EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF A LEADER’S INFLUENCE ON CREATIVITY:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF ADVERTISING FIRMS

By
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A DISSERTATION

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This qualitative study interviewed 22 creatives in the advertising industry. Participants included five firms and one freelancer from the Omaha, Chicago, and Kansas City markets. Participants were asked about their creative process and how a leader or their organization could best support that process. Results were organized into the three categories of (a) the creative process, (b) leadership influence, and (c) organizational influence. When discussing the creative process, creatives expressed the stages of the creative process were difficult to separate and often blurred together. They identified collaboration and direction as important for their creative process. When discussing leadership influence, creatives stated leaders could support their creativity by coaching them to be creative by helping generate ideas, asking questions, and speaking to them as a creative from experience with expertise. Creatives also said leaders could support them by recognizing they are emotionally tied to their work and by guiding them in the direction of the client. Creatives stated leaders hinder their creativity by not communicating specific feedback on their ideas. They also said leaders hinder their creativity by trying to pick only the safe ideas and at times being competitive, trying to come up with a better idea. The researcher noted from the feedback of creatives, there are many challenges that a leader has to balance in order to support and not hinder creativity. For organization influence, creatives said organizations could support them by creating an environment that gives them their own space as well as collaborative spaces, providing appropriate resources, and flexible schedule. Organizations should show creatives they are valued through appreciation and communicating job security.

*Keywords:* Creativity, Leadership, Advertising, Creative Process, Creatives
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my father and fellow thinkologist, Kent McCuddin, the most creative person I know. He was the inspiration for this dissertation and a key support through the process. When I was young, he would draw a squiggle line on a piece of paper and challenge me to make that line into a picture. Over the years, that interaction has evolved into us studying creativity and working together to educate others on the importance of thinking differently. He is my creative role model.

“Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.” – Albert Einstein
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Creativity is becoming one of the most valued aspects of an organization. American employers are searching for creative talent to compete in today’s globalized, technology-driven economy. There is pressure for many employees to produce the next inspirational advertising campaign, innovative product, or viral video providing companies with a competitive advantage. Ken Robinson, a leading researcher and creativity consultant, stated in a recent interview, “I work a lot with Fortune 500 companies, and they’re always saying, ‘We need people who can be innovative, who can think differently’” (Azzam, 2009, p. 24).

Florida (2002), an urban theorist, coined the term ‘creative class’ to describe these individuals and defines them as a highly educated segment of the workforce that businesses depend on for growth. These include people from a variety of fields, including technology, finance, and high-end manufacturing. As Florida explained, “They do not consciously think of themselves as a class. Yet they share a common ethos that values creativity, individuality, difference, and merit” (p. 1). Florida (2002) wrote that members of the creative class engage in behaviors that create new work that is meaningful. Within the creative class are also persons who engage in creative problem solving in the workplace (Florida, 2002).

Businesses are not only looking for creative individuals to hire, they are also seeking to implement organizational practices that support creativity. Some of the most successful and sought after businesses for employment are cited as valuing creativity. Repeatedly, and most recently in January 2013, Google was ranked by Fortune magazine
as the number one place to work. Two major reasons the company ranked so high were that the company targeted creative people to hire and the company implemented the “20% rule,” in which employees were allowed to work on a project of their own choice for 20% of their time (Fortune, 2013). Number two in the rankings for 2013 was the company Statistical Analysis Software, which also ranked high due to its serious focus on creativity (Fortune, 2013). For businesses, creativity leads to innovation that allows their business to have an advantage over competitors.

When a business decides to focus on creativity, it is essential the leadership focus on creativity as the path to innovation as well. Research from the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) supports the idea that creativity cannot be achieved by only hiring a few creative people, but also needs effective leadership. The CCL suggests that effective leadership requires innovative leadership, which entails having an innovative approach to leadership and being a leader who encourages a climate of innovation (Horth & Buchner, 2009). A leader is influential on the climate of an organization. A meta-analysis of Horner and Buchner (2009) states that studies have indicated that 20% to 67% of the climate for creativity in organizations is directly the result of a leader’s behavior (Horner & Buchner, 2009).

**Statement of the Problem**

The need for leaders who embrace creativity is growing due to changing technologies, the influence of social media, and outsourcing. It is difficult for an organization to plan for or anticipate the future when the future has been become so unpredictable. Technology allows for the outsourcing of jobs that require the knowledge of a process or particular skill. Jobs that require creativity are much more difficult to
outsource. Howkins (2013) calls this new era the ‘creative economy,’ which refers to the need for an economy based on new ways of thinking and doing business. This era emphasizes that new ideas are the source of success today (Howkins, 2013).

There is a variety of information published for businesses and leaders on how to be creative. Online searches for “creativity in business” or “how to be creative” present thousands of recent articles and books about the importance of creativity in the workplace and advice for how to implement creativity. Articles from organizations like Forbes, Business Insider, and US News have published articles on these topics to encourage businesses to view creativity as essential (Hull, 2013; Kotz, 2013; Maggitti, 2013; Schawbel, 2013). Many of these texts offer tips based on experiences from the field or share lessons learned for a successful organization.

The importance of creativity in the workplace is not just a conversation; it is a topic that is also starting to be demonstrated in research. The most notable example of this is the IBM Global CEO study, the largest study of its kind, which sought to articulate the goals of leaders across the world (IBM Global Business Services, 2010). In the 2010 edition of that study, CEOs rated creativity as the most important leadership quality (IBM Global Business Services, 2010). In the same study, IBM also interviewed college students of the millennial generation, and these students rated creativity as the most important leadership trait (IBM Global Business Services, 2010). Both CEOs and students noted the importance of a leader making bold moves and challenging widely-held assumptions in order to move an organization forward (IBM Global Business Services, 2010). A survey of 900 senior executives by the Boston Consulting Group Inc.
found executives identified innovation as the key to successful organization processes (Oke, Munshi, & Walumbwa, 2009).

Organizational practices and leadership behaviors are two major areas in which creativity research focuses. Scott and Bruce (1994) found both practices and behaviors, specifically work groups, individual attributes, and leadership, helped build the psychological climate for innovation, which, with the appropriate resources, led to innovative behavior. The authors also found leadership, support for innovation, managerial role expectations, and systematic problem solving style were all significantly related to individual innovative behavior (Scott & Bruce, 1994).

Organizational Practices

AghajaniHashjeen, Shoghi, Shafizadeh, and Eisapourchalanbar (2013) found a significant relationship between organizational structure and employee creativity at the Saveh Aluminum Pars Company. The results indicated the more flexible an organization is in structure, the more creative its employees become. Results also indicated the more formalized the rules and policies around creative practices were, and the more complex and centralized the structure of the organization was, the less creative the organization. AghajaniHashjeen, et al. (2013) suggested it is best for an organization to have an organic structure that is low in complexity, centralization, and formalization and to decrease the number of management levels in order to increase creativity. The authors also recommended having practices that make it easy for employees to propose suggestions without having to go through multiple levels of administration and paperwork. Arad, Handson, and Schneider (1997) developed a taxonomy to describe and classify all of the
organizational elements that influence and are related to organizational innovation because there were so many factors of influence.

A 2008 Harvard creativity summit brought together businesses that relied on creativity, and business leaders discussed the importance of letting ideas come from all ranks of an organization. Google discussed how the company performed an analysis of employee ideas and found ideas that came from without support from higher ranks did better than ideas backed by the executives (Amabile & Khaire, 2008). There was a theme from the speakers that when an organization allows employees to be autonomous, employees are more creative (Amabile & Khaire, 2008). The various business leaders on the panel also discussed the importance of having a structure that allows employees to be collaborative. It is difficult for people to have all the skills needed to generate and carry out an idea. Companies often hire separate people for those jobs, but it can be difficult to hand off the ideas and have them carried out in the way they were intended. Organizations need to make sure that the handoff is smooth and encourages the idea-generators and the creative employees to help carry out the ideas and engage in different skills.

**Leadership Behaviors**

At a Harvard summit for creative leaders, the leaders also discussed strategies the leaders themselves could employ to support a creative environment. They indicated it is important for a leader to be supportive of every phase of the creative process and to give employees the power to engage in the creative process (Amabile & Khaire, 2008). The leaders also discussed the importance of providing intellectual challenge for creative employees, allowing the opportunity to pursue personal passions when matching them to
a project, being an appreciative audience for creative ideas, and working to decrease the fear of failure among their employees (Amabile & Khaire, 2008).

Creative leadership is acknowledged as an important skill, but being a creative leader can be difficult because it means taking risks and doing things differently. When the Center for Creative Leadership asked 247 senior executives about their creative leadership, only 50% rated their own ability to be highly innovative (Criswell & Martin, 2007). However, leaders who felt that they were not currently creative in terms of their leadership acknowledged that it was possible for leaders to learn how to be creative through education and experience (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, & Fleishman, 2000).

Studies have explored specific behaviors or skills a leader can exhibit to encourage a culture of creativity that leads to innovation. The leaders who identified themselves as creative in the Center for Creative Leadership study referred to previously, implemented overt strategies to work toward an environment of innovation, such as creating task forces to formulate ideas or using a structured brainstorming process. These leaders also noted the importance of developing talent and rewarding good ideas (Criswell & Martin, 2007). De Jong and Hartog (2007) interviewed managers who described thirteen leadership behaviors that they believed helped promote creativity and innovation for employees. Those results included behaviors like organizational feedback, role modeling of creativity, intellectual stimulation, and recognition.

**Population**

Advertising is arguably an industry in which creativity is the foundation of its’ success. Ashley and Oliver (2010) analyzed the interviews of creative leaders from the
Wall Street Journal’s advertorial series that took place from the 1977 to 2007. These interviews of 120 creative leaders spanning three decades in the field indicated that they felt that the importance of creativity in advertising had increased over the years because of increased accountability, shortened timelines, and the overall changing business climate.

**Literature Gap**

As seen in the media on television shows like Mad Men (Weiner, 2013), most advertising firms have a structure to their creative departments. In each department there are employees who are in charge of developing ideas for the concept, text, and images. This study will refer to these individuals as ‘creatives.’ Creatives are copywriters, graphic artists, and other professionals that produce creative work. In advertising firms, the creative executive or senior creative is the person who supervises the creatives. This leader helps guide the creative team, manages the creatives’ work, and oftentimes is the ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer to ideas. The role of the creative is to produce a novel idea that is useful in the way it meets the clients’ needs. When thinking about studying creativity, it can be assumed that much can be learned by studying a field and a population of people who work daily to be creative in their work, for they are the only professional field in which an employee title is actually a ‘creative.’

The literature on how leadership is related to creativity has primarily been based on interviewing and examining the leadership itself. In the advertising literature, there is little known about creative leadership from the perspective of the creative employee – the person who is producing the creative work. Kover (1995) interviewed copywriters and Hackley and Kover (2007) interviewed creatives about the creatives’ theories of
advertising. These interviews found creatives felt there were many contradictions in role and assignments, as well as contradictions of collegiality in the bureaucracy of their firms. For example, they were asked to be creative, but had to be creative in the way that the organization allowed them to be in terms of work hours, environment, and other limitations. They were also told that they were important to the organization but felt that they were not always treated the same as other employees because being seen as a ‘creative’ had a negative connotation at some firms (Hackley & Kover, 2007).

This study sought to investigate these contradictions and gather information about how employees felt their supervisor could better support them. In particular, this study sought to gather information on organizational practices and leadership behaviors employees felt would help facilitate their personal creative processes.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate employee perceptions regarding leadership practices that influenced creativity within advertising firms. Specifically, it examined what a leader in a direct supervisory role, as well as the organization as a whole, could do to help support the creative process as identified by the creative employee.

**Research Design**

A qualitative approach to this topic was selected because the goal of the project was to understand the perspective of the employees. Qualitative research is more conducive to enabling individuals to share their input on an issue, especially individuals who have not been able to speak up about an issue in the past (Creswell, 2013). This is a typical reality for creative employees; they do not have many opportunities to provide
feedback about their leaders (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research also helps explain linkages in casual theories and develop theories when there is inadequate information from a population (Creswell, 2013). This study explored how a leader can cultivate creativity from the employee perspective, an area in which little research exists.

This study used an intensity sampling of participants and was conducted on an individual basis. The interviews were semi-structured with a set of standardized questions and allowed for further questions to clarify answers. Advertising firms in the Midwest were contacted and then participants were selected on a voluntary basis after signing consent. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and coded to identify relevant themes.

The general research problem this study examined was from the creative’s perspective was “What role does leadership play in creatives’ creative process in advertising?”

The research questions addressed included:

- What does the creative process look like for a creative in advertising?
- What role does a direct supervisor play in an employee's creative process? Is there any one stage of the creative process in which a leader is particularly influential?
- What are the specific actions that a leader can take to facilitate the creative process?
- What are the actions that leaders take that impede the creative process?
- What can the organization do to facilitate the creative process?

**Definitions**

The following is a listing of the definitions this study will use. *Creatives* – The present study will use this term to describe individuals in an organization who are responsible for idea generation. Creatives served as the participants of this study.
Creatives include creative directors, copywriters, and graphic artists. *Creativity* – The ability to produce a novel idea that is useful (Mumford, 2003). While literature differentiates between the definitions of creativity and innovation, this study used the two words interchangeably. *Creative Leadership* – the quality of leaders who generate new ideas and create a culture that facilitates the generation of ideas. *Creative Process* – There are many theories about the steps and stages of the creative process. There is no specific framework research has found to be the ultimate summary of a person’s creative process (Lubart, 2001). Therefore, when this study sought to have participants articulate their own *creative process*, this term was not referring to a specific framework, but rather the personal progression of stages a person experiences to produce a novel idea. *Leader* – Someone who manages another person. The interview portion of this study defined a leader as someone who was the direct supervisor of the participant. *Suits* – This study uses this term to refer to executives in advertising firms who have decision-making powers.

**Delimitations, Assumptions, and Limitations**

**Delimitations**

The participants of this study were 22 creatives who worked in creative departments of five advertising firms and one participant who worked as a freelancer. Participants were from the Omaha, Kansas City, and Chicago areas. The interviews took place during October and November 2013.

**Assumptions**

This study assumed employees believed their supervisor influenced the creative process and felt comfortable talking about what their supervisor could possibly do
differently. The process of personal interviews assumed participants would feel comfortable being honest and would be interested in fully sharing ideas. The nature of this research design assumed the work from this study would be applicable in other fields, helping leaders get ideas for specific actions they could take to create an innovative culture.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was that participants had to talk about their direct supervisors, which may have made them hesitant to be honest about what their supervisor could do differently – as interviews took place in their workplace. Another limitation was that because these were in-depth interviews of a small sample of professionals in a particular field, it could be argued the results cannot be generalized. The population was also in a specific area of the country that may have a different culture or perspective than other areas of the country on the questions. Another limitation was that the participants did not review the transcripts to verify their accuracy.

Significance of Study

This study is significant for three reasons. First, this study is significant because it contributes to the literature on leading creatives in the advertising field. The need for creativity in advertising is growing and thus the need for more research on the topic is growing. This study can help build the literature by adding the perspective of the employee.

Second, this study is significant because increasing creativity is a topic that leaders want to know more about. Leaders in advertising want to learn how they can be creative and encourage their employees to do the same through policies, behaviors, and
practices. This study can provide leaders with specific strategies that can help increase
their employees’ creativity as well as their own.

The third area of significance for this study is that it can help organizations
understand some organizational behaviors that may aid leaders in developing a creative
culture. If leaders can help implement strategies and practices with organizational
support, they can also enhance the creative process in employees and help the
organization develop innovative ideas. All of these improvements will produce a
competitive edge in today’s marketplace for an organization.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Creative Advertising

Don Draper, the advertising executive from the critically acclaimed series *Mad Men* (Weiner, 2013) said, “We're going to sit at our desks and keep typing while the walls fall down around us because we're creative – the least important, most important thing there is” (Weiner & Slattery, 2010). *Mad Men* brought the advertising industry into the forefront of recent pop culture. *Forbes* reported that *Mad Men* was even thought to influence more college students to pursue advertising (Vaishnavi, 2013). Since the television show aired, there has been an increase in advertising studies, making marketing one of the most popular college majors in the United States (Vaishnavi, 2013). The series gave its audience a glimpse of the creative process involved in coming up with an idea.

Creativity: The Most Important Thing There Is

The fictional character Don Draper said creativity is both the least and most important aspect of advertising, and research supports this thought (Weiner & Slattery, 2010). In advertising, when there are many ideas on the table, the ‘winning idea’ is often the one that stands out and is seen as most creative. Creative ideas in advertising impact sales of the product or service the client is selling, which ultimately affects the hiring and firing of an agency. Top-level agency executives report creativity is increasing in the field (Reid, King, & DeLorme, 1998). Advertising is constantly changing, and it appears the field is becoming more creative to keep pace with competitors and the marketplace (Reid, King, & DeLorme, 1998).

Giving out awards for advertising’s most creative ideas emphasizes the value of creativity in advertising. The “One Show” is the premiere international advertising
awards organization show. “One Show” judges advertising entries based on the creative thought process involved in generating the piece (One Show, 2013). The American Advertising Federation’s Addy Awards aim to recognize and reward creative excellence in the field (American Advertising Federation, 2013). The CLIO Awards are another sought after award by advertising firms that also seeks to reward creative excellence (CLIO, 2013).

Creativity: The Least Important Thing There Is

While creativity is seen as one of the most important aspects of advertising and what advertising firms are recognized for, creatives report they are often treated as though they are not important. Hackley and Kover (2007) interviewed creatives. They reported that they valued art and literature and identified that their agency valued the commercial side of the work. The creatives also indicated that they felt other people at the agency often downplayed the work of a creative and doubted that they were even professionals. In the interviews, many creatives even brought up the word ‘hate’ when discussing the relationship between themselves and the accounts department.

Hackley and Kover (2007) noted these tensions are typical at most advertising firms. The tension comes from the creative who wants to pick an idea based on what he or she feels is a good idea versus the firm that wants to use formal research systems to pick an idea. The firm assesses how good an idea is by testing copy, administering consumer research, planning accounts, and using formal research methods. In this more formal process, there are deadlines and meetings to attend. The creatives interviewed by Hackley and Kover (2007) felt that the research should only be necessary in identifying the audience for the ad.
Creativity Research

Before further examining creativity in advertising, it is important to look at the literature on creativity and how it relates to advertising. Creativity research has mostly come from the field of psychology; the interest for research in creativity has been continually rising. Creativity is progressively becoming more of a priority for organizations, as it is recognized as needed for innovation (Hirst, Van Knippenberg, & Zhou, 2009).

Defining Creativity

In Chapter One, it was noted this study defined creativity as coming up with a novel, yet useful, idea. Most studies have defined creativity in this way with two key points: having ideas of novelty/originality and having ideas that are useful/appropriate (Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Sternberg, Kaufman & Pretz, 2004). “Creativity is held to involve the production of high quality, original, and elegant solutions to complex, novel, ill-defined, or poorly structured problems” (Mumford, Medeiros, & Partlow, 2012, p. 30). A common misconception about creativity is that it is simply about being original and coming up with a new idea; however, definitions stress the importance of that idea being appropriate and useful. This idea of appropriateness has gone further and evolved into later, more specific definitions of creativity that define creativity as creating something new that can solve a problem or have purpose.

Defining Creative Advertising

In advertising, the purpose of creative thought is said to be the achievements of objectives set by the clients (El-Murad, & West, 2004). “To be successful, creative advertising first must be noticed and then have a specified effect on the viewer. If it is not
noticed, or if this effect is not achieved, the creative endeavor is considered to have failed” (El-Murad & West, 2004, p. 190). Bell (1992) described creative advertising as a kind of creativity that is constrained by things like marketing objectives, competition of clients, and the approval hierarchy of the client organization. Flandin, Martin & Simkin, (1992) said creativity in advertising had the purpose of attracting the attention of the customer to the brand, which would eventually lead to its purchase.

**Creativity in Advertising**

Top level advertising agency executives said despite influential reports that suggest creativity in advertising is declining, they feel creativity is actually on the rise and better than when they entered the business (Reid, King, & DeLorme, 1998). In advertising, the creative product is what sustains the business. When examining creative advertising it is important to think about how creative products are evaluated as creative. When consumers are evaluating something as a creative product, that process is subjective and based on social judgments (Amabile, 1983). Judging creativity, especially in advertising, should be based on the advertisement, the creative product, as opposed to the creative process that produces the product. Amabile (1982) suggested evaluating the creativity of a product, the observers of the product need to agree that it is creative. Typically, the observers need to have areas of expertise in the area of the creative product in order to understand whether or not the product is a creative work. Amabile (1982) wrote the appropriate judges consist of people who have developed an implicit set of criteria for creativity – technical quality and other attributes over time. In advertising, however, the appropriate judges are not those who are experts in the topic, but rather the consumers. Consumers have their own implicit ideas on what makes creative advertising
successful. Amabile (1982) described the process of having appropriate observers to judge a creative product as the Consensual Assessment Technique.

When thinking about creativity as defined as something both appropriate and original, Koswlow, Sasser, and Riordan (2003) examined how people with different roles in an advertising agency perceive what is appropriate and original. The study showed creatives were more likely to view artistic advertisements as appropriate whereas account executives were more likely to judge strategic advertisements as appropriate. Creatives viewed the ability to be the most original within the constraints of a strategy as most creative. Account executives were more focused on strategy and considered something that was artistic as original work.

There is no guarantee that a creative advertisement is automatically an effective advertisement (Kover, Goldberg, & James, 1995). When a creative advertisement did add to the functionality of the advertisement in terms of helping a consumer recall or like the advertisement, it was said to be ‘wasteful advertising creativity.’ Wasteful advertising also included an advertisement that did not add to the comprehension or persuasiveness of the message (Kover, James, & Sonner, 1997). Dahlen, Rosengren, and Torn (2008) examined what was referred to as ‘wasteful advertising creativity’ and found in an experimental study that this type of creativity can enhance brand interest and perceived brand quality. This effect was mediated by how the consumer perceived creativity. This study showed the importance of remembering that consumers are an important element in terms of judging creativity. For practitioners, creativity was being able to meet the objectives of the clients. For consumers, creativity was about how relevant the advertisement was to their needs (West, Kover, & Caruana, 2008).
Creativity as an Effective Advertising Practice

Kover, Goldberg, and James (1995) echoed the themes of tension between creatives and management by discussing how the goal of the ‘suits’ is to have a stable working environment by producing ads that are effective. An effective advertisement is measured by how many sales the ad brings in. Generally, creatives believe that creativity leads to effectiveness. Yet suits tend to mistrust creative advertising because they view creativity and effectiveness as separate components of an ad. Thus, suits tend to view creatives as bothersome and costly, furthering the tension between the two groups. Kover, et al. (1995) found that the consumer does not separate creativity and effectiveness and is responsive to ads rated as both creative and effective.

Till and Baack (2005) investigated how creativity led to effective commercials and found that it aided in incidental recall which appeared to persist for a week. When presented with creative ads, consumers rated creative ads more favorably. Creative ads were also rated as having a higher brand attitude, purchase intent, and brand recall (Altsech, 1996).

Creativity also helps employees be effective. Zhang and Bartol (2010) found that when employees had a lot of experience, they had the best overall job performance with moderate to high levels of creative engagement. For employees with little work experience, they did best with low to moderate levels of creative engagement.

The Three Ps of Creativity in Advertising

Rhodes (1961) described four strands of creativity to study: the person, process, press, and products. The person refers to the traits, habits, attitudes, and overall personality of the creative person. The process is a term that refers to the motivation,
learning and thinking involved in coming up with creative ideas. Press refers to the relationship between persons and their environment. Product is the result of creativity (Rhodes, 1961).

Sasser and Koslow (2008) developed a version of this, saying the best way to look at the research in creative advertising is with the three Ps: process, person, and place. Person refers to the creativity of the individual person involved in coming up with the creative idea. The process refers to the creative process that involves the stages that an individual or team goes through to generate a creative idea. Place refers to the environment that allows creativity to take place. This study asked creatives about their creative process and what their leader and organization could do to best support their creativity. For this study, the person is the creative. The process refers to the creative process described by the participants. The place refers to the environment and workplace the leader and organization create.

**The Creative Person**

Is a person inherently creative or is creativity something that can be learned? Shelly Carson, a researcher of creativity from the Harvard Psychology Department addressed this question by saying, “We’re all creative. There are genetic influences that allow some people to access specific brain activation patterns more easily” (Powell, March 3, 2011, p. 1). The literature on creativity has looked at the type of personalities in terms of traits, motives, and creative development.

Studies have found that a creative person must have expertise in the area that they are producing creative work in. Feldman (1999) and Weisburg (1999) have shown that persons who are very involved with their work and have extensive expertise, produce
creative work. Creative people also appear to perform better when given some degree of autonomy (Oldham & Cummings, 1996).

Feist (1998) completed a meta-analysis on the literature of personality and creativity. This review found that generally creative people are more open to new experiences, less conventional, less conscientious, more self-confident and self-accepting, driven, ambitious, dominant, hostile, and impulsive. When looking at artists and non-artists as creative people, Feist (1998) found that artists showed more emotional instability, coldness, and rejection of group norms than scientists. However, scientists could also be creative.

**The Creative Person in Advertising**

Creatives are the artists in an advertising firm. Hackley and Kover (2007) examined the complexity of creatives in their role at an advertising firm. In the past, agencies aligned their work more with being an art form than with being research-based. Clients would look at their ads as artwork and agencies would gain recognition and respect from their work (McFall, 2004). Now, agencies earn respect and legitimacy from clients by approaching the creative process not as an art form but rather as a more scientific, research-driven method. Agencies consider it less risky to first test ideas with research, putting the creativity in process (Hackley & Kover, 2007). In this field, the importance of creativity is recognized. Although organizational practices present constraints and obstacles that are barriers to creativity, many organizational practices suggest it is not intentional. It is not because of the constraints and obstacles that these practices face.
Hackley and Kover (2007) looked into how this shift has affected the role of creative in firms through interviews with creatives and found that their creative interest and the parameters within which the company required them to operate were much different. Hackley and Kover (2007) concluded that creatives’ professional identity was confusing because what a firm said was important did not always align with the firm’s actions. The creative is often seen as the key actor in the accounts that require creativity in advertising agencies (Kelly, Lawlor, & O’Donohoe, 2005). Although creatives are key to maintaining accounts and therefore clients, in advertising firms, creatives often are forced to work in the constraints of the firm and not how they actually work best.

Contradictions of a creative. Two of the themes that Hackley and Kover (2007) found in their interviews were that creatives identified that there were many contradictions in collegiality with what they were supposed to do and the bureaucracy of the firm. Many of the creatives’ interviews said that they needed to play with ideas and that many of their ideas came to them at home or in other locations than work, yet they had to try to develop their ideas at work.

Some creatives indicated that they knew creativity and advertising better than all of the stakeholders involved and wanted to produce work that resonated with people. Other creatives Hackley and Kover (2007) interviewed indicated that their values were completely different than that of their agency.

The participants of Hackley and Kover (2007) said that while the agency structures give them job security, the structures often interfered with their ability to be creative. They said they had a need for psychological space to be creative. The participants commented they had to put space between themselves and the environment
in order to free their mind and be able to produce ideas. There seems to be a cultural divide between the suits and creatives in the advertising world (Hackley & Kover, 2007).

The creatives in Hackley and Kover’s (2007) interviews also spoke of how they felt the best advertising touches people. While they needed approval from clients to keep their jobs and accounts, the approval they really sought was from their peers in advertising who share their artistic sense, which is why industry awards are a powerful source of motivation. This need for peer approval is because the industry understands creativity while clients and consumers just respond to it. They spoke of how it was difficult to produce creative ideas. It took a lot of work to produce an idea that they felt was good advertising. However, they felt that the agency did not have the same high standards. In all of the interviews, there was not one agency practice that was identified to help creatives.

The second theme that Hackley and Kover (2007) found was that it is difficult to have an environment of collegiality. Creatives identified that if they were close to non-creatives, or the ‘suits,’ other creatives might view it negatively. To maintain their professional identity, they needed to work with other creatives and successfully produce ideas over a sustained period of time. Participants identified that having a strong relationship with a creative partner was emotionally and functionally important to the creative process. Therefore, while it is difficult for creatives to feel comfortable as professionals in their workplace as a whole, they do feel part of a collective identity as creatives. After interviewing creatives, Hackley and Kover (2007) implied that advertising agencies have failed to socialize creatives into the company.
At the American Academy of Advertising Conference (2011), there was a special topic session panel that discussed how creativity works in advertising agencies as well as the variables that allow the best agencies to produce high-caliber work. The panelists were members of the top agencies in Phoenix, Arizona. The panel agreed that overall, the creativity in agencies is influenced by the individual person, the environment of the agency, the knowledge of the creative problem solving process, and the agency philosophy of creativity. Among these elements, the panel determined the individual, the creative person, as the most important element to the creative process. The panel said the creative person in advertising has the ability to self-reflect on the creative process, is intrinsically motivated, and has a passion to creatively approach a client’s problem (Vogel, Villegas, Barry, Hurni, Ortega, & Griffin, 2011).

**The Creative Process**

To generate a creative idea, it takes a creative process. The creative process refers to the ability to apply one’s creative abilities or strategies to produce a creative work. Wallas (1926) developed the first model of a creative process, which had four stages. The first stage was preparation, which included defining the problem and gathering information about it. The second phase was incubation, which was a period of latency and subconscious activity that allowed a person to digest all of the information and come up with ideas. The third stage was illumination, which was described as the sudden appearance of the creative solution – the “Aha” moment. The final stage was verification, in which the idea was tested for validity and utility.

There have been many different variations of Wallas’ model, all of which have different ideas on how many specific steps there are in the creative process. However, it
appears that there are three aspects of the creative process that are always included in describing a creative process. These aspects are: problem identification, information gathering, and idea generation (Amabile, 1983; Reiter-Palmon & Illies, 2004; Shalley & Zhou, 2008; Torrance, 1998).

As the definition of creativity has evolved into viewing creativity as a problem solving process, the theories of the creative process have evolved into a problem-solving model as well. Mumford Mobley, Reiter-Palmon, Uhlman, & Doares’ (1991) proposed model of creative problem solving was based on three criteria. First, the process must be based on knowledge and information. Second, new ideas come from knowledge that is recombined and reorganized. Third, ideas need to be turned into plans. The stages of this model include defining the problem, gathering information, organizing the information, combining concepts, generating ideas, evaluating ideas, implementing plans, and then monitoring the solution (Mumford, Medeiros, & Partlow, 2012).

**The Creative Process in Advertising**

Don Draper said, “It’s your job. I give you money; you give me ideas” (Weiner & Getzinger, 2010). This type of pressure in advertising can actually hinder the creative process. Many of the creatives appear to be intrinsically motivated. When creatives were asked what they could do to make advertising better their answer was “creativity above all” (Nyilasy & Reid, 2009, p. 90). Creativity is difficult to quantify, and it therefore has been difficult for researchers to learn more about what the practitioners say is the most important element of practice. The interviews of creatives by Nyilasy and Reid (2009) did identify creativity compliance, or rather directives that they felt were necessary in
advertising while being creative. The overall theme was that these directives still depended on the client, brand, timing, campaign strategy, etc. (Nyilasy & Reid, 2009).

Creatives are artists within a firm. Twenty-seven artists were interviewed to learn more about their creative process (Botella, Glaveanu, Zenasni, Storme, Myszkowski, Wolff, & Lubart, 2013). The data from these interviews confirmed that the cognitive component of creativity was important for artists, especially those in the digital arts. Artists felt that both positive and negative feelings could impact their creativity. However, the data showed that the emotional component to creativity was the least important variable. Interestingly, when the artists spoke of barriers to their creativity, emotional components were mostly cited. The newest artist, with ten or less years of experience, had a more difficult time describing what helped and hindered his or her creativity. The more experienced the artist, the easier it was for him or her to identify things that helped and inhibited creativity (Botella, et al., 2013). While there are many common findings on the creative process, it appears that each individual has a different experience with the process and his or her own perspective on what the creative process looks like.

**The Creative Place**

Hunter, Bedell, & Mumford (2007) conducted a meta-analysis that found that climate is strongly related to creative achievement. Challenge, intellectual stimulation, and positive collegial exchange produced particularly strong relationships between climate and creativity. This meta-analysis also found that the broad organizational and environmental variables facilitate the relationship between climate and creative
achievement. If there are certain structures in place, or a past history of a lack of resources, this will affect the climate.

The Creative Place in Advertising

On the panel at the American Academy of Advertising (2011), the environment of an agency was also deemed as an important element of the creative process (Vogel, et al., 2011). The environment that the panel felt was most conducive to creativity was one that was less inhibited, relaxed, more flexible, and collaborative (Vogel et al., 2011). In a meta-analysis, Hunter, Bedell, and Mumford (2007) found that climate perception had a strong influence on employees’ creative achievement and problem solving. The leaders of Google stated that ideas come from every person, even users, and all kinds of innovation. It is important to set up an environment where people feel that they can share those ideas; an open culture is very important (Leslie, 2009).

Sasser and Koslow (2013) studied how motivation, organizational support, expertise, and politics influence creativity in advertising agencies. Passion (intrinsic motivation) was determined to be the element that had the strongest effect on creativity. Organizational support for creativity also enhanced the creativity of employees. This study stated the importance of having leaders supporting the passion of their employees because it could lead to creativity. While having expertise in an area has been shown to help innovation in other fields, it does not have that effect in the advertising industry.

Creative Leaders

One way for leaders to influence innovation of an organization is to be creative themselves. Leaders themselves can be creative. As Mumford, Scott, Gaddis, and Strange (2002) point out, creative leaders need to be able to look at problems in new ways.
Creative leaders need to be able to approach a new task and provide direction without any precedence of what has been done in the past. This literature review also points out that creative leaders cannot rely on their position or power to get people to produce creative work because that actually can inhibit creativity. As Mumford, et al. (2002) pointed out, creative leaders must be okay with taking risks. They have to balance the risks innovation takes with still being able to produce for the organization.

Sternburg, Kaufman and Petz (2004) discussed three different types of creative leadership: (a) leadership that accepts the existing way of doing things, (b) leadership that challenges the way of doing things, and (c) leadership that synthesizes those two styles (p. 455). Often, people divide those categories into specific types. Within the existing way of doing things, there is replicative leadership that seeks to keep an organization where it is but keep moving. Redefinition leadership agrees an organization is in the right place but for a different reason than previously thought. Forward Incrementation Leadership assesses that an organization is on the right track but wants to move it forward. Advance Forward Incrementation describes when leadership seeks to move an organization forward but even further than others are willing to think about. There are also types of leadership that reject the current paradigm and seek to move an organization back to where it was then forward in a new direction. There is also a type of leadership that picks a new starting point for growth. Lastly, in the category of synthesis, the leader combines two different ideas that are unrelated into something new. Each type of creative leadership requires different abilities, and different styles fit some organizations better than others (Sternburg, Kaufman & Petz, 2004).
Leaders of Creative People

The Center for Creative Leadership conducted a study that found crucial leadership skills in today’s organizations were insufficient to meet the future needs of an organization (Leslie, 2009). Studies have examined the impact of a leader on creativity of an individual, team, and workplace. Much of this research focused on how a leader can support creativity in the workplace (Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta, & Kramer, 2004).

As Jung (2001) pointed out, leadership is not always seen as having a significant impact on the creativity of other people. This may be because people often view creativity as a characteristic of a person, an innate quality, rather than something that can be brought out. Creativity may also not be seen as something that a leader is responsible for because creativity is often thought of as something that happens when a person thinks alone. (Mumford, Scott, & Gaddis, 2002). However, research showed the perception of creativity not being enhanced by a leader is false. For example, Tierney, Farmer, and Graen (1999) found that in a chemical company, effective exchange relationships between leaders and employees were related to higher creativity. Oldham and Cummings (1996) and Cummings and Oldham (1997) found that supervisory support of new ideas in a manufacturing company was related to creativity. This was especially true for those employees who tended to be creative.

Amabile (1988) explored how a leader can support creativity in the workplace by examining what actions managers can do to influence creativity. He found that challenge, freedom, resources, organizational support, and supervisory encouragement all affect creativity. Amabile also found that the most important resources for managers were time and money. Others also cited the size quality of the workplace as helpful for creativity.
While Amabile (1988) felt it might be overrated, results of the study found workplace relationships between supervisors and colleagues’ agency philosophies, and the nature of the tasks assigned, all significantly affected creativity.

In a summary of a colloquium at Harvard Business School, Amabile and Khaire (2008) wrote that leaders of creative people needed to protect creatives. Leaders should get ideas from all people and create diverse teams. Leaders of creative people needed to provide more guidance and control at the end of the creative process as opposed to the beginning. Geoffee and Jones (2007) suggest that when leading creatives, leaders should reduce distractions from administrative tasks, make people feel that it was okay to fail, and let them pursue creative efforts independently. They also suggested that leaders model creative behavior and show their own expertise.

Florida and Goodnight (2005) investigated how leaders manage creative people at the SAS software company, often ranked as a best place to work because of the efforts made to support creativity. Leaders try to present creative people with challenges and include all people in creative efforts, including customers.

Mumford et al. (2002) did an extensive review of the literature on leading creative people. The authors noted the importance of leaders needing technical expertise and creative problem solving skills to lead creative people. Mumford et al. (2002) referred to a study of Farris (1972) that found that innovative people were most likely to communicate with their leaders under two circumstances: (a) seeking evaluative feedback about their work, and (b) initially defining the creative problem at hand. As Mumford et al. (2002) stated, this showed the need for expertise in order to give specific evaluative feedback and also creative problem solving skills to help creative people appropriately
define their problem. The two skills of expertise and creative problem solving help to communicate with creative people when they seek support. Mumford et al. (2002) identified that there are four different ways to lead this population: (a) leave them alone, (b) support and facilitate their work, (c) inspire them, or (d) model by being creative. This study suggests that leaders should engage creative people, support them in coming up with ideas, and promote their doing so.

In a summary of other studies, Mumford, Hunter, Eubanks, Bedell, and Murphy (2007) echoed these statements, finding that technical expertise, creative thinking skills, social skills, and organizational understanding are capabilities that allow leaders to be effective in leading creative efforts.

Leaders can also influence creativity by the environment they create for employees. For example, complex and demanding jobs lead to more creative outcomes. Autonomy is often a key characteristic of a context that leads to creativity. Leaders can work to make their employees feel autonomous (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Leaders can also help creativity by setting goals for creative output. Because creativity takes a lot of time and energy, leaders can be supportive of this process by giving employees enough time and sufficient resources for the process to occur (Shalley & Gilson, 2004).

Leaders’ relationships with their employees can also influence creativity of the employee. For example, Tierney, Farmer, and Graen (1999) found that effective leader-member exchange (LMX) relationships were positively correlated with employee creativity. Studies have also shown that supportive leadership has a positive relationship with creativity. Controlling leadership has a negative relationship with employee creativity (Amabile et al., 2004; Tierney & Farmer, 2004).
Reiter-Palmon and Illies (2004) discussed ideas for how leaders could facilitate creative problem solving at various stages of the process. Leaders should allow sufficient time for problem solving, especially in regards to defining the problem. Leaders can help their team understand the importance of the process and view the problem from multiple perspectives. Leaders can create a diverse team to aid in this process. If possible, leaders should provide enough time, resources, and motivation to make sure there is an exhaustive search for information in the creative problem solving process. They can encourage other employees to use methods of combining, expanding, and encoding of new concepts when searching for information. While it is important that this search for information is free with as little constraints as possible, leaders still need to add structure to the creative process. Leaders should not provide cues or goals that are too specific or restricting (Reiter-Palmon & Illies, 2004). To aid in the idea generation component to problem solving, leaders can guide their team by giving instructions for techniques that help produce useful ideas and instructions that have the goal of the process embedded within. Leaders should also give this process time. With time constraints, employees may just select the first set of ideas, which are not always the best. For the state of idea evaluation, leaders need to be clear with everyone on the criteria that the ideas are evaluated. Leaders can guide the discussion of idea generation to discuss the possible obstacles and consequences of each idea.

A way to summarize all of the literature on how to lead creative people is by saying it may be hard to balance the needs of an organization with the needs of creatives. Hunter, Thoroughgood, Ligon, and Myer (2011) discussed this balance as a paradox for leaders leading for innovation. They identified 14 paradoxes that leaders of innovation
experience and offered ideas for how to combat them. For example, a leader of innovation must provide vision but also allow for autonomy, being open to going in a different direction. Another example is that a leader must provide guidelines and deadlines to ensure a project is completed but also allow enough time and freedom to make sure creativity can happen. A leader for innovation must develop a culture that embraces risk and the possibility of failure, but succeed enough to stay in business. Hunter et al. (2011) concluded that to be a leader for innovation in others, it takes a unique style of leadership that may not be represented by current models of leadership.

Clients are also a part of the environment of an agency and are considered leaders in terms of influencing the way that a project goes. Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan (2006) looked at how clients influenced creativity by surveying agency personnel. The results showed that clients who were open to exploring different strategies helped an agency be more creative. In general, agencies that have more resources also produce more creative work. Agencies that have an environment in which there is access to top management are also more creative unless the top management of the clientele is threatening to the agency. If the agency feels a lot of pressure from the clients, it can lessen the creativity of the employees (Koslow et al., 2006).

**Academic Practitioner Gap in Advertising**

There is a gap between practice and research in the advertising industry. Nyilasy and Reid (2007) explored the “academician practitioner gap” in the advertising industry specifically. They found that it does exist. They suggested that this gap might be because information from academia is not distributed appropriately to persons not within academia. There are problems with the content of knowledge, the structure of the
academic system, the philosophical approach of academics, the perception that creative are incapable of reading research.

Nyilasy and Reid (2009) interviewed creative practitioners and found there was an ‘academic-practitioners gap’ between creatives and researchers. Creatives stated that effective advertising depends on things that cannot be boiled down to an academic theory (Nyilasy & Reid, 2009). This gap is also seen in the workplace for creative practitioners. Creative professionals may not feel like they fit into the professional field.

**Summary**

In advertising, creativity is seen as both the most and the least important thing there is. CEOs and businesses are looking for creative employees. This appears to be even more the case in advertising, where creativity lands accounts and can start the next big viral movement. In advertising firms, the creatives, those who come up with the ideas, find that while what they do is important, they are not treated as though they are important. They are often looked down upon by those in other areas of the firm, feeling that they are under-valued and that organizations may not know how to best support their creative process. Each individual and group has a different creative process, and the advertising industry has to work to accommodate those creative processes in order for individuals to flourish. This process must start with the leadership because leadership influences creativity greatly. However, the research until this point has focused on what organizational practices and leadership behaviors can do to help creatives. Researchers have called for more research on understanding the creative process for individuals (Shalley, Zhou, & Oldman, 2004).
Literature Gap

This study sought to expand on the work of Nyilasy and Reid (2009) and further gather information on practitioners, creatives in particular, about what creativity looks like and how they feel they can be personally creative in the workplace. This study also sought to build on the work of Hackley and Kover’s (2007) interviews with creatives, asking about the creative process. Prior to their study, there were no phenomenological accounts of how creatives felt about how they are creative through this process. The study was a phenomenological account that built on asking creatives about their creative process and how their creative supervisor could enhance that process.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to have creatives in advertising articulate what their leader and organization can do to help support their creative process in the workplace. In particular, it investigated what actions a leader can take to create an atmosphere that facilitates creativity. It also looked at what environment and resources an organization can provide to help creative thinking. The literature on the relationship between leadership and creativity has primarily been based on interviewing the leadership. In the advertising literature, there is little known about what helps creatives from the perspective of the creatives rather than the leadership.

Research Questions

The following research question guided this qualitative study: What role does leadership play in creatives’ creative process in advertising?

Subset research questions included:

- What does the creative process look like for a creative in advertising?
- What role does a direct supervisor play in an employee's creative process?
- What are the specific actions that a leader can take to facilitate the creative process?
- What are the actions leaders take that impede the creative process?
- What can the organization do to facilitate the creative process?

Method Rationale

The design of this study was qualitative for three reasons. First, qualitative research empowers individuals to share their input on an issue, especially individuals
whose feedback has been minimized in the past (Creswell, 2013). Because the population of this study consisted of employees giving feedback about their direct supervisor, this approach was fitting because it was not something employees had the opportunity to do. Second, qualitative research can clarify and provide additional insight to previous quantitative research, helping explain the linkages in causal theories (Creswell, 2013). Research has shown that leadership affects creativity; this study examined the relationship between leadership and creativity in employees. Third, qualitative research is also used to develop theories when there is inadequate information from a population. Currently, there is a lack of literature on how to enhance creativity from the perspective of creatives themselves in the advertising industry.

There are five different approaches to qualitative study – narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (Creswell, 2013). The current study employed a phenomenological approach, which sought to describe the common meaning several individuals have about their experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The study sought to discover more about the phenomenon of the creative process, how employees experience that process, and how leadership influences that process. Thus this approach examined a phenomenon with a group of individuals who have all had the same experience – attempting to be creative in the advertising setting with an end goal in mind. Creswell (2013) stated it is important to understand the common experiences among individuals in order to develop future policies and practices. By interviewing various persons and gathering their common experiences and perceptions, it will help leadership identify what actions they can take to foster an environment that enhances creativity.
This study was a transcendental phenomenological study. Empirical, transcendental phenomenology is less focused on the interpretations of the research and more focused on the participant response. The idea behind this approach is to bracket out one’s personal experiences and look at the information from a fresh perspective.

Participants

Snowball sampling was used to select participants. Personal contacts were asked to identify potential participants; subsequently, those contacts were asked to identify other participants. The sampling procedures proved to be efficient as the interviewer gained participants from a variety of backgrounds and agencies ranging from a freelancer to large agencies.

As the sample snowballed, purposeful selection (Creswell, 1998, p. 188) was made to make sure there were a variety of viewpoints and agencies represented. The agencies interviewed were in three different large midwestern cities. The agencies ranged from being around only a few years to being established for over 50 years. Purposeful sampling refers to choosing a population that helps gather the best information about the research problem in a strategic manner (Creswell, 2013). The goal of this study was to gather information from the creative perspective as to what a leader can do to help facilitate the personal creative process. A challenge of the phenomenological approach is that participants must be carefully chosen to ensure that they have experienced the phenomenon that is being studied (Creswell, 2013). This was achieved through purposeful sampling. Twenty-two participants were interviewed until theoretical saturation was achieved. This was determined when no new information was being obtained in interviews (Creswell, 2013).
The participants in this study were 22 creatives. They ranged in experience in advertising from being in their first year in the industry to having 34 years of experience. Nine participants had been in advertising 0-5 years; one participant had been in the industry 6-10 years; and seven had been in advertising 11-15 years. Three participants had been in the business for 21-25 years and one had been in the field for more than 26. (See Table 1)

The participants represented five different agencies and one freelancer. The freelancer referenced leaders that he had in the past when working in agencies as well as the leaders that hired him to do freelance work. The agencies were each given a pseudo name to aid in confidentiality. The Pixel agency was a medium-sized agency that had two locations and had been around for nearly 52 years. Revolution was a new, small agency that wanted to approach advertising in a new way. There were no titles or an established hierarchy there. Cohesive was an agency that started off small but in the last few years had grown into a medium-sized agency. Swift and Vibrant were both large agencies that served major clients and had been around for many years.

There was a mix of copywriters, art directors, and creative directors interviewed. While the actual job titles may have varied and while their responsibilities at an agency may overlap, the participant’s primary position was recorded and categorized. For this study, copywriters were any creative whose primary responsibility was to aid in the written work. Art directors were those who were responsible for the division that could include graphic design, digital work, or illustration. In an agency, a creative director is the person who leads a creative team for a project, coaches them, and helps decide what ideas are presented to the client. However, many times agencies had assigned a head
copywriter or head art director who also led others. Therefore, if the participant’s primary role was to coach and evaluate others, or if she or he identified as a creative director, that participant was assigned the title of creative director for the study; they were assigned that title for data analysis. The creative directors all had experience as either an art director or copywriter in their past employment and spoke as a creative for the interviews. There were 11 art directors, seven copywriters, and four creative directors interviewed.

Both male and female participants were interviewed – 18 men and four women. Overall they represented the typical population in the field minus gender. While the samples represented those employed at the agency, there were more women in the field overall than were represented in this sample. Each participant was assigned a number as well as a pseudo name to help with organization in the data analysis process as well as to ensure confidentiality. Table 1, *Participant Attributes*, contains all of the participants and the demographics associated with them.
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Job Role</th>
<th>Experience in Years</th>
<th>Pseudo Agency Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Joel</td>
<td>Male Art Director</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>Pixel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lenny</td>
<td>Male Copywriter</td>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>Pixel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Winston</td>
<td>Male Creative Director</td>
<td>26 or more years</td>
<td>Pixel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>Male Creative Director</td>
<td>21-25 years</td>
<td>Revolution</td>
</tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Clayton</td>
<td>Male Creative Director</td>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>Revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Trey</td>
<td>Male Creative Director</td>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>Freelance</td>
</tr>
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<td>Lloyd</td>
<td>Male Art Director</td>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>Cohesive</td>
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<td>Chelsea</td>
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<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>Cohesive</td>
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<td>Claire</td>
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<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>Cohesive</td>
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<td>Male Copywriter</td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>Cohesive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Kyle</td>
<td>Male Copywriter</td>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>Cohesive</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Todd</td>
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<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>Swift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Jason</td>
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<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>Swift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
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<td>21-25 years</td>
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<td>Vibrant</td>
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<td>Spencer</td>
<td>Male Copywriter</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>Vibrant</td>
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</table>

**Instrumentation**

Each participant filled out a consent form that included the Bill of Rights for Research Participants (see Appendix A). The interviewing itself was semi-structured but had a guideline protocol that can be found in Appendix B. Many times, follow-up
questions were asked to help clarify and elicit new information. Each interview took on a different conversation, but all interviews covered the following questions:

1. Tell me about your background in advertising.
2. Describe your creative process.
3. How does your leader influence that process?
4. How does your leader support your creativity?
5. How does your leader hinder your creativity?
6. How does the organization support your creativity?
7. What resources do you need to be creative? What other resources would be helpful?
8. What type of environment helps you be creative?
9. Why did you choose to work in advertising?

Each interview was recorded by two devices to help prevent loss of data. A Sony Digital Flash Voice Recorder (ICD-PX312) was used to record each interview in addition to the Rev.com app for the iPad. Interviews lasted approximately 30-45 minutes.

The Researcher’s Role

The researcher conducted all of the interviews. The transcendental phenomenological approach was used for bracketing. This approach focused on bracketing participants’ experiences. The researcher first bracketed out her experiences and then analyzed the data. The researcher did not work in the field of advertising.

Data Collection Procedures

In qualitative research, the researcher is the key instrument in gathering the information (Creswell, 2013). During interviews, the researcher focused on the “meaning
of interviews” and let themes emerge. The primary source of data for this project was interview data. The goal of these interviews was to get honest and open responses from each participant by ensuring their anonymity.

Data Analysis

The audio interviews were transcribed by a third party and then uploaded to the NVivo10 qualitative analysis software. The constant-comparative method was used in the coding process (Creswell, 2013). The researcher read through the coded comments for each theme identified and coded each theme as a node in NVivo10. While writing up the results, the researcher used the nodes to select direct quotations that demonstrated the themes reported. For questions the researcher had about the relationship between two items, the researcher ran analyses to find the degree of similarity between the words for various codes that were displayed in the results and reported as Pearson Correlation Coefficients.

Assumptions and Verification

Trustworthiness, or as Creswell (2013) called it, validation, is an important aspect of qualitative studies to ensure that the information is accurately portrayed. Peer review by the researcher’s committee helped ensure that others outside of the participants agreed with the themes identified by the researcher. The researcher made sure to include all data, even data that did not support the importance of creativity or influence of a leader or align with past research. The researcher also made sure to clarify personal research biases from the onset of the study with the goal of being as objective as possible.
Ethical Considerations

There was no perceived physical risk to participating in this study. The names of all parties involved, including the agencies’ and participants’ names, were kept confidential through the analyses. Each participant and agency was assigned a pseudonym to help protect identity. After the study concluded, all audiotapes of interviews were destroyed. For employees, the first face-to-face interview took approximately 30-45 minutes.

The benefit for participating in this research included the participants’ opportunity to reflect on their workplace and creative process. It may also have been empowering for creatives to discuss ideas and suggestions they had to a third party.

The Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved this study, and approval documentation can be found in Appendix C. Each participant signed an informed consent document (See Appendix A), and the researcher went through the potential risk and benefits and the Bill of Rights for each research participant. Each participant signed a copy for the researcher to keep, and participants had the option to take a copy for themselves.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate what employees believe leaders in the advertising industry can do to foster a creative working environment. To date, researchers have examined organizational practices and leader behaviors that influence creativity from a variety of perspectives. The current study investigated the issue from the perspective of the creatives by having the creative identify the parts of their personal creative process that could be enhanced, coached, and empowered by their supervisor.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine what leaders and an organization can do to support the creative process of creatives in the advertising industry. Chapter Four reviews the methodology and data analysis used in this study. It also discusses the themes found in the three major categories of (a) the creative process for creatives, (b) how leaders influence the creative process, and (c) how organizations influence the creative process.

Review of the Methodology

This qualitative study was a transcendental phenomenological study. Empirical, transcendental phenomenology is focused on participant responses. The researcher conducted individual semi-structured interviews with the 22 participants who represented five different agencies and one who was a freelancer. The agencies varied from a small new firm to large agencies that have been around for decades. Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes, and the audio was recorded. Interviews were analyzed for the similarities and patterns that emerged through the interviews.

Data Analysis Procedures

The audio of the interviews was transcribed by a third party transcription service. The transcriptions were uploaded to the NVivo10 software. The researcher did an initial reading of all the transcriptions to get an understanding of the major themes and patterns discussed in each interview. Then the researcher went through three rounds of coding the transcripts. In the first round of coding, the researcher coded the answers to the general questions that were asked in each interview, as described in Chapter 3. The researcher
made notes on the themes and relationships that came up in round one and then coded more detail in the second round of coding. After that, the researcher used word frequency queries in NVivo10 to assist in identifying other themes that were then coded in a third round of more detailed coding. Table 2 is a summary of the codes used in each round that were worthwhile as the data were being analyzed. Other codes were used but then determined to be similar to other codes, so were combined, and reorganized.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Codes Used</th>
<th>First Round</th>
<th>Second Round</th>
<th>Third Round</th>
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<td>Stages of the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Describe</td>
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<td>Varies;</td>
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<td><strong>Leadership Involvement</strong></td>
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<td>Direction</td>
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<td>to collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership Influence</strong></td>
<td>How a leader</td>
<td>How a client</td>
<td>Work How</td>
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<td>influences</td>
<td>influences the</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>the creative</td>
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<td>process.</td>
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<td><strong>Leader Support</strong></td>
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<td>Participants</td>
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After coding was completed, the researcher wrote up the major themes found in the coding. All of these themes answered the overall research question: “What role does leadership play in an advertising creatives’ creative process?” For each theme, the researcher used the coding to select direct quotations from the participants that supported the themes. The themes were organized into three major categories. The first category was the creative process, which referred to all of the comments that discussed what the creative process looked like for a creative in advertising. This portion answered the subset question, “What does the creative process look like for a creative in advertising?”
The second major category was how leaders can influence the creative process. For this portion, the leaders were those in a direct supervisory role. The subset questions, “What role does a direct supervisor play in an employee's creative process?” “What are the specific actions that a leader can take to facilitate the creative process?” and “What are the actions that leaders take that impede the creative process?” are addressed in the section of Leadership Influence. The third major category was how an organization influences the creative process in terms of the environment it creates, the resources it provides, and the atmosphere it creates. The theme of organization influence answered the question, “What can the organization do to facilitate the creative process?”

Results

Creative Process

The following are results of what participants answered when asked to describe their creative process. Knowing how creatives describe their process was important to the overall research question because in order to understand how leadership can influence the creative process, it was necessary to understand what the creative process looks like from their point of view. This section sought to answer the sub research question, “What does the creative process look like for a creative in advertising?”

Creative process varies in advertising. Nine of the creatives had been in the industry for zero to five years. Eight of those nine had graduated from a related academic program in higher education within the last five years. When discussing the creative process, three of those participants referenced learning about the creative process in a class during school. These participants had a particularly easy time describing their process and articulated all the steps clearly as defined in research. Four (18%) of the
participants stated that they had difficulty describing their creative process without any prompting. Some participants articulated that they were just creative people so it was difficult to say how they did it; it was just a talent they had.

Claire said, “Being a creative – it's a very fine line. You got to ... between like intuition and intent ... and talent and observation.”

Eight (36%) of the participants commented when responding to the question, “Describe your creative process” that they struggled with the word “process.” They felt that the word “process” referred to a linear step-by-step, which they argued creativity was not. While some projects may work by following a linear creative thinking process, many do not. As Joel stated:

There's no formula for getting from point A to point B with creativity. That's one of the things about it – it's not a linear process. It's very un-linear. You're finding connections between things that are seemingly unrelated and bouncing all over in your mind. You don't know where the breakthrough is going to come from.

You're exploring in a lot of different areas.

One of the copywriters, Lenny, said that his creative process was “Industry Standard,” which he stated worked to a certain degree for him. For him, the industry standard process is doing research, gathering information, hibernating on the information, and then coming up with an idea. The idea that there is an industry creative process was very present in all of the interviewers’ comments.

Six (27.3%) of the participants stated that their creative process looked different based on the task or the project. The participants identified themselves as creative people
Step of creative process are blurred. The researcher expected that it may be difficult for creatives to articulate their creative process and thus followed up with the participants to inquire about various stages of the creative problem solving process. If the creatives had a difficult time describing what their process looked like, they were prompted by the researcher to describe how they defined the problem, gathered and organized information, generated ideas, evaluated ideas, implemented and then monitored those ideas.

The majority of participants said they relied on a brief from the account team to define the problem for the client. This step of the creative process was seen as the responsibility of the account team. If the creative verbalized that they themselves defined the problem, it was not about the problem the client had. They viewed their problem as working to complete the project and meet the objectives of the brief by the deadline.

The next steps of gathering and organizing information were viewed as a step together by creatives. The themes that came up included researching competition, trends, finding inspiration, and learning about the client. Creatives spoke to how important it was to research what competitors of the client were currently doing, especially those who were doing well in terms of sales, and those who targeted similar demographics. The creatives also talked about the importance of staying current on trends in advertising through online research, periodicals, and advertising websites. With technology, they stated that it was important to be on the cutting edge of what was selling and current in general. Creatives also spoke about the importance of finding inspiration early in the
process. To be motivated to work on a project for any client, especially one that was not personally appealing to the creative, they needed to find inspiration to be motivated and excited to start generating ideas. Lastly, creatives spoke about how they needed to research new clients. It was important to look at what the client did in the past and what their business was about.

When creatives spoke about generating ideas, it was not in isolation of the other steps. In fact, it seemed to be very intertwined with the previous steps of gathering and organizing information. To measure similarity in the items coded by the research, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for the word similarity in the coding of the stages of the creative process of generating ideas and gathering and organizing information as described by the participants. The Pearson correlation coefficient was .87 \( (p < 0.001) \), which demonstrates a high degree of similarity in the words used to describe each of these stages. Table 3 describes the word similarity between the stages of gathering information and generating ideas.

Table 3

| Word Similarity Between Stages of Gathering Information and Generating Ideas |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|---------|
| Node A                       | Gathering & Organization Information | .87     | 0.000  |

The three themes that emerged when considering how creatives generated ideas were: brainstorming, psychological space, and juxtaposition, which were combining old ideas together to form a new one. All of the agencies held formal brainstorming sessions and all of the participants spoke about how a vital part of the process was brainstorming with other people within the company. Psychological space refers to the idea that people
need to get away from their work in order for an idea to develop. Many of the creatives discussed how they were always working because their ideas come to them at night, while in the shower, while driving, etc. Many times, to come up with something new for a long-time client, the creative would combine an idea that had been done prior for the client with something new to keep things fresh while staying true to the brand.

For creatives, the implementation part of the idea was the actual creation of the work. Depending on the project or their role, they may be part of the creation or sometimes they may not. The monitoring of the ideas portion of the creative process was not viewed as part of their creative process; they saw this as the role of the creative directors and other personnel. However, when they were invited to follow through with their ideas and be part of a commercial taping or photo shoot, they felt their involvement was important and they should be involved in those stages to see their ideas all the way through to the end.

**Collaboration is important.** Collaboration was an important theme that appeared throughout the creative process discussion. Fifteen (68%) of the participants discussed the importance of collaboration when describing their creative process in the workplace. Participants were adamant that while they may need some alone time to research, think, and process, collaboration was key to coming up with the best idea and vital to the creative process. Participants discussed that everyone was there because they had a different perspective, and it was important to build ideas together to come up with the best one. Collaboration did not mean that everyone always got along perfectly. Collaboration was used to refer to the act of bouncing ideas off each other. Patrick
discussed what collaboration looked like at Revolution where the employees did not have titles but rather had roles.

We have certain natural roles depending on our skills. We all have varying degrees of skills. We’re all strategic thinkers. We bring it all. It gets really messy in the beginning. Normally, if you come in, it’s borderline like arguments and stuff. It’s all for the good cause, but you bang heads in the beginning. You get a brief “these are the challenges,” and then a lot of it for us is just throwing opinions, ideas, really informally, for a day or two. Then we’ll sit down. We’ll bring all the players in, and we’ll just start to jam with each other. It’s a lot like writing a song, I guess.

To measure similarity in the items coded by the researcher between the stages of the creative process and collaboration, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for the word similarity between the codes Creative Process Stages and Collaboration described by the participants. These codes showed that there was a statistically significant overlap in the area of collaboration and stages of the creative process, with a coefficient of .51, $p = .008$. See Table 4.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Node A</th>
<th>Node B</th>
<th>$p$-Value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creative Process Stages</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>.51</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Direction.** Another theme that emerged out of the discussion of the creative process for creatives in advertising was the appreciation for direction. In this case direction refers to parameters given to an assignment or task. Seven of the creatives
(31.8%) discussed how it was helpful to have direction and parameters to contain their creativity because when there were no parameters, the possibilities were endless. As Travis said:

In that regard, you just overcome it by maybe letting go of the fact that you can't control anything, which also frees up your mind to sort of think about things practically. By practically, it essentially means inside the box instead of the proverbial outside the box. Sometimes, inside the box is just as fun and just as enlightening as coloring outside the lines as we speak.

Roger said:

Creatives, we need some kind of structures so that we create within it. As an example: If I was to say to you, ‘Paint me a picture,’ and you say, ‘Well, what kind of picture do you want?’ and I say, ‘I don’t care,’” all of a sudden, because you have unlimited possibilities, it’s impossible to do, because you don’t know – especially with somebody paying you, it’s like, ‘No, I need to know what this is supposed to do, I need to know why you want it that way and how’ – do you know what I mean? So all that information is usable for this. So I think that that’s actually a misconception, and I think agencies in general need to supply that as much as possible.

**Leadership Influence**

This section answers the research question of how someone in a direct leadership role influences the creative process. The researcher asked each participant about the involvement of the leader and the leader’s role in the creative process stages in order to identify how a leader could support the creative. The conversation discussed how a leader
could support the creative process as well as how he or she hinders it. The following are the themes uncovered in these interviews. The creatives were asked to define their leader as the person that they directly reported to, which was the creative director. Creative directors discussed their own involvement. Many of the participants also brought up past creative directors they had worked with, not just their current boss. The following are the themes discovered in this portion of the interviews.

**Leadership involvement.** The following section seeks to answer the subset research question, “What role does a direct supervisor play in an employee's creative process?” When asked about how a leader is involved in the creative process in terms of his or her role and times they worked with creatives, the answers showed varied involvement. Involvement and the role of leaders appeared to vary based on the personality and leadership style of the creative directors as well as the client. Higher profile clients required more involvement from the leader to ensure the agency was meeting the needs of the client.

The descriptions of involvement varied, but generally fit into two general types. The first was the type of leader involved from the very beginning, from defining the problem all the way to the end of implementing and monitoring of the idea. These leaders helped creatives brainstorm and gave them feedback through the process. The second type of leadership involvement was leadership that came in at the evaluation of ideas stage of the creative process. These leaders asked creatives to generate the ideas and then request feedback on those ideas, which the creatives would then have to take, revise their ideas, and present new versions.
Leader support. The following are themes that came up when discussing how leaders helped creatives in the workplace. The following themes address the subset research question, “What are the specific actions that a leader can take to facilitate the creative process?”

Coaching creativity. One of the themes that came up in the interviews is how leaders coach creativity. When the creative directors and those in leadership roles spoke about their role, much of what they said related to helping other people be creative. Creatives also spoke about how they valued a leader helping them be creative. When coding the descriptions of what creatives did for a job (code: Your Role as a Leader) with descriptions of how they coached creativity (code: Coaching Creativity), there were many similarities. When running a Pearson correlation coefficient for word similarity on those two codes, the coefficient was $r = .88, p = .000$. (See Table 5.) This statistically significant and high degree of similarity is one indication of just how much those in leadership positions view their responsibility as being the person to help bring out the creativity in others in addition to creatives viewing them in that light.

There was also a significant relationship between Leader Support (participants’ descriptions of their leaders supporting them) and Coaching Creativity, with a Pearson Correlation coefficient of $r = .79, p < 0.001$. (See Table 5). The participants discussed that coaching creativity incorporated the following three things: helping generate ideas, asking questions, and speaking as a creative.

Table 5

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<th>Node A</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Leaders Support</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Helping Generate Ideas. Participants spoke about how leaders support them through the process of generating ideas. Leaders appeared to be important in generating ideas. A Pearson correlation coefficient was run to determine the similarity between the words used in the codes for the descriptions of how leaders supported creatives and the stage of generating ideas in the creative process, and it was $r = .81, p < .001$.

Table 6

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leader Support</td>
<td>Generate Ideas</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Creatives also said it was helpful for leaders to be a part of the idea generation phase by being the person to reign in ideas and direct the brainstorming sessions. Joel described this by saying:

Sometimes, the ideas can be so creative that they're springing off-target. Maybe they're new and interesting; maybe they're completely irrelevant. That's equally bad. That's when it's necessary to have that outside opinion to look at it objectively. The creative team is going to be very tied to those ideas. You need that second set of eyes looking at the work that you do to make sure that you don't fall into that.

Many of the participants discussed that it was supportive for leaders to have a set of standards when generating ideas and pushing for ideas that aligned with the mission. If the agency was focused on the marketing side of advertising, the leader would push for
work that supports that. If the agency was focused on art, then the leader would guide the creative toward that. As Lenny said:

There's a creative leadership where it's a, yes, but you have this standard where nothing goes out the door that doesn't meet this A standard, and then, with that, creative leadership can be very hands on, and you will talk to your creative director every day, and present concepts to them every day, to make sure that … they will help you meet that standard, and generally that type of creative director is probably the best creative in the agency. They have that insight, they have that creative mind, and whatnot.

**Asking questions.** Creatives liked when creative directors asked questions of them. They felt this helped them self-reflect on their thought process, which helped them know what questions to ask themselves in the future. There were two types of questions leaders asked. The first was the creative’s opinions on what they came up with. Claire, an art director in a leadership role, articulated what that type of question looks like:

I don't like to dictate what to do. I like to question people like, "Well, what do you think?" If they are stumped, then I'll be like, "Well, try this." But, if they're like, "Oh, I don't know if I should do this for them," like, "Well, try it and let's see and let me guide you through that." I think that's the best way to describe it because again there's a lot of intuition that goes in.

Kyle also articulated examples of this type of questioning:

Okay, so give me some of your ideas that you’re not too crazy about. Why aren’t you crazy about them?” And that helps me to get a feel of where their doubts are and how we can poke some holes in that creativity flow.
The other type of questioning was asking creatives to walk through their thought process in order to articulate how they got there. This would involve asking questions like, “What were you thinking with this idea? Walk me through how you got here.” Kelly said that the following types of questions from her leader have helped her grow creatively:

He did ask a lot of open-ended questions, which I think we all do now a little bit more. Just will this work? Will this work long term? Can we push this out? It’s just the questions you ask yourself when you figure out how well something will work.

*Speak as a creative.* Creatives appreciated when their creative director spoke to them as a creative rather than a boss in a hierarchical manner. They appreciated feedback coming from someone who did the grunt work just like them and came up through the ranks. While creatives respected the experience of a creative director and wanted his or her expertise, they felt more comfortable when the creative director talked to them as creative to creative. Jason stated that speaking as a creative, this was effective because it made feedback feel like a suggestion rather than a prescription being ordered. Participants spoke about how being given choices and responsibilities as a creative was empowering and built the confidence that was needed to bear the tough criticism that comes from others in the field and from clients. Brooks said, “I always say that a great director doesn't force too much of his own will on you.” Roger also spoke about this trait:

There was an old boss that I had that was the best boss that I ever had, and he started in the mailroom, and then he became the chief creative officer over a number of years, and he would see work and if we had a suggestion, he’d say,
“You know what? I may suck, but what if you did this?” And he would do that no matter what you showed him. And the thing that made that very endearing to me was that he didn’t put himself over you when he was commenting on your work. By saying ‘I may suck,’ it said, ‘You’re at the same level as I am, and if this isn’t going to work for you, throw it away’ – so it makes you equal, so it makes the doors open, and you’re like, “Okay, I can accept what you’re going to have to say.’ I think that that’s good. ‘Whatever’ is the person who’s saying, ‘No, here’s what I would do’ – that approach actually shuts down the creative, because it’s no longer you doing the work, it’s them doing the work for you.

When speaking on a level playing field from creative to creative, leaders need to recognize that not everyone thinks the same as when they did that work. Clayton said:

People are wired differently. I cannot expect everybody to approach things the exact same way I would. I wound not want them to, anyway. So, that is definitely a challenge to try to customize or modify the coaching to fit the person.

Patrick had this point:

The creative directors and leaders that I’ve had the best success with, they bring their experience. They almost guide you around pitfalls as opposed to saying, ‘Think like this.’ Here’s a certain thing that works, but apply it to how you’re arriving at the answer.

Trey said. “I read a quote that said, A bad leader says, ‘I’ll go.’ A good leader says, ‘Let’s go.’ It makes people feel like you are in it together, which makes you feel supported.”
Recognize that work is emotional. One of the reasons it is difficult to receive feedback from leaders when they speak from a hierarchical level is because creatives and creative teams can become very tied to their ideas. Five of the participants (22.7%) of the creatives brought up how emotional the work was for a creative and how invested an individual or team could be in an idea. Winston said that this could be difficult because sometimes he felt “it's just like you're the only one out there fighting for it to succeed.” Winston went on to articulate how emotional work could be for creative people:

One of the things that you'll find with creative people in this industry, in this business, is they really put their heart out there on their sleeve. It's their work, and this is what they truly believe in, and they really open themselves up to get knocked down a lot. So it can create kind of a woe is me, hurt attitude. You know they're like, ‘Oh, it's not.’ It can get very negative very fast. Some people’s heart is really into it, so when you come back and say, I really don't feel that the idea is right. I know you can polish that to look really cool, but... It’s just making sure that you're not killing something too soon, but you're not letting something go on too long. It can really be demoralizing and it can be like, I put all this energy into something that you’re not going to go forward with.

Creatives expressed that it was important for leaders to recognize the emotional investment in ideas. That way a leader could give feedback to the idea in a way that was sensitive – sensitive in a way that the feedback was focused on the work and not on the person. Creatives indicated that they needed to feel that the leader still valued their effort and recognized their ability to create and generate ideas. If that was incorporated into the
feedback, they were more open to suggestion and changes without thinking twice about it. Walt said:

The support of management for creative ideas to be able to say, ‘Okay, we're going to take a risk with this’ – even though I don't really like it, I don't think it's ever going to sail or I'm ever going to have time with this, being able to say, ‘You know what? This shows a good style of thinking; it's on brief; it's different; we're going to present it.

Participants discussed how the subjectivity of creative work allowed everyone to have their own opinion and thus creatives might fear presenting something they felt was good because they feared others would not think so. As long as creatives felt that the feedback they received was specific and constructive, they were not only comfortable with it but needed it. When a leader recognized that work could be emotional, then they can deliver feedback in such a way. As Hannah put it:

You definitely can’t get too married or too connected to any of your ideas because it’s all about perception. What one person thinks is right might not be right too. The Creative Director’s role is to be a little bit smarter than we are. I know that sounds really horrible, but I think that’s why they get paid more. I’ve been in the business long enough, obviously, the more time you spend doing something, hopefully, the better that you get at it.

Many of the participants discussed that in order to succeed as a creative, one needed to develop a tough skin, and while it was okay to be emotionally tied to one’s work, one could not take things personally.
Knowing the client. Another theme that emerged when talking to participants about how leaders support creatives was helping creatives understand and know the client. When creatives were presenting ideas, creative directors can help the creative understand if it was what the client would want and if it aligned with the client’s brand and what they had done in the past. Joel said:

He might hand off responsibilities, but he's certainly there to make sure that we never stray too far from that brand voice. That can be really easy to do in a brainstorm, or even when you start doing the design, or whatever you happen to be dealing with. …They have a long history of creatives, and they definitely have a tone and brand voice to them. It's really tempting to throw all that stuff out and be like, ‘Let's just start over with them.’ He's really good about knowing what to keep and what to throw out because he knows that brand as a person. One of the reasons that it is important for a leader to know a client and their brand is to help ensure consistency.

Chelsea said:

[The creative director’s] like the final eye on everything before we turn it in to get back to the client. He just makes sure everything is the same standard that it’s been and that everything matches with the look that we’ve been doing for each different client. He makes sure that everyone is getting everything done on time.

Leader’s Negative Impact

The creatives also spoke about things leaders did that hurt their creativity in the workplace. This section sought to answer the question, “What are the actions that leaders take that impede the creative process?”
Lack of communication. The biggest theme that came up from participants on how leaders hinder their creativity was a lack of communication. Many of the participants spoke about how evaluating ideas could be a subjective and emotional process, as described prior. When leaders did not communicate why an idea was turned down, it could be difficult for a creative to not take it personally. As Trey stated, it was really disheartening for him when leaders in the field, whether they be professors in school or creative directors, just turned down an idea without explaining why it was turned down. His hypothesis was that many creative people who are in a leadership role felt that they were a better creative than the ones ‘below’ them and at times could be threatened that the ones below them might have a better idea. If they said no, then there was no need for an explanation because they knew best. Trey also stated that this was one of the reasons he enjoyed freelance. He did not have to report to anyone to get that feedback. Trey expressed his ideas and frustrations with leaders’ providing a negative response to ideas:

It starts in school. I remember being in college and having a professor just constantly come at me because of color theory or this or that. No concrete evidence to it at all, but beat him down, beat him down, beat him down.

Although not all participants expressed this exact frustration, they did express a need for a leader to communicate specific feedback on what needed to be changed or improved about the idea so they knew why it was turned down. Hannah expressed that a lack of communication also made her question what she was doing and caused her stress:

I think it’s just maybe a lack of communication. I think it’s when you can’t express yourself to someone else – then it’s hard to think about it in the same way. Two different people can talk and explain themselves differently, but the
communication isn’t clear between the two of them. It makes you second guess what you’re doing, like, ‘Am I doing it the way that they wanted me to, or is this completely wrong and I’m just going to be wasting all my time doing this.’ That’s why it’s good to check in and keep communication going, which I’m a huge fan of, because no one likes to waste their time.

Claire gave examples of this:

It's like you can get past the, ‘Oh, this isn't quite right yet,’ and that's the other thing, it's like if somebody is not able to verbalize the why, if somebody just tells you, ‘Hey, like I just don't like this,’ and doesn't elaborate why like, ‘Oh, I don't like this because, you know, the [product] gets lost in background.’ That's at least something, like, ‘Okay, well I could use this color to make the bottle pop out more.’ But just the bad attitude, I mean, that was what killed it for me at that other job. Because if you're around that day in and day out, then you start to doubt yourself, you start to doubt your work – even if you know that this person isn't right but it's like…then you feel helpless because it's like, ‘This person is overseeing my work and I can't get further along until she's okay with it,’ and everybody was scared of her bullying…

Participants also expressed communication as important because taste was so subjective. If someone told them it wasn’t good, they might think it was truly not satisfactory, and thus the communication about what specifically was not good and why it was not good enough was needed in order to make the necessary changes. The participants also felt that specific feedback was one of the things that helped them grow. Feedback also helped them to not make the same mistakes again as well as to know the
client better. Walt pointed out a fear that creatives have because the work could be subjective:

A lot of [barriers] are self-imposed. A lot of barriers...sometimes it's just getting big work through the system, especially sometimes internally with the various layers, with account managers, account supervisors, account directors, agency presidents. They all have a feeling about what's going to work, what the client's going to like, and what the client's not going to like. Sometimes, unfortunately, the best work doesn't get through.

Participants also spoke about how creative directors had a particular standard or style that they felt influenced the feedback they gave. Because of this, some participants mentioned that in order to get approval from their creative director, they would tailor their work to the director's style. Creatives indicated that tailoring work to a particular style hindered their creativity.

**Being Safe.** While creatives appreciated that a leader reigned in ideas, they did not like it when the leader did not want to take reasonable risk in fear that the client would not get on board with it. Joel said,

Yet there is a right and a wrong, an on-target and a not-on-target. I guess when it can go wrong is when the criticism of the ideas hinder, cut out anything that's new and revolutionary. When it's too conservative and they're too worried about, ‘Okay, we need to not do anything that has any sort of risk. It needs to be just safe and something we know the client's going to buy’ – that's when it can go wrong. That works against that need to do something that is arresting.
Lloyd spoke to this point, discussing how he would work with new creatives on a project for a client that he had worked with for a long time. Lloyd recognized that he would turn down an idea when in a leadership position when he felt the client might not go for it. He understood that it had a negative impact on creativity and wished he or others would not do that, even in the interest of the client. He recognized that he would turn down a new idea when he felt like the client wouldn’t go for it, but felt that was not good because it may not produce new ideas. He said:

I'll say, ‘You know, [a company] would never do that. I did this project two years ago that was something like that, and they completely threw it out.’ I really have to be careful about that because I don't want to kill their creativity. I've had other people kill my creativity by poo-pooing ideas because they're like, ‘Oh, they'll never do that,’ and waving it off. If any director hurts a process, it's probably in that way, although I can totally understand why they're doing it. They don't want to waste time. They also don't want to insult a brand by having them think that we don't know who you are. …Directors definitely want to throw out those kinds of ideas right away, like, ‘I don't even want to present that to the client. I can't believe you even said that.

**Competitive.** Some of the participants spoke about how at times leaders might get competitive if they felt that they needed to come up with a better idea because they were working on the same project. Todd said:

It's always a sticky situation where whoever the person is above you in the pecking order is working on the same project as you, so you're trying to get their
buy-off for your ideas, but they're also competing with you for the same job, which is a conflict of interest.

Trey discussed a situation he had with a past boss that he felt was competitive with him. Trey described that the boss would not let his work though. Trey felt it was because the boss was trying to make efforts to show he was better than Trey. Trey said:

We don’t do critiques, we do critical. We may be the critiques, we say, ‘Oh yeah, I’ve got this critique for class.’ But really, it’s a beat-down session. It’s not to make it better; it’s often, ‘Let me show you why you’re not as good as me.’ And that’s bad, but we’re groomed for that our entire scholastic career as artists or designers and then when we get into the work world or in our career path, it continues with titles – art director, creative director, president this, CEO that – and so a lot of times, the roadblock happens where someone is stifling your ability, out of jealousy or insecurity, under the guise of ‘I know better. I’m a creative director.’ Really, or are you just a hater? I had a boss that would constantly do that. I don’t think I ever got...at this one particular place on earth, I don’t think I ever got one logo into the rounds of proofing to the client. In the years after that, I’ve had work featured in all types of places: nationally, internationally, awards. ...I wasn’t that bad then. So, why not mine? Why didn’t mine ever make it to the client meeting to get proofed or chosen? The boss was insecure. The boss always had…There was always something; it’s never okay. It was never good. It was never, ‘We should send that idea.’ There was always something that was pressing down on it, or ideas.
This quote is from Trey, the participant who works freelance. Trey’s comments indicated that he made the choice to pursue freelance because of the negative impact he felt his past leaders had on this creativity. He spoke to all of the themes of lack of communication, not wanting to take risks, and being competitive with passion. For him, the negative impact on leadership was too much for him to the point that he felt he could be his best self creatively by being his own boss.

**Leadership Challenges**

Leaders need to balance showing appreciation for the creative while still giving them the necessary feedback. While creatives may not always appreciate getting particular types of feedback, it is necessary at times. Roger articulated finding this balance as well:

An old boss of mine – another old boss now, the other guy – the way he described it was guard rails: you don’t want the car to go off the road so you need guard rails. As a last resort, the only time you should say, ‘Do this.’ Because the other thing with the creative department is that you want people to explore…it’s important to allow people to explore, and if you take that away from them and then tell them, ‘No, you’ve got to do this,’ it doesn’t allow them to grow as creatives and also have as much fun, because in the creative department, the fun is in the exploration. …Creating, it should be a fun, happy experience. So I think that leaders that understand that and appreciate, I think are better leaders. I think the ones that don’t are more just there to tell you what to do, limit[ing] the creativity of the department.
Organization Influence

The researcher also asked what the organization could do to support the creative process for individuals. Participants were asked specifically about their work environment and the resources available. The following answers the research question, “What can the organization do to facilitate the creative process?” Professional development, value, and job security were themes in these discussions.

Physical Environment. The creative deemed the physical environment important for their process. Creatives liked having a space to call their own as well as spaces available for them to be collaborative. The agencies that did not have assigned individual spaces said this choice was to help with collaboration. A few agencies just had open tables or an open area for creatives to work. Participants said that open spaces were important because they helped them be collaborative. While creatives agreed that open spaces helped with collaboration, which is essential in the creative process, they still wanted spaces where they could be alone to think and get work done. With collaboration came a lot of interruptions, distractions, and noise – and creatives expressed a need to have alone time as well. Participants also discussed that it made them feel uncomfortable when co-workers were watching over their shoulders and looking at their computer screen. A lot of research is done on the computer, and they did not want co-workers to think they were not working if they were looking up ideas for inspiration.

Participants from the offices that had only open spaces and no assigned work spaces said: (a) Many workers were habitual and would naturally try to work in the same space every day, anyway or, (b) People tried to go find another place to work in the office where they could be alone. Creatives seemed most happy when they had their own
assigned space in an open environment where they could see everyone and also have lots of options for collaboration. Lloyd said:

They have to have that creative, energy-filled atmosphere around them. If you're walking into some gray building with beige walls and fake plants, and everybody's just walking around mundanely, having to get through their day, and you have disorganized or angry upper management (and I've had all of these things), why on earth would you want to help that whole situation? Or even bring any energy to it?

As Lloyd pointed out, atmosphere is an important part of the physical environment. Creatives agreed that it was very important to have an atmosphere where everything was open, where everyone had a say and could feel comfortable sharing an idea. Because jobs and deadlines can be so stressful, it was important to have an environment that was relaxing. Kyle said:

The whole environment, it's a very relaxed and healthy environment. I used to say that a relaxed mind is a creative mind. That was actually on my tea bag earlier. I think that’s what they see it too – the whole [idea] that your good ideas can come in the shower because you’re so relaxed. The company does its best, the agency does its best to create just a very happy, healthy, balanced type of environment.

Participants also liked work environments that had lots of resources and created an environment that allowed them to get away from the work to think. Examples given by participants included environments that had ping pong tables, games, smoothie bars, beer on tap, coffee, snacks, etc. Lloyd said that one of the reasons he liked the environment of his agency was because “everybody here feels important, and it feels like they can have
Participants liked working in an environment where everyone was appreciated and collaboration was important.

**Resources to Support Creativity.** Participants said that they felt they had the resources they needed to be creative. Many brought up that they felt that it was necessary for them to have certain software and updated computers and that was something they had. However, if they did not have it, it would be a hindrance to their creativity since they would not have the necessary tools to keep up with the newest technology. The two resources that came up as something creatives wished they had more of were time and professional development. Many said that sometimes they wished they had more time for an assignment but they realized that deadlines were part of the job. As Joel put it, a deadline could also be motivating:

> There's always a struggle between the time that you have and getting through the process. It's also the thing where if you didn't have any deadline, then you could keep going almost into...how long can you spend coming up with an idea?

As Hannah pointed out:

> Advertising is a career that I think takes a certain type of mind or person to not just flip everyone else off and walk out the door type thing, because it’s stressful. Once you are in the heat of it or have been at end’s wit a couple of times...This sounds really horrible, but you get used to it or you learn how to manage it through trial and error or at least through communicating, ‘Hey, this isn’t possible. I can’t do this without being able to sleep tonight.

Professional Development was the other theme that came up as a resource creatives discussed as necessary. Professional development referred to anything from...
weekly presentations in the office to traveling to a conference, to accessing online research. Those who felt that they had professional development opportunities said that it helped them be creative and gave many examples of how helpful it was. Those who felt they did not have enough brought it up as something that would help them. Hannah summarized this point:

I think that I would like to go to more, be sent or flown, to more talks, like TED Talks and stuff like that, just to listen to people outside of the agency speak, just to get different perspectives and point of views on current happenings or stuff like that. Even though I don’t know everything, I still want to learn everything. I do get inspired and fixated if someone is talking about how the brain does this every five seconds or if someone is talking about marine biology or something random. I feel like everything in our world is totally on the table; nothing is off limits. I just want to learn more about everything and get inspired by it and travel more and work a little less.

**Flexibility.** Creatives also said that they appreciated the availability of a flexible work schedule. As noted by the idea generation process descriptions, many of the creatives discussed that they come up with ideas at night, in different settings, or while taking a walk. Creatives appreciated not having formal work hours in which they were forced to be at a certain place at a certain time, with the exception of meetings. However, they appreciated suggested work hours, such as 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. to know that most people may be in the office at the time for collaboration. Participants liked that they had the option to go work at another location such as a coffee shop. According to the
participants, having flexible work hours made them feel that the organization trusted them and also allowed them to work at their best.

**Creatives Need to Feel Valued.** A major theme that emerged from the conversations with creatives was that when they felt valued by the organization, it helped them be creative. As Lloyd put it:

There's a real reciprocal relationship that happens when you take care of your employees. You get everything back tenfold. If I'm happy, and I'm comfortable, and I'm not worried about my job every day, and I'm not stressed out, and I don't feel like some manager's breathing down my neck every day – I don't have any of those things here – I'm generally more creative and happy, and probably make more money for [the agency], than if they stressed me about every little thing.

The ways that employees stated that they felt appreciated included leaders verbalizing that they appreciated the creative, invested in an employee, and made them feel like their job was secure. Leaders verbalizing that they appreciated the creatives helped during coaching creativity because it could contribute to building confidence and showed the creative that although an idea may be turned down, it did not mean they were a failure. However, not all participants said that they needed the verbal affirmation. Some participants indicated that they were confident and motivated enough by the work and feedback from the client. Participants gave many examples of how agencies invested in them. Participants indicated that it made them feel valued when the companies invested money in them. Claire was given a special desk to help accommodate an injury:
It helps me work better because now my health is better from doing the standing and since my health is better, I do better work and they really...they get it. It's like a take care of us, we'll take care of you mentality.

Employees also said that when agencies invested in them by doing simple things like throwing a holiday party for employees or having celebrations after big projects were complete, they felt valued. Lastly, employees reported that when they felt job security, they were more confident to take risks and share ideas because they could do that without the fear of being fired.

Summary

This chapter discussed how participants reported what their creative process looked like and how a leader and organization influenced that creative process. Participants described a creative process that varied based on the client and project. Creatives saw their most involved role in generating ideas. Creatives identified that the steps were not separated in the creative process and that some did not even see it as a process. Looking at how a leader, as in a creative director, influenced the creative process, it was difficult to identify a particular stage since creatives had difficulty separating the process into stages. Creatives discussed that leaders were most involved in the evaluation part of the creative process but that it was helpful to have them involved in generating ideas.

Creatives identified that leaders could support them by coaching them how to be creative, helping them generate ideas, asking questions, speaking to them as creatives, recognizing that work for creatives can be emotional, and knowing the client well. Creatives identified that leaders hindered their creative process by not communicating,
not wanting to take reasonable risks in ideas, and being competitive. These responsibilities could be difficult for a leader to balance. Creatives identified that organizations could support their creative process through the physical environment, resources that organizations supply, flexibility in their schedules, and by showing creatives that they are valued.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Creativity is becoming one of the most valued aspects of an organization. American employers are searching for creative talent to compete in today’s globalized, technology-driven economy. For businesses, creativity leads to innovation that allows their business to have an advantage over competitors. The literature on how leadership is related to creativity has primarily been based on interviewing and examining the leadership itself. In the advertising literature, there is little known about creative leadership from the perspective of the creative employee – the person who is producing the creative work. This study asked creatives in the advertising industry to articulate their personal creative process and what a leader and organization could do to support their creative process. This chapter will present the researcher’s conclusions and implications.

Summary of the Study

The present qualitative included 22 creatives (art directors, copywriters, and art directors) in advertising. Creatives from five different agencies that ranged in size from a new, small startup to a large agency that had existed for decades, as well as a freelancer. The researcher asked a series of questions of creatives about what their creative process looked like and how their creative director and agency supported that process in semi-structured interviews. The purpose of this study and the overall research question was to understand how leadership could support creativity in the advertising industry from the perspective of the employees they led. The following paragraphs represent a summary of the findings.
The creatives first discussed how the creative process varied based on the client and process. The first subset question was, “What does the creative process look like for a creative in advertising?” The participants discussed how the creative process for them varied based on the client and project.

The creatives then discussed the role that their direct supervisor played in the creative process. The participants discussed that there were two types of leadership in terms of involvement in the creative process. The first type of leadership involved leaders who were involved throughout the process. The second type of leadership involved leaders who started their involvement at the evaluating stages of ideas. The type of involvement from the leadership depended on the client, project, and personality of the leader. Creatives did not prefer one type of leadership style; they understood the various styles of involvement, but felt it was helpful to have a leader who was involved throughout the process. The answer to the research question, “Is there any one stage of the creative process in which a leader is particularly influential?” would be the evaluation stage. Creatives felt that leaders were particularly influential in the evaluation stage of the process as it was their role to make sure the best ideas were presented to the clients. They also discussed that there were no clear steps in the creative process.

Creatives were also asked what actions a leader could take to support or impede the creative process. Participants stated that leaders could support them by helping them learn how to think creatively. This could be done by having the leader help the creative generate ideas, asking questions of the creative, and speaking to them as a creative. Leaders could also support the creative by recognizing that his or her work could be emotional. When giving feedback, leaders should represent the client’s point of view to
help the creative focus on the client’s needs. According to participants, a leader could hinder the process by not communicating specific feedback and not encouraging creatives or allowing creatives to take reasonable risks. It is a challenge for a leader to balance coaching creativity and representing the client. The participants indicated that an organization could help a creative’s process through the physical environment, providing resources, flexibility, and making them feel valued.

**Summary of the Findings**

The findings from the overall research question and subset questions can be sorted into three major categories: (a) the creative process, (b) leader influence, and (c) organizational influence.

**Creative Process**

As the definition of creativity has evolved into viewing creativity as a problem solving process, the theories of the creative process have evolved into a problem-solving model as well. Mumford et al.’s (1991) proposed model of creative problem solving was based on three criteria. First, the process must be based on knowledge and information. Second, new ideas come from knowledge that is recombined and reorganized. Third, ideas need to be turned into plans.

The stages of this model include defining the problem, gathering information, organizing the information, combining concepts, generating ideas, evaluating ideas, implementing planning, and then monitoring the solution (Mumford, Medeiros, & Partlow, 2012). This model was applicable to the creative process of advertising and thus was used as the basis for the follow-up questions asked of creatives when they were describing their creative process.
The results on the creative process described how creatives articulated their creative process. The researcher assumed that it would be easy for creatives to articulate their creative process; however, 36% of the respondents said that it was a difficult task. Participants struggled for different reasons. Some participants stated that they felt creativity was anything but linear; they did not agree that the word “process” referred to something linear. The participants also said it was difficult to articulate because they felt that for them, creativity was part intuition and was just a skill they had rather than a process they went through.

Overall, creatives articulated that they did go through the steps of Mumford, et al. (2012) but not in a linear step-by-step way. Creatives recognized that defining the problem was the first step to the creative process, but said many times that part of the process was the responsibility of the account persons who developed the brief. Some creatives also articulated that they looked at the problem of the creative process as meeting the objectives on the brief in the time allotted. Scott and Bruce (1994) found that a systematic problem solving process was significantly related to individual innovation behavior.

Creatives discussed the next steps of the Mumford et al.’s (2012) creative problem-solving model with how they gathered and organized information. Creatives said they were always gathering and organizing information. Because advertising is everywhere on billboards, television, the Internet, etc., creatives said they were constantly gathering information about what was trending. They also noted that for a project’s inspiration, they used their life experience – so in that sense, they were always gathering information in their daily lives. The next step of conceptually combining information was
not formally noted as a step, but described by creatives when they discussed how they generated an idea. They discussed how oftentimes, when working on projects for the same client, they had to take old ideas or logos from the clients and combine them in new ways to stay with the brand and to deliver what the client wanted but in a new way.

The idea generation phase was what creatives discussed the most. This was the phase in which they discussed the importance of brainstorming and psychological space. Psychological space is a term that refers to the need for a person to engage in unrelated activity to generate an idea. The participants of Hackley and Kover (2007) stated the importance of having psychological space to be creative. The participants said that they had to go around the office to walk around, free their mind, or shut the door of their office to be alone in order to produce work they felt was their best. The participants of the present study supported that finding and also discussed how they often came up with ideas in the shower, while they were taking a walk, or when they were driving to work. Psychological space was vital to their process.

The stage of evaluating the ideas was one that was often discussed as the role of the leader. A few creatives did discuss the ways they vetted ideas in the brainstorming process. The two ways that they evaluated ideas was to: (a) compare the product to the objectives in the brief and intuition, and (b) decide if they thought it was good based on their experiences and gut. The majority of the creatives described this pull between intuition and comparison to the brief as the role of the leader.

When describing their creative process, creatives did not discuss much the stages of implementing the idea and monitoring the solution. In advertising, monitoring ideas refers to monitoring the sales that are generated for the client. The only reference to
monitoring by creatives was that when sales increased for a business because of an idea, it was very motivating for them. They did not feel responsible for actually monitoring the idea.

**Stages of the creative process are blurred.** While some of the participants went through the creative process step by step as articulated in research (Mumford, et al., 2012), other participants stated that it was difficult to isolate the steps of the creative process because they did not see it as a process. Many creatives discussed that they were always thinking and always researching and thus always coming up with ideas.

Those who were able to articulate a process referenced a process they learned in a school or one that was the office standard. They were the steps that the agency went through. The literature review in Chapter 2 discussed that while there are many common findings on the creative process, it appeared that each individual has a different experience with the process and his or her own perspective on what it looked like. That thought was upheld in the findings of the current study and displayed by the difficulty to identify separate stages of the creative process as described by creatives.

**Collaboration is important.** It is a common misconception (as noted by some of the participants) that creatives work alone and are married to the ideas that only they came up with, but in the interviews, creatives were very vocal about the need for collaborating and supporting each other’s ideas. While creatives noted that it was important to have time to be alone to process and think, they also said that collaboration was essential to the creative process. Research has recognized the need for collaboration and suggests that leadership actually go as far as to support and organize it. Scott and Bruce (1994) found that work groups help build the physical climate for collaboration. At
a 2008 Harvard creativity summit of business executives, the leaders recognized the importance of employees having autonomy while also providing structure for them to be collaborative.

It is difficult for people to have all the skills needed to generate and carry out the ideas. Companies often hire separate people for those jobs, but it can be difficult to hand off the ideas and have them carried out in the way they were intended. Organizations need to make sure that the handoff is smooth and encourages the idea-generators and the creative employees to help carry out the ideas and engage in different skills (Amabile & Khaire, 2008).

**Direction.** Another misconception (as noted by some of the participants) was that creatives were able to be the most creative when they had no limits and boundaries. Creatives noted that this was not necessarily true because when there were too many possibilities it was too difficult to rein in all of their ideas. They liked to have structure and parameters around the assignment. Parameters limited where their mind could go and thus, they felt it made them more creative.

Bell (1992) described creative advertising as a kind of creativity that is constrained by marketing objectives, competition of clients, and the approval hierarchy of the client organization. As Flandin et al. (1992) stated, the purpose of creativity in advertising is to attract customers who will eventually lead to a purchase. In advertising, the purpose of the creative thought is said to achieve the objectives set by the clients (El-Murad & West, 2004). Creatives interviewed not only recognized this but also said that being given those directions and objectives helped them come up with creative ideas.
Leadership Influence

Leadership involvement. There appeared to be two types of leadership: the leader who was involved through most of the creative process and the leader who just came in at the evaluation of ideas stages. Leader involvement varied by the project, leader, and client. It makes sense that leaders want to be more involved when there is a higher profile client or a project that is bringing in more money than others. It also makes sense that leaders want to be more involved with those new to the field or the office versus those who have been in the field for a few years. The employees did not identify that they liked one way or another. For them, their preference for leader involvement depended on the project and how comfortable they were with the assignment. They did state that they did not mind leadership involvement through the whole process as long as it was supportive. At a Harvard summit for creative leaders, the leaders also discussed strategies they themselves could employ to support a creative environment. They indicated that it was important for a leader to be supportive of every phase of the creative process and to give employees the power to engage in the creative process (Amabile & Khaire, 2008). However, at a colloquium at Harvard’s business school, Amabile and Khaire (2008) wrote that leaders of creative people needed to provide more guidance and control at the end of the creative process as opposed to the beginning. Creatives’ comments agreed with this research, saying that it was good to have leader involvement through the whole process with most of the involvement coming at the end.

Leader support. A leader is influential on the climate of an organization. A meta-analysis of Horner and Buchner (2009) states that studies have indicated that 20% to 67% of the climate for creativity in organizations is directly the result of a leader’s
behavior (Horner & Buchner, 2009). One of the major ways that participants felt that their leader supported their creative process was by coaching them on how to be creative, recognizing that work could be emotional, and representing the client.

**Coaching creativity.** Creatives said one of the ways a leader could support them in their creativity was to teach them how to be more creative – in other words, to be a creative coach. Specifically, participants noted that leaders could be creative coaches by: (a) helping them generate ideas, (b) asking questions, and (3) speaking to them as a creative.

**Helping generate ideas.** Reiter-Palmon and Illies (2004) suggested that to aid in the idea generation component of problem solving, leaders could guide their team by giving instructions for techniques that help produce useful ideas and instructions that have the goal of the process embedded in. For the state of idea evaluation, leaders need to be clear with everyone about the criteria with which the ideas are evaluated. Leaders can guide the discussion of idea generation to discuss the possible obstacles and consequences of each idea. Creatives echoed this statement, feeling that when their leader helped generate ideas, it was a way for them to model how they were creative. Research has shown this to be important. Jong and Hartog (2007) interviewed managers who described thirteen leadership behaviors that they believed helped promote creativity and innovation for employees. Those results included the behavior of role modeling creativity. Geoffee and Jones (2007) also suggested that leaders should model creative behavior and show their own expertise. Jong and Hartog (2007) interviewed managers who described thirteen leadership behaviors that they believed helped promote creativity.
and innovation for employees. Those results included behaviors like organizational feedback role modeling of creativity.

**Asking questions.** One of the things that Amabile (1998) said a leader could do to support creativity in the workplace was to provide challenge. Jong and Hartog (2007) also found that intellectual stimulation helped promote creativity and innovation. Those findings aligned with creatives in this study, who said they felt that when leaders asked questions about their work, it helped them be more creative. Creatives said that when leaders asked them questions, it helped them think through the opinions of the work and why they made certain choices.

**Speaking as a creative.** Creatives also reported that when a leader spoke as creative to creative rather than in a hierarchical form while discussing ideas, it helped the creative be more responsive to feedback. Leaders’ relationships with their employees can also influence creativity of the employee. For example, Tierney et al. (1999) found that effective leader-member exchange (LMX) relationships are positively correlated with employee creativity. Studies have also shown that a supportive leadership had a positive relationship with creativity. Controlling leadership has a negative relationship with employee creativity (Amabile et al., 2004; Tierney & Farmer, 2004).

Perhaps the reason why creatives appreciate this style is because there is a fear of failure when creatives present ideas. At a Harvard creativity summit, business leaders discussed the importance of working to decrease the fear of failure among their employees (Amabile & Khaire, 2008). When the creatives’ leader talked to them as a creative, it made them feel they were talking to a colleague for feedback and growth rather than to someone who would tell them they were doing something wrong (failing).
**Recognize that work is emotional.** Creatives referenced the idea that they were very tied to their work. Many of them considered themselves artists and looked at their work as their art, so it can be difficult to receive feedback, especially criticism, about their art. Participants also indicated that sometimes they became emotionally tied to their work because they had invested so much time and energy into an idea and it could be hard to get away from it and start over or go in a new direction. Data from a study that interviewed artists indicated that the emotional component to creativity was the most-cited variable for barriers to creativity (Botella, Glaveanu, Zenasni, Storme, Myszkowski, Wolff, & Lubart, 2013). This is why it is important for leaders to recognize that the work can be emotional for creatives and to make sure that they recognize how difficult it can be to go in another direction when suggesting it.

**Representing the client.** Creatives indicated the importance of clients in the creative process. Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan (2006) looked at how clients influenced creativity by surveying agency personnel. The results showed that clients who were open to exploring different strategies helped an agency be more creative. While a few participants stated that at times when a client did not want to go in a particular direction, it could be frustrating, overall, creatives viewed client directions as a piece of the creative process. They saw their job in terms of creativity to come up with an idea that pleases the client. Instead of saying the client was inhibiting their creativity, they often viewed the client’s needs as part of the problem they were trying to solve in a creative way. Nyilasy and Reid (2009) did identify that while some directives from the clients are necessary they also may lessen the creativity of those working on the account (Koslow et al., 2006).
Knowing this, it is important for the leader to represent the client but also do so in a way that guides rather than threatens creativity.

Participants also stated that their leader could support them by making sure that their ideas were supportive of the client. According to the participants, their leaders are the ones who have the most contact and communication with the clients and thus can make sure to direct the creative in a direction that would please the clients. Creatives also indicated that it was helpful to talk to their leader about a particular client because oftentimes, the leader had worked for that client for many years so they knew the history of the client’s advertising and what they looked for, which was extremely helpful for the creative. If the agency felt a lot of pressure from the clients, it could also inhibit creativity.

**Leader hinder.** When looking at how a leader influences the creative process, there are ways that a leader can hinder that process. This study showed three major ways that a leader hinders the process for creativity: (a) a lack of communication, (b) being safe, and (c) competiveness.

**Lack of communication.** A major theme from creatives on how their leaders hindered their process appeared in the part of the process in which leaders provided feedback on ideas. When the leader said an idea would not work or was bad and did not communicate why, it was difficult for creatives to know where to go next. Communication in the feedback process was essential for a creative to know what he or she did wrong and how to fix it. Communication also helped them grow by learning how to improve for next time. Specific communication on ideas helped creatives understand that the feedback was objective and based on criteria as opposed to subjective and just an
opinion. Creatives indicated that the subjectivity of evaluating work could make things
difficult. They might feel an idea was great, so if it was rejected by a leader, it was
important for that leader to communicate why it was rejected so the creative did not
assume that it was just because of the leader’s personal preferences.

It is also important for a creative to be able to communicate with his or her
director. AghajaniHashjeen et al. (2013) suggested that it was best for an organization to
have an organic structure that was low in complexity, centralization, and formalization
and to decrease the number of management levels in order to increase creativity. The
easier it is to talk to a leader, the more communication can actually take place.

**Being safe.** Creatives interviewed also said that while it was important for leaders
to represent clients and state what the client would be comfortable with, it could be
difficult when the leader just wanted to take the safe route that he or she knew would
please the client instead of presenting them a more risky idea that still represented their
brand.

Hackley and Kover (2007) noted the creative tensions in advertising firms. The
tension comes from the creative, who wants to pick an idea based on what he or she feels
is a good idea, versus the firm, who wants to use formal research systems to pick an idea.
Copy-testing, consumer researching, account planning, and formal research methodizing
is done to determine the quality of an idea. The creatives interviewed by Hackley and
Kover (2007) felt that the research should only be necessary in identifying an audience
for the ad. The creatives did not reference formal research in this study as something that
hindered them. They just noted that when a leader brought up what worked for a
particular audience or client (which was typically based on research), it hindered their process of coming up with ideas.

**Competitiveness.** Lastly, participants noted that one of the things a leader did that hindered their creativity was to try to come up with a better idea when helping them generate ideas instead of working with them.

**Leader challenges.** It is difficult for the leader to balance ways to support a creative and to know the ways that he or she may be hindering the creative. For example, participants stated that creatives can support creatives by representing the client, but then if the leader says that the client wants only safe ideas, the creatives feel hindered. Leaders can support creatives by generating ideas with them and modeling creative behavior. However, they cannot be competitive with creatives in this process and act like it is their job to come up with the better idea.

**Results About Organization Influence**

Businesses are not only looking for creative individuals to hire, but also are seeking to implement organizational practices that support creativity. Some of the most successful and sought after businesses for employment are cited as valuing creativity. The following section discusses the physical environment, resources, and flexibility that participants identified organizations can implement to support their creative process.

**Physical environment.** In the panel at the American Academy of Advertising (2011), the environment of an agency was deemed as an important element for the creative process (Vogel et al., 2011). The environment that the panel felt was most conducive to creativity was one that was less inhibited, relaxed, more flexible, and collaborative (Vogel et al., 2011). Creatives indicated all of these items in their
interviews and liked offices that had an open environment. A few of the agencies only had open areas with no assigned spaces for individual creatives. Creatives indicated that this helped them be collaborative, but they also needed time to themselves to think. They also noted that while there were no assigned spaces, people by nature, would just go to the same spot every day and almost claim it as their space. The researcher felt that these statements indicated that creatives were most comfortable when they had a space to call their own in addition to a variety of spaces in which they could be collaborative with others.

Creatives referenced how much they appreciated a physical environment that was inspiring to them. Some referenced the colors on the wall – others, the artwork that was displayed. Some discussed having cubicles cut down, access to windows, and glass offices. Overall, they felt it was good to have a space that inspired them to work with others and create. What that looked like varied.

Atmosphere was something that was discussed as part of the physical environment by creatives. In a meta-analysis, Hunter, Bedell, and Mumford (2007) found that climate perception had a strong influence on creative achievement and problem solving for employees. The leaders of Google stated that ideas come from every person, even users, and all kinds of innovation. It is important to set up an environment in which people feel that they can share those ideas; an open culture is very important (Leslie, 2009). Many of the creatives agreed with this and discussed how it was important that they work at a place where an idea can come from anyone in the agency. A 2008 Harvard creativity summit brought together businesses that relied on creativity, and business leaders discussed the importance of letting ideas come from all ranks of an organization.
Google discussed how the company performed an analysis of employee ideas and found that ideas that came without support from higher ranks did better than ideas backed by the executives (Amabile & Khaire, 2008). Creatives interviewed also discussed how having such an atmosphere indicated that everyone was supportive of one another, which was important.

**Resources to support creativity.** Creatives indicated that it was important for them to have the necessary software and equipment to do their jobs. All of the participants felt that they had the necessary equipment, but discussed times when they did not at past jobs and how negatively that impacted their performance. The two resources that came up as resources they wish they had more of were time and professional development. While creatives did recognize that a deadline and time constraints were just part of the problem they had to solve, participants did state that with some projects, time would have allowed them to generate more ideas. Reiter-Palmon and Illies (2004) wrote about the importance of time in helping the idea generation component of problem solving. Leaders can guide their team by giving instructions for techniques that help produce useful ideas and instructions that have the goal of the process embedded within. Leaders should also give this process time. With time constraints, the employees may just select the first set of ideas, which are not always the best. Shalley and Gilson (2004) also found that leaders could support the creative process by giving their employees sufficient resources, which include enough time for that process to occur.

Professional development was another theme – if creatives felt they had good opportunities for professional development, they cited that as something that was important to them. If they did not feel they had it, it was something they wished they had.
Professional development in these conversations referred to everything from morning meetings in which they watched a video together, to classes for learning how to use software, to conferences related to their profession. The theme of the professional development conversations was that it was important to be competitive in order to keep up the skills and trends needed in the industry.

**Flexibility.** Research has shown that the more flexible in structure an organization is, the more creative its employees become (Aghajani-Hashjeen, et al. 2013). Creatives agreed with this and said they felt that flexibility of an organization made them feel comfortable at work, which aided in creativity because they were not forced to come up with ideas immediately and could do so in their own way on their own time.

A theme that Hackley and Kover (2007) found in their interviews with creatives was the need to play with ideas and that many of their ideas came to them at home or in other locations than work – which was difficult if they were expected to come up with ideas when they were at work. The participants said they had to go around the office to walk around, free their mind, or shut the door of their office to be alone in order to produce work they felt was their best. While the participants of the current study did not indicate that the bureaucracy of the firm inhibited their ability to be flexible, they did indicate how much they appreciated that their workplace allowed them to engage in their creative process outside of the work office and time, and they worked in the same way, needing psychological space.

**Creatives need to feel valued.** One of the ways that creatives said an organization could help them be creative was to make them feel valued. Creatives discussed how they put a lot of time and energy into their work, and it was nice to know
the organization valued that. Research has shown that some creatives felt the agency did not value the creative department. In interviews with creatives, Hackley and Kover (2007) reported that creatives valued art and literature while their agency valued the commercial side of the work. The creatives also indicated that they felt other people at the agency often downplayed the work of a creative and doubted that they were even professionals (Hackley & Kover, 2007).

Creatives discussed that they felt valued when leaders simply told them they valued them. Creatives also said that they felt valued when leadership recognized their ideas – by showing other creatives their ideas, putting an idea on the agency homepage, or simply telling them they are valued in the organization.

Creatives also said they felt valued when the organization made extra efforts to make sure they were comfortable. Examples included throwing parties for holidays or the completion of large projects. Creatives also cited organizations providing things at the office like smoothie bars, beer on tap at a certain time of day, ping-pong tables, video games, etc. – all of the extra efforts to make sure employees felt comfortable and appreciated at work. Job security was also something that helped creatives feel safe to speak up and contribute ideas.

**Significance of Study**

This study is significant for three reasons. First, this study is significant because it adds to the advertising literature on creativity from the perspective of the creative. Second, this study is significant because it can provide leaders in advertising with ideas of what actions they can take to promote creativity. Lastly, this study can help organizations understand some organizational behaviors that will aid leadership in
developing a creative culture. All of these improvements will produce a competitive edge in today’s marketplace.

**Implications for Action**

The following section is meant to be helpful to leaders of creatives and the leadership of organizations in advertising. It provides insight on how to facilitate an environment that supports creativity.

- When looking at how a leader and/or organization can influence the creative process, it is important to recognize that (a) not all creatives view this as a process and (b) the process may depend on the project. Creative directors should discuss their involvement with a creative in the creative process, ask if it is supporting them appropriately, and ask how they can support them more.

- To support creatives, leaders could model idea generation and help creatives generate ideas.

- Leaders can also support a creative’s process by asking questions about their opinions on the work as well as their thought process.

- When communicating with creatives about ideas, it is important for leaders to be specific about the feedback they give in terms of what does not work, what needs to be changed, and what is good about the idea. During communication, leaders should recognize that for some creatives, their work is emotional, and thus should talk to them as a creative.

- Leaders should balance making sure ideas are what the clients want while still encouraging creatives to take risks with their ideas.

- Leaders should not act competitively when helping creatives come up with ideas.
- Organizations should make sure that creatives have all the resources they need, including updated software and computer equipment, time, and professional development opportunities.

- Organizations should consider that in creating a physical environment for a creative, they should provide him or her the ability to work alone if needed as well as facilitate collaboration with a variety of spaces.

- Organizations should make sure to be flexible when accommodating how a creative generates ideas, while also giving them enough time to do so.

- Leadership in an organization should take efforts to make employees feel valued. They can do this by simply telling creatives they are valued, creating formal recognition programs, providing office perks, and holding staff events and parties.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Future studies could explore more about creativity from the perspective of creatives. A future study could interview creatives and then the leaders of those creatives, comparing the perceptions of leadership to see if they aligned with what the leader intended. Another future study could look only at firms that are known in the industry as the most creative based on awards, and interview those creatives on what helps them be creative. A future study could also examine the aspects of the environment that a creative says is helpful and then observe the environment to see what those comments look like in practice.

Future studies could also look at the components of this study and apply them to different work environments such as education. For example, future studies could interview students about how their teacher, as a leader, influences their creativity.
Teachers could be interviewed about how their boss influences their creativity. Studies could also look at the findings of this study in terms of what type of physical environment helps creative and see if that is the same for another group of people in the workplace. For example, what types of physical environments in the education setting help students be creative? If accountants or others professionals in an agency were interviewed, would their study echo the comments of creatives?

One of the limitations of this study was that employees had to talk about their direct supervisors, which may have made them hesitant to be honest about what their supervisor could do differently – as interviews took place in their workplace. Another limitation was that because these are in-depth interviews of a small sample of professionals in a particular field, it could be argued the results cannot be generalized. The population was also in a specific area of the country that may have a different culture or perspective than other areas of the county on the questions. Another limitation was that the participants did not review the transcripts to verify their accuracy.

**Summary**

This qualitative study interviewed 22 creatives in the advertising industry. Participants included five firms and one freelancer from the Omaha, Chicago, and Kansas City markets. Participants were asked about their creative process and how a leader or their organization could best support that process. Discussion fell into the three categories of (a) the creative process, (b) leadership influence, and (c) organizational influence.

- When discussing the creative progress, creatives expressed the stages of the creative process were difficult to separate and often blurred together. They identified collaboration and direction are important for their creative process.
When discussing leadership influence, creative stated leaders could support their creativity by coaching them to be creative, by helping generate ideas, asking questions, and speaking to them as a creative from experience with expertise. Creatives also said leaders could support them by recognizing they are emotionally tied to their work and by guiding them in the direction of the client. Creatives stated leaders hinder their creativity by not communicating why some ideas are good or what can make ideas better. They also said leaders hinder their creativity by trying to pick only the safe ideas and at times being competitive, trying to come up with a better idea. The researcher noted from the feedback of creatives, there are many challenges that a leader has to balance in order to support and not hinder creativity.

For organization influence, creatives said organizations could support them by creating an environment that gives them their own space as well as collaborative spaces, providing appropriate resources, and flexible schedule. Organizations should show creatives they are valued through appreciation and communicating job security.
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Appendix A

**Protocol Title:** Employee Perceptions of a Leader’s Influence on Creativity: A Qualitative Study of Advertising Firms  
**Protocol Number:** 13-16877  
**Principal Investigator’s Name and Department:** Allison Poss  
Student of the Ed.D. Interdisciplinary Leadership Program at Creighton University

Informed Consent for Participants

**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**
You are invited to participate in this research study by discussing your creative process and how your leader and organization can best support that process. The details of the study and process are provided in this document. There are ___ advertising firms participating in this study with ____ participants from your firm. Each participant will engage in a one-on-one interview. The researcher will be available to answer questions at any during and after this process.

**BASIC ELEMENTS**

**Study Purpose and Procedures**
The purpose of this study is for creatives in advertising firms to identify how the leaders and organizations they work for can best support their creative process. The study will interview participants individually to make sure participants feel comfortable. The interview is anticipated to take 30 to 45 minutes and will be recorded to help ensure accuracy. The interview recordings will be transcribed and the participant will be asked to review the transcription over email to verify its accuracy. Each participant will be assigned a fictitious name or the participant may choose one. Real names will not be used at any point of the informational collection. Other names mentioned in the interviewing and the organization the participant works for will also be kept confidential by using fictitious names. Every effort to maintain the participant’s anonymity and privacy will be made before, during, and after the interview.

**Risks of Participating in the Study**
No more risk than is encountered in everyday life is expected.

**Benefits of Participating in the Study**
The benefit for participants is that each participant will have the opportunity to discuss and reflect upon their personal creative process as well as what their leader and organization can do to best support them. This reflection can help each participant become more self-aware in the work place.

**Confidentiality**
Confidential information will only be disclosed the primary investigator’s dissertation advisor, Isabelle Cherney, Ph.D. so she can help guide the primary investigator. Confidential may also be disclosed to the Creighton University IRB to also aid the primary investigator to take all of the appropriate steps in the research process.
Both records that identify you and this consent form signed by you may be looked at by others. The list of people who may look at you research records are: The investigator and her dissertation committee. I may present the research findings at professional meetings or publish the results of this research study in relevant journals. However, I will always keep your name, address, or other identifying information private. The interviews will all be recorded on an audio device with permission of the participant. During analysis the audio interviews will be stored on the investigator’s password locked computer to ensure confidentiality of the data. The recordings will also be given to a transcription service. After the interviews are transcribed and the study is complete, recordings will be destroyed.

**Contact Information**

Please contact Allison Poss, the primary investigator, by email at poss.allison@gmail.com or by phone at (712) 253-0561 with any questions concerning this research or in case of a research-related injury to the subject.

**SIGNATURE CLAUSE**

You are free to refuse to participate in this research project or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the project at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, or any effect on your medical care. *My signature below indicates that all my questions have been answered. I agree to participate in the project as described above.*

Printed Name of Subject

______________________________ 

Signature of Subject ____________________________ Date Signed

The Creighton University Institutional Review Board (IRB) offers you an opportunity (anonymously if you so choose) to discuss problems, concerns, and questions; obtain information; or offer input about this project with an IRB administrator who is not associated with this particular research project. You may call or write to the Institutional Review Board at (402) 280-2126; address the letter to the Institutional Review Board, Creighton University, 2500 California Plaza, Omaha, NE 68178 or by email at irb@creighton.edu.

_A copy of this form has been given to me._ 

Subject’s Initials

**For the Research Investigator**—I have discussed with this subject (and, if required, the subject’s guardian) the procedure(s) described above and the risks involved; I believe he/she understands the contents of the consent document and is competent to give legally effective and informed consent.

______________________________ 

Signature of Responsible Investigator ____________________________ Date Signed
We would appreciate your feedback on your experience as a research participant at Creighton University; please fill out our survey at http://www.creighton.edu/participantsurvey

**Bill of Rights for Research Participants**

As a participant in a research study, you have the right:

1. To have enough time to decide whether or not to be in the research study, and to make that decision without any pressure from the people who are conducting the research.

2. To refuse to be in the study at all, or to stop participating at any time after you begin the study.

3. To be told what the study is trying to find out, what will happen to you, and what you will be asked to do if you are in the study.

4. To be told about the reasonably foreseeable risks of being in the study.

5. To be told about the possible benefits of being in the study.

6. To be told whether there are any costs associated with being in the study and whether you will be compensated for participating in the study.

7. To be told who will have access to information collected about you and how your confidentiality will be protected.

8. To be told whom to contact with questions about the research, about research-related injury, and about your rights as a research subject.

9. If the study involves treatment or therapy:
   
   a. To be told about the other non-research treatment choices you have.

   b. To be told where treatment is available should you have a research-related injury, and who will pay for research-related treatment.
Interview Protocol

To Read Aloud: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project. The purpose of this project is to gather information on what leaders can do, from the perspective of the creative personnel, to enhance the creative process for employees. This conversation will be confidential. Your name will be anonymous and not used in research. Have you read the consent form and do you have any questions? With your permission I am going to record the interview. Do I have your permission? You have permission to end the interview at any time. Do you have any questions?

- What is your role here? How long have you been here? How long have you been in the industry?
- I want to start by talking about your creative process. So first I would like you to describe your creative process.
- about the last project you were assigned and the process that you used to generate your ideas for the project. Reflecting on that process think about . . .
  o How do you seek to define the problem?
  o How do you gather information on that problem?
  o How do you organize the information you gathered?
  o How do you generate new concepts by joining or juxtaposing old ones?
  o How do you generate ideas?
  o How do you evaluate those ideas?
  o How to plan to implement your ideas?
  o How to you monitor the ideas you implemented.
- What is the most important and/or vital part of your creative process to you?
- Does your leader, the person you directly report to, have a similar creative
Thinking of a project you were proud of in terms of creativity, how did your leader support you thought the creative process. So thinking about the following areas, where did your leader help you?
  - Defining the problem
  - Gathering Information
  - Organizing the Information
  - Conceptual Combination
  - Idea Generation
  - Idea Evaluation
  - Implementation Planning
  - Solution Monitoring

If so, how did your leader hinder that process?

What could your leader do to help enhance your creative process in any of the parts of the creative process mentioned?

How does the organization, or senior executives you work for support your creative process? How do they hinder it?
  - Thinking about your work environment, do you feel you have adequate workspace and quality workspace?
  - Do you feel you have enough resources (including time) to engage in your creative process?
  - Do you see clients as a leader in your creative process?

Is there anything else that you wanted to share with me?
Appendix C