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# Shaping Strömsö: Examining Elements in a Creative Process for the Design of New Television Content

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper explores elements in the creative process of the development of a new television format from both practice and research-based perspectives. We compare and integrate findings from an unpublished case study of the popular Finnish lifestyle television program, *Strömsö*, with the broad research literature on creativity. Through this lens, fourteen elements, which were identified through this case study to be present in the creation of *Strömsö*, are explored and contextualized with examples from the show's creation. These elements were: 1) idea, 2) analyze, 3) brainstorm, 4) research, 5) benchmark, 6) toss ideas, 7) temporary input, 8) inspiration from an unexpected source, 9) rest, 10) formulate, 11) concretize, 12) pilot, 13) make mistakes, and 14) chaos. Research on multiple subtopics related to creativity is utilized to illustrate how knowledge gained through the academic literature can be integrated with these findings to provide possible guidance for practice. In doing so, we show how diverse epistemological and methodological approaches to examining the same phenomena can bolster insight and understanding for researchers and practitioners alike. Researchers will be able to note how topics that they are familiar with manifested in a practical setting, and non-academic professionals involved in creating content for television and new media will be introduced to theory and research that may aid in their creative endeavors. We intend this manuscript to provide useful information to such professionals and inspire additional research in the academic community.

## INTRODUCTION

In this manuscript, we compare findings from a case study (Morney, 2011) of the popular Finnish lifestyle television program, *Strömsö*, with the extant creativity research literature. The initial case study of *Strömsö* was conducted by the third author using inductive practice-led and qualitative approaches (Morney, 2011). She identified fourteen elements that constituted a creative process present in the development and execution of *Strömsö*. In the following paragraphs, we provide an introduction to the case and contextualization and triangulation of the elements using related theoretical frameworks and research on various facets of creativity. Through this contextualization, we integrate examples from the creation of *Strömsö* with the relevant research findings to enrich understanding for researchers and practitioners alike. Elements in the creative process in the case of *Strömsö* will be of interest to creativity researchers, especially those who are focused on understanding organizational creativity within creative industries. The topics that we review will likely be of use to individuals who create content for new media, but who have not been introduced to the academic side of the formal study of creativity. Film and media institutions teach the craft of the production process (e.g., Goodell, 1998; Aaltonen, 2018). But this paper explores the creative process *underlying* the application of skills that are taught in film and media classes. By integrating and comparing knowledge gleaned from both practice and research, we hope to provide insight into how these two approaches can be complementary. Throughout this manuscript, we highlight the fourteen elements which we propose have allowed for the innovative nature of the show. We present the beginnings of and provide support for a tentative conceptual model that we hope will be helpful for professionals involved in creating new content for television or other forms of new media. We also hope that our exploration will inspire additional research from diverse paradigmatic perspectives.

### **Background on the Case Study of *Strömsö***

*Strömsö*, is a television format, or program, created by and for Yle, The Finnish Broadcasting Company. Yle is a national network with more than three-thousand employees. *Strömsö* first aired in August of 2002 and still holds the position of one of the most popular programs on the television channel Yle Fem. *Strömsö* has won several national prizes for best lifestyle program, generated new spin-offs, and aired in several countries. *Strömsö* was created over a four-year period, which is an unusually long time-frame for the creation of a television format. In 1998, the genesis of *Strömsö* began at a breakfast meeting where three Yle colleagues, Stefan Jansson, Christina Staffans, and Elisabeth Morney, conversed about a programming schedule for a hypothetical new television

channel. They tried to envision what a program would look like, in the best of worlds, if anything were possible. An outcome of this meeting was the decision to host the show in an authentic house away from the Yle studios. The idea was that the different rooms inside and the exterior of the house would inspire new ideas for cooking, decorating, handcraft, gardening, barbecuing, and other projects. The proximity to the sea would provide an extra dimension to the program and allow an added focus on boating. *Strömsö* would come to be innovative in several ways, which makes it an interesting case for further exploration. It would be the first time Yle had created a digital studio. It started a lifestyle trend on Yle Fem. It was the first permanent studio apart from Yle studios. It was the most cost-effective studio built in the history of Yle due to the new digital technique. It became a brand and eventually inspired the widely used saying “It didn’t go like in *Strömsö*”, meaning that in *Strömsö*, everything goes smoothly.

Morney (2011) conducted the case study that is the foundation of this paper. She ultimately identified fourteen elements of the creative process that elevated *Strömsö* beyond the technical craft of dramaturgy and storytelling for television: 1) idea, 2) analyze, 3) brainstorm, 4) research, 5) benchmark, 6) toss ideas, 7) temporary input, 8) inspiration from an unexpected source, 9) rest, 10) formulate, 11) concretize, 12) pilot, 13) make mistakes, and 14) chaos. These elements often recurred in a non-linear fashion across the creation of the show, with some present throughout much of the process, such as *formulate*, while others primarily appeared toward the beginning or end of the process (e.g., *benchmark* and *pilot*, respectively). This initial study was conducted over a six-month period spanning 2010 and 2011 and resulted in an unpublished internal report for Yle. The study was commissioned by the management because the program had become so significant for both the channel Yle Fem and the overarching Yle company. Morney was tasked to determine how the program was made from idea to broadcast in all aspects of the production, with the goal of being able to transmit the “know-how” and the philosophy behind the program’s creation to new people. Her primary research question was “Which elements belong to the process of creating a new television format?” During the data collection process, this question changed to look at how the show’s content was creative. Adapting research questions as data are collected is common in qualitative approaches to research (Maxwell, 2013), and Morney’s (2011) work employed principles from both case study and hermeneutic methodologies.

The *Strömsö* project was large enough that no one individual had knowledge of every detail, and Morney used multiple data sources to identify themes. Data collection methods included in-depth, unstructured interviews with those who held key positions during

the development of the show, formal and informal interviews and discussions with other peers and colleagues, her own observations, and a review of program documents and communication records from the creation of *Strömsö*. Morney herself had been a part of creating twelve new television concepts and formats, including *Strömsö*. Her past work and her own role in the program's creation allowed a unique perspective and for the research to be practice-led (Mäkelä & Routarinne, 2006), or conducted in such a way that the act of making has helped to inform her understanding of the creative process for *Strömsö*. One valuable outside source of information was a workshop at The Swedish Public Broadcast Television Company (SVT), which gave Morney insight into how other program developers worked with new concepts and formats. She also considered interviews that she had conducted with several participants for her master's thesis, including a particularly helpful one with television producer John Carlsson (Morney, 2007). Discussions with the leader of the development of *Strömsö*, Stefan Jansson, were also invaluable. Regarding the development of the format, he felt it was recursive, like taking two steps forward and one step back. Various moments were repeated, like brainstorming, tossing ideas, formulating, analyzing, and looking at other programs. Jansson said, "Looking at it retrospectively, it is funny how the end product is very much alike the original idea" (Morney, 2011, p. 65). This is just one relevant illustration of how Morney reached her conceptualization of the fourteen elements. The investigation of *Strömsö* began with Morney's experience and observations in the field, which informed her subsequent case study. The case study has progressed to the current comparison to the creativity research literature, which can both inform her case study and create new understanding from a hermeneutic perspective (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Davey, 2006).

### **Theoretical Grounding and Academic Frameworks**

Though creativity impacts many aspects of our everyday lives, it remains challenging to define, even for researchers. All types of ideas, products, and solutions can be original, novel, unique, or deviant from the norm. But originality and its associates are not sufficient indicators of creativity. Creativity also requires that the product, idea, or solution be useful, valuable, or applicable to the task at hand. Logically, usefulness is defined relationally to contextual outcome goals. The same is true of originality. Something may be incrementally creative, or build on existing ideas or products, as in the case of movie franchises; or, it may be boundary-breaking and radically creative, as in the case of a new class of life-saving medication (Gilson & Madjar, 2011). However, the standard definition of creativity does require that something be both original and useful (Runco & Jaeger, 2012), regardless of the relative importance of each of the two criteria. Relatedly, similari-

ties and differences between creativity and innovation have been discussed in the theoretical literature. Innovation has been regarded as the application of a creative process, the creation of something new or different which benefits an organization, and as a process that may require more restraint and less self-expression than creativity (Runco, 2014). Particularly in the case of a product or idea being created by an organization, *functional creativity* may be important; according to Cropley, Kaufman, and Cropley (2008), without relevance, one may just be left with aesthetic. In the creation of a television program, aesthetic may be necessary, but not sufficient for creative success. We primarily refer to the creative process in this manuscript but view the fact that the process was both innovative *and* resulted in innovation as implied.

The formal study of creativity has been approached through many lenses, which reflects its complicated nature. One seminal body of work is that of Rhodes (1961). His framework consists of four “p’s” associated with creativity and its study: *person*, *process*, *press*, and *product*. Research on creative persons examines individual experiences and characteristics related to creativity, such as non-conformity and openness to experience (Runco & Kim, 2011), while product research examines characteristics, such as likeability or quality, specific to the end result – the product (O’Quin & Besemer, 2011). Press refers to environmental variables which may facilitate, hinder, or otherwise influence creative engagement, and process deals with how creativity happens, from start to finish (Runco & Kim, 2011). It has also been suggested that two additional “p’s” be added to the framework: *persuasion* (Simonton, 1990) and *potential* (Runco, 2003; Runco & Cayirdag, 2012). These additional “p’s” integrate research and observation indicating that something that is creative can or must convince others of its value, and that all individuals have creative potential that can be encouraged, even if it has not been actualized. Our investigation focuses most closely on the creative process, but it is important to note that interactions abound between various frames (Runco, 2007).

Wallas (1926) provided an even earlier framework for examining the creative process, specifically. The first stage of the framework is preparation, during which one becomes familiar with and analyzes the problem. The second stage is incubation, during which one does not consciously consider a problem, but instead shifts focus to work on something else, or takes a break from complex thought altogether. Incubation is thusly followed by illumination, which is a moment or moments when prior lines of thought converge, and a solution or part of a solution becomes apparent. Finally, verification occurs when the idea is refined and tested.

Seminal to the field of creativity studies, Guilford’s (1956) Structure of Intellect Model

outlined several ways in which cognitive, production, evaluative, and memory factors are related to creativity. Perhaps most relevant here are the production factors of convergent and divergent thought. Convergent thinking is conceptualized as finding a correct or fitting answer or solution. It is most similar to Wallas's verification stage. Divergent thinking, on the other hand, is a process of thinking in several directions. It involves the ability to employ flexibility, originality, adaption, elaboration, spontaneity, and remote associations during the development and communication of ideas. Both divergent and convergent thinking are elemental to creative processes. This is, again, because a creative solution should be both original and effective. Originality requires divergent thinking, and effectiveness, convergent.

How a problem is identified and managed is also relevant. A problem need not be something negative which should be avoided, mitigated, or repaired. Problems can also be conceptualized as something interesting or new that one might engage with (Jay & Perkins, 1997), like creating a new television format. Either way, a creative process begins with the recognition of a problem that we care something about, as this lends us the motivation to engage with it (Runco, 1994a). It is not quite as simple as that, though. One must also be sure that he or she has found the correct problem and defined it in useful terms. Runco (1994a) provides a review of the complexity of the beginning of a creative process. One might identify a problem based on a general feeling, or some sort of need, and then engage in sub-processes of defining the problem, structuring problem components, and comparing the representation of the problem to alternate ones before or even during the problem-solving process. Of course, new, related, problems may be found along the way, requiring more structuring and evaluation. Basadur (1995) points out that there is an ideal ratio between ideation and evaluation at various points of the creative process, including during problem-finding, problem-solving, and solution implementation. He also notes that these ratios vary by stage based on specific industries and tasks. Put simply, both divergence and convergence are present throughout a creative endeavor, and the need for each will depend on the project and how far along one is in the process.

Though it is widely accepted that creative processes are often recursive and non-linear (Runco, 1994a), more straight-forward categorical conceptualizations such as those of Wallas and Rhodes are foundational to the field of creativity research and provide an important introduction for individuals who may not be as familiar with such heuristics as scholars in the fields and sub-fields of creativity research. As such, they provide an introductory context for additional research we discuss related to the case of *Strömsö*.

## METHOD

In the fall of 2015, Morney came to the University of Georgia as a visiting scholar. She was interested in understanding whether the elements she identified with a qualitative and practice-led approach were reflected in the creativity research literature, which has tended to employ quantitative methods (Martindale, 1990; Simonton, 1998). In qualitative research, it is not uncommon for more extensive literature reviews to occur after data analysis, in a process that is sometimes referred to as enfolding (Eisendhardt, 1989). Such linkage between qualitative and quantitative investigations can help one understand similarities and differences between findings in a specific setting and what has been learned through other means. It can help to confirm the accuracy of themes that were derived qualitatively and is a step toward theory-building (Eisendhardt, 1989; Henderson & Bedini, 1995).

There are often barriers to executing interdisciplinary and cross-paradigmatic approaches like the ones employed here, due to differences in epistemological perspectives and methodological training. For example, quantitative research typically seeks to reduce researcher influence on the processes of data collection and interpretation. This contrasts with practice-led and qualitative approaches, where reflexivity and one's own experience may be key components of study design and data analysis (Tobi & Kampen, 2018). From some perspectives, positivistic ways of understanding phenomena, particularly around creative products, may even be seen to conflict with beliefs about the very nature of creative production (Sullivan, 2010). There has generally been much debate about whether different paradigmatic approaches should be combined within a single study or line of research. Some have argued that a combinatory approach enables a more holistic understanding of phenomenon, and that this is preferable (Henderson & Bedini, 1995; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). We similarly take the perspective that cross-disciplinary and cross-paradigmatic work can result in a greater breadth and depth of understanding, particularly in reference to applicability of the information and the variety of potential lines of research on which to follow up. Similarly, this approach can provide information above and beyond what any one paradigm or disciplinary focus might allow (Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005; Tobi & Campen, 2018). The contextual nature of qualitative research allows for in-depth understanding of a phenomena in a particular situation, while an integration of the broader quantitative findings gives insight into whether and how such contextual findings might be applicable to or reflective of those from other settings (Hanson et al., 2005). Advocates of such approaches support the idea that understanding through research is an iterative, ongoing process and that the outcome of integration of diverse findings supersedes any single component of the process (Cameron, 2011).



With this philosophy in mind, the three authors conceptualized the current project. The research question for this endeavor was “How do the results from the case study of a popular television format, *Strömsö*, compare to the creativity research literature?” We worked together to conduct a comparison of Morney’s unpublished case study results and the extant research literature on creativity, with the primary focus on research related to creative processes. We had several goals in mind: (1) to share the case of *Strömsö* with the research community, (2) to integrate the case study data with creativity-focused research literature to provide contextualization and triangulation (3) to provide a relevant open-access resource for practitioners in media-related fields. This work involved more than thirty meetings over a period of approximately two years to discuss Morney’s experiences and findings in regard to *Strömsö*, whether and how existing research resonated with her results, and how best to structure this comparison to share with communities of media practitioners and creativity scholars. While Morney’s initial case study was approached inductively, without prior research or hypotheses in mind, our work in the present project has been deductive. As such, the literature we chose to include in this manuscript reviews frameworks and research articles that are directly relevant to her findings. While there is much research on creativity within organizations and quite specific research on topics such as creative individuals, we have chosen to keep a more targeted focus. In the following paragraphs, we move beyond the results of the case of *Strömsö* in order to understand how relevant research might support or further contextualize the findings, and in return, highlight events during the creation of *Strömsö* that may make the research literature more resonant (Tracy, 2010) for practitioners in media-related fields.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*Strömsö* stemmed from an overarching *idea*, which was reformulated and modified over time. Idea generation for *Strömsö* began at a meeting but bringing the format to fruition involved many additional ideas. Generating ideas can help to identify a suitable “problem” and can also be utilized in tandem with other creativity-related cognitive processes like problem-definition and solution exploration (Runco & Chand, 1995). In the creativity literature, the concept of ideation is frequently discussed. Ideational fluency (the number of ideas generated), ideational flexibility (the diversity of ideas), and originality of ideas are often measured by divergent thinking tasks, which predict a number of creative outcome variables. A discovery-oriented approach, or considering various ideas and their configurations, is associated with a higher degree of creative success longitudinally, at an individual level (Csikszentmihalyi & Getzels, 1971).

In the aforementioned interview that Morney conducted, Carlsson identified the im-

portance of having multiple ideas to work from to become successful. He noted that he allowed for a wide range of source material from which to identify potential ideas, including his interests, the people he meets, radio, television, papers and books, and continuing his education (Morney, 2007). His assertion about varied ideas is supported by the creativity literature, in which multiple studies found that ideational fluency is strongly correlated with originality of ideas (Hocevar, 1979a, 1979b). When it comes to divergent thinking, the capacity for originality may be the best predictor of individual-level creative ability (Runco & Charles, 1993).

Past research has noted the importance of dialogue, shared knowledge, and challenging what is already known in endeavors when organizational groups seek to undertake creative action (Ness & Søreide, 2014). The original *Strömsö* team members began idea generation by considering what they themselves found inspirational. During this time, the global digitalization of television was approaching, which implied the possibility for a new television channel for the Swedish speaking minority in Finland. Management in Helsinki wanted employees working with content to think about programming for a new channel, as existing Swedish-speaking programming was unstructured and inconsistent. This situation, paired with their own feelings about what inspired them, led the group to discuss leisure time, family, and home. This exploration resulted in clarity; a new program should have a feel-good factor and inspire the audience regarding their own home and leisure time. They also concluded that the show should be filmed in a real house and not a studio to support these goals, which was an original idea at the time. These ideas were suggested to management and the group was given permission to develop them further. This relates to finding useful ideas, as well as another one of Morney's elements, *analyzing*.

For *Strömsö*, analyzing referred to dwelling on, choosing, and rejecting various ideas generated throughout the process of the format's creation. When evaluating or analyzing, remaining open to revisiting, revising, or considering alternate ideas remains important. It is possible that ideas for improvement will occur even in later stages of a development process. Staying open to possibilities, otherwise known as "resistance to premature closure" (Torrance, 1979, p. 74) may help to maximize creativity. How an individual or organization evaluates ideas will, in part, have to do with whether the desire is to bring about radical changes, or to stay within a fairly well-known framework (Kirton, 1976); at many points along the *Strömsö* journey, decisions were made to try something new.

Another element that Morney identified was *brainstorming*, or the process of freely associating ideas about a topic in an organized way during a particular time-frame. Like ideation, brainstorming is a well-recognized concept in creativity research. Traditionally,

it has been conceptualized as a process during which as many ideas as possible are generated. During brainstorming, evaluation and decision-making are withheld and participants are encouraged to build on the ideas of others (Osborn, 1953). This helps to ensure that all will feel comfortable sharing, and that ideas are seen as communal property. Participants are encouraged to share even bizarre or impractical ideas, since creative thinking may involve transforming or combining parts of proposed ideas. Since its initial conceptualization, research has been conducted on different approaches to brainstorming. Levine, Heuett, and Reno (2015) found that well-established groups, similar to those found in organizations, generated more ideas, as well as ideas of higher quality, when compared to workgroups that were not well-established. There is debate around whether group brainstorming is best conducted outright or after individual members have had the opportunity to brainstorm on their own. Both approaches can be effective, but effectiveness depends on contextual variables, outcome goals, and what is being brainstormed (McMahon, Ruggeri, Kämmer, & Katsikopoulos, 2016).

The first meeting about the content of *Strömsö* occurred approximately one year after the initial idea was conceptualized. Participants were encouraged to think freely and to ignore potential economic, staffing, or technical limitations. Topics addressed included the length and frequency of the program, the house, characters to appear in front of the camera, short stories that might occur on location or elsewhere, and whether a storyline could span several episodes. The meeting established some aspects that would not be part of the philosophy of the program, such as problematizing or building in conflict. This appears to be consistent with the spirit of brainstorming as discussed by Osborn (1953).

During this relatively early stage of content development and again in later stages of preproduction, *research* was important. Research involved digging deeper to learn more about a subject and was likened to turning on a flashlight in a dark room to see what was there. Research provides a base from which to build and is a process of understanding what might enrich one's idea and further develop it. This dovetails with the notion that ideas can be found anywhere. Attempts to gain knowledge of the domain in which one is working can certainly help with developing and selecting viable ideas. Runco and Chand (1995) point out that under the right conditions, knowledge can be retrieved, selected, combined, or transformed to create original ideas. One must also be careful to avoid cognitive entrenchment, which reflects inflexibility in one's mental schemas that can occur as a result of experience in and an understanding of the domain (Dane, 2010).

Completing research may be a way to remain open to finding new and original ideas, approaches, and remote associations. First explored in modern psychology by Mednick

(1962), remote association refers to the process of making connections between bits of information that are further and further apart, conceptually. This can help ensure ideas are original. Research may also help with elaboration of ideas, or adding detail and complexity. Similarly, research at *Strömsö* was viewed as having the potential to lead to something one did not initially expect to find. Expertise that would be useful to the program was explored in this way. To discover more about potential topics and experts, educational institutions that taught courses in interior design, gardening, and wildlife studies were visited.

Similar to *research*, *benchmarking* involved the review of programs, literature, and areas of expertise to identify similarities with and differences from their ideas. This process provided inspiration and helped the team to identify what had already been done in order to illuminate original approaches. To paraphrase Carlsson, one needs to understand the sea in which one's fish are swimming Morney (2007). Torrance (1979), the "father" of creativity, noted the creative benefit of being able to sense gaps in knowledge. Additionally, many creativity theories highlight the importance of wider social contextual variables. Simonton (1976, 1979, 1980), for example, has discussed the role of zeitgeist, or spirit of the times. Zeitgeist reflects trends toward thinking and acting within a given time period and place, which can influence what products or ideas the general public might find interesting, worthwhile, or original (Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi, 2004). Zhang and Sternberg (2011) asserted that creative people "buy low" and "sell high," able to identify which unpopular or unknown ideas have the potential for positive growth. Csikszentmihalyi (2014) also discussed the role of social contexts in what is seen as creative. In his view, creativity is a phenomenon that requires acceptance by a field's gatekeepers. Gatekeepers will have a say in which creative ideas gain traction. In the arts, not only will those who are professionally involved with the field fill this role, but so, too, will the audience. These are just a few examples of how greater socio-cultural contexts may interact with how a creative product is developed, and why benchmarking may be important.

*Tossing ideas* was another element present in the creation of *Strömsö*. This terminology was borrowed from Morney's (2007) interview with Carlsson. He mentioned that when working with ideas, he would contact someone he trusted to informally discuss them, such as a manager, a colleague, or his wife. He might then share the ideas with his department to check for clarity. This could occur at several stages of his creative process, with varying individuals or groups. This fits with findings that the climate of organizational environments, as well as outside social relationships, can influence creativity in the workplace. In a meta-analysis of the relationship between several organizational variables and

creative production, those related to interpersonal relationships tended to have large effect sizes (Hunter, Bedell, & Mumford, 2007). These variables included a positive, intellectually stimulating peer group, a positive relationship with a supervisor that supported new ideas and autonomy, the perception of availability of organizational resources to engage in creativity, positive interpersonal exchange with low emotional conflict, the perception that participation and communication by subordinates was welcome, and the perception that both internal teams and external collaborators were well integrated. Madjar, Oldham, & Pratt (2002) found that interest in and support for the discussion of creative ideas by family and friends was related to individual-level creative performance at work, independent of the influence of organizational support for creativity.

Concerning *Strömsö*, there were only five meetings about the content of the program between November 1999 and March 2000. However, frequent informal, low-pressure discussions occurred during lunch and coffee breaks around Yle Fem. These were seen as meaningful and as having affected the format's development. Diverse professional perspectives were exchanged, and uncertainties explored without a specific agenda in mind during this time. Official conversations and lobbying of upper management proved an important influence on decisions about resource allocation.

It has been noted that creative behavior and products often result from complex interactions between and amongst groups of collaborators (Sawyer & DeZutter, 2009). Another key process idea from the initial *Strömsö* team was to improve the creative collaboration between the technical staff and the content department. Over the lifespan of the network, the culture had not supported collaboration unless there was a scheduled meeting or production. Typically, technical staff were situated in separate departments from content creators. The original three producers saw the possibility for increased creativity if there were permanent technical personnel tied to the production. When *Strömsö* aired in 2002, this aim was achieved. A photographer, an image and sound editor, a scenographer, a costume designer, and a makeup artist were tied to the content team. This speaks to the idea of organizational integration as discussed by Hunter et. al (2007), which was seen to improve the ability to share ideas regarding *Strömsö*.

The team also had *temporary input* from others, when individuals who were not part of the ongoing development process were invited to meetings to bring in fresh ideas. Individuals in the audiovisual industry tend to be on guard against their ideas being stolen, but the philosophy of Jansson, the project leader, was to invite everyone who wanted to participate. In terms of the creativity literature, diversity and diverse perspectives are thought to positively influence creativity (Mumford & Gustafson, 1988). Recall the afore-

mentioned importance of experienced creators remaining cognitively flexible and open to new information and perspectives. Along these lines, Fleming, Mingo, and Chen (2007) found that in cohesive teams, idea generation benefited when focal team members had a broad experience base, worked with external collaborators, and had previously worked in multiple organizations.

Two related elements in the creation of *Strömsö* were getting *inspiration from an unexpected source* and *rest*. *Inspiration from an unexpected source* differed from *temporary input* in that it did not necessarily involve a person coming into a meeting but instead, occurred during breaks from or in conjunction with the process of creating the content. One often comes across information and inspiration when not actively seeking it. This phenomenon fits with the idea that creative discoveries may involve some degree of luck or chance (Simonton, 2004), as is the case with many scientific discoveries (Root-Bernstein, 1988). The discovery of the bacteria used in penicillin, for example, occurred when an experiment did not go according to plan. The results of the mistake, however, were recognized as meaningful. This connects to the idea that highly creative individuals will generate more and more original associations between various stimuli (Benedek & Neubauer, 2013). In the creative process, inspiration is provoked by stimuli external to the individual, and provides a new perspective (Oleynick, Trash, LeFew, Moldovan, & Kieffaber, 2014).

*Rest* refers to a period of time during which one is not actively working on the project or idea. This is similar to incubation and taking time away from the problem in the creativity research literature. Engaging in non-demanding tasks which encourage mind-wandering (Baird et al., 2012), time away from tasks (Sio & Ormerod, 2009), and even REM sleep (Cai, Mednick, Harrison, Kanady, & Mednick, 2009) can facilitate creative problem solving. For *Strömsö*, the concept development was a long process and had some pauses. At the outset, key team members were away from the project for six months or more, but all returned to work full time with the program. There is not a concrete example of a new idea that came up during this time, but Morney and Staffans agreed that giving time for a prolonged thought process helped crystallize ideas and gave room for new thoughts.

Another element of the process in the creation of *Strömsö* was to *formulate*. This involved writing down thoughts, ideas, and associated details. It was a step that began early on during program development and occurred at various stages, including after ideas had been shared and explored. In the creativity literature, formulating is similar to the idea of elaboration, a process that involves the addition of detail beyond the basic (Torrance, 1979), though it is not limited to written material. Bourgeois-Bougrine et al. (2014) found

that screenwriters engaged in this process as they developed characters or identified specific characteristics of different scenes. Varying degrees of elaboration are possible, with higher elaboration involving a greater time investment. While elaboration may involve embellishment and detail, it can also be the bridge between having an idea and actual implementation. Torrance (1979) reasoned the following:

A story can be created in flashes of insight and enlightenment, but it takes many hours of writing, rewriting, changing a word here and a sentence there to make it communicate 'just right,' and much else to *write* a story. (p. 65)

Elaboration, given the circumstances, can certainly involve artistry, but it also requires planning and consideration of multiple pieces of information at once.

The first instance of formulating for *Strömsö* occurred when Jansson and Morney created the draft of the program as a proposal. Other formulating included recording and organizing ideas, and determining program rules and structure. After formal meetings between 1999 and 2000, protocols were written which detailed what had been decided regarding the content. Several draft program manuscripts were also created during this timeframe. In late 2001, a "program-bible" was created. In early 2002, the newly selected hosts wrote actual manuscripts for the episodes.

An additional element for *Strömsö* was to *concretize*. This involved going beyond the writing towards more hands-on engagement with the ideas in order to ascertain what real things existed in the world that could make the show happen. Concretizing was a process of figuring out who was going to do what, who was available, and other logistical needs. Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, and Herron (1996) identified creativity as a foundational component of innovation and Woodman, Sawyer, and Griffin (1993) stated that innovation involves actually implementing creative ideas. Likewise, Jansson said:

Concretizing started when we knew which house would be the studio for the program. Until this point everything was only fantasies. When the house was found and decided, it felt like starting over again. We realized some ideas could not be implemented. The disposition of the rooms divided where we could be filming simultaneously. The new logistic offered new limitations, but also possibilities" (Morney, 2011, p. 35).

Other examples included getting official approval and a budget, forming a preliminary department to work on the show, identifying a target age for the program, renovating the studio, and deciding which rooms would serve as studios and what would take place there. This preliminary concretizing allowed further planning to occur.

*Pilots* provided a way for the group to test ideas prior to broadcasting, including different aspects of production, aesthetic, topics, and hosts. This process echoes the assertion that a maximally creative idea requires testing different iterations in order to find the best solution. Because of the original and surprising nature of highly creative ideas, along with the usefulness requirement, both thought-trials and trials in implementation may be necessary to identify what works well and what requires modification or revision. Many variations of an idea may be required without being certain what will work best until one sees it. The more creative the idea, the more uncertain exactly how the execution will turn out (Simonton, 2013). In routine endeavors, there is not much need for testing; tried and true algorithms and approaches suffice.

For *Strömsö*, hosts and experts were auditioned then evaluated based on their performance in an on-camera test. The crew had six months to try out manuscripts, do simple pilots, and plan for the real episodes that would feature invited guests. The hosts had time to practice. Experts invented prototypes of products to be made in the program. Makeup, wardrobe, lighting, camera angles, image composition, graphics, music, and image editing were all tested during this time. Team-building, development of routines for meetings, and planning out the subsequent year's programming and production technique occurred.

Another element which occurred during the creation of *Strömsö* was to *make mistakes*. This involved trying something out, reaching a dead end, and going back to try something different. This element was present in the interview with Carlsson, in which he discussed the need to have the courage to fail (Morney, 2007). Staffans also mentioned the importance of having time and resources that allowed for thorough preparation, exploration, and mistakes (Morney, 2011). This aligns with the previously discussed results of Hunter et al. (2007) in regard to the importance of availability of resources, as well as with the idea that creativity requires reasonable risk-taking, experimentation, and failure (Simonton, 2004). Even highly creative individuals experience difficulty, and within any one individual, creative output and success varies over time (Huber, 1998; Simonton, 2015). Furthermore, how negative performance outcomes are evaluated may influence an individual's likelihood of engaging in subsequent creative endeavors; for some, negative feedback can be motivating, and for others, suppressing (Beghetto, 2014). The strength of one's belief in their own ability to be creative is termed creative self-efficacy (CSE; Tierney & Farmer, 2002), which appears to translate into creative outcomes, particularly when one's problem-solving network at work is higher in CSE (Grosser, Venkataramani, & Labianca, 2017). A work climate that is non-judgmental and allows for risk-



taking facilitates creative productivity in teams (Kessel, Kratzer, & Schultz, 2012). Altogether, the research normalizes the idea that mistakes will be made and suggests some useful ways in which to provide critical feedback.

At *Strömsö*, mistakes did occur, including the initial proposed length of the program. Mistakes often led to additional insight. For example, a coach came to train the hosts, and told them that they needed to act serious during times when they wanted to laugh. Susanna Ström-Wilkinson, an early host, noted that they decided to disregard this advice and to do it their own way; Ström-Wilkinson said, “We wanted to be friendly, not polite and neutral” (Morney, 2011, p. 44). The hosts’ “mistake” led to an important discovery about the desired culture of the show.

The final identified element in the creation of *Strömsö* was *chaos*, which is an experience during which one becomes uncertain, a time when unpredictable external forces may impact the creative process. While the occurrence of this element was low for *Strömsö*, there were points during which more chaos could have occurred. This phenomenon also has been recognized in the film industry. Ulrika Bengts, a film director and scriptwriter, said that chaos is part of the creative process and that it differs from mistakes:

Chaos is like an earthquake, like when nothing that you believe in is true anymore, so you need to find a new truth. A mistake is something smaller, that one can recognize as a mistake and one can repair it, while chaos is more overwhelming and deeper. Chaos is a process and a mistake is something that happens. (personal communication, 12 October, 2016)

In her television and radio production work outside of *Strömsö*, Morney noticed examples of chaos occurring at the beginning of the concept development stage, when going in any direction was possible. Yet, becoming stuck in her work and needing to find a new direction sometimes resulted in chaos. Thus, chaos can serve as an impetus to do something new, and without such discomfort, one is only left with what one already knows.

Indeed, the ability to tolerate uncertainty can be an asset during a creative endeavor and is associated with higher levels of creativity (Kornilova & Kornilov, 2010). Runco (1994b) explored how difficult experiences, tensions, and disequilibria can contribute to the creative process via cognitive, affective, and motivational interplay. He pointed out that emotions can help guide creativity. For example, when equilibrium is disturbed, tension exists between an individual’s knowledge and what is currently happening around them; at this point, one may be motivated to resolve this gap through cognitive processes, either to lessen unpleasant feelings or because doing so presents an opportunity to do something new and interesting. The creative individual may also feel comfortable with disorder after having, as a result of other difficulties, learned to trust in his or her own ability to re-order apparent chaos (Barron 1963, as discussed in Runco, 1994b).

Morney (2011) highlighted several points of difficulty that occurred in *Strömsö* that could have resulted in chaos but did not. However, due to the high potential for chaos and its presence during the development of other media, it was retained as an element. Points during which chaos could have occurred included the recognition of the difficulty of locating the house, negating ownership, and renovating it; in all this process took almost three years to execute from start to finish.

Furthermore, the development of the program was not a smooth, linear process. While management was impressed with the cost that would be saved by utilizing the new digital technique, the engineers protested it. This was because there was no guarantee that this production medium would last or be compatible with the studio system of Yle. Finally, the co-work between different departments was not without initial friction. But, during the process of working together, engaging in casual conversation, and going through courses and seminars, the staff were able to confront issues; this may have helped to mitigate the development of noticeable chaos. In spite of difficulties, the overall ambience of the development and execution of the show was intense but positive. Everyone was enthusiastic to be a part of creating something new.

**Table 1**  
**Definitions and Related Creative Concepts of the 14 Elements**

<b>Element</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Related Concepts from Creativity Literature</b>
<b>Idea</b>	Formation and refinement of the overarching idea.	Ideational Fluency Divergent Thinking Problem-Finding Discovery
<b>Analyze</b>	To dwell on, reject and choose from the ideas generated earlier.	Convergent Thinking Evaluation
<b>Brainstorm</b>	To associate freely about a topic in an organized way during a specific timeframe.	Brainstorming Resistance to Premature Closure
<b>Research</b>	To dig deeper and learn more about a subject.	Preparation Domain Knowledge Remote Association
<b>Benchmark</b>	To compare other shows, programs with the idea(s) to see how it differs and how it is similar to the generated idea(s).	Preparation Social Contexts of Creativity Identifying Gaps
<b>Toss Ideas</b>	To exchange ideas about a topic in an unorganized way with a chosen friend, colleague, family member, or group.	Positive Interpersonal Relationships Organizational Support for Creativity
<b>Temporary Input</b>	“Renting a brain”. Someone gives temporarily input for the idea without being part of the whole process.	Diversity of Perspectives and Experiences Cognitive Flexibility

<b>Element</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Related Concepts from Creativity Literature</b>
<b>Inspiration from an Unexpected Source</b>	Getting new information, inspiration when not seeking it.	Inspiration Luck Original Associations
<b>Rest</b>	To not actively work with the idea or the project.	Incubation Mind-wandering Illumination
<b>Formulate</b>	To put down in writing the idea or things associated with the idea. This may include writing about the characters, the feeling in the show, premises, locations, themes or to write a trial manuscript.	Elaboration Concrete Investment in Creative Work
<b>Concretize</b>	To go beyond writing towards hands on engagement and logistics. To find people, location and actual things that can be filmed.	Innovation Implementation
<b>Pilot</b>	Try out the idea. Filming parts of the show or the entire show without the intention of broadcasting it.	Blind Variation and Selective Retention Experimentation
<b>Make Mistakes</b>	Reach a dead end, go back and try something else.	Risk-taking Creative Self-Efficacy Psychological Safety
<b>Chaos</b>	A process of uncertainty, doubt, or feeling stuck or overwhelmed.	Disequilibria Tolerance for Uncertainty Resolving Tensions

## CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

We have reviewed the fourteen elements of the creative process in relation to the television show *Strömsö*, as identified by Morney (2011), and highlighted their relationship to the creativity research literature. For a summary of the fourteen elements and related concepts from the creativity research literature, see Table 1. Clearly, there are connections that we believe indicate progress toward a model for creating audiovisual formats. We highlighted issues that are important to consider, such as individual differences, organizational culture, and barriers that can arise. But, one limitation of our review is due to the breadth and depth of the creativity research literature, particularly in organizational settings, there is much left to be discussed.

A goal of this manuscript has been to compare a practice-led qualitative approach with quantitative research findings so that a fuller picture could be glimpsed. This is a first step toward creating a theory of the creative process when innovating content for audio-

visual formats and concepts. There are two overarching approaches that may be valuable in building and refining a theory utilizing the elements we have discussed. A quantitative approach to further exploration would be to survey other teams who work in the domain of creating new audiovisual content to see if the elements are consistently present across settings. A measure could be constructed and validated to further this goal. This approach also could be utilized to explore the process of creating other types of new media.

Using a qualitative approach, further case studies could be conducted using similar data collection methods to Morney's (2011) investigation. It would also be interesting to "search" for missing elements or to identify more clearly how the elements manifest over time. There are, of course, different criteria for rigor, validity, and generalizability across different philosophies of science (e.g., Maxwell, 2013; Tracy, 2010), and these will differentially guide future efforts at exploration of our topic. However, qualitative investigation may be particularly useful when seeking to understand the dynamics of human behavior in new contexts. Thompson, Parker, and Cox (2016) outlined the need for this type of work within specific creative industries. We hope that our review is helpful for informing practice when creating new content and inspiring further research.

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