AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF PERSONAL CREATIVE MAINTENANCE

A Dissertation

by

SUZANNE CATRICE CARROLL

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2006

Major Subject: Educational Psychology

AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF PERSONAL CREATIVE MAINTENANCE

A Dissertation

by

SUZANNE CATRICE CARROLL

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Approved by:

Co-Chairs of Committee,	Joyce Juntune
	Mike Ash
Committee Members,	Jim McNamara
	Rodney Hill
Head of Department,	Michael Benz

December 2006

Major Subject: Educational Psychology

ABSTRACT

An In-Depth Study of Personal Creative Maintenance. (December 2006)

Suzanne Catrice Carroll, B.S., Tarleton State University

M.Ed., Texas A&M University

Co-Chairs of Advisory Committee: Dr. Joyce Juntune
                                   Dr. Mike Ash

        This qualitative research study was created to examine four individual creative
producers in the field of the visual and performing arts from different walks of life to
determine if any similarities between the producers emerged. More specifically, the
researcher was interested in (a) investigating how creative thinkers became creative
producers and (b) investigating how these creative producers maintained and sustained
high levels of creative production. After thoroughly utilizing the constant comparative
method of data collection and analyzation, which includes peer debriefs, member checks,
and other various qualitative techniques to keep the study internally valid, three themes
emerged from the grounded data.

        Theme one is that a continuous evolution of the artist exists. This is brought
about by parental support and critical incidents. Furthermore, these participants hold an
enduring feeling of passion and responsibility for their field of creative endeavor. Theme
two is that each creative producer spoke of having an intense inner sense of self. This
sense of self first emerged within these participants at an early age, and its adult presence
is evident in how these producers (a) cannot separate the artist from the person, (b) are
aware of their personal and artistic growth, (c) are aware of their personal metacognitive
strategies of generating ideas, and they sometimes use their art as a source of personal

therapy. Theme three talks about how these creative producers see art as a greater whole.

Its evidence is manifested within these participants perception that art has a very

humanistic purpose by its effect on their communities.

DEDICATION

To all the creatively gifted people who have felt lost, alone, or misunderstood while

traveling down life's pathways.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The mind of a creative producer has caught the attention of several researchers in educational psychology Gardner (1993), Therivel (1999), Torrance & Safter (1999). These researchers have devised different models that help other university researchers and classroom teachers experience and view creativity in different ways such as developing models for teaching to reach optimal student learning (Torrance, 1979; Torrance & Safter, 1999; de Bono, 1967). In *Making the Creative Leap and Beyond*, Torrance & Safter (1999) discuss creativity models involving (a) learning and teaching, (b) predicting and studying creative behavior, and (c) to study the future. The American Creativity Association (ACA) organization, where people with high interest and/or expertise in creativity come together to share their research findings, also promotes and fosters the implementation of creativity in a variety of fields such as education, military sciences, technology (including nanotechnology), the arts, business, as well as personal growth and development.

One of the fields where creativity expresses itself is though the visual and performing arts. Broadway plays, television sitcoms and commercials, radio commercials and music, and even DVD and CD covers are just some of the ways creativity has thrived in the field of visual and performing arts. However, these examples are representations of creative productions, the finished products that came from the minds of the creative producers. The question of interest of the present study focuses on

_____

Citations follow the style and format of *Gifted Child Quarterly*.

how creative producers' develop and maintain for sustained levels of productivity. Hence, An In-depth Study of Personal Creative Maintenance is a trip to the creative producer's "mental garage," the place where creative producers look inside their own minds and conduct personal creative maintenance, which, in turn, maintains and sustains their high levels of creative production. The following two research objectives will be used to help achieve the previously mentioned question of interest:

A. To gain an understanding of how creative individuals evolve into creative producers in the field of visual and performing arts; and

B. To gain an understanding of how creative producers sustain and maintain their high levels of creative production.

The goals of these objectives are not only to answer how creative producers maintain and sustain their high levels of creative performance, but to also help fill the gaps in the creativity literature by studying the personal creative maintenance of the creative producer. A qualitative case study approach is used in the present study, since the best way to enter this "mental garage" of the creative producer may be through insights given by the producers themselves through extensive interviewing of participants combined with prolonged engagement.

Through interviews and prolonged engagement, the researcher hopes to gain in-depth insights about "personal creative maintenance" and how the various factors of such maintenance enables creative producers to maintain and sustain their high levels of creative performance. Furthermore, the findings may assist other researchers by expanding the knowledge base of creativity literature that is already in existence.

Statement of the Problem

Learning how to think creatively does not imply creative production will emerge or be maintained (Winner, 1996). The creativity literature is full of models (Guildford, 1966; Dacey, 1989; Torrance, 1979; Sternberg & William, 1998) developed to teach people how to think more creatively and/or tap into their own creative potential, yet, not all children grow-up to be creative adults (Feldhusen & Goh, 1995). Likewise, not all creative thinkers evolve into creative producers in their chosen fields (Therivel, 1999). Thus, a qualitative research study is needed that examines, in-depth, the mental processes of creative thinkers who transitioned themselves into creative producers and maintained high levels of creative productivity.

Several researchers have studied the mental processes of creative productivity (Wallas, 1926; de Bono, E. 1967; Guildford, 1950; Csikszentmihalyi, 1985). Guildford (1950) began researching ways to identify creative individuals who were considered to have creative potential and ability. His finding that the intellect consists of five different types of mental processes interests educational psychologists, psychologists, and educators (Dacey, 1989). The five mental processes from Guildford's (1950) findings include: cognition, memory, convergent thinking, divergent thinking, and evaluation, with divergent thinking being the mental process most closely related to creativity. McCrae (1999) stated that, "Divergent thinking is related to general intelligence, but it is a better predictor of creative achievements than are other forms of intelligence such as memory or reasoning ability," (p. 362). Though mental processes are important to the study of creative research, the integration of the mental processes and personality are also of interest (Csikszentmihalyi, 1985).

Torrance (1993) found that some creative producers go above and beyond their peers in various fields of creative endeavor and labeled these people "beyonders." Beyonders share ten characteristics that distance them from other creative adults including (a) a delight in deep thinking, (b) tolerance of mistakes, (c) love of one's work, (d) clear purpose, (e) enjoying one's work, (f) feeling comfortable as a minority of one, (g) being different, and (h) not being well-rounded (Torrance 1991).

Though the previously mentioned findings give a snapshot picture of the creative process and creative personality, the studies of the factors that produce long-term effects on personal creative maintenance, especially in the visual and performing arts, are sparse and in some areas nonexistent. Therefore, more studies are needed that focus on how creative producers maintain and sustain their high levels of creative achievement.

The Purpose of This Study

Creativity researchers have a tendency to select those creative individuals who are leaders in their various fields and search for insights about the creative process (Feldhusen & Goh, 1995). Likewise, this study seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of how creative producers develop and sustain high levels of creative production. To achieve the study's objectives, two research questions have been developed to serve as a guide along this path of interest and inquiry.

Research Questions

1. How do creative individuals become successful creative producers?

2. How do these creative producers sustain their levels of creative production?

For the purposes of this study a "creative producer" is defined as one who creates something by using the mind to capture a moment and create some object tangible or

intangible that provokes a feeling in an audience. Examples of this kind of production could be a picture/feeling combination or a prose/emotion sensation.   Creative producers in this study use creativity within a field where their very financial livelihood depends upon their abilities to stay creative.

Practical and Theoretical Significance of the Study

The results of the proposed research should give rise to a new understanding of the lives of creative producers, how they view their worlds, and possibly how to maintain a high level of creativity. Hopefully, the findings will influence future studies in creativity, which will trickle down from academia into the homes and lives of creative producers.

Additional studies may be conducted that examine the differences between creative thinkers and creative producers. Therefore, the ponderings of those who want to know how creative thinkers became creative producers and maintained their levels of creative production may be a step closer to being understood. Studies of similarity may be promoted which may help creative producers understand themselves. However, with qualitative findings, the emergent findings from the grounded theory do have limitations concerning generalizations.

Limitations of the Study

Generalization of findings is not possible in qualitative research, yet with the use of thick description, transferability is possible. The voices heard are only a mixture of creative producers within the field of visual and performing arts. All creative producers do not fall into the same and/or similar fields or specializations of these participants.

<u>Definition of Terms</u>

1. Creative Thinking – "The process of sensing difficulties, problems, gaps in information, missing elements, something askew; making guesses and formulating hypotheses about these deficiencies; evaluating and testing these guesses and hypotheses; possibly revising and retesting them; and, last, communicating the results" (Torrance, 1993).

2. <u>Creative Producer</u> – One who creates something by using the mind to capture a moment and create some object tangible or intangible, which provokes a feeling in an audience. Examples of this kind of production could be a picture/feeling combination or a prose/emotion sensation.

3. <u>Personal Creative Maintenance</u> - how the creative producers maintain themselves for optimal creative production.

4. <u>Purposive Sampling</u> – Purposely selecting a sample that encompasses the construct of interest and can give rich detail about that construct (Erlandson et.al 1993).

5. <u>Prolonged engagement</u> – spending enough time with the subject of interest so that the researcher is able to "see" what the subject "sees" without "going native" (Erlandson et al., 1993).

6. <u>Member checks</u> – "Because the realities that will be included are those that have individually and collectively been constructed by the persons within the context of the study, it is imperative that both data and interpretations obtained be verified by those persons. No data obtained through the study

should be included if it cannot be verified through member checks"

(Erlandson et al., 1993).

7. <u>Resiliency</u> – "The ability to recover quickly from illness, change, or

misfortune: buoyancy" (Dictionary.com)

8. <u>Thick Description</u> – The writer describes the scenarios and people so detailed,

the reader has the ability to see the situation, person, and place as if he/she

were a part of the setting his/her self (Erlandson et al., 1993).

9. <u>Transferability</u> – The findings from this study are able to be transferred and

applied to similar situations, contexts, and creative producers who are similar

to those included in this study (Erlandson et al., 1993).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Little research is available that looks directly into the lives of creative producers within the fields of the visual and performing arts that attempts to gain insights from the creative producers themselves. For instance, Gardner's (1993) book, *Creating Minds*, looks into the lives of creative producers who were creative leaders for their time (Einstein, Picasso, Stravinsky, Eliot, Graham, and Gandhi), mostly derived from the field of the visual and performing arts yet no insights were given to Dr. Gardner from the producers themselves, since most were already deceased at his time of inquiry. However, Gardner (1993) did express two themes that accompanied the lives he had studied: (1) social forces surround creative breakthroughs and (2) creative producers willingly make personal sacrifices to accomplish their creative work.

The present study seeks to gain an in depth understanding of creative producers from their first-hand experiences, specifically how they self-maintenance for optimal sustained and maintained high creativity. Thus, the literature review introduces various factors proven relevant to studies of creativity and may be insightful for understanding the mind of the creative producer, since such little research on how creative producers maintain and sustain high levels of production. Gardner (1993), Feldhusen & Goh (1995), and Gruber (1974) all believe that an individual case-study approach for tracing the methods of highly creative thinkers would be more beneficial than attempting to inquire into only present and past environmental factors or current abilities.

<u>Creativity and Intelligence</u>

The idea and speculation that creativity is linked to intelligence is a favored theory in educational psychology (Martindale, 1989).   Likewise, many researchers believe that since creativity is a higher order thinking process, intelligence is a prerequisite for creative thinking to occur (Sternberg & William, 1998; Feldhusen & Goh,1995; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2000). Thus, "The goal of many, if not most, gifted programs is to develop the potential of identified gifted students in such a way that they later become creative producers in the real world of the professions" (Vantassel-Baska, 1998).

According to the threshold theory, in order to be a success in creative pursuits, one's IQ needs to be at a certain threshold point (i.e. 120), yet scores above the threshold point make no difference in creative production (Hayes, 1989). Additionally, Feldhusen & Goh (1995) state that even individuals known to be experts in their fields are not guaranteed to be creative. With all this said, the research on creativity seems to "shadow" the study of intelligence (Gardner, 1993), and has evolved into the "prodigal stepbrother" to the research of intelligence (Sternberg & William, 1998). Hayes (1989) believe that creativity reflects a near perfect, fine-tuned mental process derived from intelligence.

Though creativity and intelligence are closely linked, not all highly intelligent people are creative (McCrae, 1999). Therefore, several researchers are seeking to find the answers to what makes creative thinkers tick (Amabile,1990; Gardner,1993; Houtz, Edwin, Esquivel, Okoye, Peters, & Treffinger, 2003) by using a variety of methodological approaches to research creativity.

Nature/Nurture Debate

The nature/nurture debate of creativity seems more of cooperation than a debate so to speak (Vernon, 1989). For instance, certain genes may control various factors of the environment, such as a child choosing to play with water colors over an x-box video game, to read a book instead of watching a cartoon, or to surround oneself with like personalities that also promote creativity. The most efficient summarization concerning the nature/nurture aspects of creativity may come from Vernon (1989):

> The genes do indeed provide for the transmission of heredity qualities,
> but they do not determine an individual's height, or intelligence, or
> creativity. They are predispositions, whose effects develop differently in
> different environments; that is, they interact with environmental
> conditions or experiences and produce not a fixed effect but a certain
> 'range of reaction.' (Vernon, 1989, p93).

Furthermore, Sternberg & William (1998) state that "Highly intelligent people seem more likely to attribute their intelligence to a permanent disposition than do highly creative people, because intelligence is more stable as a trait, at least via traditional ways in which it is measured," (p. 369).

Gender Differences in Creative Performance

Also within the nature/nurture literature of creativity lays the effects that nurture plays in the differences of creative performance in males and females. It has long been noted that women tend to be underrepresented in the hard sciences in obtaining graduate degrees (Vernon, 1989). Yet, this under representation also stands true in the visual arts, mainly sculpture and architecture (Vernon, 1989). An In Depth Study of Personal Creative Maintenance has participants that include both genders, thus some gender differences are mentioned for future discussion.

In Western cultures, boys and girls are treated differently and as early as one year old, they are exposed to different types of toys with which to play (Vernon, 1989). Furthermore, as the children age, they may feel a societal pressure to engage in different activities of interest, educational majors, and career choices (Vernon, 1989). These societal pressures may come from family members, friends, and even childhood teachers (Vernon, 1989). There are few females who are able to undergo the emotional stress that accompany living a more "rebellious" life that does not conform to societal gender expectations (Vernon, 1989). Though sex-role stereotypes tend to get blamed for the lack of females in the sciences and arts, "Purely social causation could not readily explain the greater female achievement in particular areas, for example, in writing and in the decorative and performing arts as against painting and musical composition" (Vernon, 1989, p. 107).

Creativity Research Approaches

Presently, three different approaches of studying creativity have dominated the literature, including the process approach, the product approach, and the characteristics of the creative personality (Martindale, 1989; Brown, 1989; Vernon, 1989) including creativity style and motivational factors (Csikszentmihalyi, 1985). Brown (1989) notes that some people prefer one type of approach (i.e. process approach) to another type of approach (i.e. product approach) while pursuing answers to lingering research questions. An In Depth View of Personal Creative Maintenance focuses primarily on the creative process, more specifically, the process of personal creative maintenance in the creative producer's mind.

<u>Creative Process</u>

The creative process approach assumes that creativity is normally distributed amongst the population (Stavridou & Furnham, 1996), therefore many researchers focus on how to stimulate, train, and develop one's creative potential (Feldhusen & Goh, 1995). Simply put, "creative thinking occurs when ideas are extended, modified, or combined in ways that turn out to be useful," (Feldhusen & Goh, 1995, p. 259). Many researchers have developed models aimed at enhancing and developing the creative potential in the human population (de Bono, 1967; Torrance, 1979), by studying the mental creative process. For instance, the mental processes of incubation, illumination, and flow have found considerable agreement within the creativity research community (Martindale, 1989; Torrance, 1979, Feldhusen & Goh,1995; Stavridou& Furnham,1996). A brief discussion of various theories of the creative process follows.

Wallas (1926) model of creative thought

Wallas's (1926) stated that the mental processes of preparation, incubation, illumination, and revision constitute creative thinking. Preparation refers to the time period that creative producers use to acquire the knowledge (richly detailed bits of information) and skills needed for the creative tasks within their fields (Armbruster, 1989), and it is considered to be the most important step in the creative thinking process (Hayes, 1989). Csikszentmihalyi (1996) refers to the preparation stage as a period of time when the creative thinker becomes immersed in the creative problem that arouses his/her curiosity. The preparation stage may happen with or without the creative thinker being aware of its beginnings. Thus, the preparation stage may be one that is both conscious and unconscious in the mind of the creative producer.

Once the creative producer feels that the preparation phase is phasing out, the incubation phase begins. During incubation, the ideas and information gathered during the preparation process are swirling around the unconscious mind of the creative thinker and during this time period, unlikely (creative) connections may begin (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). The unconscious aspect of the incubation process may be especially beneficial for creative endeavor, especially since "conscious attempts to guide and control creativity in the process seem doomed to failure," (Armbruster, 1989, p. 179).

Though it may be hard to know where the preparation process ends and the incubation process begins, there is agreement as to how the incubation process ends. The incubation process will end with a sudden "aha!" an insight, an illumination that just "pops" into the mind of the creative producer (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Torrance & Safter, 1999). Thus, the mental process of illumination is also know as an "aha!" experience (Torrance, 1979; Torrance & Safter, 1999). Torrance and Safter (1999) suggests that "aha!" experiences may happen when one least expects it, and Wallas (1926) believed that the sudden insight would begin the process of creation and give rise to a creative production. However, this is not the end of the creative product, but the beginning.

The last process that creative producers experience before the completion of a creative product is verification (Wallas, 1926). This process is described as sustained and painful for the creative producer (Armbruster, 1989). During this process, the creative producers constantly analyze and revise their creative production before releasing it for public opinion. "Just as originality does not guarantee creative performance, so too is

creativity not solely a divergent, intuitive, generative process. Selective, evaluative, and evaluative processes are necessary" (Runco, 1995, 222).

Csikszentmihalyi's flow state

One process that Csikszentmihalyi (1996) researched and argued, which occurs after illumination and prior to verification is the flow process in creative thinking. Flow has been described as an experience during the creative thinking process that creative producers strive to reach and thoroughly enjoy, even if they must adhere to a period of psychological pain prior to its beginning (Gardner, 1993). The creative producer becomes immersed in his/her work, and "what was once too challenging becomes attainable and even engaging" during flow (Gardner, 1993, p.26).

In his book, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) argues that not all people are able to experience the flow state. Certain personality traits (selfishness & self-consciousness) make the flow state an almost impossible thinking ability.

> Although a self-conscious person is in many respects different from a self-centered one, neither is in enough control of psychic energy to enter easily into a flow experience. Both lack the attentional fluidity needed to relate to activities for their own sake; too much psychic energy is wrapped up in the self, and free attention is rigidly guided by its needs. Under these conditions it is difficult to become interested in intrinsic goals, to lose oneself in an activity that offers no rewards outside the interaction itself (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990,p. 85).

Thus, the flow period of creative thinking is effected by the personality traits of self-consciousness and self-centeredness, and therefore is not available to all potential creative thinkers.

Guildford's (1950) views on creativity

Guildford's (1950) American Psychological Association (APA) presidential address is noted as a foundational piece of the creativity research conducted today (Brown, 1989), and Guildford's (1950) study of potential creativity found that divergent thinking is linked to creative thinking (Kirton, 1976). With this said, many creativity researchers inquire into the mental process of divergent thinking because of its association with creative thinking outside of displaying intelligence alone (Gardner, 1993). Furthermore, the ability to think divergently helps creativity researchers distinguish between the simply intellectually gifted and the creatively gifted person(s) (Gardner, 1993). In order to think divergently, the creative thinkers must generate ideas that display the mental traits of thinking fluently, originally, flexibly, and with elaboration across a broad range of categories (Brown, 1989). Likewise Guildford suggests that tests of creative productivity should incorporate tests of divergent thinking (Brown, 1989).

The Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT) is an example of a creative thinking test that examines divergent thinking in its "Uses of a Brick" subtest where subjects are to think of as many uses of a brick as possible during a timed session, and the scoring of the test is based upon how many original or novel ideas the subject(s) produced in comparison to both fluency and flexibility. Fluency refers to the number of ideas generated, and flexibility refers to how many different categories of ideas are generated (Larey, 1999). Thus, flexibility is related to divergent thinking, which, in turn, promotes creativity and a creative product's originality and/or novelty (Guildford, 1975).

Creative Product

The creative product has been noted as the primary means (evidence) of determining whether a person is creative or not (Vernon, 1989). "The results of creative thinking and problem solving are best assessed through evaluation of the products," (Feldhusen & Goh, 1995, p. 255). In general, creativity refers to the capability a person has to produce new and original ideas, insights, and artistic objects that are accepted by experts or "appropriate observers" within the domain of its origin as being appropriate and useful (Vernon, 1989; Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron,1996). "Appropriate observers," are those individuals with familiarity and knowledge within the domain of the created product who are able to judge the product's creativity (Amabile, 1990), thus not many people are able to achieve this level of creative success (Stavridou & Furnham, 1996).

While determining a product's creative appropriateness and/or relevance, the evaluators must be careful not to let their personal values bias the judgments (Runco, 1995). Being aware of a personal bias while determining whether a product is creative is very important for the artists since, "it is a necessary part of the creative process for creators to be able to advance and gain acceptance of their ideas-solutions-inventions-art," (Feldhusen & Goh, 1995,p. 223).

In regard to evaluating a creative product, "an act will not be judged creative unless it reflects the mind of the intelligence of the person who is the creator. If a work is produced entirely accidentally, then it is not judged to be creative." Furthermore, Feldhusen & Goh (1995) states, "We call products creative if they represent a

transformation, have aesthetic coherence and appeal, and/or represent a new configuration or connection of ideas" (p. 265).

However, the present study primarily focuses on the creative producer's mental process of personal creative maintenance, since the researcher agrees with Runco (1995) that, "It certainly is too much to expect a full understanding of the creative process by studying only products and achievement"(p. 382).

<u>Creative Personality</u>

Researchers agree that the personal qualities of creative producers are linked to the creative process.; "Attribution is an important part of the entire creative process," (Sternberg & William, 1998, p. 367). Thus it is important to know that the personality trait that outweighs any other is tolerance for ambiguity (Dacey, 1989; VanTassel-Baska, 1998). Tolerance of ambiguity includes seven supporting traits: stimulus freedom, functional freedom, flexibility, risk-taking, preference for disorder, delay of gratification, and androgyny (Dacey, 1989). Though several researchers in the field of creativity agree upon tolerance for ambiguity, it and its supporting traits are not the only personality traits that creative thinkers hold.

Torrance (1993) found that some creative producers go above and beyond their peers in various fields of creative endeavor and labeled these people "Beyonders." Beyonders share ten characteristics that distance them from other creative adults including (a) a delight in deep thinking, (b) tolerance of mistakes, (c) love of one's work, (d) clear purpose, (e) enjoying one's work, (f) feeling comfortable as a minority of one, (g) being different, and (h) not being well-rounded (Torrance 1991).

Olszeski-Kubilius (2000) stated that creative producers may also have the following personality characteristics: preference for time alone, ability to cope with tension/marginality, and freedom from societal conventionality. VanTassel-Baska (1998) states that creative producers display: independence in attitude and social behavior, dominance, introversion, wide interests, self-acceptance, intuitiveness, flexibility, tolerance for ambiguity, an asocial attitude, risk-taking behaviors, social presence and poise, radicalism, fantasy, and aesthetic and moral commitment to work. Furthermore, in regard to work, the personality traits that are known to differentiate between high and low creative productions in creative thinkers are devotion to work, autonomy, drive for originality, and flexibility (Hayes, 1989).

Another theory regarding the creative personality is one of opposition of extremes. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) identified ten opposing traits in the creative personality which conclude that creative people:

- Have a great deal of energy, yet they are often quiet and at rest

- Tend to be smart, yet naïve simultaneously

- Tend to combine playfulness and discipline and/or responsibility with irresponsibility

- Alternate between a rooted sense of reality and imagination/fantasy

- Tend to be both extroverted and introverted

- Tend be be humble and proud at the same time

- Are androgynous

- Are both rebellious and conservative

- Are extremely passionate and objective about their work

- Live with a sensitivity that brings them both intense pain and enjoyment.

One of Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) findings suggests that creative people are sensitive, and this sensitivity brings both intense pain and enjoyment. Likewise, Dabrowski (1967) has suggested that highly creative people are sensitive people who naturally live a life where everything that is said to them, everything they do, and almost every aspect of their lives are intensified in comparison to those not highly gifted with creativity. In regards to the emotional aspect that accompanies intensity and sensitivity, Olszeski-Kubilius (2000) argues that creative producers have a tendency to use intellectual activities (such as creative thinking) as a means to fill an emotional void.

This sensitivity and intensity of life that creative people experience influences their psychological growth, which in turn promotes their creativity (Dabrowski, 1967). Likewise, freedom from societal conventionality may enable creative producers to develop their own personal style of creative processing, thus boosting production levels.

Creativity Style

Creativity style is noted as being a new hot topic in the research of creativity (Houtz, Edwin, Esquivel, Okoye, Peters, & Treffinger, 2003). A creative producer's creativity style can be assumed to be linked to certain personality traits which, in turn, may be able to predict his/her creative behavior and/or self-perception of creative thinking (Houtz, et al, 2003). Depending on one's personality, either an innovative or adaptive style of creativity may emerge.

Adaptors have a tendency to adapt their creations to a defined paradigm or framework that is already in existence, whereas innovators create a new framework in which to place the creative problem (Kirton, 1976). Innovative individuals have a

tendency to have a more insightful, spontaneous, original, and energetic personality than adaptors (Houtz, et al. 2003). Thus the personality traits of insightfulness, originality, and energy may be the key ingredients in regard to an innovative style of creative production. However, obtaining an innovative style in combination with creative personality traits is not enough to maintain and sustain high levels of creative production. Intrinsic motivation is needed, since "differences in creativity have their origin in differences in motivation," (Hayes, 1989, p. 144).

Creativity Motivation

The study of motivation in regards to creativity has been around for several years, in particular, within the field of psychology (Gardner, 1993), with the finding that a creative producer's most "salient characteristic" is persistent motivation (Ochse, 1993). Vernon (1989) also found that in the arts, creativity required a high degree of motivation and personality qualities outside of cognitive skills. Winner (1996) stated that in regards to creative thinking and sustained production, "after a certain point, levels of ability play less important than personality and motivational factors," (p. 283).

Motivation to innovators and geniuses alike comes from a refusal to conform to what society expects one to be or a common life theme (Csikszentmihalyi, 1985). Creative thinkers want to be in charge of their own actions, and they strive to do things that have never been thought of before (Hayes, 1989). So, why do some creative producers lose their ability to sustain their high levels of creative production? For instance, why does Mozart's name still have a famous ring, yet a top forty eighties band may not be known? What causes some people to be like Mozart? Therivel (1999) states,

> An answer to this question, which goes to the root of sustained creativity, is presented by the GAM/DP theory of creativity in which G stands for

genetic endowment, A for assistances in youth, M for misfortunes of youth, and DP for division of power. Mozart was rich in G, A, and M. This condition gives origin to the challenged personality, high in sustained creativity.

One factor that Therivel (1999) did not include in his theory of creativity is the cognitive factor associated with creative thinking, which is also effected by the creative producer's motivation. "If a person is willing to work longer and harder than others, he or she can acquire a larger body of information than others" (Hayes, 1989, p. 143) which, in turn, promotes divergent thinking and creative production.

VanTassel-Baska (1998) promotes the notion that creative individuals have an intrinsic drive that allows them to work on a creative project for long periods of time. Additionally, Runco (1995) states that intrinsic motivation is commonly found in descriptions of the formula for a creative personality. Likewise, Amabile (1990) agrees that, "intrinsic motivation, the motivation to engage in an activity for its own sake, is conducive to creativity," (p. 243).

Intrinsic motivation is a personality trait that seems necessary for creative production to occur, tolerance for ambiguity, intelligence (refer to the previously discussed Threshold Theory), and other various personality attributes seem to have an effect on the creative thinking process. However, these variables are not the only ingredients in the formula for creative thinking and creative production. "Motivational states give impetus to creative behavior; attitudes and values may predispose individuals to creative functioning; and cognitive style variables may guide creative thinking processes," (Feldhusen & Goh, 1995, p. 261).

<u>Creative Cognition</u>

Creative cognition involves researching how creative producers think creatively. It specifies as to how the brain and mind operate and function during the creative thinking process. Discussed in this literature review are schema theory, the positive effects of memory on creative thinking, the negative effects of memory on creative thinking, and the role that metacognition plays in creative thinking.

Wallas (1926) described the creative thinking process as one that includes the stages of preparation, illumination, and verification while working on a creative product. Within the process of preparation, lies the schema theory in preparation. Rummelhart & Norman (1978) schema theory states that three types of learning take place during preparation: accretion, tuning, and restructuring. Accretion is the process of encoding new schema information on already defined schema, and tuning is the process of modifying a given schema due to context/circumstance in which the creative thinker finds him/her self (Armbruster, 1989). Restructuring involves creating new schema from the revision of a current schema or by incorporating a new schema from personal experience (Armbruster, 1989,p. 178).

Restructuring is noted as being the most important type of learning during the preparation process of creative thinking. "The most important type of learning is undoubtedly the learning that takes place prior to or during restructuring, since restructuring seems to be what creativity is all about" (Armbruster, 1989, p. 178). Furthermore, Feldhusen & Goh (1995) states that, "An individual's knowledge base should be well organized conceptually, highly retrievable upon specific demand, and fluent in relating new, incoming information to existing schema" (p. 255). Feldhusen &

Goh (1995) notes that when selective combinations of ideas meet the needs of a specified

task and/or problem, creative production is a likely outcome when the individual(s) at

hand have a large, fluent, and organized knowledge base in the domain of the given

problem/task. "The creative expert's knowledge base is conceptually functional; issues

and problems can be dealt with effectively by conceptual schema rather than by

cumbersome analyses of details," (Feldhusen & Goh, 1995, p. 259). In regard to

Wallas's creative process paradigm,

> The preparation phase of the Wallas paradigm may be taken as longer
> term development of the well organized, schematically meaningful
> knowledge base along with the acquisition of appropriate metacognitive
> skills for working with the knowledge base in the most efficient and
> potentially creative manner (Feldhusen & Goh, 1995,p. 261).

Positive aspects of memory on creativity

Memory involves both the way a creative thinker processes information and how

he/she recalls (remembers) the previously processed material. With regard to processing

the information, "a flexible knowledge representation increases the potential for the

unique recombination and reordering of knowledge fragments that are the essence of

creativity" (Armbruster, 1989,p. 178). Additionally, abstract knowledge and skills

promote creative thinking more than knowledge of the concrete particulars of a given

situation and/or thing (Stein, 1989). Thus, holding a general flexible idea of a given

situation/thing is more important in promoting creative behavior than holding a rigid idea

of what concrete functions a situation/thing plays. In other words, creative production

may be effected by the way the processed information is remembered.

The act of remembering is a way to relive or recreate past experiences (Stein,

1989). Memories have a profound impact on creative behavior, especially since several

artists produce work from their own personal experiences (Stein, 1989). Thus, memories of past events and/or experiences may either promote or decrease the desired level of creativity on a given piece of creative work.

Negative aspects of memory on creativity

Although memory has a positive impact on creativity, it may also have a negative impact on the creative product as well. Recent events and familiar concepts may adversely affect the creative problem solving process (Stein, 1989). For example, a recent event may impress a schema that restricts flexibility in cognitive processing, thus decreasing the likelihood of creativity in a given creative problem situation. Another such example is functional fixedness. Functional fixedness is the tendency to remember things by their designed function (Stein, 1989). Maier (1931) observed how remembering common properties of objects can adversely affect creative problem solving in the classic 'two chord' or 'two string' problem" (Stein, 1989, p. 164).

Metacognition

There exists a hierarchical nature to the psychological processes that occur during cognition; at the top of this mental pyramid of processing is metacognition (Armbruster, 1989). Metacognitive processes regulate and control the cognitive activities within the creative thinker, and they are first recognized within the creative process when the creative producer has a strong conscious desire to accomplish a given goal, with the goal being the fuel that drives the motivation for completion of a creative product (Armbruster, 1989). "Control, or self-regulation, includes setting goals and subgoals, planning the next cognitive move, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of cognitive strategies, and revising cognitive strategies" (Armbruster, 1989, p. 177).

Though metacognition is first recognized when the creative producer has an initial conscious urge to accomplish a given creative task, it is quite unconscious in nature during the incubation process of creativity (Armbruster, 1989). Two different types of metacognition have been noted as accompanying the creative process:

> The first type involves verifying or measuring the product against and internal standard- the original purpose of the creative enterprise and the mental image formed during illumination. The second type of metacognition involves verifying the product against an anticipated external standard – a would-be audience (Armbruster, 1989, p.180)

Thus, the ability to judge a product's creativity is most likely a metacognitive function (Feldhusen & Goh, 1995).

Daydreamers

Creative producers have a tendency to daydream frequently and promote creative problem solving in their day-to-day lives. (Flowers & Garbin, 1989). They are people of reflection and imagination with a purpose. Compared to the majority, creative producers have a more purposeful reason for daydreaming, with their greater ability to control their mental representations; they might be daydreaming their way to accomplishing their dreams (Flowers & Garbin, 1989) instead of only daydreaming for the sake of escaping reality. Creative producers daydreaming may encourage a more original creative product, (Flowers & Garbin, 1989). Especially since, "Disciplined imagination is positively associated with creativity," (Houtz, et al., 2003).

Environmental Factors and Creativity

Amabile (1990) argues that creative researchers hold a bias that creativity comes from people with certain attributional qualities, thus not inquiring into the environmental effects on the creative individuals.

> It is trivially obvious that there would be no creativity whatsoever without the person and his or her cognitive abilities, personality dispositions, and other personal resources; neither would there be any creativity whatsoever without a context in which to create-a context of resources, education, exposure, encouragement, stimulation, and appreciation (Amabile, 1995, p. 425).

Likewise, Sternberg & William (1998) state that, " To fully understand creativity, we would need to know both what internal factors lead to creativity and what external factors lead to the attribution of it" (p. 368), and Amabile (1990) notes that her research on creativity has generated findings that environmental factors are mentioned as having more of an affect on creativity than the personality factors do.

Feldhusen & Goh (1995) mentions that certain personality traits (i.e. being an independent worker, persistence, and autonomy) may be stable personality conditions, yet they are reflected in the person-environmental interactions in which these individuals find themselves. Feldhusen & Goh (1995) states that the personality traits of persistence, working in isolation, being autonomous, and having a questioning attitudinal disposition are learned from role models at home and at school, and the knowledge base for creativity to occur within comes from reading and travel experiences.

Creative Production

Feldhusen & Goh (1995) states that creative production is dependent upon the following:

- Personal metacognitive functioning abilities that tap into the individual's knowledge base in a given domain and assist the individual in adjusting predisposed schemas,

- A large and fluent knowledge base accompanied with the mastery of skills in a particular domain,

- A set of attitudes, dispositions, motivations, etc. acquired from
  various role models, personal experience that make the individual
  search for unique alternatives and/or solutions.

Lives of Creative Producers

Not much research has accrued that looks directly into the lives of creative
producers within the visual and performing arts, with a qualitative methodology of
inquiry. However, some previous findings concerning previously mentioned concepts
involved during the creative process have surfaced.

Intelligence in creative producers

For example, concerning the intelligence aspect of creativity, Vernon (1989)
states that intelligence plays a more significant role in scientific creativity than it does in
the arts. "The more creative individuals did not usually show better college grades than
the less creative" (Vernon, 1989). However, creative producers do display a more
conscious cognitive role of metacognition in evaluating their ideas and/or productions.

Metacognition in creative producers

During the creative thinking process, creative thinkers may have a more "tuned"
awareness of their metacognition (Armbruster, 1989; Hayes, 1989). Armbruster (1989)
states that even though creative individuals cannot explain how illumination occurs, they
may be particularly intuitive to know when an insight is worth pursuing (Armbruster,
1989). During the verification stage of creative production:

> Creative individuals seem to be especially adept at the conscious
> metacognitive skills that are required during the verification stage. They
> may be unusually sensitive to both internal and external standards and
> particularly able to revise the creative product accordingly. Creative
> individuals may also be especially good at improving these abilities with
> experience and practice" (Armbruster, 1989, p.181)

Furthermore, Hayes (1989) notes that during verification, creative producers may have higher personal standards than others in their productions.

With these higher personal standards, creative producers use their sensitivities to evaluate what aspects of their creative work need further assistance before releasing the work into the public eye, yet experts have a tendency to be more flexible in their own work's critiquing and revising (Hayes, 1989). The abilities and skills that allow artists and writers to produce creative work are impacted and developed by previous experience (Stein, 1989). "Artists are more likely to admit that their creative work is accompanied by strong emotions. Yet they, too, may make many drafts or modifications before they are satisfied" (Vernon, 1989, p.96).

Intrinsic motivation in creative producers

VanTassel-Baska (1998) states that creative producers have an intrinsic drive that allows them to work on their productions for long periods of time. Thus, an intrinsic drive accompanied by higher personal standards may be a factor in maintaining and sustaining high levels of creative production.

Feldhusen & Goh's creative producers study

Similarly to Gardner's study of creative producers mentioned previously, Feldhusen & Goh also looked into the lives of twenty different creative producers including George Washington, Lewis Terman, Charles Darwin, Frank Lloyd Wright, just to mention a few from his sample, and concluded the following signs appeared early during his sample's lifetime:

- Early mastery of knowledge and/or techniques in a field or artform
- Signs of high intelligence, memory, and rational thinking

- High energy levels, a commitment to his/her work/study at an early age, accompanied with a drive to produce

- Extreme autonomy, individualism, and preference for working alone

- Intrinsic motivation and a self-concept of creative power

- Heightened sensitivity to phenomena in his/her environment, accompanied with a heightened sensitivity to the details

Overall, MacKinnon (1978) stated:

It is quite apparent that creative persons have an unusual capacity to record, retain, and have readily available the experiences of their life history. They are discerning, which is to say that they are observant in a different fashion; they are alert, capable of concentrating attention readily and shifting it appropriately; they are fluent in scanning thoughts and producing those that serve to solve the problems they undertake; and characteristically, they have a wide range of information at their command (p. 180).

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Qualitative Research

The natures of the research questions under study were best assessed under a

qualitative research design. The former editor of *Qualitative Sociology* stated:

> Qualitative research, I want to suggest, is at its best precisely when it
> works from cases rather than samples, when it is opportunistic rather than
> systematic, when it specifies rather than generalizes, and when it struggles
> to find unconventional ways of linking research to concept" (Zussman,
> 2004, p. 352).

The strength of this methodology, internal validity, outweighs qualitative

research's weakness of generalizability of results. A case study approach of qualitative

inquiry is required for the information that only an insider's view can display both for

gaining insights from the people of interest and for comforting any internal validity

concerns in the design of the study. Thus, an in-depth view of the traits that creative

producers hold which positively effect their abilities to maintain and sustain their levels

of creative production in addition to settling internal validity concerns of the researcher

may be obtained through the use of a qualitative case study.   Most specifically, this study

is a combination of four qualitative case studies. "Qualitative case studies can be

characterized as being particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic," (Merriam, 1998, p. 29).

Internal validity issues in qualitative data, "deal with the question of how research

findings match reality" (Merriam, 1998, p. 201).

Merriam (1998) states that a person's reality is how he/she views the world, what

constructions they create about reality. This study refers to reality as how each

participant views his/her world, the environment in which he/she lives, works, and plays.

Since every human being lives within a different reality, the multiple realities in the proposed study must come from the participants themselves.

<u>Subjects</u>

Purposive selection of participants occurred to ensure the authenticity of the creative producers for this study. Each individual is employed in the field of visual and performing arts and has received recognition as a leader in his/her chosen field of production. Each participant was personally invited to participate in my dissertation by a direct voice-to-voice invitation via the telephone. I knew two that I wanted in from the beginning, Sir Blues Brown and Sir Dark Art. I received Professor Art's name from local area artists, including Sir Dark Art, and asked him to participate in my study as well by calling him at home. Mrs. Teach U. Art, Professor Art's wife, was asked to participate after another initial artist had to drop out of the study due to health concerns from various stress factors in her life. In this instance, I e-mailed her at work to see if she would be interested. Mrs. Teach U. Art already knew the gist of my study since her husband, Professor Art, was a participant.

Five individual case studies taken from different walks of life in the fields of visual and performing arts were originally supposed to encompass this study's case studies. However, only four participants were able to stick with me during my dissertation's simultaneous data collection and analysis. Two of the participants I have known for eight years, the other two I met the day of our first interviews. Three are men and one is a woman.

"It appears to be too much to expect traditionally scientific and objective methods to apply well to creativity," (Runco, 1995, p. 382).

Naturalistic Inquiry

  Tensions exist between the two clashing worlds of research traditions. The two

types of research traditions are known as qualitative and quantitative or positivist and

constructivist, (Murdock & Moore, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Creative research

began with a qualitative perspective in the 19th Century, yet by the middle of the 20th

Century, the research perspective rotated from a qualitative outlook to a quantitative

outlook. Interestingly, the mid 1990s brought about another change in the creative

research perspective, the pendulum began swinging back towards qualitative/naturalistic

inquiry. "Current interest in and use of qualitative research, which seems to be

providing the depth and richness sometimes lacking in more quantitative work appears to

reflect a reversal of that (quantitative) trend," (Becker, 1995, p. 227). The decision to

use a particular type of research method should be one of great importance and careful

consideration by the researcher, thus the decision should be one in which method can

answer the research questions best.

    Mainstream researchers regularly use quantitative methods, and
    naturalistic researchers will often use qualitative methods. The
    operational differences between the two types of research are not so well
    defined by their different methodologies as by the reasons for which
    methods are selected and by how the data obtained from them are intended
    to be used (Erlandson, et al.., 1993).

  The present study aims to gain insights from creative producers to understand

how they maintenance themselves to perform creatively and maintain and sustain their

high levels of creative achievement. "A qualitative design permits the researcher to

describe, understand, and explore social phenomena and relationships through methods

that allow insights to emerge" (Courtney, Merriam, & Reeves, 1998, p. 67).

Human Instrument

The human instrument was used to collect, analyze, and interpret the data collected in each case study. "The human instrument is considered appropriate because it goes beyond measuring frequencies of responses and searches for themes that emerge from the creative producers' perspectives of creativity themselves" (Mace, 1997). According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), the human instrument is able to:

- build upon tactic knowledge.

- theorize data collected and simultaneously test the theories.

- gain a comprehension of the individual case studies at a higher level than nonhuman instruments.

- check for understanding and seek clarification from the subjects, if needed, during the process of data collection, and

- adapt to a situation to collect and investigate data at multiple levels.

Data Collection

The four purposely-selected participants in this study were given an initial face-to-face meeting to review the consent form for the study and a consent form for the use of a tape recording devise. The purpose of the initial meeting was to: a) briefly explain the purpose of the study, (b) fill-out the study's consent forms, (c) make meeting arrangements for a specific amount of time and location options, and (d) introduce myself to my participants and answer any lingering questions they may have thought about in the past. All four participants suggested that they would feel most comfortable conducting their interviews at their homes, therefore all interviews took place within the context of

the participants' living spaces. Each participant consented to being audio taped during his or her interviews.

My participants were excited about delving into a dissertation that would be focusing on their personal lives. I immediately set-up initial meetings at their homes to go through the IRB paperwork requirements for participation and to talk to them about the study face-to-face. To my surprise, three of the four participants decided to schedule their first interview immediately after signing the paperwork. Sir Dark Art was the only participant who signed his consent forms prior to his first interview. The other three participants opted to sign their consent forms just prior to their first scheduled interviews. I explained each form to them, highlighted where I needed their signatures, allowed them to read and encouraged them to read and ask questions about the study and their roles and rights as participants in my dissertation all prior to beginning the interviews. We each signed the consent forms in the presence of each other. I kept a copy for my files and gave them a copy for theirs. Furthermore, I placed the tape recorder within arms reach from them, so they could turn off the recorder if they wanted to share any information that they did not feel comfortable being taped. Thus, I left the taped recording of information in their control. Curiously, though, I noticed that as they began talking, they would forget that it was even on. I would therefore change out the tapes when I noticed one shutting off, and they would completely be oblivious to my actions as they were lost in their own trains of thought for the most part. Once I had a tape fall apart on me, while interviewing Professor Art, but after a quick "tape operation" at a friend's house, the bulk of the information was saved.

I created two separate protocols of interview questions, one for each research question, to use as a guideline during my interviews. These two interview protocols were used for each participant in sequential order. The first protocol's questions focused more on the artist at work in the present, the second protocol's questions focused on how the artist evolved from childhood to today. The follow-up interviews for clarification, member checking inquiry, and more depth of the contents discusses were participant specific. Thus, the interviews began with very broad, grand tour questions, which became more detailed in origin as the data analysis began. The intent of using the grand tour interview protocols was simply to have a guidance system to keep myself focused on the research questions under study. The interviews were not conducted in a methodological, step-by-step sequential order, but with the researcher beginning the interview and the participants taking control there after.

Each participant was encouraged to speak freely and to become the leader of the discussions. Thus, the initial interview felt more like an interview, at first, with each participant, but by the end of each interview, my participants were telling me what they wanted to share with me as important factors in their artistic lives. Thus, one could say that the interviews were more like semi-structured discussions. The participants becoming the leaders in the discussions, and I redirecting their thought processes only when they began to really get off track. Every now and then my participants would begin to use our discussions as a means of venting about the politics they deal with at work, which is not directly related to how they maintain or sustain their high levels of creative production.

Overall, rapport was easily established with the artists in my study. We all have a common denominator in our lives, being the love of creativity and being artistic individuals. Two of the participants I have known for several years, and the other two I met for the first time. To my surprise, the two participants I have known for years were the two that I had the most difficult time with on their first interviews. Our histories together became a temporary obstacle, in that some of the interview questions I already knew the answer to, and they did not understand why I had to ask a question that they knew I already had an idea as to what the answer would be. However, once I again explained the nature of qualitative interview to them, they immediately took over the discussions and to both of our surprise, I learned more about them in the hour and a half interview than I had in several years.

Although I stated that the interviews would not last longer than an hour and a half, my participants chose to continue talking and their interviews ranged from an average to two to two and a half hours per session. I observed that once my participants began talking, they did not want to stop the interview but continue with their sharing of personal stories, beliefs, ideas, and opinions. Furthermore, each interviewee was eager to meet again and began referring to their interviews with me as a "therapeutic" session for them. I chose to allow my participants to continue sharing information with me as long as they liked, since they were enjoying the meeting so much. Since my roll in qualitative research is one as a "back-seat driver," I decided that I would permit them to talk until they had no more to say.

I noticed that my grand tour questions provoked a variety of more specific paths of questioning that became very personalized per participant. I was not concerned in

what order my protocol's questions were answered, because I noticed that each

participant would begin to answer questions without me ever asking them. At first it was

difficult for me to just sit and listen to their stories without wanting to share with them

also. A peer-debriefing meeting scheduled after my first round of interviews with my co-

chair, Dr. Juntune, brought my attention to my interrupting tendencies and how my

wanting to share was disrupting my participants' trains of thought. Thus, by the second

interviews, I learned to just sit and wait, because within that momentary glimpse of

silence, they would continue with their thoughts. Thus, my data collection became more

in-depth the more I did not talk.

I conducted member checks as I was listening to my participants' stories. I would

verify to them in my own words what I was hearing them say, and they would either

positively acknowledge my grasping of their semantic meanings within their stories or

they would let me know if I was not quite understanding their meanings. This proved to

be the best means of member checking with the participants at hand. Sir Blues Brown

and I did exchange two e-mails where I was trying to clarify a few things he had

mentioned during his second interview. I wanted to make sure that I was "hearing" him

and representing his opinion correctly before incorporating his data into the grounded

data for an emerging theme I was beginning to see within the other three participants'

data as well. The only other e-mail correspondence I had with my participants was to set

times and dates for their next interviews. Surprisingly, I only had to interview each

participant twice for my data collection before they began repeating themselves. I was

shocked that my participants were so open with our discussions so quickly, and I believe

that they were as well. On more than one occasion, I heard each one of my participants

say something along the lines of, "I've never shared this with anyone before, but I don't mind telling you and I want to tell you about this time…" The interview meetings were a great experience for both my participants and myself.

<u>Data Analysis</u>

The beauty of obtaining internal validity in a qualitative case study approach of inquiry is that the participants are able to give this through their interview responses and personal narratives. Though each of my participants came from a different walk of life, they each found themselves in the visual and performing arts. Thus, their unique personal development as artists displayed a participant specific feel.

> The analysis of data gathered in a naturalistic inquiry begins the first day the researcher arrives at the setting. The collection and analysis of the data obtained go hand-in-hand as theories and themes emerge during the study. (Erlandson et al.. p. 111).

As unique as each evolving artistic life is, my participants do show some common developmental similarities that emerged from the data as themes of my dissertation.

The participants used a variety of different conversational styles. Sir Blues Brown simply talked quite bluntly and honestly about his upbringing without displaying a need or urge to justify himself or his behavior, yet Professor Art appeared to be more reflective in his internal turmoil of his upbringing and current status as a professional in the visual and performing arts field. Sir Dark Art simply answered each question without much reflection, but he would suddenly "go back" and add to a previous question or change the direction of his discussions at a whim. Mrs. Teach U. Art was very reflective on each question, likewise Professor Art, yet talked more about the outside influences of her behavior more so than the internal forces that motivated her to chose the path she is currently walking. These differing conversational styles contributed to the personalized

follow-up questionings for further elaboration and/or clarification of their previous responses.

The constant comparative method of data analysis was the analytical methodology used to find the emerging themes from the grounded interview and narrative data collected during the interviews and follow-up member checks.

> The constant comparative method of data analysis was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as the means of developing grounded theory. A grounded theory consists of categories, properties, and hypotheses that are the conceptual links between and among the categories and properties. (Merriam, 1998, p. 159).

Thus, once the first interviews began, the data collection and analyzation processes began. I compiled a number of note cards each with a single unit of data and began to create my first round of categories and working hypothesis for my second round of interviews. To elaborate on the formation of categories, Merriam (1998) states:

> Devising categories is largely an intuitive process, but it is also systematic and informed by the study's purpose, the investigator's orientation and knowledge, and the meanings made explicit by the participants themselves (p. 179).

For this study, I encoded my data by first highlighting transcribed interviews and making suggestions in the margins of how the data would fit into the literature previously learned. Then, I began to create note card with a single unit of data on each card. I would then take these cards and attempt to group them in different categories. Thus, I was building a variety of categories with each grouping. I continued to do this until the cards would automatically fall into the same category twice. After a peer debrief with my co-chair on how I was analyzing the data, she suggested a different technique at data analysis.

At this time, I kept all previously recorded data and attempted groupings, yet I "cleared my head" and printed out fresh transcripts of each previously transcribed interview and interview field notes. Then, I began to read a new set of transcriptions (with a 24 hour delay in between readings) per participant per working theme. Thus, I was able to focus more on my analysis of a current category/potential theme at a time, instead of trying to color code several different categories on a single transcription. This proved to be the best means of data analyzation due to its highly structured organization. Likewise, due to the nature of the narratives my participants told me (in piecemeal fashion), I created developmental timelines for each participant that include: significant life transitions for both the person and the artist and critical incidents. These timelines have helped tremendously with helping me to understand the impact that various instances and critical incidents have had on their lives.

I began to notice an overlap between categories and some became consumed by another. Furthermore, I realized that the four categories I kept thinking I had did not truly exist, but three of the four did. Thus, I ended with an emergence of three themes from the grounded data.

Establishing Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, data collection and data analysis is conducted simultaneously, however, for this study, the two procedures are broken down into two separate entities for explanatory purposes. Furthermore, a discussion of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are included, since these factors enhance trustworthiness for the study.

Credibility

Credibility is how much compatibility exists between the realities of the participants and the researcher's interpretation of their realities, what reality is attributed to each participant. "A credible inquiry generally has the effect on its readers of a mosaic image, often imprecise in terms of defining boundaries and specific relationships but very rich in providing depth of meaning and richness of understanding," (Erlandson, et.al., 1993, p. 30). To build credibility in this research design, the researcher incorporated such things as prolonged engagement, member checking, and peer debriefing into the study's simultaneous data collection and data analysis.

The first step taken to build credibility in my data was to begin and continue with prolonged engagement with my participants. Likewise, the prolonged engagement process taken with each participant also elevated the amount of rapport and trust I had with my research participants. Sir Blues Brown and Sir Dark Art had already experienced prolonged engagement with me, because they have had a relationship with me for almost a decade. Sir Dark Art and I have been close friends for years, whereas Sir Blues Brown and myself also have a close friendship but also a working relationship as well. I used to work for Sir Blues Brown at a Central-Texas radio station. With this said, I was more observational during the course of our interviews and watching them at work while my data collection process was in progress. I noticed more about their voice fluctuations, facial reactions, fashion sense, and the environments of their living spaces.

Professor Art and Mrs. Teach U. Art were very accepting of prolonged engagement. Fortunately, these two participants are married, so I was able to just spend more time with them in their home before and after the interviews. They were a very

sharing couple and really opened the doors of their personal lives to me. I hung out after the interviews chatting about a variety of things including: giftedness, creativity, academia, teaching, goals, students, and our families. I watched videos of their son's band, "Fly Leaf" who are currently on tour overseas. I was introduced to their daughter, a local college students and art major herself, and I talked to her about different school and friend related issues, really just "girl chit-chat" in the kitchen of their home. I sat around the kitchen table with them, where the interviews took place, and drank wine with them, ate Cheetos and other junk food delicacies, and listened to the roosters crow outside. I felt as though I was immediately taken in as an adopted colleague, friends, and daughter. To this day, I have been invited to different events they are participating or have participated in, and we still look forward to seeing each other again. We shared more with each other than just information for a dissertation, we shared ourselves, and we became friends, or in the artistic world, an expansion of the artist's family.

Member checking is mentioned as being the most important aspect of building credibility in naturalistic inquiry (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen, 1993). It allows the study's participants to test the researcher's categories of information and interpretations gathered from previous interviews (Erlandson, et al., 1993). Furthermore, this step of verifying data may be one that happens either formally or informally, in brief conversations, or at the end of an interviewing session. For all of my participants, I conducted member checks primarily during the interview. I would specifically ask them if I would be representing their perspectives correctly if I worded what they were saying like this or that. In my own words, I would say to them what I heard them saying to me, and they were really good at redirecting my thoughts if I was off track. I also noticed that

this technique of member checking in the moment prompted them to talk more deeply about different ideas, opinions, thoughts they had previously mentioned. Thus, member checking in the moment actually gave my data more depth. I also conducted member checks via e-mail while analyzing my data. I would e-mail them what I was thinking they were saying, and I would ask for their approval or disapproval. Both techniques of member checking were easily accepted by my participants.

Peer debriefing helps to build credibility in the research study by gaining a "second opinion" of a peer with the credentials necessary to understand the nature of the study, along with allowing the researcher to vent any frustrations and/or pent-up emotions that may turn into researcher bias and adversely effect the truthfulness of the study's findings.

> Peer debriefing helps build credibility by allowing a peer who is a professional outside the context and who has some general understanding of the study to analyze materials, test working hypotheses and emerging designs, and listen to the researcher's ideas and concerns. In such sessions, the researcher thinks aloud and explores various hypotheses, while the peer debriefer asks probing questions, plays devil's advocate, and provides alternative explanations. (Erlandson, et al., 1993 p. 140).

For the most part, I really conducted my peer debriefing with my co-chair, Dr. Joyce Juntune, while I was collecting and analyzing my data. Because of the anonymous nature of my study, I felt most comfortable using my co-chair as my primary peer debriefer. We would meet at Barnes and Nobles for a couple of hours talking about my transcriptions, my data, my categories, themes, and how I was going about analyzing my collected data. Dr. Juntune did not tell me what to do but suggested a variety of ideas, and I would talk to her about different ideas I had. We were able to work together harmoniously to find the truth in my data and the best means of analyzation for grounded theory for me.

Transferability

Transferability (generalizability) refers to how well the research findings may be applicable for a similar study or inquiry within a similar context yet with different subjects. However, "The naturalistic researcher maintains that no true generalization is really possible; all observations are defined by the specific contexts in which they occur," (Erlandson, et al., 1993, 32). Thus, to increase the likelihood that transferability of the findings may be relevant for similar inquiries, the use of purposive sampling and thick description were required for this study.

Purposive sampling was one of the easiest and most difficult aspects of my dissertation. I knew the qualifications I had created for my dissertation participants, and creating the criteria an artist needed to hold to be a potential participant was more thought provoking than I had originally thought. Yet, once the criteria were decided, I had a good "checklist" to use as a screening method for potentially qualifying creative producers to be in my study. I also asked qualified creative producers, who had either accepted or had declined participation in my dissertation, if they had any suggestions of other potential creative producers who would qualify for my dissertation. This is the means that lead me to Professor Art and Mrs. Teach U. Art.

Thick description was used to write my participants stories. It is a vehicle that qualitative researchers use during their writings. I used thick description in chapter four to not only tell my participants stories, but to paint in words the very essence of their beings. I used thick description to take my readers as close to the souls of the participants as I possibly could. My goal was to tell their stories in such a way that if anyone who read my dissertation met one of my participants, they would feel de-ja-vue if they ever

met one of my participants. Likewise, they would be able to ask the person if they were

in Suzy Carroll's dissertation, and the person would say yes.

Dependability

Dependability is the consistency in a study that it may be replicated with similar

subjects, in similar contexts with similar results. Thus, dependability may be perceived

as the reliability of the research. However, in naturalistic inquiry, any observed

instability between studies may be due to shifts in reality (Erlandson, et al., 1993).

Therefore, a dependability audit is necessary to show evidence of the shifts of reality and

help display "trackable variance" between the studies. Critical incident documentation,

interview notes, and reflexive journaling all different ways that this researcher built a

dependability audit trail.

I began my reflexive journal prior while I was still working on my dissertation

proposal. I recorded my thoughts about what I expected or hoped for in my dissertation,

my frustrations with grand tour questioning, and a variety of what I was thinking during

the data collection. I used my reflexive journal as a means to keep track of my own

thoughts while working on this dissertation. I recorded critical incidents on 3x5 note

cards, a technique I learned from Dr. Dave Erlandson, and used these cards as the first

means of grouping my data into different categories. I took interview notes that included

future questions and my random thoughts while interviewing my participants in a spiral

folder. Some of these notes were transferred to my reflexive journal.

Confirmability

"An inquiry is judged in terms of the degree to which its findings are the product

of the focus of its inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher," (Lincoln & Guba,

1985, p. 290). Additionally, "An adequate trail should be left to enable the auditor to determine if the conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations can be traced to their sources and if they are supported by the inquiry," (Erlandson, et al., 1993 p. 35). A confirmability trail (confirmability audit) is a necessity in naturalistic inquiry to build trustworthiness in the study's findings.

Assumptions

The researcher made the following assumptions regarding this research project.

1. The subjects selected for this dissertation's case studies are true creative producers in the field of visual and performing arts.

2. Each subject will be honest in his/her interview and not purposively try to mislead the researcher.

3. Each subject will have a deep understanding of his/her contribution to the creativity literature.

4. Prolonged engagement will be available between the researcher and the participants.

5. Qualitative methodology is the best technique to answer the research questions of this study.

CHAPTER IV

THICK DESCRIPTION

The four participants who were able to participate and complete my dissertation's

simultaneous data collection and analysis all came from different walks of life and are

creative producers within the Visual and Fine Arts department in this world of creativity.

I have known two of the participants for eight years. I met the other two the day of our

first interviews. Three of my participants are men, and one is a woman. A demographic

table of the participants is shown:

Table 4.1 Demographics

Name	Ethnicity	Age	Area of Artistic Endeavor	Job Title
Sir Dark Art	Caucasian	29	Graphic Design, Painting, Drawing, and some sculpture	CEO of Cathedral Studios
Sir Blues Brown	Caucasian	50	Radio	Program Director
Professor Art	Caucasian	50s	Painting, Drawing, Glass Blowing, Jewelry Making, Mobile construction, etc.	Chairman of University Art Department
Mrs. Teach U. Art	Caucasian	50s	Collage & Alter Construction	High School Art Teacher

The Art's House

My first encounter with Professor Art was experienced vicariously through

observations of his home. Running late for our interview, I sat in the Arts' kitchen

talking to his wife and my future participant, Mrs. Teach U. Art. Professor Art is running late due to a glass-blowing project he is involved in with a fellow artist, Mrs. Art explains as we sit around the kitchen table, eating junk food, and staying warm by the gas stove.

As I take in my surroundings, the history of this "castle" surrounds me aesthetically as it projects the souls of its past and current inhabitants. The home belonged to Mrs. Teach U. Art's grandparents and has passed down from one generation to the next. It is filled with the contrasts of old and new, originality in structure and uniqueness; and the artwork of this family decorates its walls in every room and into the yard.

The light fixtures remind me of my great-great grandmother's home as I observe a typical antique chandelier made of aged medal and teardrop light bulbs hanging from the high ceilings. Instead of having the typical family portraits decorating the walls, the Art's have created a constantly evolving living space with their own art productions. There is antique furniture, mixed with a modern Toshiba television, CDs, DVDs, and a computer desk that is definitely one of originality. The stained glass windows are half shaded for privacy, but the light still shines through the upper half, and one can look out and see the trees that surround their home. Their hallway is filled with pictures and works done by various artists (friends, students, family).

Though very unique and personalized, the artwork and aesthetic flare of the home is not what drew me into it. The semantic meanings, the underlying stories, the moments of inspiration, sudden insight, and the desire to share their artistic soul is what drew me into their living space. For instance, Professor Art created a five-foot mobile that hangs from their kitchen's vaulted ceiling. Its majestic size clashes beautifully with its tranquil

movements as it lightly floats through the kitchen's upper air space. The mobile consists of the cooking utensils that Mrs. Teach U. Art's grandmother owned during her time in this kitchen. The mobile represents the childhood memories of Mrs. Art's time spend in "Grandma's kitchen."

An Introduction to Professor Art

When Professor Art arrives, he is excited about the interview and excited about his glass project. He kisses his wife, hugs me, and opens a bottle of wine. " I do a lot of different things and I do them simultaneously. What I spend my main energy on, on a daily basis, is running an art department. That kind of effort, and energy, and daily routine is what monopolizes my time," are the first things purposely spoken out loud for my interview. Yet, I immediately notice that his voice is soft. His pauses prior to, sometimes during, and after he finishes speaking are for depth of reflection. Professor Art is not just allowing me to interview him, he is allowing me to truly join him on his life's journey. With each question comes a pause, a concentration, a variety of facial expressions as he sometimes closes his eyes to not just remember, but maybe even visualize and relive those moments he intends to share. The joy, the pain, the frustrations, the shame, the happiness, and moments of unexplainable inspiration are all laid bare before me, and I know that this man is not talking as a professor or as an artist, but as a whole human being. He is one who is able to speak from his soul as he confesses, " I don't know how to divide myself artificially."

As the director of a art program at a local college, a husband to Mrs. Teach U. Art, a member of a local band, a strong Christian, and a father to a creatively gifted daughter, who is in the art program at his college, and a son, who is currently on tour

overseas with his band, Flyleaf, this man is constantly being stimulated with creativity in every aspect of his life. .

Reflections from childhood

Professor Art's childhood was filled with both extreme joy and sorrow. The reflections from his childhood that are discussed highlight his early awareness of an inner self, his risk-taking tendencies, his need to be alone, and the occurrence of a critical event that had a big impact on his personal life.

> I've often tried to remember as far back as I can just for the curiosity of it, to see what I can dredge out. One of the most vivid memories that I have is it's early in the morning and I'm going out onto the back porch of our house. I'm feeling the sun on me and watching my shadow. A very crisp shadow of myself on the steps and then on the wall of the house and being fascinated for I don't know how long. I was just moving and watching the shadow and feeling the warmth of the sun. The freshness of the morning I tend to remember. It was a real happy time for me, and I thought, "Man, I hope I get to remember this later."

This memory was created prior to his first year of kindergarten. He speaks of how the mix between the shadow and sun was a, "real visual cue" for him. As I conversed with him about this and other like topics, I realized that this man has been aware of his nature inspired environmental surroundings since just a small child.

From birth to eight years old, Professor Art lived in Uvalde, Texas. Across the street from the Methodist Church and only four blocks away from his grandmother, rested his parents' house that Professor Art, his parents, and his brothers occupied. From the ages of three to five years old, he states that the Methodist Church was his childhood playground and describes it as an, "Old, old, old timey church. It was semicircular with beautiful stained glass windows. We just kind of had a free run of the place and we'd

climb up real tall tress and jump on the roof." I can see him smiling and wanting to laugh as the urge to share another story surfaces into his conscious.

He explains that in that South Texas town where he first began his life's journey, he had this feeling of, "The world is my home." He was not afraid to roam around town and climb buildings at even three years old. In fact, at only three years old, the fire department got him off the telephone building after he had climbed up the fire escape and yelled down, "Heelllloooo" to the people below. Thus, adventure and risk-taking tendencies surfaced into observable behaviors prior to kindergarten.

> One of the most vivid memories I have early on was the opportunity to go out and camp. My dad is a big outdoorsman and always has been. As soon as I could walk pretty much, we were out on the river fishing, learning to swim, and doing all kinds of outdoors activities. I learned to swim by just watching people, and then thinking I could do it. I just jumped in the river. The Nueces River is still a very fond memory of mine, because I would go back and swim in that same river in different parts until I was an adult.

A key figure in Professor Art's upbringing was his grandmother who he preciously and delicately described as being a very gentle person.

> My grandmother was a very important person in my life, because I lived the first year of my life actually at her house. My mom had a bunch of problems, mental problems, and so I was the second child and she was busy with the first child and struggling. So, I think Nanol agreed to take care of me to make her life a little bit easier. So I had this, I think, real special first year of life because of her.

Throughout his childhood upbringing and even into his college years, Professor Art would find himself gravitating back to his grandmother's home. The outdoorsman persona that is an intricate part of every aspect of his character focuses on the outside atmosphere of his grandmother's home. He closes his eyes as he describes the, "big two

story house" that she lived in with the, "big old trees, big yard, and huge rose garden in

the back."

> It was just a real neat place that I kept returning to over and over again.
> Living there in the summers all through childhood. Actually, when I was
> in college, I had summer jobs and I'd live with Nanol. So, that particular
> home is a center of gravity for me for my memories; and I attribute a lot of
> my values from home based on my experiences growing up there.

Even though he only had to attend a half-day of class for kindergarten, Professor

Art was miserable during school. He mentions that even during recess he felt alone,

because children at that age would just play independently. However, his attitude toward

school changed when he began first grade. His teacher was a family friend, and his

mother taught third grade at the same school. Recess became his favorite period, and he

began making friends with his school age peers. He shares another story that gives

insight to the sensitivity that he carried as just a small child to feel ashamed and the risk

taking behavior associated with his childhood personality.

> One time I got into a fight with one of my really good friends, John
> Thomas. It wasn't really a fight, it was a play fight, but when I pushed
> him down, his head hit the sidewalk or something. It smashed right open,
> blood was everywhere, and I felt so bad. This little girl in a skirt comes up
> and says, "You should be ashamed of yourself," and I was, so I just left. I
> walked home in the middle of the day thinking, "Forget this. I'm just
> going home."

He says that he just needed to get away. The story ends with his teacher coming to his

home and finding him sitting on his bed. She was able to coerce him into going back to

school that day, but he remembers just the feeling of shame that he felt and how he

needed to get away. He needed to be alone to feel and to think at such a young age.

When Professor Art was eight years old, he moved to Beeville, Texas with his

family. There he had to transition into a new environment, circle of friends, and school.

Yet, these transitions were minor in comparison to the most emotionally tragic impact of his childhood, his mother's passing into the world of deep sleep. At the tender age of eight years old, this highly reflective and sensitive young man lost his mother. He states that this event impacted his emotional well being up into his thirties, and he still thinks about her today.

> I think about her all the time. I really don't think I knew her that well. As well as an eight year old could. But, uh, it's always been a kind of ghost in the back of my head. I had a dream when I was like nine, and I'd gone to stay at my grandmother's house in Uvalde. I dreamed that my mother flew in the window while I was playing with some toys and played with me for a little bit. Then, she said, "Well, I got to go now, bye," so she flew back out the window. Then, I woke up and thought, where's mom? That was really weird, that reality kind of dream, and I always wondered if that was a visitation or not. (After he shared this dream with me, there was a heavy period of silence).

Prior to his father's second marriage, Professor Art described his home life with three brothers, a single dad, and a couple of nannies as, "a little rough." He spoke about his childhood home environment, he was obviously honest with his assessments, yet seemed a little hesitant that I may take what he was trying to say the wrong way, in too much of a negative light.

> My home life is, uh, oh… I don't know how to say this exactly. Dominantly pervaded by an over, uh, over-possessive domineering father and a strict disciplinarian. Somebody with a horrible temper and kind of a bully. So, I had to survive with that. It was not very pleasant. Although, I craved his attention and still do to this day. I guess the harshness of his judgment, and the severity of his punishment made a pretty deep pattern in my mind. So there was a lot of fear and turmoil that was the tone of the house.

After stating these words about his childhood home's environment, he pauses. I can tell that he is once again pondering upon what he just said. Then Professor Art speaks again:

> Dad's a very unique person even though he's kind of a scary guy. There's something very engaging about him too and very charming. He was very

much, you know, taught us the guitar and got us started on art, and he was
broad minded. He wasn't very, uh, gullible as far as like Christian
philosophy goes. Although, he grew-up in that and he tried to maintain a
semblance of social propriety. He didn't just buy into all of that, and he
cautioned us all along to not be a follower but a free thinker. I got that
from him too, and I like that part about him. (Silence).

Professor Art acknowledges that rearing four boys would be tough for any nanny

or mother. Then he describes how he and his brothers would play together as children.

With an innate love for the outdoors, the boys would run around their Nanaw's place

playing Army from dusk and into the night or until they were called in to take their baths.

He talks about how they played like that for years, every summer, while staying with

their Nanol in Uvalde.

I couldn't wait until summer. It was freedom. Yeah. We played in the
afternoons, but in the summer time when the grass was high, you know,
that's when you really dig in and get something done with, you know, out
in the fields.

The phrase, "Child's work is play," was appropriately applied to Professor Art. Even as a

child, he took his play as serious, not only in the fields but in school as well. In seventh

grade, Professor Art tells another story about his desire to do a large drawing.

I wanted to do a big drawing. To copy the front of a songbook they had in
the 1960s, kind of colorful thing. There was no art teacher in the county
or anywhere, so I got my social studies teacher to let me use her projector.
I was just drawing this thing during homeroom. She let me do it. all the
kids were asking me why I was doing it, and I said, well I want to. They
could not understand that I wanted to do something. So, I was making a
stupid little 60s drawing with markers or something. I don't even think I
ever finished it, but I was so excited about it. I just had the idea to try to
copy it.

The teenage years: Sacrificing the artist within

Professor Art's teenage years were mostly spent with his transitioning family in

South Texas. His father remarried a lady who Professor Art first resisted accepting into

his life, yet she is very much appreciated and loved by him today.   She officially adopted

him as her son (he smiles that he can say that he is officially adopted) and whom he

claims to be his mom today. He has in no way replaced his real mom with his adoptive

mom, but he loves them both for the important women they were in his life. When asked

what his teenage home life was like after his father remarried, Professor Art stated:

> I lived in a fraternity. A real live fraternity, you know? Because, we were
> all brothers. A band of brothers. We stuck up for each other, protected
> each other, but we hated each other. You know, all the dynamics. We had
> this set of Norman Rockwell pictures in our bathroom. It was the series of
> four boys playing sports. That was an illustration about who we were
> together as a group. The working together, camping together, and dealing
> with the tensions of the home together, protecting each other in different
> kinds of ways, built the strong bonds that exist today. We're as close as
> brothers can be today, the four of us. If we get together, it's kind of a
> special event. "Oh, the four boys are together. Look at them."

Though there was no Art Program in his school district, there was a good music

program. He was very involved in his high school's music department, but he knew deep

down that singing would not be an adult career choice. His school district did not offer

art as a subject, so he was still fiddling with art projects of his own creation until he went

to college. However, he did receive parental support for creative pursuits. He did

continue to feed his appetite of attraction to the outdoors, and he was first introduced to a

new form of painting.

Professor Art's father was very creative guy who played guitar and got him

interested in music. Thus, as a teenager, Professor Art was well schooled in music. He

played the guitar. He sang with his brother. He went to solo and ensemble contests with

his school, and he transferred to the visual arts program because he realized that his voice

was ok, but not that good. However, during his musical reign, " I was known as the guy

who was a singer and guitar player."

As a teenager, Professor Art found himself again gravitating with his friends to the Nueces River for fun.

> I would go to the country and sit and watch the river. Fortunately my mom, that my dad married, had a piece of property that she had inherited from her dad and we'd go out there and camp. I'd take my buddies, and we'd go on the weekends and take bacon and eggs and cook them early in the morning. We'd roam around the pasture, put a trotline in the water…I just loved being out there. I still do.   In fact, last weekend my son and I went to the very same place. He went hunting and I got to hunt with him, and we sat at the banks of the Nueces river together for maybe two hours in total silence. We watched dragonflies. It was really beautiful. I loved it. I have a real strong affinity for that kind of activity where you just go away from buildings and streets and people and cars.

Though the Nueces River tops the list of favorite pastimes during Professor Art's teenage years, other hobbies were incorporated into this time too. He claims that music was his most dominant hobby, but he also liked to carve things and went from carving figures out of sticks to larger figures out of tree stumps. He tinkered with different visual art forms on his own mostly outside of school.

> One thing I can say that I didn't have a hobby of, was going to art museums and being exposed to what's considered higher culture. Because, it was normally an agrarian ideal, just the environment I was dragged into I guess. After leaving home, I like to say I transcended it, but at the same time those roots are where I'm going back. What I'm drawing from to strengthen my art now. It's really full circle for me. It's like my arbor. It's very organic, very natural.

College years: Emergence of the inner artist

After leaving home, Professor Art headed to Sam Houston State University. It was the 1970s and he had a cousin who was working on her art degree at Sam Houston State University. She suggested that he should enroll in a few art classes to just see how it felt to him. After taking a drawing class and a design class, a whole new world opened

for Professor Art. He shared that he had no clue that this world even existed, and the learning experience was a real eye opener.

> Once I got connected with art, my direction in life solidified. I became more focused and realized that there was a goal, a reason for living, and something that would coalesce all the entities of my life. My interest in religion, in philosophy, my connection with a family, my love of nature, it all kind of came together with the wholisticness of art.

Post college: Finding purpose and meaning

Professor Art has continuously evolved as an artist since his collegiate experience. He knows what he enjoys doing and what he does not enjoy doing. He has found meaning not only in his personal art but also within his field of the visual and performing arts. He continues to grow as an artist, pushing himself to learn more, to experience more, and to try new things. He continually understands the purpose and meaning behind his work and the effect that it has on the community. Once again, he encounters another powerful critical incident in his artistic life.

He began his artistic journey by turning back to his roots in nature and painting what he was visually taking in. Preserving the beauty of nature on canvas.

> You're supposed to just go outside, sit on a cactus, and enjoy yourself. Which I still enjoy today, well, I don't sit on a cactus, but just being there in the environment. Be a part of it, don't try to manipulate or change it. So painting landscapes seemed to be a natural thing for me.

However, after a few years, Professor Art began to get a little anxious about how formulaic his work had become. He felt that his art needed a push, a creative leap, a something that he wasn't quite able to embrace. He said that he began to try to add objects like road signs or pavement to his landscapes, but in this attempt to be creative, his work was coming across as, "An artist who was trying to be creative," so it wasn't working for him.

A close friend and trusted colleague stepped into Professor Art's life and altered his artistic journey by introducing to him the concept of "responding". Through a summer of days playing with their paints, drinking wine, and telling jokes, Professor Art learned to "respond". This was a really important time in his artistic life, and he stated that just living through it was so very important. He learned to respond.

> By responding, I learned a new way of thinking about how things evolve, objects evolve, and where ideas come from. How paintings have a life of their own. When you're in the act of expressing something, there's a part of the artist who needs to be in control. There's also a part that needs to let the work have it's own life. I wasn't giving the work a chance to have it's own life. I was trying real hard to have it make sense. I was trying too hard to create meaning and be profound. I thought I was being responsible.

He stated that this friend of his is still close to him today, and they gave that time period of daily summer play the title, "The Summer of Our Content." Currently, Professor Art is the teacher inspiring future budding artists. As the Chairman of the Art Department at a local private college, Professor Art wears many faculty and professorship hats. While still taking his job seriously, he lets his inner child thrive while he is at his adult work, the work that once was his childhood play.

> If it's not fun, I really don't think we should be doing it. so, that's how we run our department. Trying to get openness and freedom, as much laughing as possible, and work done too. We enjoy working. That's the fun stuff too.

When asked what he likes most about his job as an artist; his response was one of much thought and sincerity.

> What I most like about being an artist is the responsibility of it. Because, if it wasn't serious, I don't think I would be interested. But, I see that through the study of Art History and knowing the artists, and knowing how important the arts are to hold culture together, I see that it's real important.

We discussed the concept behind responsibility. What exactly does that mean? To answer my probing question, his response is one on both a personal and communal scale. Professor Art tells me:

> Well, the responsibility to myself first. As a human being and trying to live to the fullest potential with what I've been blest with. That's a responsibility. I think one of the characteristics of creative people is that they take seriously their responsibility to project for others or model for others the seriousness of what we do.

He shares with me that his favorite part of his field is the emotion behind the arts. He thinks that one of the fun things that accompany his work field is the fact that it is so humanly oriented. Artists are, "Trying to address those things, to understand why we feel the way we do, and how in the world it will ever be expressed in a constructive way." Thus, the process of idea generation to creation is fun for Professor Art, and he tries to embed this sense of fun into his professional life at work with his colleagues and students alike.

He explains that he loves to investigate the "galaxy of ideas that are at our disposal to investigate" that accompanies academia. However, the politics and the institutional setting make him fear for himself and his students. "I fear for the loss of my own autonomy and power, and the freedom to do what I want to do and for my colleagues and my students to feel free to express themselves without retribution."

Professor Art goes on to tell me about his least favorite types of projects to do. Apparently, he hates to do murals. The actual painting is not the issue, but the restrictions and guidelines that the client expects are artistically repulsive and creatively strangling to this artist. He disliked a particular Christmas event that his boss had decided would be a great idea for Professor Art's Art Department to head. It was to be a

spectacular exhibit for the city. The pressure upon him coincides with it the year that he began taking his antidepressants. Too much externally imposed structure chokes this artist to his guts. So much so that even when his finances were beginning to reach a straining point, he was determined not to do a mural. "Our phone's going to be dead in a day or two, but what I really love to be doing now is what matters. I don't want to be making somebody's mural." When asked if he had a favorite project, his response was one that was at his home. Without surprise, the project in and of itself is derived from nature.

> It's an arbor. It's a fundamental piece of art. It's like a gigantic basket that's upside down and it's made from cedar that I harvested from the property after a freeze snapped off these limbs. I saved a whole big pile of limbs and put them together. It's in the back. It took about a year to weave and connect all these parts, and they're self-supporting. It hasn't sagged at all. It's really one of my favorite things to sit under and it lives, because the vines grew up over it in the summer to provide shade. It's kind of a nest of a place to sit under and watch the world go by.

When asked about how he feels about his evolution as an artist today, he responds with, "I feel like I'm maturing into the understanding of what that's all about, and also the responsibility of what that's about," yet, "I've only arrived at where I am today. The train leaves in the morning."

An Introduction to Mrs. Teach U. Art.

While sitting at her kitchen table, I find myself looking into the eyes of a struggling artist. Yet, she is more than a struggling artist. Mrs. Teach U. Art is an artist who is fighting herself for positive recognition. This intrinsic struggle for approval manifests itself throughout our conversations.

Reflections from childhood

Mrs. Teach U. Art grew-up in Colorado during the school year. She spent the summers with her mother and grandparents in Central Texas. Her childhood is filled with parental support for her artistic endeavor, her creative thinking, her longing for artistic recognition, an inner awareness of self, and a critical incident that happened with her favorite teacher, Mrs. Tarr.

Mrs. Teach U. Art's appreciation for the world of the visual and performing arts began as a small child while growing up in Colorado Spring, Colorado. With four sisters, two older and two younger, Mrs. Teach U. Art is the middle child in a very art appreciative family. Beyond several childhood opportunities to learn different forms of artistic expression such as ballet and piano, Mrs. Teach U. Art's artistic mother encouraged creative expression within her children at home.

> My mom's quite creative, so we always had that stuff available, always had a, I can see it, big bucket of crayons and paper, so it was very much encouraged. Lots of books, lots of stuff like that.

Mrs. Teach U. Art's mother not only supplied her children with the tools with which to play and tinker with to develop their own creative expression, but she was also a student taking various art classes and learning atypical female artistic pursuits like painting and how to refinish furniture. She further encouraged artistic expression and appreciation by taking her daughters to a local art museum on Sunday afternoons. From early childhood and throughout her teenage years, Mrs. Teach U. Art's life is a direct contrast to her husband's past. She was constantly being encouraged and surrounded with opportunities to discover new forms of art.

> My mom would take us to the museum. I remember seeing like nudes and stuff, and my mom would say, "It's art. It's ok." That was great!

Because, we got to see a lot. Sunday afternoons she would take us. I
remember getting close and touching stuff, and, you know, hearing my
mom snap at me.

Growing up with four sisters and being the middle child was not the easiest life.

Mrs. Teach U. Art learned at an early age to get her stuff together quick. "I just knew

that I needed to get my stuff together. You want something, you better get it and stake

your claim." Though fighting siblings can be tough, Mrs. Teach U. Art says that, as the

middle child, she never felt neglected by her family, yet she never quite got enough

positive encouragement either.

I remember making all As in fourth grade. I was like, "Mom, I'm making
all As!"   Well, that's good, but don't get disappointed if you don't make
it. You know it's going to get harder.

This type of hesitant praise at home did not mix well with Mrs. Teach U. Art's sensitive

feelings as a child. Furthermore, her parents always believed in authority over the child.

Thus, even if things did not seem "fair" at school in different teacher/student dealings,

she was not able to vent her frustrations to her parents because "authority is always

right." Thus, as a child, Mrs. Teach U. Art was already learning that there existed

limitations as to how excited one can be over success and there were also limitations

concerning how much she could vent about unfair adult encounters.

Mrs. Teach U. Art's long journey down the path of low self-esteem got kicked

into high gear during elementary school, because she received a low mark on her report

card in self-control in the classroom by Mrs. Tarr. This was her first wake-up call to

"tone it down," thus she began repressing her inner child's desire to play and create.

I had a favorite teacher. Mrs. Tarr. She had black hair, and she had a blue
Chevrolet, and I loved her, Suzy, I loved her to the point of getting in
trouble. I'd laugh at all her jokes, and I'd run up there and try to help
her…I got a check in self-control one time, and I was devastated. I think I

just overdid it. That really, really probably started my road to low self-esteem.

Though she won the Best Colorado State Cover for a book award in fourth grade, the mix between the lack of reinforcement of personal appreciation and understanding at home, and the heartbreak and shame that accompanies letting down a favorite teacher, may have been the final breaking point for Mrs. Teach U. Art's imaginative world.   She hit hard reality.   In the real world, you have to "tone it down" or so she thought for such a long time.

It's kind of funny what school does. It's sad. But it, you know, learning those cues and those prompts about don't blurt out everything you feel. Maybe, don't hang it all out there on the line all the time. They're going to criticize. You learn how to be like everybody else, blah, blah, blah. But, I always had a wild side liking something flashy or different or laughing intense types of emotions. So, for me, it's always been toning it down. Learning how to not be so sensitive, which is really hard.

Teenage years: Sacrificing the artist within

Mrs. Teach U. Art's childhood was tainted by a vivid imagination that haunted her with a very realistic imaginary audience. She experienced a spiritual critical incident when she moved from Colorado to Texas. After that time, she experienced the typical anxieties concerning self-image and attractiveness with which most teenage girls struggle. She did have very supportive parents concerning a variety of forms of creative expression, but she denied herself the opportunities to take art in high school so she could pursue her goal of attending college and to please her parents.

Childhood feelings of insecurity carried over into her teenage years. Living in a body that felt awkward and gawky to her, Mrs. Teach U. Art was also highly nervous about the "boy factor" as a teenager. She wanted to be in the "in-crowd" yet she was not willing to compromise her morals and ethics enough to really "fit- in". "I wanted to be in

the in-crowd, but I didn't want to be wild enough that you had to be." She explains that

even though most of the time she preferred to stay at home, it was the invitation to be

included in the in-crowd that truly mattered to her. Furthermore, she felt an inner sense

that life was getting serious for her and a subtle fear of her future began.

> That feeling in the back of your mind of wondering what you're going to
> do, that sort of growing insecurity, growing on me and feeling like it's
> about to get serious here. I think you see that as a child. It's getting
> serious.

The imaginary audience with which many teenagers deal was constantly in the

back of her mind and her vivid imagination just intensified the feelings of always being

watched. With a lot of drama bouncing around her friend circle throughout high school,

Mrs. Teach U. Art explains, "Everything was such a big deal. I was probably battling

some depression. Just really feeling really blue, misunderstood, and almost suicidal."

Outside of the high school walls that were filled with typical teenage drama, Mrs.

Teach U. Art found herself once again collecting things and saving things for herself.

Mrs. Teach U. Art seems to have first begun to express herself in collage form during her

teenage years as an outside of school hobby.

> I was into the fashion magazines. I remember cutting out lots of pictures.
> I had a whole wall, almost floor to ceiling, full of cut out magazine
> pictures. I remember my mother found a Channel box, it was just black
> and white with channel perfume in it. I took the box and glued the whole
> thing to the wall, you know? It was 3-D. I was starting with my trying to
> control the environment with these visual things and trying to remember
> them. I was putting them before me. I still do it.

Though the art department fascinated her at her high school, Mrs. Teach U. Art

never took a high school art class. She took language and found herself on the "academic

track" in high school, which bettered her chances of getting into college. By taking Latin

in high school, Mrs. Teach U. Art stayed the course her parents wanted for her. She

believed that in order to get into college, this is the high school track that one pursues.

Yet, all of the time, she was curious about and desired the art classes her high school

offered.

At home, another parental tension arose. This time it was between her and her

father, who, once again, triggered the tendency in Mrs. Teach U. Art to hold things in,

"tone it down," and not be so expressive. When she talked with her dad about her

exciting or stressful day, he would correct her grammar as she spoke. This frustrated her

to the point that she decided to quit talking to him. Speaking of her teenage frustration,

Mrs. Teach U. Art stated, "They really always kind of chided me and teased me. So, you

know, those years you want to be taken seriously, they always would bring me down."

These little chides here and there would cause Mrs. Teach U. Art to once again think,

"Oh my gosh, what am I going to do with myself?"

College years: Emergence of the artist within

Mrs. Teach U. Art's college years were very influential upon her development as

an artist and as a person. After high school graduation, Mrs. Teach U. Art once again

found herself not knowing what to do with herself. She had just become a Christian and

wanted to have a back door escape from her college bond group of fun yet nonchristian

friends.

> I had just become a Christian, and my friends were really wild. I knew if I
> stayed in Colorado with them, you know, and no parents… I don't know
> if you know about Boulder, but it's hippie finishing school. I mean, that's
> just what we called it.

So, after years of waiting to "fly the coop" and get out from under her parents' thumb,

she decided to move to Texas with her family. Mrs. Teach U. Art's dad had just taken a

job in Uvalde, Texas. He was familiar with this section of Texas due to his being a Texas

A&M University-Kingsville graduate and having grown-up in Kingsville, Texas. She claims that the move was "A good way out" in regard to her current friendship situations.

Thus, she's off to college in a new state with a new tablet to begin first writing then drawing her new life's journey. The first couple of years that Mrs. Teach U. Art was in college, she was an English Literature major. However, in one semester, her life's journey took yet another twist of fate. At the same time that she took an Art Appreciation course, she met her future husband. In regard to her reaction to taking a college level art appreciation course, Mrs. Teach U. Art explains

> I just went in there and went, "Oh, my gosh! You know? This is it. This is so beautiful!" I just wanted to cry. Then, I met my husband. We were mutual friends. We were friends for like a year, and so, you know, he had not taken art in high school either but was pursuing it in college. That somehow gave me confidence, you know, and I took that Art Appreciation course and then took studio courses.

Therefore, with the support of her then friend and future husband, Professor Art, Mrs. Teach U. Art was able to finish college and receive her degree in art.

Post college: Finding purpose and meaning

Mrs. Teach U. Art is continuously evolving as an artist today, and she is growing both personally and artistically. She spent several years putting the artistic side of her personality on the "backburner," because she was so busy teaching art in a nearby high school, rearing two children, taking care of the house, and supporting her husband. She, like her mother, has provided her family with a very open and supportive environment concerning creative thinking and artistic pursuits.

Mrs. Teach U. Art can be found teaching her high school students how to express themselves artistically. She encourages them as much as possible. She takes care of her artistic husband, daughter, and son as they scurry in and out of their family museum of a

home. She smiles big and has real Southern mannerisms, yet inside she is still striving to be the artist she was born to be. Though her persona of a high school art teacher is the first impression one may get from her, as I was listening to her talk about her work, I could see the artist inside just dying to express herself. A lack of talent or great ideas is not what stops her flow; instead a still strong psychological chain of insecurity weighs her self-efficacy down.

> I have such insecurity problems. I am just like panicked that it will not be good enough. It will not meet their expectations. I don't want to see that disappointment. I want to begin to start liking myself more. I have such performance anxiety. I think that's not good.

Though her work is very admirable, she still feels the anxiety of her now adult's imaginary audience's reaction to her work. Once again she complains,

> The self-doubt can really kind of be debilitating. I don't' like that. I don't like worrying about what people are going to think when I'm done. It's like a real imaginary audience. It's like they're all, you know, you think about the person that doesn't understand anything at all about art, and they're standing there looking at it going, "Uh, huh. Ok."

 At first, Mrs. Teach U. Art felt the pressure to be a good mother, wife, and career woman. Looking at the smiles and success of her husband, daughter, and son, and the way that they all speak of her today, she has succeeded at providing an encouraging and loving heart to her family. She has been the mother hen who still cares for and protects her family. Yet, while playing these different roles in her life, she put her own artistic evolution on hold. She sacrificed her own intrinsic artistic growth to encourage and cultivate the artistic potential, desire, and growth of her husband and children.

> I think that it was really having a family (that stunted her growth as an artist), and I remember older artists telling me to give it a few years. Wait until your kiddos are older. Wait until things have settled down for you. So that's, you know, a woman who has a career, has children, and does

that also, I admire. That's total discipline. I used my family as an excuse, because I felt so insecure about what others would think of my art.

Likewise, Mrs. Teach U. Art did not make the time or space for herself to truly delve into her own artistic expression. Yet, today she has recognized this tendency of hers that had restricted her as an artist for so long.

> You hear people talk about studio space and how it's very important. I think too that's another thing when the kids were smaller. I didn't have my own studio space. I didn't think that I needed one or deserved one. Plus, you know, they're little and they'll get into stuff. Now, I'm just indulging myself. I just lay it all out, so I can get to it. I try not to let myself make any excuses for not doing stuff.

Mrs. Teach U. Art has become aware of her insecurities and is facing them head-on. She has always felt a little insecure about her drawing abilities, so she is now trying to make them a friend. A new trend is manifesting in Mrs. Teach U. Art's attitude towards her artistic abilities that's enabling her to grow. She is embracing wisdom, her age, and realizing that she is worth it.

> I'm really enjoying wisdom. To me, in my life, it's just the ability to say, you know, I'm worth doing this. I'm just going to do my own thing.

She can get away with sitting at home in her pajamas and working on her "stuff" over the Christmas break. She can quit using her family as an excuse to not "play" with her collections. She now finds herself surrounded by her family and that, "forces me to think about creativity and artistic type of issues." Speaking more rapidly and excited, Mrs. Teach U. Art states,

> I have prayed about it and really tried to work through my insecurities and so it is just work. I really have to think about it and work it. I feel like I'm finally coming into my own. I'm feeling good in my own skin.

Furthermore, she states that she despises, "that demon that comes with critique. I'm going to stand up for what I've done."

Mrs. Teach U. Art has created a variety of different ways to keep herself motivated. The one method that she stressed the most is the idea of a visual journal. She keeps a journal in which she can either write or draw in. She tries to sketch out her ideas in it, makes lists of things she needs, projects to work on, her "Aha!" ideas for new projects in it. She also plays games with herself now to keep herself moving forward with her progress as an artist.

> I play this game where you have to make it. You know? We all used to play do that. Ok, we've got milk, we've got eggs, and what are we going to make for supper? I try to play that game. I can't buy anything to make this project, and I just keep trying to push myself. I really am enjoying not caring what others think. I do it because I want to.

This "Milk and Eggs" game helps Mrs. Teach U. Art to stay focused on her artistic pieces. Otherwise, she admits that she's like a bucking bull that bucks and bucks with ideas in the pen, but has trouble getting started out of the shoot.

Sometimes you have to go back to your roots to find that inner child of creative play without caring about others' reactions to your creation. The imaginary audience disappears as one reflects and delves into his/her past of childlike faith. Mrs. Teach U. Art's upbringing has impacted her as an artist today in a very positive light.

> Being able to create and that being seen as something that was fine for everybody to do even though it was play. Being exposed to the arts, being taken to the historical aspects of the museums, as an artist, those life experiences can't help but impact you…. There was something about the aesthetic, the beauty of things. The poetic, you know, the lyrical of just day in and day out life. The appreciation for it. Encouraged to be creative, encouraged to kind of be your own person to some extent, this all came from my family.

Also coming from her family and passed along to her children is the love of junk food.

A sculpture is hanging on the wall and you just can't help but smile. It is the Cheeto Altar, a top-drawer exhibition collage of Cheeto paraphernalia featuring the "Cheeto, god" that the others bow down to, a candle to light this alter piece, and a pig on top. Imagine an old wooden drawer nailed against the wall. Mrs. Teach U. Art "wallpapered" the inside of the drawer with strips of a cut-up Cheeto bag, then placed the biggest Cheeto, the "Cheeto god," (maybe four to five times the size of a normal Cheeto) in the middle of the drawer. Around the Cheeto god she placed a number of regular sized Cheetos that look as though they are bowing down to their "Cheeto god." Sitting on the top of the drawer, where the drawer handle would be, is a rubber pig with a crown on its head. On the inside base of the drawer is a little candle. She preserved the Cheetos inside the drawer by spraying them with a glossy texture. A combination of excitement and joy in the vibe of the altar's bright colors and aesthetic feel illuminate from it as it sits glazed over by time. If it had been for sale, I would have bought it on the spot.

> My sisters came at Christmas and I had lit the little candle, and they all ran in here and just died laughing. They all got it. A lot of my stuff is very narrative, and I know that its been real good for me. I'm just like, "Can it be this easy?"

The Cheeto Altar represents a good time with family. This junk food connection has extended from Mrs. Teach U. Art's childhood immediate family to her own. The bonds that are strengthened over Cheetos are unbreakable and strong. Joy comes from the eating of junk food and laughter as a family sits and munches together. It is like medicine that calms your soul on a dreary day. Cheetos. However, the Cheeto Altar serves a very important purpose:

> The Cheeto Altar. It solves the problem of telling the world how I feel about Cheetos, and how precious. This is like, you know, a saint's bone in this huge Cheeto eye god on an evening I was entertaining people I didn't

> care to entertain. It was like a gift from Heaven. The enormous Cheeto
> that fell out of the bag.   You know, that's the creative part.

 I ask Mrs. Teach U. Art, if there is any advice that she might give a person who is two

steps behind her in this artistic journey of growth. I believe that her answer shows how

far she has come.

> Just don't listen to anybody else but yourself. Have fun. Play. Do what
> frees and pleases you. If it makes you smile, if you can't stop working,
> then that's it. Just feel free to do it, and know that it's valid and that you
> validate it yourself just by you thinking of it. Don't make excuses. It
> sounds really simplistic, but I truly believe, it's the ability to play too and
> to experiment.

An Introduction to Sir Blues Brown

"Put the coffee on baby, I'm coming home," and he is off the air. An

approximated 30,000 listeners know this simplistic radio sign-off as they listen to his

drive at five-radio show. In the business for nearly twenty years, Sir Blues Brown

climbed the ladder of radio to the rank of radio programmer, yet he still has a heart for his

dedicated listeners. The traffic delays and rush hour frustrations get a little less stressful

as you find yourself merging into this artist's groove. Sir Blues Brown says that his

favorite part about his job is the power to control his own destiny.

Reflections from childhood

On the childhood path no child should ever have to walk, Sir Blues Brown

learned quickly that he would have to be in charge of his own destiny.   His earliest vivid

recollections from the Visio-spatial sketchpad of his mind retrieve memories that have

drifted into his subconscious since he was in the crib. As early as two years old, his

visual and olfactory senses made episodic impressions of memories that play like a movie

on his adult imagination's screen.   He remembers being awakened by these monster

masks as a two year old. Images of monsters haunted his dreams until his mother

explained the reason behind the monster awakenings when he was twelve years old.

> Oh, that was your dad. He thought it was the funniest thing in the whole
> world to come home and he had these Halloween masks and he's sneak up
> on you guys and wake you up going Aarrggg.

Pause. A look of remembrance spreads across his face, and he states, "I can still smell

the rubber today," and he tells me that after that conversation with his mom, those

monstrous dreams stopped. Allowing himself to further delve into his earliest memories,

he tells me about his first bedroom. "I lived in the closet... That was my room." He lived

in the closet under the stairs. He faintly smiles as he talks to me about sneaking out of his

room in the middle of the night to snack on government baloney and cheese.

Though his family's socioeconomic circumstances were in constant fluctuation

within the poverty zone, Sir Blues Brown's childhood play was filled with fond

memories of playing along the beach in Long Beach, California. Sir Blues Brown smiles

as he recollects, as a small child, being tossed onto the beach by the Pacific's waves. "I

used to think greatest thing in the world…I had no fear of the water." A risk-taker at

heart, he does recall one incident along the beach that did impact his childhood

imagination,

> I remember one time out at the beach, we were out there and there was a
> big area with this big bamboo growing up and stuff. There was these little
> trails that ran through there. Me and my sister were running around
> through there and found a dead hobo back up in there. I'll never forget
> that, because it scared the hell out of us. That was a trippy day.

Not long after finding the dead hobo, Sir Blues Brown was put into foster care. He states

that at that time, it was he and three older sisters who were all living with his mom. He

does not remember exactly what led to the government taking over his guardianship, but

he did enjoy the experience.

> I got to have foster parents, which was kind of cool. When you're a kid,
> you don't really know what's going on. You kind of enjoy it. It was an
> easy and nicer place where you lived, where people were a lot nicer.
> These people were real nice. I never will forget them. Peggy and Tony.

While living with Peggy and Tony, Sir Blues Brown played with their two

children who were about the same age as he and his closest sister. He explains that his

two oldest sisters went to another set of foster parents, but they kept him and his youngest

sister together since they shared the same father. He smiles as he tells me:

> Peggy and Tony. They were cool. They were just good peoples. I think
> that was a good time, because it was a real family. We had all the right
> amenities. Nice little house, school, and you had the things you wanted.
> You had punishment, but you had rewards and kindness. I kind of liked
> that. They never wanted to split me and my sister up. They fought to
> keep us together.

Still smiling, he tells me about helping to dig a deep hole in the backyard for a bomb

shelter, he explains, "That was back in the day when everybody was building bomb

shelters. It was in the early 60s". He continues to talk about Tony and Peggy's backyard

with the above ground swimming pool and how the girls and boys would alternate swim

nights skinny-dipping in the pool with their friends.

He starts laughing as he remembers a moment when his foster dad scared the hell

out of him. Sir Blues Brown is a natural storyteller, so he sets up this story by explaining

that there was a movie he had watched with his foster family. The movie was about a

hand that came from outer space and would walk around earth. It was just a hand that

had come from outer space when a spaceship blew-up, and the only thing left was the

hand. Later that evening, right before bed,

 I remember lying in bed and hearing a (starts tapping fingers), and
thinking, Oh God. What's that? I look up and there's a hand crawling
across the screen of my window. Of course, it was my foster dad scaring
the hell out of me…I forgot about that.

I noticed that during my interviews with Sir Blues Brown, he would occasionally

make a statement along the lines of, "I forgot about that." Thus, I could tell that as the

interviews were taking place, long lost childhood memories were resurfacing for him and

he was enjoying pondering these "lost moments" from his childhood. Another twist of

fate happened to Sir Blues Brown while living with Peggy and Tony, his first of several

encounters with the Criminal Justice System.

Betrayed by his own best friend, Sir Blues Brown explains that a group of his

friends used to ride their bikes to a meeting point and have rock fights. It was just a fun

thing that boys do, but it turned sour one day after a particular rock-fighting event at a

local hospital. In his own words,

We used to get into the big rock fights. The hospital had the best rock
beds. Some jerk off threw a rock through a window of the hospital, so
everybody scattered, you know. I'm pedaling my bike getting my butt
home. I get home about 7:30pm that night, there's a knock on the door,
and there's the police with my best friend sitting in the front seat pointing
at me going, "Oh, he's the one that did it." I remember I got put on
probation for that whole summer.

Looking back along Sir Blues Brown's life, one can understand that this particular

incident can be seen as a foreshadowing of several life lessons and a theme of his life.

Sir Blues Brown's future did, in fact, hold a variety of levels of family and friend

betrayals, false accusations, and incrimination.

A few years later, Sir Blues Brown was reunited with his two oldest sisters and

mom. They were transients moving around from Florida to Oklahoma to Ohio. He

mentions that his stay in Ohio was the one he remembers the most. He states that he

actually liked living there. They were a family in a small little house. He was about eight years old at the time, and he acquired a new best friend. In fact, he was one of the best friends that Sir Blues Brown ever had.

> We lived next door to this guy who was retarded. I was probably 8 years old or something, but him and I were best friends. He was probably in his 30s. We used to play together and swap comic books and stuff. That was probably one of my real first best friends. He didn't mind I was a kid, and I didn't know anything about somebody being retarded. You know? I just thought he was pretty cool to be an older guy, and he would hang with me, you know. We became real good friends. I'll never forget that guy.

This period of Sir Blues Brown's life when the family lived in a nice little house in a nice little neighborhood with the next-door neighbor as his best friend may be symbolized as the calm before the storm for a good portion of Sir Blues Brown's adolescent life.

Sir Blues Brown's mother remarried a man that he labeled as a real "jerk of a stepfather." He will never forget him. He stated that his stepfather used to knock him and his family around a lot as they were traveling along Florida and Georgia. While in Florida, Sir Blues Brown had an escape from the tensions at home. He had joined the Boy Scouts and was excited about the opportunity to attend Boy Scout Camp.

> When we were in Florida, I was probably about ten or something, I went to a Boy Scout Camp. I was gone two weeks, came home, and the house was empty. Nobody was there. They were all gone. A day, two, three goes by and nobody shows-up. I was just there by myself. Apparently this jerk-off was wanted by the FBI. So, they found him, and they all went to Arkansas or something to get him out of jail. They finally showed-up and he was an asshole. He still liked to beat the shit out of us, me, my mom, but never messed with my sister.

At only ten years old, Sir Blues Brown finally had enough. To stop the abuse, he attacked his stepfather one night with a pair of vice-grips. He states that was the night he learned what reality was. His stepfather immediately began to bleed. They rushed him to the hospital. When they got home, the police followed. His own mother called him a

shithead and told the police that her son (Sir Blues Brown) had attacked her husband for apparently no reason. With all fingers pointing at his childlike frame, Sir Blues Brown had a rude awakening to the reality in which he lived.

I notice that Sir Blues Brown uses the term reality frequently. I wonder how much of an impact his childhood experiences have on his perceptions of people's various realities. Speaking of his family, he states, "I didn't really feel like there was a lot of emotional reality in my growing up. I was just one of those responsibilities that came along that was like, "We have to take care of him."

The teenage years: Sacrificing the artist within

Sir Blue Brown has always been aware of his love of music, yet his teenage years were spent mostly living within Maslow's basic needs for survival. Food, clothing, and the basic necessities for survival is what he primarily concentrated on obtaining. However, Sir Blues Brown's resiliency, intellect, and risk-taking tendencies all played a vital part in his personal growth and his ability to learn from previous mistakes. He became a survivor, and his ability to survive has highly influenced who he is today.

By the time he was around 12 years old, Sir Blues Brown began to run away from home. The first time he ran away, he stayed in the announcer's box at the local baseball field. He stayed there until he got so hungry he had to go back. He states that he did not know how to survive at that time. However, he began to get better at surviving. He learned to take something (food, money) with him when he would leave. He began to learn about life alone on the streets. Therefore, it should be no surprise that by the time he was about 14 years old he left his family's home with passionate intentions of never returning.

> I was like 13 or 14. I hitchhiked out to L.A. (Los Angeles), and I hooked-up with some guys out there in a little piece of crap place to live. We used to steal motorcycles and stuff. We'd steal food and cigarettes to eat and smoke. We'd go to the grocery stores and shove them down our britches. If you wanted a steak or something, that's what we'd steal that day. If we needed gasoline, we'd go out and siphon gas at night. We'd steal motorcycle parts because we knew how to get the parts off and they were easier and smaller. Odds and ends jobs. I lived like that for a while.

Yet, a while got long enough and he was ready to reconnect with his closest sister after about a year. He remembers being about 15 or 16 years old and was traveling back to Florida to stay with his sister. Unfortunately, he had an encounter with the Texas police while traveling through the state, and this encounter led to another vicarious rejection from his family.

> I got arrested in Dallas for having an illegal weapon. A knife I bought in Mexico was too big for somebody to carry. I had a roach clip, so it's paraphernalia in Texas back in the 1970s. Oh my god, I was a criminal. I didn't tell them who I was or anything, but after a couple of days of sitting in the jail, they said, "Come on man. You're just bullshitting us. Who are you?" I told them where I left from and all that stuff, and they searched it out. They found out that my family had never reported me missing.

Though a tough blow to know that his own family did not even report him missing, the police were able to connect with his sister. She paid for him to have bus fare, and he was able to get back to Florida. However, while in Florida, he got arrested again. His "parents" found out that he was working at a little grocery store, and they had him picked up once again and taken back to Georgia.

> I hung out there for a while. Came home one day and they're gone again. For a week, then two weeks. The electricity gets turned off, water gets turned off, and it's colder than hell. I was about 16.

Reflecting on this turbulent and very transient aspect of his life he states, "I never wanted to go home. I didn't have nothing to go home to…that is pretty much my childhood."

I look at him, and I cannot tell if he says that with a hint of sadness or relief that his life

no longer is like that. Redirecting, I ask him about school:

> School was cool for me, because it got me away from the house. It was
> kind of the only thing that was mostly, I think, pleasurable in the day. I
> was a latch key kid, and all that crap. I finished eighth grade actually.

It was in the ninth grade that another turning point came in Sir Blues Brown journey.

> I was in the nineth grade and sum bud behind me tapped me. I had
> already ran away and stuff, and I was out in California and back and trying
> to get back into the groove of things. Some creep touched me on the back
> and said I had cooties. I just walked out and never went back to school. I
> said, "I have cooties? What happened to you people? Did any of you
> grow-up at all?" While I was a runaway, I ran into a lot of unsavory
> people. People trying to molest me, rape me, hurt me, rob me, and things
> that I wasn't very proud of, but survival was survival. I don't remember a
> lot about school.

He continues to tell me about how he was pretty much a loner at school. Sir Blues

Brown had to move around so much, it would be difficult for any kid to be able to

establish any real sense of stability with friends. Yet, things got better for him.

In all actuality, Sir Blues Brown lived the life of the television teenage heartthrob

today. He was a "rebel." A runaway. He was the academically intellectual mind with

savvy street smarts whose encounter with the real world came early. While others were

still being reared by their parents, he, with his piercing blue eyes, was independent and

running the streets. Though the notion of being a street kid attracts a number of teens

today, enough for M. T.V. to create series, "My So Called Life" and producer Aaron

Spelling to create the character Dylan on "Beverly Hills 90210" Sir Blues Brown never

really wanted that life. "I didn't like freedom. It was scary. I'd rather have been

coddled. I didn't feel special to be free. I was scared. Always scared." Silence.

 I look at him again, and I can see him really delving into his memory bank. As he takes another drag of his cigarette, his expression is one of reflection. He is looking at the wall in front of him, but I can tell that he sees only what is in his mind. He isn't just telling me his story; he is taking me on a journey with him as he tours his own life. He continues to tell me that he's been in radio for 28 years. It all began with his move to a university town in Mississippi after his military tour was finished.

The military: Finishing high school and beginning college

Sir Blues Brown joined the Army, and he was able to go back to school. After receiving his General Education Degree (GED), Sir Blues Brown decided that he really wanted to get his high school diploma. Being the perfectionist and intellectual that he truly is, he felt that the GED program was nothing. It wasn't the challenge that he felt he needed to feel as though he had actually earned anything. Therefore, he decided to also earn his high school diploma. Thus, while still serving in the United States Army, he took correspondence classes and earned his high school diploma. Beyond educational accomplishments, Sir Blues Brown also got to travel while he was enlisted in the military.

> I didn't go to Vietnam. I was in Europe for four years. It was great. Being out of the United States, understanding foreign cultures, the differences, the realities, the likes and the dislikes. It was invigorating to me. I hated the weather, but sure loved to go around countries and visit different parts of Europe and see castles and where things happened. I went to Berlin and Frankfurt, and concentration camps, and things like that.

He continues,

> When I got out of the service, I did various other types of jobs. I did construction, worked at a shipyard, did route sales, and did a dozen types of things. I got transferred to Mississippi with a job in a university town. I had the GI Bill, and that job washed out after a year. I thought, "Hey!

> I'm living here. I might as well go to school." My father was in
> broadcasting. I did real well with communications in the military. I had
> met some disk jockeys and it seemed like a pretty cool thing to do. So, I
> took radio, television, and film and within six months I had my first job.

He takes another drag of his cigarette and looks at me. He gives me that, "what would

you like to know now?" look. I decide to continue his story by finding out how it all

began. So how do you go from disk jockey to radio programmer?

Post college: Finding purpose and meaning

Sir Blues Brown explains that it's a funny thing how all disk jockeys become

"disk jockeys". They think it is fun; a fun job in the public eye. The unpopular become

suddenly popular. The unheard voice is now broadcast through a stranger's speakers. He

explains that the beginning disk jockey transitions from the perception of this is such a

fun job to this is a real job and I am hardly getting paid. Therefore, he realized that he

needed to get as much experience doing various aspects of radio as he possibly could. He

wanted to learn more about the ins and outs of running a radio station. "Every time you

make yourself available, you increase your wealth to the end result of your career." The

mix between his desire to learn as much about radio as he could and being a natural risk-

taker helped him get his first experience with radio programming.

> I was in a station meeting one time and our program director fell asleep
> during the meeting. The GM (general manager) didn't like it very much
> and fired him. He said, "Well, we've got to find another PD (program
> director)," and I raised my hand up and said, "Hey! I can do it!" He said
> alright and that's my first real job in radio. I've been programming ever
> since, and that was about 18 years ago or something like that.

Even though he is a radio programmer, Sir Blues Brown still has fun doing his

own show. He is still just as involved in the control room as everyone else is at the

station. Though his work responsibilities have piled higher, "The boys still have to get

paid," he still holds onto the disk jockeying side of radio. As a disk jockey, he walks into

the control room and begins his show, and the show then directs this musical journey.

> I don't have any clue of what I'm going to do probably 15 minutes in
> advance. I just go in and sit down and it all comes out of me. Then I
> jump into it, and it allows me to work through it. I'm not it. I'm just a
> piece of that. If that makes any sense at all. The show I can do. Radio is
> radio, and I just kind of slide into its being. It doesn't slide into me, but I
> let it encompass me, and that's my flow. I'm not prepared when I do it. I
> just walk in and do it.

I ask him if his job ever becomes mundane doing the same thing every day, and

he responds with a swift yet thoughtful no. He explains how each day brings about new

challenges from rewriting commercial breaks to better fit the station to filtering music

and dealing with other artists in his office space. We begin to discuss the high turnover

in employees that seems to portray the culture of radio employment. Knowing that he

has observed this on several occasions, even within his own station, I ask him what

distinguishes the disk jockeys who are able to stay in radio as a lifetime career from those

who are phasing through it.

> They have a true passion for the business. They understand more than just
> themselves and what they can achieve out of it. That it does have a true
> effect and that you do affect other people. You can affect your community
> in a positive way. There are rewards that are much farther beyond your
> own ego. A lot of gratification in there. Challenges. They love the actual
> challenge of every day.

After explaining the difference between those who can survive radio and those who

cannot, he begins to tell me how his upbringing has helped him sustain a career in radio.

> I think that the thing that has helped me to survive this industry is
> humility. Growing up the way I did, I suffered humility a lot. I had to
> improvise. I had to do things I didn't want to do. When I had something,
> I was grateful to have it. I think humility is probably one of the biggest
> lessons. My ability to improve, to problem solve, because I didn't have
> anybody to solve the problems for me. I had to figure out solutions. I had
> to be brave enough to attack the problems, to think about it, analyze it, to

figure out how to get from point A to point B. I may be over expressing this, but I think growing up for me that way, I just had to have the balls, the nerve, to make decisions. That's helped me, because I'm not scared to make decisions in my life now.

As he is speaking, I can tell that he really means this. This makes a lot of sense to me. I used to work for him, and I know that he is a great problem solver and decision maker. I also know that he is very passionate about his work and takes it very seriously. Radio is his baby. He continues

It's very funny that you even asked me that question today. I actually had to speak to one of our other programmers yesterday and remind him that he's very lucky to be in a job that is so, you know, revered. There's a lot of responsibility involved in that. He has to remember to respect that, because it carries a lot of responsibility. We forget sometimes where we grew-up. We should remember, so we don't separate ourselves from our listeners. It's very important.

I know that he means this statement as well. I have heard him speak of this on many occasions while hanging out with him after a show and on location years ago.

Today, Sir Blues Brown is controlling his own destiny in a positive light. He is the star that can shine through any circumstance or event. No matter what the situation, Sir Blues Brown is able to improvise, adapt, and overcome with style and is able to laugh about something along the way. Through the invisible tool of radio, Sir Blues Brown gives back to society daily. He understands the responsibility of being a program director, he remembers where he is from, and he understands the power of music on his listeners' emotions and minds.

We influence people in a lot of different ways through the music, the emotion of the music… I used to do a thing I called Musical Mood Manipulation. I can take any 3 records and create a concept of thought based on the image or what's in the records. If I want to make you angry, I can make you angry. If I want to make you sad, I can make you sad. I can make you think about abortion, war. I can make you think about anything I want to.

Acknowledging that most people think a radio personality's only job is to entertain; he further explains that most people don't understand the responsibility that comes with the title. Sir Blues Brown explains how as a disk jockey, he is responsible for a variety of things; yet, the most important are the emotional impact that music has on his listeners and the image of the station he projects through his show. The job of the disk jockey goes well beyond making a listener sing along or call-in to a show. He can challenge your thoughts, challenge your emotions, and promote community service awareness, events, and/or issues. Furthermore, Sir Blues Brown explains that many people do not realize that radio is mainly an image.

Sir Blues Brown's station is more like the BobFMs and the new AAA stations played in Central Texas today. These are based on the image of the station and not on playing the "current hits" or Top 40 only. There is a distinct difference between an image-based station and a formula station. He explains, "It's not about how popular or how good you are, it's about how good people think you are" as a radio station. They take risks. They stretch the rules. They are little more PG-13 and R rated with their listeners. They are trendsetters, not trend followers, and there's a lot of responsibility that comes with that. He also stresses that the taste of one's audience is a very important factor to consider.

> "Bullet with a Name on it." We were the first in the country to play that record, because it was perfect. It really hits society's emotions right now. It's all about, "Hey, man! We're paying too much for gas. We're paying too much for that. I got a bullet with your name on it!" We're just fed up with it. It's a very social record. We're in a military town.

He further explains how passion is an important factor. I can see the same passion in his eyes today, when he speaks of radio that was there when I first worked for

him. His speech is what first inspired me to control my own destiny so many years ago

in another life. When I probed him about how he is able to maintain his passion, he tells

me that it's his way of giving back to society.

> I did a lot of wild things in there to make it. I sold a lot of drugs and hurt a
> lot of people. Did a lot of things just to survive. I think that was one of
> the driving forces too, that it was the wrong thing to do. I was an angry
> person. I didn't like the world. I was angry at me. I think that helped me.
> I think it reflects a lot in radio, because radio gives me a chance to make
> people happy. I aspire to give back.

He continues to stress how radio can influence a person's emotions and lifestyle,

and it brings him joy to know that he can have a positive influence on another's life. This

seems to really be important to him, because it continues to pop-up during our

conversation. He talks about how he can sell radio and also do giveaways that promote

the positive reflection of the station to its society. He can do free gas giveaways, free

concert tickets, or promote a local service event. Sir Blues Brown's listeners are more

like family to him and less like fans. He truly cares about his listeners, and he is more

likely to sit down and have a beer with them than to sign an autograph. Sir Blues Brown

practices what he preaches about not forgetting who you were before you became a

personality.

I ask him if he has any advice to those wanting to pursue a similar journey as his in radio.

He responds:

> Experience all that you can experience and forget nothing that you've ever
> done. Read as much as you can and believe none of it yet remember all of
> it. Don't be afraid to take chances. Don't be stupid and take bad risks.
> Apply yourself. If you limit yourself to what you're expected to do, then
> nobody can expect anything else from you. If you become proficient at
> what you do, then always strive to do become better at it. don't be afraid
> to look over your shoulder, to the left and to the right, and use both sides
> of the brain. Be smart about it, but just let it go sometimes. Just let it go,

because those are moments of brilliance.   If you're scared to act on those, then you'll never be known as being brilliant.

<u>An Introduction to Sir Dark Art</u>

In Huntington Beach, California, a twelve-year-old blond haired and blue-eyed boy sits in the sand on the beach by his surfboard painting. A military brat from birth, he recollects various thoughts from his past to portray on the canvas he is holding…

Seventeen years later: "I was born in Germany. My Dad was in the military," he tells me as we begin talking about his life. Sitting in his living room, I take in all the different artistic expressions in which he surrounds himself at home. The walls and fireplace are decorated with his work, and his style has just intertwined its way into every aspect of his living space. This is Sir Dark Art's place. No doubt.

Most of his family lives in Southern California, the Huntington Beach and Newport Beach area of the state. This is where Sir Dark Art's family grounding is, where he could call "home" while living overseas, and a part of his identity. Growing up on the beach, whether it was California's or Hawaii's, he has been a "water baby" from birth. He talks to me about his cousin who still does surf competitions in Southern California, and he tells me about how much he still misses the beaches from his childhood home even though he still tries to make it back out to California to visit family, friends, and surf each year.

Reflections from childhood

Sir Dark Art's father was in the military, so he had a very transient childhood. He was reared as an only child, and he spent a lot of time alone. Maintaining friends during childhood was difficult because of all the moves he experienced with his family. Since his father was overseas so much, his mother mostly reared him. However, both of his

parents were very supportive of his creative pursuits. Trying to figure out what he wants

to share about his life, he begins by telling me about his childhood as best he can

recollect.

> I went to elementary school in Idaho and California. I was in third grade,
> so that would put me around eight or nine years old in Idaho. Stayed there
> until I was 10, then we went back to California for a year. Then we went
> to Hawaii when I was 11, and I left Hawaii when I was 14 and we moved
> to Texas.

He is having difficulty recalling much from his early elementary years, so we begin

talking about the things that stand out in his childhood's memory bank while he lived in

Idaho. "It was Mormon country. It was my first taste of religion besides my family," he

tells me. Because he came from a family where his mother was his primary parent and

her religious affiliation is one of semi-atheist, Sir Dark Art recalls several instances of

"The Mormons" coming around the house. They would try to talk to the family about

their religion, which was nothing too out of whack for the area. His family was the only

one on the block who were not Mormons.

A different round of memories come surfacing into Sir Dark Art's consciousness,

and he begins to tell me about his best friend in Idaho, Sean, who lived across the street.

Doing the typical nine-year-old boy bike rides and play, Sean and Sir Dark Art also got to

have a little taste of creativity by watching Sean's father, who was a make-up and special

effects artist for horror films, work. Sean's father also allowed Sir Dark Art and Sean

play with the special effects make-up. This encounter with the power of artistic

manipulation got Sir Dark Art's childhood attention. Speaking of Sean's dad, Sir Dark

Art states:

> We'd always watch him work. It was kind of cool, and I think that's
> actually kind of when I first got into the whole creativity thing. I just

thought it was really cool. The art of making new things, or making things look different. It's kind of where I got my first taste of it.

Hawaii is where things began to take shape for Sir Dark Art's childhood life. This was a major "growing-up point" in his life journey, and he is still fond of some of his memories as a kid in Hawaii. This is where the beginning scene of Sir Dark Art's artistic journey began to take shape. He began his serious drawings in Hawaii.

> I'd draw my GI Joe figures and turn them into little stories. I came up with my first character man when I was like ten or eleven. I started doing that because of Bill Cosby's "Picture Pages." I thought that was kind of cool, so I started doodling and drawing my own stuff. I started getting pretty good, and I realized "Wow!" I'm actually ok. My parents helped me with that too, not really like, "Do it for a living," but they said, "You're really good."

Sir Dark Art also collaborated with his dad on his first "major art project." When Batman was hitting the theaters, Sir Dark Art had a Joker character and wanted to build a pad for his new toy figure.

> Joker had to have his own little pad, so my dad helped me design it…We built this huge, massive, just gigantic five-roomed big complex. I drew-up all the little manuals and things like that. It was like my first major creative undertaking, I guess… I used to like have all these dossiers, files, and all this stuff, and I was like really anal retentive about it. I don't know what the deal was. It was like my way of being fairly creative with all this stuff, because you could do more with it. You have all this background.

The teenage years: Sacrificing the artist within

As a teenager, Sir Dark Art was so busy living for other people, he forgot to live for himself. He sacrificed his desires to be in the art program at his high school, hang with the artsy crowd in high school, and he even slowed down on his personal artistic expression at home because he was too busy being what everyone else wanted him to be.

Sir Dark Art did not only grow as an artist, but he grew from being a kid to being a teenager as well. He lived in Hawaii from 11 to 14 years old before moving to Texas,

and he states that while in Hawaii he got to, "grow-up and kind of see things on my own without having my parents' blinders on." He had his first kiss, first crush, first job babysitting the neighbors' kids, and he got to go to the beach with his friends. His parents were not always there, so he was free to be himself. He smiles and states that for the most part, he spent his days surfing, boogie boarding, wake boarding, and basically just lived on the beach. The beaches of Hawaii are where Sir Dark Art first encountered prejudice personally.

> I knew what "Howee" meant pretty quickly. It means, "white boy" in Hawaii. It's almost like trying to call me a cracker. The same thing. On the beaches there was a lot of prejudice, in the schools, not really

Even though the prejudice he encountered was primarily on the beach, he passionately tells me how much he hated school. He states that he was constantly getting into trouble and into fights. "I was not really sure of who I was, I guess. I didn't know if I was a Momma's boy or if I wanted to be a rebel. I didn't know what I wanted to do or be, so I got into a lot of fights and junk like that." Also, he explains that for a long time, up until his senior year of high school, Sir Dark Art was very introverted. Thus, being a transient military kid, basically an only child with an introverted personality, the ability to make and keep friends was a constant battle. This is just the nature of growing up with the military. With this said, it is easy to see how a move to Texas at 14 years old was a dramatic transition for him, especially since he claims that Hawaii was his "growing-up point" in regard to girls, a job, independence from parents, friends, and the beach.

Sir Dark Art describes his Texas transition as a "Culture Shock. Big time." He states that in his imagination he was picturing moving to the typical Texas movie screen adaptation, "I pictured some Western town, everybody wearing six shooters all that

crap." He says that it was so difficult to leave all his friends. He went from being surrounded by the ocean to having no waves around. He began getting into fights at school. Though now he claims Central Texas as his home, he says that he remembers well that culture shock transition.

Attending high school in Texas, Sir Dark Art once again began to evolve as a person and as an artist though he never took an art class while in high school.

> I didn't take any art classes at all in high school. Ir really wasn't in my schedule because I was studying to be a lawyer. So, I just doodled on my own, painted, and drew and kind of self-taught myself, I guess. I didn't have any formal training until I went to college. I created my own little comic strip with a Bonnie and Clyde little cat and dog. I just did a little comic strip with them and SAM (Secret Agent Man). I created him. I was always drawing somewhere. I still have them locked-up, never to be seen by the human eye.

Thus, even though he did not take any art classes, he still drew just for the sake of drawing. He enjoys creating today s much as he did then. Sir Dark Art also evolved as a person in high school by going from a dominantly introverted personality to one of more extroverted socialite. Between dating a popular girl, becoming a popular guy and football figure, and by throwing the high school's finest party, Sir Dark Art's social confidence began to climb. However, the birthday bash is what made history.

> The first party that I ever threw, and it's been legendary ever since, was my 17th birthday party. My mom actually supplied all the beer and stuff, got a hotel, and kind of stayed out of everybody's way. It was like the first big house party I ever threw. I've been throwing pretty good house parties ever since actually. It was fun. It kind of put me on the map a little more socially. A lot of people were at the party, and if they weren't there, they heard about it somehow. Everybody talked about it for months and months. So, it was kind of a good social thing. My social status went up a little more, and I got a little bit popular.

One thing that Sir Dark Art has been able to carry over into his adult life is the ability to have a variety of different types of people with differing personalities as

friends. This is something that he prided in himself in high school. "I was a friend with a lot of different types of people. I wasn't really part of one click." He says that he mainly hung out with the football crowd and his hip-hop friends, even though he really did not care for hip-hop, but it was what people wanted him to be. "I never really hung out with people who I wanted to hangout with. I spent most of the time trying to be what everybody wanted me to be. I would have much rather hung out with the artsy crowd, because they had more to say."

Sir Dark Art was fortunate to have both parents support his artistic nature. In describing his relationship with his family, he stresses how he has always been closer to his mother since his dad was always overseas with the Army. Furthermore, he is his mother's only child and his father's fifth. Thus, he has two older stepbrothers and two older stepsisters, but he hardly ever sees them. Therefore, he basically grew-up an only child. It was mainly he and his mom.

> This is no offense to my dad at all, but in the military you always had to do whatever. So, I never really formed a solid relationship with my dad until recently. It was always I and my mom. She's the one who played catch with me in the backyard. She was the one who pretty much raised me on her own. I just remember my dad was gone. I don't know where or what he was doing. He went to like Korea once, Alaska, Australia, Japan, and Korea again. I guess that was about it. That was kind of the downfall of being a military family.

Even though his dad was frequently overseas, Sir Dark Art still had his father's support for him to be happy. For a long period of time, even throughout high school, Sir Dark Art assumed that his father would want him to also enlist in the military. So, he had plans to join the Marines when he got out of high school. Fortunately, before he did enlist, Sir Dark Art realized that a military career was not what he really wanted to do

with his life. His father was retired at the time and working at a mechanic shop when Sir

Dark Art gave his father the news that he did not want to go into the military.

> I told him, "Dad, I'm not going to join the Marines or the military," He
> was like, "Good," and that threw me. He goes, "I don't want you doing
> this crap. I don't like doing it." I was like, "Oh, ok." I guess I'm not a
> total disappointment. It just shocked me, because I was just like, ok, here
> I am thinking I have to be something that I'm not, and I really don't have
> to be that. They just want me to be happy and do something. I didn't
> realize that really up until that point.

For a long time, Sir Dark Art had thought that if his parents suggested something

to him it meant that they wanted him to do it. In reality, Sir Dark Art had mistaken his

parents' supportive nature and thought that he needed to please them. "I always thought

that we'd like you to do it was more or less do it or die, but it wasn't." Thus, for him to

tell his father how he felt about being in the military and his father being so supportive of

his decision was a major perception change for him on his life's journey.

> You know, that kind of thing when I was younger, I fell into this thing of
> constantly being what people wanted me to be. Over the years, I finally
> got out of that, but back then, that's the way it was. I was a chameleon,
> and I lost who the hell I was. I'm still finding out who I am.

After he got through high school, Sir Dark Art's parents talked with him and

explained that they would be getting a divorce. He tells me about how it was no shock to

him to hear them say that, because he could see it coming as a kid. He knew that they

had stuck together to get him through high school, but that they would never make it.

Even though his parents would try to keep their fights and bickering away from him, he

states that he still caught the vibe. He explains, "I'm a lot more observant than people

think." Also, he mentions that he knows his parents still, to this day, care for each other.

> Even to this day I know that they still care for each other. That's why it
> doesn't really bother me they are apart. I know that hey still give a shit.
> It's not like they totally hate each other ands despise each other. My

relationship with them has always been good. I never grew-up hating them or disliking them.

Sir Dark Art left his hometown with his high school prom date turned fiancé and moved to Dallas after graduation. He claims that this move was another major transition and learning experience for him. This was his first "trek into adulthood" and he describes the experience as somewhat "scary."

> You get all these delusions of grandeur when you're in school, like "I'm going to get out of here and rule the world." You get out there and the world rules you. It's not a bad thing. It's just eye-opening knowing hat you're not going to get everything handed to you. You're going to have to work and work and work and work. You have to work your butt off to get what you have.

He also learned the impossibilities of living a "Champagne lifestyle on a beer budget," while trying to please his fiancé. However, it was in Dallas that he began to get interested in art again. Not being able to afford too many daylight or late night luxuries, he began to draw again to fill his spare time.

> I started drawing more there. I couldn't afford to go anywhere. I would watch TV, then I started drawing, because I got tired of watching TV. I started drawing and just playing around with art again. That ultimately ended up paying off. I started getting some recognition while I was up there. I did a couple paintings that people had seen. That's how I got the whole option to do a cover for Harry Connick Jr. That's what got me the trip out to New Orleans and started doing cd covers for Sony, which is some of what I'm doing now.

College years: The emergence of the artist within

Needless to say, the reality of complete independence in the real world ultimately had its toll on Sir Dark Art. Thus, he ended up moving back to his Central Texas hometown, got a job at a local junior college, and began to take classes again. Discussing his move back home and the break-up with his fiancé, Sir Dark Art states, "It's a blessing

in disguise." He was able to go back to school, and since he couldn't focus on law at the

college he attended, he took an art class and got addicted.

> My first class was a drawing I. class where we'd just sit there and draw
> boots and still life for an entire semester. You learned different techniques
> that I didn't know. I just knew my own technique. It was simple line
> drawing with a pen and things like that. It tweaked my interest in art all
> over again. I was learning all this new stuff. I was taking in all this stuff.
> I learned how to use ink for the first time, charcoal, learned how to do rub
> outs, and things like that. I did that and I had to take a figure drawing
> class, which is what interest me the most. I think that's why I do a lot of
> figures in my work now. The human form is just fascinating to me.
> Especially the female human form, this is going to sound perverted, but I
> guess there's a lot more curves to it. There's a lot more shapes in the
> female body than there is the male body. It's more appealing to the eye.
> You can do a lot more with the female form than you can with a male
> form. As a artist who uses models, it's hard to get a lot of male models
> anyway. Especially in the area that I'm in right now. There's a calming
> effect that it gives me too doing the female human form or just the human
> form in general. My figure drawing class is what definitely got me back
> in art again. Just learning all these things on the human form and I've
> always been fascinated with the way Divinche did a lot of his hands. He
> actually studied on cadavers to do that stuff. So I learned a lot and then of
> course I took an art history class. Everything just kind of went hand in
> hand and started clicking left and right in my head. It was like, "oh,
> wow!" I definitely where I want to be now. I just fell in love with it, and
> I just stuck with it. I am where I am right now.

Thus, his figure drawing class is what got his focus back on art, and PhotoShop is what

captured his adult imagination, interest, and fascination in graphic design.

Post college: Finding purpose and meaning

While working in the Visual and Fine Arts Department at the same college he

once attended, he was offered an adjunct teaching position teaching graphic design as a

noncredit art class. He designed his own curriculum and remembers how nervous he felt

during his first class. "I warned them ahead of time that this was the first time I'd ever

taught a class." Yet, the experience and his students' attitudes and proactive involvement

turned the class into a positive learning experience for both himself and those in

attendance.   Elaborating on his learning experience, Sir Dark Art explains, "You don't want to get stumped by a student, so you want to keep ahead of them. I'm learning as I go with that, and I learned about people as well."

Still learning about himself today and those whom he encounters, Sir Dark Art is still observant. His deep thinking abilities are portrayed in his artwork. He describes his pieces as being more thought provoking than anything else.

> They're more psychological. I like to kind of take a trip into the human mind, you know, and see what people come up with on their own. That's what I like about a few pieces I have, because a few people get a lot of different things out of them.

Admitting that at first his motivation for his artwork was solely for himself, yet he now enjoys the ability to read into his critic's reactions. He enjoys the power to make people think that accompanies his field of creativity, graphic design. "I got them to think about something. That's what I like. There's so many people nowadays who just watch their movies, you know, and drive their cars and go to work. Nobody really thinks about anything anymore."   Elaborating further, he explains:

> I just tell things that I think should be told. Whether it be for entertainment purposes or philosophical purposes, just something to think about. I always want to give somebody something to think about if they ever see my work, because it always gives me something to think about. I'm thinking while I'm doing it. if I have to think while I'm doing it, I think somebody should have to think while they're looking at it.

Another motive that fuels Sir Dark Art's passion for his field is that it is still a new area of artistic expertise. "It's still not recognized as a solid visual arts form," Sir Dark Art tells me. Thus, he is now trying to use his work to break the notion that graphic design work is just a form of visual collage. He states, "It's not just collage work, it's visual art." Looking at Sir Dark Art's work, a spectator can see that this artist takes his

artwork seriously. His pieces make one think. They push the limits of one's imagination.

They are as Sir Dark Art describes, "My soul on a wall."

> My artwork is my therapy…that's how I was dealing with my personal
> problems…if you have something in your mind that you need to let go.
> Me, personally, I'm not a big talk about it to everybody type of person, so
> I just put it on paper. It may not have anything to really do with what I
> was thinking, but underneath it does. It's the one think I was thinking
> about when I did it.

Elaborating further about his artwork, Sir Dark Art explains:

> To coin a religious term, it's an exorcism of sorts. However it's on my
> mind, I put it on paper. Then, when I'm done with the piece, I'm done.
> Some people go punch a punching bag, I do artwork. Some people mow
> the lawn and clean, I do artwork.

Beyond being his creative release, Sir Dark Art's graphic design work also serves

as the medium for him to share various book and movie ideas he has thought about. "I

couldn't put it on paper in words, so I put it on paper in visual forms."

While he works on his pieces, Sir Dark Art explains that sometimes he falls into a

flow state and may sit at his computer for ten hours straight. He "hears" the phone ring,

but by the time his brain registers that the phone is actually ringing, it has already

stopped. He may get easily irritated if people try to interrupt him or demand his attention

while he is in his flow trance. Feeling the exhilaration of a job well done, though no art

piece of his is ever really finished to him, he realizes what he has just done.

> There is the remorse afterwards. The, "Oh, my God, I just wasted a whole
> day doing this." To me, it's not a waste, because I did something creative,
> something I wanted to do. I don't really feel like it was a waste, but
> sometimes I get that thought thinking, "Man, I could have gone out
> grocery shopping or mowed the yard, but here I am working on a
> computer." But, then I'm like, "Screw-it!" This is what I want to do, and I
> don't get a chance to do what I want to do a lot. When I can do it, I relish
> it.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

In qualitative research, data collection and analysis are simultaneous events that aids in the development of grounded data and an emergence of themes from such data. This study used a constant comparative method of analysis to code and organize the raw data, yet it also included a number of member checks, peer debriefs, the use of a reflexive journal, and prolonged engagement to assure the voice of the participants, not that of the researcher, is spoken through the emerged themes. Three themes arose from the gathered data:

- Each creative producer is still evolving into a more complex artist today, thus A Continuous Evolution of the Artist exists.

- Each creative producer experiences an Intense Inner Sense of Self

- Each creative producer perceives Art as a Greater Whole

Emerging Theme One: A Continuous Evolution of the Artist

Though coming from different walks of life, all participants spoke of a personal artistic evolution during their interviews. "Artistic Evolution" implies a level of artistic growth in each individual participant's artistic process. After a comprehensive analysis of data gathered, this theme arose from the grounded data. Though the process of growth is unique for each participant in my study, there exist similar factors as to why they began to evolve in their creative processes. It is interesting to note that each artist's evolution began in childhood, even prior to his/her awareness of his/her artistic abilities. This theme arose from specific categories that had risen from the raw data including: parental

support for creative endeavor, a presence of critical incidents, and an enduring feeling of passion.

Parental support for creative endeavor

All participants had some sort of parental support whether it was vicarious, direct, or in the form of an absence of discouragement. Sir Dark Art reflects that while he was living in Hawaii, he started drawing. His parents were supportive of his newfound hobby in that they verbally recognized his abilities and even helped him with his first creative project. Mrs. Teach U. Art had both vicarious and direct support from her artistic beginnings. Having a mother who is artistically inclined, she was reared with a home environment that fostered her artistic potential. Her mother would take her and her sisters to different museums to foster art appreciation.

> My mom's quite creative, so we always had that stuff available, always had a, I can see it, a big bucket of crayons and paper, so it was very much encouraged…My mom would take us to the museum. I remember seeing like nudes and stuff, and my mom would say, "It's art. It's ok." But that was great, because we saw a lot. Sunday afternoons she would take us.

Professor Art gives his father credit for his artistic beginnings. Though he struggled with some of his father's domineering ways, he still freely spoke of his father's positive impact in his artistic beginnings.

> My dad was real creative and he played the guitar. He got us started with music, which is still a big part of my life. Then Dad got a paint set for Christmas one time just out of the blue. We were just fascinated that there were just tubes of paint. I had never seen a tube of paint until he got the paint box. I watched him learn how to paint, and I thought maybe I could do that. So, he let me try a little bit.

Though no direct parental support was noted from Sir Blues Brown's data, he was still subject to vicarious parental support from an artistic mother. He spoke of his mother being very artistic in that she could do oil paintings. Sir Blues Brown had no one to be

unsupportive in his creative endeavor. With a more permissive parenting style, his

mother supported his creative process by not discouraging him to pursue it.

Presence of critical incidents

Artists had at least one critical incident happen to him or her that helped them

grow artistically by changing the direction of their creative process. Each participant

gave credit to these incidents as a major factor in their personal artistic growth. One of

Sir Blues Brown's critical incidents was quite comical. While working as a disk jockey

at a "mom and pop's" radio station, his program director fell asleep during a staff

meeting. Sir Blues Brown's general manager fired his program director on the spot, and

Sir Blues Brown was promoted to program director status at the station.

Likewise, Professor Art also spoke of a critical incident in his evolution as a

creative producer. However, Professor Art's critical incident did not come in the form of

a sudden job opportunity, but through the form of a colleague of his. His colleague, his

friend, opened Professor Art's mind to a new way of thinking. Professor Art spoke of a

good friend of his who helped him reach another level of painting. His colleague and

friend helped him develop another way of thinking about his art, which, in turn, helped

him develop a new method of painting. Professor Art speaks of this time as:

> The "summer of our content" is what we called it. Everyday we would
> show up in our shorts and start painting. We painted a lot of pictures and
> just had fun slinging paint to see what happened, talking about our
> product, the process. I was a great learning opportunity for me. I'll never
> be able to repay him for that. It put my life in a different direction
> artistically and intellectually.

Thus, Mrs. Teach U. Art had both a negative and a positive critical incident that came her

way. Her first key negative incident happened when she was in fourth grade and received

a check in conduct from her favorite teacher, Mrs. Tarr. This was the beginning of Mrs.

Teach U. Art's tendency to "tone it down" and keep her feelings of sudden creativity, excitement, and play within herself. The negative she still remembers and the positive she married, but she acknowledges both as having an impact on her artistic development. Where one caused her a fear of rejection; the other encouraged her to take her heart's risk and follow her passion.

An enduring feeling of passion and responsibility

Most of the participants spoke of a passion they have for their field that seemed to manifest itself as a responsibility each participant felt toward his/her field of artistic endeavor. Professor Art directly spoke of a seriousness and responsibility that an artist has for his field. When asked what he liked about being an artist, he replied, "What I most like about being an artist is the responsibility of it. Because, if it wasn't serious, I don't think I would be interested."

Professor Art's opinion of creative people is directly seen in Sir Dark Art's passion to make his field within the visual arts more recognized. He uses his art to make others think. He mentioned that his work really has a psychological aspect to it. When I asked him more about that, he stated:

> It is psychological, it's mental, it makes you think, which I like. It's not just pictures of bluebonnets in fields. It makes you think, "I wonder why he did that?" If somebody is going to look at this work, which I don't like because it's a personal thing, but if they happen to look at it, I'd like for them to see, "Hey! I know where he's coming from," or "I don't see where he is coming from at all," but at least there's a thought process involved. I don't want them to just look at it and say, "Oh, that's ugly," and "That's pretty." That's where you can look at some of my pieces four or five different times and find something new

Sir Blues Brown also speaks of the disk jockey's and radio station's responsibility for their station and the community. Radio is an image-based reality for the listeners.

Thus, the disk jockey is responsible for both helping to project an image of radio through the speakers and into the mind of the listeners. However, "Not many understand that they have a responsibility with that, that they can create an image." Likewise, Sir Blues Brown feels that he has a personal responsibility to not only project the image of the station, but to also make his listeners think.

> I used to love to do a thing I called Musical Mood Manipulation. I can take any 3 records and create a concept of thought based on the image or what's in the records. If I want to make you angry, I can make you angry. If I want to make you sad, I can make you sad. I can make you think about abortion, war. I can make you think about anything I want to.

Thus, Professor Art's opinion that creative people take their work seriously and feel a sense of responsibility for their fields is clear in both Sir Dark Art's and Sir Blue Brown's interviews. Where both Sir Blues Brown and Sir Dark Art look at art as a means of making their viewers/listeners think, Professor Art views the arts as a means of preserving and holding the culture together. Mrs. Teach U. Art, being in the beginning stages of her artistic evolution, spoke more of her responsibility as an art teacher for her high school students in her classes. She mentions that taking art classes helps her to stay connected with how her students must feel when she is constantly asking them to "put it out on the line day in and day out."

Emerging Theme Two: An Intense Inner Sense of Self

This study's creative producers spoke of having an inner sense of self that has lived within them from an early age and continues to be their inner voice today. This voice is like a driving force that makes them want to perform and broaden their résumé. This intensified inner sense of self is a heightened awareness of their intrinsic feelings concerning personal appreciation for artistic growth. It's almost as though the passion

drives the artist to continue to perform through a sense of responsibility, and this inner sense of self-fuels that passion to expand the artist's abilities. Thus, each artist is aware, via his/her inner sense of self, of his/her artistic growth, and desire to create. This theme came from specific categories that emerged from the raw data including: an early awareness of inner-self, the artist and the person are one; an awareness of personal and artistic growth; an awareness of where they pull ideas from, and art as a sense of therapy.

Early awareness of inner self

Each participant spoke of having an awareness of his/her inner self at an early age. Thus, they realized that they are separate entities in their world with separate feelings and memories of events. Professor Art spoke of remembering his shadow as a toddler.

> One of the most vivid memories that I have is it's early in the morning, and I'm going out onto the back porch of our house and feeling the sun on me and watching my shadow. A very crisp shadow of myself on the steps and then onto the wall of the house, and being fascinated for I don't know how long. I was just moving and watching the shadow and feeling the warmth of the sun. the freshness of the morning I tend to remember. It was a real happy time for me, and I thought, 'Man, I hope I get to remember this later.' I think that's part of the memory is wanting to remember it, because it was so neat.

Mrs. Teach U. Art spoke about how her inner self was one that had to be maintained. Through various schooling situations and her parents' Victorian attitude, she had to suppress herself and not be so sensitive and excitable about things. She had to learn to control the wild streak. Likewise, in high school, she speaks of wanting to hang out with the artsy crowd but not doing so, because she was too afraid of not fitting in. Again, she is aware of her own conforming behavior.

The artist and the person are one

Three of the four participants I interviewed spoke of their inability to divide themselves into two separate personas: the artist and the person. This inability obviously affects both their home and work lives, since they are one and the same.

Professor Art bluntly stated, " I don't know how to divide myself artificially," when asked about his differing roles as an artist at home and an art director and professor at work. He believes that he was just born to create, but had no direction or education of the world of visual arts in his childhood environment. "It's just been a slow life process. I think I was an artist early on, but I had no clue that there was even such a thing as artist as a Bible occupation." Likewise, Sir Dark Art response to my question was, "I really don't have to separate my home life from my work life. They're both kind of one and the same and that's art. Life imitates art. Work imitates art. Life is art. Whatever. It's all the same kind of thing."

Sir Blues Brown gives credit to his atypical childhood as a motivating factor in his success as a radio programmer today in the sense that he is not afraid to make decisions. He can improvise, adapt, and overcome, and the fact that he has the humility in his personal self that will not allow radio to go to his head. In his own words,

I think one of the things that have helped me to survive this industry was humility. Growing-up the way I did, I suffered humility a lot. I had to improvise. I had to do things I didn't want to do, and when I had something, I was grateful to have it. so, I wasn't over reactive to, 'Oh look at me. Look what I did. Look at what I've got.' I think humility is probably one of the biggest lessons. Growing up, my ability to improvise, to problem-solve, because I didn't have anybody to solve the problems for me. I had to figure out solutions. I had to be brave enough to attack the problems, to think about it, analyze it, to figure out how to get from point A to point B. I might be over expressing this, but I think growing up that way, I just and to have the balls, the nerve, to make decisions. That's helped me, because I'm not scared to make decisions in my life now.

Awareness of personal and artistic growth

Each of my participants show a trend for being aware of different moments in their lives when they had some sort of creative or personal growth and/or breakthrough, and they are currently aware of their continued artistic evolvement today.

Mrs. Teach U. Art has spent the majority of her artistic life teaching art, yet hiding from her own artistic talents that are screaming to be let out. She has muffled her work for so long by trying to overcome what she learned as a child, a serious lack of self-efficacy in her ability to create something of which others will approve. Likewise, she spoke of how she did not feel as though she really deserved to create art, when she had a home to run and all these other responsibilities hanging over her head. However, now she is beginning to embrace her more artistic side. The children are reared, and she is beginning to really feel as though she has come into her own as an artist.

Mrs Teach U. Art:

> I found the things that I really feel strongly about, I see why people get in their studio and really don't want to hear any opinions. It's taken me many years to get to that I'm ok. I'm a big old grown-up person. I really don't have to care what anybody thinks about it, but that's still so hard to justify at the time. I'm getting better. I feel like I'm finally coming into my own. I'm feeling good in my own skin.

Sir Dark Art talks about how his artwork was only for himself in the beginning, but now he doesn't mind sharing most of it with the world and hearing their critique. He is no longer afraid of others' reactions to his work.

> Before it was just for me, but now I like how people react, because I have so many mixed reactions. There's some that just are in ah awe and feed your ego, and you're like, "Yeah!" Then, there's some that are like, "You're weird," you know, but it's cool because it's their opinion and they're entitled to it. I don't really see a review I get from my artwork as a bad review. I just see someone voicing their opinion and I got a reaction from them. I got them to think about something….Nobody really thinks

about anything anymore, so if I can just get them to think of something and react, that's a good feeling."

Awareness of idea generation

Professor Art stresses that a lot of his art compliments his outdoorsy upbringing. He has a sincere love of the outdoors, not because it's the "next big thing" but because it is who he is. Professor Art was not the youngster taken to various art museums or being a loner inside who sat in his room and drew all the time. Thus, even though he has graduated from college, teaches college, and has moved on with other accomplishments in his life, his talk is about how his art is pulled from his upbringing's environment. "After leaving home, I like to say I transcended it, but at the same time those roots are where I'm going back to, what I'm drawing from, to strengthen my art now. It's really full circle for me."

Mrs. Teach U. Art: "A lot of my stuff is very narrative." "Something I want to say, but mostly it's things I like." Sir Dark Art talks about how his artwork comes from either his emotional side or just straight-up creative side. Sir Dark Art's creative side is one that tells stories, jump starts his series work, and is where a lot of his movie ideas originate. "I just tell things that I think should be told. Whether it be for entertainment purposes or philosophical purposes, just something to think about."

Art as therapy

Interestingly, all four of my participants spoke of art as being more than just a creative outlet for them to express themselves, to tell the world their ideas, but they use their art as a sense of self-defined therapy. Whether it is a means of gluing different aspects of their personal life together in one entity, to vent about an uncomfortable

evening, to release a flow of emotional stress, or to correct a wrong. These participants

all spoke of their artwork as being a sense of therapy to them.

Mrs. Teach U. Art used her Cheeto Altar as a way to poke fun and vent about a

miserable evening she had entertaining people. The irony in her story is how a Cheeto (a

family prized source of junk food) saved her mentally and emotionally that night.

> Like with the Cheeto Altar, it solves the problem of telling the world how
> I feel about Cheetos, and how precious. This is like, you know, a saint's
> bone in this huge Cheeto eye god on an evening I was entertaining people
> I didn't care to entertain. It was like a gift from Heaven (the enormous
> Cheeto that fell out of the bag).

Thus, her Cheeto Altar tells the world how she feels about Cheetos, how one helped her

on a miserable evening, and how Cheetos are a bonding element amongst both her sisters

and immediate family.

Sir Dark Art labeled his first art show, "Therapy." He spoke of how, at first, he

was scared of the show, because "that's my soul on a wall" but how he was glad he did

the show afterwards. He describes his artistic therapy as follows:

> To coin a religious term, it's an exorcism of sorts. However it's on my
> mind, I put it on paper. Then, when I'm done with the piece, I'm done.
> Some people go punch a punching bag, I do artwork. Some people mow
> the lawn and clean, I do artwork.

Sir Blues Brown uses radio as a way to give back to society. As a child and

teenager, he lived in a reality that did not adhere, as much to the law, yet he was aware of

this lack of respect for society. Thus, he felt remorse about some of his actions that

occurred from childhood to young adulthood.

> I did a lot of wild things in there to make it. sold a lot of drugs. Hurt a lot
> of people. Did a lot of things just to survive. I think that was one of the
> driving forces too, that it was the wrong thing to do. I was an angry
> person. I didn't like the world. I was angry at me. I think that helped me.

> I think it reflects a lot in radio, because radio gives me a chance to make
> people happy. I aspire to give back.

Sir Blues Brown uses his artistic instrument as a way to give back to society. Sir Dark

Art uses his artistic tool as a means of expressing his emotional stress. Mrs. Teach U. Art

uses her artistic abilities as a means of poking fun at her frustrating surroundings.

Emerging Theme Three: Art as a Greater Whole

Though my participants are at different stages in their artistic careers and are at

different levels of artistic evolution, each artist stresses the importance of the arts as

having an effect on others. In the broadest sense, these artists are aware of their ability to

have an effect on their communities. The first thing that each stresses is the importance of

their art as a reflection of themselves. Through telling their own stories, stating their own

opinions, and drawing from their own "mental rolodex" they share their beliefs and ideas

with the world. This theme surfaced from specific categories that emerged from the raw

data including the humanistic purpose of the arts, and arts' effect on the community.

The humanistic purpose of the arts

The participants speak of how they want to have an impact on their audience.

Sir Blues Brown stresses the image of his radio station. He stresses how important an

auditory image is in regard to his listeners' perception of his station. Additionally, he

stresses how powerful the image of the station can be and how so many people in the

radio industry are not moving forward, because they do not get what radio is all about.

> There's a small group that actually get it. That understand there is power
> there, there is purpose, and meaning. Most people just say that our job is
> to entertain, hopefully. (Laughs). But, not many understand that they have
> a responsibility with that, that they can create an image.

The image that Sir Blues Brown speaks of is one that "Hits society's emotions."

Thus, the humanist view of the arts is stressed in radio, because they can, "Take a mad

person and make him madder or a sad person and make him sadder." Sir Blues Brown

states,

> You can influence people's emotions and their lifestyles by what you do,
> and I think that good radio stations consciously keep that always a
> factor… I think there's only a small group of programmers and
> consultants across the country and operators, station owners that
> understand that deep philosophy of what we do.

 Previously, Professor Art talked about how artists have a responsibility to

themselves first, but also to their community by being serious about their work. (See

Chapter IV, Artistic Evolution). He also believes that creativity is reflected in all fields,

but his field is also humanisticly unique in regard to the artist's voice,

> There is creativity in all fields. I respect that. One of the fun things about
> my field is that it's so humanly oriented.   I like the emotion part of the
> arts. Trying to address those things to others to understand why we feel
> the way we do.

He later adds,

> I guess I could create in isolation, but I don't see that as being very
> human. My experience in life is that everything's connected and people
> are very important.

> Sir Dark Art also speaks of the humanity of the arts and how his artwork is his

"soul on a wall." He also uses his instrument for expression, as a means of addressing

what he thinks should be said and "taking a mental trip into a person's psyche". He

spoke about a piece of his, "Whisper" that has a psychological impact on his audience.

> I like to kind of take a trip into the human mind, you know, and see what
> people come up with on their own. That's what I like about a few pieces
> that I have, because a few people get a lot of different things out of them.
> One of them I call, "Whisper" and it's, uh, one where there's this woman.
> She's almost kind of faceless, and the back is a mirror, and the woman's

face is there and she is screaming. What that's kind of a take on is people in everyday life. You know? Because, we put on our happy face and show everybody what they want to see. They don't want to see that on the inside we're screaming. What we're ultimately doing is whispering to the world, I guess.

Art's effect on the community

Each participant acknowledged that his or her occupation in the visual arts has a community impact. Throughout history, art has been a part of the community in the form of plays, musicals, orchestras, religious services, cave drawings, and technological advances, highway billboards, commercials, and so forth. The artists are having their voices heard on either large or smaller scales, and they are hoping to have an impact on their communities through their audiences. Interestingly, Sir Blues Brown not only acknowledges his impact on the community, but the community's impact on his radio image. He states, "Do understand one thing. There is no accounting for the taste of your audience." Thus, in a paramilitary town, he is not going to play antiwar songs, and at a heavy metal station, you will not hear a Bach musical for the afternoon drive.

I don't play the current Slipknot because they're anti-military and things like that. Well, that's not good to be playing in a paramilitary community. So those types of considerations come in (during music selection).

Furthermore, he views radio as a vital part of the community.

I look at it as an intregal part of our community and our society. I believe that we are trendsetters not trend followers. There's a lot of responsibility with that. I have the passion and desire to have some impact within society on whatever level I can.

Professor Art also acknowledges the arts effect on the community and the seriousness that is associated with being an artist. Yet, he broadens art's influence on the community to an influence on culture and it's presence in history.

> What I most like about being an artist is the responsibility of it. Because,
> if it wasn't serious, I don't think I would be interested. But, I see that
> through the study of art history and knowing the artists, and knowing how
> important the arts are to hold culture together, I see that it's real important.

Sir Dark Art stresses the importance of making his audience think through his art.

He states, "All of my artwork is psychological, it's to get you to think." Furthermore, in

regard to his own creativity, he states," I'm inspired by uniqueness. That's the best way I

can put it. Because, especially in this day in age, there are so many remakes, remixes,

and you know, even old fashion is coming back. As soon as I hear something original,

that inspires me to be original." Thus, the community of creative artists may inspire each

other to be creative, thus affecting the society in which they live.

Conclusions and Implications

　　　　This study began with the inquisitive mind of a researcher who created a

dissertation proposal based on the following research questions:

　　1.　How do creative individuals become successful creative producers?

　　2.　How do these creative producers sustain their levels of creative production?

　　Research Question One: How do creative individuals become successful creative

　　producers?

　　　　Each participant shared certain personality characteristics with other participants

that assisted them as they grew into their artistic selves. Likewise, they each had key

events that impacted their artistic lives in a positive and uplifting manner. All

participants had some form of parental support, an early awareness of their inner selves, a

tendency to take risks, critical incidents that impacted their evolvement to and within

their fields in a positive light, and a growing passion to exceed their current artistic

abilities.

Gardner (1993) spoke of two themes that he found in his study of creative producers. One of his themes details how social forces surround creative breakthroughs. In this study, the creative producers all had some form of parental support for their creative endeavors. This was true for Sir Dark Art, Mrs. Teach U. Art, and Professor Art. Sir Blues Brown also received parental support vicariously through his mother's artistic streak of painting and through the lack of discouragement for his creative endeavors.

Feldhusen & Goh (1995) conducted a study of creative producers in which he found that creative producers have (a) high energy levels,(b) a commitment to work to his/her work at an early age, (c) a preference for working alone, and (d) intrinsic motivation accompanied with a self-concept of creative power. The creative producers in this study also displayed the same traits as Feldhusen & Goh's (1995) creative producers. All four displayed high energy levels, a commitment to his/her work at an early age in the form of child's play, a preference for working alone, and intrinsic motivation. Their self-concept of creative power emerges within the theme of Art as a Greater Whole, because they all believe that they are working to enhance their communities perception of art.

Critical incidents had an important and positive impact on these participants artistic lives. Sir Dark Art's had a variety of critical incidents. One was that Harry Connick, Jr. came across his artwork in Dallas, Texas, which jump-started his work with Sony. This example of Sir Dark Art's critical incident may be due to chance. Professor Art spoke fondly of his friend who helped him to learn the technique of responding while painting during his "Summer of Content." Sir Blues Brown had a variety of critical incidents during his upbringing that effected him as an artist including the time his radio programmer fell asleep during a meeting, got fired on the spot, and Sir Blues Brown took

a risk at volunteering to do his job. Sir Blues Brown's critical incident was self-initiated, because even though chance can be credited to a radio programmer falling asleep during a station meeting. Sir Blues Brown's risk-taking behavior is what put his hand up in the air to volunteer for the job on the spot. Mrs. Teach U. Art has also had a number of critical incidents happen to her, yet the incident with the strongest impact on her as an artist may the meeting of Professor Art during college. Thus, for both Professor and Mrs. Teach U. Art, other important people played a critical role in the implementation of their critical incidents.

Research Question Two: How do these creative producers sustain their levels of creative production?

These participants displayed several similarities that assisted them to sustain high levels of creative production, yet none of them stressed sustaining a high level of creative production as a forerunning thought in their minds. The single most important factor in these artists ability to maintain such a superior degree of creativity may be their intense inner passion to better themselves within their fields.

Dabrowski (1967) wrote about how the sensitivities and intensities of life that creative people experience influences their psychological growth, which promotes their creative performance. Two other categories from this study's grounded data that supports the theme of an Intense Inner Sense of Self are (1) an awareness of personal and artistic growth and (2) the artist and person are one. Thus, these people cannot separate their creative self from their person which may help them to be more aware of their evolving personal growth as artists.   Each participant in this study spoke of his/her awareness of his or her personal and creative growth from childhood and on into today.

This artistic growth trend that accompanied these participants lives evolved into its own theme.

Summary

In retrospect, a single research question that asks how creative people transition into creative producers and maintain and sustain their high levels of creative production may have been more appropriate, because the themes that arose from the grounded data appear to correlate to both research questions. It appears that a creative person transitions into being a creative producer through both their intense inner sense of self and their need to have a continuous evolution as an artist within their field. Their passion for their field helps to fuel their continuous evolution. These creative producers' passions for their specific fields fuel their artistic evolutions, which helps to sustain and maintain their already high levels of creative production.

Recommendations for Future Studies

This dissertation delves directly into the lives of creative producers within the visual and performing arts. More specifically, it establishes the emergent themes that these creative producers have in common that promoted their growth from a creative individual to a creative producer and how they maintain and sustain their already high levels of creative production. Thus, this study focuses more about the lives of the participants and less about their creative processes and/or products. In general, more research needs to be conducted on the lives of the creative producers, hence, "It certainly is too much to expect a full understanding of the creative process by studying only products and achievement," (Runco, 1995, 382).

The various roles that women play in their personal lives may have a more or less profound impact on their evolution as a creative artist than what happened to Mrs. Teach U. Art. Therefore, more studies which focus on the various aspects of being a female creative producer in the visual and performing arts is suggested. These studies may want to consider the impacts that being either a single mother, a mother in general, a career woman, a wife, a career woman who is also a mother and wife, and other various combinations of the titles that women may hold on their lives. These studies may want to include such things as the pressure that women feel from their partners, extended family members, friends, and society's stigmas in general about the previously listed roles that woman may play on their personal lives and how these stereotypes effect them as artists if at all.

Future studies may want to consider if any differences exist between creative individuals/creative producers who had transient childhoods. For example, are transient children more likely to be risk-takers in adult life? This would be an important consideration in the sense that most creative producers do have the personality streak of being a risk-taker (Torrance, 1993; VanTassel-Baska, 1998).

REFERENCES

Amabile, T. M. (1990). Within you, without you: The social psychology of creativity and beyond. In M. A. Runco & R. S. Albert (Eds.), *Theories of creativity* (pp. 61-91). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Amabile, T. M., Conti, R., Coon, H., Lazenby, J., & Herron, M. (1996). Assessing the work environment for creativity. *Academy of Management Journal 39,* 1154-1184.

Armbruster, B.B. (1989). Metacognition in creativity. In. J.A. Glover, & C.R. Reynolds (Ed.), *Handbook of creativity* (pp. 177-181). New York: Plenum

Becker, M. (1995). Nineteenth century foundations of creativity research. *Creativity Research Journal, 8*(3), 219-229.

Brown, R. T. (1989). Creativity: What are we to measure? In. J.A. Glover, & C.R. Reynolds (Ed.), *Handbook of creativity* (pp. 3-32). New York: Plenum.

Courtney, B.C., Merriam, S.B. & Reeves, P.M. (1998). The centrality of meaning making in transformational learning; how HIV-positive adults make sense of their lives. *Adult Educational Quarterly, 48*(2), 65-84.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1985). Emergent motivation and the evolution of the sell motivation in adulthood. In M. H. Mehr (Ed.), *Advances in motivation and achievement* (Vol. 4, pp. 93-119.). Greenwich,CT: JAI Press.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990) *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience.* Harper Perinneal, New York.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996, July/August). The creative personality: The new frontiers of happiness. *Psychology Today,* 36-40.

Dabrowski, K. (1967). Personality-shaping through positive disintegration. Boston: Little Brown & Co.

Dacey, J. S. (1989). *Fundamentals of creative thinking*. Boston: Lexington Books.

de Bono, E. (1967). *New think: The use of lateral thinking in the generation of new ideas*. New York: Basic.

Erlandson, D. A., Harris, E.L., Skipper, B.L. & Allen, S.D. (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry: A guide to methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Feldhusen, J. F. & Goh, B.E. (1995). Assessing and accessing creativity: An integrative review of theory, research, and development. *Creativity Research Journal, 8*(3), 231-247.

Flowers, J.H. & Garbin, C. P. (1989). Creativity and perception. In. J.A. Glover, & C.R. Reynolds (Ed.), *Handbook of creativity* (147-161). New York: Plenum

Gardner, H. (1993). *Creating minds*. New York: Basic Books.

Gruber, Howard E. (1974). *Darwin on man: A psychological study of scientific creativity* London: Wildwood House.

Guildford, J. P. (1950). Creativity. *American Psychologist, 5*, 444-454

Guildford, J. P. (1966). *The nature of human intelligence*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Guildford, J. P. (1975). Creativity: A quarter century of progress. In J. W. Getzels (Ed.), *Perspectives of creativity* (pp. 37-59). Chicago: Aldine.

Hayes, J.R. Cognitive processes in creativity. In. J.A. Glover, & C.R. Reynolds (Ed.), *Handbook of creativity* (pp. 135-146). New York: Plenum.

Houtz, J. C., Edwin, S., Esquivel, G.B., Okoye, R. A., Peters, K.M., & Treffinger, J.D. (2003). Creativity styles and personal type. *Creativity Research Journal, 15*(4), 321-330.

Kirton, M. J. (1976). Adaptor and innovators: A description and measure. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 61*, 622-629.

Larey, T. (1999). Group preference and convergent tendencies in small groups: A content ananlysis of group brainstorming performance. *Creativity Research Journal, 12*(3), 175-186.

Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Mace, M. A. (1997). Toward an understanding of creativity through a qualitative appraisal of contemporary art making. *Creativity Research Journal, 10*(2), 265-278.

MacKinnon, D. W. (1978). In search of human effectiveness: Identifying and developing creativity. Buffalo, NY: Creative Education Foundation.

Maier, N.R.F. (1931) Reasoning in humans: II. The solution of a problem and its appearance in consciousness. Journal of Comparative and Physiological Psychology, 12, 181-194.

Martindale, C. (1989). Personality, situation, and creativity. In J.A. Glover, & C.R. Reynolds (Ed.), *Handbook of creativity* (pp. 211-232). New York: Plenum.

McCrae, R. R. (1999). Consistency of creativity across the life span. In M. A. Runco, &

S.R. Pritzker (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of creativity* (pp. 357-371). San Diego: Academic Press.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Murdock, M. C. & Moore, M.T. (1995). Another look at reputational paths and case studies. *Creativity Research Journal, 8*(1), 91-94.

Ochse, R. (1993). *Before the gates of excellence: The determinants of creative genius.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Olszewski-Kubilius, P. (2000). The transition from childhood giftedness to adult creative productiveness. *Roeper Review, 23*(2), 65-72.

Rumelhart, D. E. & Norman, D. A. (1978). Accretion, tuning, and restructuring: Three modes of learning. In J. W. Cotton & R. L. Klatzsky (Eds), *Semantic factors in cognition.* Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlba um Associates Inc. pp. 37-53.

Runco, M. A. (1995). Insight for creativity: Expression for impact. *Creativity Research Journal, 8*(4), 377-390.

Stavridou, A. & Furnham, A. (1996). The relationship between psychoticism, trait creativity, and the attential mechanism of cognitive inhibition. *Personality and Individual Differences, 21*, 143-153.

Sternberg, R. J. & William, W.M. (1998). *Intelligence, instruction, and assessment: Theory into practice.* London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Therivel, W. A. (1999). Why Mozart and not Salieri. *Creativity Research Journal, 121*(1), 67-76.

Torrance, E. P. (1979). An instructional model for enhancing incubation. *Journal of Creative Behavior, 12*, 23-25.

Torrance, E. P. (1991). The beyonders and their characteristics. *The Creative Child and Adult Quarterly, 16*(2), 69-79.

Torrance, E. P. (1993). Understanding creativity: Where to start? *Psychological Inquiry, 4*(3), 232-235.

Torrance, E. P. & Safter, H.T. (1999). *Making the creative leap and beyond.* Buffalo,NY: Creative Education Foundation Press.

VanTassel-Baska, J. (1998). Creativity and the gifted. In J. VanTassel-Baska (Ed.), *Excellence in education: Gifted and talented learners* (pp. 381-398). Denver: Love Publishing Company.

Vernon, P.E. (1989). The nature-nurture problem in creativity, In. J.A. Glover, & C.R.
    Reynolds (Ed.), *Handbook of creativity* (pp. 93-108). New York: Plenum

Wallas, B. (1926). *The art of thought*. London: Watts.

Winner, E. (1996). *Gifted children: Myths and realities*. New York: Basic Books.

Zussman, R. (2004). People in places. *Qualitative Sociology, 27*(4), 351-363.

VITA

SUZANNE CATRICE CARROLL
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
4225 TAMU
COLLEGE STATION, TX 77843-4225

Texas A&M University	M.Ed.	Educational Psychology	2003
Tarleton State University	B.S.	Psychology	2001