Creativity and Culture: Perception, Interaction, Opposition, and Marginality

Marilyn Badran Weigel

Loyola University Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses

Part of the Educational Psychology Commons

Recommended Citation
https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/4244

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master’s Theses by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.
Copyright © 1997 Marilyn Badran Weigel
Copyright by Marilyn Badran Weigel, 1997
All rights reserved.
It appears to be the established custom of our society for an individual to feel compelled to explain or justify any deviation from a traditional structure or method. In writing this thesis within the realm of standard educational psychology, I found that an immediate explanation was needed to convey to the reader the reason for the unconventional reporting procedure that was used here.

I entered into the writing process with a great deal of respect for the work of the empirical researchers in the fields of psychology, sociology, and anthropology as well as with a fervent interest in what had been uncovered and studied within the more specific topics of creativity and culture. This respect has only grown as I have come to better understand the realities of what they were undertaking, the magnanimity of their task in trying to identify key components of these fields, and their attempts at joining together fragments of understanding into a cohesive whole. In writing this paper it was my desire to include many of the core elements of that body of empirical research while simultaneously
balancing it with references to popular culture and also specific creative works which embody the spirit of that research. One may frequently come upon here a reference to the work of a well-known classical psychologist cited alongside the reference to a recent film or popular novel. Furthermore, the style of writing is more conversational than one might expect to find in a typical educational psychology paper. The combination of these factors is likely to be unsettling for readers who have come to expect a more conventional format, yet, I felt that the nature of this particular topic dictated that the format be otherwise.

I strongly believed that to do justice to the multifaceted relationship of creativity and culture, a multifaceted approach was, likewise, needed and, in that case, connections must be made between professional empirical psychological research and poetical expressions of a popular nature. Respect for both the gifts of empirical evidence and emotional expressiveness reflects our ability to see the importance and the beauty of each, while all the time appreciating how they fit together and augment our view of humanity. British scientist and writer, P. B. Medawar (in John-Steiner, 1985), once suggested that:

The analysis of creativity in all its forms is beyond the competence of any one accepted discipline. It requires a consortium of the talents: psychologists, biologists, philosophers, computer scientists, artists, and poets will all
expect to have their say (p. 7).

And so they shall. However, it is left up to the reader to determine if this particular attempt at a literary version of that kind of consortium is successful.
Inquiry into the nature of creativity must therefore address not only its source and principles but the societal quirks and foibles that restrain it.

--Robert Grudin, 
The Grace of Great Things
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE ................................................................................................ iii

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS .................................................................. ix

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION ...................................................................... 1

2. CREATIVITY ........................................................................... 8
   Defining the Difficulties
   Personality Characteristics of Creative Individuals
   The Problem Solving/Finding Process
   The Maddening Issue of Psychosis/Neurosis
   Creativity Across the Domains

3. CULTURE ............................................................................... 42
   The Philosophical Basis of Culture
   The Senses of Culture

4. RELATIONSHIPS AND INFLUENCES ................................... 63
   The Four Forces
   Perception
   Interaction
   Opposition
Marginality

A Model of Intersection

5. PROJECTIONS.................................................................129

APPENDIX: LISTING OF EPIGRAPHS........................................133

REFERENCES.............................................................................135

VITA.........................................................................................142
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure                      Page

1. A Model of Intersection..................................127
The two players stand facing each other across the court while the onlookers wait in silence. Finally, one player picks up his racquet and the ball, nods to his opponent in preparatory warning, and readies himself to serve.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Argue for your limitations, and sure enough, they’re yours.
Richard Bach, *Illusions*

Awareness of the problem of certainty has grown during this century with the increasing recognition that objectivity is an illusion.
Ellie Pozatek, “The Problem of Certainty”

For conventions are in themselves soulless mechanisms that can never do more than grasp the routine of life. Creative life is always on the yonder side of convention.
Carl Jung, *The Integration of the Personality*

Easily, the most frustrating aspect--but also the most interesting and exciting--of researching and writing an in-depth study on any relationship between culture and creativity is the very nature of the two elements in question.

I am a non-objective, primary, and very active participant in my life. “Culture” evokes the *essence* of my lifestyle, environment, and everything in the world that I notice or even take for granted. I am very much a member of a community and many of my beliefs and values have originated from my own particular background. All of these factors are in effect for the reader as well. I believe that
there is no way to actually overcome the majority of culture’s influence and, thus, all theoretical work of this nature must be seen as subjective. The knowledge of this is something of which I am profoundly aware and it influenced my attitude and thoughts throughout this work. In addition, this topic--to an overwhelming extent--deals with “creativity.” Writing is itself a creative art, yet, there is always a distinction between art and reality. Since I do not pretend to be exposing the reality, only attempting to express my own, how, then, shall I approach the writing of such a paper? By the use of assumed objectivity since I am the researcher? And how is it possible to do it creatively while still remaining true to the subject? By the use of a standardized structure? Perhaps formulaic organization and writing strategies? As you might well imagine, any of these approaches would be almost unthinkable and would, by their very paradox, completely undermine any hope that the reader would believe me capable of genuinely understanding (however difficult that understanding might be to convey in writing) the nature of creativity and the creative process or the ever-present influences of cultural, familial, and personal perspectives...But, knowing the limitations, what could be done? The pressure was enormous!

Ultimately, my decision to attempt such a discussion on the relationship of two extremely elusive concepts led me to the even
greater and more mysterious concept of "truth." Thomas Jefferson once wrote that honesty was "the first chapter in the book of wisdom." I agree and, therefore, must warn you that if your intention was to flip through quick listings of definitions, straightforward and completely logical explanations, and the final, rational word on (or the answer to) the creativity-cultural connection, you have been vastly misdirected. I gave up all hope of such an easy task long ago and can offer none of these. What I can share with you is the benefit of literally hundreds of hours of reading and research, possibly some unusual connections between some rather unlikely sources, one individual's highly interested perception (mine) on the relationship between the cultural perspective of individuals in a larger society and their creative expression, and a model that I have found helpful in exploring their influences upon each other.

In doing this study, I have read through innumerable pieces of research--a great deal on the individual constructs of "creativity" or "culture," and a few which have linked them--and I have cited the results of many of those bodies of knowledge here. Of the previous studies, some were strictly empirical in nature, some were based on personal interviews or literary biographies, others were historical in orientation, and still others developed theories or models based
upon the scientific findings or subjective explorations of their peers and themselves. Ultimately, this study comes closest to the latter, but it also contains elements of nearly all of the above. Using the empirical research, psychological/sociological literature, historical chronologies, and interviews of others, I will first explore the ways in which I would view and eventually define the terms "creativity" and "culture." Then I will propose a model on the relationship of what I have come to call "the four forces"--perception, interaction, opposition, and marginality--which influence the ways the creative individual expresses him/herself in society and the way the culture, in turn, first develops and then views this individual's contributions. Throughout, I will refer to artistic, scientific, musical, or literary creations, etc. and their creators who have shaped our cultural and ever-changing images of creativity...all along exploring the nature of these concepts and adding in some ideas which I see as potentially interesting thoughts or possibilities.

Of course, the best way to approach a topic such as this would be in a real discussion--in person with changeable locations and lots of props. Unfortunately, this particular medium does not allow for that style and we are confronted with a problem of limitations on depth and extent of expression. Despite an effortful desire not to be swayed by an overt appearance of such constraints, I cannot help but
to recognize some of the natural barriers to our communication. Of these, the largest is that it is only my voice which speaks and, then, only on paper. In a true discussion of creativity and culture, where three-dimensional expression is barely sufficient (the four-dimensional element of "time" would be preferable), we are prisoners of only two dimensions and confined to "appropriate" formatting, marginal restrictions, and other such logistical printing conventions. In other words, as the reader, you must use your imagination in this endeavor as well and, together, we must try to inventively overcome the kind of black and white limitations that are imposed. What I hope will be found is that in the midst of my reality is an element of your reality—that some part of what I found to be meaningful will also have some meaning for you. While this all may be from my point of view, I hope it will not be confined to just my understanding. After all, transcending one individual's experience to speak meaningfully for many is part of what creativity is about...and the alternative is but a depressing, isolated world where no one can genuinely communicate with another--where we are existentially alone. As the character "Celine" said in the Richard Linklater/Kim Krizan film "Before Sunrise" (1995):

You know, I believe if there's any kind of God, it wouldn't be in any of us--not you or me--but just this little space in between. If there's any kind of magic in this world, it must be in the attempt of understanding someone sharing something. I
know, it's almost impossible to succeed, but who cares really? The answer must be in the attempt.

And so, as we reach together towards identifying and communicating a more collective sense of this particular aspect of human identity, it is, thus, with hope, honesty, and a little humor that we journey to a place that is virtually undefinable and, yet, essentially understandable...the place where our selves meet our world.
The game
is progressing naturally.
One player scores and
then the other.
There are forehands, backhands,
faults, curves, and
occasional misses.
Then, one player notices
a fallibility in his opponent--
in his pattern of
playing the game--
and it is in this instant
that strategy
is born.
CHAPTER 2

CREATIVITY

When I'm finished with that bridge we saw today, it won't look quite like you expect. I'll have made it into something of my own, by lens choice, or camera angle, or general composition, and most likely by some combination of all of those. I don't just take things as given; I try to make them into something that reflects my personal consciousness, my spirit. I try to find the poetry in the image.

Robert James Waller, *The Bridges of Madison County*

A spring of fresh water is a nuisance when it first issues from the ground, producing only mud and mire. It cannot be stopped by cement or earth fill; its flow will continue to seep around the edges. But when the spring is given a protective and delimiting margin, and a channel is provided for its stream, it becomes a source of joy. The same is true for creativity.

J.C. Gowan, G.D. Demos, and E.P. Torrance, *Creativity: Its Educational Implications*

**Defining the Difficulties**

Creativity is an elusive quality. Thought to be a key component among many essential human characteristics, creativity seems to defy or, at the very least, sidestep simple definition.

To shorten the word to its base form--"create"--is only of minor assistance. As one Webster's dictionary defined it, to create means "to make or bring into existence something new" and,
therefore, "creativity" would be "the ability to create." Not a particularly complete or profound definition. The ease of defining creativity could be likened to the task of defining "falling in love" or any other concept which combines a mysterious human process with a physical set of actions resulting in some form of a product...a few sentences would be unable to do justice to either and, yet, volumes would not be able to explain intellectually that which the heart or soul does not understand. Incidentally, love itself has been referred to as "a creative force"--perhaps there is some inherent wisdom in that of which we should take note.

Occasionally, some "parts" of creativity have been reportedly isolated and we may make attempts at defining these and, then, projecting the holistic outcome of the creative process through them. Yet, we cannot seem to formulate or, in essence, recreate creativity. Technology has advanced us to a point where we can program a computer to compute at phenomenal speeds and perform a multitude of simultaneous tasks. We can infuse artificial intelligence into the circuits, simulate randomness, have it generate elaborate lists, combine unusual or unlikely elements, categorize, organize, classify, project the outcome of specific results, and many other complex tasks...but we cannot tap into creativity by a certain sequence or a correct programming procedure. Nevertheless,
creativity in its natural human form can often be immediately sensed and is frequently (though, granted, not always) recognized by a congratulatory society. It is the *verbalization* of this internal understanding which is so difficult. It is also the degree to which this understanding is linked to our societal concept of self (the ties of individual self-definition which are bound up in that of our culture) which further confounds our ability to define anything independent of its relationship to that society.

Even *within* any given society we still do not seem to have a completely clear or comprehensive idea of how the creative process occurs. Researchers (eg., Torrance, 1974; Gardner, 1993; Wallas, 1926) have differing theories and opinions even amongst themselves. This theoretical diversity and the issues that it calls into question may be the result of many things--two possibilities include: an as-of-yet unknown or unidentified element (or set of elements) of the creative process which must eventually be factored into it, or the result of a combining *synthesis* of elements, both known and possibly unknown, which unite in an unpredictable, inexplicable manner. To investigate scientifically it would seem that if the definitional difficulties lie with the former, the solution is *relatively* straightforward. As scientists and psychologists we must simply FIND what is lacking (be it a brain-behavior impulse,
hormonal chemical response, environmental reaction, internal biological stimulus affected by age/gender/etc., or even a unique “creativity gene!”) and then insert this element into our view of how the creative process occurs. If, however, the definitional difficulties are caused by the latter, as I am inclined to believe, our curiosity is not likely to be so easily satisfied. To use a simple example, were we to make a cake from “scratch,” we may be able to identify its basic ingredients initially, yet, once stirred up and put into the oven to bake, those same ingredients are now individually invisible and have, instead, by an irreversible chemical reaction been combined to form a collective entity which is entirely new and unreflective of its original elements. We can no longer “see” the eggs or the sugar or the flour--they are still present and were necessary to achieve the final product, but the cake does not resemble any of those ingredients now. More importantly, were another cake to be made using those same ingredients, the two cakes may be very similar, but never identical. Additionally, we all know that many delicious cakes can be made from very different ingredients and with very few, if any, “essential” ingredients...and, if we extend the example to include other baked goods in addition to cakes, the possibilities of final products would be endless.

Analogously, though we might notice someone, for example,
who possesses intelligence, a sense of verbal wit, and an eye for comic detail, we do not necessarily know if those qualities will later combine and take the form of a creative anecdote or a humorous product nor do we know to what degree two individuals with similar traits would be able to independently rate in comic performance compared to each other in any given situation. There is always with any form of creativity--as with baking--a very strong element which we know as variability. And it is precisely this variability and these qualitative contingencies which make an empirical definition of creativity so difficult to construct.

Alex Whitson (1994) chided his readers when he wrote, "When confronted with the word 'creative,' we immediately feel compelled to define it. Many learned scholars have attempted to pinpoint its essence without fully explaining the process by which it can be understood" (p.2). Certainly in light of the past several pages I, too, may be guilty of such an offense. However, I believe we cannot simply assume that it is even possible to fully explain the process. Furthermore, "process" of any kind does not operate in isolation. Ralph J. Hallman (in Gowan, Demos, & Torrance, 1967) wrote in "The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Creativity" that the creative act, while a singular event which involves the total being, is also multifaceted. "It includes psychological, environmental, cultural,
physical, and intellectual aspects” (pp.16-17). There are individual, social, and cultural contexts present in ALL instances which must be recognized even while trying for discusional and analytical purposes to isolate a particular process. It is with that in mind that we can look at specific personality traits, the problem solving/finding process, and other possible components of creativity without making an assumption that at any one moment we have the “whole picture.”

**Personality Characteristics of Creative Individuals**

Many terms have been mentioned in textbooks and speeches regarding the names of specific characteristics which constitute a creative person. At last analysis an alarmingly large list of possible attributes had been distributed, for instance, in the form of creativity “checklists,” character trait sheets, and identification procedures. Personal possession of a changeable number of these would be sufficient for the bestowal of creative potential (as opposed to creative ability since that is dependent upon other factors in addition to the personality characteristics.) We are familiar with such terms as “fluency,” “flexibility,” “originality,” and “elaboration,” etc. which have worked their way--and certainly with some merit--into our creative consciousness, as well as a plethora of other possibilities. Below is a sampling of some of the
most frequently mentioned characteristics as defined by Theresa Stahlman and Connie Skinner (1991, p.19):

**Fluency**--generating a large number of ideas, products, plans, and/or responses.

**Flexibility**--generating ideas or products that show a variety of possibilities or realms of thought.

**Originality**--generating unique and unusual ideas and products.

**Elaboration**--generating ideas or products that show intensive detail or enhancement.

**Risk Taking**--generating ideas or products which place the creator in a potentially unpopular position.

**Complexity**--generating products or ideas which entail classification skills, high level organization, and/or problem solving.

**Curiosity**--generating ideas or products which reach beyond the obvious and explore unique directions.

**Imagination**--generating ideas and products which may allow for guessing, posing possibilities, and predicting outcomes without evidence.

Judy Leimbach and Joan Vydra (1988) added the definitions of two more noteworthy and commonly mentioned characteristics:

**Awareness**--the ability to notice characteristics of things in the environment so as to build a knowledge base that is the beginning of all other forms of creative thinking. Creativity does not occur in a vacuum. It must be built on the knowledge that the learner has already acquired (pp.4-5).
Perseverance—the ability to keep trying to find an answer; to see a task through to completion. Perseverance encourages a positive attitude toward problem solving (pp.4,59).

Finally, Robert Sloat (1991), an associate professor in the Department of Early Childhood and Special Education at Texas Woman's University, added two more unusual characteristics to the discusional mix—improvisational and spontaneous. He explained the distinction between these traits as a means of describing the difference between two different kinds of creative children—the creative-gifted and the creative-talented (pp.9-10):

**Improvisational**—used to describe the dual orientation of the creative-gifted....The creative-gifted, with a product and process orientation, tries to identify the process which will lead to the very best possible product. Always directing energies toward the product as a goal, this individual, during the development of the product, constantly changes and improves the process until he is satisfied. Aware of the probable need for changes as the unforeseen occurs, this individual is always in a state of readiness and demonstrates outstanding improvisational skills and abilities, but with an emphasis on quality.

**Spontaneous**—used to describe the dual orientation of the creative-talented....The creative-talented individual is constantly looking for a product that will please him and his audience. These two orientations may often conflict, especially if the internal feedback of the creative self is different from the external feedback received from the audience. As a result, the individual responds in an impulsive, affected manner. Changes in actions or behaviors may or may not be related to any logical process or direction; they are spontaneous. The end
product may be a masterpiece or a total failure.

Sloat brought up the idea that the concept of creativity itself must be subdivided into segments based upon what else was combined with it. If creativity, giftedness, and talent were not synonymous, then the possession of one alone or a combination of any two or even all three would be possible and would very likely result in a different kind of product AND process. This difference in processing would ultimately lead to very different personality characteristics associated with each of these orientations. Sloat (1991) felt that the gifted individual was primarily process-oriented, the talented individual was performance-oriented, and the creative individual was product-oriented. Expanding further on the latter, the resulting product of the creative person could be either a physical or a mental creation or a new combination of existing ideas or objects, but that in all cases the orientation of the creative individual is focused upon his or her creation (p.9).

Now, depending upon the particular type of creative individual of whom we are talking, an extensive and differing list of characteristics can be generated. Below is a partial list--certain traits complement each other while others may be in opposition: good problem solver, loves complexity, intrinsically motivated, highly inquisitive, desires variety, uninhibited, dreamer, easily
sidetracked, divergent thinker, self-confident, instinctive, original, introspective, risk-taker, high energy level, nonconforming, perfectionistic, persistent, inner conflict, impetuous, inventive, resourceful, embellisher, charismatic, imaginative, curious, empathetic, and intuitive (Sloat, 1991, p.10).

As one might well imagine, the descriptors could have continued at great length. Sloat himself quite wisely wrote:

If one is considering creativity as being either a distinct entity or a combination of other components, it is incumbent to accept that creativity maybe expressed in a myriad of ways since not all creative individuals have the same traits or characteristics. A list of only 10 characteristics could produce over 3 1/2 million different combinations of characteristics (p.9).

Therefore, it is not easy to say "this is how a creative person acts" or "that is what creative people are like." We strive to identify consistencies and generalities, but they have a tremendous tendency towards variance depending upon the individuals involved.

Regarding the many terms such as "fluency," "flexibility," etc. I must conclude that while they can assist in identifying the types of tasks that creative individuals are likely to do, possession of them is not enough of a qualifier, especially in light of the variance mentioned above. Torrance (1974) was cited once as saying that a high degree of such characteristics or abilities does not guarantee
that the possessor will behave in a highly creative manner, it only increases the individual’s chances of behaving creatively.

A few specific characteristics did, however, keep reappearing in the literature and in the work of other researchers. While no one characteristic is a guarantee of creativity, the idea of “originality” was one such example of a trait that came closer to the heart of the concept. Jerome Bruner (in Gowan et al., 1967) said that all forms of creativity grow out of a combinatorial activity, a placing of things in new perspectives. Many considered that the concept of bringing something new—either a new element or a unique combination of existing elements—into being was at the forefront of creative expression. Varying points of view were debated, among them Hallman’s argument that since we humans—unlike God—are incapable of creating anything which is not of this earth, all that is “original” is really only a combination of existing factors; we create by “bringing already existing elements into a distinctive relation to each other” (Gowan et al., 1967, p.17).

Albert Rothenberg (1990) of Johns Hopkins University brought out another interesting one. He wrote that many unusually or out-of-the-ordinary ideas are not at all worthy of attention. Just like “productivity” could be the generation of only a very large quantity of worthless material, “originality” could be nothing more than
producing strange or bizarre products that have no value or connection to our society. He also claimed that some people will purposely try to act strangely or differently so as to be positively deemed "a creative person." "Creativity is, therefore, the production of something that is both new and truly valuable" (Rothenberg, 1990, pp.4-5).

Rothenberg also stated that the only characteristic he found consistently in all creative individuals was the motivation that person had to create these new and valuable entities. Motivation to create was yet another predominant characteristic. Anthony Storr (1972) suggested that one motive for creativity may be a quest for identity. He noticed a paradox in that creative individuals have such a high level of individuality--especially in their work--and, yet, not as strong of a sense of identity apart from their creations. Storr felt that one feature of the creative person's psychology was the capacity for change and an openness to inspiration. Because this recurrent experience of inspiration provokes personal changes, the individual frequently has difficulty recognizing his or her "proper self," although that person's style may be easily apparent to others (Storr, 1972, pp.299-302). Whatever the motivation--a quest for identity, fame, fortune, or otherwise--without a desire to do the corresponding hard work which is usually associated with the art of
any form of creation, it is difficult to believe that much action upon
the creative ideas would be taken.

Another frequently recurring characteristic was what I came
to know as the “permeability of boundaries.” H.A. Murray (in
Bloomfield & Kory, 1976) wrote in “Vicissitudes of Creativity” that
creativity requires a “permeability of boundaries, boundaries
between categories...between different spheres of interest...[and]
between conscious and unconscious processes” (p.144). David
Perkins (in Lenger, 1995), codirector of Project Zero at Harvard
University’s Graduate School of Education, echoed this sentiment
when he expressed that “creativity has to do with knowing where
the boundaries are, and finding ways to subvert or transcend them”
(p.18). It is in this state of receptiveness and loosening of
boundaries across professional fields or literary genres or artistic
forms of expression that we are able to free our minds to the
surprising connections which may awaken within us. It is an ability
to see and sense patterns that within our realm of experience do not
usually exist together, but it is also the realization is that they can.
I believe that a permeability of boundaries is a fundamental part of
the creative process and can play a very important role in relation to
culture and how creativity is influenced by simultaneous, but
differing cultural viewpoints. Unique ideas can be born by
transcending the structure of one cultural experience and allowing it to merge into another. Knowledge of both experiences, however, is assumed.

An additional characteristic which may be attributed to creative individuals relates closely to the above idea. It is the ability to tolerate ambiguity with regards to concepts and ideas. In their book *Creativity: Its Educational Implications* (1967) Gowan, Demos, and Torrance wrote:

The ability to tolerate ambiguity is another trait which has been commonly accepted. It is the ability to accept conflict and tension resulting from polarity, to tolerate inconsistencies and contradictions, to accept the unknown, to be comfortable with the ambiguous, approximate, uncertain. The creative person can postpone decisions and accept the abeyance as pleasantly challenging" (p.28).

Whether this is "pleasantly challenging" is all a matter of personal perspective, however, the ability to deal with vagueness and ideological discontinuities is not for the faint-hearted. To continuously tolerate such uncertainties requires a strong "anchorage" in a value system held in high esteem by the self. In fact, it must BE the self. The creative person must have "a sense of personal destiny and worth which will allow him to accept himself as the source of values..." (Gowan et al., 1967, p.29). To do this requires an inner strength and self-confidence that is generally not
easy either to acquire or to maintain.

The final recurring characteristic relates to this issue of self-confidence—it is a belief in oneself and a willingness to take intellectual/emotional/social risks which seem to frequently characterize the creative individual. Without the personal freedom to take risks, the greatest ideas would often remain just that--ideas--and would not be translated into action. Over and over again I encountered this concept. Below are two of the most representative thoughts on the subject:

The greatest obstacle (to developing creative potential) of all is not having enough confidence in our own abilities.

Alex Whitson (1994, pp.2-3)

While creativity is generally assumed to have some correlation with talent, the more important correlation is with nerve.

Ralph Keyes (1985, pp.180-181)

Keyes (1985) suggests that the fear of taking risks is the underlying force specifically behind many creative writing problems. According to Keyes, vagueness, pretension, and writer's block are a result of not a fear of writing per se, but a fear of other people's reactions to our writing and our own fear of self-exposure. Keyes stated:

The better our writing, the more danger we're in. Good writing, like good acting and art of any kind, must reveal something authentic. This risk must be taken. There's no alternative to risking self-exposure in writing of any consequence (p.180).
Generally, Americans live in a society which allows and often encourages creative risks. Actually, the United States was built upon it! Looking back historically to the types of individuals who first colonized the American shoreline, we find a group of people who, by definition, were “pioneers,” adventurers, and risk-takers. Frank Farley (in Zweig, 1987), a University of Wisconsin psychologist and researcher who is a prominent figure in this field, discussed this issue of early and later immigrants and how these individuals were and still are “Type T” (high risk-taking) personalities. In order to cross the oceans and come here to an unknown environment, these people needed to have confidence in themselves and their values; they were required to take a multitude of risks. Farley (in Zweig, 1987) stated that traits such as these have been bred and blended into American society through the generations and that, in comparison to other cultures which are more closely tied to order and the reverence of tradition, like China and Japan, the “United States certainly fits the profile of a Type T nation” (p.28). Of course there is also a destructive element to the Type T personality trait. Some individuals may use the Type T characteristic for the betterment of self and society, while others may take irresponsible or violent risks which endanger their lives or
the lives of others (such as reckless driving, drug usage, etc.), as a means of expressing this element of their personality. The paradox to this, however, is that while our society in general appreciates certain forms of risk-taking for creativity, there are infinite instances specifically in which we are striving toward constant conformity. The excessive emphasis on this is apparent in many aspects of our national media. Best (1994) put it most eloquently when he wrote:

...this slickened ethos in which we are made to think that we are personally unique, while we are unwittingly being made into each other's image....The local, home-grown sandlot heroes...are almost no more. They have either left us, trying for bigger things, or if they humbly choose to stay at home, their worth is belittled by the media-hyped superstars and by the gatekeepers who create them: these gatekeepers who choose our culture and then manipulate us into thinking we have chosen it...(p.3).

So we, as a nation, are having then to tolerate a polarity within our own freedom of creative expression. It has been speculated that creative individuals are distinguished by being "divided selves" to a greater extent than most people; that they have more of an access to "the other side" and are more aware of the opposites which they possess (Storr, 1972, p.310). Perhaps, then, creative individuals are better able to deal with the dissonance which they encounter, both internally and externally. They may
simultaneously hold multiple ideas of their culture externally and, yet, need to reconcile multiple visions of themselves internally; the reverse is very likely to be the case as well because culture is also an internal sense and the self is, to a large extent, an external entity...This sense of polarity is an extremely important one to my model of the creative process proposed here and will be dealt with to a much greater extent when we get to the concept of "opposition." For now, however, let it suffice to say that the ability to take measured, responsible risks is a significant trait for people of our Western cultural tradition and is especially linked in our society to creative thought, despite its own battles with opposition.

It was the combination of these last several traits which was the catalyst for some of my earliest thoughts on how a cultural identity helps to shape creative expression. The following is a recap of the five personality characteristics that I feel most exemplify the creative individual and their definitions as I intend to use them from this point onward: "Originality" as the production of something new and valuable; "Motivation" as a desire to create followed by action; "Permeability of Boundaries" as the ability to be aware of patterns within and across domains; "Toleration of Ambiguity" as the ability to deal with multiple, even oppositional, concepts simultaneously while temporarily withholding judgment; and "Risk-
Taking” as a willingness to put oneself in a potentially unpopular intellectual, emotional, or social position for the sake of a quality idea or product.

How are these characteristics used by the individual, however? How are they put into action to forward the process toward a creation? Volumes of speculation on this very subject have been researched and written and the actual “process” of creativity should now be explored in greater depth.

The Problem Solving/Finding Process

We are indebted to specific individuals for creating for us easy-to-comprehend models of what the creative process could, and possibly should, be like (eg., Wallas, 1926; Osborn, 1953). We are familiar with these models and, over time, have a tendency to embrace them as “truth,” forgetting that truth is a difficult concept about which to be certain and that, in any case, a model is no substitution for the reality. Regardless, these models provide for us a framework within which to picture creativity occurring. As with all things related to creativity, it is imperative to remember that it is the interaction of personality characteristics (such as the ones previously mentioned) with a mental sequence of events all within a particular environmental setting which allows for the creativity to be expressed. Nothing happens in isolation and it is very possible
that there is more that is happening which we do not know about and may not yet even suspect.

Waller (1992), in *The Bridges of Madison County*, wrote, "Analysis destroys wholes. Some things, magic things, are meant to stay whole. If you look at their pieces, they go away" (p.39). The division of the creative process into parts is a dubious practice from the first, but--as with other "magical" concepts--we must make some assumptions or, at the very least, take a step toward a reasonable hypothesis or all discussion will degenerate into circular and infinite debate, leaving us wondering why we bothered in the first place...It may also be comforting to keep in mind the advice of William J.J. Gordon who said in 1961 that with the creative process "the emotional component is more important than the intellectual, the irrational more important than the rational" (p.6). Gordon based this insight on his involvement with a Synectics problem solving group in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The word "Synectics" comes from the Greek meaning the "joining together of different and apparently irrelevant elements" (Gordon, 1961, p.3). Gordon felt that, in the selection of group members, those who could best contribute to this diverse consortium of individuals gathered to creatively solve problems were the ones who were able to suspend rational communication during a discussion and deal, instead, with
issues metaphorically and emotionally—not just intellectually. Gordon wrote, “Ultimate solutions to problems are rational; the process of finding them is not” (p.11). I, also, do not believe it is possible to factor out this vital irrational/emotional element in the process of creativity and there remains much to explore based upon this influence. This study is a step in a process as well and is, likewise, an exercise in the toleration of ambiguities. However, if we allow for the assumption that we can look at models which subdivide the creative process in a rational manner (despite the possible irrationality of creativity itself, the overlapping nature or interconnectedness of the components, and the emotional intangibles), let us look further at some of their proposed components and see what we can learn from them.

Back in 1926 Joseph Wallas theorized that there were four stages to the creative process: “preparation” (gathering ideas, doing preliminary work), “incubation” (waiting for a period of time while ideas are stored in the mind), “illumination” (seeing “the solution” to a problem, either by a sudden “insight” or the result of sustained work), and “verification” (critically evaluating the solution to make sure that it is one that will really work) (Arieti, 1976, p.15).

Throughout the following years and up to the present, there has been surprisingly little which has been developed to challenge the
Wallas theory and many researchers have simply modified it by adding additional stages or expanding upon the original ones in some way. Alex Osborn (in Arieti, 1976), 27 years after Wallas, presented the creative process as a seven-stage model using the terminology “orientation” (finding the problem), “preparation” (gathering data), “analysis” (breaking down relevant material), “ideation” (ideas which are possible alternatives), “incubation” (a period of “letting up”), “synthesis” (putting the pieces together), and, finally, “evaluation” (judging the resulting ideas) (Arieti, 1976, p.16). Here Osborn brings up in his first stage the vital component of FINDING a worthy problem to solve and this is, especially for creative individuals seeking original material, an extremely important notion. Scientists must find new research questions which deserve their time; musicians must be able to discover a melody line or lyrical topic not expressed in the same way previously; and dancers must be able to create a bodily image that is both unique and meaningful. It is the identification of the need for a problem to solve which initiates the creative process.

Additionally, it has been speculated that within the process of creativity there is a social side that tends to get overlooked because we so heavily focus upon the lone individual’s “ah-ha” moment of illumination. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Keith Sawyer (in
Sternberg & Davidson, in press) wrote, “It seems that the solitary nature of the moment of insight may have blinded us to the social dimension of the entire creative process” (p.2). It is now coming to light that there may be a “recurring circle” from the individual to others in the field to the domain itself and then back to the individual again. One literary critic coined the term “coduction” for this collective effort in the creative process which expresses the way we try out an idea, listen to other people's opinions, and go back and try again (in Sternberg & Davidson, in press, p.10).

As far as the actual solutions to the problems, a staggering list of obstacles can interfere with one's ability to reach the further stages of the creative process. Arthur Van Gundy (1982, pp.14-15) refered to five major obstacles to creative thinking:

- **Perceptual**—using overly restrictive problem boundaries, stereotyping, failure to use all of one's senses, inability to isolate the problem.

- **Emotional**—fear of failure, criticism, or risk-taking, inability to suspend judgment, a desire to succeed too quickly.

- **Intellectual/Expressive**—lack of information or use of incorrect information, failure to use the appropriate problem solving language for the problem at hand.

- **Cultural**—taboos, tradition, lack of humor, belief that fantasy and intuition are a waste of time, lack of a questioning attitude.

- **Environmental**—lack of time or support, distractions, over-
reliance on experts.

The connection between these obstacles and the previously mentioned personality characteristics is unmissible. Again, the ability to take risks comes up as well as a toleration of ambiguity which allows for suspensions in judgment. Also included are some of the external factors which have a prominent place in the value and expression of creativity and this concept of an environmental/social dimension in regards to the creative process itself.

But there is even more to the story than this. While these sections provide the backdrop of personality characteristics and the way in which a person may approach problems, other factors relating to the individual in question and that person's influential surrounding environment come to the forefront. As mentioned previously (eg., Torrance, 1974), the simple possession of "creative-like" characteristics no more guarantees great creative achievement than the drinking of a chocolate shake would guarantee an increase in brain power. Nor does following a prescribed sequence of steps (even devoid of known obstacles) automatically result in a creative process leading to a creative product. Ultimately, there is still a mystery here to be solved--the mystery of what transpires so as to synthesize all of these elements into one creative thought. But, while it might be a difficult-to-predict or even an incomprehensible
process, it must be singularly stressed that creativity is a healthy process of thinking and reasoning--despite much public opinion to the contrary--and it is a concept of enough importance to deserve some attention now.

**The Maddening Issue of Psychosis/Nurrosis**

Sigmund Freud saw a definitive link between psychotic or neurotic behavior and creative behavior. His premise (as discussed in Arieti, 1976) was that both creativity and psychosis originate from fundamental biological drives which create internal conflict; the resulting creative/psychotic behavior is an attempt to resolve those conflicts (p.22). However, for Freud, his interests rested upon the motivation to act creatively, NOT the essence of creativity. Nevertheless, due in part to his theories, we are left with images of “mad professors” and “temperamental artists” which have contributed to the stereotypical cultural view of the creative individual as one being somewhat strange, different, or difficult.

Rothenberg (1990) argued that, while creative thinking requires unusual thought processes compared to everyday thinking (for instance, the toleration of ambiguities which allow an individual to juxtapose one concept with its antithesis simultaneously), creative individuals can accept such mental risks because they are free of anxiety and can assess reality well.
Rothenberg also found that whereas an individual with psychosis seemed to come from a family where both parents were mentally/emotionally disturbed in some way, the creative person had at least one parent who was psychologically healthy and, generally, it was also a parent who had a strong interest in a creative field, but had not necessarily succeeded in that field (Rothenberg, 1990, p.13).

“What seems to characterize the creative person...is a relative absence of repression and suppression as mechanisms for the control of impulse and imagery. Repression operates against creativity, regardless of how intelligent a person may be, because it makes unavailable to the individual large aspects of his own experience...” wrote Donald W. M. MacKinnon (in Eiseley, 1962, p.10). Creative people are able to express, not repress or suppress their creative impulses. Therefore, if a person does suffer from psychotic or neurotic tendencies, this creative and healthy process must have occurred either before or after a neurotic episode--but not during it. Certainly history has provided us with examples of creative individuals who have been prone to instability (such as Sylvia Plath or Vincent van Gogh), a further misleading reinforcement of Freud's initial premise. Keyes (1985) contributed one explanation for the odd or eccentric responses performers, writers, painters, etc. may
exhibit. Keyes believed that such constant exposure to the criticisms associated with being in the public eye and the fear which accompanies such risks of self-exposure take their toll. He wrote:

Since it would be gauch to admit such a fear (to yourself even), instead you pick fights with the phone company; or hassle your agent; or brood distantly among people you'd like to be close to. A lot of the “madness” assumed to underlie genius is little more than this constant fear of humiliation leaking out in more acceptable forms--such as lunacy (p.179).

In many ways I believe that an interesting perspective must be gained from a neurotic/psychotic outlook--possibly an unusual interpretation or vantage point on one's life as the result of such an experience. It is an unusual form of “marginality” in relation to the larger society. It is also likely that artistic avenues in some favorite domain may well be a positive and therapeutic release for such people. Ultimately, however, to take on such challenges as those required by the creative process, the person must be free from illness--if not permanently, at least temporarily. Silvano Arieti (1976) commented:

The neurosis of the creative person may be recognized as an important motivational factor and also as an important part of the content of a creative work. In these cases the neurosis is bypassed by the creative process itself, and what is important is not the neurosis but what has followed from it (p.24).

And what has followed it? This brings up the issue of the
content of a creative work which remains to be addressed as part of the following set of questions and concepts.

Creativity Across the Domains

If a paper such as this were to ask the questions who, what, where, when, why, and how in relation to creativity--we have just come from the “who,” “how,” and some of “why” sections and are moving into the “what” part. Essentially, creativity is not a product but a process and, therefore, there is a good deal of research which suggests that you cannot have creativity independent of a “what,” or, rather, a particular field or domain of knowledge.

Howard Gardner (1993) has done extensive research and development in this area which he named “Multiple Intelligences” or “MI” and has, in addition, related his theory of intelligence to the world of creativity. Gardner (both independently--in his book Multiple Intelligences, 1993--and as described in Armstrong, 1994) delineated seven specific areas of intelligence, all of which were contingent upon being universally present in all cultures and throughout the known history of humankind. Below are listed the seven domains, their core components, and (in parentheses) the ways which many cultures show their value of that form of intelligence (Armstrong, 1994, pp.6,8):

Linguistic—sensitivity to the sounds, structure, meanings, and functions of words and language (oral histories,
Logical-Mathematical--sensitivity and capacity to discern logical or numerical patterns; ability to handle long chains of reasoning (scientific discoveries, mathematical theories, counting and classification systems.)

Spatial--capacity to perceive the visual-spatial world accurately and to perform transformations on one's initial perceptions (artistic works, navigational systems, architectural designs, inventions.)

Bodily-Kinesthetic--ability to control one's body movements and to handle objects skillfully (crafts, athletic performances, dramatic arts, dance forms and sculpture.)

Musical--ability to produce and appreciate rhythm, pitch, and timbre; appreciation of the forms of musical expressiveness (musical compositions, performances, recordings.)

Interpersonal--capacity to discern and respond appropriately to the moods, temperaments, motivations, and desires of other people (political documents, social institutions.)

Intrapersonal--access to one's own feeling life and the ability to discriminate among one's emotions; knowledge of one's own strengths and weaknesses (religious systems, psychological theories, rites of passage.)

Gardner, in his book Creating Minds (1993), defined the creative individual as one who "regularly solves problems, fashions products, or defines new questions in a domain in a way that is initially considered novel but that ultimately becomes accepted in a
particular cultural setting” (p.35). Looking more closely at Gardner's definition, the functions of a creative person (solving problems, fashioning products, or defining questions) all take place within a specific domain of knowledge, thereby allowing for a particular personality characteristic (ie: highly inquisitive, risk-taker, motivated, imaginative, etc.) to ALSO be only specific to that particular area of intelligence. Personally, I can easily list several individuals whom I know to be extraordinarily creative problem solvers or original thinkers in one domain (say logical-mathematical) while in another (linguistic, for instance) their thinking is quite predictable, average, or even elementary in nature. I believe we have all come into contact with people who possess naturally such typically divided abilities and, quite likely, we have similar extremes within ourselves. A gifted athlete may be a terrible public speaker; a musical composer may have little drawing talent; or an experimental scientist may possess poor interpersonal skills--all of these, and many other combinations, are possible.

Thomas Armstrong (1994), in a book written to explain the application of Gardner’s MI theory to the classroom, wrote down the three main factors which determine whether a specific intelligence develops within an individual:

**Biological Endowment**--hereditary/genetic factors.
Personal Life History--experience with parents, teachers, peers, which either encourages or prevents development.

Cultural and Historical Background--the time/place of birth and growth, the nature/state of cultural or historical developments in different domains (p.21).

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s life was used as one such example of the interaction of all three factors: biologically he must have had a particular genetic strength (ie: healthy, efficiently functioning right temporal lobe region of the brain which is the center of musical thought); he was born into a family of musicians and his father, Leopold Mozart, devoted his life to the development of his son’s talent; and the time period in which Mozart was born in Europe was very receptive to music and the arts with new ideas, styles, and developments frequently being made in these areas (Armstrong, 1994, p.22).

One particularly interesting aspect of MI theory is the belief that most people can develop all of the seven intelligences to a level of mastery that is, if not extraordinary, at least generally competent. Of course, in relation to the question of creativity in general, we must ask ourselves a multitude of questions: To what degree do we consider someone to be creative? Is it enough that the individual put creative thought into effect in his or her own life or must it be extraordinary to “count” (like a Mozart composition)? It
is probable that most of us could improve in competence and be more
effective problem solvers--should our search for creativity end
with that goal in mind? Or, should we focus only upon the elite?
Who has the power to decide when someone has crossed the line into
"the creativity zone?" Who should be relied upon as "the experts?"
Who do we allow to be the gatekeepers of our creative culture and,
more importantly, can we trust them?

For my part, I am interested in ALL creativity--from the little
novelties we create to make life easier for ourselves to the great
masterpieces of the intellectual and artistic worlds which make our
life pleasurable and, occasionally, disturbing. But in all cases, the
culture shapes both the expression and the interpretation. According
to MI theory, "an intelligence must be valued by a culture in order to
be considered a true intelligence... [and] all cultures in the world
possess and make use of the seven intelligences in MI theory;
however, the ways in which they do so, and the manner in which
individual intelligences are valued, vary considerably" (Armstrong,

This thought brings up the questions of "where," "when," and
more of "why." Although all individuals have the potential to develop
each domain of intelligence and, thus, take risks and formulate
original ideas or creative products within that domain, the emphasis
that our cultural environment places upon the value of a domain greatly influences where or when opportunities will arise to develop the necessary experience and skills needed for creative thought within any particular domain. My definition, therefore, of what creativity is remains contingent upon this and, thus, I would define creativity as: a healthy process of seeing patterns across boundaries, juxtaposing polar ideas, or combining known elements in an unusual way within a domain so as to willingly bring into being something valuable to the specific culture and, hopefully, to the human culture. The distinction between these and other senses of culture, its philosophical history, and how its influences are established and expressed is so important a topic that the next chapter has been devoted entirely to it.
The onlookers initially attempt to maintain a respectful presence, but they are besieged by a preference of one opponent over another. The onlookers cheer--some for one, some for the other--in small gestures at first which eventually give way to overt shouting.
CHAPTER 3

CULTURE

A person’s reality is shaped by the culture in which the self is embedded...

Carol H. Hoare, “Psychosocial Identity Development and Cultural Others”

We experience the world because we understand it in certain ways, not vice versa. Meaning is not after the fact; it is not something we experience, as it were, after a first exposure to nature in the raw. Experience is already an interpretation.

Jerome Bruner, “Meaning and the Self in Cultural Perspective”

I should not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew as well...Moreover, I, on, my side, require of every writer, first or last, a simple and sincere account of his own life, and not merely what he has heard of other men’s lives...

Henry David Thoreau, Walden

The Philosophical Basis of Culture

Initially it had appeared to me that a definition of culture--while not a simplistic task--would at least not present the expressive difficulties that creativity did. Clearly I was mistaken, for not only is “culture” a miraculous feat to express linguistically, it also encompasses the philosophic issues of creativity and the arts
into its very meaning, clouding concepts, and raising the challenge by the tenth power.

While being led on an intellectual chase from one source to another in an attempt to understand the background of the components of culture, I came across Alain Finkielkraut’s (1987/1995) work *The Defeat of the Mind*. As is sometimes the case in life, one comes into contact with a body of knowledge that, once assimilated into one’s consciousness, seems to “change everything.” This is essentially what happened to me. Finkielkraut’s writing was instrumental in explaining the impact that a few of the European schools of philosophic thought had on our Western idea of culture and how these views have changed over time.

Alexis de Tocqueville (1966) once observed:

Less attention, I suppose, is paid to philosophy in the United States than in any other country of the civilized world. Americans have no school of philosophy peculiar to themselves, and they pay very little attention to the rival European schools. Indeed they hardly know their names (p.393).

Judith Friedlander, to whom I am indebted for her 1995 translation of Finkielkraut’s work into English, referred to a similar version of the above quotation in her notes and, even before reading *The Defeat of the Mind*, I found that I, too, must agree with de Tocqueville. Speaking only for myself, not only did I have very little exposure to the schools of European philosophy in high school,
college, or graduate school, I had virtually no exposure to ANY pure philosophy whatsoever. Others may disagree or argue differently, of course, based upon their own experiences, but, in comparison to the deeply held tradition and philosophic background of other nations (particularly France and Germany), I am increasingly aware of our nation's lack of interest in philosophic issues just as Tocqueville suggested. Finkielkraut (1987/1995) pointed out the many ways in which philosophic tradition had shaped the European perception of the nature of culture, which--due to the link between European thought and the formation of our own government--had, in turn, influenced us...quite possibly without many modern Americans being fully aware of it. An understanding of these differing philosophies (eg., German romanticism, French traditionalism, European theocracy, etc.), their origins, and the ideas which descended from them are embedded in the history of the European nations. To comprehend their impact would require that we embrace what knowledge of philosophy, theology, and history we have access to and to attempt to reconstruct, as realistically as possible, some of these differing perspectives and where they have led us up until the present. Certainly any steps toward the understanding of "culture" as we know it would originate in the past.

T.S. Eliot (1949) devoted no less than 128 pages to his
“definition of culture” and expressed that throughout history “no culture has appeared or developed except together with a religion” (p.13). (Although it was up to the reader’s own judgment as to whether the religion was a product of the culture or the culture the product of the religion.) Eliot also pointed out that we Westerners owe many things to our Christian heritage aside from the formation of a religious faith: the evolution of our arts (especially music and painting), the conception of Roman Law, public and private morality, and the literature of Greece, Rome, and Israel as common standards. “This unity in the common elements of culture, throughout many centuries, is the true bond between us” (Eliot, 1949, p.127).

However, Finkielkraut (1987/1995) expressed that there had been a “transmutation” through time. Once people looked to culture as a domain in which the spiritual and creative life of man developed--there was, in essence, a kind of common standard of “beauty” or “truth.” A change in philosophic thought took place in the eighteenth century, though, and since then there has been a prevailing belief that “everything is cultural”--even the mundane tasks of every day life--and, likewise, everything is relative; the focus shifted from culture in general to MY culture in particular (p.5).

How was this change initiated and why? Up until the late
1700's it was believed that a number of things could form man's general outlook on life--this idea was largely due to Montesquieu's thesis *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748)--and included such influences as climate, law, religion, custom, manners, etc. These were "positive laws" and were distinguished from "universal principles of equity" such as "goodness." In 1774 Herder (as in Finkielkraut 1987/1995) took this idea to the extreme, first by eliminating the distinction between laws and universal principles and, then, by claiming that nothing had a higher authority than "the plurality of collective souls" and that *any* value, whether legal, aesthetic, or moral, which was not derived from the nation itself, was not valid. The idea behind this was called the "Volksgeist" meaning "the spirit of the people." Herder wanted to put an end to the notion that it was possible to remove a human creation from its place of origin and evaluate it out of context based upon "timeless criteria of what is Good, True, or Beautiful" (Finkielkraut, 1987/1995, p.6). He argued that the standards and norms which had previously been set were derivatives from another time, from someone else's history or Volksgeist, and that there were no absolutes, only "regional values and contingent principles." Additionally, Herder did not accept that there could be a distinction between reason and custom, that reason could be disassociated from history. "It was not history that was
reasonable, or even rational, it was reason that was historical...” (p.7).

The result of this, however, was that now, in the late 18th century, people of a nation had no interest in the thoughts of anyone outside of their own country for, of course, why should they care about Spanish ideas if they were Italian or French ideas if they were German? "Nothing, no eternal ideal or value independent of time and place, should be allowed to impair the individuality of a people or divert the spirit, the genius, they carried within them" (Finkielkraut, 1987/1995, p.9). Herder had brought philosophic thought, at least in Germany, from an emphasis on the eternal and the external and turned it into an infinitesimal and inwardly focused obsession. The Germans looked for individuals within their society who were “not yet ruined by foreign contact” and “in the name of culture [legal scholars and writers] no longer sought to push back prejudice and ignorance but to convey the unique soul of the people, whose guardians they were, in all its impressive singularity” (p.10). In hindsight, of course, it is easy to glance back at the formation of ideals and deeply set beliefs in a society that we know, from our futuristic vantage point, will be problematic later. At the time, however, no such retrospective view was available and Germany was alive with its own quest for nationalistic identity and self-
Meanwhile, what was happening in France was a different story altogether. In the aftermath of the Revolution, class distinctions had been abolished but, unlike Germany, the French did not try to create a collective identity or promote a nationalistic Volksgeist. Instead, they felt that belonging to France was a "contract of associates," people who lived together based on free and voluntary will, and that their government should reflect this. "Power, in other words, no longer came from on high but from below, from that union of wills of the people who formed the national collective" (Finkielkraut, 1987/1995, p.12). It is interesting to note here how, back in the United States during the formation of the state governments, a similar distinction had been made in the philosophy of granting power to the governmental forces as opposed to the British ideal of power being derived from the leaders (Peterson, 1996). At this time in world history such ideas were startlingly novel in their conception.

Unfortunately for the French, they did not allow this novelty to develop naturally and stand the tests of time. In their desire to give a rational foundation to their newly and quickly created universal constitution, they cut off the very traditions and heritage which made them unique. Finkielkraut (1987/1995) relates how a group of
thinkers called the traditionalists challenged these ideas by countering:

Human subjects did not consciously create the community in which they lived; they were formed, on the contrary, by the community itself, without their ever having been aware of it. It was not the will of its members that created the nation; it was the nation itself that imposed its will on those who belonged to it (p. 16).

A very interesting idea which tied national culture to religion was derived from this traditionalistic school. It was claimed that nations had an overriding character or "soul" which was best expressed through the national language. God was no longer seen to be a "Supreme Being" but, rather, the result of collective reason--"God existed within human intelligence, not beyond it"--and He spoke not "to" man in a universal tongue, but "within" man using man's own native language (p. 18).

Around this time the Germans, still reveling in their principles of Volksgeist, proceeded to take the Alsace-Lorraine region from France on the basis that the residents there spoke German and, therefore, belonged to the German culture. While German historians quickly scrambled to "justify the annexation," the French refuted that, despite the fact that the Alsatians spoke German, the very fact that they did not want to belong to the German State was the real issue. It was part of the "rights of the people" to determine of
which national power they wished to be a subject (pp.28-29).

Of course the French were now in a rather precarious position philosophically with the traditionalists emphasizing native language and the remnants of a “contract of associates” still floating around their national conscience. How would they be able to align both of these beliefs? The Alsatians themselves were consistently unified in wishing to remain with France, but could not deny their native tongue and, thus, were truly prisoners--held captive by their very own identity. According to the Germans, man “belonged to his culture before he belonged to himself” (Finkielkraut, 1987/1995, p.32). The Frenchman, Renan, offered an alternative to this thought, however. He stated that humans, once formed, have the ability to think, reason, and make rational and moral decisions--in essence, that man had the ability to break away. “Before French culture, German culture and Italian culture, there is human culture” (p.33).

Up until this period of time the poet and scientist, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (in Finkielkraut, 1987/1995), had faithfully been following the German Volksgeist philosophy in which “characteristic art is the only true art” and openness in actions or tasks between peoples only encourages uniformity. It was better to reach in, not out, and to protect human differences we should “defend ourselves from foreign influences instead of delighting in
them” (p.36). However, Goethe experienced a metamorphosis in thought when, upon reading a Chinese book, he was startled by coming across striking similarities to his own thoughts on a multitude of subjects. He now was convinced that, despite differences across cultures, there was a connection! The reading of this book gave him the evidence he had hoped for to demonstrate that the “spirit transcended society and history.” By 1808 he had rejected the idea that an individual or an artist owed his country allegiance without ever questioning it and retained a strong belief in the idea that “the value of anything with true merit lies in its belonging to all of humanity” (Finkielkraut, 1987/1995, pp.34,37).

People must allow themselves to open up to a wide range of influences, especially that of literature, since, in Goethe’s opinion, it possessed the ability to transcend differences across time, race, or culture and, therefore, had “an obligation” to do so.

Goethe had learned from Herder that man did not escape the particular influences of his birth--that ethnicity was fundamental and primary, that language and history were not secondary characteristics. But, as Finkielkraut pointed out, he “refused to make a virtue out of necessity.” Humans are shaped by their national heritage and we should recognize this as fact--not worship it or encourage prejudices. Art has “the task of transcending this
dependence rather than hanging on to it more tenaciously. Individual works must surpass the Volksgeist--they should not be an expression of it" (p.39). Goethe (1963) stated:

True, we are born with certain innate capacities, but we owe our development to a thousand and one influences from the great world, from which we appropriate what we may....I owe much to the Greeks and the French, and I have become indebted beyond telling to Shakespeare, Sterne and Goldsmith. Yet they all do not exhaust the sources of my culture--to do so would transcend all limits and would also be quite pointless. The main thing is that one have a soul which loves truth and welcomes it wherever it is found (p.173).

European philosophy would have to continue its arguments as to the nature of culture, its tie to the spiritual world, and the place of the artist at a later date. Under the influence of a rising German nationalism, Goethe's thoughts would be temporarily subdued in deference to Herder's as the world neared the twentieth century. Finkielkraut (1987/1995) remarked, "Reducing culture to the cult of origins, the Volksgeist triumphed, revealing in the process its totalitarian potential" (p.40). To me, I found myself flashing back to the continued meaningfulness of Thomas Jefferson's words which are etched on the walls of the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C.: "I have sworn upon the alter of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man." One hundred years later, two hundred, or five hundred...these words still hold within
them the truth that the mind of man is indefinitely subject to the peril of such tyranny.

In 1945 a branch of the United Nations, called UNESCO, was formed with the intent of encouraging the circulation of ideas and reason so as to not allow humanity to fall into the trap of such cultural specificity again. The objective was to destroy prejudice as it was "no longer a matter of opening others to reason, but of opening ourselves to the reason of others" (Finkielkraut, 1987/1995, p.57). This led to the fascinating consequence of, at long last, questioning the form of colonial expansion that European and American "imperialism" had allowed and encouraged. It came to be appreciated that cultures should not be ranked according to "their worth" (as deemed by the West) and that it was a high form of ethnocentrism to assume that these "barbarian" cultures were in need of "saving" by any Western nation.

In his book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said stated that throughout the Western literary tradition there have been tight constraints placed upon the cultural representation of women and members of so-called "inferior" races or classes. Not only is the "capacity to represent, portray, characterized, and depict" not easily or freely available to just any member of a particular society, but that the "what and how" of the representation has been socially
regulated so as to perpetuate the beliefs that domination of these lesser beings is justified, both in philosophy and in action (Said, 1993, p.80).

While these and other practices were unintentionally called into question during the UNESCO meetings, this "ethnocentrism" was systematically being chased out of the disciplines to the point of also destroying any connection or recognition which we had to the past (Finkielkraut, 1987/1995, p.58). In a sense, the past negative experiences of denying the individual differences among humanity was returning for an encore, and--with it--bringing to mind the old axiom, "Those who do not learn from the past are condemned to repeat it." The repetition, however, came in a radically different form this time: technology and the media in a "politically correct" world.

We live in an environment where everyone can now "choose" their influences and call them "cultural"--be it Mozart or MTV. No distinctions are made nor is it really socially acceptable for us to make them. On this subject Finkielkraut wrote:

We are living in a time of feelings, where there is no truth or lie, no stereotype or invention, nothing beautiful or ugly, but an infinite palette of different and equal pleasures. Democracy used to mean culture was accessible to everybody; now it implies that everyone has a right to the culture of his or her choice (or to identify as cultural any urge of the moment)....The absence of thought [la non-pensée] has of course always
coexisted with the life of the mind, but this is the first time in European history that the two share the same name (culture) and enjoy the same status. Those who believe in “high” culture and dare make the distinction are called racists or reactionaries (p.117).

Finkielkraut contended that, while intellectual or artistic masterpieces are still being created, the boundary between culture and entertainment has been blurred and there is no longer a place to receive this art and give it a point of reference or a sense of significance.

Going from a philosophy of culture where there was a universal principle of what was Good, True, or Beautiful to a belief that nationalistic society is the only capable judge of art or thought, and now ending up with an “everything is equal and everything is cultural” fascination we are left with significant questions as to what culture is. We have moved from culture in general to culture in the specific to no definitive form of culture--it is difficult to know in which senses culture still exists and how to express it meaningfully. How is a collective sense of “culture” to be reclaimed?

Finkielkraut’s concluding remarks lacked both possible solutions and any sense of hopefulness. He stated:

And so as we come to the end, barbarism replaces culture. In the shadow of the great word, intolerance and infantile behavior increase. When it is not cultural identity restricting
the choices an individual can make, using threats of high treason to silence expressions of doubt, irony, and reason--opinions that might separate him from the collectivity--it is the entertainment industry, the creation of the technological age, that reduces great works of art to drivel. The life of the mind has quietly moved out of the way, making room for the terrible and pathetic encounter of the fanatic and the zombie (p.135).

As for myself, I choose not to view the current position of culture with the same degree of pessimism although, admittedly, I am not encouraged. In the past 225 years alone there have been such shifts in public opinion and in the perception of "culture" so as to convince me that we have not yet reached the end of the debate--this is but one more stage in the on-going argument. From my vantage point now, however, I am most likely to join in with Goethe on this one. I believe that there is a human spirit which transcends even the important elements of birth, situation, and lifestyle. It is difficult to neglect or deny the powerful influences of these elements--they surely exist. But, creativity can--and should--make an attempt to rise above these restrictions. Perhaps, in answer to the question in the previous chapter about whether those interested in creativity should be concerned with ordinary kinds of creative ideas or only the more extraordinary variety, Goethe's thoughts provide an insight. Maybe what separates everyday creativity from genius creativity is not in the degree of the individual's recognition
by that person's culture or in a higher level of specific personality traits, but in the ability to express meaning through his or her art which is not only valuable to the individual's own culture, but beyond culture altogether. Both are important, but it is the latter which gives us the hope for all of humanity—the connection between souls regardless of society.

The Senses of Culture

Philosophic thought provides us with a vital background as to its meaningfulness and its history, but, in our daily use of the word, we must still maintain some form of a working definition of culture so that it can be discussed as more than just an abstraction which has been altered across place and time. For this purpose I wish to examine some of the differing "senses" to which we have assigned the word to represent.

Eliot (1949) wrote that there were three major senses of culture, all of which must be taken into account simultaneously: the culture of the individual which was dependent upon the culture of the group or class (to which the individual belonged) which was, in turn, dependent upon the culture of the whole society (Eliot, 1949). Within all three of these major senses one could be referring to any of these four additional senses of culture (p. 21):

Refinement of Manners—meaning "urbanity" and "civility," thinking of the superior individual as representing the
best of a particular social class.

**Accumulated Wisdom**—meaning the learning of the past, the superior individual as a scholar.

**Philosophy**—meaning an interest in and an ability to manipulate abstract ideas, the superior individual as an intellectual in the strongest sense of the word.

**The Arts**—meaning a talent in an artistic form, the superior individual as an artist (p.21).

Eliot felt that “no perfection in any one of them, to the exclusion of the others, can confer culture on anybody....And if we do not find culture in any one of these perfections alone, so we must not expect any one person to be accomplished in all of them” (Eliot, 1949, pp.25-26). In other words, while incredibly good manners without a corresponding intellect did not constitute a “cultured individual,” neither should any society expect that an individual perform extraordinary feats to be deemed “cultured.” Additionally, for Eliot there remained the issues of to what extent culture is anything we can control or deliberately influence and, also, the degree to which there is an intricate and intertwined relation of culture underlying every part of the world to every other part (pp.25-26).

In reading an article on “Multi-Culturalism” by Michael Davis (1995), from the Illinois Institute of Technology, I noticed that he,
like Eliot, divided the term "culture" up into senses--some of which were strikingly similar to Eliot's version. He did, however, bring up an unusual and original point when he said that, as sociologists define it, a culture is an independent society--one that can exist without any other--whereas a sub-culture would be a dependent society or one that could not exist except within a larger society. Therefore, if a culture is a complete way of life for a group and nothing outside of it can be fundamentally important to the group's members, with the way our world exists now in its highly interconnected state only the world itself could be large enough to fulfill this complete way of life. Therefore, we "may be tempted to conclude that there is but one culture, world culture, and but one society, world society" (Davis, 1995, pp.5-6). However, Davis then urged his readers to resist such a temptation and, instead, stated that there are alternatives. One is that there is no complete way of life--all ways are ultimately incomplete--and we just extemporize and pick things up from each other as we go along. The other is that there is more than one complete way of life--none of which defines a society--and we "mix-and-match" from the possible options of organizing our lives. If no one way of life can define a society, then there can be no cultures, or sub-cultures, at all (p.7). This seemed to capture the mental fury of the European philosophical debates on the
meaning of culture all over again. Is there a universal truth or is there not? Are manners, intellect, and art all tied together or are they separate entities?

Eliot (1949) argued that initially in a primitive culture activities of art, religion, politics, science, etc. were interwoven (ie: a piece of artwork was first a religious symbol) and it is only at a much later stage in the society’s development that such concepts “become abstractly conceived apart from each other” and a conflict as to their ability to be autonomous or dominant was born (Eliot, 1949, p.23). The resulting tension can, in fact, be a highly creative factor because struggling with dual or opposing ideas within a society leads to a similar struggle within the mind of the individual. An ability to deal with this opposition, tension, and ambiguity is, as some researchers have come to believe, one of the marks of the creative mind (eg., Rothenberg, 1990).

There is a natural interaction, overlapping, and sharing of interests within a society and between societies--a frequent and functional permeability of boundaries; important activities in any culture are not necessarily seen as distinct or exclusive. Likewise, I find it difficult to believe that any modern culture has remained singularly distinct or exclusive--all stringent lines here have long since become porous due to an international economy and a world-
wide communication network. Yet, it is still quite possible to be a person who lives a life decidedly out of the mainstream--to live a life of **marginality** even within a diverse, multifaceted, and interconnected society. This is a lifestyle that some will choose purposely and others will have thrust upon them. Simply being born into a complex and "integrated" environment is not enough to insure one's acceptance by that same environment nor does it guarantee one's desire to accept the society itself.

Culture, then, in the sense of a whole society, represents a combination of elements: place and historical time of birth, national/political environment, hereditary and familial factors, contact with members of other environments, personal talents/skills/desires which have developed as a result of this placement--and, to a large extent, our **perception** of the influence of these elements. If the true meaningfulness behind art of all kinds or creative thought is to be able to transcend these barriers or demonstrations of culture--these interactions, oppositions, perceptions, and marginalities which tie our creative spirits to a particular cultural influence--then it is the purpose of the next chapter to discuss the ways in which these forces fit together and also the ways they not only have been overcome, but actually used to the advantage of the creator.
The ball glides back and forth across the net, tapping a dance of connection between the two players. It is the link between the players and their onlookers as well as the means of executing the strategy of strange side angles, corner shots, underspins, overspins, and aces. The score climbs 0-15... 15-30...30-40... The ball is oblivious.
CHAPTER 4

RELATIONSHIPS AND INFLUENCES

Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe?

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*

*S. Hawking:* I don’t demand that a theory correspond to reality because I don’t know what it is. Reality is not a quality you can test with litmus paper. All I’m concerned with is that the theory should predict the results of measurements....

*R. Penrose:* Whatever ‘reality’ may be, one has to explain how one perceives the world to be.

Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose, *The Nature of Space and Time*

If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is: infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro’ narrow chinks of his cavern.

William Blake, “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell”

The Four Forces

With the definitions of creativity and culture in hand, I intend to propose a multilayered model of relationship and influence between these two concepts. While there certainly may be room for additional factors, I believe on the basis of the following research that there are four primary internal/external forces or components which permit a *two-way* relationship to occur—a relationship which
allows for the concurrent influences of culture and creativity both on the side of the individual and also from the perspective of the society.

The first force, “perception,” is the individual and society looking at each other. In other words, how the individual perceives that specific environment and his or her place in it and, likewise, how the society views that particular individual during a period of time and according to that person’s perceived contributions.

“Interaction,” the second force, is the combination of the individual and society. These are the values that are shared, the common interests, and the joint activities which we recognize together as having merit or importance; it also allows for the permeability of knowledge exchanged between disciplines and the social dimension and relationship between people. It is the result of such intense interactional and perceptual functions in particular which have given rise to such theories that we as humans cannot be defined as “selves” separate from a society--the ties are too many and too strong and our individual identities are too reliant upon our societal experience to be viewed apart from it (as Bruner, 1986, had suggested in Actual Minds, Possible Worlds). Of course relationships are made and defined by dissimilarities as well as likenesses and, in keeping with that, there are also other forces to consider.
The third one, “opposition,” is the force of the individual and the society against each other--the cause for tension within elements of a society leading to tension within the specific individual. Opposition therefore acts on several levels: within the society, within the individual, and between the society and individual.

Finally, the fourth force, “marginality,” may be seen in some ways as an extension of opposition for it occurs where the boundaries of the individual and the society diverge--the moments when the society and the individual are on the fringes of one another. Marginality operates on two levels: marginal status by choice of the individual and marginal status as inflicted unwillingly upon the individual by the society. There is a natural overlapping of forces--not just between these latter two, but in all cases since it is likely that in any one situation all four forces could be in operation simultaneously.

A recognition of these relationships is fundamental to our understanding of the influences of the creative individual and the cultural environment upon each other. We must determine in which ways we are affected by this interplay of forces acting both within ourselves and between us and our society at any given time if we are to expect the study of creativity or the study of culture to be seen
as “science.” Then again, it is possible that we may need to rethink what we call science in light of our own subjectivity of perception and undisputable--and often imperceptible--influences of our own environments upon us. As Roger Penrose had suggested, regardless of what the reality is, we need to find a way to explain how we perceive our world and ourselves in it.

**Perception**

Perception is an extremely strong influence in its own right, but it is also particularly unusual because its effects are dominant in the other three forces as well. At any given moment and in ALL situations our perception of our world influences our behaviors within it. I will address perception at length, both in general and specifically relative to several domains including music, history, media/art, science, and literature. Of the four primary forces this one deserves a great deal of focused attention and needs to be addressed first.

The force of perceptual influence is especially prevalent in relation to time. The opinions held by members of a larger culture about certain individuals, specifically in relation to their creative abilities, do not necessarily stand the test of time. Deep philosophic debates about the nature of Truth and Beauty aside, much inconsistency can be put down to simply the fickle swaying of fads,
trends, and popular opinion. Denise Shekerjian in *Uncommon Genius* (1990) humorously wrote:

But who is creative? In the eighteenth century, Shakespeare was thought coarse, almost unfit as a writer. The nineteenth century considered Bach stiff and lacking in soul. Edison was laughed at, James Joyce sneered at, the Impressionists spat at and their paintings attacked. Tastes change, the objects of veneration come and go (p.xvii).

Bonnie Cramond (1994) suggested that one of the problems we have with “expert judgment” of creativity, aside from the way it simply changes over time, is that “the vanguards in a field may have particular problems getting recognition from those who have a stake in the status quo” (p.70). Change is challenging for most people, especially when it is seemingly unpredictable and, yet, we seem to be constantly faced with it. The further individuals become established in a field, the easier it is to allow themselves to become satisfied with “the way things are” and resent any major changes in that which is now familiar and comfortable--even possibly among the very individuals who broke the barriers initially! Additionally, it is interesting often important to question that which we have been conditioned culturally to find creative or beautiful. David Bohm (1987) and F. David Peat stated that, “Creativity, in almost every area of life, is blocked by a wide range of rigidly held assumptions that are taken for granted by society as
a whole" (p.235). Along this line of thought, Walter Kaufmann (1980) added:

Those who find beautiful only what in their childhood they were told to find beautiful are hardly fit to play 'the judge in matters of taste.' To be a judge worth listening to one must not only reconsider the aesthetic judgments one accepted or absorbed as a child but also explore what one was not trained to find beautiful and even what one was taught to find ugly (p.147).

The perception of that which we see as beautiful, witty, or culturally important is a dynamic interaction and while, on rare occasion, a thought may be expressed so as to almost immediately call into question a particular world view (Darwin's *The Origin of the Species*, 1859, springs immediately to mind), it is generally the case that such changes in cultural values occur over a period of time so as to make the date of passage almost unnoticeable. A very simplistic American “pop-culture” example would be the change in favored musical styles in the 10-year span from 1977-1987. What transpired was a seemingly radical movement from the popular “disco” era of music to a synthesized “pop/punk” style which in turn eventually gave way to “hip hop” and “rap” as the musical style-setters and ground breakers. These popular musical styles are miles apart as far as lyrical themes, instruments, and origins--and, yet, the changeovers cannot be pinpointed to a certain date, a specific
performer, or even a full year of musical artists. Somehow, somewhere the tide of popular musical styles for American youth shifted and disco—"ultra cool" in the 1970's—was an almost unspeakably backward style in the 1980's. Rap was seen to be more meaningful, more representative of their cultural experience, and even more musically expressive for a large group of young Americans. Other musical styles still persisted throughout this era, of course, including classical, country, folk, and even hard rock, but there was not another form that went from such a degree of monumental admiration to laughable repulsion in musical culture in such a remarkably short period of time.

What was it that so many American youth perceived to make disco so unappealing, punk so transitory, and rap so suddenly meaningful? Or, for that matter, what makes any new trend appear wildly popular only to burn out a short time later in favor of another? We have been faced with hula hoops, pet rocks, bell bottoms, beanie babies, karaoke bars, and Hugh Grant movies—what's next? These trends only reinforce the temporal appeal of "novelties," but, perhaps, they do not always fit the full description of creativity in the sense that what they deliver is not of value to the culture—at least not of long-term value. Or, possibly, the latest trend helps us to get to "the next stage" in some domain and, once it
has delivered the culture to a certain point or a particular level of awareness, it has served its purpose and can then be discarded. In many cases trends seem to be a function of our level of technology (even trends in fashion have been the result of new discoveries in materials, like synthetics, or inventions, like velcro) and our perception of their worth in light of what is currently valued by the culture. Certainly the very fact that the terms “the web” and “the net” are household words is indicative of the combination of our new technological abilities and a perceptual societal need for greater communication and “access” to information. No one can deny that creative forces are at work here, expanding and strengthening our global connectedness--yet, it is a series of deep cultural changes which have brought us to this point and, furthermore, the general perception that these changes are “good” and that this use of creativity is valuable.

Another historical example of perceptual influence on creativity--one undeniably high in cultural value--is based upon what took place during the early stages of the American Revolution and, more importantly, in the years preceding it. The differing points of view between the British leaders and the American Colonists in the 1770’s was not simply a matter of ideology, but almost unconscious values that were derived from the attitudes and actions
of their unique cultures over long periods of time. The technology which we use so freely now--express mail, telephones, FAX machines, satellites, television, and computers--was not of course in existence and, thus, a separation of 6,000 miles was a world away. Not only did the two cultures develop vastly different lifestyles in the years from 1620 to 1775 with comparatively little joint interaction, but the very words they used to describe their ideologies--words like “liberty” or “power”--had a substantially different meaning from each other because they had been conceived and used in differing ways governmentally and socially. To add further to the confusion, those very words mean something else to us in our cultures today--so not only did “liberty” have a different connotation between the British and American usage back in the 1770’s, but there is a similar difficulty of expression from the past to the present (Peterson, 1996). This makes direct comparisons of cultures and ideologies between the America of the late eighteenth century and the America of the late twentieth century virtually impossible. Our current perceptions of communication do not allow us to see the world through the limited global scope of our ancestors, but neither are we able to grasp the rich textures of their very community-focused lives.

In *Paul Revere’s Ride* (1994) David Hackett Fischer looked at
the lives of two “protagonists”—Paul Revere (the infamous “midnight rider” for the American side) and Thomas Gage (the military general and commander-in-chief in Boston for the British). Fischer stressed the differences in culture which affected both men’s perceptions of the colonial situation and their actions and responses in the eventual call to war. These differences in culture affected the way they viewed the enemy, the way they fought, the way they used their creative and intellectual talents, and the way their societies reacted to their endeavors.

In the Jack L. Warner/P.H. Hunt film “1776” (1972) there is a humorous scene in which the ever-charming cinematic characterization of Ben Franklin is explaining to a Pennsylvania delegate (who is in opposition to the proposal of “independency”) why he believes in its approval. Franklin said, “We’ve spawned a new race here, Mr. Dickinson—rougger, simpler, more violent, more enterprising, less refined. We’re a new nationality. We require a new nation.” Although the film was almost as fictional as it was historical, this statement clearly sums up some of the critical differences between Revere and Gage—between the Americans and the British of the 1770’s.

Going back to the early seventeenth century it is well-known that some of England’s most extreme—many would say “fanatical”—
religious practitioners were among the first European settlers of New England. The Puritans, along with others who were less devout, but equally pioneering, fervently began the task of conquering the wilderness and building a home and a community out of a harsh, unpredictable land and amongst a native population that varied from very friendly to extremely hostile. They fought wars with the natives; they came up with new ways to deal with the unusual climate; they tried multiple ways of gaining food and resources until they found some that worked; they brought about a new kind of self-government which could stand up under these new conditions; and, they did it all without England's help (Peterson, 1996). In fact, for the first 100 years or more of New England settlement the "Mother Country" was all but absent and uninterested in this "America"...It had bigger fish-n-chips to fry and an imperialistic empire to attend to--one that was more profitable elsewhere. During this time period, however, the New Englanders had developed their own system of government and, due to English indifference and a great deal of corresponding freedom, this system became a cornerstone of the colonial culture. Such were the founding principles of New England: "the sacred covenant and the rule of law, self-government and majority vote, fundamental rights and free association, private responsibility and public duty, the gospel of service and the ethic of
work, and a powerful idea of community" (Fischer, 1994, p.10).

These principles, virtually unheard of in the “Old World,” were brought about by novel philosophic beliefs (eg., Montesquieu, 1748, etc.), firm religious convictions, and by differences in environmental and social forces requiring different actions and attitudes. These new thoughts developed slowly, stood the tests and trials of time and experiences, changed when they were no longer valid, and eventually led the way from community leadership to the creation of the state governments, the Continental Congress, the national government, and a new political ideology and methodology. There was an increasingly vast disparity in thought between those British subjects who were living in England and those who were living in the Colonies. One need only juxtapose the “founding principles” along side the then unchanged British belief in a “small elite who claimed to rule the English-speaking world by right of birth and breeding” to recognize the distinction. Fischer (1994) expressed this difference of cultural style beautifully when he wrote:

Thomas Gage and Paul Revere were both taught to cherish English law and liberties, but they understood that common heritage in very different ways. For Thomas Gage, the rule of the law meant the absolute supremacy of that many-headed sovereign, the King-in-Parliament. For Paul Revere it meant the right of a free-born people to be governed by laws of its own making. Both were highly principled men, but their principles were worlds apart. The ideas they shared in common were the ethical foundation-stones of English-speaking
society. Their differences were what the American Revolution was about (p.33).

Gage perceived the lifestyle and the governing laws of the New Englanders as a “bizarre form of litigious anarchy,” believing that “the protection of Britain has made them opulent. Were they cast off and declared aliens, they must become a poor and needy people” (Fischer, 1994, pp.39-40). Gage felt that the Colonists owed more respect and financial support to the British crown and he proposed to keep them in a state of commercial dependency on Britain. It cannot be stressed strongly enough that from the British perspective, the New Englanders’ actions, attitudes, and decision to go to war was completely mystifying. The British perception was that it was only reasonable for the New England Colonists to pay taxes (truly a minuscule amount in comparison to what was demanded of the British population back in England) to help cover the costs of British military protection (which was now sizable because the colonial resources were becoming increasingly important to the British economy.) The New Englanders, however, feeling that they had been neglected, minimized, and ignored during the entire preceding century until their natural resources and exports were significant enough to warrant England’s attention, did not see themselves as requiring so much “protection” from the Crown
(Peterson, 1996). They had done quite well on their own, thank you, and were feeling particularly indignant because they were not being consulted in some of these tax-levying decisions while in earlier times it had been discussed with them. Meanwhile, England, with its desire to protect its share in an increasingly valuable commodity, pulled the strings even tighter and the Colonists felt that their hard-earned--and self-defined--"freedoms" were being taken away.

It was a complex issue of perceptions and misperceptions and, of course, there was goodness, greed, stubbornness, and diplomacy on both sides. In New England this very creative, and sometimes rather inefficient new system of leadership was in effect. The New Englanders did not credit the British with a sense of governmental fair play--as they felt their own system to possess--but, for their part, the British did not recognize the validity of the New England system and the reasoning behind its origins. Both believed the other side to be illogical, unreasonable, irrational, and evilly conspiring against the other to take over. Additionally, they approached confrontation in a culturally-specific manner. Fischer (1994) observed how dissimilarly the two sides were thinking during the "Powder Alarms" of 1774. Thomas Gage focused primarily on the material aspects of the problem and made his leadership decisions accordingly, while Paul Revere was mainly concerned with
advocating "the Spirit of Liberty" and launching a series of verbal attacks in a social forum based on this theme. Fischer stated:

While Imperial leaders were laboring to remove the physical means of resistance, New England Whigs were promoting the spiritual will to resist. The two parties to this great conflict were not merely thinking different things; they were thinking differently (p.48).

Both individuals were well-respected by their cultures and the members of their own society, but they were unable to understand each other. Their differing perceptions, due to cultural upbringing, on the crisis in the Colonies--specifically in Boston--led them to act according to their beliefs, form allegiances, and frequently have reason to create plans and strategies that were considered rational in relation to their particular cultures. Both were rewarded for their contributions--Gage, earlier on when a British victory seemed probable, and Revere, later when his network of friends and acquaintances helped to make his involvement in the "midnight ride" and its aftermath so successful.

It is difficult on one level to look at a war as a form of creative expression--particularly when the results are ultimately so destructive, painful, and personally damaging. However, if I think of some of the most confrontational, professionally unhealthy, or authoritatively restrictive working environments which I have personally experienced, there is an undeniable element of creativity
present. Once sides are taken and an “enemy” has been defined, a tremendous amount of energy, insight, thought, and work goes into a bonding of individuals, the creation of plans of attack, and the promotion of the rightness, the goodness, and the justification of “our side.” There is a phenomenal onslaught of propaganda, persuasion, and a passionate display of the optimistic belief that “we could create a better system if we had the chance.” The very belief that there is a “right side” and the decision to choose one is in direct alignment with an individual’s values and attitudes. In other words, our personal or our group’s perception of the situation is based upon the values we hold or share and, if another person or group holds a differing set of beliefs in a situation in which we feel quite strongly, it is easy to deny them of any appreciation for their logic, values, or even creative abilities while, at the same time, lavishing overwhelming appreciation and recognition upon our own.

Yet, both Gage and Revere were honorable and respectable men. They were responsible for the lives of many and, in their duties as in their lives, they wished to do a worthy job. On both sides plans and strategies were needed, messages had to be delivered, and public opinion swayed—whether to ignite passion or to promote restraint. Persuasion is also a creative art, both in its written and spoken forms. These gentlemen found their messages to be highly valued by
their respective cultures because they both knew the values and expectations of their audiences and were well-versed in the methods needed to display their art to its greatest advantage.

It is as interesting to note that from a British perspective our beloved artisan/hero, Revere, was considered a troublemaking, meddlesome, treasonous commoner, as it is to realize that our view of a tyrannical General Gage was opposite to the fair-minded Old English Whig view of him as he was seen in British eyes. There is some research to suggest that it may have been the very honorable nature of Gage which assisted in strengthening the American resistance and led, ultimately, to a colonial victory. Fischer (1994) responded by writing:

Had General Gage been the tyrant that many New England Whigs believed him to be, the outcome might have been very different. But Thomas Gage was an English gentleman who believed in decency, moderation, liberty, and the rule of the law...he could not crush American resistance to British government without betraying the values which he believed that government to represent...On the other side, Paul Revere and the Whigs of New England faced no such dilemma. Their values were consistent with their interests and their acts. That inner harmony became their outward strength (p.64).

Some controversy still remains as to whether the American Revolution was inevitable or if it might possibly have been prevented. Once begun, however, fighting the war on American soil added some elements to the mix that certainly assisted the
Colonists—the consistency of “their interests and their acts” being one, the lack of communication and long delays between the British leaders in New England and the Crown back home versus the rapid network of messages through social structures here, and the natural emotionalism which arises when a war is being fought in one’s own backyard as opposed to thousands of miles away. From the biased vantage point of our national identity, it seems to have been our destiny—for better or for worse—to separate from the Old World and begin a new one. I believe there were defining moments in which it could have gone either way and it is interesting to speculate that, perhaps, if both sides had possessed a stronger interest or a greater insight into the differing cultural perceptions of the other, we may still have been a part of the Commonwealth. Furthermore, the strategic and persuasive creativity of these two great leaders may have been put to the strengthening of ties rather than the severing of them.

The art of persuasion tends to lead to a discussion of the media and the perceptions of a general culture. Our social structures and value systems are represented by our media in a way that we tend to take for granted. Our American culture tends to put a lot of emphasis on the viewpoint of “the individual,” while other cultures focus greater emphasis on the connectedness between members of a
society and their interpersonal skills. Comparing the United States to Japan one finds a myriad of examples. Simply in our commonly known sayings there is a marked difference. Everyone in America knows the phrase "the squeaky wheel gets the grease," and our culture is built around such a metaphor—if you want something, cause a commotion and you will eventually get it. Contrast this with Japan's common saying, "the nail that stands out gets pounded down," and one immediately sees that in the Japanese culture it is not acceptable to be a squeaky wheel—the goal is to fit in (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p.224).

Our media simultaneously promotes or inhibits certain behaviors—it may emphasize certain domains of intelligence while almost completely ignoring others. For instance, some cultures consider musical intelligence to be a universal quality among all its members, rather than a gift belonging to an elite few. In Hungary, due to the extraordinary influence of composer Zoltán Kodály, children are exposed daily to music and expected to learn to read and write in musical notation from a very early age. In Nigeria, members of the Anang culture expect their children to learn hundreds of songs and dances by the age of five (Armstrong, 1994, p.161). American media promotes athletic abilities, money-making business skills, good looks, and verbal prowess—not necessarily verbal reasoning,
but we are known world-wide as a culture that is always talking. Look at who we admire: sports heroes make salaries in the multi-millions, big business leaders front the covers of our major national magazines, attractive, chatty people are in our films and on our television screens. America has taken the movie/TV industry to exorbitant heights and our focus upon the screen has changed our cultural perceptions and taken much of the world along with us. Hannah Arendt (in Finkielkraut, 1987/1995), in writing about the American cinema of the 1960's, said, "There are many great authors of the past who have survived centuries of oblivion and neglect, but it is still a open question whether they will be able to survive an entertaining version of what they have to say" (p.121).

Harold Best (1994) described our intense interaction with this cinematic world; we act as if we are bystanders to the violence or the images the film portrays, and, yet, somehow we do not seem to step far enough back from it when it is over. He explained:

As we watch...there is the sense that underneath it all that we're in a kind of perceptual envelope. We're only a reach away from the chips and dip, comfortable in the ergonomics of the family room or theatre, near the touch of someone...We know down deep that our worst fears, our most visceral reactions, will pass. We can leave the envelope, rewind the VCR, clean up the chips, and re-enter the "real" stuff of real life. But do we? (p.7).

All forms of art are perception and image--it is, however, up
to us to realize the distinctions between that image and the reality. Creative artists are aware that they are distorting an image by their very presentation and that what they are creating is the real art, not necessarily a picture of the real world. A top American commercial photographer, Dewitt Jones (1994), wrote of his style:

To find an extraordinary photograph, I need the right lens on my camera. In other words, if I don't view the challenge from the right perspective, I won't have a chance of finding a creative solution...The wrong lens--the wrong perspective--kept me from capturing the extraordinary view. When I corrected my perspective, I found the real photograph (1994, pp.151-152).

Yet another perceptual issue relates to creative scientific breakthroughs. This is especially pertinent in relation to our use of models (like the Wallas four-stage model of the creative process itself from 1926, etc.), just as image and presentation were vital to art forms. For example, René Descartes expressed a clock-like mechanistic model of the universe (as described in “Meditation VI” of Meditations on the First Philosophy, 1641/1969) which was truly creative in the sense that it was innovative and extremely valuable for his time. He provided a model which related observed patterns and combined known elements in a unique and, yet, logical way. But, again, times change and over time it is possible to fall into the habit of losing touch with the origins of our models and, then, coming to believe that they might be reality--not just represent reality.
In the Bernt Capra film “Mind Walk” (1991) three characters--a physicist, a politician, and a poet--spend nearly two hours discussing the state of the global environment from their differing perspectives. “Sonia,” the physicist, spoke the words of her creator, real-life physicist and writer Fritjof Capra (from whose book, *The Turning Point*, 1982, the screenplay for “Mind Walk” was based), when it was mentioned how the clock was humanity’s first real break from the world of nature. She said, “The clock...became the model of the cosmos and then they mistook the model for the real thing. People got the idea that nature was just a giant clock. Not a living organism, but a machine.” “Jack,” the politician, added to the dialogue by agreeing that a new vision is indeed needed for the world and, quoting Thomas Jefferson, he remarked, ”It’s foolish for a society to try to cling to old ideas in new times, just as it’s foolish for a grown man to try to squeeze into the coat that fit him in his youth.” The poet, “Thomas,” agreed in part, but later stressed the fact that life is not “condensable.” You cannot really succeed in making a model of any kind for it because an analysis of pieces actually just brings you back to yourself and your own vision. He responded, “Even with the best intentions in the world you’ll go wrong if you don’t remember that life is infinitely more than yours or my obtuse theories about it.”
From a scientific standpoint, "Mind Walk" expressed that we are caught up in a "Crisis of Perception"--that it is not a matter of identifying the functions of individual elements, as we are so accustomed to doing in empirical science, but rather recognizing the intricate web of relationships and interconnections which IS the essence of all living things. This concept of a world system was further developed by English biologist J.E. Lovelock (1979) who believed that the earth and its atmosphere is an organically interrelated system which has a global system of self-regulation and development. In this case, our physical, and I would add, cultural environment is a living system and together we co-evolve. In "Mind Walk" the characters say that, "We are systems and the planet is a system. We don't evolve on the planet, we evolve with the planet.” And what is the basic element of evolution? According to both Bernt and Fritjof Capra...it is creativity. An organism within the relationship organizes, maintains, renews, surprises, and transcends itself--it is a creative adaptation. “Evolution is an ongoing dance, an ongoing conversation...Evolution is so much more than adaptation to the environment, for what is the environment if not the living system, which evolves and creatively adapts itself?”

The characters discuss how subatomic experiences affect perception also as, for instance, with the very nature of light--an
inspiration to both physicists and impressionists! By believing in what appears to be true (ie: matter is solid and compact), we lose our ability to realize what is true (ie: at the subatomic level nothing is solid and all is primarily vast regions of empty space.) Yet, this is not easy to visualize and, until now, we do not have the right model or even the right vocabulary to express even a picture of this post-mechanistic reality.

However, even once a model is created, it may help us to express the reality, but it is NOT the reality. Bohm and Peat wrote in Science, Order, and Creativity (1987) about René Magritte’s painting of a pipe which also contained the words: “This is not a pipe.” Peat added:

However realistic a painting may be, it falls indefinitely short of being an actual pipe. And ironically, the word pipe in the title is not an actual pipe either. Perhaps, in the spirit of Magritte, every theory of the universe should have in it the fundamental statement “This is not the universe” (p.9).

To continue with that banter, I would add that this model of creativity is not creativity; writing about perception is, likewise, not perception. These are words or images, but the real thing is infinitely more than what could be expressed two-dimensionally. Even “virtual reality,” for example, is a reality in and of itself--but it is not the original reality. Goethe (1963) wrote, “The highest mission of all art is to project a pretended semblance of a higher
reality. It is misguided endeavor to realize the semblance to such a degree that in the end all that is left is common reality” (p.175). Therefore, there is nothing—not art, not scientific models—that we can use to substitute for our reality.

Perception is also strongly linked to literature, as well as to every other domain whether mentioned or not. Literature is a reflection of the creative individual’s perception of the world and, while it showcases one person’s unique vision, it simultaneously aids in amplifying the cultural values and attitudes of that person’s society. When taken together, several writers within a historical era and a part of a particular culture, can give the reader a very strong sense of how the people in that place and time viewed their world and themselves. This powerful aspect of literary work was able to challenge ideas, act as inspiration, educate, entertain, and also promote the beliefs of the culture—sometimes in a manner so subtle as to not be recognizable.

Said (1993) was particularly sensitive to the issue of British imperialism and looked closely at literary masterpieces by such well known British writers as Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Austen for evidence within their writing of how these imperialistic practices had been validated as socially acceptable. In Culture and Imperialism (1993) Said claimed that the writers used careful
strategies to promote positive ideas of their home nation, England, and all the values that their countrymen held dear: language, morals, behavior, proper order, etc. However, these positive ideas towards the British lifestyle did more than simply reinforce the values of their world, they also tended to devalue the cultural beliefs of other worlds and give rise to a kind of justification that imperialism was not only acceptable, but actually beneficial for the "natives" in these other places (p.80). One example would be in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* when Sir Thomas Bertram sails to Antigua to visit his plantation there and oversee its progress. There is no question as to whether his presence in the West Indies was right or wrong, only a matter of how successful he was there and how beneficial such a success would be in maintaining the lifestyles of the people still at Mansfield Park. Believing the British way to be the correct and proper way, there is no interest or even mention of the native Antiguans or their cultural heritage, just an assumption that they had been saved from their heathen lifestyle. They are important only as a means of attaining greater wealth for the Bertrams and stories are never told, or even hinted at, from their point of view. When a group of people can only BE described, but they cannot describe back, we are left with a relatively clear picture of the describers, but virtually none at all of those they described. Said (1993) wrote:
The capacity to represent and depict is not easily available to all members of society. We have become very aware in recent years of the constraints upon the cultural representation of women, and the pressures that go into the created representation of inferior classes and races. In all these areas—gender, class, and race—criticism has correctly focused upon the institutional forces in modern Western societies that shape and set limits on the representation of what are considered essentially subordinate beings; thus representation itself has been characterized as keeping the subordinate subordinate, the inferior inferior (p.80).

There are thousands of things that could be said about perception in the literary world, but, from my vantage point, the most important one is that the writers are writing about themselves—regardless of the topic—just as scientists use their own models to explain how they see the world or artists use their canvases to express their perceptions of life. Allan Bloom (1993) wrote, “True intellectual openness consists in trying to understand the writers as they understood themselves, which is possible if one is not arrogant about one’s own understanding of things” (p.32). An insight into their world—their vision—is possible because at every moment they are telling us who they are and what they see.

One does not overcome perception, regardless of how socially aware one might be. Perception is like a simultaneous double snapshot of a moment in time—how we look at our world and how it, in turn, looks back at us. Possibly a creative way of dealing with
perception is to juxtapose past and present snapshots, noticing how time, experience, or attitudes have altered one’s own and society’s perceptions--giving insight into the degree of influence of even those three factors alone. Perhaps an attempt could be made at making personal alterations in one such area as a test on the limits of perception. For example, has my different attitude changed the way others perceive me, resulting in a revision of how I see them? Or, am I more comfortable doing this activity now because I am familiar with it, lending me to the belief that it’s actually more enjoyable? Or even, now that I have changed my hair color, do blonds really have more fun? This awareness and recognition of the changeability of perception has the potential for allowing broader vision, seeing more possible patterns across human boundaries, and offering more available elements to be combined.

Interaction

The force of interaction is the process of drawing together that which the individual and the culture share--it is the social dimension. Interaction is what gives us a sense of belonging and a “oneness” with our environment; it ties individuals together as a family, community, nation, or civilization. The way we interact with our culture is a social process and one not restricted to only a single society--we are quite capable of interacting with other cultures as
well and allowing their ideas to influence and become a part of us. "Both the individual and the culture are open systems which can receive material from the external world" (Arieti, 1976, p.310).

As mentioned earlier on page 31, the concept of "coduction" lends itself well to this social dimension of the creative process. We have a need to test our creative ideas through a series of dialogues with members of our field as well as seek solitary moments of contemplation. Csikszentmihalyi and Sawyer suggested that this ongoing dialogue occurred in addition to the gathering or combination of information from more than one domain and prior to the occurrence of a major insight (in Sternberg & Davidson, in press, p.4). It is likely that some of these multi-domain ideas were acquired as a result of the dialogue--thoughts which open the doors to "ideational fluency" and play a large role during the preparation phase of the creative process.

Csikszentmihalyi and Sawyer stressed the importance of this "dynamic interaction" and recognized the need we have as creative individuals to work within our cultural traditions--we are part of a "common culture" and guided by "internalized social norms" (p.12). This last statement brings back to mind the role of cultural perception in creative expression. If one is genuinely interacting with one's culture, the individual is aware of (and in all probability
shares) the majority of the societal values of beauty, logical reasoning, humor, etc. that are present in that culture. Shekerjian (1990) wrote, "Whether something is accepted depends upon its fit with the collective wisdom and the shifting sands of taste...One's culture will decide what will be honored and what will be cast aside as parochial or transient" (p.51). For some cultures the focus may be upon the economic aspect of a creation, for others the tradition or family honor, and still others on ecological security.

Howard Gardner (in Shekerjian, 1990) reflected on this difference of focus when he expressed the thoughts he shared with his colleague, Csikszentmihalyi, who said that "the appropriate question is not what is creativity but where is creativity..." Gardner continued by explaining that there are people and institutions responsible for deciding what does and does not get noticed. He observed:

You don't have creativity unless you have a certain mind engaged in a certain domain of practice with other people looking in at it and saying, 'This makes sense, this doesn't, this is good, this is not.' But there is no statute of limitations on these judgments--they can occur immediately or two hundred years later...Whether people are allowed to do something unusual and whether it becomes accepted or not is really a value decision made by the culture. Most cultures throughout human history have not liked creative individuals. They ignored them or they killed them. It was a very effective way of stopping creativity (p.52-53).
Gardner made the same claim in relation to intelligence—that a culture makes a value decision based upon what is “important.” We looked at that in depth already: the musical children of Hungary, the young dancers of the Anang, American business-minds, and Japanese team-players, etc. Children are introduced to certain skills from birth and they live their lives under the influence of them. Kyoko Nakagawa (1991) compared the differences in creativity styles between the Japanese and the Americans and her research reinforced that statement. BOTH cultures are very creative, but the creativity manifests itself in different areas. For example, the American spirit of individuality leads to strong-mindedness and self-reliance. We are prized for our unique thoughts which are different from the rest (Nakagawa, 1991, p.11). We have a vast country and we like big things and things that “make a statement.” Children are taught to be responsive to new ideas, express themselves openly and verbally, and not be afraid of trying something new. Of course, expression of one’s ideas, openness, risk-taking, and originality are important characteristics in what we Americans deem as “creative.” A large portion of this very paper deals with a discussion of those traits! Contrast this with a Japanese view of creativity. In Japan, as Markus and Kitayama (1991) had suggested as well, children are taught that they are “members of a community” and great emphasis is placed on
promoting cooperation and harmonious relationships. Also, because the culture is non-confrontive, Japanese children learn to be more sensitive and intuitive in human interactions--their communication is less direct than ours because they do not wish to hurt another person’s feelings. Japan is a very small country and this smallness has influenced the spirit of the Japanese people. Nakagawa (1993) wrote, “The creativity of the Japanese people is found in the making of small things.” She told of artists who painted pictures on a single grain of rice; the Japanese creation of haiku, the world’s smallest form of poetry; and the fundamental belief that there is an importance and a beauty to those elements of nature that are particularly minute, like snowflakes, spider’s webs, and blades of grass (p.12-13). Sensitivity, intuition, harmony with nature and with others--these are important aspects of creativity as well. No single culture seems to have a monopoly on “the most” creative ideas--but these ideas have very different origins and tend to be produced for very different audiences.

Arieti, in his 1976 research, stressed the development of “the social character” which is the result of the individual’s exposure to a certain type of structured society. This exposure, to use Fromm’s idea, will “make people want to act the way they have to act” (in Arieti, 1976, p.304). The culture operates in relation to the creative
individual in two distinct ways: first, by offering the necessary material to the individual and, second, by facilitating the occurrence in the individual of those characteristics which will make that person more susceptible to cultural stimulation (p.311).

And, so, while there are variations from culture to culture in what is seen as "a creative product," due to the kinds of personality characteristics and cultural reception that is needed to produce any kind of creative output, certain cultural environments on the whole tend to be more successful in allowing for an interaction of ideas or a permeability of boundaries. The term Arieti used to describe such a society as this--one that would promote creative expression--was a "creativogenic society," and he referred to nine specific socio-cultural factors which he believed could heighten an individual's potential for being creative in that society (Arieti, 1976, p.324):

1- Availability of cultural means.
2- Openness to cultural stimuli.
3- Stress on becoming and not just on being.
4- Free access to cultural media for all citizens, without discrimination.
5- Freedom, or even the retention of moderate discrimination, after severe oppression or absolute exclusion.
6- Exposure to different and even contrasting cultural stimuli.
7- Tolerance for diverging views.
8- Interaction of significant persons.
9- Promotion of incentives and awards.

Naturally, certain nations and types of societies value some of
the above traits more than do others. However, it is not much of a stretch to realize that an environment which is not open, tolerant, free, or interactive would impose limitations on an individual’s access to ideas and, thus, limit one of the vital elements in the formation of creative expression.

If we are a product of the culture itself, then in some way—whether obvious to the eye or not—we humans put back into the culture what it has made us; a part of us becomes what we create and that is part of what is returned to our culture. Culture imposes itself on the individual—its attitudes, its values, its judgments—but creativity feeds the culture (in the sense of the whole society) and becomes its culture (in the sense of the arts.) And those of us within the society recognize in the creative product something of ourselves. Why? Because we, too, were formed by that particular culture and the creative product, however novel, must still make sense to us, at least within the realm of our culture, but possibly even throughout humanity. On this subject, Storr (1972) wrote:

By identifying ourselves, however fleetingly, with the creator, we can participate in the integrating process which he has carried out for himself. The more universal the problem with which the artist is dealing, the more universal his appeal (p.327).

In reflecting upon Storr’s statement, what immediately came to mind were Anne Morrow Lindbergh’s beautiful meditations in Gift
From The Sea (1955). In the spirit of genuine creativity, Lindbergh saw patterns between the different shells/sea life and our own human relationships. She drew insightful analogies, many of which have remained true and timeless for over forty years. Lindbergh wrote, "The first part of every relationship is pure....It is pure, simple and unencumbered. It is like the artist's vision before he has to discipline it into form, or like the flower of love before it has ripened to the firm but heavy fruit of responsibility" (1955, pp. 64-65). Our social lives and needs are as dynamic and, yet, as universal as any other fundamental aspect of the human experience. Lindbergh, in speaking of her own personal experiences, was able to speak for many.

Again we return to the social dimension of the creative process. In William Allman's May 1996 U.S. News and World Report article "The Dawn of Creativity," it was suggested by the findings of the latest anthropological research that the way in which the minds of our ancestors were most creative was not simply artistic cave work or tool design, but the very "manner in which they created the fabric of society itself" (p.53). The major difference between humans and Neanderthals--one that may have made all the difference in their creative cultures and their ability to survive--was how members of each species interacted among themselves. The humans
in Africa had a sophisticated system of long-distance trading networks for the exchange of quality stone and goods at least 100,000 years ago—a kind of intertwining social system which the Neanderthals lacked.

Allman's report also noted a link between human creativity and sociability as evidenced by one of the earliest examples of ancient art: bead work and the human body as a canvas (1996, p.56). Body adornment was extremely important to these early human and they would spend hours making the beads (each bead took an average of one hour to make) and decorating themselves. The social significance of this and the desire to impress others in their community was a fascinating finding. The world of fashion has, apparently, only changed its styles—not its intentions.

The discovery of “delicate bone harpoons” in Africa which predate the well-known and often-studied cave paintings of Ice Age Europe by more than 40,000 years, indicated a sense of artistic creativity as well as useful innovation. Some of the newly discovered examples of sophisticated tools strengthened the belief that, while ancient human did not always express it, they may have always had the capacity for creative thinking. However, until it became sociologically important for them to pass their tools on to others, we did not come upon a verification of this creativity. Very
advanced toolmaking and sophisticated cultures became prevalent only when the human society had grown to a level in which these practices became vital to its survival and, then, the social networks rapidly spread each novel invention. Allman (1996) observed:

Clearly, it was profoundly rich relations that inspired and reinforced creativity among ancient humans. The artists who created the cave images were people of spirituality and grace; they loved painting, music, and the beauty as well as the function of their technology. Mostly, they were people whose creativity connected them with the members of their community--those along-side them in the cave or thousands of years in the future (p.58).

Here we have evidence once more of a connectedness: between people, between domains, and between the ages. Philosophic distinctions between that which is “art” and that which is “science” was once not even a question--such a separation of roles and disciplines did not exist. If, in a society, an individual was involved in learning, one subject would lead that person to another and then another...the interconnectedness was undeniable.

Thinking back only a few hundred years to Leonardo da Vinci--the person who virtually defined “Renaissance Man” for modern humanity--he was a scientist, an engineer, a mathematician, an inventor, and much more, in addition to being an extraordinary painter. His artistic and innovative creations showed an interrelation among all of these disciplines of knowledge; he was
not held captive in the role of only one of these occupations. His study of muscular form and human anatomy helped to perfect his artwork, his knowledge of perspective and balance was fundamental to his mechanical drawings and inventions, and his mathematical skills assisted him in his designs and scientific pursuits. Certainly we can argue that he was very intelligent, but we must also agree that he was insatiably curious to discover patterns and relationships; the connections he made leading to his creations were a direct result of his developing that curiosity and allowing for an interaction between elements between the disciplines as well as between himself and society as a whole. He gained new insights and appreciations of relationships, but it did not stop there. He also simultaneously devised a way to share those ideas and return them back to the culture from which he had first learned them. It was the interaction among those spheres of knowledge which allowed da Vinci to see patterns across domains and be in contact with such a large and diverse body of knowledge within which to make connections and try unique combinations of elements. He left us a legacy of beautiful, original, and valuable things, but his greatest gift was the insight he gave us into the exciting way that such a creative individual lives his life. Arieti (1976) eloquently expressed:

Creative work thus may be seen to have a dual role: at the same time as it enlarges the universe by adding or uncovering
new dimensions, it also enriches and expands man, who will be able to experience these new dimensions inwardly. It is committed not just to the visible but, in many cases, to the invisible as well. Indeed, it is the perennial (and almost always unverbalized) premise of creativity, to show that the tangible, visible, and audible universe is infinitesimal in comparison to the one that awaits discovery through exploration of the eternal world and of the human psyche. A new painting, poem, scientific achievement, or philosophical understanding increases the number of islands of the visible in the ocean of the unknown. These new islands eventually form those thick archipelagos that are man's various cultures. Thus any creative product has to be considered from two points of view: that is, as a unity, in itself; and as part of a culture, either a specific culture or the general cultural patrimony of mankind (p.5).

What a beautiful image! That our interactions between other individuals and between different intellectual domains can lead to our ability to create something precious and representative of our human culture is an inspirational thought. To leave the world having given humanity something of lasting value is a goal which arouses the creative spirit.

**Opposition**

In his article "A Creative Universe," John Hitchcock (1986) wrote, "Everything which grows and develops, eventually develops opposites." This, in a sentence, is one of the major premises behind the ancient Chinese philosophy of Taoism and, indeed, a principle upon which a portion of creative intelligence is thought to be based.
Within the pages of *The Tao Te Ching* the second lesson teaches about "paradoxes and polarities." This lesson has been translated by many and in a myriad of ways. I am particularly fond of Stephen Mitchell's (1988) translation in which lesson two is stated as:

When people see some things as beautiful, other things become ugly. When people see some things as good, other things become bad. Being and non-being create each other. Difficult and easy support each other. High and low depend on each other. Before and after follow each other. Long and short define each other ("Lesson Two").

The lesson behind these words is that definition is formed by contrast or, expressed another way, meaning lies in opposition. However, when a concept becomes more complex than long or short, it takes on the fullest possible range of characteristics. Both long and short are necessary to explain the concept of length; both high and low are needed to fully express height. And, so, when one investigates a subject long enough its internal polarities begin to appear--its dichotomies become visible. For instance, altruism can also be selfishly pleasurable, very mature people are simultaneously quite childlike, an obsession with living suggests worry about dying, or trying too hard to be beautiful makes a person ugly (Heider, 1985, p.3). While these are apparently puzzling contrasts, what gives each concept its complete identity is this sense of wholeness--of being both oppositional elements together. The combination of all the
inner components give the concept its form (Grudin, 1990, pp.15,75). Or, as British sculptor Henry Moore (in Rothenberg, 1990) stated, “To know one thing, you must know the opposite...just as much, else you don’t know that one thing. So that, quite often, one does the opposite as an expression of the positive” (Rothenberg, 1990, p.19). It is like the concept of “negative space” in art--the design that is made by the empty space in either a drawing or a statue is complimentary to the actual figure...both are necessary to create the artistic piece. The same is true within the realm of music--relationships between major and minor keys, between pitch and volume, tone and tempo, silence and sound. And, the opposition is not contained to the musical composition itself--it is also connecting the self to the society. “Music, and the other arts, provide bridges between the external and the internal, and by making a whole out of apparently disparate elements, provide a paradigm of that ‘subjective unity of experience’ towards which we all aim, but from which we are so often and so inevitably deflected” (Storr, 1972, p.331).

Due to an ability to tend to see such dichotomies in life and tolerate the cognitive and emotional dissonance this causes, creative individuals are frequently distinguished by being “divided selves” to a greater extent than most people. They also tend to possess a more acute awareness of the opposites within themselves
and utilize the creative process as an attempt to reconcile these opposing factors within (Storr, 1972, pp.310,322). This concept of opposition relates directly to the creativity characteristic of “juxtaposing polar ideas.” An ability to see both the thesis and its antithesis simultaneously allows the creative individual an insight into the holistic form of the concept and that person is better able to then put those contrasting ideas side by side and comprehend a complete, and possibly quite unique, vision.

Rothenberg (1990) of Johns Hopkins University created a theory which revolved around the concept of opposition and called it the “janusian process.” Named after Janus, the Roman god of doorways and beginnings whose several faces look in opposite directions at the same time, Rothenberg believed that this process of opposition lies at the heart of the most striking creative breakthroughs. He wrote:

In the janusian process, multiple opposites or antitheses are conceived simultaneously, either as existing side by side or as equally operative, valid, or true. In an apparent defiance of logic or of physical possibility, the creative person consciously formulates the simultaneous operation of antithetical elements or factors and develops those formations into integrated entities and creations. It is...a leap that transcends ordinary logic. What emerges is no mere combination or blending of elements: the conception contains not only different entities, but also opposing and antagonistic elements that are experienced and understood as coexistent. As a self-contradictory structure, the janusian formulation is surprising when seriously posited. Although it usually appears
modified and transformed in the final product, it leaves the mark of implicit unexpectedness and paradox on the work (Rothenberg, 1990, p.15).

After reading Rothenberg's words, I was reminded of a painting by Peter Bruegel, “Two Chained Monkeys,” in which two monkeys are near a window and are firmly bound together, but they are looking in opposite directions. It had many meanings for me but one was this idea of a natural tension still present even within an integration of antithetical elements. The monkeys are right there--together--and, yet, where they wish to be seems to be so far away and apart--both from each other and from us. They are held captive in one world and, at the same time, neither of them is a part of it; they are part of a world that we cannot see in the painting, but we are aware that it exists for them. I believe that Bruegel understood this kind of coexistence and reconciliation of opposites without ever losing touch with what made each element so unique. To me, his painting represents the pull of oppositional forces, present in both what he observed and also within himself...he then was able to show his vision to us. As Harrison Gough (in Storr, 1972) said:

Somehow, a creative product must give a sense of reconciliation, of having resolved in an aesthetic and harmonious way the discords and disharmonies present in the original situation. The work of art, for example, for a moment re-orders and brings into balance the tensions of form and space, and in so doing, moderates the inner tensions of the observer, giving him a sense of encounter and fulfillment
Opposition can exist on several levels: within the individual, within the society, and between the individual and the society. More than one form of opposition can also occur at the same time and manifest itself, if we are fortunate, in the form of creative expression. While Bruegel was able to depict both internal and external opposition in his painting, others show this force at work in their writing—particularly by the use of irony. Ved Mehta (in Shekerjian, 1990) defined irony as a kind of constant battle to try to get at the truth behind what something seems to be, but the result is surprising because the truth turns out to be the opposite of what you imagined it would be. Irony is an especially powerful creative technique in literature when used to describe social situations which, on the surface, appear to be one thing but, at a deeper level, are seen to be exactly the reverse. I know of no author who exemplifies the full use of such irony—or employs it with more hilarity—than does Jane Austen.

In her novel Sense and Sensibility (1811/1994), Austen described a situation in the last chapter regarding the state of marital felicity between two couples and their consequent relationship to each other. The couples involved were Fanny and John Dashwood and Lucy and Robert Ferrars. Robert and Fanny were
brother and sister and Mrs. Ferrars was their mother. Throughout the novel Fanny and Lucy had shown themselves to be ill-tempered, jealous, discourteous, petty, greedy, and generally not very pleasant characters. Robert, not a particularly well-developed character, was somewhat on the dishonorable side and John, although in possession of good intentions, was rather easily swayed by the ulterior motives of others and his own desires for self-comfort. As the novel comes to a close and the protagonists, Elinor and Marianne, are safely elsewhere with their kind and thoughtful husbands, the less-than-delightful secondary couples are accounted for and their experiences explained. Austen, with her characteristic sense of irony, wrote:

They [Lucy and Robert] settled in town, received very liberal assistance from Mrs. Ferrars, were on the best terms imaginable with the Dashwoods; and setting aside the jealousies and ill-will continually subsisting between Fanny and Lucy, in which their husbands of course took a part, as well as the frequent domestic disagreements between Robert and Lucy themselves, nothing could exceed the harmony in which they all lived together (p.230).

*The best terms imaginable!* Yes, I think we can all imagine what excessive “harmony” could result from such a combination of self-centered characters living in such close proximity! Austen, to our delight as readers, was able to see such discrepancies between human character and the manner in which social situations were politely dictated and explained to others. She must have derived a
great deal of comic amusement out of creating newer and funnier ways to describe these follies and inconsistencies in her writing. And so, while irony is itself an expression of opposition, the situations in self or society about which the irony refers, are often likewise in opposition. As in the case above it is the polarity between the way one would politely describe such a relationship and the way that relationship actually is that accounts for both the creativity and the comedy.

Austen is an excellent example of the forces of opposition that are present in literature in another sense as well—a way which comes even closer to the heart of cultural influence. She was writing—as Shakespeare had also done during his era—at an exciting historical time, a time when there were strong and opposing world views which greatly influenced the philosophical, intellectual, and social worlds of her countrymen. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was a time of real tension between two ways of life. It was the beginning of a great migration from the country to the town and the Industrial Revolution, in conjunction with the building of the great railway, was on the verge of transforming British society forever (Wheeler, 1996). In 1813, in the year that *Pride and Prejudice* was published, the majority of the population in England was still primarily involved in agriculture;
only twenty years later this trend completely reversed and most of
the British population was in industry. In addition, the Americans
and the French were fighting their battles of independence, Napoleon
was roaming around, British imperialism was at an all-time high,
and two of Austen's brothers--to whom she was very close--were
currently in the British navy. Regardless of what critics may have
said about her apparent lack of interest in world affairs, she was
anything but unaware or unaffected. In her lectures on Austen at
Brasenose College (Oxford University), Helen Wheeler (1996)
expressed that Austen's father, George, was a Tory parson who had
been schooled in the classical Augustan manner. He was a fellow of
St. John's College in Oxford and was only one of several intelligent,
well-educated, Enlightenment-based rational thinkers that were her
nearest relatives. Furthermore, they were strong Anglicans and many
male members of her family, besides being scholars, were also
clergymen. Newton's ideas of rational deism had a profound
influence on the education and philosophies of her closest family
members and, in turn, influenced her perspective on life. Then, in the
midst of all of this, came the Romantic Movement with writers such
as Byron, Scott, Wordsworth, and Shelley rebelling against
mechanistic science, political absolutism, dogmatism in religious
creed, and social hierarchies (Wheeler, 1996). In 1816, the very
same year that Austen’s *Emma* was published, Coleridge published *Kubla Khan* and Byron published *The Siege of Corinth*. There was a great deal of ideological turmoil and opposition between the thinkers who remained true to the Age of Enlightenment and those who forged ahead with the Romantics.

Austen, however, was able to juxtapose these polar ideologies and return them to her society in the form of her characterizations. As the title *Sense and Sensibility* suggests, the representations of the two female protagonists, Elinor and Marianne, are divided along rational (sense) versus romantic (sensibility) lines. Austen promotes the idea that too much sensibility, as in Marianne’s case, should be distrusted as it is likely to lead to inappropriate and thoughtless behavior. Yet, Austen also recognized the failings of too much of Elinor’s kind of sense and the need to not always be so restrictive with respect to one’s emotions. Although decidedly “rational” in her personal orientation, Austen was still able to see benefits and failings of both of these opposing views and, in her writing, she was able to resolve the tension between them to form a series of literary masterpieces.

Another way in which the force of opposition influences the creative process is in relation to cultural identity. It is not within the scope of this paper to delve deeply into the forms or causes of
oppression, prejudice, or racism, but it is at least important to mention that these factors play an important part in one's perception of self and society. Again, the people with whom we come into contact become the foundation of our body of knowledge, they help us to develop our values and ideas, and they influence our perception of what is beautiful, truthful, or humorous. If the group of people with whom an individual identifies most strongly is in a state of opposition to the general society, the emotions and reactions of this person will be greatly different from someone else who is accepted within the mainstream. The way any given individual may react to such a situation is unpredictable. Some people may try to blend in on the surface, while really still holding on to their more specific cultural values. Others may reject their original culture in favor of the mainstream. And still others may be proud of their "differentness" and express their beliefs openly and confidently.

Some research has shown that opposition is one of the key forces to promoting and maintaining a cultural identity because contradiction to one's deeply held beliefs unifies the members of a group. Edward Spicer (in Castile & Kushner, 1981), in his work on "persistent cultural systems" wrote that "the oppositional process frequently produces an intense collective consciousness and a high
degree of internal solidarity" (p.131). Firm footing in one's cultural tradition, a unique or different world view, a social network within which to share ideas, strength of beliefs, and persistence of valuing one's cultural ideals--these characteristics alone lend themselves to a tremendous potential for creativity. If the individual in question also possesses a motivation to succeed despite mainstream obstacles and an ability to notice parallels between the original and mainstream cultures that others may have overlooked, that potential to be creative (within a domain of strength) is further amplified.

Of course, an important part of all social opposition is the recognition of the conflicting issues to begin with--the initial tension which occurs when one first perceives a contradiction and is expected to make a decision on how to act, what to value, etc. Carol Harding (1987) proposed that, as individuals and societies, we are capable of inventing "dilemmas" for ourselves. In her research, she further developed the concept of a dilemma by investigating the specific characteristics present which cause an event to be initially interpreted as a dilemma and, then, exploring the cognitive processes which lead to its interpretation. Harding felt that, while choices in life are required daily, certain situations take on a particularly important meaning to the individual and the choice that is required touches upon an opposition of two equal alternatives,
causing the decision-making process to be especially difficult (p.282-283). A particularly interesting characteristic of dilemmas is that, given what knowledge we now have, there is no way to know the actual "truth." This leads to what MacIntyre (in Harding, 1987) termed an "interminable argument" over the issue in question, resulting in one side's values versus another's without the possibility of reaching a single "right" conclusion (p.284). The importance of dilemmas in regards to culture and society rests in these premises. Not only do we, as individuals or groups, create that which becomes a dilemma, but these dilemmas can be very different in nature from the dilemmas of another individual or group. Furthermore, to argue someone's reasoning over the choice of one resolution over another could result in an eternal moral debate. Again, we are reminded to consider the special perspective of a person or a culture, both in terms of what they see as linked together and also what they view as being in opposition. Harding concluded, "It may be, in fact, the recognition--and invention--of dilemmas that suggests the significant developmental and cultural questions" (Harding, 1987, p.290).

Once more, we have reason as individuals to wish to understand those situations which cause tension--both internally within the individual and externally within the society--and the
ways in which those tensions are connected. If one's cultural
identity is being attacked, it is simultaneously an issue of both self
and society, and the way in which this divided person relates to a
divided culture is an opposition in itself. Storr (1972) expressed:

We all possess inner worlds which are, to varying degrees, at
odds with the external world; and the contents of these inner
worlds and the tensions engendered by them have much in
common. The great creators, because their tensions are of
universal rather than personal import, can appeal to all of us
when they find, in their work, a new path of reconciliation
(p.327).

**Marginality**

The fourth and final force, marginality, can be an extension of
the opposition between the self and the society, but it is not
confined to that. Marginality is the edge, the fringe--it remains a
point of contact, but yet, it is on the verge of separation. From the
vantage point of marginality, more than one border can be seen--the
borders could interact, they could oppose, they could be ignored, or
they simply could be accepted as is. Marginality changes our
perception of where the limitations are and what is possible in and
beyond those limitations. Arthur Koestler's metaphoric statement
(in Boden, 1990) below could well be applied to marginality:

The most fertile region [in the mind's inner landscape] seems
to be the marshy shore, the borderline between sleep and full
awakening--where the matrices of disciplined thought are
already operating but have not yet sufficiently hardened to
obstruct the dreamlike fluidity of imagination (Boden, 1990,
What causes marginality? Or, perhaps, a better question would be when exactly is there marginality...because a particular thought, belief, or action may be marginal in one situation and very mainstream in another. In her book *Growing Up Creative* (1989), Teresa Amabile did some research into the types of home environments in which very creative children lived. The results were that their homes and their lifestyles were decidedly different from the mainstream. Some were very modernistic, others were in unusual natural/environmental settings, and still others were restored antique-style homes, just to name a few. What was even more striking, however, was what was on the inside--different furniture, artwork, or designs and, in many cases, distinctive collections (belonging usually to the children) on display (Amabile, 1989, p.109). Home is the first real environment against which we judge our level of normalcy or acceptance. If our family lives life in a certain way and we--seeing no reason to do otherwise--go along with it, that lifestyle becomes mainstream to us, regardless of how out-of-the-ordinary it may appear to others. Likewise, just because "everybody" in general society is doing something, it does not necessarily follow that those actions will be seen as acceptable at home--whether the home environment is healthy or not.
In many cases family environments which are dysfunctional can bring about a kind of marginality which could lead to high creativity or, possibly, a form of neurotic/psychotic behavior. Rothenberg (1990) said, “With respect to family environment, there is also a thin but definite borderline between the type of family interaction which nurtures psychosis and nurtures creativity” (p.12). He concluded that because of the frequent discrepancies between what family members might say they think or feel and what they actually do, the child in this environment must develop an unusual sensitivity to implicit messages and must utilize unusual modes of thinking to deal with the situation. It would be difficult for a child from such a family to easily feel a part of or be comfortable in other environments. He or she may be watching for signs and messages that other children would not necessarily be aware of, and this attitude and behavior would likely set the child apart from the peer group even if he or she were the only one who knew it.

Certain individuals and groups seem to find themselves frequently on the outside fringe of their society, for example: the people with disabilities, expatriates, those with very strong or unusual religious convictions, gays/lesbians, the highly intellectually gifted, and of course minorities of all kinds. Rothenberg (1990) felt that individuals who were seen as marginal
in society (especially gay/bisexual males in dance/film/theatre), participated to a larger degree in the arts due to the talents which they had acquired through their marginality. He expressed, “This marginality...seems to have something to do with a person’s learning to tolerate ambiguity, project varying points of view, and strike out in new directions--factors that seem to play an important role in creative orientation and ability” (p.106).

A sense of “differentness,” alienation, or isolation are frequent emotions of marginal individuals, particularly when their marginality is involuntary. “I think you’re always alone,” the poet Doug Crase (in Shekerjian, 1990) once explained, “Even if you’re with people, or married, or living with someone, or surrounded by people” (p.193). Shekerjian also interviewed Sara Lawrence Lightfoot, a winner of a MacArthur fellowship and a fully tenured Harvard professor. She is an author, an educator, a sociologist, and only the second black woman to reach a level of such status in the university’s 350-year history. When asked to describe her feelings about her situation and the institution, she had a multitude of insightful comments:

How do I handle distressing things...like, for example, my feeling of being peripheral to this place?....Well, I recognize that it’s not just this institution, Harvard, but would be something I would feel, I suppose, in most institutions. And I think there is some value to that. I think that once one is committed to the maintenance and sustenance of an institution
and its patterns, then one is less likely to take off into some pioneering or creative or interesting edge. I think there is something to not fitting in--not purposely nonconformist but still nonconforming in so many ways--that has really helped me in the definition of my work, its ideas and craft....There’s something that can’t be missed about being a woman and a black in this institution...the only tenured black woman, the second in history, that has left a huge mark on this place, and that makes me know that I’m not in it. I’m not of it. I’m here but I’m not of it. I don’t mean to imply that I feel the heavy hand of discrimination or that anyone’s blocking my path or anything like that. Rather, I’m now trying to speak about learning how to survive and thrive in a position of noncentrality. And I think that very early on, probably adolescent years, I learned the advantages of not fitting in because I was never part of the majority in a school context, say, or a community context, so I learned how to turn that to an advantage (Shekerjian, 1990, pp.205-206).

I believe that over time marginal groups and individuals may become so accustomed to their marginal status that they, in a sense, “forget” how to be mainstream--especially if their marginality has aided them in being or feeling personally successful. Eventually one tends to develop a level of comfort with the way one has had to operate and simply because the society chooses to accept the individual now does not necessarily mean that the individual will embrace society’s attitudes or ways. It is in this way that people who might have initially been involuntarily marginal may decide to voluntarily remain so. It is also for these benefits, namely the unique perspective which a fringe position in society gives one
access to, that many creative people purposely choose to live a life of marginality. For example, in speaking of T.S. Eliot--an American writer and poet living in England--Howard Gardner in *Creating Minds* (1993) described him as a man “caught between cultures, ‘inhabiting’ diverse time periods, experiencing painful personal anxieties and disjunctions on the border of mental disturbance. And, because Eliot was born into a decidedly nonmarginal family, he also exemplifies the extent to which creative individuals may strive to make themselves ever more marginal” (p.11).

Travel, as a means of attaining the perspective of marginality, is a common theme. It is a way of making the strange familiar and the familiar strange--a way of breaking habitual and thoughtless responses to our life and our environment and looking at our world, and ourselves, fresh again. “Why do I love to travel?” asked Brad Leithauser (in Shekerjian, 1990), a poet and a novelist who lived in Japan for three years. Explaining to Shekerjian he thoughtfully said:

> It gets very hard, then, to come back and feel that New York is the center of the world, because for three years it vanished but you survived. That’s one of the main reasons I like living overseas. You deal with Japanese people in Kyoto, say, and for them Tokyo is the center of the world. Go to Iceland and Reykjavik is the center of the world. One needs to be constantly reminded that there is no center of the world. And there is a certain amount of clarification that comes with that....My own sense is that if you have any realistic perception of yourself, you’re acutely aware that the aperture through which you view the world is so tiny and so limited....From year
to year you're stuck in your gender, in your upbringing, in your language, in your own very, very limited mastery of anything. If you realize this, a kind of desperation sets in. There is nothing you can do about it except to widen your interest a bit. Change your horizon (pp.122-123).

After speaking with Leithauser, Shekerjian concluded that being a foreigner confirms for Leithauser a belief in what he had always suspected about himself: he is different, he does not fit in, and he is a loner. Traveling liberates his creative imagination and encourages new ideas and clearer perspectives. Shekerjian also discussed the influence of travel with theatre director Peter Sellars. He claimed that traveling had a great effect on the quality and the nature of his work, but points out that the borrowing of foreign-influences, which one can attain through travel, is not the only value of travel to his creativity; its value goes to the “very core of art itself--what it is, where it fits, why we care about it at all.” He felt there was a “giant gulf between art and life” here in America and that this is a very different experience from the more communal and collective Asian village form of creative expression--and that there is a tremendous value to knowing and understanding these cultural differences (Shekerjian, 1990, pp.126-127).

E.M. Forster is a writer well-known for bringing to the English a sense of perspective about themselves--namely by sending them off to some very foreign and very different cultural/emotional
climate like India or Italy. In both *A Room with a View* (1908) and *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), Forster, reflecting on the tremendous influence that his own trip to Italy had on him, showed through his characterizations the same of emotional enlightenment that he had experienced—with, of course, much more drama and, occasionally, more humor. For example, Lucy Honeychurch, from *A Room with a View* (1908/1959), is caught up in her very claustrophobic, highly structured world of Victorian values and propriety. Then, on a chaperoned trip to Florence, Italy, she meets some very “extraordinary” individuals, as compared to her rather bland set of English neighbors, including two adventurous spinster sisters, a brash lady novelist, a very marginal father-son pair of expatriates, and several extremely emotional Italians. Her experiences in Florence, and the continuation of some of these remarkable acquaintances back home, “transform” her and she is able to break away from the conventions of her dictated life and realize true love (or, at least, something roughly approximating it.) The influence of cultural marginality on creativity works on two levels here: within the novel, Lucy’s choice to finally live as fully and as excitingly as her emotional performance on the piano suggests is possible and, outside the novel, in the way Forster’s own marginality in Italy provided an impetus to create this classic story.
To provide another instance of the effects of cultural marginality on the creative process, we need to return briefly to the American Revolution. The creation of the state governments is an excellent example, not just of the effects of the force of marginality, but also of a situation where all four forces are apparent at once. The force of perception in relation to it was already described at length, however there was a tremendous interaction as well of philosophies, ideas, and values, all caught up within an intricate social network born of the New England community. The force of opposition is easily apparent with the British government and all their ideologies actually at war with the Colonists, but there is also a sense of marginality that is not just bound to that opposition. The New Englanders were also culturally marginal because of having been away from the British political mainstream for so long. They were expatriates in the truest sense of the word and, while they considered themselves to still be British citizens right up until the time of battle, they were very far removed from the governmental system in England and the manner in which it may have changed since the departure of their forefathers. Harvard history professor, Mark Peterson (1996), said that it was this “deviant experience as Colonists apart from the Empire” which gradually provided the insight and formulation of the very creative
development of individual state constitutions which was the first written representation of our "American" values and what "our culture" was all about. He also stated that it was the development of the Colonists' political education--their gradual conception of ideals, understanding, and desire to represent their own values--which was extremely important to the initiation and unfolding of the American Revolution and, thus, the creation of both our nation and our national identity.

Marginal individuals are in an unusual situation. If they are artists, they realize that if they produce something out of the mainstream it will usually take some time before their audience can assimilate it. However, it cannot be too far outside the mainstream or it will simply be considered "strange." We have seemingly always a cultural judge looking over our shoulder and telling us what is mainstream, what is marginal, and what is too far outside the borderline to count for anything. As Robert Weisberg (1986) quipped, "There is nothing intrinsically unique about an artist to make them possess genius; we, their audience, bestow genius upon them."

Creativity, as with all else which society has its say in, is subject to its restrictions and even a concept like marginality, ironically, has its limits. As Arieti (1976) wrote:

Creativity is not simply originality and unlimited freedom. There is much more to it than that. Creativity also imposes
restrictions. While it uses methods other than those of ordinary thinking, it must not be in disagreement with ordinary thinking or rather, it must be something that, sooner or later, ordinary thinking will understand, accept, and appreciate. Otherwise the result would be bizarre, not creative (p.4).

Therefore, if a creator wishes to use marginality to its advantage and not have his or her unique perspective passed over as "too unusual," it is important for the individual to develop strong and thorough communication skills in an effort "to bridge the gap between what the culture will tolerate and the innovator's vision" (Shekerjian, 1990, p.54). But, if able to do this, what a fantastic value such real insight could have for the culture! From this unique perspective, a marginal individual is capable of doing something extraordinary for society—to be the lens for an area of growth—to "see" an opening into which new knowledge can flow. Marginality is the force by which a creation, when it is deemed as really original and valuable, promotes the actual expansion of the culture—the culture grows so as to encompass the creative idea and that initial thin line of a margin will, eventually, be stretched to then include this creation as a part of the larger body of the mainstream.

A Model of Intersection

Having described in detail each of the four forces or components which link cultural influence and creative expression in this model, all that actually remains is to put them together and
show the way in which they particularly combine.

My model is roughly designed along the lines of the perpendicular intersection (see “Figure 1” on p.127) of two rectangular blocks which allow for expansion—as shown by the end arrows—on all four sides. The thinner top-to-bottom block represents “the individual” and contains the specific talents, abilities, intelligences, values, desires, and emotions, etc. specific to that given person. The wider left-to-right block represents “the society” with its particular cultural history, time period, political affiliations, values, and trends, etc.

The majority of the intersection is overlapping as there is a great deal in common between the two, but there are also segments unique to each. The lines separating the two blocks are not, however, straight lines (as would be expected in a typical mathematical intersection), but are, instead, undulating waves to show the continuous interaction between the individual and the societal elements. Yet, an intersection is, by definition, moving in opposite directions and, in this case, it allows for the potential opposition and marginality which lead to expansion. The four, cornered locations where the individual and the society are not interacting, but are on the fringes of one another, are specifically representative of marginality. Finally, surrounding and covering the entire
Figure 1: A Model of Intersection

Perception

Interaction

Opposition

Society

Individual

Marginality
intersection like a blanket is perception, influencing all the forces, in all situations, at once.

Werner Heisenberg was quoted in Fritjof Capra’s book *The Tao of Physics* (1975) as writing that:

> It is probably true quite generally that in the history of human thinking the most fruitful developments frequently take place at those points where two different lines of thought meet. These lines may have their roots in quite different parts of human culture, in different times or different cultural environments or different religious traditions: hence if they actually meet, that is, if they are at least so much related to each other that a real interaction can take place, then one may hope that new and interesting developments may follow (p.6).

I, too, believe that the greatest creative achievements occur when an individual, or group of individuals, still very much interacting and in touch with the culture, can push the limits of understanding just a little further than the bounds of society--due to insightful integration, recognition of polar ideas, or combination of elements already perceived, etc.--and, thus, expand the culture enough so as to allow it to encompass the creation and recognize its value.
Deuce...
Advantage...
Win.
The game is over,
the onlookers suppress
any further cheers,
and the ball is forgotten.
The players--
their names: Success and Failure--
thank each other for
the challenge
and momentarily look back
on the game--
one with pride,
the other with resolve--
before turning their
thoughts to the next tournament.
The man,
who was himself all
of the participants,
smiles inwardly and
walks away.
CHAPTER 5

PROJECTIONS

I readily believe that there are more invisible than visible Natures in the universe. But who will explain for us the family of all these beings, and the ranks and relations and distinguishing features and functions of each? What do they do? What places do they inhabit? The human mind has always sought the knowledge of these things, but never attained it. Meanwhile I do not deny that it is helpful sometimes to contemplate in the mind, as on a tablet, the image of a greater and better world, lest the intellect, habituated to the petty things of daily life, narrow itself and sink wholly into trivial thoughts. But at the same time we must be watchful for the Truth and keep a sense of proportion, so that we may distinguish the certain from the uncertain, day from night.

Thomas Burnet, *Archaeologiae Philosophicae*

It may be an unattainable goal to know the “certain from the uncertain” in regards to the full relationship between creativity and culture. Certainly comprehensive empirical verification seems difficult to imagine. We remain, for the time being, in the process of simply striving to understand the nature of the concepts, hypothesizing about their relationship, and formulating strategies by which a test of some kind might be a valid exercise. Perhaps there are certain aspects of life that are “invisible Natures,” just
as Burnet (1692/1979) had suggested, and those things must just be accepted as mysterious or even magical processes...

But the human mind is curious, so we continue to be "watchful for the Truth" and to search for understanding. Can these human experiences of searching be combined? Interestingly, the search for the full relationship between culture and creativity could be paralleled to the search for a creative solution to any cultural dilemma. Patrick Noonan (in Shekerjian, 1990) of The Nature Conservancy said, "Bringing together a diverse set of talents to work out a problem from varying perspectives is how we get creative solutions" (p.91). Referring back to Medawar (in John-Steiner, 1985) and his insights in the preface of this paper, all members of the different disciplines will expect to have their say in this analysis. Indeed, the psychologists spoke as did the poets, the philosophers as well as the artists...Even so, many of us find that we are still searching for the greater "Why?" of the creative process, as well as for the cultural reasons for our involvement with (and our value of) its creative products. Our approaches are likely to vary considerably for it is difficult NOT to look at life through our own fragmented lens which is based upon our own specificities of background, education, interest, etc., and is part of the perceptual ties, societal interactions, and oppositional and/or marginal forces...
which are at work in our daily lives. I am reminded of E.M. Forster’s familiar but continually haunting passage from *Howards End* (1910/1991) in which he wrote:

> Only connect!....Only connect the prose and the passion and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer (p.195).

It is, perhaps, much easier said than done, but Forster’s words echo in my mind—not necessarily as a finite solution, but as a call to greater unity in our search. To do this is to imagine that we have been able to bring together the differing sides of our human existence, to allow those sides to merge peacefully, comfortably, and creatively within our own beings, and then to project the beauty and meaningfulness of those bonds and relationships outwardly to our world. Above all, it is to believe that such a connection is possible. Expressed another way, Goethe (1963) wrote:

> Our desires presage the capacities within us; they are harbingers of what we shall be able to accomplish. What we can do and want to do is projected in our imagination, quite outside ourselves, and into the future. We are attracted to what is already ours in secret. Thus passionate anticipation transforms what is indeed possible into dreamt-for reality (p.57).
APPENDIX:

LISTING OF EPIGRAPHS
APPENDIX:

LISTING OF EPIGRAPHS

Page and year references to all cited epigraphs are listed below in order of their appearance:

**Epigraph**, p.vi
(Grudin, 1990, p.8)

**Introduction**, p.2
(Bach, 1977, p.5)
(Pozatek, 1994, p.397)
(Jung, 1939, p.295)

**Creativity**, p.9
(Waller, 1992, p.50)
(Gowan, Demos, & Torrance, 1967, p.vii)

**Culture**, p.43
(Hoare, 1991, p.45)
(in Bakhurst & Sypnowich, 1995, p.19)
(Thoreau, 1854, p.1)

**Relationships and Influences**, p.64
(Emerson, 1836, p.5)
(Hawking & Penrose, 1996, pp.121,128)
(Blake, 1982, p.39)

**Projections**, p.130
(in Abrams, 1979, p.337)
REFERENCES


Waller, R. J. (1992). *The bridges of Madison County*. New York:
Warner Books.


VITA

The author, Marilyn Badran Weigel, was born in LaCrosse, Wisconsin.

In August, 1985, Ms. Weigel entered the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Science in May, 1990, with highest honors in her major of elementary education and her minors of psychology, social studies, and international studies. While attending the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse, she was a member of the university's general honors society, Areté, and a member of the university's educational organization, Kappa Delta Pi.

In June, 1990, Ms. Weigel was offered a teaching position in Lake Forest School District 67 which brought her to Illinois and provided an opportunity for her to complete the Master of Arts in educational psychology at Loyola University Chicago in January, 1997.
The thesis submitted by Marilyn Badran Weigel has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Carol Harding, Director
Professor, Counseling Psychology
Loyola University Chicago

Dr. Philip Carlin
Associate Professor, Educational Leadership/Policy Studies
Loyola University Chicago

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the committee with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

10/30/96
Date

[Signature]
Director's Signature