Chapter 1

Introduction

It is important to review language that reinforces the dominant culture's view of disability. Around the world and throughout history, various terminologies and meanings have been used to describe variations in humans that are known in contemporary Westernized countries as disabilities. During the past century, the terms *disabled*, *handicapped*, and *crippled* have been used as nouns that convey the idea that there is a common link in this group of distinct individuals. The terms have been used to classify people in ways that are economically and socially convenient for society as a whole.

Over the past 20 years, people with disabilities have gained greater control over use of terminology. The "disabled" or the "handicapped" were replaced in the mid-1970s by "people with disabilities" to maintain disability as a characteristic of the individual, as opposed to the defining variable. Beginning in the early 1990s, "disabled people" was increasingly used in disability studies and disability rights circles when referring to the constituency group (Linton, 1998).

However, glancing through any dictionary will reveal definitions of disability that include incapacity, deficiency, and

especially a physical or mental impairment that restricts normal achievement. A disability is something that hinders or incapacitates. The term *disability*, as it has been generally used, appears to signify something material and concrete, a physical or physiological condition to have predominantly a medical significance.

The terminology of disability may have been modified. The societal conception of disability as a negative medical condition in conjunction with the perception of disability as impairment, hindering, incapacitating, or limiting normal achievement has not been altered. This situation has major implications for people with disabilities because society either has absolutely no expectation or has substantially lower expectations of performance. With the challenges of society's prejudice of disability, how is it then that individuals with disabilities are able to be creative?

Problem Statement

According to Simonton(1996) "people are almost universal in their appreciation of creativity. This is true in home and at school and whether at work or play" (p. 189). Additionally

according to Csikszentmihalyi[1] (1996), "creativity results from the interaction of the system composed of three elements: a culture that contains symbolic rules, a person who brings novelty into the symbolic domain, and a field of experts who recognize and validate the innovation" (p. 6). There is research concerning the construct of creativity for the general population. However, a void exists in academic literature relating to research and investigation concerning creativity in the arts specifically as it pertains to people with physical disabilities.

An assumption could be made that accessible research concerning creativity in the arts and people with physical disabilities would help lead to a better understanding of creativity in general. Access to knowledge of this kind could benefit individuals with physical disabilities immediately at micro-level. This will be attained by documenting examples of success and how that success has been attained. It is also not unreasonable to speculate that research of this kind could foster understanding, promote discussion, and study of creativity at the macro-level. This information could better inform national and local policy improvement, arts programming,

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[1] As a note of interest, Seligman (2002) offers a pronunciation for Csikszentmihalyi "("cheeks sent me high" the name comes from St. Michael of Csik, a town in Transylvania)" (p. 113).

and curriculum development, and, above all, it could encourage a more realistic and positive perception of the potential concerning people with disabilities.

Conceptual Framework

Bronfenbrenner (1992) illustrates in ecological systems theory that understanding an individual is possible only by truly understanding his or her environment. Consequently, it is very important for this study to gain an understanding of the length of experience, type, level, and severity of physical disability of the individuals involved. In addition, it is important to document and evaluate schemes, attitudes, and cognitive decisions employed by people with disabilities that enhance or facilitate their life of creativity.

Opportunities to experience compatible activities that will ultimately lead to creativity will require study and identification. People with physical disabilities should be able "seek out those sensory environments that are conducive to optional functioning" (Eysenck, Nias, and Cox, 1982, p. 5).

These opportunities may lead to effort by an individual to overcome the distraction of physical disability and begin to discover creativity. Leisure activities may well be the

beginning point for this effort. However, as Prost (1992)

notes, many people with physical disabilities are chronically or

sporadically unemployed and therefore commonly poor. This

situation deprives them of participation and enjoyment in any

number of leisure activities that are available to much of the

rest of society. These activities could incubate creativity in

people with physical disabilities.

Stebbins (1998) states that "leisure studies specialists have

all but ignored the leisure patterns and needs of people with

disabilities" (p. 1). As a result, says Prost (1992), we know

little about the meaning of the leisure among that group of

people. McGill (1996) and Simmons (1995) explain further that

family members and leisure service professionals are concerned

primarily with keeping people with physical disabilities busy

and not necessarily with providing significant and meaningful

leisure experiences. Significant forms of leisure are capable

of providing deep satisfaction through exploration and discovery

of who they are and who they might become through personal

expression. These opportunities will provide a valued identity,

which is important to individuals as they discover meaning and

create balance in their lives. Reynolds (2002) states that

"people with learning disabilities may experience poor self-

image and behavioral problems which are not necessarily a direct

outcome of cognitive impairment, but caused by living a life with restricted opportunities for pleasurable and meaningful occupation" (p. 63). Without question, this scenario can be transferred to people with physical disabilities as well.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) believes that some of the many gifts of creativity in art or any other discipline are self-respect, self-discovery, and a small contribution to society. Other rewards of creativity are simply the love of the activity, the opportunity to enjoy work, and total involvement with life.

Research Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between people with physical disabilities and creativity in the arts. The interest here is to research schemes, attitudes, and decisions employed by people with disabilities that will enhance or facilitate a life of creativity.

Good evidence, in my opinion, is based on precise observations that are repeatable, informed by theory that will hopefully unveil illusions and will have a certain aesthetic property that can make a connection with people's inner feelings. I believe that human beings have a desire to create meaning, are constantly making sense of their world, and are social. In

addition, common sense is a very powerful concept that is used and understood by ordinary people, including people with disabilities. I also believe that the reason for research is to discover natural laws so that people may better understand the world in which we live. An understanding of these laws will provide the impetus for and empower change in society with meaningful action.

Creativity is almost universally revered as a human trait. However, people with disabilities experience substantial challenges in their efforts to attain creativity. The in-depth case study examines three individuals with a physical disability who are actively involved in the arts. This study will allow for greater insight into the following:

(a) What are the cognitive mechanisms that people with physical disabilities use to facilitate their creativity? (b) Do people experience a series of stagelike processes in reaction to the onset of physical disability? (c) Is it possible that people will experience positive shifts in values, attitudes, and beliefs that were generated in part by the onset of physical disability? (d) How do people overcome the distraction of physical disability and move toward positive growth? (e) How much influence do mentors have on creativity? (f) Is denial of a disability an effective coping strategy?

The type of creativity of interest for this research is a life of personal creativity, specifically in the arts: a life that is more satisfying than most lives typically are (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

The knowledge and understanding gained during this research project should enable me to facilitate and encourage a lifestyle of creativity for those I will have the opportunity to serve in the future.

Chapter 2

My goal in the literature review was to gain some understanding
of the environment or atmosphere in which creative people with
disabilities live. I thought it also important to examine that
nebulous idea of creativity. I did include the concept of
resilience in human beings, which I believe is an essential
component of this research. The literature research explores
(a) models of disability that include medical and social or
minority; (b) disability culture; (c) disability aesthetic; (d)
creativity; and (e) resilience and adaptability.

Models of Disability

Until the disability movement was initiated in the early 1970s,
individuals with disabilities were seen as medically or
functionally disadvantaged or deviant. The dominant framework
for understanding disabilities in the past was the medical
model. The medicalization of disability casts human variation
as a deviation from the norm, as a pathological condition, as a
deficit, and as an individual burden that translates into
personal tragedy. Scholars in the field of disability studies
also use the terms based on this focus as individual, medical,
or functional limitations (Burgstahler & Doe, 2004). As Hughes
(2000) states, "This model is far from socially benign, since

for disabled people, it is based on the disabling extrapolation

that bio-physical 'maladaptation'-to use the ubiquitous

evolutionary terminology-leads to social maladaptation" (p.

555). Social workers, medical doctors, special-education

teachers, disabled student service administrators, and

vocational rehabilitation counselors have also been educated to

understand disability as a long-term to permanent result of

pathology or injury. Consistent with this view of disability,

services for disabled adults typically focused on individual

rehabilitation or adaptation of the environment to accommodate

the disabling condition. This older medical model grants an

authoritative voice to the medical professional rather than to

the person with a disability. When medical definitions of

disability are used, it is a reasonable action to separate

people according to their medical condition through the use of

diagnostic categories and to impose medical distinction on human

variations. Individuals who hold this perspective believe a

person's inadequacies are responsible for the disadvantages that

they may experience. Society has continued to assign the

medical meaning to disability, which continues to confine the

issue within the area of the medical establishment.

Professionals who intervene in disability are concerned only

with curing, rehabilitating, and accommodating the individual.

These professionals are not concerned with changing the

individual's environment or treating the social processes and policies that constrict the lives of people with disabilities (Hahn, 1988a; Ingstad & Whyte, 1995; Linton, 1998). To quote Hughes (2000):

> To be or become invalid is to be defined as flawed or in deficit in terms of the unforgiving tribunal of nature and necessity, normality, and abnormality over which medical science presides. Medical distinctions are powerful cultural distinctions, which promote and reinforce social hierarchies and sort people into the bare "essentials" of identity. (p. 558)

This model is widely regarded among disability rights activists and disability studies scholars as the "opposition" model (Lubet, 2004). These activists and scholars are critical of the power of the medical definition of disability. They view it as a major obstacle to the reinterpretation of disability as a political category and to the social changes that might follow such a shift.

This is not to say that medical treatments have had entirely a negative impact on the lives of people with disabilities. One clear benefit has been that medical treatments have increased the well-being and vitality of many disabled people and have

saved many people's lives. It is critical for the medical establishment to try to improve the health and well-being of people with disabilities, continues to prevent disease and impairments. Research efforts concerning remedy or cure must be continued. Christopher Reeve is an example of a person who truly believed that some forms of paralysis will be cured in the very near future through medical research (Johnson, 2003).

In contrast to the medical model, there exists the social or minority group models of disability. These models have gained credibility in the arena of disability studies. They hold that the disadvantages associated with people with disabilities are primarily imposed by negative attitudes and systemic discrimination that results in system-wide barriers to information, communication, and the physical environment (Balcazar, Bradford & Fossett, 1988). In the social model, disability is the interaction between the person with impairment and the physical and social environment. It is only when a particular form of impairment encounters a society in which that impairment is not recognized or favored that the impairment becomes a disability. For a person using a wheelchair, it is not the body or the wheelchair that is disabling, but rather the stairs. The barriers of inaccessible architecture, attitudes toward people with disabilities, and the institutional

discrimination resulting from those barriers are, in the social model, the disabling factors. It is not the body of a person. A person is not a person with a disability until society makes it so.

Meekosha (2004) gives this Australian perspective:

> Over the past 30 years there has been a growing social, political and intellectual reevaluation of the situation for disabled people in the broad structures of society. This re-evaluation began to accelerate after 1981 with the International Year of Disabled People, a moment that raised the idea of disability as a human rights issue in global public discourse. This symbolic statement by the world community drew on other human rights struggles-by women, by racial and ethnic minorities, by gays, and lesbians-and had its influence in the academy. The fundamental challenge lay-as it had for other marginalized social sectors-in replacing the biological determinist views of the social presence of disabled people, with recognition of the social and political ways in which there are open Russian had been constructed. The 'social model', as it came to be known, argued that what ever the individual's impairment or apparent differences from some socially sanctioned 'norm', their capacity to operate in society was primarily determined by social recognition of

their needs, and the provision of "enabling" environments.
. . . One of the distinctive strategies produced by these
developments evolved into a conceptual distinction between
'impairment' as a functional limitation of the individual
actor and "disability" as a socially generated system of
discrimination. (p. 723)

As an interesting side note, Meekosha (2004) believes that the
evolution of disability studies can be seen as an integral part
of the emergence of the social movement of people with
disabilities and not just as a reflection of the period and
politics of liberation. She also sees an intellectual struggle
within academia against the dominant and unreflective paradigms
of normality.

Kuppers (2000) notes that activists for people with disabilities
have taken the social definition of disability and used it to
campaign not for special treatment, as the medical model
demonstrates, or special education. These activists assert the
idea that people with disabilities are citizens with civil
rights and the right to participate in society on equal terms.
This means full access to information, education, public
programs, employment, and transportation. Also, interactional
models support the idea that interaction of the individual and

the environment determines if a difficulty exists at all. For example, inaccessible facilities create barriers for people who use wheelchairs for mobility. Appropriately designed elevators, ramps, and other physical spaces ensure that no one is disadvantaged in this environment. People with disabilities should not be expected to live on nondisabled terms and accommodate themselves to someone's definition or notion of "normal." Instead, as the activists believe, a more accessible society, in both environmental and attitudinal terms, will help eradicate disability as a meaningful category. This change in society will leave only varying differences in its wake (Burgstahler & Doe, 2004).

The social and interactional models of disability are consistent with legislation, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. This legislation promotes the participation of individuals with disabilities in the most inclusive settings possible. The statute also mandates that reasonable accommodations be provided as needed and promotes both systemic change and individual accommodation.

                        Disability Culture
Traditionally there have been many different definitions for the term *culture* especially in the disciplines of sociology and

anthropology. These definitions range from identifiable music
and literature to the existence of artifacts to behaviors that
are supportive and related to the behaviors of others.
Pfeiffer (2004) reflected on the artifacts and language of
disability culture that consisted of items such as wheelchairs,
crutches, Braille documents, hearing aids, the stair lifters,
and other such devices. Also, there are publications such as
magazines that are directed toward the disability community.
There is music, literature, and poetry written by people with
disabilities and for people with disabilities. There are
performing arts groups composed entirely or almost entirely of
people with disabilities. While many persons in the Deaf
Community may not agree that they belong here, sign language
literature is available on video. There are also terms like
"crip", "blinkie," and "deafie," which only persons with certain
disabilities can use with legitimacy. Language consisting of
slang, sign language, and insider terms like "survivor" and
professional jargon are examples of the language of disability.
These are all mechanisms or components of what could be called
the traditional view of disability culture.

Pfeiffer (2004) does note that today he respects the position of
the Deaf Community in the area of sign language. Their position
is that those of us not conversant with sign language are the

ones with the disability. They consider people who are deaf to be part of the Deaf Community, which is a linguistic minority who are not disabled.

The idea of a flourishing disability culture seems to perplex many outside of the disability movement, including people with disabilities. Some continue to question the existence and/or legitimacy of such a culture, either because they fail to appreciate the shared oppression of those marginalized by disability or because they fail to recognize how or why this culture should be recognized or celebrated. Other individuals take it as a given that this culture does exist and indeed is thriving as it confronts the traditional construction of disability and celebrates the unique narratives of people with disabilities. These people, who could be called activists, feel that their mission is to shed light on disability and the celebrations that occur around and because of it. They also intend to create a record of the celebrations of this culture, its accomplishments, and its potential (Abbas, Church, Frazee, & Panitch, 2004).

People with disabilities may not have a culture in the traditional physical sense, such as being raised for generations among other people with shared physiological characteristics.

Many people with disabilities are aware that they certainly have a culture from an internal sense of sharing experiences with many other people with disabilities. These common internal experiences include knowing what it is to be cast as the "other," being raised as someone fundamentally different from other members of one's family, being openly talked about as "different," receiving overt sympathy, and ultimately having the gift of being unique in a world of people who do not stand out in a crowd. According to Abbas et al. (2004), all of these unique and exclusionary experiences in combination with vital survival strategies developed in response to them form the cornerstone for a shared disability culture.

To further this discussion, Peters (2000) notes that early concepts of culture were characterized as an organic whole or as an ethnic heirloom. An individual was assumed to have a culture by birthright versus individuals who produced culture by creating meaning in the lived experiences of their everyday lives. This resulted in a descriptive conception of culture that focused largely on classification of its component elements. However, more recent historical study of the development of culture as a concept rejected descriptive and categorical notions of culture as depicted or received. Instead

there is the concept of developing definitions of culture as an enacted dynamic process.

Out of very spirited discussions over a disability culture there have emerged three primary understandings of it, which, according to Pfeiffer (2004), will dominate the discussion of disability culture at the start of the 21st century. First, there is the contention that no separate disability culture can exist because disability is vastly different from linguistic and ethnic identities. Instead, they argue, there is a shared consciousness by most people with disabilities, which creates a strong bond between them. This argument is reinforced by a study conducted by Gilson and Depoy (2004), in which their informants saw their disabilities as personal characteristics among many others. Many of their informants were active in disability organizations. Yet, none, regardless of their involvement with disability efforts and organizations, articulated belonging to a separate and distinct disability culture. The strongest expression of disability identification among the informants emerged from the unwanted negative experiences of isolation, discrimination, and exclusion. They did make the point that the informants who perceived disability as primary to their lives and personal identities did not discuss disability identity as cultural pride. Their findings

did not support the construct of a distinct culture of
disability and consequently raised important questions about the
fit of the construct of culture with disability identity.
Gilson and Depoy (2004) emphasized that the notion of disability
as culture emerged from academic discourse and that it is
discussed primarily among academics and students. The research
team noted that the only informant who was conversant in the
cultural discourse of disability was a graduate student who had
been exposed to relevant literature.

Second, according to Pfeiffer (2004) there is the idea of
equating disability culture with participation in the disability
community, which as noted above does not necessarily define
cultural identity. In addition, in a study of acceptance,
denial, and adjustment among adults with disabilities, Olney,
Brockelman, Kennedy, and Newsom (2004) concluded:

> Controlling for age, gender, race, presence of psychiatric
> diagnosis and health status, adults who rejected their
> disability status reported significantly lower rates of
> mental health problems than those who accepted their
> disability status. Given the current stigma of disability
> in American culture, denial of disability status may be
> seen as a relative effective coping strategy. (p. 4)

These findings raise the following question: Is it healthy to declare disability and consider oneself part of disability culture?

Disability Aesthetic

Gabel (1998) points out that the cultural experience of disability is not always or predominantly experienced through active membership in a minority group. She asserts that the development of one's "embodied self" (p. 12) through the process of experiencing life is significantly influenced by personal interpretations that are unique for each individual. The body with a disability interacts within a social environment, but "identity itself starts with the body: what the body does, how the body looks, what the body says, how the body feels and how others experience that body" (p. 12). While developing a theory of an aesthetic of disability Gable (1998) continues:

When I say "I am disabled", I say something about the culture within which I experience life, its values, and its norms. I also consider my disabled-ness in light of my other body experiences (gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation) and how those are constructed and valued or de-valued in my culture. Finally, if my statement appears to disagree with the prevailing notions of my culture, then my claim is one of resistance to those notions, and,

in the end, my claim collaborates with my culture to

construct my disabled body. In the end, my statement says

much about me and how I view my body and my self but it

also says much about the others with whom I experience my

world. (pp. 74-75)

Peters (2000) adds that claiming disability means identifying

with a disability community. That is an aesthetic pursuit.

Claiming disability is an act of decoding in which aesthetic

pursuit creates a cultural identity within which innumerable

experiences and the multiple perspectives of people with

disabilities take center stage. She continues:

[A] disability culture as personal/aesthetic constitutes a

pervasive self, which is strategic and positional.

Cultural identities are constituted through a process of

personal identification that has aesthetic appeal. The

body (physical and ideational) serves a symbolic function

as the signifier of culture and constitutes subjective

realities. These realities are not constructed

universally, but through concrete and specific encounters,

struggles and engagements that are affective and

ethnically-based on values of self-pride. In this

respect, disability culture as personal/aesthetic is

reminiscent of post-structural symbolic anthropologists

who asserted that descriptions of culture must be cast in

terms of constructions and interpretations to which people

subject their experiences.

Culture as personal/aesthetic is what disabled people and

knowledge when they speak of "coming out" --an expression

borrowed from lesbian/gay traditions. When I say I am 25

years old, I am not referring to my chronological age, but

the age at which I became physically disabled and could

proudly assert "I am disabled". For those who subscribe

to the view of culture as personal/aesthetic, the ability

to assert an aesthetic pride in the disabled body is a

necessary prerequisite to the political identity and is

the source of empowerment. (p. 596)

In reinforcing this point, Hahn (1988b) argues that people with

disabilities need to reclaim/reconstitute an aesthetic tradition

by deconstructing images of the body as a gestalt or whole body

image. Instead there needs to be an emphasis on separate and

discrete parts of the body. In place of a gestalt, people with

disabilities need to "cultivate a heightened aesthetic

appreciation of anatomical variations" (p. 223). The body with

a disability can also have an intrinsic appeal that is embodied

in its innate differences. This view requires that one reject

conformist visions of beauty and assert that "disability is

beautiful" (p. 223). Scotch and Schreiner (1997) believe that "a new model should emphasize that variability inherent in disability and that disability thus may be seen as an extension of the natural physical, social, and cultural variability of the human species" (pp. 154-155). Further, Hughes (2000) asserts that it is possible that people with disabilities could take advantage of this appreciation of anatomical difference by deconstructing the moral polarization of truth and error and the intolerance of variability that has marked modernity. Until very recently, only Nietzsche, among the historical legions of scientists and philosophers, has regarded error, or in this case variability, as a cause for celebration (Scotch and Schreiner 1997).

Finally, there are many people who equate disability culture with the arts that are for and about disability (Pfeiffer, 2004). That is the concept of disability aesthetic. Brown (2004) recounts the summation from a survey respondent:

> This particular respondent offered two definitions of disability culture. 'First it is the filter through which we people with disabilities experience the world (shared experiences & thoughtfully developed concepts). Second our expression of ourselves in writing, words, art, etc. as well as organizations, etc. (p. 34)

The informant's recognition that disability culture does indeed
involve self-expression adds support to the idea of a disability
aesthetic. Blandy (1999) brings the disability aesthetic alive
by highlighting people with disabilities such as Dennis Bye, who
chronicles his life in books he crafts himself, cartoonist John
Callahan, photographer David Hevey, painter Ernie Pepion, and
performance artist Julia Trahan. Blandy (1999) uses Bye as an
example:

> [He] refuses to portray himself as a victim or as
> helpless, demanding that he be recognized as an active,
> expressive, and contributing member of the community. His
> books are more potent than any document drafted by
> educators or human service workers defining him as
> mentally retarded. Bye's books, because of their self-
> advocacy and attention to his story of living as a person
> called disabled, embody an emerging aesthetic orientation
> that is being identified by members of the disability
> rights movement as the 'disability aesthetic.' (p. 35)

Blandy (1999) continues:

> Julia Trahan (1994) describes herself as "being a 27 year-
> old flamboyant but shy performance artist, hemiplegic
> tomboy dyke who walks with a fluorescent-colored crutch"

and her home as "those wonderful moments when I am
complete in all my thought but sweet, limping brains and
beauty" (p. 36)

These two examples illustrate the disability aesthetic and the
multidimensionality of the individuals involved. The emergence
of disability culture has been reinforced by the momentum and
power derived from the increasing number of people involved in
the disability rights movement. Blandy (1999) continues:

Wade suggests that art emerging from a disability
aesthetic consciousness tells stories about people with
disabilities, "where we came from, where we're going, how
we got here." [p. 29] For Wade, this is the art of
survivors, art that makes the invisible visible; "the
silence insisting on Voice" (p. 29). This is an aesthetic
defined by shame and pride, an aesthetic that encourages
people with disabilities to make art that entertains,
enlightens, educates. Art that takes us out of isolation.
Art that transforms lives. Art that embraces every
complex part of who we are, alone and to gather, in this
horrifying and exquisite journey'. (p. 35)

Blandy (1999) concludes by saying:

People with disabilities contribute to this aesthetic

orientation by making art that self-advocates, is self-

referential, is at times socially activist, and which

documents the experience of being disabled. This is an

aesthetic that can be appreciated by both people with, and

without, disabilities, and one that is evolving across

arts disciplines. Within the visual arts disciplines it

is evidenced in the fine arts, the popular arts, and

industrial design. It is also an aesthetic orientation

that is being experienced in how people think about their

everyday lives. This aesthetic is emerging from a

disability culture shaped by decades of social action

towards the construction of an equitable society. (pp. 39-

40)

Creativity

I think it is important at this point in the exploration of

disability and creativity to take a very brief glance at what

has been perceived as a mystical and mysterious process.

Creativity is perceived as more analogous to divine inspiration

than to ordinary thought.

When it comes to a discussion of creativity, I cannot in good

conscience overlook the work of Csikszentmihalyi (1996). He has

brought together 30 years of research in his book, *Creativity: Flow in the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*, exploring how creative people live and work. His contention is that creativity cannot be understood solely by looking at the people who appear to make it happen. He believes that without the assessment of reliable observers it would be impossible to validate creativity. According to his view:

> Creativity results from the interaction of a system composed of three elements: a culture that contains symbolic rules, a person who brings novelty into the symbolic domain, and a field of experts who recognize and validate the innovation. All three are necessary for a creative idea, product, or discovery to take place. (p. 7)

He also uses the analogy that the cultural equivalent of the biological process of genetic change is creativity. New traits in biological organisms that are an improvement over what existed before will have a greater chance of being transmitted to descendents. In the evolution of culture, a new idea or invention that is valued by enough of the right people will become part of the culture if they perceive the change as an improvement (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

Therefore, to understand creativity it is important to not only study the people responsible for new ideas and novel things

whose contributions are necessary and important. It is also important to understand that they are only a link in a chain, a phase in the process of cultural evolution.

There are challenges created simply by the idea of defining a theory of creativity. According to Eysenck (1997) there are two major ways to use the term. Behavior is creative when the outcome is unusual, surprising, original, novel, or unique. Also, creativity also implies a degree of social usefulness or conformity to meaningful expectations. A creative person could be described as the person who frequently demonstrates creative behavior even though such creativity may only be on a small scale.

Creativity is often understood in terms of great achievements or the outcomes of endeavors that are considered genius. This type of creativity would require high intelligence, persistence, hard work, strong motivation, or special musical, artistic, verbal, or mathematical abilities. In addition, the proper background, teaching, social support, and much more are required for creative achievement. Creativity as a trait is necessary but not a sufficient condition for creative accomplishment (Amabile, 1983).

Even though the phenomenon of creativity and the creative process has been a topic of interest throughout history, it was not until 1950 that psychologists expressed a high degree of interest in the subject and research began in earnest (Simonton, 2000).

Research psychologists who are interested in creativity have worked toward an understanding. Cognitive psychologists have been interested in the mental processes and operations that produce creativity. A wider and more comprehensive point of view has been examined by personality, social, and developmental psychologists. The research in these areas of psychology has moved forward in four unique areas of inquiry: the creative act and the cognitive processes utilized; the creative person and their distinctive characteristics; an individual's lifespan with the accompanying maturity and continued demonstration of creativity; and finally the social environments associated with creative individuals and their activities (Simonton, 2000).

Simonton (2000) illustrates that the literature concerning creativity does include several of the core sub disciplines of psychology. The important topics for this discussion are cognitive processes, personal characteristics, social context, and lifespan development.

Cognitive Processes

Cognitive psychologists have gathered empirical information that demonstrates intuitive information processing as a regular expression of the cognitive unconscious. This means that an apparent creative inspiration, the light bulb turning on or the famous "aha" moment, is in reality a sequential operation of subliminal stimulation and the subsequent development of an idea (Bowers, Farvolden, & Mermigis, 1995).

According to the work of Smith, Ward, and Finke (1995) using the creative cognition approach, creativity consists of a mental phenomenon resulting from the application of ordinary cognitive processes. This simply means that creativity involves ordinary cognitive processes and therefore creative activity and thought is accessible to almost everyone.

Recent studies by Ericsson (1996) demonstrate clearly that exceptional talents are not necessarily born but are made. Creativity, as does any competitive sport activity or music performance, demands a substantial amount of practice and training in order to attain proficiency. They also note that even creative genius cannot escape the lengthy period of apprenticeship. This work, like the work on creative cognition,

implies the ability of anyone to acquire proficiency in
creativity. This point certainly has significant egalitarian
implications (Howe, Davidson, & Sloboda, 1998).

Personal Characteristics

Gardiner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences is especially
interesting because it includes abilities such as musical,
bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal
intelligences. As opposed to performance on a standard IQ test
as a gauge of intellectual capacity. In addition, each
intelligence is associated with a specific expression of
creativity (Gardiner, 1993).

Results from a recent revival in personality research has
documented and compiled a generally secure profile of the
creative personality (Martindale, 1989; Simonton, 1999a).
Generally, individuals who exhibit this creative personality
tend to be independent, nonconformist, unconventional, and even
Bohemian. They are likely to have varied interests, greater
openness to new experiences, a more conspicuous behavioral
and/or cognitive flexibility, and more risk-taking boldness.

There is research that has shown that creativity often tends to
be associated with a certain amount of psychopathology (Eysenck,

1995), reinforcing the long-standing mad-genius stereotype.
This is not to say that creative individuals must suffer from
mental disorders. Quite the contrary, research has demonstrated
that (a) creators of the highest order have no apparent
tendencies toward psychopathology; (b) the instances of mental
disorder vary according to the domain of creative activity, with
some showing fairly low rates; (c) creators who exhibit symptoms
usually possess compensatory characteristics that do enable them
to control and even channel their tendencies into productive
activities; and (d) many characteristics that may appear
abnormal can actually prove quite adaptive for the individual's
adjustment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Ludwig, 1995; Rothenberg,
1990). In fact, Simonton (2000) states that "the creative
personality often provides a fine illustration of how supposed
psychological weaknesses can sometimes be converted into a form
of optimal functioning" (p. 154).

Social Context
The lone genius has long existed as a popular image. However,
the work of Amabile (1996) illustrates that much creativity
takes place in interpersonal settings. Her and her associate's
inquiries into intrinsic and extrinsic incentives for performing
a task reveal that creativity is more prevalent when individuals
perform a task for inherent reasons rather than for external

reasons. Creativity is lower when external reasons for performing the task have little to do with the task itself. However, there are circumstances where extrinsic motivation can enhance individual creativity, which with additional research may reveal how to better nurture creativity.

Most creators and their creativity take place within a particular artistic, scientific or intellectual discipline. Creators and their creativity do not function in isolation. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) uses a systems view where creativity requires dynamic interaction between three subsystems. Only one of these subsystems includes the individual creator. The domain is the second subsystem that contains the set of rules, the repertoire of techniques, and any other attributes that might define a particular mode of creativity. The people who work within the same domain are part of the field that is the third subsystem. These individuals have their creativity governed by these same domain-specific guidelines. According to the systems view, creativity does not exist until those making up the field decide to recognize that the product does indeed represent a creative and original contribution to the domain. These colleagues are an essential component to the confirmation of individual creativity.

During the past couple of decades, psychologists have begun to examine the extent to which creative achievements depend on the impersonal and pervasive zeitgeist (Simonton, 1984). It is clear that certain political environments affect the degree of creativity generated by the population. Cultural heterogeneity rather than homogeneity suggests that cultural diversity may facilitate creativity. Creative activity in a civilization tends to increase after it has opened itself to extensive alien influences by enriching the cultural environment through immigration or travel abroad (Simonton, 1994).

Lifespan Development

Simonton (1987) has developed a large inventory of developmental backgrounds through his research over the past several decades. Family environments and circumstances such as birth order, early parental loss, marginality, available mentors, and role models strongly influence the growth of creative personalities. Other developmental influences are an individual's experiences in education including higher education. The generalization that can be drawn from these developmental influences is that creativity may not always surface from the most nurturing and uncomplicated environments (Eisenstadt, 1978; Goertzel, Goertzel, & Goertzel, 1978; Simonton, 1984). That is a significant and important concept that pertains directly to this

study of people with disabilities and their creativity. In

fact, to emphasize this point even more, Simonton (2000) states:

> creative potential seems to require a certain exposure to
>
> (a) diversifying experiences that help weaken the
>
> constraints imposed by conventional socialization and (b)
>
> challenging experiences that help strengthen a person's
>
> capacity to persevere in the face of obstacles. . . . [I]t
>
> is startling testimony to the adaptive powers of the human
>
> being that some of the most adverse childhoods can give
>
> birth to the most creative adulthoods. (p. 154)

The Actualization of Creative Potential

Large-sample quantitative and nomothetic investigations of how

creativity is manifested during the course of a person's career

are abundant. The relationship between creativity and age has

received a significant amount of attention, with the most common

approach being assessment of how productions of creative

products change as a function of age (Lindauer, 1993b; Simonton,

1988). This research has consistently concluded that creativity

is a curvilinear (inverted backward J) function of age.

Conversely, empirical and theoretical literature clearly

demonstrates that such a pessimistic conclusion is definitely

unwarranted (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Simonton, 1991, 1997a).

There are many factors that help sustain creative output

throughout a lifetime. To support this notion, Lindauer (1993a) and Simonton (1989) maintain that it is in fact very plausible for creators to exhibit a quantitative and qualitative burst of creativity in their final years. Given these findings, the creative outlook for the later years of life is very optimistic rather than the commonly held pessimistic perception of creative deterioration that accompanies maturation. This optimistic point of view is important to this particular researcher, as well as the rest of the "baby boomers," simply because it is gratifying to understand that creative potential is not going to be lost when one is eligible to join AARP.

I believe it is in the best interest of and relevant to this investigation that I touch ever so briefly on the topic of creativity and aging. The rationale quite simply is that some consider aging a disability, and I would like to share a bit of what I have discovered about art, creativity, and aging.

Artists that remain creative are able to, in many cases, produce enduring masterpieces during an extended span of life. Clearly these artists demonstrate that creativity is not in decline and will not end during old age. Age-related deficiencies can be overcome. Cognitive and other abilities that facilitate artistic activity may not necessarily wane over time (Lindauer,

2003). When losses in dexterity, strength, and mobility do occur, they do not necessarily translate into the loss of creativity. Hard work and a strenuous activity that can be carried out by apprentices or assistances are not a requirement of creativity. The disabling factors of aging are easily remedied by reorganizing priorities, developing helpful relationships, revising goals, and building a network of useful contacts. The slower pace as a result of age and disability can lead to the discovery of new materials, efficient labor-saving devices, modified techniques, and unique styles of work. Matisse, in his later years, chose to use large cut-collage as a medium when he was no longer capable of holding a brush. As Rembrandt grew older his "hand travels less stylistically, conserving its energies, drawing more economically [and becoming] more deliberate and cautious. . . . His movements, those of an old man now, are those of the characters he projects" (Rosand, 1987, p. 92).

Disabilities consistent with aging have been experienced by a number of aging artists. Artistic expression is not compromised by a casual or loose brush stroke due to the loss of hand coordination and dexterity (Cowley, 1980; Lindauer, 2003; Linksz, 1980). A trembling hand did not deter Poussin from painting successfully. After being disabled by arthritis,

Renoir strapped a brush to his arm. Goya wore several pair of glasses, which were supplemented by a magnifying glass, when his eyesight failed at 78. At this point in his life he was also deaf (Berman, 1983). Suffering from gout, Rubens relied heavily on assistants. "Faced with Rubin's late works without information about his life, it is unlikely that one could detect any physical disability" (White, 1977-78, p. 53).

Paintings by several of the Impressionists who had severe medical and physical conditions were "artistic triumphs over physiological disorders" (Hamilton, 1984, p. 237). Ravin and Kenyan (1998) verify that Monet and Dégas both lived and worked at approximately the same time, both had successful and lengthy careers, both died in their 80s, and both had progressive eye diseases. "[D]espite their physical and psychological problems they created masterpieces in their later years" (p. 266). Lindauer (2003) reiterates that "creative ability is independent of physical deterioration. . . . [I]ncreasing age also leads to more mature thinking, revitalizes ideas, opens new avenues of expression, and for those so blessed, creativity is enhanced" (p. 61). Held (1987) maintains that "intense artistic creativity can inhabit wasted bodies just as the body can long survive with the loss of a mind" (p. 128).

The ability to deal successfully with life's demands and
challenges can be enhanced by creativity. The result of meeting
these challenges can be a kind of growth. Creative individuals
are not merely reacting or passively absorbing experiences.
They are bringing something to their experiences using their
resourceful talents to generate engaging and interesting
experiences. They use cognitive processes that incorporate the
role of choice in creativity. It is clear that there is growth
associated with adaptability, coping, and resilience in the
aging process and the resulting disabling conditions. As a
result, creativity leads to age-specific attitudes, perceptions,
and viewpoints (Runco & Charles, 1997).

Resilience and Adaptability

The course of the literature review for this project has been
more akin to personal discovery in conjunction with the review
of literature. A case in point is the psychological concept of
human resiliency or personal hardiness. I believe this is a
very important component of optimal functioning and personal
creativity as it pertains to people with disabilities.

Resilience is the ability to maintain relatively stable, healthy

levels of psychological and physical functioning while

maintaining a stable life experience. Bonanno (2004) states:

> A review of the available research on loss and violent or
>
> life-threatening events clearly indicates that the vast
>
> majority of individuals exposed to such events do not
>
> exhibit chronic symptom profiles and that may and, in some
>
> cases, the majority show the type of healthy functioning
>
> suggestive of the resilience trajectory. (p. 22)

Additionally, Bonanno (2004) suggests that there are multiple

pathways to resilience, which include personality hardiness,

self-enhancement, repressive coping, and positive emotion and

laughter.

Bonanno (2004) and Maddi (2005) agree that personal hardiness

consists of three interrelated attitudes or dimensions: (a)

being committed to finding a meaningful purpose in life rather

than feelings of alienation; (b) an understanding of the control

of one's life rather than powerlessness; and (c) the conviction

that one can grow and learn from positive as well as negative

situations or experiences. The courage and motivation generated

by personal hardiness leads to problem-solving rather than

avoidance. Also, interaction with others while giving and/or

receiving assistance and encouragement can transform potential

disasters into growth opportunities.

An effective adaptive mechanism that helps to promote well-being

is self-enhancement. This mechanism is viewed as the

unrealistic or overly positive biases in favor of one's self

that can develop (Taylor & Brown, 1988). A recent study of

bereaved individuals in the United States and among Bosnian

civilians living in Sarajevo (Bonanno, Field, Kovacevic, &

Kaltman, 2002) determined that self-enhancers were rated by

mental health professionals as better adjusted. Also, self-

enhancement proved to be particularly adaptive for individuals

suffering from severe losses.

There is a considerable body of evidence that documents that

individuals identified as repressors tend to avoid unpleasant

thoughts, emotions, and memories. Repressive coping appears to

operate primarily through emotion-focused mechanisms or

emotional disassociation rather than the cognitive processes of

hardiness and self-enhancement (Bonanno, 2004). Although,

emotional disassociation is generally viewed as maladaptive, it

does appear these tendencies foster adaptation to extreme

adversity (Bonanno & Singer, 1990). This information also

reinforces the study of acceptance, denial, and adjustment among

adults with disabilities by Olney, Brockelman, Kennedy, and Newsom (2004) mentioned earlier.

Studies by Bonanno and Keltner (1997) and Keltner and Bonanno (1997) found evidence that the use of positive emotion and laughter is also an effective tool when dealing and coping with traumatic loss or adversity. Research has shown that positive emotions can help reduce the level of distress following adverse events by quieting or undoing negative emotions. These studies also demonstrated that individuals who exhibited genuine laughs and smiles when speaking about a recent loss had healthier adjustment.

Kelley (2005) has found that:

> Psychologists have dramatically underestimated the human capacity to thrive after extremely adverse events. More important, psychologists have also failed to realize that the human capacity for resilience, highlighted by Bonanno, is natural and normal, part and parcel of the innate health built into all human beings. . . . [A]ll human beings have innate mental health, which includes a natural capacity for resilience. (p. 265)

I would like to close the literature review portion of this project using a positive and optimistic point of view concerning disability. A major contribution to creating a fresh identity of disability comes directly from the field of positive psychology (Seligman, 2002) focuses on positive emotion and optimism along with the study of what makes healthy, well-adapted individuals healthy and vibrant. I would like to conclude this chapter with a statement that I believe defines the experience of disability from Elliott, Kurylo, and Rivera, (2002) who state:

> Thus, individuals who incur a physical disability may do more than "survive" their condition; their resilience and clarity of purpose may result in a greater resolve for pursuing personal goals and an attainment of spiritual awareness and psychological adjustment that surpasses their previous level of adaptation. (p. 688)

Chapter 3

Interviews

It is important to me that during the course of this project I include a qualitative human dimension to the research. It is also critical to note that the interviews are based on the notion of positive psychology, which is quite simply not about categorizing what is wrong with someone. It is identifying positive, optimistic, and strong qualities in individuals that cultivate satisfying, happy, and fulfilling lives (Snyder & Lopez, 2002).

Following the approval of my project from the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects/Institutional Review Board at the University of Oregon, I issued an invitation to participate in the study. The invitation was distributed through local arts organizations, regional arts organizations that serve people with disabilities, local prosthetic and orthotic companies, and word of mouth.

Three artists with physical disabilities were selected from respondents on the basis of artistic merit, area of expertise, type of disability, availability for the interview, and a subjective decision on my part concerning who I felt would

deliver the best information for my needs. Gender was not a consideration in the selection process. However, all three interviewees are female. Two of the individuals were born with disability: Jamie Weaver was born with no eyes, Carole Patterson with muscular dystrophy. The third, Laurie Bower, acquired her disability after being struck by a truck.

Laurie Bower

(L. Bower, personal communication, May 7, 2005)

Laurie strongly believes that health care professionals, including doctors, and the general public have absolutely no concept of what people with disabilities are capable of doing and accomplishing.

After many surgeries to regain use of her arms, studying the dictionary to relearn words, and adjusting to the reality of writing and drawing upside down and backwards, Laurie continues to be interested in drawing, photography, and papermaking. She has re-created herself and had the opportunity to re-examine her life. She came to understand that her life is not the same as before. She firmly believes her life is not limited. She sees the world differently than she did prior to her incident, but now that is normal.

Laurie has discovered through her work at a major home-improvement store that helping people, especially young people, discover their creativity has become a very important part of her life. As a side note, Laurie commented that children are more than willing to experiment with a process or an idea. Adults are generally fairly set in their ways with distinct ideas and are not generally willing to experiment or try something new. Laurie also mentioned how much she has learned from the young people in her classes, and how they are willing to experiment with a playful attitude.

She has also been drawn to helping people with severe developmental disabilities express themselves through the processes of papermaking. In fact, she and her husband, who is very supportive and likes to tinker with machinery, have developed a manually operated paper press that can be operated by a person traveling in a wheelchair. She emphasized that it is a manually driven press simply to offer important physical exercise for the user.

When asked if she believes she has a disability, her answer was yes. She reiterated that her life was not the same as before, but she does not feel limited. She is adapting to the way her arms currently operate and tolerates a number of frustrations.

Her disability is not obvious or visible, which has created challenges when she requires accommodation in the workplace.

When asked what advice she would give a recently disabled person, she responded: "Doctors are wrong about what you can do or are capable of. Do not take anything a doctor or therapist says about what you will be able to do or not to do. Find out for yourself."

Carole Patterson

(C. Patterson, personal communication, April 20, 2005)

Carole, who is currently coordinating events, workshops, and films at DIVA in downtown Eugene, widely known as Carolezoom, has been active in the civil rights movement for people with disabilities since 1988. She believes that "people do not think I am disabled, but they should and that is not bad." She relates that people generally do not understand disability and have negative attitudes toward disability. "Disability is." She believes there is a social construct of disability because there are "no ramps in the world." Therefore, the environment and society cause disability. She also mentioned that people with disabilities can end up beating themselves up because they are not able to conform to society's expectations.

The people who know her understand that "my disability is not a limitation." Her life is very different from the life others experience, and it is important to her that others think about and recognize that there are other ways of living in the world. She takes exception when others enforce their attitudes and perceptions on her limitations.

Carole has been forced to make difficult decisions in her life. At the age of 16 she was spending a large amount of energy and time in physical therapy in order to be strong enough to walk. She made the decision at that time to forgo walking. That decision would allow her time and energy to pursue interests that were more important than walking. She believes then as now that "it is equally valid to walk as it is not to walk." She did make the brief comment that the decision to use a wheelchair did change the world around her. It was a good decision. She does perceive herself as a person with a disability, although she emphatically rejects the idea that she is a person with a severe disability.

Carole does not think of her herself as an artist but feels she is expressing herself along the way. She is making her art to make connections with people and not for personal satisfaction. Carole's creative process begins with an image that is

digitized, manipulated using a computer, and transferred to a woodblock or linoleum for carving. Then she makes the print without the use of a press. She says she enjoys the process up to the actual making the print. She has considered using help for the actual printmaking but does not like to lose control of her work and is "rather uncomfortable" working with people on her artwork.

Carole has experienced a supportive family growing up and continues to experience support from her husband and the people that she chooses to surround herself. However, she did mention that she is continually working toward being more independent.

She does have an aspiration to produce a body of work that is worthy of an exhibition. She did mention that she may utilize some assistance on this project.

Jamie Weaver

(J. Weaver, personal communication, April 26, 2005)

Jamie is very proud of her success in the Ph.D. program in voice performance at the University of Oregon and also very proud that she survived her recent studies in Italy. She feels very lucky that she has had the support of many people and especially her academic adviser for the last seven years.

She feels that creativity follows curiosity. Her parents taught her to be curious and wonder about the world. They gave her many chances to explore and feel the world. For example, her mother would take her to the circus when she was very young. She was able at a very young age to distinguish between an Indian elephant and an African elephant by touch. Consequently, she has developed a wide variety of interests.

Her appearance and mannerisms are major obstacles to becoming an opera singer. That is generally the goal of most students who major in voice performance in college, according to Jamie. She explains that the way she moves, the way she holds her head, her lack of contact with the audience, and her lack of stage presence are big obstacles for her and other blind singers. In classical music, people do not value vocal expression alone. Looks do count. Creativity in that respect for blind performers is also more difficult because they have no reference for clothing, jewelry, and hair. She realized that she was not going to be an opera singer, although she does have "the voice of a young cutie." It takes "an entire package for an audience to accept."

She did say she is learning to move more "naturally" while making sure she is comfortable onstage and taking steps to feel like herself onstage. She understands that she does not have to look like everyone else. She is currently working toward becoming "the most convincing me."

Jamie explained that there are more options to singing than just opera. She cited the examples of oratorio, concert works, unstaged operas, sacred music, and early music. She is on the hunt for what is most interesting. Those will include works in the five languages she speaks.

When I asked if she believed she was disabled, she said yes. However, she qualified that by saying it is more of an inconvenience than anything. She does not believe her blindness is a "handicap."

When asked about the importance of art in her life, she said it is very relaxing when the art form is something other than your career. She enjoys writing poetry and likes to knit. She also believes that art broadens a person's knowledge of the world and the space around you. She feels it is very important for young people to have experience in art because it develops curiosity, which encourages the desire to learn and understand more. Art

also extends what we think we can do, leading us to discover

that limitations are not what we think they are. Even though

something may be difficult, it is well worth the effort. She

also believes that the right kind of positive attitudes can help

a person deal with disability. Part of that attitude is a sense

of humor. Jamie believes it is important that everyone be able

to laugh at themselves. She did reveal that she has a sick

sense of humor.

When asked what advice she might give others, she answered:

"Take advice from others, but find your own way." Be willing to

experiment to find your own way of expression. Above all,

"create your own package."

                       Interview Conclusions

Carole, because of her activism in the civil rights movement for

people with disabilities, is the only one of the participants

that felt a part of a disability culture and could speak to

disability aesthetics. Jamie and Laurie do not associate

themselves with a disability culture and do not see the

significance of a disability aesthetic.

I did discover through the interviews that there are several

significant threads of continuity that connect these three

individuals. Without exception, all three participants believe that: (a) they do indeed have a disability, but all strongly believe that their disability is not necessarily as severe or as limiting as others may perceive; (b) they have experienced and continue to experience support from peers, mentors, and family members; (c) they perceive their disability as somewhat frustrating at times and inconvenient; (d) they understand that their perception of the world is different and recognize that their life experiences are unusual compared to the lives others experience; (e) they all demonstrate that their personal creativity is used not only in their art form but also in living their lives; (f) all have made important decisions that were thoughtful, difficult, and life-altering. To conclude, I found all the participants to have positive attitudes, with very clear purpose in their lives, and extraordinary resolve for pursuing their personal goals.

Correlation of Interviews with Research Questions

What are the cognitive mechanisms that people with physical disabilities use to facilitate their creativity? All of the interviewees have made very deliberate cognitive decisions that have positively influenced their lives. The decision-making process included a thorough understanding of their personal priorities and goals, careful examination of their life

situation, and evaluation of the available options, with the determination and the will to pursue a proactive position in their lives. They also appear to have a strong grasp of the consequences of their decisions.

Do people experience a series of stagelike processes in reaction to the onset of physical disability? Jamie and Carole moved from infancy through childhood to adulthood and experienced not only the stages of maturing but also a process of maturing in their particular situation. Laurie's reaction and growth to disability is described as more of a continuum rather than an experience of distinct stages, as she was overcoming obstacles imposed by health professionals.

Is it possible that people may experience positive shifts in values, attitudes, or beliefs that were generated in part by the onset of physical disability? At this point in time, there is not enough evidence either way to make a determination. To determine if there is a shift in value, attitude, or belief after a disability has occurred, there would need to be a measurement of those components prior to the disability. Other than the crystal ball, there is no effective mechanism to determine which subjects might encounter a disability.

How do people overcome the distraction of physical disability and move toward positive growth? I found in my conversations that there is little perception of a distraction of disability. The interviewees did express some frustration and inconvenience at times, although they did not articulate or indicate significant distraction. It is important to understand that a person with a disability may be living an interesting or challenging life and may perceive the world through a lens or from a point of view unlike others, but that is a "normal life."

How much influence do mentors have on creativity? The interviewees confirmed mentors do play an important role of encouragement and positive influence. Nevertheless, in reality, mentors provide those support services to everyone. There is total agreement that creativity emanates from within and is very personal.

Is denial of a disability an effective coping strategy? The interviewees were universal in their acceptance of disability. However, without exception they believe that their disability is not as severe as others would believe or have them believe. Further, they all firmly communicated that their disability may be an inconvenience, but it is not a significant limitation.

Chapter 4

Conclusions

Although it was a very small study with only three informants, I was able to draw some conclusions from the interviews pertaining to people with disabilities and their creativity.

Initially, the concept of disability culture was not an important consideration in the lives of two of the participants. They are primarily concerned with pursuing their individual interests and goals while making a life for themselves. They do not consider themselves part of a culture of disability. The third participant, an activist in the disability rights movement, was very aware of the concept of disability culture, and she considers herself an active member of disability culture.

Jamie the singer, from her perspective, did not subscribe to the idea of a disability aesthetic. She did feel that, in her experience, vocal performance was neither the focus nor the result of disability. She did mention that it would be possible, even interesting, to compile a body of work by blind composers for a concert or recital. The focus of the performance would be centered on the artistic merits of the performance and the compositions, not about the blindness of the

composers. She used the analogy of a concert consisting solely
of Austrian, German, or Spanish composers where the emphasis
would not be on the country of origin.

The notion of a disability aesthetic was recognized by two of
the informants as a component of self-expression. They believe
that disability does inform the creative work of a great many
artists with disabilities. The content of their artwork
directly reflects personal experience with disability or with
disability in a larger context. They both talked about their
ability to perceive the world differently than most people
generally do. That might give them a creative edge.

I did conclude from the interviews and the literature dealing
with resilience that disability does not stifle creativity. In
fact, creativity may be enhanced by disability with the inherent
resourcefulness and ingenuity.

It became very evident from all the interviews that creativity
is a lifelong endeavor. All of the participants experienced
childhoods that were rich in art and creativity. Those early
experiences have strongly influenced their lives as adults.

Finally, I found through the interviews that, without question, the resiliency and adaptability of these three individuals is the impetus for their life of creativity.

Recommendations

I would strongly recommend that federal and state governments along with private arts funding organizations emphasize the significance of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 in their awarding of funds. Compliance with the act should be required and demonstrated in this regard. I believe it is time to reward those organizations that have taken and are taking a proactive role in accessibility issues. I would also recommend that, after 15 years, the time has arrived to motivate those organizations that are lagging. I believe it is important to inspire these organizations with positive and not punitive strategies by making funds available for planning, design work, and facility improvement. I think it is important that funding organizations continue to stress that accessibility for all is fundamental.

I believe it is also important for arts organizations that work primarily with people with disabilities to work toward including everyone in their programs. I believe it is just as important

for all arts organizations to include people with disabilities. The segregation of people with disabilities is unacceptable.

I would encourage arts institutions operating in the United States, as well as in the rest of the world, to work toward an organizational atmosphere or culture of welcoming. That will help ensure that programs as well as facilities are welcoming, accessible, and positive places to work and play for everyone.

I would suggest to art administrators that marketing or recruitment to very specific groups such as people with disabilities be done subtly, simply because, as revealed in the study, people with disabilities may not see themselves as disabled and therefore may not respond to a marketing campaign overtly targeting them. Utilizing staff, artists, and instructors with disabilities, bringing board members with disabilities into more visible roles, networking, and word of mouth are strategies for drawing people with disabilities into programs is also very important.

A strong mentoring program for budding artists of all ages and abilities involved in varying situations is essential. I see a seed of creativity growing not only in young artists but also in

people with the "disability of old age." A small amount of

mentoring may facilitate a personal surge of creativity.

I think it is important that art administrators understand that

overt or even the most subtle inkling of lowering expectations,

implying limitations, or imposing limitations on anyone should

be absolutely avoided at all times. It does not make sense. It

is unkind and unfair to impose unjustifiable and unrealistic

limitations on individuals. All individuals involved in

personal growth are part of a challenging process of discovery

or rediscovery of their abilities and capabilities while

defining themselves. Arts administrators should strive to

create and maintain an environment of encouragement so that all

people, not only people with disabilities, have the opportunity

to explore, develop, and push the boundaries of their individual

talents, skills, and interests as far as possible.

In closing, I believe that it is very important to recognize,

understand, and appreciate the significance of the innate human

capacity to thrive following extremely adverse events.

Creativity, that optimal human function, is also part of the

innate human condition that will not be stifled by conditions

that some consider a trivial inconvenience and others classify

as disabling.

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Appendix

Human Subjects Protocol