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Fashioning cross-cultural creativity: Investigating the situated pedagogy of creativity

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ABSTRACT

Creativity can be regarded as universally and internationally endorsed as a key trait for students and graduates across disciplines. This endorsement comes despite differing definitions of what creativity is and how it may manifest itself in creative individuals and products and in different contexts. The descriptor 'creative' has been applied to certain educational practices and institutions who claim advantage over others as mediators of creative education. This 'creativity-branding' is also evident at city and national level, with countries claiming competitive advantage for housing a high prevalence of creative people or products, often concentrated within 'creative cities'. London is one such creative city with a reputation for fostering creativity especially within its long-established art schools. London has claims to being the location of several of the world's most respected fashion schools and attracts students from the UK and internationally to study in its creative colleges. The diversity found within higher education institutes is often cited as part of their creative appeal, however there is evidence that students coming from cultures with differing definitions of creativity may find their work marginalised or negated. This paper explores London's position as a creative city with respect to contemporary definitions of creativity across art and design, and discusses some of the issues educators in the creative arts face as we attempt to teach creative subjects in increasingly diverse classrooms and with an understanding of creativity as a culturally-situated practice.

Keywords: creativity, cross-cultural, fashion, London, pedagogy

ARTICLE

On November 24th 2014 (London), Sir John Sorrell and other senior figures from the United Kingdom (UK) creative and cultural industries meet to celebrate the founding of the *Creative Industries Federation*, a body that states its aim is to provide a unified voice for the UK's creative industries: 'Creativity is the U.K.'s calling card. We must make sure it remains so' (CIF, 2014). A British Fashion Council (2010) discussion paper unambiguously titled 'The Value of the U.K. Fashion Industry' highlights the creativity of U.K. fashion and textile designers as a key industry strength and its major differentiating feature and foregrounds the U.K.'s reputation for 'edgy individual style'. The British Fashion Council report credits the UK's higher education system with providing a 'world-class environment' for 'nurturing creativity and innovation' and for ensuring the U.K. maintains its status as an 'international centre for fashion excellence'. However the report also highlights increasing challenges to the UK's current position from both rival overseas cities and education funding pressures at home.

Taken together, these statements reveal interesting assumptions about contemporary creativity: firstly that creativity is a trait about which one nation or culture can claim to have an advantage over others, and secondly that this position (for the UK at least) is under threat. The U.K.- in common with many other countries- has prioritized creativity as a core skill for national success in the post-industrial knowledge economy and in 2014 the U.K. creative industries were valued at £8m per hour (DCMS, 2014). Many designers and fashion industry professionals working globally have been educated in the UK, but practicing in an environment where increases in student fees, a UK government emphasis on the importance of STEM subjects, the auditing of student satisfaction via instruments like the annual National Student Survey, and visa restrictions for international students, mean those involved in creative education are increasingly having to justify their practice and results against implied and explicit critiques of the value of a creative education. One of the reasons for this may be that, despite the growth in higher education courses across creative subject areas, creativity resists any consensual definition. This U.K. lecturer is representative of many involved in delivering a creative education, when she says: 'I don't know how to define creativity in a sense that people can use as a recordable thing, it's one of those substances that isn't actually definable.'

Pedagogic literature has highlighted the paucity of research into students' learning in creative fields (Drew, Bailey, & Shreeve, 2002) and that of the existing creativity research even less explores cross-cultural concepts of creativity and the extent to which these understandings are fixed or dynamic as students pass through education systems (Sternberg, 2006; Zha et al., 2006). With the fashion industry and higher education institutions both becoming increasingly globalized, the idea of culturally-situated constructs of creativity becomes more relevant. This paper discusses some of the issues facing educators working in creative fields as we seek to prepare students for the challenges and choices facing both contemporary industry and wider society, many of them requiring creative solutions to polarities such as global-local or mass-custom (Corner, 2014). My own pedagogic research includes qualitative interviews carried out with stakeholders at a London art and design university with a high proportion of Confucian heritage culture (CHC¹) students which have informed a series of conference presentations, professional development sessions and student seminars that introduce the concept of cross-cultural creativity and highlight the cultural underpinnings of creative teaching and assessment practices, with a view to informing a wider dialogue around creative education and culture which are explored in this paper. Should a creative education be skills-based or conceptual? What expectations do students- both home and international²- have of a 21st century creative education? How does the location of a university impact its students' creativity?

Defining Creativity in the Creative Arts

In a 2006 survey of U.K. arts education, Banaji, Burn, and Buckingham explored a series of distinct and sometimes contrary ideas of creativity, identifying nine functional definitions, each of which illustrates its own set of tacit assumptions about propensity to, or prevalence of, creativity as illustrated by the opposing understandings of creativity explored in chapters discussing beliefs in the rarity of the 'Creative Genius' or the opposing view of 'Ubiquitous Creativity.' It is not surprising that confusion exists around definitions of creativity when we consider creativity research approaches have included psychometric, experimental and biographical, encompassed quantitative and qualitative methodologies, been examined in controlled environments and observed in field-work settings, been analyzed as a national or cultural characteristic or as an individual propensity. Each method of study and each differing method of quantifying creativity may ultimately add to, or potentially contradict, current understandings.

¹ CHC is D. Y. F.Ho's 1991 term for the cultures of China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Korea and Japan, in Biggs (1996).

² In the absence of consistent definitions of the terms 'home' and 'international' students (Merrick, 2013) the terms are used to differentiate between UK and non-UK students and thereby imply the degree of familiarity with UK academic culture.

Applying the approach of these frameworks to research in fashion education reveals a belief in ubiquitous creativity- as shown in teachers' comments about their understandings of creative potential and the efficacy of effort in creative work: 'the *main* essential is an enthusiasm, dedication, to feeling that they're going to be able to work really hard...' (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2011, p.81). An education manager supports this view saying 'My definition of creativity is one in which students can be encouraged to do things that will enhance their ability to be creative. It's not just something that you're born with...' (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2011, p.132). However, within those subject areas most closely associated with creativity- art, design and fashion- whilst teachers and students may be able to vocalize what they consider to be the prerequisites and characteristics of creative students in general, they find it problematic to identify those specific individuals who personify these creative attributes, which could be interpreted as supporting notions of the rarity of the creative genius, or alternatively that it is hard to make distinctions between the value of creative practices situated within a designated creative environment (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2011).

Added to a lack of consistent definitions of creativity, in the public imagination- and most likely in government ministers and sometimes even our students' minds- there are several myths around creativity; myths encompassing the nature of creative people and practices (Plucker, Beghetto & Dow, 2004). One myth perpetuates what Barthes terms 'the romantic notion of an inexhaustible abundance of spontaneous creativity' (2006, p. 92). A key attribute of creative production that supports this myth is product novelty. This is clearly evidenced in the fashion industry, which is required to constantly produce and discard fashion garments to fuel the increasingly multi-seasonal trend-driven fashion system. Within this system, fashion education endorses a hierarchy of creativity as evidenced by the ranking of domain specificity of creative products; three-dimensional fashion products (i.e. fashion design as shown in graduation runway shows) are much more likely to be foregrounded as 'creative' than work produced in two-dimensional formats (e.g., fashion photography), and definitely more so than fashion marketing text-based work.

Another myth that is significant for those shaping contemporary creative education is the nostalgic view of the existence of past 'golden eras' of creative practice, often situated in particular places and times- Renaissance Florence, nineteenth century Paris- and positively contrasted against current art and design culture and educational institutions (Till, 2015). This ambiguity around the concept of creativity and the myths surrounding its practice have not aided the cause of education in the creative fields; when creativity is perceived as indefinable and uncontrollable, creative educators are defending a difficult position. Yet behind

the illusion of spontaneous creativity lie systematic codified approaches to teaching creativity; research into art and design education describes a linear process: specifying, researching, making, testing, refining, evaluating that is common to much creative practice (Dillon & Howe, 2003).

In the absence of codified definitions of creativity, U.K. art and design academics rank art school applicants based on judgments of creativity as evidenced through the presentation of a student portfolio. Such is the importance of demonstrating creativity within the portfolio in order to secure a positive endorsement by art and design "subject gatekeepers" (Dineen, 2006, p. 117), that an industry of portfolio-preparation courses has grown up, mainly targeted at international students who are not likely to be familiar with the UK art and design model. Capturing evidence of the design process may not be exclusive to UK creative practice (Dillon & Howe (2003, p. 290), however findings from Sovic's (2008b) study of 141 international students from six geographic areas studying creative arts at UAL, showed that the ambiguities and uncertainties fundamental to a method of working that comprises preparation, incubation and illumination (Dineen & Collins, 2005) are an unaccustomed educational feature, and a major cause of academic shock for many international students. Fashion students in the UK are encouraged to trust in their own creative instincts and engage in an experimental creative process of problem finding and solving that involves mixing disparate influences and selecting themes that develop from the resulting *mélange* (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2011, 2014) whereas the mimetic system commonly employed across CHC education uses traditional models and direct instruction in order to develop technical skills to a high level and preserve academic traditions.

These differing conceptions of creativity must surely impact multicultural student cohorts and have resulted in a situation where Confucian heritage students' technical skills are undervalued in U.K. colleges (Sovic, 2008a) and Confucian heritage students with no prior experience of a U.K. research and development process and whose design work focuses on the creative product are disadvantaged in the creative classroom, as evidenced by this observation from a U.K. education manager: "students are to some extent *limited* by the kind of context in which they've developed that work. If they've been working to meet criteria which we would not see as *helpful* then that's kind of problematic" (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2011 p. 100). Craft (1997) has highlighted the need for further research into the pedagogy of creativity generally, and I would argue that globalization, changing working patterns and an increased focus on the ethics of fashion production, consumption and promotion, along with unprecedented technological advances- such as 3-D printing and

omni-channel retail- make the questions of *what*, *how* and even *where* we teach fashion urgent considerations. I would add another strand to this discussion, that of the *pedagogy* of creativity itself.

Creativity Across Time and Place

I sometimes show short videos to keep the noise level low at the beginning of a large lecture class during the five or so minutes it takes to complete the attendance register. One time a colleague who was sitting in on a lecture observed that our predecessors would have expected their students to complete a hand-stitched buttonhole during register-taking, demonstrating that they had the requisite industry skills required for graduates of the London College of Fashion at that time. I asked my audience if any of them could complete the same challenge and unsurprisingly only a very few hands went up. Until fairly recently I was teaching in the same buildings where those buttonhole-stitching students were being prepared to work as dressmakers for London's aristocracy. Nowadays our graduates will take up a vast array of careers- including designing and making but also fashion management and marketing- within the global fashion industry, an industry that was valued at \$1.5 trillion in 2013 (Amed, 2013) and ranked number two in worldwide economic activity (Corner, 2014). Not only have the options and expectations of our graduates changed exponentially, also the profile of student cohorts is radically different from the days of the hand-stitched buttonhole task.

The University of the Arts London- of which the London College of Fashion is a constituent college- is amongst the top recruiters of overseas students to the U.K., with classrooms populated by students drawn from all over the world. Many students cite the attractions of London's cultural capital as key to their decision to study at a London art and design college (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2011). Western universities have dominated international league tables and designed international recruitment strategies around a position of perceived pedagogic superiority (Starr, 2012). Educators' roles in determining the content and delivery of creative education cannot be underestimated. They are in possession of symbolic capital; as Bourdieu's (1989) *nobiles* they have the power to impose their values on students through explicit and implicit rules and customs (Burnes, 2004; Gudykunst, 1998; Radclyffe-Thomas, 2007). The literature on international student experience shows how cultural biases are often manifested across curriculum areas where sojourners and their learning styles may be subject to cultural stereotyping and generalisations (Biggs, 1996). And furthermore, rather than

embracing the possibilities offered by diverse classrooms, cultural stereotyping often casts home students and their practices as the 'normative model' which international students then 'fail' to replicate.

This model was seen most clearly in the past in language learning where many interventions were designed to assist students in becoming carbon copies of native 'speakers', but the implications of this position resonate in practices in other areas of the curriculum, including creative arts. The literature shows that creative institutions have adopted the same 'native speaker' sensibility towards creative processes and practice, without undergoing the debates and discussion that have happened within the contemporary language learning pedagogy where the notion of the native speaker as ideal has been challenged, notably by intercultural communication advocates (Byram, 1997).

Creativity has been identified as a key skill for graduates entering an increasingly dynamic and globalized industry (Karpova, Marcketti, & Barker, 2011). Whether their interest lies in design, production or promotion, today's fashion graduates must take a global approach to fashion and the modern fashion school should seek to create an intercultural creative environment for its students, to allow the diversity of the fashion industry to be reflected in its graduates. I gave a guest lecture recently about the contemporary Chinese fashion industry to some fashion business students. Towards the end of the session, some of the students rather timidly admitted that they hadn't realized there *were* any Chinese fashion designers such is the dominance of the Made in China production model. This perfectly illustrates how the practice of translating creativity across cultures is not value free; the power balance between the culture being studied and those doing the studying is paramount (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2014).

The impact on creativity and the importance of one's cultural heritage is exemplified by two fashion creatives: Dame Vivienne Westwood when she says: "I'm not really trying to be English- you can't avoid it, it's what you've absorbed." (Wilcox, 2004, p. 21) and the fashion photographer Chen Man who claims her creativity is heightened as a result of being educated in her native China not overseas like many 'hai gui'³ working in the contemporary Chinese creative industries (Radclyffe-Thomas & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2015). Assuming that creative practice cannot be separated out from cultural context (Gardner, 1989a; Lubart, 1999; Niu & Kaufman, 2013; Wong, 2004) cultural norms are likely to be reproduced in art and design education. China has the largest education system in the world and currently sends by far the most students to study

³ Hai gui: literally sea turtle is a Chinese expression for students returning from studying overseas, famously satirised in Qian Zhongshu's 1947 novel *Fortress Besieged*.

internationally. The U.K. received 87,895 Chinese students in 2013-14 (UKCISA, 2015). China's pedagogical practices have influenced the other Confucian heritage cultures of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and Korea (Chou & Ho, 2007; Pang & Plucker, 2013; Postiglione & Tan, 2007). Although we should be wary of setting up false dichotomies, and must acknowledge that neither 'the West' nor 'the East' represent homogenous masses (Rudowicz, 2004), they do share common beliefs- especially with regard to the individual's relationship to society- manifested in their education systems (Ng, 2001). Whilst cross-cultural comparisons of creativity have tended to investigate differences in creativity as defined through divergent thinking tests, particularly TTCT (Choe, 2006), more recent cross-cultural creativity research has sought to reveal implicit ideas about creativity through approaches that ask individuals to describe the characteristics of creative people or rate characteristics that are perceived to contribute to creativity (Lim & Plucker, 2001; Niu & Sternberg, 2002; Wang & Greenwood, 2013).

Educational institutions encompass and reinforce norms and values; institutions or individual teachers are gatekeepers for the designation of creativity. Domain and discipline-specific practices positively associated with creativity are likely to exist at institution and classroom level, and those who lack the cultural capital and symbolic literacy may be excluded from definitions of creativity and furthermore may suffer from academic culture shock (Gardner, 1989a; Radclyffe-Thomas, 2007, 2011; Sovic, 2008b). Creativity is generally viewed as a positive attribute (Kaufman, 2009; Lubart, 1999; Weiner, 2000), yet despite extensive literature on creativity published since Guilford's seminal 1951 APA address, ambiguity about its definition, especially across time and place in some domains, persists (Karpova, Marcketti & Barker, 2011; Radclyffe-Thomas, 2011).

Whilst it is evident that most creativity research has taken place within Western cultures, there is a growing body of cross-cultural creativity research, much of which attempts to define differing propensities to creativity as a function of cultural-general tendencies as reflected in education systems (see essays in Kaufman & Sternberg, 2006). As fashion is an international language and culture mediates our worldview (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Glaveanu, 2010; Lubart, 1999; Ng & Smith, 2004; Niu, 2006), particularly in London, with students from so many cultural backgrounds studying alongside each other, it is important that fashion schools foster an appreciation of diverse approaches to creative education and creative production. The creativity literature supports diversity as having a positive effect on creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Florida, 2002) and whilst there is evidence that staff and students in the creative fields endorse culturally diverse classrooms, U.K. educational practices and expectations are often transmitted implicitly and international

students' educational and cultural norms are frequently misunderstood or negated (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2011; Sovic, 2008a).

Art historian Dr James Fox (Fox, 2014) presented a BBC4 television series 'Bright Lights, Brilliant Minds: A Tale of Three Cities' (Shariatmadari, 2014) the central thesis of which was that specific cities could be seen as crucibles of creativity at designated periods in recent history- he builds compelling arguments drawing on the culture or often counter-culture as expressed through a range of creative individuals and movements, that significantly impacted subsequent understandings and practice in the arts. Thus in turn 1908 Vienna, 1928 Paris and 1951 New York, were the scenes of creative cultural shifts across the twentieth century that inform our contemporary ideas of creativity. This notion of 'creative revolution' is one endorsed in Western cultures where creativity is synonymous with individuality (Gardner, 1989a) where transformative creativity emphasizes freedom, spontaneity, innovativeness and risk-taking (Zha et al., 2006) with the creative process seen as paramount (Sovic, 2008a). In contrast Confucian heritage cultures- influenced by Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism- have traditionally focused on the creative product (Gardner, 1989a; Sovic, 2008b; Tsui, 2009) with an emphasis not on breaks with the past but on creative evolution. Although CHC art and design education increasingly focuses on developing creativity (Choe, 2006; KEA, 2009; Niu, 2006), historically the mimetic system emphasised replication rather than innovation (Buchanan, 2004; Gardner, 1989a; Nickerson, 1999; Tsui, 2009), imitation of the masters, the preservation of academic tradition to develop fundamental skills and the creation of beautiful and morally sound art (Bo Yang, 1991; Chan & Chan, 1999 in Choe, 2006; Ho, 1996 in Niu, 2006; Lim & Plucker, 2001; Niu & Sternberg, 2002; Rudowicz & Hui 1997 in Niu & Sternberg, 2002; Yue, 2003; Gardner, 1989a; 1989b).

Western creative education has endorsed process over product whereas across disciplines the CHC system focuses on the end result- on product over process (Biggs, 1996; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Gardner, 1989b; Ng, 2001; Tsui, 2009). These differing emphases present difficulties at the university application stage where the methods of recruitment to creative educational institutions may differ vastly. In the UK entry to art school is generally preceded by a one-year art and design foundation course, the outcome of which will be a body of work- the portfolio- which supports an applicant's claim to whichever field of art and design they are applying to. Student sketchbooks that support the portfolio's finished products demonstrate their engagement with process and the evaluation of these sketchbooks can be compared to psychometric measures of creativity which quantify creativity through divergent thinking tests, whereby the volume and range of responses is an

indicator of higher creative potential (Plucker & Makel, 2010; Plucker & Renzulli, 1999; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999): “We want to see the process. We want to see what leads to an idea” (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2011, p. 122). In Asia entry to art school is generally by an examination; thus the *product* is valued, which seems a natural outcome of a system underscored by rote methods (Gardner, 1989a; Kim, 2005; Lau & Yeung, 1996) and as evidenced in this quote from a Japanese fashion student studying in London: ‘When I was in Japan just they assessed just the final product, the final image or something... That I think (is) really different from here... I was quite *surprised* because the process is really important in here.’

Creative Fashion Cities

Haute couture sits imperiously at the pinnacle of the fashion industry pyramid with its roots in Paris of the 19th century and still central to the modern fashion industry’s identity. The couture system is organised through Paris’ Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture who oversee the bi-annual couture shows, and ensure that those designers invited to participate abide by a host of rules and regulations relating to the handcrafting and artisanal skills of the ateliers which produce some of the world’s most exquisite fashion designs. In the past these shows were held behind closed doors, but nowadays- although the prices are beyond all but those with ultra high net worth, and production is limited to single figures to maintain exclusivity- live streaming of the couture shows, video and photos are immediately available online to be analysed, criticised and used as ‘inspiration’ for those lower down the fashion food chain.

The press the shows receive is fundamental to designers’ marketing strategies- maintaining a luxury image that fuels the sales of handbags and perfume that support fashion houses like Chanel and Dior (Okonkwo, 2007). The couture shows held in Paris in January and July kick off a calendar of ready-to-wear shows comprising menswear and womenswear held internationally in a well-established hierarchy of fashion cities: New York, London, Milan and Paris. What has been codified as the New York- London- Paris effect has finer delineations, with each city having its own fashion identity. New York is defined as the home of commercial fashion design and London has a reputation for fostering the most creative fashion designers, most recently exemplified by the success of the newly launched fashion week for menswear: London Collections Men.

The globalization of the fashion industry has led to Western practices and criteria being exported to other cultures (Jung & Lee, 2009). Furthermore there is a growing literature reporting on the importance of location in creativity; cities and countries strive to become hubs of creativity and researchers such as Richard

Florida (2012) argue that as well as the who and the how, the where of creativity should be an important focus of research. An exhibition at the *Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration* (Museum of the History of Immigration) that coincides with Paris' February 2015 Fashion Week refocuses the fashion world's attention away from its competitor fashion cities and shows how Paris operates as a magnet for international creative fashion talent – a chic illustration of Florida's (2002) concept of the creative city. A map of the world is painted on the wall at the entry to the exhibition, Paris is at the epicenter with diverging lines linking over forty countries worldwide to the declared capital of fashion. The exhibition explores how ever since the Englishman Charles Frederick Worth launched his fashion house in nineteenth century Paris, and established what we now understand as the contemporary fashion system, Paris has attracted fashion talent from all over the globe to practice in Paris, establishing their own houses, or heading up the established household name French fashion houses of Chanel (Karl Lagerfeld from Germany) and Dior (Raf Simons from Belgium).

Although Paris is undoubtedly the number one city associated with fashion a 2012 Business of Fashion intelligence piece cited Paris' approach to creative education as a contributing factor in answer to the question "Why Isn't the World's Fashion Capital Producing More Fashion Businesses?" (BoF, 2012). The authors argue that the French approach to fashion education focuses more strongly on skills-based learning rather than experimentation and thus inhibits the development of individual creativity and a personal design aesthetic. This may be due to the fact that -as the centre of haute couture- the Parisien fashion system is bound by strict regulations based on an atelier system within which there are established practices and distinctive demarcations necessary to support fashion production at its highest level, but also undoubtedly reflects the academic culture embodied in an education system critiqued in a recent book by the journalist Peter Gumbel. Gumbel's critique- written as a British journalist based in France whose children attend school in France- cites the absence of team work, sports and drama, as well as a rigid hierarchical transmission system, as factors that inhibit the development of creativity in the French education system (Hyslop 2010).

Creative London

Creativity researchers such as Csikszentmihalyi (1999) and Florida (2002) have highlighted the importance of location to the formation of creative communities and London's diversity and tolerance of difference can be traced back across its history. London has an established reputation across many creative industries and is well represented in international rankings of the world's top fashion schools, being home to three of the world's leading fashion colleges. The student and alumni informants in my research chose to

receive their creative education in London and many of them describe the course location- in one of the world's fashion capitals- as an integral part of their creative education, talking of how London itself is a rich source of inspiration (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2011). This theme is also evident in institutional literature that speaks of 'London itself (as) a major learning resource' echoing an oft-quoted saying about creativity being in the atmosphere, accredited to the designer Coco Chanel and endorsed by a more contemporary French fashion designer Jean Paul Gaultier when he speaks of the impact on his designs of his early trips to 1970's London (Barbican, 2014).

London has been described as the 'creative centre of the world' (Ben Wolstenholme branding guru in Derbyshire, 2005). London's position as a creative city is supported by its cultural capital of museums, art galleries and art schools many of which have been strongly connected to the youth movements of the latter half of the 20th century. Fashion and music collided in the London of the Swinging Sixties, and again in youth fashions of the following decades through punk (1970s), new romantics (1980s) and Brit pop (1990s). London's reputation for innovation and streetstyle continues a well-established confidence in rule-breaking which can be traced back to Beau Brummel whose own dandy style rejected the excesses of Regency fashions and established London as the pre-eminent centre of men's tailoring. The European Creativity Index highlights the cultural environment of museums and galleries as central to its measure of creative capital acknowledging their contribution to fostering creativity. Another key measure in the European Creativity Index that supports London's claims to creative advantage is the measure of openness and diversity (KEA, 2009), a function of creativity also highlighted in the literature on geographies of creativity by Csikszentmihalyi (1999) and Florida (2002). In my research, teacher informants spoke positively about heterogenous student cohorts: "Diverse groups means that life is *always* interesting, *always* exciting" (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2011, p. 93).

Amongst an overwhelmingly positive endorsement of the exposure to other cultures and the inspiration that living and studying in a diverse environment provides for creative work, my research revealed some ambiguity about the effects of studying in a host culture that is so different to one's home culture; some international students believing that by coming to study in London, they may abandon their home cultures' aesthetic and adopt a Western aesthetic instead: "I think most people who want to come to Europe they will try to be a European." However my research also revealed that stakeholders endorse the benefits of a multicultural environment, yet whilst teachers and students (both UK and international) recognise cultural influences in international students' work: "when I go back to Hong Kong I will try to get some inspiration from

there, which is quite different from other countries,” UK students and teachers often fail to recognise or acknowledge that their own practices and work are also cultural constructions (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2011).

Facilitating Cross-cultural Creative Education

‘There are issues around whether students coming from an international background have been *prepared* for Higher Education in the same way as Home students or EU students... and what their expectations of a creative education are...’

This quote from a U.K. Higher Education Manager reveals a fundamental paradox at the centre of contemporary creative education: are diverse cultural understandings of creativity reflected in the curriculum and practice of higher education institutions, especially those in receipt of high numbers of international students? It should be emphasised that cross-cultural comparisons themselves- including those within this paper- inherently run the risk of cultural essentialism, of stereotyping and giving a skewed focus highlighting difference rather than similarity (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2007), yet it is valid to state that educational organisations play a significant role in the process of enculturation, reinforcing shared norms and values (Lubart, 1999; Ng & Smith, 2004; Niu, 2006).

In a statement that many creativity researchers may concur with, Jackson and Sinclair observe that ‘one of the problems of creativity is that it is difficult to understand and explain’ (2006:119). Banaji, Burns, and Buckingham’s (2006) work illustrates how creativity resists any consensual definition even in one culture, let alone cross-culturally. Traditional cross-cultural creativity research has presented a dichotomous view of Western and CHC propensity to creativity (Gardner, 1989a) as when creativity is defined as synonymous with individuality, rule-breaking and originality, cross-cultural comparisons favour Western individualist societies over CHC collective societies (Ng, 2001; Niu & Sternberg, 2002; Radclyffe-Thomas, 2011; Rudowicz, 2004). Western individualist cultures tend to focus on the individual and their internal processes, and this emphasis is also evident in definitions of creativity wherein the exploration of the creator’s identity is often viewed as central to creative work. In the West, teachers strive to create student-centred classroom environments in which students are encouraged to take ownership of their work, to experiment, to personalise their work and where teachers act as facilitators rather than instructors (Dineen & Collins, 2005). This approach necessarily involves levels of ambiguity as part of the creative process, ambiguity which is not usually appreciated by students, especially when they receive different- often conflicting- advice from tutors on the same course. Neither is ambiguity universally recognised as a pedagogic strategy for creative arts: admittedly some time ago

now, Gardner (1989a) wrote compellingly about observing art education in China illustrating the complete absence of ambiguity by describing an art class in which students were guided with staged templates to ensure a 'standard' result was achieved by all.

The fostering of creativity in education is not simply demarcated on East-West lines; many European students coming to study in London describe their shock at a system that encourages and relies upon independence and experimentation. As noted above, the UK has a distinctive art and design pedagogy, one that encourages experiential learning through exploration, experimentation and divergent thinking followed by a synthesis that is documented in sketchbooks and realised in original products (Dineen, 2006; Sovic, 2008b). UK art and design students begin to specialise in creative subjects during the latter years of secondary school and the established progression route is to undergraduate study via a one-year diagnostic art and design foundation course during which students develop their individual portfolios within a creative specialism. The crit is a fundamental part of this creative education and students are expected to speak fluently and personally about their own and others' creative process and outcomes (Sovic, 2008a). This "energizing and transformative" (Dineen, 2006, p. 117) approach to creative education is marketed worldwide and the UK attracts increasing numbers of students from around the globe (BFC, 2010) with a high proportion of CHC students in art and design courses.

Creativity researchers like Csikszentmihalyi (1999), Gardner (1989a, 1989b) and more recently Florida (2002, 2012) and Glăveanu (2010) highlight the geographic and cultural influences on creativity and this idea of culturally-situated creativity not only has implications for those seeking a creative education in a culture that is dissimilar to their background one but also for higher education institutions attempting to deliver a creative education in a multicultural context. The bringing together of diverse cultures in the classroom presents a wealth of opportunities for educators to explore the heterogeneity of approaches to art, design and communication, and to develop skills of interculturality (Fleming, 2006), yet without awareness of cultural differences in classroom behaviour and creative practice, educators risk perpetuating cultural stereotypes and discounting divergent approaches (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2011).

A useful analogy to illustrate the situation of non-Western students studying in UK education institutions is that of learning a new game; the visiting team are disadvantaged when the hosts know the rules and the moves and expect everyone else to have this knowledge and skills (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). Fleming (2006) argues that the arts provide a medium through which the two key elements of intercultural

communication may be developed: namely gaining appropriate knowledge of and attitudes towards other cultures and questioning assumptions about one's own culture (Byram, 1997). To operate with intercultural competence means having the ability to identify and mediate the relationships that exist between different cultures, as well as take an analytical view of one's own and other cultures i.e. be conscious that thinking is culturally determined rather than believing understandings and perspectives are 'natural' (Byram, Nichols & Stevens, 2001). Research on international students' learning experiences shows that successful strategies are those that demystify academic culture through explicitly addressing expectations of class behaviour, group work and providing exemplars of desired outcomes (Carroll, 2005). Ways in which expectations can be made more explicit could start with educational institutions codifying their views on creativity as it can be argued that in order to work, practice and teach effectively across cultures we should understand the values, language and choices made within different education systems (Becker, 1982; De Rijke & Plucker, 2011; Lubart, 1999; Niu, 2006) as part of the broader societal context.

I have developed a creativity attribute ranking activity to facilitate staff development and executive education sessions on cross-cultural creativity. Participants are given approximately 40 attributes to sort into a matrix ranging from essential to least relevant. The attributes include some that appear to be universally endorsed e.g. individuality, originality, and others that divide opinion e.g. copying, morality. The suggested attributes are those that were most frequently cited in a survey of creativity literature and from participant interviews with staff and students at a UK art and design college. This activity always inspires debate and is a particularly insightful exercise for those teaching creative subjects as it forces what are often implicit ideas to be made explicit and the codifying of beliefs in what qualities foster or preclude creativity. It is interesting to observe the diverse responses to this activity and how many involved in delivering creative education have not previously engaged in codifying their own beliefs in how creativity can be taught and demonstrated.

Conclusion

To teach and learn effectively across cultures, the values, language and choices made within different education systems must be acknowledged as part of the broader societal context, and approaches to creative education should surely be at the cutting-edge of pedagogy. Perhaps London's fashion schools are a good place to start. The fashion industry in particular relies on novelty and change (Craik, 1993); designers produce multiple collections a year as without last season's fashions becoming *démodé* the need for fashion consumers to keep buying their creations would be removed. Adopting an understanding of creativity as an equally

dynamic construct reveals the need for more understanding of cultural-general tendencies, as education systems, motivators and definitions of creativity vary across the globe (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2011). The vast changes in the creative industries as well as the internationalization of classrooms have pedagogic implications for a creative education as without mindfulness to industry's diverse and dynamic needs the value of higher education is eroded (Finch, Nadeau & Reilly, 2012). Csikszentmihalyi (1999) argued that creativity often exists at the confluence of cultures- something which occurred historically in trading ports but now exists in higher education institutions that often describe themselves as 'melting pots'; a teacher informant described how '...diverse groups of students teach themselves in a lot of ways by showing, by example, different possibilities' (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2011). Thus the notion of creativity as understood and interpreted in different cultural settings, and in cross-cultural settings is worthy of further exploration.

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