Fake or Flow Examining the potential impact of producing art on mental health.

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Fake or Flow?: Examining the potential impact of producing art on mental health.

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With the rise of accessible art therapy, such as through the production of mindfulness colouring books for adults, it could be perceived that creating art is beneficial to our mental health and wellbeing. However, this assumption contradicts the romanticised stereotype of the 'tortured artist'; the likes of Vincent van Gogh and Jackson Pollock (Malchiodi, 2007, p.31) are renowned for their contribution to the artistic canon, given their personal struggles. Furthermore, contemporary artists, such as Lee John Phillips and Ana Jaks, have spoken openly about their struggles with the *Imposter Phenomenon*- self-perceived incompetence, or feeling as if you are 'faking it' (Hibberd, 2019, p.29; Wang et al, 2019). This challenges the popular notion, often linked to Confucius, of "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life," (cited in Sturt and Nordstrom, 2015).

If the use of art, through art therapy and mindfulness, is being marketed to the general public as a way to improve mental health, yet there are numerous professional artists with known mental health issues, it begs the question whether creating art causes more harm than good to our psyche?

This Independent Inquiry is written as an extended essay which will explore the concepts of Art Therapy and the Imposter Phenomenon, with reference to those that produce art as part of their profession. I hypothesize that producing art has an impact on mental health, and this impact is more positive than negative. Within this text I will also examine qualitative data, collected through conducting a questionnaire with practicing Illustrators, in this way the concepts covered can be applied in respect to Illustration. As an Illustration student, I feel that my discipline has interdisciplinary properties that can overlap with both, art, and design. Consequently, I would like to investigate quite broadly in terms of art and design, but with a focus on art and design that is drawn, painted, collaged or sculpted.

Art as Therapy

Although some people may be of the opinion that art therapy is a relatively new phenomenon, Naumberg said that it, "has been an established form of psychotherapy for over 26 years, and it continues to gain recognition and support" (1966, p.1). This shows that art therapy is a well-established procedure that has been practiced and recognised for 79 years; it has been a State Registered

Profession since 1996 (Case and Dalley, 2003, p.ix), and continues to be used as a viable form of therapy. In an era where we seem more concerned about mental health than ever before (Siegel, 2019; Bingham, 2016, p.8.), it could be assumed that therapy used to treat mental health has continued to advance and evolve, perhaps more rapidly as the discussion around mental health becomes more prominent in society. The continued use of art therapy to treat mental health, given its decades of practice, suggests that it offers benefits that have not yet been displaced or substituted through alternative therapies. If art therapy was ineffective in treating mental health, it would have undergone substantial changes or been discredited as a form of therapy, however, the fact that art therapy is present in today's society suggests that the benefits of art therapy outweigh the potential problems. Thus, given its well-regarded status in the world of psychiatry and psychology, it could be argued that producing art through art therapy helps our mental health.

Simon (1992) believes that "all creative art practice has an integrating effect upon the artist and promotes mental health."(p.xi). Thus, she concludes that art ultimately helps our mental health and improves our psyche. This sentiment is echoed by Malchiodi (2007) who argues that making art is "one of the most ancient forms of healing", with many people finding it "soothing and stress reducing" (p.ix). This could explain the prominence of mindfulness colouring books. Many 'non-artists' turn to art as a hobby, art clubs and classes are present throughout the country and can offer a social role for both, the younger and older generations. Some may argue that the social aspects of art clubs and classes possess more benefits than the art itself. Despite this, the dominant role of art making as a hobby suggests that there are substantial benefits from creating art, besides financial gain.

However, there is a long-standing link between artists and poor mental health. "Creative art is not a cure-all: if it were, no artist would go mad" as noted by Simon (1992, p.18). As a result, it could be argued that if making art was truly effective as a therapy, there would not be artists with mental health disorders. As we know this to be false, we can assume that art therapy may not be entirely effective. Malchiodi notes how history demonstrates art being used to address and express inner turmoil, such as within the work of Vincent van Gogh (2007, p.16). In contradiction, the audio guide at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, states that it is a common

misconception that Van Gogh painted “because of” his mental illness, rather he painted “in spite of” it. This misconstrues the ‘tortured artist’ narrative that is frequently thrust upon Van Gogh, but demonstrates how some artists might “mythologize the past” (‘I Found Myself in the Art World’, 2013) to create a wounding story that gives their art more meaning. If artists are manipulating their own narratives to create a tragic back-story to their art, we could question the reliability of the ‘tortured artist’ trope; perhaps the ‘tortured artist’ does not exist, but has been created through the amalgamation of exaggerated tales. Furthermore, ‘I Found Myself in the Art World’ comments that there are many happy artists (2013), demonstrating that the production of art and poor mental health are not mutually inclusive. A tragic back-story is not required to be an artist- the only requirement is to make art. Consequently, this suggests that it is still ambiguous whether producing art does more to help or hinder our mental health, although there are many famous examples that suggest producing art might hinder mental health, the validity of these examples can be questioned. However, we cannot state that producing art can help everyone’s mental health.

Art therapy is based on the psychoanalytic approach in psychology, of which Freud was a frontrunner (Freud, 1985). Freud stated that many of his patients struggled to verbalise their dreams: “… ‘I could draw it,’ a dreamer often says to us, ‘but I don’t know how to say it.” (Freud, Ed. Strachey, 1963 cited in Naumberg, 1966, p.2). This “creative impulse” (Winnicott, 1971, pg.80-81), suggests that we have a compulsion to draw what we are trying to explain when we cannot comprehend it verbally, despite our level of artistic background. Interestingly, Carl Jung, another leading psychoanalytical psychologist, also highlighted that images were important in therapy (Malchiodi, 2007, p.9). This belief is furthered by the understanding that, “our brain is mainly an image processor… not a word processor” (Bushman, 2012). Throughout our social and personal histories, we recognise and create associations with visuals before spoken word- “Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak” (Berger, 2008, p.7). For example, prehistoric man would have associated the sight of a predator with danger, without the word ‘danger’; a baby can associate a bottle with food, without knowing the words ‘bottle’ or ‘food’. So, it is understandable that we are better at communicating through art and drawing, compared to spoken word, as visuals are our primary and universally native

language. Consequently, it may be more beneficial for us to try and understand our psyche through drawing our thoughts, and producing art, as opposed to speaking our thoughts. This could explain positive responses to art therapy and mindful doodling.

Through evolution “every culture has developed activities designed primarily to improve the quality of experience”, such as art, music, dance, and games (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008, p.76). Our need to draw, which spans across cultures, suggests that drawing and creating art is an innate instinct; this can be seen in the volumes of art produced by children. Winnicott says that “…when we cannot be as creative as we need to be in life, it is natural to turn to art, as children do.” (Winnicott, cited in Simon, 1992, p.193) The fact that children usually turn to art suggests that creating art is a primitive instinct within us. The most notable primitive instinct is the flight or fight response, which we developed to protect ourselves from danger and predators, historically. Having a primitive instinct suggests that producing art is a part of our biological framework, therefore, it could be assumed that the process of creating art possesses physical benefits to us- in the way that the flight or fight response benefits us, thus, could help our mental, or physical, health.

Whereas Freud is seen as the founder of talk therapy, Margaret Naumberg is deemed the pioneer of the use of art as therapy (Malchiodi, 2007, p.36). Freud’s psychoanalytic approach mainly centred around talking as therapy, however, research into art therapy has shown that, “…the spontaneous creation … leads to a speeding up of verbalization.” (Naumberg, 1966, p.3), which implies that art therapy may be more time effective than traditional psychoanalytic therapies. Furthermore, “Art therapy is not opposed to verbalization, which it too uses in combination with spontaneous art production,” (Naumberg, 1966, p.3). Whereas Freud may not have allowed his patients to draw their dreams, despite expressing that they would be able to draw their thoughts that they could not otherwise communicate, art therapy is generally not as rigid, offering some fluidity to the therapy structure. Patients are less restricted, and allowed to express themselves however they are able to. From this we can infer that art therapy may be most effective when used in conjunction with traditional psychoanalytic therapies, as “those who originally blocked in speech often begin to verbalize in order to explain their art productions.” (Naumberg, 1966, p.1). In this way, it could be seen that producing art can help our mental health when it is

part of a combined therapy and complemented with professional therapeutic support. It helps us to find the words to explain how we feel, especially when we do not fully understand how we are feeling ourselves.

Despite this, some people claim that the benefits of art therapy come from the making of the art itself (Malchiodi, 2007, p.8-9; 'I Found Myself in the Art World', 2013). When we are engrossed in making art, we are sometimes able to forget ourselves ('Nice Rebellion, Welcome In!', 2013), this absorbed state of mind was coined '*Flow*' by Mihály Csikszentmihalyi (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008; Greenhalgh, 2015). Flow was first defined as "a holistic sensation that people have when they act with total involvement (Csikszentmihalyi 1975, cited in Beard, 2015). Interestingly, the foundation of Flow was Csikszentmihalyi's dissertation on artists. Csikszentmihalyi was intrigued into how artists spend hours immersed in their work, to then spend very little time enjoying it themselves before moving on to the next piece. This highlights that it is the striving in the process that is most important, not the outcome (Beard, 2015). For example, Monks create mandalas in a state of peacefulness and creativity, once they have finished they will destroy the mandala and create a new one, demonstrating that the outcome was of no importance-losing yourself is most fulfilling (Tsao, 2015). When we experience Flow we are completely focused on a singular task, such as creating art, and unaware of the world around us. Perhaps it is the undisturbed tranquillity, removed from the outside world, which provides the positive effects of art therapy, as opposed to the observed therapy aspects. This suggests that verbalization may not be a required part of the process, as the benefits of art therapy may be drawn entirely from the art making process itself. However, the production of art remains beneficial.

Accessibility, and Effectiveness for Artists

Art therapy is formed on the understanding that anyone, "whether trained or untrained in art … [can] project his inner conflicts into visual form."(p.1). It has been used to treat "adults, adolescents or children, and… persons with behaviour disorders as well as for neurotic and psychotic patients."(Naumberg, 1966, p.2). This reaffirms that art therapy is accessible and open to anyone; it is not restrictive of disorders. The accessibility of art therapy is evident in the role of the therapist; "The

art therapist does not interpret the symbolic art expression of his patient, but encourages the patient to discover for himself the meaning of his art productions." (Naumberg, 1966, p.2). This demonstrates that an art therapist acts as an aid in art therapy, to help patients arrive at their own interpretation of their work. Consequently, patients may be less dependent on their therapist during art therapy, as opposed to other therapies where the therapist plays a more active role. As the patient leads the interpretation, sessions with the therapist could be less frequent compared to other therapies which would minimise barriers usually caused by the cost of therapy. The patient could also continue their therapy outside of their scheduled sessions, should they wish.

As part of its accessibility, art therapy in the form of mindfulness and colouring books is targeted towards the general public, whom may not usually take part in any other form of creative activity. In contrast, it is interesting to consider how the effects of art therapy may differ for those that create art for their profession. In a case study on a professional artist undergoing art therapy to treat an ulcer, Naumberg stated that, "she found that art therapy was useful both as a form of treatment and as a means of freeing her ability to paint again." (1966, p.48). This suggests that art therapy can be beneficial to those in art professions, in addition to non-artists. It can help to relieve physical symptoms and offer a release from creative block. However, it is worth noting that the artist in this case study had not painted in six years, perhaps art therapy would have been less beneficial had she not taken a break from her profession?

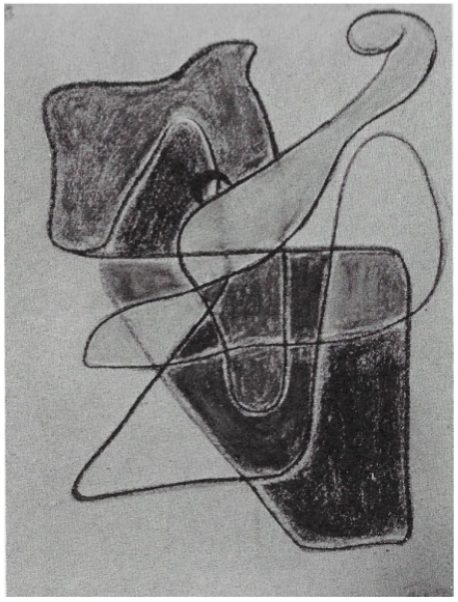


Figure 1: Abstract Design (Scribble).

Although the professional artist's art therapy course was successful overall, showing improvement in just 2 years, there were several problems presented due to her artistic background. She was "anxious" (p.49) as to how it might affect her professional work, and as a trained artist, found it difficult "to relax sufficiently to allow the unconscious to express itself in the unexpected forms and symbols released through the scribble technique." (Naumberg, 1966, p.59). This comments on how professional art training can cause difficulty in some areas of art therapy. Some artists may struggle to differentiate their instinctual artistic ability, from their informed techniques and understanding; in this way, art therapy may prove more stressful than relaxing for an artist. Therefore, some areas of art therapy may be ineffective for artists, as opposed to non-artists. Combined with their artistic knowledge, some professional artists using art therapy as treatment, as in this case study, are too eager to transform their therapy artworks into professional pieces. Naumberg states that, "if she capitalized too quickly on this first free outpouring of her unconscious in a scribble she would block the spontaneous release of her unconscious through the art therapy procedure" (1966, p.59-60), which implies that

the merging of professional and therapeutic art can hinder the progress of therapy. Therefore, it is important for practicing artists to be aware of this, and keep their art separate until the completion of their therapy sessions if they want the sessions to be successful.



Figure 2: “Devil”: an Unconscious Symbol of the “Bad” Mother (Scribble).

Further in the case study, the professional artist patient claims to have left a painting unfinished (see fig. 2) due to being “fearful of making it into “too artistic a design” ” (see fig. 1). Later it is revealed that she was actually “frightened at the degree of hostility she had again released against her mother.” (Naumberg, 1966, p.60). This hostility can be seen in fig. 2 through the sharp angles, angry face, and almost inhuman form. Although it can be beneficial to a patient’s psyche to uncover deep-rooted thoughts and feelings, which art therapy has done successfully for this particular patient, the emergence of these thoughts has brought distress and anguish to the patient whereas she was previously blissfully unaware of their existence. This offers the question, whether it is ethical or more detrimental to the patient’s mental health to unveil their unconscious trauma? Although unearthing this revelation may have had long-term benefits, it resulted in short-term, heightened distress and discomfort. In this way, it could be argued that producing art through art therapy can hinder and harm our mental health more than it helps.

In contrast, releasing hidden emotions can result in catharsis, which means 'cleansing' or 'purging' (Malchiodi, 2007, p.14). Catharsis refers to the sense of relief once a suppressed emotion has been released. "A drawing can let you *see* how you feel"; it gives "*form* to formless emotions" which can then help to cope with these emotions (Edwards, 1993, p.67). When undergoing art therapy, the patient may not be aware of their thoughts, feelings, and emotions, but, as in the case of the professional artist, the process of art therapy can help to make these thoughts conscious. Although I have highlighted how making the unconscious, conscious, may have harmed the patient, it is likely that the relief through catharsis would have helped her long-term, as she has dealt with her thoughts and problems, so is able to move on.

Fear of Failure

Anxiety disorders can affect up to a third of the population (Bandelow & Michaelis, 2015), with a third of the British public feeling stressed at least one day each week (Barr, 2018). Despite feeling that the rates of anxiety have risen, there is no evidence that the overall rates have changed (Bandelow & Michaelis, 2015). However, within a span of ten years, work-related illnesses linked to stress and anxiety rose by 9% (Barr, 2018). Anxiety disorders affect more women than men (Bandelow & Michaelis, 2015; NHS, 2018), although women are more likely to receive treatment for their mental health (Lubian et al., 2016), including therapy and medication. When anxiety disorders are so prevalent, how are those whose professional livelihoods depend on judgement and validation, such as Illustrators, Artists, and Creatives, affected by these potential obstacles?

As an artist, Simon (1992) confesses that "The fear of failure is very strong", in spite of this, "When art is therapy, an individual has an opportunity to question his assumptions and work on them in his own way."(p.193). The thought and process of making art can be riddled with doubts. This suggests that many artists frequently question the worth of their own work; which is a firm link to the Imposter Phenomenon (sometimes referred to as Imposter Syndrome); however, Simon states that these doubts are overcome and can be twisted in the use of art as therapy. Consequently, it could be said that producing art can hinder the mental

health of professional artists, despite this, when a professional artist undergoes art therapy, their expectations are subverted, and producing art in this way may have the potential to help their mental health.

Imposter Phenomenon was first described in 1978 by Dr Pauline Clance and Dr Suzanne Imes (Hibberd, 2019, p.29; Dalla-Camina, 2018). Similar, to art therapy, the concept has been present for a deceptively long time. Like most feelings of failure, discussing Imposter Phenomenon is a taboo subject, which has likely resulted in its lack of exposure, however, 70% of people are expected to have related to the phenomenon in some way (Hibberd, 2019, p.30; Gravois, 2007, cited in Badawy et al., 2018). Thus, the Imposter Phenomenon should be viewed as a spectrum, as opposed to a definite diagnosis (Slank, 2019). Although the Imposter Phenomenon was initially thought to mainly affect women (Clance & Imes, 1978, cited in Badawy et al., 2018), it has since been found that it affects, both, men and women, equally (Dalla-Camina, 2018; Lawler, 1984, cited in Slank, 2019; Gravois, 2007, cited in Badawy et al., 2018).

With the rise of awareness and the journey to lose the stigma surrounding mental health in society, the same is being done with the Imposter Phenomenon, with an increase of academic discussions (Slank, 2019; Cokley et al., 2018). In February 2019, contemporary Illustrators Ana Jaks, and Lee John-Phillips, both independently gave speeches to the Swansea College of Art's Illustration students that touched upon their battles with the Imposter Phenomenon. These issues were generally linked to the need for a 'non-artist' job in order to be financially self-sustaining. Hibberd comments on how self-employed people that "have to actively 'win' work" (2019, p.30), such as Illustrators and other freelance Artists and Creatives, are particularly at risk of suffering from the Imposter Phenomenon. More high-profile discussions on the Imposter Phenomenon include Natalie Portman on her Harvard experience. Whilst at Harvard, she felt the need to prove that she "wasn't just a dumb actress" (Portman, 2015, cited in Badawy et al., 2018). This demonstrates how the Imposter Phenomenon can affect different professions, especially within the creative arts, in spite of success.

Imposters have been shown to have poorer mental health than non-imposters (Sonnak & Towell, 2001). In addition to self-doubt, Imposter Phenomenon has been linked to physical problems, such as migraines and back pain, as well as depression

and anxiety (Hibberd, 2019, p.35; Dalla-Camina, 2018; Slank, 2019). In contrast, art as therapy can be useful for some individuals with anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Cohen, 2018). This poses a dilemma, as it implies that producing art could be linked to both, causing, and easing, issues, such as anxiety and depression. As a result, we cannot generalise that producing art causes or eases anxiety and depression, each case should be viewed individually, and thus, we cannot determine whether producing art helps or hinders the psyche in this way.

Personality traits, such as perfectionism and neuroticism, have also been linked to the Imposter Phenomenon (Slank, 2019; Cokley et al., 2018). In order to 'prove' themselves, Imposters set themselves impossibly high standards (Fraenza, 2016), which can result in stress, anxiety, and guilt, especially when the standard is not met (Thompson et al., 1998). The heightened anxiety of being 'found out' leads to over preparing and overworking, which results in *burnout* (Badawy et al., 2018; Kolligan & Sternberg, 1991 cited in Fraenza, 2016; Clark et al., 2014). Burnout is defined as work-related physical and emotional exhaustion (Freudenberger, 1974 cited in Hoffarth, 2017). This process of anxiety, over preparing, and overworking, is referred to as the imposter cycle (Fraenza, 2016). As part of this cycle, Imposters will either over-prepare, or procrastinate, then frantically prepare. Relief is brief as the cycle starts again (Thompson et al., 1998). For example, an illustrator may take on too many projects at once- causing stress, rather than admitting that they cannot manage all of their current projects. They may end up working problematic hours, and feel guilty about giving themselves a break- yet their frantic stressing results in less work being done and they will burnout. In this way, we can visualise how producing art professionally, whilst suffering from the Imposter Phenomenon could be detrimental to the psyche.

A major problem of the Imposter Phenomenon is that it is not necessarily cured by success. For some people, "the better known you become the worse you feel." (Hibberd, 2019, p.97). This demonstrates how success within the industry could lead to distress and anxiety as your audience has increased, consequently, the artist is fearful of not performing as they believe is expected of them, as there will be more witnesses of their 'mistakes'. Furthermore, the duality of success can distress our psyche, especially if success has been derived from artworks that the artist does not enjoy themselves. In this instance, the artist may feel obliged to continue to

create similar artwork that doesn't satisfy them, in order to avoid failure and rejection. This argument seems most relatable in the world of social media; for example, an Illustrator may have built up an online following that loves their animal illustrations. However, if the illustrator grows bored of animals and would rather draw portraits instead, they may feel hindered by their audience. Their portrait posts may not get as many likes, and may even lose followers, which can be disheartening, especially when they find more enjoyment from drawing portraits. Consequently, they may return to drawing animals to please their followers, and maintain satisfaction from the statistical likes and follows, but feel less satisfaction from producing the art itself. This demonstrates one way that success from producing art, can hinder our psyche, rather than help it.

How we measure creativity and success can also affect our relationship with the Imposter Phenomenon. Western society prioritises productivity, high output and efficiency over quality of life (Tsao, 2015); this mindset makes individuals more prone to the Imposter Phenomenon and susceptible to burnout, as we value productivity more than experience, which results in stress (Tsao, 2015). Living in the Western society, it is easy to see how this normalised mindset could be detrimental. Western society tends to have a consumerist viewpoint, where greater quantity means greater value. In contrast, Eastern society focuses creativity on simplifying to find the essence of a piece of art, the subjective experience (known as Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008), or your element (Robinson & Aronica, 2013)) is valued over the output (Tsao, 2015). This demonstrates how the importance of producing art differs across cultures, and as a result our environment could impact how we are affected by producing art. From this, it could be suggested that producing art could do more harm than good to the mental health of a Western individual, whilst simultaneously helping an Eastern individual's mental health. Our environment and socialisation informs our norms and values, and therefore, creates our perceptions and deems what is 'good enough' or fulfilling enough.

Art in schools and as a career

During a talk at Swansea College of Art, Illustrator Chris Haughton spoke about how drawing is not made to be as important in schools as he thinks it should be (Haughton, 2019); art generally seems to be undermined, especially as a career. As a 'non-academic' subject, it is typically given low status in schools (Robinson & Aronica, 2013, p.63), which can be seen during budget and staff cuts in education. The focus remains on STEM subjects, to the disadvantage of creative arts which are viewed as a luxury (Thorpe, 2019; Rosen, 2019). This discipline divide is evidently historic, with Freud stating that, "Art is almost always harmless and beneficient" (Freud, 1975, pg.195-196), when compared to science and religion. This demonstrates that even at the end of the Victorian era, art was not being taken as seriously as science or even religion. Art has often been "linked to mucking around" ('Beating the Bounds', 2013), consequently, it is understandable how an individual whose peers believe art is 'not a real subject' through school, might suffer from the Imposter Phenomenon if they choose a creative career, as opposed to a 'real job'. Having your livelihood belittled as 'not a real job' could cause a lot of distress, as an individual might feel inclined to constantly prove themselves and the validity of their career to others.

In contrast, when studying Flow in schools, Csikszentmihalyi found that Art was one of the subjects that students encountered the most Flow during (Beard, 2015). An explanation for this could be that we need judgement- an internal sense of what is 'good' or 'bad'- in order to experience Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008, p.56). This criticises the current arts education system and curriculum set-up, demonstrating how having time to produce art can be beneficial to students. However, although this does not mean that we need the Imposter Phenomenon, it could suggest that a diffused variation of the judgement at the core of the Imposter Phenomenon is necessary for Flow. If we do not judge ourselves and our work, we are unable to challenge ourselves, thus, unable to feel satisfied and fulfilled within our work.

Despite a lesser view of art within schools, there is a "growing interest in design" (Brown, 2009, pg.7-8). As technology and demand advances at a quickening pace, there is a constant need for more designers and design thinking within the

industry. Using 2011 statistics, Perry notes that the average male art student will earn 1% less than someone that never went to university, yet there is still a demand to go to art college ('I Found Myself in the Art World', 2013). This shows that in spite of the income, art is still being pursued as a profession. There will always be people that love and choose art as a profession, and will continue to pursue it despite negativity around them. However, it is not enough for most to jeopardise potential income for an 'unconventional' profession doing something you love, therefore, in order to justify the lower income, it could be assumed that producing art must provide more benefits than problems to these individuals.

Questionnaire

As part of my research, I conducted a short questionnaire composed of 8 open, closed, and graded questions. Within my questionnaire I hoped to explore how producing art as a profession might impact the lives and mental health of contemporary practicing illustrators.

I reached out to 9 individuals (5 male and 4 female) that had previously attended symposiums and talks for Swansea College of Art's Illustration students about their profession whilst I have been a student. I felt that it was best to approach illustrators and creatives that I have previously met through these talks, in the hope that they would be more likely to respond. From the 9 requests that I sent out, I had 4 responses. Participants were assigned letters based on their time of response: Participant A is a male that identifies himself as an illustrator. Participant B is a male illustrator and author of children's picture books. Participant C is also a male that identifies himself as an illustrator and creative. Lastly, Participant D is a female illustrator.

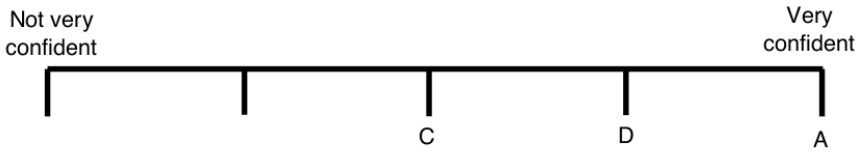


Diagram 1: How confident each participant felt that they were 'good' at their profession.

Participant A felt very confident (see Diagram 1) that they are good at their profession, and never doubts their choice of profession (see Diagram 2). This would suggest that producing art for them has no negative implications. However, participant A also confessed that they were "a little embarrassed" to say that they felt very confident, and that their enjoyment of work over leisure can also be unhealthy. From this we could infer that although producing art as a career has not caused the negative effects itself, there are other factors, such as societal norms, that may cause feelings of doubt, such as feeling embarrassed to say you feel very confident in your work. Participant A felt that how hard you work is more important than how 'good' you are. When trying to overcome doubt, they suggested working harder and trying to feel inspired; try something else if it's not working out, and make it fun. Whereas these are useful suggestions, it could be possible that if an illustrator felt that working harder was the only way to overcome doubt, this could easily lead to burnout (Freudenberger, 1974 cited in Hoffarth, 2017). Thus, it is important that trying new things and making it fun are viewed as equally important. The link to burnout could also be made as participant A placed 'taking too much on' as one of their three main challenges within their profession.

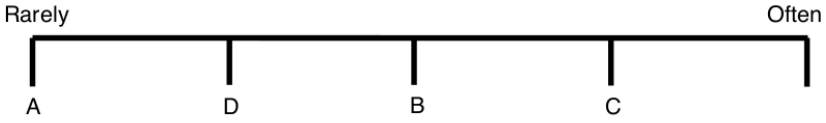


Diagram 2: How often each participant doubts their choice of profession.

When asked how often they doubt their choice of profession, participant B placed themselves in the middle of often and rarely (see Diagram 2). This implies that doubt plays a somewhat small role in their professional life, and a noticeably

bigger role than in the professional life of participant A. Similar to participant A, they felt that to overcome doubt, it was best to keep on going, and to diversify; as an illustrator and author of children's picture books, they diversify by doing lots of rewarding educational work. Perhaps it could be argued that being an illustrator and author allows participant B more opportunity to diversify, which is important to them, than if they were only an illustrator. When discussing art therapy, participant B states that, although they have never tried it themselves, they know how beneficial art can be to people from doing workshops with children; this further cements the notion that producing art is beneficial.

Participant C felt neither confident, nor not confident that they were good at their profession (see Diagram 1). They stated that they doubt their choice of profession quite often (see Diagram 2), which is corroborated by the fact that they named 'doubt' as one of the three main challenges that they experience within their profession. Similar to participant A's 'taking too much on'; participant C also placed 'work/life balance' as another of their three main challenges. This could reinforce the likelihood of burnout amongst illustrators and creatives in general. Participant C also felt that trying harder was important to overcome doubt; additionally, they suggested chasing leads and thinking of new ways to approach industry. Although participant C had not previously thought much about art therapy, they would consider engaging with it.

Despite the Imposter Phenomenon previously being linked with women, Participant D, the sole female participant, felt more confident that they were good at their profession than Participant C did. However, she did not feel as confident as Participant A (see Diagram 1). She also didn't doubt herself as often as Participants B and C, but more often than Participant A (see Diagram 2). These results contradict the belief that the Imposter Phenomenon affects women more than men; however, a larger sample would be needed to confirm this. Interestingly, whereas Participants A, B, and C gave similar advice to overcome doubt, Participant D says they try to identify what is causing the doubt, such as creative slump or income, and focus on it until it starts to improve. This strategy seems logical, with more thought and direction, which could explain why Participant D doubts themselves less as their thinking is rational. Participant D also voiced that they believed Art to be a very real source of therapy for lots of people, and can affect moods, whether as a creator or

spectator. They expressed that they would be interested in art therapy, if they felt that their skills or knowledge could help others. Similar to Participants A and C, Participant D placed 'work/life balance' as one of their three main challenges, admitting to be a bit of a workaholic. In comparison to the other Participants, Participant D struggles with the business side of Illustration, such as pricing and licensing. Some illustrators may struggle with these issues as it can be difficult to objectively judge and value your own work accurately, especially when starting out. However, Participant D finds happiness and satisfaction through her work, which suggests that her work load is challenging enough without becoming unbearable.

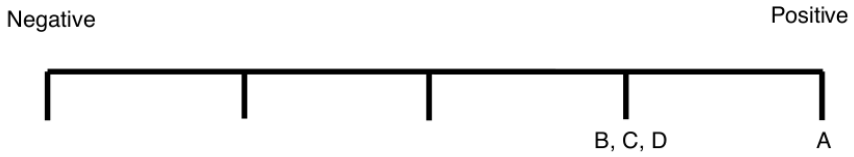


Diagram 3: How positive or negative each participant felt the impact of producing their work was on their mental health.

All of the participants felt that producing their work impacted their mental health, and the impact was seen as very or somewhat positive (see Diagram 3).

Overall, the results of my questionnaire suggest that there are elements of producing art (i.e. illustration) as a profession that could have negative effects on mental health. The freedom to manage your own time as a freelancer can lead to poor time management, and thus, the loss of an efficient work/life balance, which could result in burnout. There is evidence of doubt and low work-related self-esteem, however, this does not generalise to all illustrators and creatives, as seen in my sample. Despite this, the participants in my sample unanimously agreed that producing their work had a positive impact on their mental health, which suggests that producing art does more to help than hinder our mental health.

If I were to complete similar research in the future, I would also take into consideration age and culture, as it is possible that these factors could affect perceptions of self. The validity of my results would be improved with a larger, more

diverse and representative sample, such as more females and a range of age groups, which may allow us to make generalisations to the larger target population.

Producing art can be a powerful experience, as it allows you the opportunity to change the world ('Nice Rebellion, Welcome In!', 2013). The satisfaction and accomplishment of creating something new can be "a powerful driving force" (Brown, 2009, pg.236), which can lead to a positive cycle of inspiration and motivation to produce more art. This demonstrates how empowering creating art can be; art has unlimited potential and allows anyone to express themselves, however they deem necessary. Self-perceived success and satisfaction can result in continued enjoyment of work, which would be positive for the psyche.

As the Greek root of the word 'passion' means 'to suffer/endure' (Robinson & Aronica, 2013) we may question whether producing art, particularly as a profession, is something to love or loathe. The role of an artist is traditionally known to have been associated with poor mental health. There are aspects of producing art that can have detrimental effects on the psyche, such as the Imposter Phenomenon which is potentially linked with the undervaluing of art as a career and financial worries, doubt caused by the Imposter Phenomenon, burnout caused by overworking or lack of a clear work-life divide, and the uncovering of troubling, deep-rooted thoughts. These negative effects are prominent in Western cultures, where productivity is placed over well-being (Tsao, 2015). It is also clear that there are ways in which producing art can help our mental health; the rise of positive psychology has led to widespread understandings of Flow and mindfulness, producing art exists in all cultures, although not strictly necessary for survival, it is an established part of human life, and art therapy continues to grow in practice, becoming more mainstream. Although I am not able to come to a decisive verdict whether or not producing art does more harm than good to our psyche, it is evident that it can play a significant role in both. However, from the questionnaire that I conducted it can be seen that despite the negative effects caused by producing art, especially as a profession, the perceived impact on mental health within my small sample of individuals, was more positive than negative. Though we are not able to generalise from this research, it could be

an indication that producing art can be more of a help than a hindrance on mental health, in spite of its negative impacts.

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Abstract Design (Scribble). - Naumberg, M. (1966) *Dynamically Oriented Art Therapy: Its Principles and Practice.* New York: Grune & Stratton.

Figure 2: "Devil": an Unconscious Symbol of the "Bad" Mother (Scribble). - Naumberg, M. (1966) *Dynamically Oriented Art Therapy: Its Principles and Practice.* New York: Grune & Stratton.

Diagrams

Diagram 1: How confident each participant felt that they were 'good' at their profession.

Diagram 2: How often each participant doubts their choice of profession.

Diagram 3: How positive or negative each participant felt the impact of producing their work was on their mental health.

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Appendices

Questionnaire results table:

Participant	Question
	1. What title best suits your profession?
A	Illustrator
B	Illustrator, Author of children's picture books
C	Illustrator, Creative
D	Illustrator
	2. Can you name and rank 3 main challenges, such as stress/time management/imposter syndrome, that you have experienced within your profession? (1=most challenging, 3=least challenging)
A	1. Dealing with emails 2. Time managing 3. Taking too much on..... I can't really complain
B	1. Having enough money coming in regularly 2. Keeping my work relevant and fresh over time 3. Generating a steady supply of new ideas
C	1. Finances and licensing 2. Work/Life balance 3. Doubt
D	1.Licensing 2.Pricing 3.Work/Life balance (I'm a bit of a workaholic!!)
	3. Can you name and rank 3 main benefits, such as Catharsis/mindfulness/Flow, that you experience from your profession? (1=most beneficial, 3=least beneficial)

A	1. Flow. I really enjoy the work I do 2. 3.
B	1. Manage my own time 2. Doing something I love 3. Connect with a audience (through my work being published) from all around the world
C	1. Education, personally I believe that to create something effectively that is distinct and poignant you need to study and know the subject/thing you are trying to illustrate and portray inside and out. It's then you can have freedom to play and stumble on to new grounds of illustration...I love that journey 2. Public interaction 3. Peer acknowledgement and networking
D	1.Happiness 2.Satisfaction 3.Pride
	4. On a scale of 1-5, how confident do you feel that you are good at your profession? (1=not very confident, 5=very confident)
A	5 I am a little embarrassed to say I feel v confident !!!!!
B	-
C	3
D	4
	5. On a scale of 1-5, how often do you doubt your choice of profession? (1=often, 5=rarely)

A	5 Never. I feel v lucky to have a job that I enjoy so much. If anything I enjoy my work more than leisure which can get unhealthy maybe!!
B	3
C	2
D	4
	6. How do you overcome feelings of doubt linked to your professional life?
A	Ignore it. I think it's all about how hard you work not how 'good' you are. Work harder and try to feel inspired and up the game. If it's not working out on this particular project try something else I'm make it fun !
B	You just need to keep on going. Important to diversify as well - in my case doing lots of rewarding educational work
C	Try harder, chase leads and think of new ways to approach industry.
D	I find the best way to overcome feelings of doubt is to try to identify what is making my feel that way, be it a creative slump or income, and focus on it until I start to feel like it is improving.
	7. What is your perception of Art therapy, and is it something you would consider engaging with?
A	I've heard it's great and v interesting but I'm focused on my own work really. I've enough things on the go for now :)
B	I've never tried it myself but having done lots of art workshops with children, I know how beneficial art can be to people.
C	I must say I haven't thought of it much but yes I would.
D	I think Art is a very real source of therapy for lots of people and I can see that it effects peoples moods regardless of it is the physic act of creating a piece or even just engaging as a spectator. If I felt like my skills or knowledge could help people I would be very interested in

	doing so.
	8. Do you feel that producing your work (i.e. drawing, painting, sculpting, etc.) has an impact on your mental health? If yes, could you rank on a scale whether that impact is more positive, or negative? (1=positive, 5=negative)
A	Yes, 1
B	Yes, 2
C	Yes, 2
D	Yes, 2