more autonomous fine artists—negotiated their autonomy and independence of judgment in the course of creating.

The second dimension of the interactionist model reflects social and contextual supports. This category includes elements of the environment and social setting in which the creative act takes place, and thus have the potential to contribute to or detract from individual differences in creativity (Woodman & Schoenfeldt, 1989). Two influences on creative behavior from the literature—holistic responsibility for the work and rewards and punishments—will be presented here for their relevance to the findings.

Holistic responsibility. A job that is designed for a worker to make autonomous decisions about how to approach his or her work and to have responsibility for a whole, identifiable piece of work is vital to individual creativity (Cummings & Oldham, 1997). This latter element appeared in participants' comments in two ways. First, participants wanted innovation team members to express the precise outcomes they wanted for the script without being told how to write them. They also expressed the desire to remain as the writer on their scripts at the time the project is greenlit. The desire for a more

holistic responsibility for the complete work emerged in two of the studies on professional creators evaluated in Chapter 2. Hackley and Kover's (2007) study of advertising creatives suggested their negotiation of identity was connected to a desire for authorship for their work. Pritzker's study also demonstrated in rich detail his writer participants' identity negotiation and struggle for authorship amidst the requests of fellow collaborators. It is noteworthy that the relationships between participants and their teammates in both the current study and Pritzker's was not an equal one. The distribution of power on the team was imbalanced because many of those collaborators other than the writer represented the financial contribution to the screenplay or teleplay, which included the pay of the writer. This study and Pritzker's explored the same essential process, where a team is developing a story for filming, and the primary participants and point of view represented were creative writers; this is promising for future research on development teams at film studios and television companies. Therefore, exploring creative collaboration within teams developing other products where there is structural imbalance of power and how that affects creative output would be worthy of future inquiry. Within the current study, participants' comments around their desire for respect, and the practice of seeking integrity—intrapersonally, interpersonally, and for their projects overall—extends both Hackley and Kover and Pritzker's findings around identity negotiation.

Responsibility for delivering a script that is made into the film is important not only because it often determines screen credit and the pay associated with it. It also produces a deeper sense of gratification for a screenwriter, where one is not only paid to write screenplays, but also to deliver movies to the screen for audiences. Roughly

half of the screenwriters in this study had successful careers as paid professionals in which most of their writing efforts never reached movie audiences. In other words, several participants had and have careers writing screenplays that the major film studios are developing. Yet, as the earlier mentioned 1:23 ratio of films made to those developed suggests, a relatively small number of those scripts succeed to filming.

Rewards and punishments. Although engaging in an activity only to obtain a reward can undermine creativity, creativity can be enhanced by expecting a reward that is perceived as a "bonus." Rewards can confirm one's competence, or motivate one to do better, more interesting work in the future (Amabile et al., 1996; Hennessey, Amabile, & Martinage, 1989).

Sandor's (2001) findings showed two themes similar to those found in this study: expected rewards and marketplace reputation. Participants in the current study reported the greatest reward lies in writing a script that is made into a movie and receiving onscreen credit for it. Participants detailed their internal and external struggles to push their scripts through the process and the many compromises they made in order to please their employers and avoid being cast off their own scripts. Because the ratio of screenplays developed to filmed is low, participants talked about the other benefits as well, such as the opportunity to work in a business that produces entertainment (Gordon), high salary (Brett, Murray, Jack), and the ability to work in an environment that allows access to their families (Lilly). However, in light of Sandor's focus on role evolution, it is unclear if there are additional scholarly links between the two studies.

This section presented various elements from creativity and innovation theories that align with participants' orientation to individualism, namely personality traits of creative individuals, their desire for holistic responsibility for their creative work, and the connection between rewards and punishments and motivation to create. Many of the elements from the creativity literature aligned well with descriptions from this study's participants. Thus, a tentative association was established between the well-validated characteristics and needs of individuals performing creative tasks and professional creators. I also presented apparent ties to the scholarly studies on professional creators evaluated in Chapter 2. In the next section, I will surface and discuss elements in the creativity and innovation literatures that parallel participants' orientation to collectivism.

Supports for collectivism. From the creativity and innovation literature, several concepts that supported the innovation team as a whole and that appeared in the findings will be highlighted in this section. Perceptions in the individual that are essential to unimpeded innovation in organizations included collaborative idea flow, the availability of key resources, and supportive managerial practices.

Collaborative idea flow. Many researchers have written about the importance of collaboration—specifically the flow of ideas that occur in it—as critical to innovative outcomes in organizational settings (Allen et al., 1980; Kanter, 1983; Kimberley & Evanisko, 1981; Monge et al., 1992; Zaltman et al., 1973). Additionally, creativity research has shown that the probability of creative idea generation increases as exposure to other potentially relevant ideas increases (Osborn, 1957; Parnes & Noller, 1972). Participants described the myriad ways they work collaboratively with others on

the innovation team. If we define collaboration simply as a group of people working together toward a common cause, then there was plenty of evidence that those interactions took place in participants' stories.

If we elevate the definition of collaboration to mean a building on one another's ideas in order to create a solution that is fuller and more developed than one would devise alone, then the results of this study suggest such activity to be extremely rare. Dennis, Brett, and Murray each described certain projects where the collaborative flow was exceptional. These observations largely stemmed from a clear vision for the project from the beginning, which was already mentioned as a hallmark of successful organizational innovation (Bailyn, 1985). Many more comments from all participants in this study described the need for an almost surgical extraction of useful ideas from meetings with unprepared collaborators. In Lilly's case, lack of qualified collaborators caused her to seek out development support completely outside of the project.

Availability of resources. The next element of successful innovation, the availability of crucial resources to innovation team members, was a prominent topic in this study's findings. The resources can include a wide array of elements: sufficient time for producing novel work, people with necessary expertise, sufficient funds, material resources, systems and processes necessary for work, relevant information, and the availability of training (Amabile, 1997). All of these, other than a need for material resources, were mentioned by participants.

Amabile (1996) made the connection between one's perception of adequate resources and its possible effects on a person's sense of the project's intrinsic value. Writers taking too much time before delivering a draft is a common complaint from

executives, perhaps because screenwriters' contractual deadlines are accepted as mere guidelines and rarely enforced. Psychological research in laboratory settings suggests that having time to explore alternative possibilities for the outcome on a project directly correlates with the creativity of task outcomes (Conti et al., 1993; Parnes, 1961; Ruscio et al., 1998; Whitney, Ruscio, Amabile, & Castle, 1995). Time pressure undermines creativity when it is perceived as imposed from outside as a means of control (Amabile, 1993).

However, for participants, adequate time to write was less important than how time was managed on their projects overall. One study estimated studio executives spent some 22 hours outside of normal business hours in any given week reading and evaluating material for feature films (Ferguson, 2004). Participants mentioned that too much time between meetings drained momentum, a loss they attributed to the development executives' heavy workloads. Studio executives apparently did not have or take the time to prepare for creative meetings. Thus, when teams did meet for one or two hours every couple of months, the added pressure on the writer to determine a direction to follow for subsequent changes to the current draft drove some, like Brett, to seek out other screenwriters for help in translating fuzzy requests into action.

Several other comments also suggested executives set a deliberately slow cadence for a script's development to keep as many open options as possible for potential films in the upcoming year's slate. The shifting competitive market, leadership changes (and thus changes in taste in films), and lack of overall strategic understanding of corporate mandates were mentioned as additional reasons behind project delays. Whatever the studio's reasons, project delays allow many more film

projects to be concurrently developed. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, only about one in 23 projects that executives purchase to develop are made into films. As Lilly so eloquently put it, perhaps if executives had less projects—and presumably had more time to become better skilled and more deeply involved with the fewer projects they have—screenwriters would be more satisfied with the process but far fewer would be earning a living.

All participants in this study spoke of the excitement and more fruitful collaborations that can occur when they are moving quickly. A recent case study involving screenwriters and development executives (Ferguson, 2009) on one highly-successful studio film showed that lack of time in the development process in order to reach production stimulated collaboration and camaraderie. In Chapter 2, we saw that some degree of organizational pressure has a positive influence on creativity if it is perceived as arising from an urgent, intellectually challenging problem (Amabile, 1988; Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1987). On a screenplay with market drivers pushing it toward production, such as talent attached to direct or star, or a competing project along similar storylines, the studio pressure on participants to write quickly had a positive effect on their perception of the collaboration.

Creativity is also enhanced when people have access to those with necessary expertise and training they may need (Amabile, 1997). All participants questioned the skill of most development executives. Jack placed a premium on executives who understood the fundamentals of storytelling. He, along with Murray and Lilly, considered executives necessary hurdles to be surmounted until a director could get involved.

Lilly suggested that all executives should be required to write at least three screenplays and run them through development workshops before allowing them to develop scripts for professional writers. I can attest that, in my case and those of many other executives, hired into executive positions is based on one's ability to evaluate, as opposed to create, stories. The rigors of a screenplay's structure and requirements, which are very specific, and the fundamental of storytelling are often overlooked criteria in hiring decisions. Furthermore, the availability of professional training for nonwriters in these areas is minimal.

Supportive management practices. Finally, several topics in management practices surrounding an innovation team were described in Chapter 2 that have some relevance to the findings and are more akin to collectivism. These include flexible project supervision, shared leadership, and formation of diverse work groups. Good communication flow and positive encouragement are also important. I will briefly review the literature for each topic and then will conclude with a discussion of their overall relevance to this study.

Several researchers suggested that creativity and innovation were fostered by project supervision that allowed for a considerable degree of freedom or autonomy in the conduct of one's work (Amabile, 1997). This is not surprising given the importance of autonomy and freedom for creative individuals. In addition to goal clarity already mentioned, project supervision is likely to foster creativity when there is good communication between the supervisor and the work group (Kimberley, 1981; Kimberley & Evanisko, 1981). Managers who allow for more participative management and shared decision-making among innovation team members help support

fruitful creativity (Allen, et al., 1980; Kanter, 1983; Kimberley & Evanisko, 1981; Monge et al., 1992; Zaltman et al., 1973). Enthusiastic support for the work of individuals as well as the entire group is also valuable (Delbecq & Mills, 1985; Orpen, 1990). It is likely that perceived supervisory support operates on creativity largely through people feeling that negative criticism, which can undermine intrinsic motivation, is less likely to occur (Amabile, 1979, 1983a, 1983b).

Finally, management practices for creativity include a manager's ability to form work groups that represent a diversity of skills and include people who trust and communicate well with each other. Members should challenge each other's ideas in constructive ways, be mutually supportive, and committed to the work they are doing (Amabile, 1997). Team member diversity and mutual openness to ideas may operate on creativity by exposing individuals to a greater variety of unusual ideas. Such exposure affects creative thinking positively (Parnes & Noller, 1972; Torrance, 1961). Constructive challenging of ideas and shared commitment may boost intrinsic motivation, which is enhanced by challenge in the work and a focus on the work itself (Amabile et al., 1994; Harter, 1978; White, 1959). Additionally, co-worker interaction can stimulate wider interests, add complexity, or introduce some competitive pressure to enhance the novelty, usefulness, or number of their contributions relative to co-workers (Cummings & Oldham, 1997).

Although Hackley and Kover (2007) did not refer to their participants' identity negotiation as being affected by the pull of collective creative needs, its findings align well with those of this study in two ways. In both studies the "bureaucratic system of judgment in [companies] disempowers creatives" (Hackley & Kover, p. 75). Second,

both studies featured participants that, despite their bitter complaints, are deeply passionate about their work. The authors suggested that agencies that employ these creatives could perhaps enjoy more creative outcomes from their hires if they put sympathy and energy into understanding their feelings of isolation and marginalization.

In summary, many of these managerial practices are not surprising given the plethora of studies on what good leadership looks like; inside or outside of team innovation, many appear the same. However, much of the literature cited thus far references managers and their employees in the more traditional hierarchies seen in businesses. Some of these studies cited above do reference project teams, but they assume an employee/employer relationship and not a complex network of work relationships (see Appendix A). Screenwriters are self-employed, not employees, and their supervisors change from project to project. Although there is an inherent team hierarchy, it is socially constructed by the screenwriter and can change from one project to another. Sandor's (2001) study, evaluated among studies of professional creators in Chapter 2, showed how a film producer's contribution to the script development process may vary from project to project, despite his or her prescribed role. The fluid nature of innovation requires individuals to assume other roles based on the flow of information and the needs of the project and other team members (Baker, 1992; Smith-Doerr & Powell, 2005; as cited in Sandor, 2001). A team composed of independent contractors and employees—and who represent different functions, expertise, and occupy different roles—creates a complexity in the group dynamic that appears to be missing from these and other team innovation studies. This issue deserves further study to explore whether these managerial practices prove to be as fruitful with mixed teams

and what other practices to consider.

Summary of Creativity and Innovation Literature

This section provided an overview of theories within the creativity and innovation literature that were relevant to this study's findings. The literature was divided into two sections to illustrate those more aligned with individualism or collectivism. Research suggested that a number of personality traits associated with creativity are individualistic in nature. These included internal locus of control, self-discipline, dogmatism (firmness), nonconformity, autonomy, and independence of judgment. They also included social and contextual influences on creativity, such as whether the person is offered holistic responsibility for a complete work and what the expected rewards are. Elements in the team innovation literature, such as collaborative idea flow, the availability of key resources, and supportive managerial practices for members of the innovation team, emphasize a more collectivist philosophy. The next section will present the dynamic tension between individualism and collectivism in the literature on conflict management.

Organizational conflict. The presentation of the organizational conflict management literature here provides a foundation on which the suggestions for practical application of the findings will be based. According to a 2008 survey (CPP), U.S. employees spent 2.8 hours per week dealing with conflict at an estimated cost of $359 billion in paid hours that year. One study estimated that managing conflict at work costs the average employer nearly 450 days of management time per year (Reade, 2004). Levine (1998) speaks of costs other than lost time and money. *Continuity* cost refers to the loss of ongoing relationships and the sense of community they provide.

Emotional costs include the pain of focusing on and of being "held hostage" by our emotions (p. 16). Reaching agreements on goals, making good decisions about how to achieve those goals, and helping each other accomplish activities despite differences are critical to team effectiveness (Thomas & Thomas, 2004). To be a high performing team, the ability to resolve conflict openly and constructively is paramount (Katzenbach & Smith, 2003).

Kenneth Thomas (1992), a well-known researcher in applied conflict management, has defined conflict as "a process that begins when one party perceives another party has or is about to negatively affect something the first party cares about" (p. 651). As is apparent in this definition, conflict is commonly thought of as a negative. It is framed as the result of poor communication, a lack of openness and trust between people, or failure of leadership. This *traditionalist* view of conflict is consistent with attitudes about group behavior that prevailed in the 1930s and 1940s. Attempts to improve group and organizational performance involved attending to the conflict's causes and correcting its associated dysfunction (Robbins & Judge, 2011). Despite its origins as a predominantly negative occurrence, all definitions of conflict commonly consider conflict a perception of incompatibility by a person or group. Once this incompatibility is acted upon, it starts the wheels of conflict in motion and the perception of disagreement rises to the surface of consciousness (Robbins & Judge, 2011, p. 454).

More recently, researchers realized that some conflict helps to thwart apathy and unresponsiveness to the needs for change and innovation (De Dreu & Van De Vliert, 1997). Some even go so far as to assert that more organizations probably fail because

of too little conflict (Robbins & Judge, 2011). The *interactionist* view of conflict is well aligned to the interactionist perspectives in the innovation literature (see Woodman, Schoenfeldt, Glover, Ronning, & Reynolds, 1989). The interactionist view differentiates types of conflict that are productive or functional, including task or process-related conflicts, from relationship conflict. Relationship conflict has been shown to be unproductive or *dysfunctional* in an organizational setting (Gamero et al., 2008; Jehn & Mannix, 2001; Yang & Mossholder, 2004). It appears that the friction and interpersonal hostilities inherent in relationship conflicts increase personality clashes and decrease mutual understanding, which hinders the completion of organizational tasks.

The detriments of unproductive conflict are well known: increased turnover, decreased employee satisfaction, operational inefficiencies, and labor grievances and strikes. It is one of management's major responsibilities to keep the intensity of such conflict as low as possible (Robbins & Judge, 2011). A 2006 survey by Accountemps of 150 senior executives in human resources, finance, and marketing functions found that they "waste" 18% of their time survey managing conflicts among their staff.

Benefits of productive conflict in organizations have been described extensively (see De Dreu & Van De Vliert, 1997). Productive conflict can produce solutions and bring about radical changes. It can band a group together against external threats, from which the resulting intragroup cohesion can be drawn upon as a resource.

The Shift to Managing Conflict

Tjosvold (1991) argued that since conflict is both inevitable and potentially constructive, organizations should become "conflict positive." Conflict positive

depends upon establishing conditions in which conflict can be managed cooperatively and workers can discuss their differences openly. This is referred to as the *managed conflict* perspective. Furthermore, literature on organizational influence indicates that rapid technological change, short product cycles, virtual teaming, and downsizing in a competitive market requires employees at every level to work against organizational threats (Cohen, Bradford, & Books24x7, 2005).

Research in managed conflict. There is a growing body of research around how to minimize the negative effects of conflict by preparing people, developing resolution strategies, and facilitating open discussion (Robbins & Judge, 2011, p. 436). There is significant debate in the literature about the conditions that produce productive conflict. For example, low levels of process conflict and low to moderate levels of task conflict can be functional, but only in very specific cases (Jehn & Mannix, 2001; Somech, Desivilya, & Lidogoster, 2009). Recent reviews have shown that task conflicts can lead to stimulation of new ideas at low to moderate levels, but at higher levels are usually equally as disruptive as relationship conflicts.

In the research related to team performance, task conflicts sometimes escalate into relationship conflicts because, in the heat of conflict, people fail to discriminate between task and relationship conflict (Peterson & Behfar, 2003). Moreover, process conflict becomes unproductive when arguments escalate around roles and responsibilities. Process conflict increases uncertainty about task roles, the time to complete tasks, and leads team members to work at cross-purposes (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). Finally, task conflict is also related to positive outcomes only when anchored by common goals and high levels of trust (De Dreu & West, 2001).

In the research connecting conflict to innovation, groups whose job design involves uncomplicated, routine tasks will not benefit from task conflict. Similarly, teams that do rely on innovative behaviors need not add conflict to their already active discussion of ideas (De Dreu & West, 2001). However, studies by Jehn (1995) and De Dreu and Weingart (2003) found a positive correlation between task-oriented conflict behaviors and individual team member creativity and innovation outputs. Conversely, when interpersonal conflict levels are high or team members anticipate an overly competitive or hostile negotiation, creative thinking skills are diminished (Carnevale & Probst, 1998). Some traits found to be present in highly creative individuals stand out for their connection to managing conflict: tolerance for ambiguity, delay of gratification, and courage to persevere. When individuals can tolerate the ambiguity of an unresolved issue, persevere in the face of intense frustration, and delay closure even when pressure to do so is high, innovation can thrive.

My findings showed a clear struggle between the desires of the individual and the needs of the team. Because creativity is an inherently individual act, it is natural then that professional creators would first aim to protect the integrity of their creative work when collaborating with others. Hackley and Kover's (2007) study evaluated in Chapter 2 connects well to the polarity concept because it captured the professional creator's negotiation between personal and professional identities. This study also touched upon conflict, but more in the sense of conflicting values between the creatives and advertising agencies, urging the latter to become more sensitive to the needs of these creatives rather than demonize them as "trouble." Conflict begins in the development process when the team begins discussions about the script. Conflict

manifests itself in communication when one evaluates another's point of view as incompatible with one's own viewpoint. Conflict seems inherent to interpersonal interactions, particularly those involving members of a team who are personally and financially committed to a common task.

Conflict styles. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument ("TKI"; Thomas, 1974) provides the nomenclature that many contemporary conflict management studies leverage. CPP, Inc. (2009), publisher of the TKI, introduced the instrument on their website as

> the world's best-selling instrument for conflict resolution. The 30-item, forced-choice inventory identifies a person's preferred conflict-handling mode, or style, and provides detailed information about how he or she can effectively use all five modes—competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. Using the TKI, individuals can learn to move beyond conflict and focus on achieving organizational goals and business objectives. Organizations can apply the TKI to such challenges as change management, team building, leadership development, stress management, negotiation, and communication. (para. 1)

Notable in this description are the last two sentences. One describes ways that individuals can use the TKI to "learn to move beyond conflict," which emphasizes that it is a negative experience to be overcome. The other emphasizes that organizations can apply the TKI to solve a plethora of major challenges. The two dimensions on which the instrument is built are assertiveness, aimed at satisfying one's own concerns, and cooperativeness, aimed at satisfying others' concerns. Thomas outlined five conflict styles as follows:

- *Competing* is assertive and uncooperative, a power-oriented mode. The intent is to win at all costs.
- *Collaborating* is both assertive and cooperative. It involves digging in to find a solution that fully satisfies the concerns of both individuals.

- *Compromising* is partially assertive and partially cooperative. The goal is to find an expedient, mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties.

- *Avoiding* is unassertive and uncooperative. Here there is an effort to diplomatically postpone or sidestep an issue rather than address it.

- *Accommodating* is unassertive and cooperative—the opposite of competing. The objective is to satisfy the concerns of the other individual fully without regard for one's own needs. (in CPP Inc., 2011, p. 2)

Figure 1 illustrates where each of the five styles sits relative to the other styles along the assertiveness and cooperativeness axes.

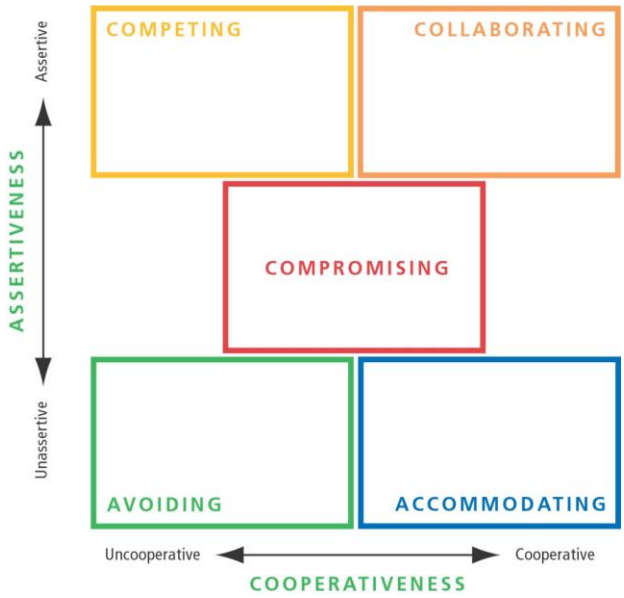

Figure 1. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument Model. *Note.* From *Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument* by K. W. Thomas and R. H. Kilmann, 1974, 2000. Mountain View, CA: Xicom, Incorporated, subsidiary of CPP, Inc. Copyright 1974, 2000 by CPP, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

This model captures my findings on two levels. First, each participant's comments reflected behaviors that could be clearly attributed to a dominant style when in conflict-rich situations. For example, the highly assertive approaches to team work

described by Jack and Lilly fit into the Competing style. On the opposite pole, Gordon and Alex's cooperative efforts to address their teammates' wishes represented a more Accommodating style. Brett alone spoke of his active decision to see development as a completely different process in which improving his ideas through the input of others was his primary goal. His style was equally assertive and cooperative, or Collaborative.

While all of the participants would consider themselves "collaborative," the work of a development team is necessarily conflict-rich. The screenwriter has written or will write a story that is put through a critical process of evaluation in which others make contributions by requesting changes to "improve" the screenwriter's work. The development process is a constant negotiation between individuals over one product for which they all have some responsibility, a responsibility that drives their paychecks. Thus, the stakes are quite high should their "collaboration" be unsuccessful.

Second, we can deduce that assertiveness is individualistic and cooperativeness is collectivist in their orientations. The collaborative style is both assertive and cooperative, thus leveraging the strengths of what individualism and collectivism offer. In the next section, we will review the literature on collaboration that is relevant to these findings.

Collaboration research. Current management and organizational theory elevates collaboration as the most effective method for managing conflict. Collaboration among those with clashing perspectives is likely the best method to harness that energy within innovative work teams to produce the most novel, useful products (Weiss & Hughes, 2005). I have yet to locate literature on developing conflict management skills that suggests developing a style other than collaboration. Whetten

and Cameron (2011) suggest it as a default behavior for good managers, or, if that fails, a resort to compromise. Ken Cloke (with Goldsmith, 2005) strongly stated,

> Compromise produces results that are intermediate, lukewarm, mediocre, vague, average, and ordinary. Collaboration produces results that are unexpected, synergistic, transformational, unique, creative, and amazing. For every opposite, there are simple and complex forms of combination. Simple combination consists of adding, averaging, or blending two parts until they disappear into one. Complex combination consists of bringing opposites into creative tension and multiplying or recombining them until they become something new and different. (as cited in Morgan, 2007, p. 4)

Somech, Desivilya, and Lidogoster (2009) found that groups with dominant cooperative conflict styles—accommodating, compromising, or collaborating—and a strong alignment with the overall group goals are more effective than groups with a more competitive style.

The negotiation and power literatures also advocate integrative leadership and group behaviors that seek to maximize the best of both party's positions. Working together day-to-day establishes the "living" nature of negotiation outcomes and cyclical, ongoing negotiations are to be expected. "There are no one-time negotiations and. . . .no long-term personal advantage to short-term gains won through unfair means" (Whetten & Cameron, 2011, p. 386). However, collaboration is more time consuming and taxing to implement, and less skillful leaders will often opt for less challenging styles. Even skillful leaders will revert to a more directive approach if the collaboration is not going in a desired direction (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1983).

As already cited in the first chapter, the sociocultural study of creativity emphasizes collaboration and the interconnectedness and mutuality of its participants. John-Steiner (2000) sought to capture the dynamic of individuals working creatively together, particularly creative partnerships in which one or both partners were

professional creators. She directly addressed the individualism vs. collectivism polarity. She likens creative collaboration to an interdependence of those who are thinking and learning together to create new knowledge. In the cultural-historical tradition of Vygotsky to which John-Steiner contributes, "creative activities are social . . .[and] thinking is not confined to the individual brain/mind. . .Construction of knowledge is embedded in the cultural and historical milieu from which it arises" (p. 5).

John-Steiner described four patterns of collaboration. One aptly described the division of labor found on feature film development teams. In complementarity collaboration, "participants negotiate their goals and strive for a common vision. . .[via] complementary expertise, disciplinary knowledge, roles, and temperament" (p. 198). Descriptions of collaboration in sociocultural studies seem, as Sawyer (2007) said, to romanticize the positive feelings that can occur from symbiosis. Therefore, a solid structure within this nascent research area with which to coordinate my findings eluded me. However, new areas of research must begin somewhere. It could also be said that my findings rely on interpretive inferences that might qualify it as theoretically soft, the same criticism delivered to researchers in the creative collaboration realm (Paulus & Nijstad, 2003). Perhaps more research around professional creators will bring the practical application of creative collaboration theories into focus.

Communication research. Renowned psychologist Carl Rogers found our tendency to evaluate as the single greatest barrier to communication (Rogers & Roethlisberger, 1952). He suggested that learning to listen fully to others would mitigate our evaluative impulses and greatly improve interpersonal communication. Gabarro (1991) made three excellent points that connect to this study's findings in his

contemporary response to Rogers and Roethlisberger's seminal article. First, while a lack of active listening still accounts for most routine breakdowns, the diversity of the modern workforce has increased the potential for misunderstandings. The diversity of the feature film development team brings together inexperienced and experienced professionals, corporate employees and independent contractors, leaders and their direct reports, all generations, and both sexes. It would seem subject to the mixed impacts of diversity on innovative outcomes (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Cabrales et al., 2008; Yap et al., 2005) and would account for more communication challenges. The general acceptance of active listening as a strategy has led to a number of efforts since the 1970s to empower employees. The premise is that leaders who listen to their employees show that they care about their input, and engender greater trust. However, Gabarro noted that while understanding can improve the negotiation process (Fisher et al., 1991; Walton, 1969), understanding alone does not resolve conflict.

Second, Gabarro (1991) noted that many other factors, such as consistency in behaviors and motivations, contribute to trust among team members. A willingness to listen and understanding is not enough to establish trust between two people. Participants' comments about the importance of listening and making others on the team feel heard were plentiful; however, the individual and team struggles were still dominant.

Third, and perhaps most relevant to this study, is what Gabarro (1991) called the "managerial paradox" (p. 109): the notion that the major activity of modern management is to make judgments, a bias that thwarts their inclination to listen carefully. He added that how we train managers further exacerbates the problem.

Business schools teach students evaluative listening, elevating the competitor who defends his or her position best. He concluded that managers must have both the ability to suspend judgment and the ability to make evaluative judgments. I think that this tension accounts for much of the struggle between members of development teams. Development executives are hired to make judgments on screenplays to feed the product pipeline. As Murray and many others mentioned, development executives must say something in order to justify their presence in the development meetings, and yet many participants felt that the executives often do not contribute in meaningful ways. Active listening also takes time, as Gabarro noted; perhaps the lack of time executives set aside for creative meetings with the team makes more structured or patient discussions less likely.

Conflict management interventions. This section will provide an overview of prevailing interpersonal and group techniques for stimulating conflict, and then those for resolving or managing conflict. To deepen our understanding of the findings, I will simulate the use of one method that I believe would be useful to an evaluation of the individualism/collectivism polarity and to surface some practical recommendations from the findings.

Conflict stimulation techniques. Robbins (1974) suggested several techniques that organizations can employ to stimulate healthy conflict. For example, restructuring can change people's roles and responsibilities and/or combine teams in new ways that can have positive consequences. In the case of a feature film development team, one might redefine the responsibilities of development executives or add marketing analysts or managers to the process as Murray suggested. One might even recombine writers

into new configurations (partnerships or teams) as Lilly advocated, to change the process dynamics in potentially positive ways.

Second, strategic communications can also be used to stir people to debate. All participants noted the lack of clear communication and direction-setting from senior studio management. A memorandum from studio leadership that set the strategic stage for each new script as it entered development would certainly create a basis for commonality that the process does not currently employ. This memo could include target market demographics, any potential talent they might like to see involved, competing projects at other studios, or thematic boundaries for the story. This information could help ground the team with an objective set of marching orders before beginning development.

Third, building a team identity that forges bonds around a common enemy—either a group or object—can reduce intergroup conflict. It has been my experience that the team does not discuss competing film projects in concurrent development at other studios. They appear superstitious about acknowledging the existence of these projects. An analysis of other similar film projects competing for audiences in the marketplace, and even openly reading and discussing drafts of their scripts, could be useful in rallying the entire team to want to win the race to the screen.

Lastly, bringing in outsiders with different backgrounds, values, and norms of behavior can stimulate healthy debate. Along a similar line, the addition of "devil's advocates" into group situations can shock them out of apathy, complacency, or groupthink (De Dreu & West, 2001). A classic study of decision-making by Boulding (1964) shows a fascinating paradox involving an experiment in which these dissenters

were placed into select groups tasked with resolving a complex problem. The outcomes of the groups with the devil's advocates, who stimulated more conflict, were judged as superior. Yet, these higher performing teams expelled these members because they made others feel uncomfortable, a widely shared reaction to conflict despite organizational gains because of it (Whetten & Cameron, 2011).

Occasionally, development teams will enlist researchers to help authenticate the setting of or character in a particular script, such as an entomologist for a giant insect movie or an aerospace engineer for a movie set in space. Stimulating the creative process by bringing experts and nonexperts representing different viewpoints on story elements could provide endless opportunities to see the story in new ways that the original team combination would not have discovered alone.

A study by Isaksen and Ekvall (2010) identified methods that increase the frequency of debate. They defined *debate* as positive, useful task-based disagreement, and *conflict* as destructive, negative personal disagreement. They found that administering style assessments such as the TKI (Thomas, 1974) or Creative Problem Solving Profile ("CPSP"; Basadur Applied Creativity, 2004a) highlighted differences among team members that could stimulate healthy debate around the implications of different preferences on group output. For example, if the CPSP were administered to a development team, it would identify those who were best suited to different phases of problem solving. "Generators" are strongest in presenting options in ideation phases. "Conceptualizers" excel at distilling options. "Optimizers'" are at their best during evaluation and selection of options. "Implementers" are at their best at the planning and production stages of the process. If no team member was identified with a style

more inclined to generate ideas, as was the case in Murray's descriptions of his development experiences, then the team would want to bring others onto the team for help when needed.

Conflict resolution techniques. There are methods for resolving both interpersonal and intergroup conflicts utilizing less cooperative styles that could be useful in some cases where development teams are engaged in unhealthy conflict (Robbins & Judge, 2011). One option would include authoritative command and top-down communication of a resolution. In the case of the development team, the senior-most person representing the studio might dictate a creative or technical direction for the story to take to break a stalemate of competing opinions. Another method for an organization to resolve unproductive conflict is by making structural changes to move conflicting parties apart (such as through transfers, job redesign, or creation of intermediary positions). Depending on the power structure within the team, writers are frequently replaced when development becomes difficult, even if the difficulty is not clearly attributable to the writer. Occasionally, a new executive will be brought on to a project permanently or temporarily to add a fresh perspective. If the writer has more experience and success than others do on the team and strong relationships with senior-level studio management, the writer may request the removal of an executive from the process.

Interventions that support a more democratic approach to conflict in innovation teams, first mentioned in Chapter 2, have common attributes that will be outlined here. Third-party peacemaking (Walton, 1969), principled negotiations (Fisher et al., 1991),

integrative bargaining (Stroh et al., 2002), and polarity management (Johnson, 1992) suggest common design traits:

1. *Problem-solving* in face-to-face meetings designed to facilitate open discussion, where people are separated from the issue and agreement is more likely to be about the unreasonableness of a direction (task conflict) instead of seeing the other party as being unreasonable (relationship conflict);
2. Creating *superordinate goals* around which participants care equally and that cannot be attained without mutual cooperation;
3. A *focus on interests* instead of positions, in which the classic collaborative statement might be, "Help me understand why you advocate that position";
4. Inventing *options for mutual gains*, in which the focus is generating unusual, creative solutions through brainstorming alternative, mutually agreeable solutions. Using this technique, the interpersonal dynamics naturally shift from competitive to collaborative and more options and combinations to explore increase the probability of finding common ground;
5. Using *objective criteria for evaluating alternatives* so that the focus is on what makes the most sense and what is fair. If the parties have agreed to collaborate, it is difficult to sustain the openness and reasonable attitude outside of structured conversations; thus, objective criteria for evaluating what options help arrive at the best outcome helps alleviate retrenchment in initial positions;
6. *Define success* by real gains. Even if gains are small, the gap in expected outcomes can be communicated as a loss. Maintaining a positive attitude about

gains as wins toward mutually beneficial solutions is important to sustain satisfaction in a collaboration*;*

7. *Training* in behavioral change techniques to support resolution (Schein & Bennis, 1965);
8. Increasing the amount of interaction and communication between groups (French & Bell, 1999).

The next section will illustrate how to manage toward superordinate goals. This method, called polarity management, could evoke a conversation with film industry members on how to reconcile the apparent dichotomy of individual creativity and collective production. It is also a method that could be used to create actionable plans around unresolvable tensions that cause turbulence for innovation teams.

Polarity management. Polarity Management, as defined by Barry Johnson (1992), is a process by which people can come to agreement on how to manage ongoing, unsolvable issues. A polarity exists when there is an issue that has competing solutions. Applied practically, the steps in the intervention are shown in Table 10. A polarity identified in this study is the dynamic tension between a screenwriter's individualism and the collectivism required when working with others. In Step 1, the superordinate goal of the screenwriter that supersedes both of these forces could be defined as script success, defined as a greenlight for production. Conversely, the opposite of this goal is script failure, in which the script is officially abandoned by the financier.

Table 10

Polarity Management Intervention Steps.

Step	Activity	Details
Step 1:	Identify the Polarity	a) Get clear description of issues; make sure all parties agree. b) Decide on two different positions that clearly represent the polarity. c) If possible, develop a superordinate goal that all can agree on.
Step 2:	Map the Polarity	d) All identify upsides of each polarity. e) All identify potential downsides of each polarity. f) Ensure agreement by all on map content.
Step 3:	Gain/ Maintain the Upside	g) All identify advantages on both sides worth keeping. h) Identify what is already being done to realize benefits from each pole. i) Brainstorm what new things might be done to realize benefits of this pole. j) Choose 2 or 3 doable actions with greatest benefit for effort expended; set deadlines and responsible party.
Step 4:	Minimize the Downsides	k) Build in an alarm system: What indicators or measurements would tell us the downsides are prevailing? l) Prioritize most pressing issues in bottom quadrants. m) Brainstorm a list of potential strategies for dealing with most pressing issues. n) Choose 2 or 3 doable actions with greatest benefit for effort expended; set deadlines and responsible party.
Step 5:	Follow-up & Reassess	o) Agree on a date to meet again and check progress, and decide if more action is required.

Note. From *"Working with unsolvable problems: Paradox/polarity management,"* by B. Alban, 2004, conference proceedings: Pepperdine MSOD Alumni Conference. Copyright 2004 by B. Alban. Adapted with permission.

In Step 2, the polarity is mapped by listing the potential upsides and downsides of either pole (see Figure 2).

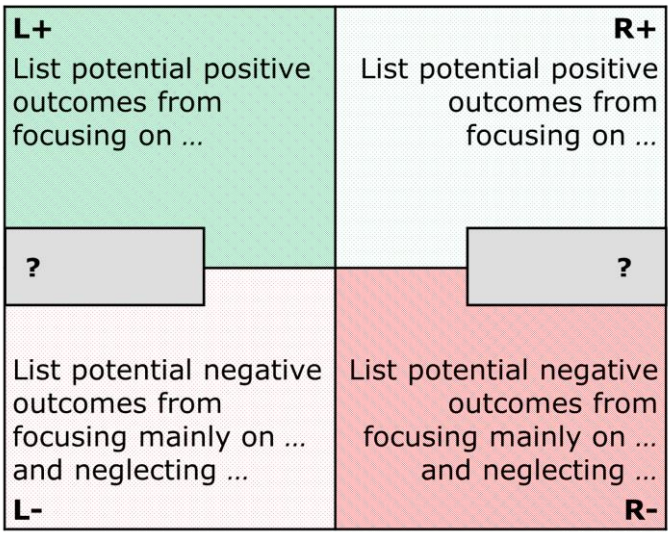

Figure 2. Polarity Management Map™ exercise. *Note.* From "Polarity Management: A Summary Introduction" by B. Johnson (1998). Copyright 1998 by Polarity Management Associates. Adapted with permission.

The benefits of individualism for a screenwriter include focused energy, realization of personal vision, and creative freedom. They also experience a feeling of responsibility and less frustration or emotional exhaustion. The downside or detriments of individualism for a screenwriter include lack of feedback on the story and lack of general support from others. They miss the contributions of those with responsibilities during filming (i.e., studio executive and director), and the added motivation that others' ideas can provide.

On the side of collectivism, the potential benefits to a screenwriter include diversity of thought, stimulation of dialogue and debate, and shared risk-taking. Additional gains might be hearing new and/or different ideas outside of one's own experience or thinking, and shared responsibility for and help in delivering the work. On the downside, collectivism can reduce fresh ideas to their lowest common denominator through compromise, cause time loss, and produce less discernible

contributions. Scattered energy, emotional exhaustion from excessive negotiation, and power struggles are also possible.

Looking at both lists, we can see some matched pairs. The upside of individualism tends to alleviate the downside of collectivism. The downside of individualism is remedied by the upside of collectivism. Johnson (1998) illustrated this with a breathing analogy. The body's need for oxygen causes us to breathe in. Our bodies then produce carbon dioxide as a byproduct, which we must expel. The continuous loop of breathing is similar to an organizational polarity and could be mapped this way using pairs of upsides and downsides. In Figure 3, you see a potential upside of individualism, a screenwriter's creative freedom, the downside of which could be a lack of fresh ideas from other team members. The upside of collectivism resolves this downside, which is the availability of new and/or different ideas outside of the screenwriter's purview from others. The downside of that for a screenwriter could be that, by incorporating the ideas of others, his or her contributions to the script may be less noticeable.

In Step 3, I would seek to identify the advantages of both upsides that must be preserved: the benefits of the screenwriter's creative freedom and the benefits of receiving new and/or different ideas from collaborating with others. Creative freedom might be served by respecting the screenwriter's ability to implement an idea in the course of writing. The collective wisdom of the team in service of new, different ideas should benefit the screenwriter when he or she retreats to write.

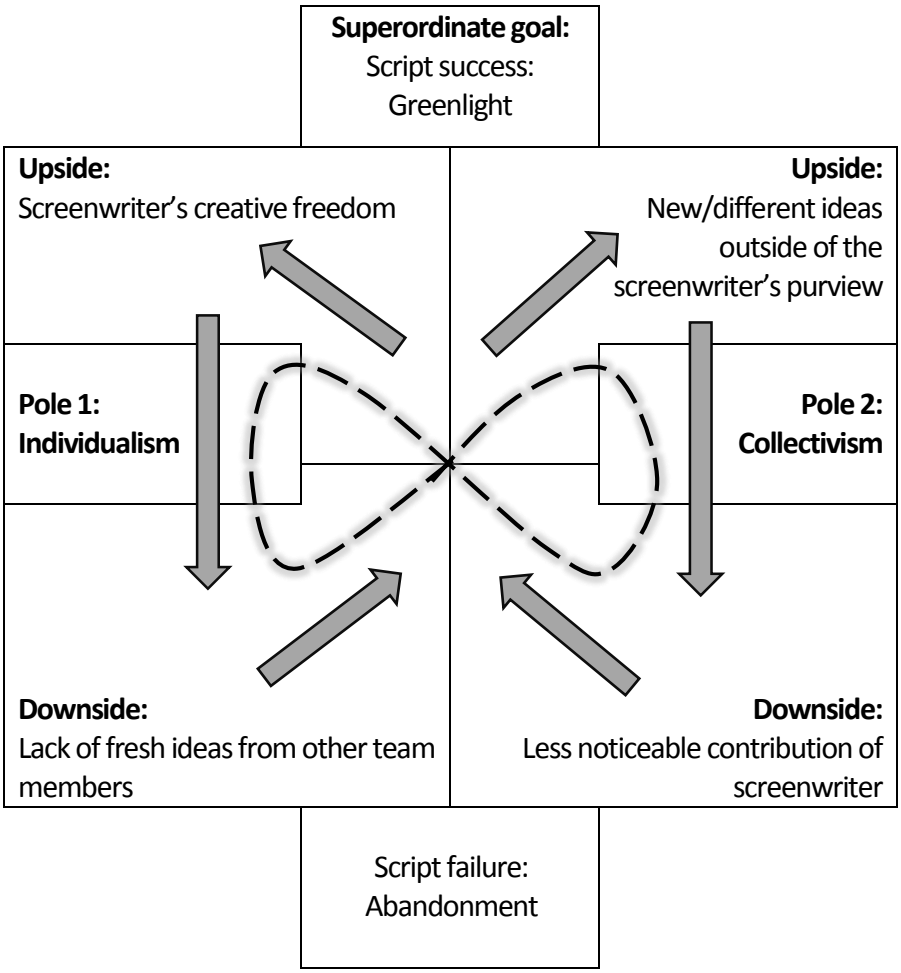

Figure 3. Polarity Management Map™ sample. *Note.* From "Polarity Management: A Summary Introduction" by B. Johnson (1998). Copyright 1998 by Polarity Management Associates. Adapted with permission.

Participants noted that they are generally granted the final decision in the course of writing on how to execute a request. What more could be done, as Murray suggested, is for the team to agree on desired outcomes for the story or character in creative meetings, as opposed to exact changes to be made. The writer needs the freedom to determine the best means to execute the outcome and still maintain the integrity of the script, as was Brett's concern. Creative meetings are usually scheduled and take place at intervals between drafts, which allow for some collective wisdom to

be shared. Formal brainstorming methods, separating the process of diverging on ideas from converging on the most desirable ones, might also be implemented so that all ideas are considered before their evaluation. Another possibility would be to schedule meetings at intervals that the writer requests so that the team can contribute ideas that are useful to the writer when he or she needs help, as Lilly suggested, as opposed to times dictated by the contract.

Providing training for development executives and writers on brainstorming techniques and the goal of providing options for story outcomes as opposed to direct suggestions for changes to the writing seem like good strategies. More frequent meetings based on the screenwriter's need for feedback and support could be allowed between deliveries of drafts. These should not count toward the official delivery of the draft from a screenwriter's contractual standpoint.

Step 4 is a plan to minimize the downside of each pole. In this example, the downside of creative freedom is a lack of fresh ideas from other team members. If a writer has not reached out to anyone for several weeks, it should raise an alarm and a brief weekly phone call for the team if not a face-to-face meeting should be arranged. The potential downside of a screenwriter's receiving more ideas from others counters the importance placed on having responsibility for a whole, identifiable work (Cummings & Oldham, 1997). To mitigate this blurring of the script's authorship, a mandate for the writer to choose the best method for addressing the outcomes requested by the team respects his or her unique skill.

The purpose of this section was to illustrate the applicability of an intervention from the prevailing conflict management literature and, at the same time explore

recommendations for action to address the issue at the heart of the findings: individualism vs. collectivism. This method—polarity management—showed that it has value as an intervention design to structure productive discussions and action plans around unsolvable problems facing the participants in this study.

Conflict management intervention summary. This section provided an overview of prevailing interpersonal and group techniques for stimulating conflict, and then those for resolving or managing conflict. To deepen our understanding of the findings, I illustrated how a development team could manage toward their mutual goal of receiving greenlight for filming using polarity management. The model facilitates a structured conversation among team members on how to reconcile the apparent dichotomy of individual creativity and collective production. Using the findings, I simulated the applicability of this intervention method to address the issue at the heart of the findings: individualism vs. collectivism. While polarity management is one method for structuring discussions around unsolvable issues for film development teams, it is one that could be used to create actionable plans around unresolvable tensions that cause turbulence for other types of innovation teams as well.

Summary of Discussion

Two benefits emerged from this study. First, the findings delivered on the research purpose: They revealed substantial data about the experiences of professional creators that are absent from the scholarly discussion within creativity, innovation, and business literatures. Secondly, analysis around the stakes—or risks—faced by participants suggested a motivation to protect one's individuality was an underlying driver of their actions. This driver showed in participants' comments as dynamic

tension between a creative professional's individualism and the collectivism required to collaborate with others toward the production of one's product. Participants' comments showed that the quality of one's writing is but one aspect of a successful screenwriting career. A premium is placed on attitudes and behaviors that build one's reputation as a writer with whom fellow collaborators—some of whom control the purse strings—enjoy working. Thus, what was hanging in the balance for these participants was their ability to be employed as screenwriters.

The previous sections sought to show connections between the study findings and existing literature. Individual elements within creativity and innovation studies, including those featuring professional creators, were evaluated for their supports for individualism and their supports for collectivism. Specific examples from the study findings were cited. In addition, the conflict management literature was introduced because of its scholarly ties to collaboration research. Finally, to begin a discussion of recommendations, an overview of conflict management interventions—those designed to stimulate or resolve conflict—was presented. One conflict management intervention, polarity management, was chosen as a model to explain the individualism/collectivism paradox revealed among this population of professional creators. The mapping of polarities appeared to be a useful design for managing issues surfaced by participants in the interviews. The next section will present some key limitations of the findings.

Study Limitations

The primary limitation in this research was the sample size and composition. If the study was conducted again and the sample size was increased to include more screenwriters, the findings could reveal different themes and/or different conclusions.

Similarly, the sample composition could have been mined for variables that may have yielded new evaluations of the data. For example, with more females in the sample, perhaps some remarkable themes along gender lines would have emerged. Other demographic variables, such as age, sexual orientation, race, and years of writing experience, were also not utilized in this study and could have produced interesting variations among the results. Other professional variables, such as the decision to write solo or in partnership, expertise in particular genres, ratio of development projects to screen credit for the completed film, and box office grosses of completed films, could have added significant categories for analysis. If this study were to be conducted again, selecting participants for their affiliation with certain demographic and/or professional variables could provide more opportunities for variation in the results.

Another limitation of this research was its dependence on archival data from interviews conducted in 2003. If the participants were approached again some 10 years later, they would have different stories and many more experiences to share. Whether the themes would have been distinctly different is not clear. However, it could also be said that the distinct time and place that the data were gathered is as relevant unto itself as if different data were gathered today.

As I mentioned in Chapter 3, the development process has changed very little over the years, like many other aspects of the film business model and operations. The film industry, in my opinion, is surprisingly antiquated in its own organizational practices considering it thrives on the zeitgeist.

My decision not to contact the participants was due to an apparent conflict of interest in which, during the years when this study was conducted, I was employed by

two of the six major motion picture studios. First, my employer benefactors during my doctoral program might have felt entitled to the data as relevant to their operations. Second, the participants would not have felt as trusting of me, despite my promise to maintain their anonymity, as a representative of one of their major employers. My affiliation with any one of the studios would undoubtedly have changed the content of what participants chose to share with me, irreparably corrupting the soundness of the original data and the overall trustworthiness of the current study.

Ideas for Future Research

Additional research could take several directions: sharing the ideas that came out of the findings, expanding the participant sample of the existing study, conducting a longitudinal study, exploring the intersection of the findings with emerging theories, and testing the usefulness of the recommended intervention.

Sharing Findings

Sharing the major themes and/or data with others involved in the feature film development process would offer new ways of looking at the existing data. Their feedback—and the reactions, emotions, and ideas that emerge for them—are data as well. For example, presenting the findings with directors and/or studio executives would provide a basis for stimulating discussion.

Discussions with studio leadership around the film studio's organizational structure, job design, and operations could be rewarding. If writers are at the genesis of the film project, the studio leaders are most active at greenlight and at its release to audiences toward the end. Certainly, those responsible for the financial decisions at

higher levels in the studio would have their own unique perspective on filling the film pipeline.

Expand Participation

First, one could conduct the same study with new screenwriters and combine and/or compare the findings from the 2003 interviews with new data. Interviewing directors and development executives, as professional creators and also creative *interpreters* of the script, would yield more perspectives on the development process. Interviewing a combination of film writers and television writers to compare their perspectives could be especially interesting. The development process for television is structured differently than that for films. First, scripts are shorter, but must be executed very quickly to meet the demands of a weekly show. There are several writers who make up the writing team, all of whom have some individual writing responsibilities as well as collaborative responsibilities to their fellow teammates. The show's creator is usually the lead writer on the team, sets the creative direction, and is awarded Executive Producer credit on the television show; directors in television are lower in the power hierarchy than writers and producers.

The television development process, involving daily creative collaboration and writing on the fly, often while sitting and brainstorming ideas with other writers during the production season of the show offers new pressures, pacing, and processes to consider. Comparing how television writers experience development as compared with their film counterparts would be a fascinating way to continue the exploration of professional creators' experiences of collaborations. Furthermore, television and film writers are professional "siblings" employed by brother/sister industries frequently

under the same corporate umbrella. Another variation of this research could be interviewing writers who actively write in both media for their viewpoints on their comparative practices.

Independent film writers might also have an interesting perspective on their development process. If the findings were shared with them for their feedback, or if they were interviewed as a separate population, their comments would probably show some unique patterns. As mentioned in the design limitations in Chapter 3, independent films are subject to a different process and pressures that may affect the creative process for writers differently. For example, other constraints may have an impact on independent film writers' creative process, such as the early attachment of talent to the script so that a return on financier investment can be estimated.

Two other ways to expand the study would be to extend the current study's database by launching a survey to Writers Guild of America members. The Guild may have a stake in the extension of the data as it is their goal to support and guide the careers of writers through fair practices and compensation via their labor contracts with the major studios. Another forum could be an event in which a panel of current screenwriters could discuss, among an interactive audience of writers, their reflections on the findings. The Guild produces research reports that are showcased and brought into a wider community discussion through such sponsored events.

Conduct Longitudinal Study

It would be suitable for me, as I am no longer an employee of a major studio, to approach the original participants to gauge their interest in reviewing the findings and being interviewed again. I decided not to conduct participant checks in the 2004 study

to avoid inconveniencing these participants in a difficult-to-access population in a closed industry. However, they may find a review some years later interesting for reasons of personal growth. Evaluating their commentary some 10 years after the original data were collected would help to evaluate the validity of the current findings and also to refresh and extend them into new areas. Noting the ways in which their careers have evolved personally, professionally, and in their accomplishments would be fascinating to me, but could have significance to a deeper understanding of professional creators' experiences in collaboration as well.

Explore Alignment with Emerging Theories

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the sociocultural approach to studying creative collaboration shows promise in providing researchers with a preliminary framework that, if applied in studies with professional creators, could provide new insights. Issues participants faced in collaborations, especially those caused by impatience, ownership, conflict, and unfriendliness (Moran & John-Steiner, 2004) are particularly poignant topics from what this study's participants expressed. Furthermore, John-Steiner (2000) directly referenced the notion that creative collaboration necessarily involves the reconciliation, if possible, of dichotomies. Although these works did not provide sturdy links to this study's findings, asking more specific questions around the issues described above of a participant sample similar to those selected for this study could yield findings to augment the rigor of the creative collaboration literature.

Apply Recommended Intervention

Another researcher without access to the participants in the original study could quite easily test out the effectiveness of polarity management as an intervention with

innovation teams. The scholarly connection between team innovation and conflict management provides a strong basis on which to try various applied interventions. As research on interventions with active project teams are rare, this new research direction would be significant on its own. I think that polarity management is a good choice for this population of feature film development teams and could yield some very thought-provoking results if tested in action. Similarly, other tools such as the Creative Problem Solving Profile (Basadur Applied Creativity, 2004a) mentioned in the literature review on conflict stimulation techniques earlier in this chapter has future research potential. I have preliminarily tested this assessment and its associated problem-solving model with teams of professional creators and non-creative management in a major studio's film and television divisions; it showed promising results for future applications targeted to intact work teams.

Key Learnings

From this research, I saw dimensions of feature film development and screenwriting that I had not seen before. I also gained useful insights into how I see myself as a practicing consultant in light of this study's findings. Finally, I remembered some important things about life in general, how I make sense of it and move through its ups and downs. To conclude this paper, the three sections below will highlight some of these learnings.

Learnings about Feature Film Development

Below are five polarities that summarize what I learned from the findings in this study.

Keeping the peace vs. speaking up. The choice to stay silent or speak out in a group viscerally captures the individualism/collectivism polarity, which is recognizable to us as an archetypal conflict far beyond creativity or work. We all must reconcile ourselves to the risks we take in standing up for ourselves when the loss of group membership is possible. Standing out, however authentic the expression, can alienate us from others, some of whom are people whose support we want and need.

A highly agreeable temperament may help a screenwriter build alliances and build a reputation for being a pleasure to work with. However, defending one's integrity as a creative person, demanding respectful treatment from fellow collaborators, and speaking up about what is right for the script could result in a screenwriter's removal from a project. It could even land a screenwriter on the proverbial blacklist, labeled as "difficult." Screenwriters likely choose how much courage is safe to display when they have assessed the hierarchy on the team. Participants described various ways they balanced when to speak up and when to stay silent.

For anyone who spends time in organizational life, this is not a unique requirement. In this study's participants, the tension was distinctive due to its intrapersonal manifestation: how they negotiated with themselves to use or silence their speaking voices in defense of their visions when their writing voices were threatened. Yet their writing voices were presumably what brought them together with their collaborators in the first place. The question resulting from this dynamic could be, in what ways does speaking up or staying silent in the development process affect outcomes?

Creative art vs. technical craft. Another polarity that emerged was freedom vs. structure: the screenplay as creative expression within a necessary technical mold. Before money is spent on script, a script's creativity and freshness is revered. After money is spent, the emphasis turns to what will be feasible to shoot as a film and what will attract directors and actors. Tension arises from at least two sources. First, participants described wanting to be trusted to write autonomously and respected as a creative individual and expert, and they also spoke of wanting more connection to production and its urgencies. A few warned, if you want creative freedom, do not write a screenplay. Second, scripts are like dough—they get tough the more your knead them. As a script is changed to become more practical, it sometimes gets overworked and loses some of its freshness that sparked attention in the first place. So the question becomes, how does a team use the development process to make the script more attractive to talent without diminishing its freshness?

Successful collaboration vs. jobs program. Successful collaboration, in which everyone on the development team is building upon the ideas of others to create something better than they could alone, would make for a smoother process that ends in greenlight. Every participant in this study wished for better collaboration with their project colleagues and spoke of myriad ways they try to support it. If the development process was improved such that fewer writers and projects were terminated and more development projects reached greenlight, then the ratio of scripts purchased to those made would significantly increase. However, this increase means that far fewer writers in business with the major U.S. studios would have careers as screenwriters.

Lilly spoke of accepting the issues of development as necessary challenges since

many writers and executives still work in Hollywood because development fails. The question to answer from this polarity is: do studios want to improve the development process toward purchasing fewer scripts and developing more of the scripts into films, thus saving money? Would development process participants rather experience improvements that could result in a more positive work environment if it meant that fewer people overall could participate? Alternatively, are there other ways of collaborating that maintain employment levels and/or benefit from diversity of thought and experience that presumably result from greater numbers of contributors?

Development as process unto itself vs. development as means to an end. There is tension between the two development processes, the one in which team members are trying to make good use of their time until the second one starts, when a director comes on board and filming becomes a real possibility. In many cases, the people involved in the first process do not continue into the second one, either because they do not have the seniority to work with the director or because the director has intimates with whom he or she would rather work. Consequently, there may even be some subconscious reluctance to fully resolve a script's "issues" or come to agreement because it could signify the end of one's usefulness to the project.

The participants who regularly transitioned into writing with a director at the helm were anxious to get through the development process and complained more about its slowness. Those participants who did not regularly work with directors seemed more accepting somehow of development's drama and inefficiencies. Furthermore, a studio's acceptance of the odds that most scripts do not receive a greenlight for whatever reason may have some correlation to the number of scripts they develop at

one time and the ensuing slower pace that number necessitates. One question that emerges is, are development team members consciously or subconsciously slowing the process? If so, why? Another question is, if slowness affects momentum, does a lack of momentum affect desired outcomes?

Babysitters vs. collaborators. All of the participants wished for better-prepared executives who put time and effort into the development. Some felt that executives lacked fundamental skills to be of much use to the writer and could use training at the start of their careers. Murray mentioned that many highly paid writers simply do as these nonstorytellers ask so they can work more and get through the process. They hope that, in the end, their scripts will still be intact enough to catch the attention of a director. Several participants admitted to colluding in this way as well.

Murray suggested that if writers behave authentically and disagree openly, a healthier ecosystem—a natural system of checks and balances—is created that would help the system flourish in new ways. If one likens the development team members, other than the director, to project babysitters, as some participants suggested, then does it matter if they have superior storytelling skills?

As already mentioned, good collaboration might feel more harmonious and might better serve the integrity of the story and its team members. However, it might also reduce long-term security for them because, with greater success in development, fewer writers may get writing work and there would be fewer projects for executives to develop. Furthermore, success, meaning greenlight, may still have little to do with "successful" development or a quality script. A question emerges: Do studios and

others who hire development executives feel that training them to be better storytellers will help, hurt, or make no difference to filmmaking?

Learnings about Consulting

The last question I ask myself as a result of this study is, what has this taught me about myself as a consultant? My own central struggle, and for many OD practitioners, is balancing our role as expert vs. facilitator. The moniker "consultant" implies we must have some tools or knowledge that others do not. Those who hire us expect that we will bring this expertise to them; that is presumably what prompted them to find someone to assist them and what they expect in exchange for their money. The pressure to deliver goods in advance of results is strong for me and for many in my position. Knowing the most effective, current tools that will resolve organizational issues puts us at the front of the hiring line.

Yet, the transformative learning in our clients occurs of their own volition, not because of information I provide. The most effective OD methods involve facilitation, in which we build environments to bring out the innate knowledge of our clients, not the other way around. Schein's (1999) seminal book on process-based consultation calls on practitioners to discern what they think they know from what they do not know. When I am asked for advice by a client, it takes strength to dismiss the power they are granting me, as would be accepted in a doctor-patient relationship. Asking deeper questions to reveal more about the client's reality encourages others to find their own wisdom within their complaints and leads the consulting down a facilitative vs. directive path.

Everything I do with my clients is an intervention, Schein (1999) reminds us.

Presenting the findings of this research in this publication has consequences for the participants, for me, and for others involved in feature film development. Because my intention is to be helpful, I am acutely aware of how the findings could be used to help or to divide people further in my industry. As I continue the conversation with this client population about how to improve the process, I must stay open to what is helpful to them as opposed to what seems most provocative to address.

This leads to another of Schein's (1999) directives: The client owns the problem and the solution, not the practitioner. In this case, it is only the screenwriters and their collaborators who live the day-to-day reality of trying to make ideas into films. Therefore, they will dictate the best course of action for them. My job is to support them to get the help they want, not the help I want them to have.

Without a concrete hypothesis to test next, my findings feel somehow less groundbreaking than I might have liked. However, a new understanding of professional creators' worlds necessitated a starting point. I am comforted by the practice of process consultation's last tenet: involving the client in the diagnosis of their situation. Sharing the new problems I found through this study with the same participants or others in their positions will involve the very people who have the most to gain and lose in what course of action can be taken.

In the humanistic psychology tradition of Rogers (1961), May (1975), and Maslow (1968), people are already whole, not broken and in need of fixing. They have within them the capacity to change and grow in meaningful ways for them. My role as a dedicated helper toward individual growth—whether related to work life or personal

life—is to facilitate the conversations and actions that will remind clients of their capacity.

How do I marry my knowledge with building the capacity of others? In spite of the rich data that emerged in this study, I am only a small step closer to a model that accurately reflects what supports and thwarts professional creators. What did emerge was a process model—polarity management—that could be a useful container in which to hold a conversation about the findings. Discussing competing and interdependent constructs as polarities might reduce my clients' anxiety about there being a magical inoculation out there for their troubles. In this way, the polarities presented above provide me with additional springboards for fruitful conversation.

Learnings about Life

What is most exciting to me about the exploration of polarities in this study's findings and intervention recommendations is that it honors the duality of life—the paradoxes, the pairs of opposites we all see around us in daily existence. We can address them with struggle or with grace. The more complex problems yearn for more concrete solutions; therefore, we spend much of our lives negotiating problems that may not be resolvable because we also value the benefits of their opposing forces. Lao Tzu beautifully captured this some 2,500 years ago in his Tao Te Ching (Laozi, Yi-Ping, & Muller, 2005):

> All in the world recognize the beautiful as beautiful.
> Herein lies ugliness.
> All recognize the good as good.
> Herein lies evil.
>
> Therefore
> Being and non-being produce each other.
> Difficulty and ease bring about each other.

> Long and short delimit each other.
> High and low rest on each other.
> Sound and voice harmonize each other.
> Front and back follow each other.
>
> Therefore the sage abides in the condition of wu-wei (unattached action).
> And carries out the wordless teaching.
> Here, the myriad things are made, yet not separated.
>
> Therefore the sage produces without possessing,
> Acts without expectations
> And accomplishes without abiding in her accomplishments.
>
> It is precisely because she does not abide in them
> That they never leave her. (chap. 2)

The Tao, like other ancient philosophical and spiritual texts, speaks to a theory of duality, nonaction, and harmony. Holding on to our perspectives creates a separation from the opposite perspective and the two perspectives exist as absolutes and in negative tension. When two sides are not held on to firmly, they can co-exist in positive tension, or harmony. The process of writing this paper reminded me that opposites must co-exist and that I do not have to react or resolve them. Thus, it is with a peaceful feeling that I end this journey and begin another commendable and heartening pursuit: to maintain harmony with myself, my clients, and the natural order of life.

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Appendix A

Common Roles in the Motion Picture Development Process and Their Descriptions

Role	Description
Screenwriter	• Independent contractor paid by private or Studio Funds for an idea, an existing script, or for his/her skills to execute on another's idea or existing script. • Writes screenplay drafts, based on number outlined in contract. • Can receive screen credit for major contribution. • Under protection of writer's union (i.e. Writer's Guild of America).
Producer	• Guides overall creative direction and approaches talent to attach to script. • Owner/operator of Production Company, which may be under contract and/or receiving financial support from Studio. • May or may not have invested private or company funds (sometimes provided by a contracting Studio) to secure screenwriter's services on their behalf. • Receives one or more forms of Producer screen credit, depending on different roles assumed and number of producers involved in project. • Often under protection of producer's union (i.e. Producer's Guild of America).
Producer's Development Executive(s)	• Salaried Production Company employee paid by Producer via private or Studio funds. • Guides screenwriting on behalf of Producer. • Suggests talent attachments. • Can be junior, mid-, or senior level/Partner. • Can receive screen credit for major contribution.
Senior Studio Executive/ Studio Head	• Salaried Studio employee. • Approves screenplay draft submissions based on agreed changes. • Makes final recommendation for greenlight. • Has likely invested funds in securing the screenwriter on behalf of the requesting Producer, Director, or Actor or directly for the Studio. • Does not receive screen credit. • Required to adhere to all contracted union rules.

Role	Description
Studio's Development Executives	• Salaried Studio employee. • Guides screenwriting and story on behalf of Studio. • Suggests talent attachments. • Can be junior, mid-, or senior level. • Does not receive screen credit.
Director/ Director-Producer	• Guides script to align with his/her filming vision. • Leverages relationships with actors to attach them to script. • May be independent contractor who will be paid fee to direct film; or may be owner/operator of Production Company, which may be under contract and/or receiving financial support from Studio, in which case Director often also acts as Producer. • May or may not have invested private or company funds (sometimes provided via contracting Studio) to secure screenwriter's services on their behalf. • Will receive screen credit for filming the script. • Under protection of director's union (i.e. Director's Guild of America).
Actor(s)/ Actor-Producer	• Guides creative direction of role they have agreed to play and other key roles/characters. • May be independent contractor who will be paid fee to act in film; or may be owner/operator of Production Company, which may be under contract and/or receiving financial support from Studio, in which case Actor often also acts as Producer. • May or may not have invested private or company funds (sometimes provided via contracting Studio) to secure screenwriter's services on their behalf. • Under protection of actor's union(s) (i.e. Screen Actors Guild, American Federation of Television and Radio Artists).
Actor(s')/Director's/ Screenwriter's Development Executive(s)	• Salaried Production Company employee or independent contractor or Manager. • Guides screenwriting toward the film Director wants to make, role Actor has agreed to play and development of other key story characters, or script Screenwriter has agreed to write. • Can be junior, mid-, or senior level/Partner. • Can receive screen credit for major contribution.

Appendix B

Comparison of 2004 Study's Interview Protocol with New Questions Aligned to 2012 Study's Research Question

Original Categories:			
	Original 2003 interview questions:	**New 2012 questions:**	**New question purpose:**
Introduction to the person:			
		Participant background	
1	First, briefly tell me about how you got started in the business and how it led you to where you are now.	How did you get started in the business?	Build rapport; provide context of how they see their careers have unfolded.
a.	What was that like working for/ on [that first project/that company/ your first boss]	What was [that] like?	
b.	When did you know you were suited to being a screenwriter?		
c.	When did you know you wanted to be in the business?		
General Values, Beliefs, and Norms at the individual level:			
		In the development process…	
2	As a screenwriter and creative person, what is most important to you in the development process?	What is most important to you? What do you value most? What do you care about?	Learn personal platforms from which participants operate.
a.	What motivates you to do your best work?	What motivates you?	Learn participant goals/dominant intrinsic and extrinsic motivators.
b.	What parts of the development process and working with the team brings you the most satisfaction/do you value the most?	What brings you most satisfaction?	Learn participant goals/dominant intrinsic and extrinsic motivators.

Original Categories:			
	Original 2003 interview questions:	**New 2012 questions:**	**New question purpose:**
3	Why is [that] important?	Why?	Learn participant goals/dominant intrinsic and extrinsic motivators.
4	If I were a fly on the wall in a development meeting, what would [that] look like in action?	What does [that] look, sound, feel like in action?	Learn how participants take action to meet their personal goals and what outcomes result.
a.	How does [what's important to you] manifest itself in action?		
b.	How do you express [what's important to you] during the process?		
c.	How do you insure that your criteria are met to maintain x		
General Values, Beliefs, and Norms at the process (group) level:			
5	What is most important to the development process in general, to move a script forward toward getting a greenlight?	What is most important to the process?	Reveal alignment/discrepancies between what is most important to them and what is most critical to successful process.
6	Why is [that] important to moving a project forward?	Why?	Reveal beliefs about what participants feel is possible or not possible as a result of certain methods used to achieve outcomes.
7	How does [what is most important to the process] manifest itself in action?	What does [that] look, sound, feel like in action?	Reveal what methods participants use to achieve outcomes aligned to their goals.
a.	How does one make that happen?		

Original Categories:			
	Original 2003 interview questions:	**New 2012 questions:**	**New question purpose:**
Personal Competence: Your own sense of your skills, knowledge, and capability as a screenwriter/executive and others' sense of your skill, knowledge, and capability.			
8	What do you consider to be your strengths in the development process?	What do see as your strengths?	Reveal participants' self-knowledge about skills, abilities, motivations, values.
a.	What are the particular competencies or skills that you bring to the table?		
9	What would others say?	Are you known for something?	Reveal participants' self-knowledge about how those skills, abilities, motivations, values are perceived by others with whom they work.
a.	To what extent are the qualities you just mentioned known to others in development?		
b.	Are you known for being good with structure, character, a particular genre? Are you known as a hard worker?		
Social Competence: Your own sense of contribution to the process and others' sense of your contribution to the process.			
10	What are the factors that you consider when entering into the development process in order to contribute value?	What do you do to prepare yourself to collaborate successfully with the team?	Hear rich descriptions of approach to working with others on an innovation team.

Original Categories:			
	Original 2003 interview questions:	**New 2012 questions:**	**New question purpose:**
Social Competence: Your own sense of contribution to the process and others' sense of your contribution to the process.			
11	Where would you place yourself and what you want in this list [of factors]?		
a.	To what degree do these factors generally override what you personally would prefer?	How does this align or conflict with what you would prefer?	Hear rich descriptions of ways in which participants personally intersect with others on an innovation team.
12	After you have been hired on a project or had a script bought, to what extent is the long-term core strategy of that particular studio discussed or considered during the development process?		
a.	Describe more about how the studio determines its creative mandate and what that means for you as a writer.		
13	Thinking back over your career as a screenwriter, can you tell me a story about one of those moments when you felt your creative work was really alive and meaningful for you?	Describe a time that you look back on as a peak experience.	Hear rich descriptions of best experiences.

Original Categories:			
	Original 2003 interview questions:	**New 2012 questions:**	**New question purpose:**
13 a.	What made it a peak experience? Environment? Subject matter?	Tell me more about subject, people, environment.	Hear rich descriptions of best experiences.
b.	Were other people involved? Who? What did they contribute?		
14	Does this event describe a time when you also felt your contribution was recognized in the way you intended it to be?	Is this story an example of personal and process alignment? Was what you wanted to accomplish/contribute align with what was expected/desired from the process or not? Why?	Reveal correlations or lack thereof, between peak personal experience and peak process experience.
Personal Integrity: Your own sense of authenticity in your work and others' sense of your authenticity in the process.			
15	To what extent do you allow your true, authentic self to come out in the process?	Describe how your authentic self shows up or is hidden?	Reveal how participants balance personal openness and restraint/separation; reveals how they negotiate authenticity in the process.
16	To what extent do others in the process recognize you for your taste and/or for your views?	Are you known for how you go about things?	Self-awareness about how others see participants as it pertains to their behavior in the process.
a.	Do others' concepts or opinions of you in your work ring true to you?	Does that ring true to you?	Reveal alignment of self-concept with how others see participants as it pertains to their behavior in the process.

Original Categories:			
17	Do you feel trusting of the development process?	Describe what it is like to be a part of a development team.	Reveal how participants see the purpose and effectiveness of an innovation team in which they participate, as opposed to or in alignment with working alone creatively.
	Original 2003 interview questions:	**New 2012 questions:**	**New question purpose:**
		In the development process…	
18	To what extent do you think open communication, freedom, and mutual respect are vital to this kind of creative collaboration?	What are some critical qualities, behaviors, aspects, beliefs that the team must uphold?	Learn participants' beliefs about what is important to team health/high functioning.
19	To what extent are these qualities present in the development process?	When have you been a part of team with these…?	Hear rich descriptions of peak experiences around belonging, quality of interaction, flow, pride, enthusiasm, safety, trust, open communication/advocacy of beliefs, diversity, participative leadership, collaboration.
20	With what entity or whom do you identify most when you are developing a project? Why?	Who do you identify with the most during the process?	Explains the foundation to which participants may defer or ally with when the process becomes challenging, such as one's self, the studio, the director, outside relationships, the movie's audience, the script's story or characters, or past films.
Closing: Future Vision			
21	If you had three wishes for the development process--that if you could wave a magic wand--would make it the best it could possibly be, what would they be?	If you had three wishes for the development process--that if you could wave a magic wand--would make it the best it could possibly be, what would they be?	Learn what participants want most to improve/be better in the collaboration process that would improve the process for them too; learn of possible intervention topics.

Appendix C

Sample E-mail for Board of Directors to Introduce Research to Participants

Dear [Potential Participant],
I am helping my friend Brooks Ferguson find people—that she doesn't know and who don't know her—to interview for her thesis and I thought you might be a good candidate.
The working title is "Art, Commerce, and Integrity: An Exploration of Group Norms in the Development Process," which will be a means to open a dialogue about the concepts of personal creativity inside the confines of a social art form like film. She is interested in documenting this as "exploratory grounded theory research," which will attempt to scratch the surface of a subject matter that hasn't been documented before.
She will be interviewing a broad base of current screenwriters and (creative) studio executives who have developed a minimum of one domestically released feature film. She will be conducting two interviews with each person on two separate occasions in September & October lasting approximately one hour each; you will have a contract with her assuring your anonymity. The completed research will be published in August of 2004.
She is getting her MS at Pepperdine in Organization Development (OD), which is the systemwide application of psychology to the planned development, improvement, and reinforcement of the strategies, structures, and processes that lead to organization effectiveness. She has been consulting in OD since 1999 after spending 9 years in studio-based development at production companies.
If you are interested in being interviewed, let me know by August 15th and I will put her in touch with you.
Thanks,
[Board of Directors member]

Appendix D

Letter of Informed Consent for Participants

August 15, 2003

Re: Informed consent for thesis research project

Dear x:

I greatly appreciate your time and willingness to contribute your valuable viewpoint to my thesis research project, which is currently titled *Art, Commerce, and Integrity: An Exploration of Group Norms in the Development Process*. This project is a requirement for the Master of Science in Organization Development from The George L. Graziadio School of Business and Management at Pepperdine University, and will be published in August 2004. This letter is designed to inform you of the specifics of the research and provide as a release for the information that results from your interviews.

In September and October, I will be asking questions of you in two interviews, on two separate occasions, and will discuss options with you as to a suitable location that will provide privacy and that is convenient for you. In addition to handwritten notes, I will be audio recording the interview so that I am able to transcribe your words exactly as you have said them. Each interview will require *approximately* one hour to complete once the interview begins. Given that the interview may exceed the one-hour period, as the length of responses may vary from person to person, I would like to request we take into consideration the flexibility of your schedule when planning interview times. Additionally, it is also helpful if interviews are not scheduled at a location or around other appointments that will create a sense of pressure or urgency to conclude the interview.

I will occupy a position of trust and confidence with you in this research and will never divulge your identity in connection with your comments, either in writing or verbally. I will also remove names of organizations, names of individuals, and references to projects mentioned during the interviews. Instead, all names and other information agreed to will remain anonymous will be coded for my understanding and further analysis. I shall prevent the disclosure of all this information; however, I have retained a research assistant for help with the significant undertaking of transcribing the interviews who is bound by the same requirements stated in this letter. Additionally, I will not include in my research any content from you that results from verbal or written communications we may have outside of the interviews. Only content that arises specifically from the interviews at the scheduled time and place will be included in the research project.

Your participation in this research is purely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your participation. You also have the right to refuse to answer a particular question if you find it unacceptable. Upon request, you may obtain copies of the written

transcript of your interview and/or a copy of the completed research report when they become available. I reserve the right to use the data and resulting analysis from this research, while still honoring your anonymity, beyond this initial research. It is possible that I will continue working in my academic and professional careers toward theoretical frameworks that build upon the findings from this study.

To give you a better understanding of the topics that will be covered in your interviews, the following is an outline of the major areas of study. In terms of new product development among innovative work teams, the demands of those who participate in film development are, in my opinion, unique to new product development in other industries and particularly personal. I believe the innovative methods used in film development teams will be of significant interest to those in other industries. New product development in manufacturing accounts for about 20-30% of production each year whereas film studios turn out new products in the 80-90% range, and often without the benefit of a team that remains intact from project to project. On the subject of integrity, for the purpose of this study, it is defined as a value that reflects one's sense of *wholeness* and *authenticity* as an individual and a professional. I am interested in exploring how one maintains his or her integrity as an individual while contributing to this highly collaborative creative process. The exploration of group norms referred to in the working title refers to the informal organization, which is defined as the standards of behavior a group expects and anticipates of its members, opposed to the stated, formal policies and procedures required of the work. In summary, it is (1) the dynamic tension among one's sense of creative contribution to the team, (2) authenticity and integrity in one's work, (3) the tacit agreements among members of the team on acceptable behavior, and (4) the need to make choices that will be profitable that will be explored in this research.

Finally, my personal interest in the subject has naturally developed from my years spent committed to this process; it continues to be an area I care very much about and want to include in my practice. In the spirit of complete disclosure, I have attached my informal biography to this letter, should you wish to discuss it before we meet. I encourage you to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have. Otherwise, if this meets with your approval, please return this letter with your signature to me in the envelope provided, retain a copy for your records, and I look forward to meeting you in the coming weeks.

Thank you again for your participation.

Sincerely,

_____ _____

Brooks Ferguson, Researcher Date

_____ _____

Participant Date

Appendix E

Researcher Biography Provided to Participants

Brooks Ferguson

Professional Experience

Senior Consultant for Sony Pictures Entertainment	3/03 - present
Organization Development Consultant for Pivotal Resource	11/02 - 3/03
OD Consultant for National Recreation and Park Association	10/01 - 2/02
Usability Consultant for TransCore Inc.	1/01 - 5/01
Producer & Project Manager for TrafficStation Inc.	5/00 - 12/00
Usability Producer for SmallOffice Inc.	2/00 - 5/00
Executive Producer for Lawnmower Media	11/99 - 12/99
Executive VP of Production for Jon Landau, 20th Century Fox	10/97 - 5/99
Senior VP of Production for Randa Haines, 20th Century Fox	8/95 - 10/97
Vice President of Development; Director of Development; Creative Executive; Executive Assistant to Denise Di Novi, Columbia Pictures	9/92 - 8/95
Executive Assistant to Neil Simon	5/92 - 9/92
Assistant to Richard Lovett, President of Creative Artists Agency	5/90 - 5/92

Education
Pepperdine University, Graziadio School of Business and Management
Candidate for Master of Science in Organization Development, 2004.

Stanford University
Accreditation in Human-Computer Interaction, 2001.

University of Southern California
Bachelor of Arts in Drama, Magna cum Laude, College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences, 1990.

Santa Barbara City College
Associate of Arts in Theatre Arts, 1988.

Cambridge College of Arts and Technology
Anglia Polytechnic University, University of Cambridge, England
Studies in Dramatic Literature, Political Science, History, and Poetry, 1987.

Professional Affiliations
Organization Development Network, National and Los Angeles Chapters
Pepperdine University Alumni Association
Mensa, Greater Los Angeles Area Chapter
Women in Film

Brooks Ferguson
Vita

Publications

Ferguson, B. (2014). *Professional creators unveiled: Screenwriters' experiences collaborating in motion picture development teams.* (Doctoral Dissertation, in press), Fielding Graduate University, Santa Barbara, CA.

Ferguson, B. (2009). Creativity and integrity: Marketing the "in development" screenplay. *Psychology and Marketing, 26*(5), 421-444. Retrieve at: http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/122312947/abstract?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0

Ferguson, B. (2004). *Art, commerce, and values: The relationship between creativity and integrity in the feature film development process.* (Master of Science Thesis), Pepperdine University, Los Angeles. Retrieve at: http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=913499161&sid=2&Fmt=2&clientId=46781&RQT=309&VName=PQD

Ferguson, B. (1997). For the collector. *Entertainment@Home*, *January – December*. Malibu, CA: Curtco Freedom Group.

Education

Fielding Graduate University, School of Human and Organizational Development
- Doctor of Philosophy, Human and Organizational Systems, 2014.
- Master of Arts, Human Development, 2011.

Fielding Graduate University, Evidence Based Coaching Program
- Coaching Certification, ICF ACC, 2009.

Pepperdine University, Graziadio School of Business and Management
- Master of Science in Organization Development, 2004.

University of Southern California
- Bachelor of Arts in Drama, Magna Cum Laude, College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences, 1990.

Santa Barbara City College
- Associate of Arts in Theatre Arts, President's Honor Roll, 1988.

Cambridge College of Arts and Technology, University of Cambridge, England
- Studies in Dramatic Literature, Political Science, History, and Poetry, 1987.

Brooks Ferguson
Vita (Con't.)

Teaching and Speaking

University of Southern California, Marshall School of Business, MBA program:

- Guest Lecturer on Corporate Intrapreneurship and Innovation, 2013.

Pepperdine University, MBA program; BS in Business program:

- Mentor to students and guest lecturer on Entrepreneurial Marketing, 2008; Consumer-Based Product Development and Marketing, 2002-2004; Technology and Media Product Development, 2001; Business Issues for Entrepreneurs, 2001.

The Hero's Journey Entrepreneurship Festival, Pepperdine University:

- Presenter, "The Screenwriter as Entrepreneur: Channeling the Trickster Spirit in the Creative Process", 2008. See: http://herosjourneyrenaissance.org/

National Association of Women MBAs, Pepperdine University Chapter:

- Panelist/mentor on challenges and strategies for businesswomen, 2008-2009.

Chapman University, Bachelor of Science in Business:

- Guest Lecturer on Organizational Design Toward Effective Team Design and Development, 2005.

Emerson College Film School, Bachelor of Arts Program:

- Guest Lecturer on Topics in Visual and Media Arts Practice: Film as a Business, 2002-2003. Film and Society, 2003-2004.

Cinestory Conference, San Francisco:

- Screenplay consultation and seminars, 1999. Mentor to screenplay competition winner, 1999-2000. Screenplay Training Course, 1999. Read more at: http://www.screenwritingsecrets.com/cinestory-iv.html

Organization Development Roles

- Fox Entertainment Group/NewsCorp, Inc.: Intervention diagnosis, design, delivery, and administration at individual, team, and organizational levels for 3500 employees in 20th Century Fox, Fox Searchlight, and Fox Broadcasting companies. Employed as Director, Organization Development and Training, April 2012-July 2013.
- DIRECTV, Inc.: Strategic communications, event planning, and employee engagement design and implementation. Consulting completed April, 2012.

Brooks Ferguson
Vita (Con't.)

Organization Development Roles (Con't.)

- Sony Pictures Entertainment: Change management and workforce transition lead for large-scale transformation effort involving centralization, outsourcing, restructuring, downsizing, and retraining. Responsible for design, facilitation/implementation, coaching, evaluation, event planning, and communications globally for multiple support, engagement, and rewards initiatives. Employed as Director, Change Management, IT reporting to CIO, December, 2009 - July, 2011.
- Sony Pictures Entertainment: Process improvement via technology systems design lead for Production and Marketing departments in Television division, as Director of Production and Marketing Systems, Sony Pictures Television, IT; previously International Television, IT; previously Project Manager, International Television, IT. Employed August, 2005 - December 2009.
- Activision, Inc.: Leadership training design and delivery of session focused on communication skills and negotiating agreements. Consulting completed March, 2007.
- REVShare Inc.: Full organizational diagnosis resulting in strategic, human resource, and structural recommendations for company growth. Consulting completed March, 2006.
- E! Networks: Full organizational diagnosis resulting in recommendations around strategic, leadership, and process improvements followed by learning and development program design. Design and delivery of leadership training in personal development, interpersonal communication, and conflict resolution. Consulting completed August, 2005.
- Sony Pictures Entertainment: MGM merger/acquisition diagnosis and transition design for Home Entertainment division. Consulting completed June, 2005.
- MTV Networks: Custom design & delivery of HR department's annual team building session. Consulting completed May, 2005.
- Wells Fargo, California Business Banking division: Training and development assessment and redesign. Consulting completed March, 2005.
- ADESA Inc., Western Region: Executive team building, process improvement, conflict resolution training, and hiring training for managers. Consulting completed September, 2004.
- State of Alaska, Division of Public Assistance: Strategic planning, corporate visioning, and executive team building. Consulting completed September, 2004.
- Los Angeles Institute of Architecture and Design: Charter student survey and yearly strategic planning for Board. Consulting completed July, 2004.

Brooks Ferguson
Vita (Con't.)

Organization Development Roles (Con't.)

- Heping District Government, Shenyang, China: US-China joint ventures strategic planning symposium. Consulting completed February, 2004.
- Intercontinental Hotels/Crowne Plaza, Beijing, China: Organizational effectiveness assessment to raise customer service ratings. Consulting completed February, 2004.
- Sony Pictures Entertainment: Anti-piracy and process improvement IT system business case analysis and design. Consulting completed August, 2003.
- Vitro Glass Corp., Monterrey, Mexico: Vision and values development, new employee training, and process improvement. Consulting completed June, 2003.
- California State Energy Services: Leadership development, strategic planning, and process improvement. Consulting completed January, 2003.
- National Recreation and Parks Association, Washington, DC: IT architecture plan design and recommendations. Consulting completed February, 2001.
- TrafficStation, Inc., The Department of Transportation, and TransCore Inc.: Produced internet/wireless product for federal/state-funded Intelligent Transportation System. Consulting completed March, 2000.

Feature Film Development and Operations Roles

- Executive VP of Production for Jon Landau, 20th Century Fox

  Launched film production company for TITANIC Producer Jon Landau. Managed production efforts, developed ideas for potential film/TV projects, generated & negotiated buying/selling of properties, and managed staff/company operations. Produced films, 20th Century Fox/Paramount: TITANIC. Employed October, 1997 – May, 1999.

- Senior VP of Production for Randa Haines, 20th Century Fox

  Launched and supervised daily operations and creative direction for director Randa Haines' production company at 20th Century Fox. Produced films, 20th Century Fox/Fox Searchlight: ANTWONE FISHER. MGM/United Artists: A FAMILY THING. Columbia Pictures: DANCE WITH ME. Employed August, 1995 – October, 1997.

- VP of Development, Director of Development, Creative Executive, Executive Assistant to Denise Di Novi, Columbia Pictures

  Launched company, assisted, and developed films for producer Denise Di Novi at Columbia Pictures. Produced films, Touchstone/Walt Disney: THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS, ED WOOD, CABIN BOY, JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH; Columbia Pictures: LITTLE WOMEN. Employed September, 1992 – August, 1995.

Brooks Ferguson
Vita (Con't.)

Feature Film Development and Operations Roles (Con't.)

- Creative Assistant to Neil Simon, Writer
  Employed May, 1992 – September, 1992.
- Assistant to Richard Lovett, President, Creative Artists Agency
  Employed May, 1990 - May, 1992.

Certifications

- EQi 2.0 Emotional Intelligence Assessment, MHS, 2013.
- Entrepreneurial Innovation, Cox Consulting, 2013.
- Creative Problem Solving profile and methodology, Basadur, 2013.
- CPI 260 Personality Assessment, CPP, 2013.
- Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Personality Assessment, CPP, 2012.
- Lominger 360 Feedback and VOICES Personal Development Programs, Lominger, 2010.
- Evidence Based Coaching, Fielding Graduate University, 2009.
- Project Management, University of Colorado, Denver, School of Business and Management, 2007.
- Creativity Coaching, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, 2005.
- ITIL Information Services Management Methodology, Pink Elephant, 2006.
- DiSC Assessment, Leadership Strategies, 2004.
- Hogan Leadership Development Assessment, Hogan, 2003.
- Human-Computer Interaction, Stanford University, 2001.

Professional Affiliations and Awards

- International Coaching Federation; Member 2013-present.
- American Psychological Association, Division 10: Society for the Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts; Member, 2009-present.
- National Association of Women MBAs, Los Angeles, Charter Member, 2008.
- Sony Pictures Entertainment, Core Values Award for Creativity, 2007.
- Organization Development Network, National & Los Angeles Chapters, Member, 2002-2006.
- Pepperdine University Alumni Association, MSOD Alumni Network, 2003-present; former Co-Chair of Advance Knowledge & Practice Initiative, 2004-2006; Program Ambassador, 2011.
- Mensa, American and Greater Los Angeles Area Chapters, 2002-present.
- Women in Film, and former New Media Council Member, 2000-2006.