The Creative Problem Solving preferences of playwrights and its relationship to behavior and success.

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The Creative Problem Solving preferences of playwrights and its relationship to behavior and success

A Project in Creative Studies

by

Jeffrey S. Welton

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements For the Degree of

Masters of Science May, 2004

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The Center for Studies in Creativity
Acknowledgements

Foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Gerard Puccio, for his guidance and support in seeing me through this project and completing my master’s program. I would like to recognize Dr. Mary Murdock for her energy, assistance and supervision. I would also like to recognize Mike Fox, who, as the embodiment of the creative process and the International Center for Creative Studies during my undergraduate years, inspired me to join the major and seek out the creative process in myself.

I would like to acknowledge the many people who made this project possible including Joyce Stilson at Alleyway Theatre, all of the playwrights that responded and specifically the five playwrights that were interviewed. Thank you for being so eager to talk about yourselves and your creative processes.
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Jeffrey S. Welton

An Abstract of a Project in Creative Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Science

May 2003

State University College at Buffalo
Center for Studies in Creativity
Abstract of Project

The Creative Problem Solving preferences of playwrights and its relationship to behavior and success

The purpose of this project was to explore whether playwrights share a similar Creative Problem Solving preference and how this preference related to real world behaviors. *FourSight* was administered to 57 playwrights. The results were analyzed and five playwrights that represented each of the preferences were interviewed. The playwrights showed a high preference for Ideation. Seventy percent scored Ideator as their highest preference and of those 56% scored high based on their mean score. Playwrights that wrote historical dramas shared a common preference for higher Clarifying and Developing. The real world examples from the playwrights aligned with their individual *FourSight* preference with a few slight exceptions. One interesting example is that the most successful playwright scored equally across all four preferences. The results of the interviews and other research were used to create a model for the creative process of playwrights. The theoretical and applied implications of these findings are discussed as well as recommendations for future research.

Jeffrey S. Welton

Date
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Section One: Statement of the Problem

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to discuss the style approach to creativity and research done on writers and playwrights. The study of creative style differs from the more common study of level creativity (i.e., ability) and the assessments designed to analyze preferences for different styles are explored. These preferences will later be related directly to playwrights. Research already completed regarding writing and playwrights will be introduced. The section continues with a summary of Puccio’s (1999) *FourSight* measure and concludes with the purpose of this study, guiding research questions, and the statement of significance.

Creative Style

Commonly, creative assessments have been designed to examine how creative an individual is as opposed to how they are creative. This difference is referred to as level and style of creativity, respectively. Several cognitive style measures have been created under the theory that all people are born with psychological preferences towards creativity and solving problems. Various researchers have then examined whether people involved in the same profession share the same cognitive style preferences. One common measure is the *Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator* which has been used to determine if a common preference exist among occupational groups from probation officers (Sluder & Shearer, 1992) to authors (Frost, 2002; Gladis, 1993; Piirto, 1998). Other researchers have relied solely on interviews to determine common preferences in occupations such as authors (Shekerjian, 1990). This project will specifically examine the cognitive style preferences of playwrights.
Playwriting

The majority of research on writers has been conducted to evaluate the characteristics and mental health of exceptional writers (Pritzker, 1999). Various research topics have included psychopathology and mood disorders (Jamison, 1989), mental illness (Andreason, 1987), effects of alcohol and alcoholism (Goodwin, 1988; Brunke & Gilbert, 1992), the premature mortality of writers (Jamison, 1989; Cassandro, 1998), drug use and suicide (Kerr, Shaffer, Chambers, & Hallowell, 1991; Shneidman, 1981). Other studies have focused on the motivation and personality of writers looking at intrinsic motivation, biological drive and trying to answer why writers write (Pritzker, 1999). While these studies focus on distinguished writers a study of average writers can help present a more realistic portrait of the writing process. “While a great deal of attention has been paid to dysfunctional writers, the healthy writer (if one exists) is barely represented in the literature” (Pritzker, 1999, p. 735).

Allowing for the atypical cases of individual eccentricities similarities can be seen in process and style among all writers. Even though “writers’ work habits are as individual and idiosyncratic as their work” (Pritzker, 1999, p. 734) very little research has been done to determine similarities in these habits or relationships to preferences or cognitive style.

In addition, most research focuses on poets or novelists and overall, little research has been done focusing solely on the playwright.

FourSight

FourSight, originally known as the Buffalo Creative Process Inventory, was created as a cognitive style measure to indicate an individual’s preferences for the various
stages of the creative process (Puccio, 1999). *FourSight* is a pencil-and-paper, self report measure, “designed to identify preferences in terms of the major operations within Creative Problem Solving” (Puccio, 1999, p. 171). These preferences are divided into four preferences (Clarifier, Ideator, Developer, and Implementer). Initial work on *FourSight* shows evidence for concurrent validity. Additional studies that lend further support to the validity of the measure include research conducted on the personality composition of its four preferences (Rife, 2001); the impact of Creative Problem Solving training and individual differences (Wheeler, 2001); problem solving behavior in light of cognitive style preferences (McLean, in progress); and the Creative Problem Solving preferences of secondary educators and administrators (Mann, 2003). The present study identifies the Creative Problem Solving preferences of playwrights and further explores the usefulness of *FourSight*, adding to the body of knowledge surrounding its application, usage, and validity.

**Project Questions**

The purpose of this project is to examine the cognitive style preferences of playwrights. The questions that guided this study were:

- Do playwrights share certain cognitive style preferences?
- What is the relationship between a playwright’s *FourSight* style and their creative process?
- What is the relationship between a playwright’s *FourSight* style and what becomes of their creative product (their success)?
- What is the relationship between a playwright’s *FourSight* style and the path they took to become a playwright?
**Statement of Significance**

The purpose of using assessments to analyze behavior is to gain a greater understanding of the people being studied. “The general purpose of measurement is to facilitate the process of inquiry” (Puccio & Murdock, 1999, p. 8). The use of an assessment in this study helps determine whether commonalities among the group of playwrights exists, and to determine if their preferences, as measured by *FourSight*, are reflected in their descriptions of the creative process.

This study will also help the assessment itself. One of the most important aspects of a measurement is to prove validity (Treffinger & Poggio, 1999). This study may provide additional evidence for construct validity of the *FourSight* measure. By examining real behavior one can determine the extent by which a measure like *FourSight* measures the theoretical constructs it purports to observe.

Playwriting holds unique opportunities over other professions to link the *FourSight* preferences to real behaviors. This is because playwriting is a pure activity of choice. It is extremely rare to find a playwright that was forced to write plays and would rather do something else. There are very rarely bosses or work environments other than what the playwright wishes to create. It would seem that the only limitations on this “perfect fit” environment and process are limitations of time and resources.

This project holds many opportunities to expand on the knowledge of the *FourSight* measure. Unlike other measures it has yet to be proven whether *FourSight* will hold universal results over any group or whether preferences will emerge within a specific group or occupation. This project will attempt to address that issue within the specific group of playwrights.
This project is also personally significant as it provides me the opportunity to know myself better as a playwright. I begin writing plays as a high school freshman and have been involved in the theater since elementary school. Since that time I have written many plays, produced five, entered contests and won the Alleyway Theatre’s Maxim Mazumdar new play competition in 2002. In 2003 my involvement in community theater lead to the creation of the Lake Effect Players. This is a volunteer theater troupe that is producing four shows a year and was created to give anyone interested the opportunity to participate in the theater. This project will help me understand my own playwriting better and also show me how cognitive style preferences can influence the creative process including environment as well as artistic product and success.

**Summary**

Assessments have been created to examine an individual’s approach to the creative process rather than recording the amount of their productivity. While a lot of research has been conducted on writers very little has explored differences and similarities in the creative process and cognitive style. By administering a cognitive style assessment to writers these commonalities can be explored.

The purpose of this study was to examine similarities in the creative process preferences of playwrights as assessed by the *FourSight* measure, analyze the behavior associated with any similarities, and extend the investigation of the *FourSight*’s validity by relating these preferences to real life behaviors.

Section Two takes a more thorough look at the creative theories and research introduced in this section, discusses the creative process, and reviews literature published on *FourSight*. 
Section Two: Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to review the pertinent literature related to this project. Specifically, it takes an in-depth look at creative style, assessments of creativity style, and research on writers. Literature is also presented on the creative process and the connection to the FourSight measure. The writer’s creative process will also be explored through an examination of related literature.

Level and Style

Most creative assessments focus on the amount of creativity a person displays. This is known as the level of creativity. However, this is not always the best way to examine someone’s creativity. Another way to assess someone’s creativity is to examine the way in which they are creative. This is known as the style of creativity. Cognitive style is defined as, “consistent individual differences in the ways people experience, perceive, organize, and process information” (Martinsen & Kaufmann, 1999, p. 273). Level is usually a measurement of how much creativity a person shows while style focuses more on how they show it. A style preference is mastery over one’s environment. Each person’s own experiences, abilities and thinking styles will affect the process. Even though style seems to be the more relevant question in creativity (Fox & Fox, 2000) there exist many more assessment measures designed to measure level of creativity.

Creative Style Assessment

Cognitive style tests can be used for leadership development, change management and team building. These assessments can also improve problem solving by making people aware of their strengths as well as blocks and barriers that may result from their
cognitive preference. “The more you learn about yourself and explore your creative talents, the more you will be able to consciously access them and use them to produce creative results” (Hermann, 1990, p. 30).

The *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (MBTI), a paper-and-pencil forced choice test, has been used to determine the creative preferences of many occupational groups. Originally developed in 1942 the assessment is based on the work of psychologist Carl Jung and assesses how individuals prefer to use their perception and judgment. Sluder and Shearer (1992) used the MBTI to find a preference among probation officers (ESTJ and ISTJ) and cited similar studies of police officers, fire department employees, correctional managers, lawyers and judges.

Based on the theory behind the assessment, Gladis (1993) used the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* to separate the cognitive preferences of all writers into four Jungian categories. These categories included only the cognitive scales of intuitive/sensing and thinking/feeling. He hypothesized that all writers fit into one of four categories and managers should be aware of the different preferences to get the best work from their employees. These categories were correspondent writers (SF), technical writers (ST), creative writers (NF) and analytical writers (NT).

Piirto (1992) strongly theorized that, “creative writers – poets, playwrights, novelists, story writers, essayists – have definite personality characteristics” (p. 145). In a study of 80 contemporary United States female creative writers she found a preference towards Intuition and Perception (Piirto, 1998). Barron (1968) found that creative writers had a preference of INFS with 89% of creative writers preferring the intuitive scale as opposed to 25% of the general population.
Lynne Levesque (2001) used the 16 MBTI types to create eight creative talents. She created a theory in which every person has a dominant and auxiliary talent. It was then determined that poets have a preference for ISFP and INFP types (Frost, 2002).

Other tests include the Hermann Brain Dominance Instrument (Hermann, 1990) and the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory. Kirton (1999) has received the greatest attention in regard to the style and level debate. His assessment, designed in 1976, is a pencil-and-paper test that determines a subject’s preference on a scale from high adaption to high innovation. The theory behind the assessment is that all people are creative but in different ways. Adaptors generally accept problems as defined and work to generate ideas that do things better. Innovators often redefine problems and break previously perceived restraints to do things differently. The difference between an adaptor and an innovator lies in their preference towards more or less structure while solving a problem.

Kirton’s research has revealed preferences within different occupations. Bank managers and secretaries have a higher tendency towards Adaption. Research and Development managers and Marketing employees have a higher tendency towards Innovation. Knowing these differences allows companies or groups to work better together.

**Creative Writers**

Creative writers have been researched from their childhood to death, on mental and physical illnesses, and on various life choices. These studies often discover disturbing themes or abnormal aspects of writer’s lives.
Shekerjian (1990) found that creative writers are early readers, often suffer childhood trauma, have high conceptual and verbal intelligence, have difficulty with alcohol and prefer writing as their mode of expression for emotions and fears.

Jamison (1989) found that of the British writers and artists studied, playwrights had the highest rate of severe mood swings and affective illness. Andreason (1987) found that writers in general had the highest occurrence of mental illness and family members with mental illnesses.

Brunke and Gilbert (1992) experimented with the effects of alcohol on the creative writing process. They found that alcohol led to some improvements to the content of the writing but impairments to the actual wording.

One study found the average life span of artists, especially writers, to be 62 years (Cassandro, 1998). Jamison (1989) found an even earlier mortality average at 53.2 years among British writers.

Pohlman (1996) examined the effects of being a parent on the creative writer. He found that the writer would often forfeit their time or environment for their family but still found time to work, “often rising at dawn or staying up after their family went to sleep in order to acquire time and space to write” (p. 13).

These studies and others on exceptional writers focus mainly on the dysfunctional aspects of famous writers. Analyzing the mental health, substance abuse or early mortality of these artists does very little to further understand the creative process of the writers. However, studies like Pohlman’s (1996) examination of parenting and writing, that are focused on the average writer, can help present a more valuable understanding of the writing and creative process.
Creative Process

The creative process is whatever method a person uses to generate new ideas. This could be made up of a conscious sequence of steps or it could be an involuntary, relatively rapid change in perception (Davis, 1999).

It would seem that there should be as many different processes as there are different creative individuals. However, a global process can be seen throughout all various creative activities. This would mean that playwrights share a similar creative process to other writers and other artists. However, even within playwriting, there must be differences according to the different styles (historical: [Subject 4], Appendix I, [Subject 1], Appendix E; fiction: [Subject 3], Appendix F; political: [Subject 2], Appendix G; dramatic comedy: [Subject 5], Appendix H), “the requirements of the creative task, and the idiosyncracy of every creative individual” (Davis, 1999, p. 115).

Davis (1999) described that global process in three steps as clarifying the problem, working on it and finally finding a suitable solution. Wallas defined the creative process in his four step model of Preparation, Incubation, Illumination and Verification. This model adds the additional step of Incubation, allowing time for an idea to develop.

Originally formulated by Osborn (1963) the Creative Problem Solving process follows the same three general stages as Davis’ model. These stages are fact finding, idea finding and solution finding. Within these three stages are a total of six steps including Mess Finding (creating a problem that needs a solution), Data Finding (creating facts relevant to the problem), Problem Finding (creating a specific problem statement), Idea Finding (creating solutions to the problem), Solution Finding (evaluating ideas) and Acceptance Finding (creating ways to implement the idea) (Davis, 1999).
Creative Style, Process, and *FourSight*

Creative Problem Solving, created by Osborn, has been used around the world and serves as an excellent tool for generating creative solutions. *FourSight* is designed to, “help you recognize your preference for different aspects of the creative process” (Puccio, 2001, p.1). The assessment helps the individual understand his or her strengths and see how it may effect his or her use of the creative process. These personal style preferences can be identified for every individual and can be used to improve the understanding of Creative Problem Solving as a complete process (Isaksen, Puccio, & Treffinger, 1993).

A similar tool, the *Creative Problem Solving Profile* (CPSP) was created by Basadur. The CPSP is a paper-and-pencil questioner used to measure an individual’s preference for various aspects of the creative problem solving process. CPSP is built around the theory, “that most people tend to favor working in some phases of the complete process over other phases” (Basadur, Graen, & Wakabayashi, 1999, p. 394). These phases include Generator, Conceptualizer, Optimizer, and Implementer.

Higgins (1994) explores four similar process styles. These styles are similar to *FourSight* and include the Explorer, a person who finds new information; the Artist, a person who creates new ideas; the Judge, a person who evaluates; and the Warrior, a person who carries the idea into action.

**Creative Process of Playwrights**

Many authors and playwrights have written texts on the process of playwriting, but any discussion of creativity is usually limited to generating ideas and not the process
as a whole. These books serve as “how to” instructions but neglect the creative process that is continuous through all the stages of writing and working on a play. Playwriting embodies the creative process.

“It is generally conceded that playwriting is the most difficult form of writing” (Anderson, 1975, p. 482). A lot of thought, preparation and innovation are put into every play written. “The playwright must wright and not merely write. He must ‘wright’ plays and scenes because he is primarily a builder and his job is to build scenes to play before a living audience” (Chase, 1975, P. 498). Playwriting can be compared to bridge building. A play is a conceptual design connecting two distinct things. The design can be elaborate or simple but either way it needs a solid construction.

Catron (1993) defines a play as, “a structured and unified story…written to be performed and therefore told with speeches and actions plus silences and inactions, projected by actors from a stage to an audience that is made to believe the events are happening as they watch” (p. 18).

In an essay for the Young Playwrights Workshop of the Denver Center Theatre Company Terry Dodd stresses, “playwriting, after all, is problem solving” (Blegen, 1993, P. 18).

Writing a play would be commonly accepted as a creative process. However, it would be more debatable to say that writing a play follows the same process as creative problem solving. The question arises as to what the problem being solved is. In problem solving a problem is defined as, “a situation in which a problem solver has a goal but does not know how to achieve it” (Mayer, 1999, p. 437).
“Many psychologists see the creative process as a kind of problem solving but the nature of the problem to be solved has been more difficult to identify in the arts than in domains such as science” (Doyle, 1998, p. 29). Doyle, however, points to the seed incidents, the events that had inspired or created a story. “For writers, seed incidents provide a mystery, an invitation to exploration and discovery” (Doyle, 1998, p.30).

To create a model specifically to deal with the complex work of writing fiction Burke (1983) created a three-dimensional model based on the modes of student writing. The model depicts the process flowing through multiple layers of context and passing through phases of stimulate, prewrite, produce, contemplate, revise, stop, contemplate and audience.

Burke also discovered a common theme that is true through most writing. He found that the students were forced to stop rather than feeling as if they had completed the process. “Closure is usually defined by the teacher, rather than by the student” (p. 445). An interesting aspect of creating a model for the creative writing process is that it rarely is completed. The writer usually is only stopped by some force or event that requires he or she complete the work. For playwrights this is usually either the production or publication of the script. Interestingly, Stein (1974) also notes that the process may continue past this forced stop when the playwright wishes to make alterations based on audience and critic response.

It is also difficult to create a model of the creative writer’s process because it is an evolutionary process and can make minor or major shifts during any stage of the process. “Thus the creative process in writing is usually not linear, but rather a series of steps that are repeated over and over as refinements are made” (Pritzker, 1999, p. 734). Basadur,
Graen and Wakabayashi (1999) thought that, “creative problem solving can be characterized as a continuous circular process” (p. 116).

**Summary**

This section reviewed creative style, examined assessments used to measure style, specifically the *FourSight* measure. The creative process was then explored focusing on creative writers and playwrights. Section Three outlines the methods and procedure by which this study was conducted.
Section Three: Methods and Procedures

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to outline the methods and procedures used to conduct this project. General characteristics of the research participants are provided along with a description of how the measure was administered to the participants and how the interviews were conducted. The section concludes with an overall section summary.

The Sample

Participants were located through personal acquaintances and then followed the snowball sample method (McCall & Simmons, 1969). To ensure diversity of race, sex, age and cultural background, additional participants were located through Alleyway Theatre and www.stageplays.com. This site provided the homepages and e-mail addresses of playwrights throughout the world. The homepages of the playwrights were scanned and then 100 playwrights were contacted.

Fifty-seven participants (41 male, 16 female) completed the required consent forms and assessments to be included in this research study. The mean age of the subjects was 42.5. Participants came from 21 states including 10 located in Buffalo, NY. Seventy-eight and nine-tenths percent of the participants (n=45) said they would select playwriting as their only creative outlet with 15.8% (n=9) saying they would not, and 5.3% (n=3) declining to answer. Seventy-five and four-tenths percent of the participants (n=43) consider themselves successful while 17.5% (n=10) did not and 7.0% (n=4) declined to answer. Forty-seven and four-tenths percent of the participants consider playwriting their
profession (n=27), 15.8% (n=9) considered it a hobby, 31.6% (n=18) submitted their own wording (vocation, passion, etc), and 5.3% (n=3) declined to answer.

**Methodology**

Once playwrights were identified and expressed a willingness to participate they were sent the assessment *FourSight* (Appendix D) and a consent form (Appendix C) giving permission to use their data for research purposes. The *FourSight* measures were scored and graphed. The data were entered into an Excel spreadsheet and compared for statistically significant similarities.

Five participants were selected for further research based on their cognitive style preferences identified from their *FourSight* results. These five participants took part in in-depth interviews and again signed a consent form (Appendix C), giving permission to use their comments for research purposes. The participants were asked whether they wanted to use their real names and if not names were assigned to protect their identity. The interview was based on qualitative questions categorized by the *FourSight* preferences. Question topics include whether playwriting is a hobby or profession, coming up with ideas, work environment, what led him or her to playwriting, theater involvement and results of creative work. These interviews were transcribed, coded and then compared across and within preferences to see what themes emerged.

**Summary**

This section identified the methods and procedures used in administering the *FourSight* assessment and conducting the interviews. Once all data was collected and entered into a database, the results were analyzed. Section Four provides the results and analysis of the data gathered by this project.
Section Four: Presentation and Analysis of Data

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to present the findings and the analysis of the data gathered for this study. The statistical data from FourSight are presented and then related to the five interviewed playwrights. Specific examples and comments are presented along with their FourSight preferences to compare and contrast to real world behaviors. The section concludes with brief discussions on environment, advice to other playwrights and an overall summary.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the four FourSight preferences including mean, minimum and maximum scores. The mean scores for the FourSight are relatively similar ranging from 3.35 to 4.11. The mean preference for the 57 playwrights follows the “Driver” combination (Puccio, 2001). This combination is said that the playwright, “plays with lots of possibilities and when the spirit moves leaps to action” (Puccio, 2001, p.10). The scores for each playwright were graphed to determine his or her individual combination. Forty-nine and one-tenth percent of the playwrights (n = 28) showed this combination in their own scores, all others had either one high preference or no high preference.

Table 1
Average FourSight preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>4.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideator</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developer</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>4.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementer</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Ideator preference occurred most frequently as the highest preference. For each playwright, the highest preference was recorded and the results are displayed in Table 2. Three playwrights had two preferences both occur as their highest score and both preferences are recorded. Seventy and two-tenths percent of the playwrights showed Ideator as their highest preference.

Table 2

*Frequency of highest FourSight preferences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>High</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>n=4</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideator</td>
<td>n=40</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developer</td>
<td>n=9</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementer</td>
<td>n=7</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To do a further analysis of the playwright’s *FourSight* preferences by profile, high and low preferences were determined. The frequency and percent of high and low preference is recorded in Table 3. To determine high or low preference the mean score for each individual playwright was found. The four preference scores were examined to find the mean score then 0.5 points (i.e. roughly one standard deviation) was added to and subtracted from this mean to identify the high and low preferences. Those that did not get either a low or a high preference in any of the scores were categorized as Chameleons. The Chameleon preference represents 33.3% of the playwrights.

Table 3

*Frequency of high and low FourSight preferences based on mean score*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>High</th>
<th></th>
<th>High</th>
<th></th>
<th>Low</th>
<th></th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>n=0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>n=14</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideator</td>
<td>n=32</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
<td>n=2</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developer</td>
<td>n=1</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>n=11</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementer</td>
<td>n=5</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>n=8</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chameleon</td>
<td>n=19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interviews**

Five participants were selected for in-depth interviews that scored highest in each of the different preferences and one that scored equally across all four preferences.
(Clarifier, Ideator, Developer and Implementer). The FourSight preference scores for these five playwrights are included in Table 4. Both [Subject 2] and [Subject 4] show the greatest difference between scores, each having one high preference and two low preferences, while the other three playwrights have only one high preference or none at all.

Table 4
FourSight scores for interview subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Clarifier</th>
<th>Ideator</th>
<th>Developer</th>
<th>Implementer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Subject 1]</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Subject 2]</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Subject 3]</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Subject 4]</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Subject 5]</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bolded scores show a high or low preference based on mean score

All five playwrights interviewed have jobs outside of playwriting although two work in other areas of the theater. Other demographic information is presented in Table 5 including occupation, sex, age and the preference they were selected to represent. All five are men and the average age is 50. Three are married with children and one was just recently married. All five live within New York and Pennsylvania. Another interesting similarity is that four of the playwrights have founded their own theater company.

Table 5
Demographic information for interview subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Subject 1]</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>Teacher/Writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Subject 2]</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ideator</td>
<td>Theatre Technician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Subject 3]</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Developer</td>
<td>College Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Subject 4]</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Implementer</td>
<td>Computer Technician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Subject 5]</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Chameleon</td>
<td>Theater/Writer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the interview the playwright was asked to describe his creative process and asked a series of questions based on the different stages of the process. After the
process was fully described the playwright was told his *FourSight* preference and asked to comment on it. After the interviews were transcribed various passages were highlighted. Comments were selected based on their relationship to any of the four preferences. Special attention was paid to comments that stated the playwright’s favorite, least favorite, hardest or easiest part of the creative process.

Figure 1

*FourSight preference scores for [Subject 1]*

[Subject 1] (Appendix E) was selected to represent the Clarifier preference. Clarifier preferences on the whole were low for this group of playwrights. Therefore, given [Subject 1]’s relatively higher score for Clarifier (see profile above) he was selected as a reasonable representation of this preference. Though it should be noted that he also has a higher Developer score as well. His Clarifier preference most clearly shows itself in his work with historical plays. [Subject 1] says that he enjoys research, “very much. Yes, I would have to say I enjoy writing historical dramas mainly because of the research. I enjoy research for those” (p. 63). [Subject 1] also clarifies all the scenes before beginning to work whether the script is historical or a comedy. “I’ll have pretty much all
the scenes written out in this [computer outlining] program before I do any script writing at all” (p. 65). He has also developed two devices from his Clarifying preference. First, he walks through a local cemetery to create character names. Second, if he is working on a script that stalls [Subject 1] says he’ll, “start reading, doing research for another play” (p. 65).

The Developer preference had the same score for [Subject 1]. “I like refining. I like the polishing process” (p. 63). The smallest score for [Subject 1] was Ideator which was low based on the mean score. “The actually creative process is difficult. It’s arduous.” Then [Subject 1]’s following comment returns to the Developer preference, “but once you’ve gotten a first draft I really enjoy the polishing process of getting the second draft, getting the third draft,” (p. 63).

Historical plays seem to encourage the Clarifier and Developer preference while diminishing the Ideator preference. There is less need for new ideas and more emphasis on research and development. “When you’re writing historical plays you’re kind of ensnared in the facts and you sort of have to stick to them a little bit or your audience will rebel” (p. 64).

[Subject 1]’s implementer score was not particularly high although he has shown signs of high implementation by directing several of his plays, getting a college production, entering contests, starting a dinner theater and having readings in New York and California. He even sends his scripts to publishers, various theaters and theatrical management companies. “My attitude is that it isn’t a script until it’s been produced. So I keep at it until somebody produces it somewhere and if no one wants to produce it, I do” (p. 71).
After being presented with his *FourSight* profile, [Subject 1] could see it apply to his directing. “Directing is an interpretive art. It’s not a creative art. And I think just the act of my directing so many years makes me a Developer more than an Ideator. I mean, you have to come up with ideas when directing but it’s the implementation of the production that is the really tough part. That’s one that I do fairly well. So I think that’s probably where I get this profile” (p. 70). He also sees a connection to his real life. “I’m organized. My wife complains about it constantly because she isn’t. But, I’ve always been very meticulous, organized, that type of person” (p. 71).

Figure 2

*FourSight* preference scores for [Subject 3]

[Subject 3] (Appendix F) was selected to represent the Developer preference. He thoroughly enjoys, “fleshing the story out” (p. 75) when working on a script. Rather than focusing a lot more on editing the drafts of a script [Subject 3] prefers to spend a long time developing a story before writing it. “I feel that a concept is not born until it is ready to. It doesn’t come out until it is prepared to. I think some sit in us and hibernate in us for a long time before they are ready” (p. 79). While he states that he can begin writing after
a few days he also says that some play ideas get stuck in development. “For some reason it isn’t ready to go any further yet. One day it will.” (p. 87). For example, he describes an incident on a plane that led to a recent play. “That’s been in me for years and this year it finally said, ‘I’m coming out’” (p. 88).

He uses journals and free writing to develop ideas. “For me, what it does is it takes something that is blurry and it begins to bring it into focus. I’m very much a believer in the idea that an idea can change from our brains to where it lands on paper. It can evolve” (p. 84). Journaling allows him to explore an idea before actually writing the script. “I want something at the get-go that is eminently workable. And so, maybe that’s why my concepts take so long to be born. When I write…I want the initial draft to be good. So that everything else from there is refined even more so” (p. 81).

Although he states, “I’m not the kind who writes it and then refines, refines, refines, refines” (p. 81) he still spends a considerable amount of time working on a script. “As an artist my goal is to always make it better” (p. 81). He also uses readings to help work on scripts. “I’ve got to tell you that one of my favorite parts is to take the finished script to the first reading. To hear it done. To hear life breathed into it for the first time” (p. 80). He described one instance after the first reading in which it took an additional six to seven months of editing to prepare the script for the stage. “The hard part comes when the whole thing comes together and I have to say, ‘Is this too long? Have I over stated anywhere? Is there any place that I’ve got to cut? And if I need to cut, where should I cut?’ It’s that all hard part of saying to yourself as much as I want to be madly in love with my words I can’t” (p. 81).
[Subject 3]’s second highest score, Clarifier, is reflected in some preliminary research. [Subject 3] prefers a more hands-on and experiential form of research. “The research is a very interesting phase because it is not necessarily going to a library to look up a certain era…Sometimes for me it is going to a location, sitting there drinking it in, imagining my story happening in that place” (p. 85). Clarifying can also be seen in his daily life. “When it comes to dealing with situations one of my favorite ways of problem solving is to sit down and write the whole problem out…I tend to be a person who likes to look at the whole picture and analyze how something is developed” (p. 95).

While Ideator was his lowest score, [Subject 3] enjoys the process. “There was a great rush in the conception of something” (p. 75). He admits however that, “I do find finding the ideas the hardest…I tend to be very much a writer who works by way of waiting for what inspires him” (p. 96). He uses a journal to record ideas but doesn’t often pursue new ones. “Often times, no, I don’t go out looking for something. I often times wait till I get it” (p. 84). He has also begun developing ideas that his wife generates. “She’s begun to make suggestions and I’ll hear them and say, ‘Yeah, that’s a great idea. I’ll use that’” (p. 90). He also occasionally has trouble incorporating new ideas into a draft to improve it. “For some reason I can see the story but I can’t find the words to move it forward yet, but one day, gosh darn it, I will” (p. 87).

The Implementer score, which is low compared to his individual average, is still a high score at 4.09. [Subject 3] founded and runs his own community theater company in which he writes, directs, produces and acts. However, he feels that he hasn’t been doing enough with his scripts. He doesn’t enjoy the marketing aspect of playwriting. “Trying to sell your writing is so risky and difficult,” (p. 92). He spoke of one contest that he entered
but does not submit his work to other companies or publishers. “If I’ve been remiss in any way in my writing it’s not entering contests enough” (p. 91).

Figure 3

*FourSight preference scores for [Subject 2]*

[Subject 2] (Appendix G) was selected to represent the Ideator preference. [Subject 2] has a high preference for Ideator based on the mean and significantly lower preferences for Clarifier, Developer and Implementer. When asked if he came up with a lot of seeds or germs for plays he said, “lot’s of germs. Yeah, I’ve got a high infectious rate” (p. 100). He also described ideation as, “fun. That’s the easy part” (p. 100). Within the process of editing he shows a high Ideator preference by taking the original idea and experimenting with adding a lot of new ideas to it. He finds playing around with the concepts the easiest part of the process. “I could do that forever” (p. 102).

Similar to [Subject 3], [Subject 2] prefers that an idea be mostly developed before beginning to write. “I don’t start a new project unless I’m really convinced it had a lot of meat. For the amount of time I have to put in on it it’s just not worth it unless I’m really sure it will go somewhere” (p. 98). Of all the ideas he generates he estimates he uses 0.5%. As a Developer he, “kicks it around for maybe three or four months before I
actually start writing anything down” (p. 98). Like [Subject 3] he also does fewer drafts than other playwrights and finds it difficult to edit his work. “Pretty much hate that…You’ve got to sit there trying to read something you know so well and trying to pretend you can look at it objectively…It’s really hard” (p. 101).

The Clarifier preference and research is an interesting aspect of [Subject 2]’s process. He seems to delay the research and analysis, “a lot of things I get into would require a good amount of research so it’s like, when I do the research I’ll consider it” (p. 100) but thoroughly enjoys it, “I can vanish into the library for days on end and do nothing but just look up what ever the subject is” (p. 101). He says that it takes a while for him to get into the research but once he begins it can be very consuming and enjoyable. “Once I get going it’s great. It is my preference except that life gets in the way. Silly things like eating and doing laundry. When I get into it I forget everything” (p. 101). He estimates 100 hours of detailed research for the work on a normal play. He even took a job as a taxi driver to research for a play about that occupation.

[Subject 2] also uses outlines to organize his new play ideas. “I do a lot of outlines. I guess that I hold off for a long time from actually putting any writing on paper, dialog on paper. But I’ll make outlines fairly early on in the process” (p. 104).

From his descriptions, Clarifier seems that it should be a very high preference for him. However he does agree with the score. “I do do a lot of research, but not in an analytic kind of way. Much more haphazardly…If anything I would keep [the Ideator preference] up and move the Implementer score way down” (p. 110).

[Subject 2]’s Implementer preference is shown in a series of staged readings of his plays as well as other playwright’s scripts. While he has workshopped his scripts at
various venues and has won some contests he doesn’t think he is doing enough with the final scripts. “My dream is to find a girlfriend who will push me to do these things because I don’t do it nearly enough” (p. 107).

Figure 4

FourSight preference scores for [Subject 4]

[Subject 4] (Appendix H) was selected to represent the Implementer preference. Although he has been successful at marketing his final script, [Subject 4] describes that part of the process as the hardest. “But, now ask me about rejection and how that can knock all your creative spirit out of you and make you feel you should never bother to write again” (p. 134). He has not only mailed scripts to various organizations but has also gone to speak directly to the person in charge. “I submitted my work myself because I had the drive in me even though I hate that part of the job” (p. 134). He has won awards, received grants, directed a short play and produced another.

He describes his process in specific steps. First the original seed incident is noticed and mulled over for several days. Then he makes notes on the characters, order, structure, problem, and denouement. “And when I am pretty well engrossed and can’t wait to get started, I make a few little moments of dialogue” (p. 128). He continues to
work on the stage elements of the story. Once everything is in place he begins to write. He completes each act carefully to make sure everything is properly punctuated and formatted. “Then the fun begins. I usually put it aside for a few days and do other works, other plays, etc. When I think I can look at my play objectively, I drag it out again and begin the long process of revising, rewriting, making better, etc. This may take twenty or more attempts before I get it. There have been times I have let it go again after the twentieth time and still rewritten it completely” (p. 129). Then he considers marketing a middle step rather than a final step. He makes additional revisions after each rejection letter and may even make alterations while making the copies to give to a theater company when it is accepted. “Usually, by the fifth or sixth rehearsal I have corrected everything” (p. 129). Although, he may still make additional changes based on actor and director comments.

Each of the five playwrights were asked to comment on the quote that, “it is generally conceded that playwriting is the most difficult form of writing” (Anderson, 1975, p.482). Four of them agreed. [Subject 4] did not. “I think [playwriting] is the easiest, but then I am probably not succeeding because I do not treat the difficult art of playwriting with all the respect that it should have” (p. 136).

Developer was a low preference for [Subject 4]. However, his favorite and easiest part of the playwriting process is editing. “A lot of writing is editing, rewriting, etc. This I can do with no worry about distractions” (p. 134).

He also scored low based on the mean for Clarifier. [Subject 4] has done historical plays and relies on research, facts and events. “For historical plays I do several days research and look at several sources” (p. 131). For a play on the civil war he typed
these notes into the computer. “Then I did several more days of research putting them in the exact chronological order. I always have to do that because my mind cannot tolerate a mixed up mess of events” (p. 131).

[Subject 4] was presented with his *FourSight* scores and given the description of his particular combination; the Driver. “Plays with lots of possibilities and when the spirit moves leaps to action” (Puccio, 2001, p. 10). “No, I don’t play with lots of possibilities. I work on a single idea at a time, one that strikes me, or I go to one that I have jotted down. I don’t leap into action when the spirit moves me either. I am very industrious and keep at my work in a regular routine. So, I don’t think very much of your diagnosis” (p. 136). However, he did agree with the Implementer analysis.

Figure 5

*FourSight preference scores for [Subject 5]*

[Subject 5] (Appendix I) was selected to represent the Chameleon or flat-liner preference. He requested his name be kept in confidence thus a fictitious name has been assigned to this participant. The Chameleon *FourSight* combination is an even score across all preferences with no high or low points. A person with this combination should be flexible and find it easy to work in any of the problem solving preferences (Puccio,
[Subject 5] does find the whole process to be equally difficult. “Nothing comes easy in the creative process but I suppose that relatively the easiest part is when I’m writing and enter the zone” (p. 113). He is also able to get through the process more than some of the other playwrights. “Generally, I finish all of the projects I start. Rarely, I will hit a road block with a play and put it in the drawer and pull it out again” (p. 121).

“The most difficult part of the creative process is trying to discern what the core issue is in a play, I’m developing” (p. 114). While the other aspects of the story like the characters, themes and style come easier, he finds the core conflict more difficult to pin down. “I suspect this is because developing a character is something that evolves over a period of time and rarely springs onto the page without a great deal of thought and musing on the ‘supposes’” (p. 114). However, the editing aspect of the Developer preference comes a little easier. “After that, there were revision after revision, more revisions after public readings, more revision after a production and revisions, smaller ones, to the present day” (p. 115).

[Subject 5] spends a good deal of time deciding which of his many play seeds he will develop and work on. “I believe plays are sitting inside me for years and even decades awaiting the right time and place to surface” (p. 118). “After I’ve decided on one play, idea or topic I generally stay with it until I’ve completed it to my own satisfaction” (p. 116).

Depending on the play, [Subject 5] may do extensive research or none at all. “Research is vital to some projects and unnecessary, or at least minimal, for others” (p. 117). His thought process is very analytical in preparation for writing the script and he states that he enjoys doing the research most of the time. The different preferences are
also linked for [Subject 5]. “Doing research can sometimes trigger new creative ideas” (p. 118).

As an Implementer [Subject 5] runs a non-profit theater in New York City dedicated to the development of new playwrights. In this capacity he needs to do producing, publicity, marketing, and audience development among other aspects of running a theater. “Certainly, after the play is completed the marketing process, which is another form of creativity, is also high on the list of playwright difficulties” (p. 114). He enters all the contests he can, sends queries to regional theaters, contacts actors and has readings.

**The Creative Environment of Playwrights**

As stated earlier, Playwriting is an activity of choice. Very few people are forced to write plays or told specific ways to do that. This means that the playwright gets to set the environment that he or she finds most conducive to writing.

The only limitations to the free choice of the playwright’s environment seem to be time, money and distractions of life. Distractions include stress, a busy atmosphere or even, in one case, a dog that insists on receiving attention while the playwright is working. One writer used to be unable to work in an area that was unkempt but no longer finds that an issue.

Three of the playwrights need quiet to work. Although he usually prefers quiet, one has a tape of energetic, “demonic tunes,” used to spark the muses while in the editing process. Another prefers to work with no one else in the same house. While the fifth prefers modern classical music playing, he cannot work with other forms of music or the television on.
Time of day matters to some of the playwrights but not all. [Subject 3] works best in the evening and during lunch hours at work. [Subject 2] gets his biggest inspiration at night during the winter. [Subject 4] now writes between one and four in the afternoon. When he had young children living at home he used to write once they were all in bed. [Subject 5] works very early in the morning before his family wakes up or at the office if he has a chance.

One of the playwrights works in short spurts. “I have a hard time writing for more than an hour” (p. 66). Another has disciplined himself to work for at least an hour a day. A third can work for long periods of time but only when he is inspired and in the mood.

There are also specific ways in which the playwrights might need to write. [Subject 3] insists on hand writing original drafts on a specific type of pad. “I find that an interesting part of creativity, that as an artist I need the right conditions. I can’t just make it happen anywhere” (p. 89).

The Beginning of Playwriting

“Should I be a writer? I believe it’s more a question of *must* you be a writer. It chooses you, not the other way around” (Gores, 1975, p. 9).

The playwrights each had different reasons for beginning to write plays but the underlying theme was self-expression and control over the artistic process.

[Subject 1] was led to playwriting as a practical purpose. As a teacher he needed better material to work with. “I wanted something I could stage, a piece of literature I could work with with my students” (p. 69).

[Subject 3] was at a meeting for his college’s radio station and made a comment about using murder mystery radio plays. He was then volunteered to write them and has
been writing plays since. While he spends a lot of his time playwriting he also enjoys short stories and poems. “I love writing. I can’t imagine my life without it” (p. 96).

[Subject 2] began writing in fifth grade and in 2003 had his first full length play produced. He chose playwriting over other forms of writing because he enjoys the societal aspect of theater and can get his message across.

[Subject 5] began as an actor and wanted more control. Instead of waiting for auditions and perhaps not even liking the script or director he decided to write his own plays. “I needed a creative outlet and started to discipline myself to write every day. From then on, when I didn’t write, I felt there was something missing” (p. 123).

**Playwriting Advice**

In order to become a better playwright, [Subject 3] and [Subject 5] suggest reading other works. “I found, in that period of time, that it was so instructive to look at the work of other writers. Both at what they did well and what they did not do well” (p. 77). [Subject 5] learned the skills of playwriting by reading other works. “I learned about playwriting by reading about five to ten plays every single week for at least a decade” (p. 123).

It is also important to know about the theater to write effective plays. “That’s why I wanted to work in theater, to get an understanding of it. From the ground up. I generally feel that playwrights that don’t practically know the medium they’re writing about are pretty much useless” (p. 98). [Subject 1] also believes that one needs to know the basic rules of the theater. “I’m a big believer in the axiom that, ‘in order to break the rules, you have to follow and understand them religiously’” (p. 121).
Most importantly the playwrights agree that the work has to be relevant to the playwright. “As writers I don’t think we can write plays in places that we don’t know” (p. 79). “I began to make the realization that no matter what, what you write comes from you. You can’t look anywhere else but inside yourself for the germs that are going to become plays” (p. 76).

On a lighter note, all five playwrights agreed that it was very difficult to make a living in the theater. “You have to have another means of an income whether you like it or not to engage in your art” (p. 92). They suggest a job that pays the bills but still doesn’t take up all of one’s time or creative energy. “If it weren’t for my ‘real’ job I would have starved to death about 1951” (p. 127).

**Summary**

In this section, the descriptive data and findings of this research were presented along with an analysis of the data. The majority of playwrights showed a preference for the Driver combination, specifically with a higher occurrence of high Ideator preferences. The real world behaviors of five of the playwrights were analyzed in comparison to their *FourSight* preferences. The section concluded with a brief examination of environment, the path to playwriting and general advice.
Section Five: Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to present overall conclusions of this study as well as recommendations for future research. The guiding questions of this project, as identified in Section One, are addressed. A model is also proposed to represent the playwright’s creative process. After identifying the implications of the research, the section concludes with a summary.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the Creative Problem Solving preferences of playwrights and to see if these preferences had any relationship to real behavior and success. The results were exciting and introduce an interesting direction for further FourSight research. This project is one of the first to show a similar preference of FourSight scores in a specific group of people. The results of this project lead to the possibility that specific professions or people who are drawn to similar activities, like playwriting, will share similar creative problem solving preferences. The following section answers the research questions initially posed in Section One.

Do playwrights share certain cognitive style preferences?

Playwrights show a higher occurrence of the Ideator preference. A vast majority of the playwrights scored Ideator as their highest preference and still more than half (56.1%) showed that to be a high preference based on their individual mean score. Even
though this preference occurs more often all of the preferences are represented in this
group of 57 playwrights except a preference for high Clarifier.

Implementer scored the next highest based on the mean scores for the group. However, the number of playwrights that scored Implementer as their highest preference (12.3%) was much lower and the number of low preferences based on the individual mean (14.1%) was more common then a high preference (8.8%). Developer was more frequent as the highest preference (n=9) then Implementer (n=7) but also received more low preferences (19.3%) than high preferences (1.8%).

The Clarifier score was universally lower across the various calculations. Clarifier received the lowest mean score for the group. This preference also occurred the most infrequently as the highest score for the playwright. The majority of low scores based on the individual mean across all four preferences was Clarifier and there were no high preferences.

This seems to show a general trend in playwrights towards high Ideation and low Clarifying. While Developing and Implementing share very similar scores that are neither low nor high there is a slightly higher preference towards Implementing.

From the small sample of playwrights interviewed another interesting relationship seemed to appear between preference and type of plays written. Those high in Clarifier and Developer seemed to lean more towards historical dramas. In these plays the stories have already been created and it takes research and development to make them into workable plays. There is less need for new ideas although some characterizations, smaller events and themes need to be created.
What is the relationship between a playwright’s FourSight style and their creative process?

Based on the examples given in the interviews there seems to be a strong relationship between FourSight preference and the playwright’s individual creative process.

The examples that [Subject 1] gave demonstrates that he enjoys the parts of the process involved with Clarifying and Developing, which were his two highest scores. He even related how they manifest in his daily life describing himself as a meticulous and organized person. His comments on the difficulty of the creative process match with his low Ideator score. He describes the creative process as arduous and spends a great deal more time developing ideas than creating new ones. His Implementer score, however, does not match with his behavior. He states that he dislikes that part of the process but still does very well in it. This could be because he has learned to overcome this weakness and adapt to his preference.

[Subject 3]’s examples demonstrate a high preference for Developer, which matches his FourSight score. He works on ideas and doesn’t proceed until he believes they are ready to make the best possible draft. His preference for Clarifier is demonstrated in his research as well as his real-life problem solving technique. [Subject 3] also readily admits his weaknesses within the Ideator and Implementer preferences. He states that creating new ideas is the hardest part of the process and that he doesn’t market his scripts as much as he should.

[Subject 2]’s description of himself and his work process do show a high Ideator preference. He finds it easy and fun and, as demonstrated by his estimate that he only
uses 0.5% of his ideas, generates a lot of ideas. His three remaining scores were all low in
the 3 point range. Developer seems that it should be higher due to his long preparation
and development before actually writing a play but he does find editing very difficult.
Clarifier also seems that is should be higher due to his enjoyment of in-depth research
and outlining but he believes it is lower because he does it in a non-analytical way.
Lastly, [Subject 2]’s Implementer score is appropriate because he describes it as difficult
and would rather find a girlfriend that would do the implementation for him.

[Subject 4]’s FourSight assessment seems to be the most inconsistent with his
playwriting behavior. The high Implementer score is clearly reflected in his process. He
has shown that he is very dedicated to getting his work produced or published no matter
how much he dislikes the process. The other three scores, however, would seem better
reversed. His Ideator score is the next highest but in his own words he doesn’t, “play with
a lot of possibilities,” (p. 136). His account of his process would seem to indicate a
stronger tendency towards Clarifier and Developer than is reflected in his FourSight
score. Before writing he researches the topic, types the notes and organizes them. Then
he makes sure all the various aspects are together before he writes. He also described
editing as his favorite part of the process and the easiest.

[Subject 5]’s ability to complete almost all of the projects he starts complements
his score as a Chameleon. Even when he comes on a script that is having difficulties he
just sets it aside and comes back to it at a later date. His equal scores across all four
preferences seems to relate directly to his comment that all parts of the process are
equally difficult.
What is the relationship between a playwright’s FourSight style and what becomes of their creative product (their success)?

All five interview participants stated that they would consider themselves successful. Of all 57 project participants, 75.4% (n=43) said that they would consider themselves successful. However, the term successful for a playwright seems to have a much lower standard than other forms of writing. In his essay on playwriting Anderson (1975) writes, “you can make a killing in the theater, but not a living” (p. 481). Each of the playwrights interviewed agreed with this quote. “I eke out a few dollars every year,” (p. 70). “You have to have another means of an income whether you like it or not to engage in your art,” (p. 92). “I feel like it’s something you do just because you have to. Nobody in their right mind would do it” (p. 110). “The number of people who actually can support themselves in the theatre is miniscule. The number of playwrights is probably even less. On the other hand, any kind of achievement is that much sweeter as the road has been longer and more arduous” (p. 124).

How is success to be measured for the playwrights? Four of the playwrights have their own theater company so they receive regular performances of their work. Coates (1997) describes little theater as a way, “to give the playwright a chance to see what works and what doesn’t – not on the page, but on the stage with living, fumbling, stumbling actors” (p. 446). Coates describes four markets for scripts: community theater, experimental theater, legitimate (professional) theater, and publication. All of the playwrights interviewed have received community, college or professional performances of their work. Four have won contests and two have been published. Financially and by
fame though, none of these participants has been successful enough to be considered a professional playwright.

On a purely subjective opinion based on the playwright’s comments on plays, productions, publications and awards it would seem that [Subject 5] is the most successful of the five participants. His comfort in all stages of the creative process, as determined by his FourSight score, would seem to help him accomplish this. [Subject 1] shows a strong dedication to marketing his work even though he dislikes that particular stage of the process. His description of the process shows that has worked against his preference in order to make this happen. [Subject 4]’s high Implemeter score would appear to account for his success with awards, grants and productions. [Subject 2] is just beginning to find some success. Perhaps his lower scores in the Developer and Implemeter preferences have slowed his progress. [Subject 3] on the other hand has received small successes within his own theater company and local community but needs to take the initiative to market his work towards other companies and publishers. Perhaps his high Developer score and low Implementer score leads him to continue working within the current arrangements rather than pursue other outside opportunities.

There were some playwrights that did not consider themselves to be successful. Is there a similar preference for those that do consider themselves to be successful? Of the 43 playwrights that consider themselves successful, Ideator is the highest score for 69.8% (n=30). This is just slightly higher than the 66.7% for the whole group.

Overall it would seem that FourSight preference does relate to the quantity of smaller successes for each playwright but has little effect on professional success. Those that enter more contests and contact more companies and publishers will receive more
individual successes. However, it is very difficult to succeed professionally in playwriting no matter what the preference.

What is the relationship between a playwright’s FourSight style and the path they took to become a playwright?

The research and interviews showed very little evidence of a relationship between preference and the beginnings of playwriting for each of the five participants. Two examples though are [Subject 3] and [Subject 1]. [Subject 3] was pushed into the playwriting process which follows his preference as a low Implementer and high Developer. However, [Subject 1], with the same preference, took the initiative to write plays. He did follow his Developer preference by writing plays to complement something that he had already been doing with his class.

**Model for the Creative Process of Playwrights**

In synthesizing the concepts behind the *FourSight* measure, information from the related literature, and the results of the interviews it is possible to create a model to represent the creative process of playwrights.

Because playwriting is problem solving (Blegen, 1993) the basic problem solving model of clarifying the problem, ideating, developing the solution and implementing the solution can be used. However, slight alterations need to be made to understand the specific differences inherent in playwriting.

Even though different styles of playwriting would seem to need different processes a similar process did appear in the literature and interviews. After examining
previous models and experimenting with other shapes and arrangements the constellation Pegasus was the most conducive to describe the playwright’s creative process.

Figure 6

*Pegasus Model of the Playwright’s Creative Process*

1. Perception of a seed incident.
2. Preconscious application of present and past elements.
3. Illumination and insight into a play concept.
5. Ideating.
6. Developing.
7. Implementing.
8. Abandonment of the script.

In a very broad sense the process of playwriting can be divided into the four stages of problem solving examined in the *FourSight* measure. The stages of clarifying, ideating, developing and implementing can be matched with the writer’s process of research, idea development and writing, editing and marketing. However, playwrights go through each of the four stages of the creative problem solving process during each of these stages of the writer’s process. The writing stages of idea development, editing and marketing each represent a complete process in themselves. Therefore the playwright goes through the same four stages multiple times. When Burke (1983) created a model to represent the process of writing fictional essays she depicted the process repeating itself while flowing through multiple different layers of context and passing through various phases.
It is also difficult to create a model of the creative writer’s process because it is an evolutionary process and can make minor or major shifts during any stage of the process. “Thus the creative process in writing is usually not linear, but rather a series of steps that are repeated over and over as refinements are made” (Pritzker, 1999, p. 734). Basadur, Graen and Wakabayashi (1999) thought that, “creative problem solving can be characterized as a continuous circular process” (p. 116).

The Pegasus Model (Fig. 6) takes the basic four step creative process of Clarifying, Ideating, Developing and Implementing and creates a cyclical process. Once inside the process circle of steps four through seven the playwright can repeat this process as many times as needed. The minimum cycles would be three. First the playwright would have to clarify the original concept, ideate on ways to build on that idea, develop those ideas and then implement them by writing a script. Pohlman (1996) describes this process of translating imagination into a creative product as the generative phase. The next cycle would be the stages of editing (done as many times as needed) and the last cycle would be the stages of marketing or producing the play.

In the generative phase research is needed (clarifying), the idea is developed (ideating), the idea is cognitively reworked and tweaked (developing), and finally the script begins to be written (implementing). In editing additional research may be needed (clarifying), ideation may occur on levels from additional elements to complete conceptual changes (ideating), these new ideas are worked into the script (developing), and the script is rewritten (implementing). To market or produce the play additional research is required on theater companies, contests, agents and publishers (clarifying), followed by ideas to market the script (ideating), which are developed and implemented.
These cycles themselves are described in a general order but can be repeated or revisited multiple times and at any time during the process. Playwrights may be in the final stages of marketing and see a new way to edit or get a new seed incident that takes the script into a new direction and the whole process begins again.

The original idea for the play or seed incident has been pulled away from the creative problem solving process. Seed events are those incidents that inspire or create an invitation to explore a possible story (Doyle, 1998). [Subject 2] described these ideas as, “those little possibilities” (p. 9). Even though the seed incident is usually described as a creative insight the majority of playwrights take no deliberate action to create this idea. This seed incident comes with a flash of illumination and serves as the problem that the playwright needs to solve rather than a solution. “[The idea] was not something I was thinking about until I took that walk” (p. 86). “On several occasions I had dreams that upon waking seemed not only the germ of the plot, but pretty much the entire plot” (p. 130). “I just have a stageable scene in my head and then I build the play around that one scene” (p. 62). “I knew immediately that this was a setting for a play” ([Subject 5], p.4).

“I’m aware of [seed incidents] everyday. I’m constantly thinking of new theatrical moments or theatrical settings I could use” (p. 62). [Subject 4] is very methodical in this process. If a new idea comes to him while working through this process he sets it aside. “I have to discipline myself to stow away an idea if I am in the middle of a play and wait until I am completely finished before trying to do anything more than write the idea down” (p. 130).

The playwright’s creative process is rarely completed and may often be seen as a never ending process. A formal finished creative product would be a producible
completed script. Burke (1983) found that the process was usually forced to end rather than coming to an organic finish. The writer usually is only stopped by some force or event that requires him or her to complete their work and there is often a feeling that the final product is not completed. “Closure is usually defined by the teacher, rather than by the student,” (p. 445). This is depicted in the Pegasus Model by two exits from the cycle; steps eight and nine. Step eight is the abandonment of a project either because the playwright lost interest in the concept or feels that the script does not match his or her expectations. “Some of the ideas, I get sick of them and I don’t want to write at all” (p. 106). Step nine is the forced stop of the script because the play is being produced, published or some other means that halts work on the script. Very few scripts seem to be considered finished. The remaining scripts are either abandoned (8), still being worked on (4, 5, 6, 7) or can no longer be worked on because it has been published or produced (9).

“I don’t think it ever is [finished], frankly” (p. 67). “Most of my scripts are still in the process of being written” (p. 67). [Subject 2] joked that a script is only finished when, “the computer breaks down” (p.11).

“I don’t think any playwright ever knows [when a script is finished]…I can’t ever pick up an old play of mine, even the oldest, without wanting to grab a pen and change a line here and there” (p. 133). “Sometimes I have had scripts where I’ve written them and gotten as far as they were meant to get, I’ve put them away and years later when I pull them out I see ways of taking them further” (p. 91). [Subject 5] believes a script is never finished but only, “in a condition that I’m ready to share it professionally” (p. 120). “A script is never finished. Each production enlightens me to new aspects of the play and generally will elicit a change of a line or two here and there” (p. 123).
Finally this cyclical process may be continued at the same time for many plays. “I have to say that I have a hard time working on just one script at a time. I like to have multiple scripts going” (p. 65). These multiple projects might also be put away for some time. “Years later I may pull them out to work on again” (p. 116).

**Suggestions for Future Research**

When it is possible to quickly find fifteen local playwrights just in the Buffalo area it becomes very clear that a study of 57 playwrights is hardly sufficient to access the field of playwriting. Although every effort was made to ensure the diversity of the participants, the group remains relatively small.

This study has some limitations. First, the interviews with the five playwrights concerned past events, so inaccurate remembering is possible. Second, five is a small sample size, so any conclusions based on the playwrights’ accounts must also be tempered by the possibility that other writers might have very different stories to tell. Third, due to the necessity of in-person interviews, the playwrights selected were located within a six hour drive from Buffalo, NY. To further verify any of the conclusions or suggestions made in this project more playwrights would need to be included in the research. Any further interviews should be done with playwrights in a different geographic location or from a collection of various locations. Such a group could then provide a more realistic and reasonable cross section of geographic and ethnic backgrounds in the United States.

One area that warrants further exploration is the idea that different play styles are more common with playwrights with similar preferences. This project seemed to find that
historical drama playwrights have a higher preference for Clarifying and Developing. Further research could determine if other historical playwrights share the same preference and if other play styles have a common preference combination. Other play styles could include, but are not limited to, historical, autobiographical, musical, one-act, full-length, farce, and adaptation.

One of the guiding questions of this project was whether there is a relationship between Creative Problem Solving preference and the path that led a writer to playwriting. The questions asked in the interviews for this project and the answers provided were insufficient to determine a relationship. Another more focused project could determine if such a connection exists.

Lastly, it would be interesting to expand the study of arts and FourSight preference to other art forms. Since it appears that the majority of playwrights share a common Creative Problem Solving preference, would other artists share a similar preference within their specialty? For example, do dancers, musicians or painters share similar preferences within their own groups?

**Summary**

In this section, the research questions were answered based on the results of the project and a model for the creative process of playwrights was proposed. A majority of the playwrights did show a similar tendency and their real world behaviors reflect similar creative problem solving preferences as their *FourSight* scores indicate. The creative problem solving preference of the playwrights, however, seemed to have a smaller
relationship to the playwrights’ individual success. The section concluded with a brief suggestion for further research.
References


APPENDIX A: Concept Paper

 Theme:
 Understanding Multifaceted Interactions Among Person, Process, Product and Press/Environment

 Initiative:
 Identifying person-process preferences in CPS

 Thesis Title: The CPS preferences of playwrights and its relationship to behavior and success

 Rationale and Questions: The purpose of this project is to examine the cognitive style preferences of playwrights. To accomplish this task, the FourSight, a measure of individuals' preferences for the various stages of the creative process, will be given to playwrights. This study will investigate how the cognitive style preferences (Clarifier, Ideator, Developer, Implementer) of playwrights are similar or differ.

 The questions that will guide this study are:

 - Do playwrights share certain cognitive style preferences?
 - What is the relationship between a playwright's FourSight style and their creative process?
 - What is the relationship between a playwright's FourSight style and what becomes of their creative product (their success)?
 - What is the relationship between a playwright's FourSight style and the path they took to become a playwright?

 Statement of Significance: Several cognitive style measures have been created under the theory that all people are born with psychological preferences. One common measure is the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator which has been used to determine if a common preference exist among occupational groups from probation officers (Sluder & Shearer, 1992) to authors (Frost, 2002; Gladis, 1993; Piirto, 1998). Other researchers have relied solely on interviews to determine common preferences in occupations such as authors (Shekerjian, 1990).

 FourSight, originally known as the Buffalo Creative Process Inventory, was created as a cognitive style measure to indicate an individual's preferences for the various stages of the creative process (Puccio, 1999). Initial work on FourSight shows evidence for concurrent validity. Additional studies that further validate the measure include research conducted on the personality composition of its four preferences (Rife, 2001); the impact of Creative Problem Solving training and individual differences (Wheeler, 2001); problem solving behavior in light of cognitive style preferences (McLean, in progress); and the Creative Problem Solving preferences of secondary educators and administrators (Mann, in progress). This study will identify the Creative Problem Solving preferences of playwrights and further explore the usefulness of FourSight, adding to the body of knowledge surrounding its application, usage, and validity.
Description of the Method or Process: Using FourSight, a pencil-and-paper, self-report measure, "designed to identify preferences in terms of the major operations within Creative Problem Solving (Puccio, 1999, p. 171), I will examine the relationship between these individual preferences and the process and products of playwrights.

This project will involve the collection of quantitative data from FourSight and qualitative data from a number of in-depth interviews. A minimum of 30 FourSight tests will be administered with at least five of the subjects participating in interviews representing each of the four preferences and one Chameleon. Question topics include whether playwriting is a hobby or profession, coming up with and working on ideas, work environment, what led him or her to playwriting, theater involvement and results of creative work. Subjects will be located through personal acquaintances and follow the snowball sample method (McCall, & Simmons, 1969). To ensure diversity of race, sex, age and cultural background, additional subjects will be located through past submission information for Alleyway Theatre's annual Maxim Mazumdar New Play competition and attendance at local play reading meetings held monthly at the New Phoenix Theater. The subjects will first complete a consent form authorizing his or her willingness to participate in a research study and then FourSight will be administered. Once data are collected, each participant's cognitive style preferences will be identified. FourSight preferences will be compared for statistically significant similarities. From this information playwrights will be selected to be interviewed who represent a mix of FourSight styles. Responses to the qualitative questions will be categorized based on FourSight preferences, then compared across and within preferences to see what themes emerge.

Learning Goals:
- To become intimately familiar with FourSight including administration, scoring, analysis, and interpretation of data;
- To gain an understanding of how cognitive style preferences can influence creative process and environment as well as artistic product and success;
- To gain an understanding of research and analytical statistics;
- To know myself better as a playwright;
- To gain a better understanding of process and environment; and
- To network in the creative and theater domains.

Outcomes:
- Additional research that underscores the utility of FourSight as a valid profiling assessment;
- 20 CBIR Annotations; and
- Thesis Write-Up.

Timeline:
- December 2002: Concept Paper approved to begin thesis work.
  Complete Human Subjects Form.
Obtain all the necessary *FourSight* forms and manuals.
Learn how to properly administer *FourSight*.

- **January 2002**: Complete interview protocol.
  Obtain Human Subjects Approval.
  Contact subjects for permission.
  Interview playwrights and administer the *FourSight*.

- **February 2002**: Interview playwrights and administer the *FourSight*.
  Transcribe and analyze results.

- **March 2002**: Interview playwrights and administer the *FourSight*.
  Transcribe and analyze results.

- **April 2002**: Interview playwrights and administer the *FourSight*.
  Transcribe and analyze results.

- **May 2002**: Complete analysis of interview and *FourSight* data collected.
  Prepare project draft for review (chapters 1,2,3,4).

- **June 2002**: Complete draft for all chapters.
  Refine and finalize draft.
  Submit final draft of Master's thesis.

- **July 2002**: Master's thesis approved.
  Graduate.

**Principal Investigators:** Dr. Gerard J. Puccio, Faculty Advisor; Jeffrey S. Welton, Master's Candidate.

**Related Literature:**


APPENDIX B: Human Subjects Approval
**You Must Be 18 Years of Age or Older to Participate in This Study**

1. **Purpose:**
   The purpose of this study is to explore the creative personality of playwrights and how it effects process.

2. **Procedure:**
   You will be asked to complete an assessment: *FourSight*. The results of the assessment will be forwarded to you once scored. Additionally, some participants will be interviewed.

3. **Risk:**
   *FourSight* is a pencil-and-paper, self-report measure designed to identify preferences in terms of the major operations within Creative Problem Solving. Since *FourSight* is a measure of style with no right or wrong answers it is not anticipated that this study will present any risk to you.

4. **Voluntary Participation:**
   Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may quit at any time without penalty.

5. **Confidentiality:**
   All information that we obtain from you is strictly confidential. The results reported from this information obtained from you will not identify you in any way.

6. If you have any concerns about your treatment as a participant in this study, please call Dr. Gerard Puccio, Department of Creative Studies, Buffalo State College, (716) 878-6223.

I have read the above information and willingly consent to participate in this study.

Signed: ___________________________ Date: ______________
Profiling Creative Problem Solving in Playwrights
SUBJECT CONSENT FORM
Interview

1. **Purpose:**
   The purpose of this study is to explore the creative personality of playwrights and how it effects process.

2. **Procedure:**
   If you decide to further participate in this study, I will ask you to participate in an open interview where you will be asked to express your experiences, thoughts and opinions about playwriting. This interview will be tape recorded for the purpose of documenting the conversation and evaluating the results as they compare with the other participants. I will ask specific questions during the interview, but you are free to contribute whatever you believe to be relevant to the topic. The interview will take approximately 1-2 hours.

3. **Risk:**
   There should be no risks or side effects to you as a result of participating in this research study.

4. **Voluntary Participation:**
   Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may quit at any time without penalty.

5. **Confidentiality:**
   The information obtained for this study can be kept confidential at the request of the participant. Below please sign the portion that reflects your desire with regard to confidentiality.

6. If you have any concerns about your treatment as a participant in this study, please call Dr. Gerard Puccio, Department of Creative Studies, Buffalo State College, (716) 878-6223.

I have read the above information and willingly consent to participate in this study. I agree to have my name appear in the reports and presentations associated with this study.

Signed: ___________________________ Date: ____________

I have read the above information and willingly consent to participate in this study. I wish to have my participation remain confidential.

Signed: ___________________________ Date: ____________
APPENDIX D: FourSight Assessment
APPENDIX E: Transcript of Interview with [Subject 1]

Welton: First, a little personal stuff. Are you married?

[Subject 1]: Yes, I am.

Welton: Ok. Do you have children?

[Subject 1]: No.

Welton: What is your heritage?

[Subject 1]: English – Irish.

Welton: Ok. Would you describe yourself as creative?

[Subject 1]: Yes.

Welton: Have you worked on it in anyway to improve, or better use your creativity, or do you just accept that you are creative?

[Subject 1]: I’ve been creative my whole life. Ever since I was a little boy I painted. I started out being a painter and I drew everything. I used to make ship models when I was a kid and I read constantly.

Welton: When do you think you switched into the writing?

[Subject 1]: Well, as an English major in college but I still didn’t write creatively then. It wasn’t till I was half way through my teaching career and I got a little maturity under my belt. Then I thought I could actually do it.

Welton: Would you call playwriting a part-time job, or a hobby, or something else?

[Subject 1]: I would describe it now as a part-time job.

Welton: You said your profession is teaching. Do you enjoy that?

[Subject 1]: Yes. Yes, I do.

Welton: Do you teach English?
[Subject 1]: English and theater.

Welton: Oh. How much theater do you teach?

[Subject 1]: I usually teach one theater class every other year and then I direct one play every year.

Welton: Do you work at home?

[Subject 1]: Yes. That’s where I do most of my work.

Welton: Do you feel your “real” job effects your playwriting any?

[Subject 1]: Oh, yeah. It just doesn’t give me the time I would like to have to devote to…but I’m going to retire in two years and I think after retirement I will have the time I need for it.

Welton: Can you think of anything else that might hinder your ability to work in the way that you would like for playwriting?

[Subject 1]: I don’t think anything else hinders the creative process.

Welton: How long would you say you’ve been writing plays?

[Subject 1]: I’ve been writing plays, probably, seven years.

Welton: What would you call your first success and when was it?

[Subject 1]: The first successful stage production…when or what?

Welton: Both.

[Subject 1]: It was just about seven years ago and it was a play called [title of play]. It was a historical drama.

Welton: Would you say you’ve changed styles at all or is it the same kind of work?

[Subject 1]: I think I’ve actually branched out into lots of different things. But I’ve gravitated towards full-length plays rather than one-acts. I just don’t have
an interest in one-act plays. But I do write… I started out mostly with historical dramas and now I’ve just gotten into more comedies.

Welton: Could you describe how one of your finished plays started from first awareness that a story was there through the process to the final? What kind of process do you remember yourself going through?

[Subject 1]: Yeah, although it varies from play to play. It also varies according to the type of play. If it’s a historical drama, obviously it starts with the notion of a real person and the events that happened in that person’s life. If it’s a comedy or fictional drama then it starts in different ways. Sometimes it’ll start with just a scene. Usually it’s the climax of the play I’ve found. So I just have a stageable scene in my head and then I will build the play around that one scene, and usually it ends up being the climax. A really explosive, stageable scene or stageable moment and then I’ll just build the play around that. And that’s usually how it works. Sometimes also I’ll think of a set. Just a set that would look really nice on stage and then I’ll build a play around that set. I had one script that I never finished but I’m half way through called [title of play]. I just thought a [name of place] would be a great set for a play.

Welton: How aware are you of these seed incidents that gave you that idea?

[Subject 1]: I’m aware of it everyday. I’m constantly thinking of new theatrical moments or theatrical settings I could use.

Welton: Do you find you come up with a lot of these before you pick one or do you usually go with one and then see…
[Subject 1]:  I come up with quite a few and I reject quite a few.

Welton:  Do you use any brainstorming techniques to encourage the development of ideas?

[Subject 1]:  No. Not for that. I do have a pretty pat technique for thinking of character names. That’s just walking through a cemetery. When I walk…I exercise, I go up a hill and go through a cemetery every day. So I look at the names on the headstones and kind of combine names and that’s usually where I find characters’ names.

Welton:  In the various aspects of playwriting, how would you…talking about your favorite or worst parts. Do you like the coming up with the idea part of it?

[Subject 1]:  Very much. Yes. I would have to say I enjoy writing historical dramas mainly because of the research. I enjoy the research for those.

Welton:  How about determining a purpose or message?

[Subject 1]:  I don’t write issue oriented plays at all. I really want to avoid them but as far as, if you’re speaking thematically, I am always conscious of some kind of theme that’s running in the background. I make a point of having, even in comedies, I want to make sure there’s a really strong theme so it’s not just a vapid fluffy comedy. That it really has some poignancy to it.

Welton:  Do you like reworking or refining the ideas or coming up with them more?

[Subject 1]:  I like refining. I like the polishing process. The actually creative process is difficult. It’s arduous. But once you’ve gotten a first draft I really enjoy the polishing process of getting the second draft, getting the third draft.
Welton: So, then you probably like the researching of the various elements or do you do that just because you have to?

[Subject 1]: I enjoy the research quite a bit but I also like writing just completely fictional, writing about fictional characters and fictional events because you just have a lot more freedom when you do that. When you’re writing historical plays you’re kind of ensnared in the facts and you sort of have to stick to them a little bit or your audience will rebel. So, you have to be kind of careful with one of those.

Welton: Compared to those aspects, the actual writing of it, do you like that more or less?

[Subject 1]: I like the writing a lot. I love working with words. I’ve always had a passion for words ever since I was a little boy.

Welton: Are you one that goes through and then edits or one that carefully goes through as you go along?

[Subject 1]: Yes and yes. I’ll write ten pages and then go back and do a little editing. Write ten pages, go back and do a little editing. I’ll finish an act and then I’ll really work on editing that act because I don’t feel that you can continue with the second act until I know exactly where the first act has been and where these characters are headed. I know a lot of playwrights will say that you’ve just got to zip through the whole play. You’ve got to write the whole thing in one mad dash and then you go back and start the editing process. But I just can’t do it that way.

Welton: Have you worked on the production of your work?
[Subject 1]: I’ve directed two of...no, I’ve directed three...four of my plays.

Welton: How does that compare to the other aspects of the process? Do you enjoy that?

[Subject 1]: I used to. I’m pretty much directed out. I’ve been directing for 28 years and I’ve had enough. I think I’m going to...I’ve started my own dinner theater and for the last three years I’ve directed in that but the restaurant just went out of business so I’m going to take the summer of and start to regroup. I directed two of my plays in high school productions. They were really successful. I had a good time.

Welton: How long do you usually think about a new idea before you begin to do the writing?

[Subject 1]: Ah. Weeks. Months. Rarely do I come up with an idea and start writing that week. It takes me quite a while for this idea to germinate. I’ll actually think of other stageable moments that revolve around the one central stageable moment. I do outline. Once I have...In fact I have software. What’s it called? It’s a software program that helps outlining...I use that and I’ll have pretty much all the scenes written out in this program before I do any script writing at all. And I’ve thrown a lot of outlines away that I just knew in advance that they weren’t going to work. I have outlines all over the place that just never amounted to anything. Then when I get an outline that I know looks stageable then I’ll go to the next step which is actually writing the script.

Welton: How would you overcome any blocks?
[Subject 1]: I don’t have any blocks. I’ve never had them. Although maybe some people would call them blocks. When I don’t feel like writing, I don’t write. I have to say that I have a hard time working on just one script at a time. I like to have multiple scripts going. If I get written out, when I get exhausted in one script, and that can be after two pages of writing, I’ll go on to another script or start reading, doing research for another play. So I give myself breaks constantly. I know the old adage, a writer writes everyday, but I don’t. I get tired if I write every day. I let ideas germinate every day and I open my mind to inspiration everyday but I don’t do actual writing everyday.

Welton: You said you use a computer program. Do you do any note booking or when you get the initial idea do you jot it down to keep it…?

[Subject 1]: I have a journal that I keep. It’s a 3-ring binder and I have one section that I call scenes. Just scenes that I think would be stageable. I have another section called characters and I just write down if I think of an interesting character or see an interesting character or a personality trait I’ll write it down there. Then I have another section of lines. When I hear a good line that I could use some day in some play I keep a log of those.

Welton: Do you have any rituals, or what you might call a ritual when you write?

[Subject 1]: No.

Welton: What time of day or activity do you find you get the most ideas?

[Subject 1]: Um, well, not night time. Morning or afternoon it really doesn’t matter to me. I have to write in short spurts. I have a hard time writing for more than
an hour. I have to take a break after that. Really, the time of day doesn’t
matter that much to me.

Welton: What would you say is the most inviting place for you to work…if you
could work anywhere?

[Subject 1]: It would have to be quiet. I need quiet. I think my office [at home] is the
best place. I have a boat also and I’ll go up on the boat also and write
there.

Welton: Have you tried collaboration?

[Subject 1]: Not really, no. I have an actor friend who was an actor in New York for
twenty years and he moved back here now. I consult him and he’ll read
through my scripts and give me ideas but that’s the extent of the
collaboration.

Welton: But otherwise you prefer to work alone?

[Subject 1]: Right.

Welton: What sort of strategies would you use to make sure your idea is finished or
gets produced?

[Subject 1]: I do outlining and I think if I am able to finish an outline it has a pretty
good chance of becoming a script. I enter contests and I see if I can get
something noticed by someone somewhere. So far, I’ve been pretty lucky
with that. I’ve never had a professional production. I’m having a college
production next fall. I’ve had some readings in New York and California.

Welton: What percentage would you say you finish of your projects?

[Subject 1]: I’d say probably 70 percent.
Welton: How do you know when a script is finished?

[Subject 1]: I don’t think it ever is, frankly. For me, right now, my finished scripts are ones that have just ran their course. I entered contests. Either they won a contest, got a production or are published now. And once their published, that’s pretty much it. You really can’t fiddle with too much. Most of my scripts are still in the process of being written. I think this is what separates this art from other arts. Every time it’s performed it morphs into something else. With every performance you can gleam ideas from it to change it or you know what works or what doesn’t work. I think that’s what makes playwriting a really dynamic art form compared to other art forms because it’s constantly changing every time it’s performed.

Welton: Are there any specific steps you take once you feel that the writing is as far as you can get it at the moment to move it on besides entering contests?

[Subject 1]: I send it out to theaters which I think is, pretty much at this point, a lost cause unless you know somebody. I think you have to have contacts in theaters to get theaters to produce your plays. Unless it’s received a lot of notoriety or it’s been published it is really difficult to have a theater take it because they have to access money and time and they don’t want to take a chance. I send plays to theatrical management companies occasionally and to other places that do readings like…I just had a reading at the Hudson River Classics, which is on the Hudson River obviously. I’ve had other readings at Cap21 and the Pulse Ensemble Theater. Once in a while you
will find theater companies that will do readings and those I try to get as much as possible.

Welton: Did you go out there to…

[Subject 1]: I go to all of them.

Welton: How about the local theater community? How would you describe that here?

[Subject 1]: I don’t participate in [name of company]. It’s a professional…well, it’s not an equity theater, but it’s a professional theater. But I am pretty much the high school and community theater person here. Then we have the college theater. [Name of college] and they are doing two of my plays in the fall.

Welton: Do you submit your own work or is it more someone else’s pushing or someone else’s actions?

[Subject 1]: No. I do it myself.

Welton: Have you received any awards?

[Subject 1]: Yup.

Welton: Been commissioned?

[Subject 1]: No. Never had that.

Welton: Have you tried anything specific to attract publishers?

[Subject 1]: I’ve published one play. I’ve gotten response from Baker’s plays but they haven’t actually published one yet. But I do send them out to publishers. It’s just a really long tedious process to get a response and to get action. I try.

Welton: If you had to choose one creative or artistic outlet would it be playwriting?
[Subject 1]: Yeah. I’ve tried so many and I think it is the one in which I excel. I can do lots of different artistic endeavors but this one I just seem to have a natural talent for.

Welton: What other areas of theater have you…you said you directed, and it sounds like you produce. Have you acted?

[Subject 1]: Oh yeah. I’ve done a lot of acting. Set building. I’ve designed and built sets.

Welton: Which of those is your favorite?

[Subject 1]: I think probably directing.

Welton: What do you think led you to become a playwright?

[Subject 1]: I think directing. Directing so many plays and my interest in the literature.

Welton: And why plays over other writing like poetry, short stories or novels?

[Subject 1]: Like I said before, I think they’re much more dynamic then the other literary art forms. For me when I started I wanted something I could stage, a piece of literature I could work with with my students. It served a practical purpose with my directing.

Welton: Did you have a mentor or an idol?

[Subject 1]: Yup. A high school director. He really…and he was my department chairman when I started teaching. So I started working with him immediately when I was hired as a teacher. So I directed with him. I built his sets for years. He was my mentor.

Welton: What do you think of this quote, “You can make a killing in the theater but not a living.”
[Subject 1]: Well for me, that’s true. I have to say. I’ve won awards, cash awards. But I certainly wouldn’t call this making a living. I eke out a few dollars every year but I haven’t made a killing yet. I think that’s probably true, if you can make a killing with someone else financing your production, especially in New York, you’re going to have a much greater chance of making a killing with the public. You have to win over the backers first before you can win over the public.

Welton: One more quote. “It’s generally conceded that playwriting is the most difficult form of writing.” Would you agree with that?

[Subject 1]: Not to me. For me it’s the easiest.

Welton: [Explanation of FourSight assessment cut] You’re top one is Developer and then Clarifier.

[Subject 1]: Right. I buy that.

Welton: Can you think of any examples, perhaps not even within playwriting, that you see that happening?

[Subject 1]: I think directing. Directing is an interpretive art. It’s not a creative art and I think just the act of my directing so many years makes me a Developer more than an Ideator. I mean, you have to come up with ideas when directing but it’s the implementation of the production that is the really tough part. That’s one that I do fairly well. So I think that’s probably where I get this profile.
Welton: The specific shape is called the Converger. “A very analytical approach to problem solving. A clear focus on thinking critically, scrutinizing situations closely, and evaluating information.”

[Subject 1]: Yeah. I’m organized. My wife complains about it constantly because she isn’t. But I’ve always been very meticulous, organized, that type of person.

Welton: What I had said over the email is that most of the playwrights have the exact opposite. That the Ideator was highest followed by the developer. Do you know of any other playwrights that you could compare yourself to?

[Subject 1]: I do.

Welton: Do you see a difference between yourselves?

[Subject 1]: I do. I do. I have playwright friends and actors who are playwrights who come up with ideas constantly and they always have scripts in the works and that’s about as far as they get. My attitude is that it isn’t a script until it’s been produced. So I keep at it until somebody produces it somewhere and if no one wants to produce it, I do.

Welton: Another interesting thing is that this [FourSight] shape seems to come up with historical plays.

[Subject 1]: Oh, I can see that because with historical plays you don’t have to come with the characters, you sometimes have to come up with their personality traits if not a lot of research has been done on them. But you don’t create
the characters so that Ideator thing would be lower then the other ones than in other plays.

Welton: Do you think you were drawn to historical plays?

[Subject 1]: The historical plays that I have written are all about characters I was fascinated with from the beginning even before I started writing plays. The last one I wrote [name of play], is about [personal name] and I read a biography of him about twenty years ago. His character always stuck with me. He’s the one who wrote the [name of book]. He was obsessed with words. It was an obsession. So I’ve always wondered about this guy and I finally wrote a play about him. They are ideas that have been in my head for quite a while.

Welton: That’s about all the stuff I have. Is there anything that you would like to add that you think would be relevant?

[Subject 1]: No. I guess not.

Welton: Thank you very much.
APPENDIX F: Transcript of Interview with [Subject 3]

Welton: Would you describe yourself as creative?

[Subject 3]: Yes I would.

Welton: How would you describe your playwriting? Would you consider it a full-time job, a part-time job, a hobby, or something else?

[Subject 3]: I would call it…First of all, I don’t like the word hobby. Hobby indicates something that’s done leisurely and when I set out to write something it’s a job. So I would pick a part-time job. Another word that I have toyed with is an avocation. It’s more serious to me then a hobby.

Welton: Would you say your real job effects your playwriting?

[Subject 3]: Yes.

Welton: How so?

[Subject 3]: First of all, with regards to character study, through my teaching job I come in contact with people all the time who are fodder for characters. For example, at one point I actually started to write a play about a young college professor trying to work his way into his first job and all the politics he encounters. I actually back-pedaled on the concept because it got to be too real. I was fleshing out something that hit way, way too close to home. I was also working out some issues at the time and playwriting was not the place in which to work them out but nonetheless a story came up in my workplace. I also find that the negative energy in my workplace is what often times leads me to write more positive stories. That it’s the negative things I see at my job. I have to say this, when I see the lives of
my students, especially some of their hardships, it’s those very hardships that drive me to want to write things that are life affirming. Some of the life stories that I’ve seen in my classroom, oh man, they’re heartbreaking. Some of the backgrounds I’ve seen are heartbreaking. Seeing the heartbreak and even some of the cynicism in the students I have, they’ve grown up in nothing but cynical circumstances, and so therefore their way of looking at life is through a very cynical eye, has driven me to want to write more life affirming stories in that sense. To show people there is another place you can go that’s uplifting.

Welton: Can you pinpoint about when you started writing plays?

[Subject 3]: Yes. Oh, absolutely. I had always had a love for theater. And always loved the aura of going into an auditorium and being on stage and contacting a live audience. I have always preferred that to film. I had the fortune to act in some film. To even write a couple of screen plays. And even though you feel a satisfaction walking away from doing camera work, there is something about live theater that is more satisfying. Getting a live reaction out of an audience to me is far more gratifying then the delay that I think is involve in film. So anyway, through the years that was always something that was appealing to me. When I got into undergraduate school at [name of college], in my first semester there I went to a meeting of what was called the educational communication division of [name of radio station] our FM radio station. They were asking for suggestions and the woman who was in charge of it was an upper level student. I believe she
was a senior and I was a sophomore. She asked us to write ideas down on 3x5 cards. So on my card I wrote, why don’t you do your own original radio plays. She came back to me and said, “Great idea. Do it.” She hurled it right back in my lap. I stood there dumb struck but I thought to myself, I have just been told to write a script. I had never tried to do this but I was very intrigued by the prospect of doing it. I loved writing and this was one kind of writing I had never done. So, I said, why not? I will try this. So, I wrote a two part radio play. An hour script which would be done in two weeks a half hour each week. It was a murder mystery because at that time I was deeply into mystery fiction. It was called [name of play]. What I did was set a murder mystery on the Ithaca college campus in a real dorm. [Play synopsis cut] So, I would have to say the situation I was in right away gave rise to the writing. There’s no doubt that where I was what began the play plus some suggestions from family and friends of, why don’t you use the real setting you’re in. So I wrote this play and the greatest irony is that in the dorm where I set the murder an assault of sorts happened not long after I wrote the play. The FM radio station came to me and said stop writing things that are so realistic and you’re going to have to go into much more fictional vein with what you write. But amid all of this I got hooked on the idea of writing scripts. I enjoyed sitting at the typewriter and writing on the pad and seeing something there was a great, I don’t know, there was a great rush in the conception of something and then fleshing the story out and then, I hate to say this, but being part of an
imaginary world. There was an appeal. I got hooked. At Ithaca I continued to do this all three years. I couldn’t get enough of writing my own scripts, doing my own casting. I worked for the AM station for that year. I got [name of play] on the air, then I wrote own called [name of play] which was a spoof of soap operas. Unfortunately, they didn’t like what I did with it and the play never got produced and I got fired from the FM station. Among the things I did in the play to be creative, I went back and extracted character names from the golden age of radio from real radio soap operas and fused them into my imaginary world. [Play synopsis cut] Needless to say, I got the boot, but the passion was still there. Later that year I landed with the AM station and the irony here is that I went for a job to write commercials and promos and they didn’t want me for that but the manager of the radio station said, “you’re not ready to take on that kind of a leadership responsibility with only a half of year in campus radio. But you know what, Marty? I love old time radio and I would love to see radio plays on this station.” So he gave me a slot to go back and write again. And with his backing and his support and his confidence in me I churned out what I thought were some really good scripts. Because he was more serious about me, I got more serious. I began to dig a little bit deeper into the depths of myself to find better stories. It was in that time period that I began to make the realization that no matter what, what you write comes from you. You can’t look anywhere else but inside yourself for the germs that are going to become plays. It’s no where else. That
would become a guiding light through the rest of my work as a playwright. And I would go on, by the way, for two more years I would write. Another year for [name of radio station] and in my senior year I went back and wrote plays for the FM station again. They thought that I had perfected my art enough that they took me back on again. The only bad part was they gave me some ungodly air times. For example, the last radio play I wrote we aired at six o’clock in the morning, when I don’t think anyone was listening. But the experience was worth it. Do you want to know one influence that came out of those years that was profoundly important? That was at Ithaca I had the privilege to take a television writing course. In that course we studied the works of Rod Sterling. Each week we watched an episode of the Twilight Zone and dissected it. I found, in that period of time, that it was so instructive to look at the work of other writers. Both at what they did well and what they did not do well. For example, one of the things that Sterling came right out and said he didn’t do well is he said, “I didn’t conceive female characters well. Well, lo and behold, we watched his work and sure enough many of his female characters were not good. They were weak. The male characters were far stronger. For some reason as a man, he felt more comfortable writing about his own gender. I never had that problem. I felt as comfortable writing men as I did women. In fact sometimes I found more intriguing possibilities in female characters, stepping out of my box. But studying another writer’s work I thought, at that time, enhances my creativity. As a matter of fact, my very last radio
play that I wrote in college was a Twilight Zone type episode that had come out of studying Sterling’s work. What was the original question?

Welton: Could you describe how one of your performed plays developed from the first awareness that a story was there to the finished product?

[Subject 3]: Ok. I’ve got a great one. [Name of play] was a play that came about as a result of an incredibly negative artistic experience that I went through. In 1990 I entered an original script I had written in a state-wide community theater contest run by the Theater Association of New York State. I wrote a play called [name of play]. [Play synopsis cut] I wrote the play and my previous theater company produced it. When we performed it on a local level in Tonawanda it played beautifully. If anything, of the two pieces I entered in this competition, it was the stronger of the two. The characters were deeper. What I was trying to dig into was deeper than anything I had written about to that point. [Play synopsis cut] Another part of me that came out of this play that has permeated my work ever since is the connection between man and God. It goes with my faith. The hand of God in our lives is a huge theme in my work. When the play went to the competition at least one individual ridiculed the entire central theme of the play. To make a long story short. When we took the play to the festival where it was staged, because my play was one of eight that was invited to a state festival in Corning, NY, whatever we had built that summer, something was lost in the energy. Whatever happened, the play was not the same when we got to Corning and I got torn to shreds by the way that I
was criticized. The judge who watched it did not like it. He basically, in his criticism, rewrote the whole script. [Play synopsis cut] The judge actually cracked some, what I thought were very nasty sarcastic remarks about it. He made a good part of the audience laugh and it was humiliating. All I can tell you is that when I left Corning I went through a bit of what I’ll call a playwright’s identity crisis, which is that I’ve now had a piece of my work completely torn apart. I have been humiliated in front of a convention of three to four hundred people. I don’t know that I can put pen to paper any more or go to the keyboard and write anymore because of what happened here. I began to have a lot of serious inner doubts. It took me several months to unravel everything inside myself and go back and look at that script after the emotion of the festival had worn away. I sat down several months later, reread it, and said, “Well now wait a minute. There is a lot of this that I still love that is still me that I still want to say regardless of what he thought.” That was one person’s opinion and obviously he didn’t connect with my message. And yet, as I looked at it, I said, “There is great value here.” When I read the ending I said, “Yeah, this really doesn’t work, but 95% of it does. One of these days I’ll sit down and rewrite it.” Well, I never did I went on to other projects. In my theater company we formed a repertory company and I did a lot of sketch writing and found that the comedic stuff I was writing really went over. To make a long story short, that episode of my life left an indelible imprint on me about the notion of criticism and how some criticism…the
way criticism is done is so key to an artist’s identity. So I had a theme. That was 1990. In 1994 I sat down and wrote an Oak Grove one act in which out of hibernation came this theme. Because all of a sudden…and as a writer I feel that a concept is not born until it is ready to. It doesn’t come out until it is prepared to. I think some sit in us and hibernate in us for a long time before they are ready. And it could be that we as writers are not ready to confront what it is we are going to write about. I maybe needed three or four years to heal from what I went through because there were other humiliations that day. I was secretary of that particular group. My play was the last one and then I had to run an annual meeting in full costume and make-up because I acted in it as well. And that just added to the humiliation factor. Four years down the road I think I was finally ready to confront the germ of this play and write about it. [Play synopsis cut] As writers I don’t think we can write plays in places that we don’t know. Neil Simon talks about when he wrote the play The Star Spangled Girl. He set the play in San Francisco and later on he would say, “I had never been to San Francisco. I didn’t know where these characters went when they walked out the door of their house and down the street.” And in fact when you read the play it sounds like he’s writing about two people in a city that is supposed to be San Francisco that feels a heck of a lot more like New York, which is his home. So, as writers I don’t think we can live away from our own elements. So therefore, I don’t think this concept emerged till I found Oak Grove. [Play synopsis cut]
Welton: What step of the process from the idea to the writing to the performance would you say is your favorite?

[Subject 3]: Oh, that’s a good question.

Welton: At the same time, think, what is the hardest for you?

[Subject 3]: I’ve got to tell you that one of my favorite parts is to take the finished script to the first reading. To hear it done. To hear life breathed into it for the first time. There is such an excitement and rush even though there is a risk that the life could be breathed into it and you could hear it and say, “That really stinks. That doesn’t work. Or what I thought looked good on paper sounds terrible.” I’ve had that happen where I wrote a play that I thought was really good and then when the actors breathed life into it there was something grievously wrong with it. One that comes to my mind is a play that [name of theater] ended up doing. My last full length play which was called [name of play]. That was one where I was again writing about…the germ for that was things that happened in my previous theater company. And when I first wrote it I had not distanced myself enough from what I was writing about. It was too close. The play itself was not ready to go. I had to go through another 6-7 months of rewriting before it was ready to go to the stage and I had to look at something that was too close to reality and say, “ok, what can I do to draw it more into my imaginary world? What theme am I truly trying to draw on?” It was the theme of a childish man in his 30s growing up. And when I found that the play rewrote itself beautifully and I still captured what I wanted to out of
the past. So, one of my favorite parts would be the initial reading. Second to that would be the staging. The hard part comes when the whole thing comes together and I have to say, “Is this too long? Have I over stated anywhere? Is there any place that I’ve got to cut? And If I need to cut, where should I cut?” It’s that all hard part of saying to yourself as much as I want to be madly in love with my words I can’t. As an artist my goal is to always make it better. One of the hardest things I had to learn, when I wrote at Ithaca I was in love with everything I wrote and I had not grasped the idea that writing is rewriting. Your best work is going to come out of the retooling part of it. I wanted to write the perfect script on the first bounce. What I still try to do on the first bounce, I am one of those writers that tries to write the best first draft possible. I’m not the kind who writes it and then refines, refines, refines. I want something at the get-go that is eminently very workable. And so, maybe that’s why my concepts take so long to be born. When I write it I want it…I want the initial draft to be good. So that everything else from there is refined even more so. I would have to say I do enjoy casting. Trying to find the right actor to breathe the right life into a character. There is another pleasurable part of this when I can find an actor who takes a character that I have written and moves that character to the next step. Last summer when we did [name of play], which I am proud to say of all my summer scripts is one of my favorites. The character of the teacher, who is at the center of this wild world around her, which is very much me at the center of my wild theater world. I wrote
the play and I knew that I wanted [personal name] to play that part. As I wrote it at the typewriter I saw her in the role. I had no doubt that I was going to go after her and do whatever it took to get her to play it. Luckily I knew that she was hotly interested because I had told her what it was and what I was looking at her for. Much to my delight, [name] took that teacher and took what I’ll call the clay I had given her and molded something out of it that was wonderful. She evolved things out of my clay that I didn’t think of but were perfect. Things that I wished I had thought of. I have to say that one of the things that we as playwrights need to think about when we put a script in the hands of actors is…well, what we have to hope for is that we’ll get an actor who sees the germ and builds on it. I’ve also had people take a character and they’ve gone off in a direction I thought, “where in God’s name are they going? This is not what I intended.” The character ended up changing dramatically and not being what I wanted him or her to be. [Name of person] on the other hand grabbed it and took several steps forward that were wonderful, that were things that absolutely made sense, made the character more full. It was wonderful to watch. I’d go home every night feeling so fulfilled at the life she was breathing into what she was doing. That is another favorite part of the process. I would have to say the hard part, again, is cutting and also when you have an actor who doesn’t seem to be on the same page as you with a character and it happens to be a person that no matter how much you want to bring him or her back to it it’s not in their realm to do that and
sometimes you have to give a character up in an initial production. You have to say, “that one is not going to be done quite the way I intended,” and you have to live with it. And that’s hard. I guess the only other thing that I would put into this is to say when you have to compromise something in your creation either because it is the way you have to stage it or it’s one of those things where you loved it, it looked great on paper, but when you got it on stage it doesn’t fit the quilt that you are trying to make. And it’s wonderful but out it has to go. I have heard pleasant stories where other playwrights have taken that square of the quilt, pulled it out, and it became a play in itself. So, if we as writers can see the value in that kind of moment when we remove something that has a life of its own and grows into something else it’s worth it.

Welton: It sounds like you don’t put too much effort into the germ. Is that true, would you say the germ comes more to you?

[Subject 3]: Yes. Although I have been trying more to put more into the germ. One of the things I am doing now as a writer is to keep a notebook and when a germ comes to me I write it down. Whether it is a germ for a play, a germ for a poem, a germ for a short story, I’m trying to do more with things in the germinal stage and one reason I am doing this is that I have had a number of wonderful germs that because I didn’t write it down, I lost it. And it was gone. I would sit and rack my brain for hours as to what was that germ. And, it doesn’t come back. So at one point I said, if I am going to be a serious writer I have got to discipline myself to put the germs on
paper when they come. And sometimes still I’ll pick a germ up off the page and, boom, something will create itself. But often times, no I don’t go out looking for something. I often times wait till I get it.

Welton: Have you tried any techniques to try to get something or have you just let them come to you mostly?

[Subject 3]: Well, journaling. I keep a regular personal journal and I’ll flesh out certain things that are going on and ideas come from that. Sometimes I’ll take a germ and write on that germ. Another process I use is free writing, where I’ll have an idea in my head and because the idea is foggy or fuzzy I just begin to write about it freely. For me, what it does is it takes something that is blurry and it begins to bring it into focus. I’m very much a true believer in the idea that an idea can change from our brains to where it lands on paper. It can evolve. You’re not going to get that evolution if you leave it up here in the brain to swirl. That at some point you have to pull it out and translate it to another surface. That happens often times in my idea notebook where I put the germs down. I’m working right now on an idea for a poem. [Poem synopsis cut] I don’t know where this is going to go. I don’t know what’s going to come out of it but it intrigues me. [Personal information cut] I use the free writing process often times to bring something more into focus or to plumb its depths more. Sometimes I’ll come up with a germ and say, “there’s more to this then that. I’ve got to get out the mental shovel and dig deeper to truly find what’s there or pan,
like a miner panning for gold, I’ve got to go deeper here to find what it is that I need to find.

Welton: So, in general what would you say you do with that seed then? How would you take that seed or germ to the next step?

[Subject 3]: I think oftentimes I try to flesh it out. I try to just go right into the process of writing the play or story.

Welton: Now you said, like how long, four years in some cases, how long do you think it usually takes?

[Subject 3]: Much less. I think that was an extraordinary one because of what, if I can put this, a trauma that theatrical experience was and how long it took to emotionally come down. I would say otherwise usually I get the germ and within days or weeks I’m trying to flesh it out.

Welton: Do you conduct any kind of research before you start?

[Subject 3]: Sometimes.

Welton: Do you enjoy doing that or do you do it just because you think you need to to make it more realistic?

[Subject 3]: I would say both. Sometimes the research needs to be done to make it more realistic. Sometimes I do it for the enjoyment. The research is a very interesting phase because it is not necessarily going to a library to look up a certain era. For example, with [name of play] it was driving down [name of street]. It was looking at this beautiful tree covered street and imagining [my character] living on it. Sometimes for me it is going to a location, sitting there drinking it in, imagining my story happening in that place.
Sometimes the research is very incidental. With a summer script that I wrote for the depot called [name of play] which was a Twilight Zone-esque play, which failed with regard to audience coming to see it. To this day, I don’t know why, but when I look back at it, it was a good script. One that I feel I ought to do again sometime. That play was born walking on the Lehigh Valley Memory Trail near the depot. As I walked out on the trail and as I was walking back I all of a sudden got this vision of a man walking next to me who came out of nowhere and visualized the idea that this man was from the past and as he walked with me we walked back in time. I imagined the tracks reappearing, the depot coming to life, trains and it all...the research happened because of a walk. It was not something I was thinking about until I took that walk. And yes, sometimes the research can be fun too. If I’m going to a certain location because I feel an inspiration and I want to try to push it to become, then going to a location where I’m feeling the germs of a story can hasten the process. I begin to see something when I’m in a physical place where a story would happen.

Welton: How would you overcome any blocks?

[Subject 3]: That’s a very good question. Blocks can be very scary. Free writing is one way. I think another way is to…since writing unfortunately is not what I do for a living, thinking about all that is going on in life that could be blocking the process. For example, right now I am entering the last two weeks of my semester at my college and I am in a flurry of paperwork, a flurry of grading, a flurry of being responsible to others. Today I stopped
for a second and said, “I don’t feel creative at all. I haven’t taken pen to paper in God knows how long.” But in the same breath I think, “that is because you’re in the heat of battle in your job.” I have to be of the right mind to be able to create and if I’m too stressed, too hurried, if too many other things crowd in the creative capacities the creative part is put on hold until I am ready to give birth again, if you will. Part of what I need to do to get beyond blocks is to clear away those things that are distracting from my ability to create. If the block happens to be with a certain piece of work...as with most writers, I have a tendency to start a piece and if it’s not...some point all of a sudden it will stall. I will have a germ that I’ve conceived only so far and for some reason it doesn’t want to go any further. For example, I’m walking around right now in my briefcase with an Oak Grove story with a fantastic beginning and for some reason it isn’t ready to go any further yet. One day it will. [Play synopsis cut] For some reason I can see the story but I can’t find the words to move it forward yet, but one day, gosh darn it, I will. When it’s ready. There’s some sort of a block there and I don’t know what it is yet. I guess I would say free writing, trying to clear my mind, reconnect with that which inspired me. For example, one of the most inspirational places for me is around the Williamsville Depot. I go there and I find Oak Grove stories. It’s as if Oak Grove begins to live there. That’s where it was born and where it continues to thrive. So I will return to a place that is productive for me. What I find happens when I go to the depot is I tend to pull in, park my
vehicle and when I get out I leave everything else out on the street and up
on Main Street. All of sudden I’m clear and the creativity comes. I’ve
found more germs for our summer shows just walking that path and sitting
by the building then anywhere else. And at times when I have faced the
summer and said, “Oh my God, I have to come up with a script,” my first
move is to drive there and to sit there or to walk there and sure enough it
happens. So, sometimes I think we need to go to a place that moves us out
of a block and I would have to say the other part is patience. When a
block…when I can’t seem to get out of a block I have to ask myself,
maybe now is not the time and involve some patience and say to myself,
“you know you’re a writer at heart. You’re going to get back to it. Maybe
right now it’s just not happening but it will.”

Welton: Can you work on more than one idea at a time?

[Subject 3]: Yes. It’s happening right now. I’ve got an idea for an Oak Grove story.

[Play synopsis cut] I finally said to myself, “[Name], you have to go back
to something you know about.” That has also broken me out of blocks.
The best place to go is back to what I know. From that I have found my
way out of blockages. When I went back and said, “who are you, what do
you know, what have you lived?” I’ve found my way out when I finally go
back to writing what I know it works. To get back to writing two things at
once, I found this one idea and then lo and behold I found another. I
started working on a [name of] story. [Play synopsis cut] This story
decided that it wanted to begin to be written during the Easter season. So
you know where this story was born? On a plane between Pittsburgh, PA and Orlando, FL. My wife to be was sitting next to me sleeping and I can’t sleep on a plane. So I pulled out a pad and I said, “darn it, I’m going to start putting the Easter story on paper.” And it was ready. And it came out. [Play synopsis cut] That’s been in me for years and this year it finally said, “I’m coming out.”

Welton: Would you have anything you would call a ritual while you write? Something you need to do?

[Subject 3]: Oh, yes. The very first draft of anything I write has to be hand written. I have to sit down with a pad, a spiral notebook, and I have to flesh it out by hand. The word processor part of it is usually the second step, because I don’t conceive well on an electronic machine. I rewrite well on it. So, my practice is to write the first draft on paper. As a matter of fact, when I write plays there is certain kinds of pads I like to write on and the pen has to feel comfortable in my hand. I can be, I almost want to say, very anal retentive at times about the conditions that have to exist before I can write. I played a little trick on myself on this trip between Pittsburgh and Orlando. I took a very small spiral notebook in which I’ve written some of my best [name of] stories and I took that with me and I said, “in that will go the Easter story.” Sure enough, I opened it and, “boom.” So by giving myself the palate upon which I do the best work, the work came out. I find that an interesting part of creativity, that as an artist I need the right conditions. I can’t just make it happen anywhere. I’ve also learned to
create those conditions so I go to work. I’m pleased about that because without that I don’t think I would produce.

Welton: What is the most inviting place for you to work?

[Subject 3]: That’s a good question. Well, the most inviting place has to be… I like to be alone. I like to be in a place where I can be isolated, though the irony is that I’ve written an awful lot of Oak Grove stories sitting in a Starbucks, sitting in a Tim Horton’s, but the isolation was being at my own table, usually off in a corner. I don’t know that I would ever make a very good collaborator even though with [person’s name] in my life she has begun to be… this is going to sound funny but she has begun to give me germs. She’s begun to make suggestions and I’ll hear them and say, “Yeah. That’s a great idea. I’ll use that.” But I have to be alone. I have to be in communion with the pad of paper in front of me. If it’s working with the word processor it’s got to be at a time of day when I can be totally alone, not be bothered. I find that I write the best in the evening and I’ve also trained myself during lunch hours at work is writing time. I’ve been able to produce some very good work at that time of day because I isolate myself. I usually don’t eat with anyone else. Often times I want to go in, get my food, eat and then leave. I have friends at work but they usually have schedules different than mine so I usually eat alone and that has become a very good creative time for me.
Welton: You just knocked off a whole lot of questions right there. Do you finish all of your projects or do you find that you start a lot more? What’s your balance of starting and finishing?

[Subject 3]: I have to admit that I start a lot more than I finish but I see a value in that because one of the things I also do is save everything that I start. From time to time I’ve written stories or plays where I’ve started and put it away, pulled it out and then saw how to finish it. I have a particular Oak Grove Christmas story that I wrote, where when I initial wrote it I was not thinking about Oak Grove and I wrote a first draft. It had a lot of holes in it. It wasn’t very good. Something that I had written in the end that I had wanted to be funny was tonally wrong. [Play synopsis cut] But it took almost two years to figure that out.

Welton: How do you know when a script is finished?

[Subject 3]: When I can take it no further. When it seems as though it has grown to where it is meant to go to. Sometimes I have had scripts where I’ve written them and gotten as far as they were meant to get, I’ve put them away and years later when I pull them out I see ways of taking them further. But in that stint of time they got as far as they were meant to go and that was it.

Welton: Now, on a different topic, have you entered contests, stuff like that?

[Subject 3]: Just…I think the main one I entered was the community theater competition back in 1990. 1990 TANYS festival. That was the only one I’ve ever entered. It was not a writing competition per se, it was really a
play staging competition. If I’ve been remiss in any way in my writing it’s not entering contests enough. On the other hand I want to enter contests that fit my work and where it’s going to be dealt with with care because the one lesson I was taught out of that Corning situation is that, you want to be careful and also I have to say that it came out of a playwright’s workshop I took in which my first full-length play was born back in the mid-1980s. You want to be criticized in a way that is constructive with someone who can understand where you are going as a writer. I think someone who doesn’t understand your vision is going to criticize you in a way that could be damaging. You want to work with someone with an understanding of what it is you are trying to do. When I’m asked to look at another writer’s work, one of the first things I do is to get on their wave length and not superimpose what I’m trying to do on what their trying to accomplish. I want to criticize them based on their premise. Not the way I think they should do it. When I get criticized I want to be criticized based on, ok take my palette and by knowing me and by knowing my goal, then criticize me and tell me what I need to do to fulfill my mission. Does that make sense?

Welton: Yes. Have you had your work done without your involvement?

[Subject 3]: Nope. Never have. I think I’ve always been involved.

Welton: If you had to choose one creative outlet would it be playwriting?

[Subject 3]: If I had to choose one creative outlet…

Welton: If you could only do one thing.
[Subject 3]: Wow, that’s a tough one. I’m right now in a transitional period. At this time in my life I would probably have to say no. I would probably choose short stories.

Welton: Ok. You’ve been acting, directing, producing, design, and stage work. You’ve basically done it all. Which is your favorite?

[Subject 3]: That’s a tough one. I would have to say the writing. I like the writing the best. A close second would be directing.

Welton: Just a comment on this quote, “you can make a killing in the theater, but not a living.”

[Subject 3]: That is a very interesting quote. I have heard it before. I think inborn into it is a bit of cynicism because we live in a culture that has programmed us into the notion that to try to make a living in an art form is impractical. My own feeling is that I think, and I think most playwrights you read about have been through this, you have to have another means of an income whether you like it or not to engage in your art. You have to be able to support yourself and trying to sell your writing is so risky and difficult that you have got to have some solid foundation upon which to stand and on the bottom line you don’t want to starve. I think you write better when you have some stability in your life. So therefore, I think many of us that do this are forced into doing other things. I’ve gone into teaching and I made a decision very early on going into my art form that I wanted stability of income and I made a decision at some point in life that I would be…my
train would ride on two tracks. That I would have a stable income that would allow me to create.

Welton: Another quote. “It is generally conceded that playwriting is the most difficult form of writing.” Do you agree or disagree?

[Subject 3]: That I would agree with very strongly.

Welton: How so?

[Subject 3]: Because you write a play and then if you keep the process traditionally, that is it goes from your hands as a writer into the hands of a director, the director than probably has a concept of his or her own. If you’re lucky you will get a director that is on your wave length and who is of the spirit that it is his or her job to take what you create and make it live. The problem is not all directors think that way. For example, the man that used to be the theater director at my college once said to me, “[Name], a playwright can not direct his own work.” Which I think is baloney. I think a playwright can. However, this man said no playwright can direct his own play. He needs a director…a director has to direct a playwright’s script because a director sees things a playwright doesn’t see like where the play needs to be cut. A director is not wetted to the playwrights language so therefore if a cut needs to be made a director can do that. And a director will know when something a writer writes is not stageable. His philosophy was that you had to have somebody who was a theater person critically look at the writer’s work and the way he treated it was that a playwright is not really a theater person. I say, “Bull” to that. If you know anything about the lives
of writers like Moss Hart and George S Kaufmann who were also directors, they wrote their own scripts. They collaborated at times. Then one or the other would direct and they were merciless to themselves. Matter of fact one of my favorite quotes is when George S Kaufmann in the eulogy of his partner Moss Hart’s funeral said, “if Moss heard this eulogy he would probably say it needs cutting.” They were tough on themselves. They would cut their own work so tremendously because they wanted to put on stage the most tightly wrought piece that they could so they became their own harshest critics, which I tend to be with myself. At some point in life I had an epiphany and I said to myself, “you really need to be your own toughest critic here. You really need, when you write, to go back and take the hardest look at your own work if you are going to be the best writer. You can’t be satisfied until you’ve done everything you can do, not only as a writer, but an editor with your own work.” And when I stage things it’s the same way. I’m always looking at, does this work? Is that too long? Will the audience start to squirm? Do lines have to be cut? I had a play once where one particular scene was literally a page too long. When I hacked that page out the scene was perfect. So, I think that a writer can direct his or her own work but that writer has to be…you’ve got to have a knowledge of your medium, which is theater. And you have to willing not to be in love with your words and to do what you know as artist is right.
Welton: [Explanation of *FourSight* assessment cut] You scored highest as a Developer. From what I’ve said, does that sound like you?

[Subject 3]: That sounds right.

Welton: Your lowest score was on the Ideator scale. Would you also agree with that one?

[Subject 3]: Sure.

Welton: Your second score was Clarifier. Does that sound like you?

[Subject 3]: Somewhat.

Welton: The pattern that you have is called the Converger. A very analytical approach to problem solving. A clear focus on thinking critically, scrutinizing situations closely and evaluating information. Does that sound like you?

[Subject 3]: That’s why I’m a college professor too. It all fits. That’s me. I have to tell you, when it comes to dealing with situations one of my favorite ways of problem solving is to sit down and write the whole problem out. Tell the story of the situation in order to see all of its elements. I’ve done that recently in my life with a number of things. I’ve done it when I’ve had problems in Theatre Williamsville to figure out what was going on. Or I was in a situation where there seemed to be a problem. What’s led up to it? I tend to be a person who likes to look at the whole picture and analyze how something is developed. So yes, that fits.

Welton: Anything else that you would like to add that you think is relevant?

[Subject 3]: What is the lowest one again?
Welton: The lowest one was the Ideator but it’s not that extreme, it’s only half a point away from the Implementer.

[Subject 3]: What’s interesting though, with finding the ideas being technically the lowest, what’s very very interesting about that is that I do find finding the ideas the hardest. When you made that comment early in this interview about oftentimes waiting for them to come to me, that’s often times the way that I work. I tend to be very much a writer who works by way of waiting for what inspires him. That’s very true. Part of that may come from the fact that the earliest creative writing I did was poetry. And ironically enough I’ve gotten back into writing a lot more poetry right now. And when you write poetry often times you can’t just all of a sudden say, “I’m going to write a poem.” Something has to hit you a certain way and you think to yourself…you feel a reason to bring it to paper. And I think that crept its way into my playwriting. I started writing poetry at the age of 13 and I’m now 44. I think this pattern is well engrained in me.

[Small talk cut] Can I tell you the most interesting remark I’ve ever heard by a writer about the writing process? You ever hear of a novelist by the name of Richard Bach? He wrote *Jonathan Livingstone Seagull*. He is one of my favorite writers. His philosophy of writing is a riot. He is a very good writer but in many ways he hates the process. He said, “I only write when I have to. When I get an idea that has to be written, I write it. Otherwise I don’t even like to do it and it takes me a lot to do it.” I find that very interesting. “I only write when I have to.” Sometimes it is like he
wrote because financial he had to and lo and behold there was an idea.

One of the few writers I know of that has openly said, “I really don’t like to write. I just happen to do it very well.” I love writing. I can’t imagine my life without it.

Welton: Thank you very much for the interview.

[Subject 3]: My pleasure. It’s been fun to go back in time and think about those episodes in my writing life.
APPENDIX G: Transcript of Interview with [Subject 2]

Welton: First, a little personal information, whatever you are comfortable with answering. Are you married?

[Subject 2]: No

Welton: What is your heritage?

[Subject 2]: My mother was German-Dutch my father was Polish-Jewish.

Welton: Would you describe yourself as creative?

[Subject 2]: Yes. Has anyone said no?

Welton: No. Have you done anything to increase your creativity or have you just accepted yourself as creative?

[Subject 2]: I had a playwriting class at U.B. and Manny Freid’s playwriting workshop. I would think that as far as formal training goes that would be it.

Welton: Would you describe playwriting as a full-time job, part-time job, hobby or how would you describe it?

[Subject 2]: I would describe it as a full-time job, but not, of course, to pay the bills.

Welton: What do you do for money then?

[Subject 2]: Other aspects of theater. Mostly technical work. Lighting. I also write reviews.

Welton: Do you enjoy that?

[Subject 2]: Yeah.

Welton: Do you do most of your work at home or do you have a place that you do your writing?
[Subject 2]: Mostly at home.

Welton: Would you say that your real job, the way you make money, influences or impacts your ability to write in the way you would like?

[Subject 2]: Sure. My work in theater ties together. That’s why I wanted to work in theater, to get an understanding of it. From the ground up, I generally feel that playwrights that don’t practically know the medium they’re writing about are pretty much useless. If you want to write about something you ought to know it from ever angle. I’ve been trying to learn as much as I can about all the parts of theater.

Welton: How many years have you been writing?

[Subject 2]: Wow. I guess I started in fifth grade. So, I don’t know, how old are you in fifth grade?

Welton: About 10.

[Subject 2]: Ok. Then this will make it twenty years.

Welton: When would you consider you had your first success?

[Subject 2]: Hopefully in about a week. But seriously, in about a week and a half I have the first full productions of one of my plays. Before that we had a staged reading of one of my plays back in February of 2002. That went very well.

Welton: Could you describe how one of your finished plays or finished projects went from the first awareness that an idea was there till the final steps?

[Subject 2]: I think it’s changed a lot as I’ve worked on it. I used to go start to completion in about 6 to 8 months now I go start to completion in about 2
years. Now I don’t start a new project unless I’m really convinced it has a lot of meat. For the amount of time I have to put in on it it’s just not worth it unless I’m really sure it will go somewhere. What I have been doing the last couple years is the longer process. Idea first occurs to me. I kick it around for maybe 3 or 4 months before I actually start writing anything down, because, like I said, I want to make sure it’s really got something to it. I play around with a lot of ideas then just decide they’re not going anywhere and just drop it. Or just put it on the back burner until something else comes to me to make it more. Then I finally start writing things down. I usually write a lot of it in my head before I actually write things down. If I start writing things down and it looks ugly on paper it really discourages me. I’ll just…if it’s not half way decent by the time I’m putting it on the paper I’ll scare myself away. I purposely try to work it out more before I start. That’s probably 3 or 4 months into it I start writing things down. In a sense I’ve already worked it out more. I think I do less drafts than a lot of playwrights do. Most playwrights I know do six or eight drafts before they even get anywhere close to a finished product. I usually do about 3 or 4 but there is also a lot of time between each one and a lot of writing in my head between each one. The one I’m working on now, the germ first occurred to me in September 2000 and I started writing it down in December of 2000. Then I workshopped it a couple of places and decided to do rewriting. I believe I did those rewrites summer of 2001 then I did more rewrites by the next winter 2002. Then finally declared it done
somewhere around January, February 2002. Then just had to find a place to do. I finally got that. Then we went to work on it. I don’t know if I’m jumping ahead of the plan by getting into that. But when we finally sat down to work on with actors. I had heard actors read it before, I had the staged reading before but…hearing actors read it over and over again is really what I would call…I err on the side of writing too much so I cut a layer off as I go. The rehearsal process has been a lot of cutting out those little chunks. You might call that another rewrite. The process I’ve gone through with that, I just, actually yesterday, put together my final version of the final scene. So I guess, in a way, you could say I only declared the process done yesterday and I started it three and a half years ago.

Welton: You said you play around with a lot of ideas. Does that mean that once you have the germ you play around with a lot of ways to work that or do you play around with a lot of germs?

[Subject 2]: Lot’s of germs. Yeah, I’ve got a high infectious rate. There are dozens of little premises that occur to me and if I think about them it just like, well that’s smart but it doesn’t really go anywhere, or that’s too obvious. It’s too obvious. That’s my usual grievance for ditching an idea. A lot of things I get into would require a good amount of research so it’s like, when I do the research I’ll consider it. I’d love to do a piece on [garbled]. But I wouldn’t contemplate trying until I read every play he’d ever written and read most of his poems. Like what I said about theater, you shouldn’t
write about it unless you know what you are talking about. I feel the same way about historical subjects.

Welton: Now, asking if you do or don’t like the parts of the process, how do you feel about coming up with the initial idea?

[Subject 2]: Oh, that’s a lot of fun. That’s the easy part.

Welton: Defining your purpose or message?

[Subject 2]: Usually I consider that part of coming up with the premise. I write a lot more [inaudible]. You’d probably call that my number one purpose. So it’s usually already there by that point.

Welton: How about researching? Do you like to do it?

[Subject 2]: When I get into it I love it but it takes me a while to get into it. It can actually get kind of frightening. I can vanish into the library for days on end and do nothing but just look up what ever the subject is. The play I’m working on now, it’s all about Buffalo history and the amount of Buffalo history…I ended up with a chronology at the start of the play that was four pages long that was only a fraction of all that I had found. When I get going on it I really do.

Welton: I’m trying to get the feel of what you’re saying. Is it not your preference and you’ve made yourself good at it or you just don’t like to get into it at first?

[Subject 2]: Once I get going it’s great. It is my preference except that life always gets in the way. Silly things like eating and doing laundry. When I get into it I forget everything.
Welton: How about working on and refining the idea? How do you like that compared to what we’ve already talked about?

[Subject 2]: Pretty much hate that. You’ve got to cut stuff that doesn’t really work even though you enjoy it. You’ve got to sit there trying to read something you know so well and trying to pretend you can look at it objectively. Trying to imagine what a company would see looking at it fresh. It’s really hard. If you let yourself you can spend an eternity just doing that. So, that is probably my least favorite.

Welton: How about the actual writing?

[Subject 2]: Writing is a lot of fun. That’s another one where I start and then look up to find, oh, it’s four a.m. How did that happen?

Welton: How about the final steps, getting it produced, getting it published, or getting it done?

[Subject 2]: Well, I really don’t have much experience there, like I’ve said. In general, I could say with all the stuff I do in theater, plays I’ve had stages reading of, and plays I’ve managed, there’s always some anticlimax. I really kind of hate praise. Other people don’t like it, and that’s no problem, and others do like it and they praise me, and I don’t like that either. That just makes me feel uncomfortable. So it’s kind of a no-win situation. The excitement of getting it out there.

Welton: Which do you find the easiest of all we’ve talked about or anything else you can think of.

[Subject 2]: Playing around with concepts. I could do that forever.
Welton: What do you struggle with?

Subject 2: Getting going on research. That’s a big one. Editing. Usually the biggest thing I’m torn between as far as letting go is, like I said, too much information or there isn’t enough. It drives me nuts both ways. I also write making a certain point. That’s another one that it’s hard to find a balance on. You want it to be clear but you don’t want it to be obvious and boring. I never feel like I have that balance right.

Welton: How aware are you of the seed incidents or do they just suddenly come to you?

Subject 2: I guess I’m pretty aware of them. Yeah, they stick out in my brain pretty clear.

Welton: Do you use any brainstorming techniques to help?

Subject 2: Pacing. I pace all the time. I have a kazoo and I don’t play it, I toss it up in the air and toss it back and forth. That’s my work procedure.

Welton: Of all the ideas you come up with what percentage would you say you use?

Subject 2: 0.5%.

Welton: Ok. Just looking at that 0.5%, what percent would you say you finish?

Subject 2: Well, in the last five, ten years I would say almost 110%.

Welton: For a normal play, that doesn’t require a lot of research, how much research would you do?

Subject 2: I usually get pretty detailed so I would say, I would say probably about 100 hours worth of research.
Welton: How do you overcome blocks?

[Subject 2]: I just wait them out. Yeah, sort of the downside of not having deadlines is that I don’t have much reason to freak out if I get stuck. So, yeah, I mostly wait them out. A lot of things can go wrong. A lot of things come to me in hallucinations and sometimes my hallucinations go away for…most frequently they went away for a couple years. It was actually quite frightening because I wondered when the hell they would come back. But they did and it’s amazing how clearly I do when they were back too. I always refer to them as…I have a whole compilation tape entitled demonic tunes which are things that remind me of the success. On the one hand the muses are great because they give you the sense of fulfillment but on the other hand they are horrible because they just ruin your life. They suck up any resemblance of a normal life. It’s all about serving them. You can serve them for months at a time and not have anything to show for it. At this point I forgot what the question was.

Welton: About dealing with blocks.

[Subject 2]: Oh yeah. The biggest block I had at the recent time, my hallucinations left me for a long time. Eventually they just came back. I think…well, I don’t want to sound wholly insane. But I think there are just things they require to be around. First, exhaustion, physical and mental. I guess another, I would say, is travel. General exasperation I would say would be the number one. The only things I’ve found that get me out of funks are accidental and not things I consciously do.
Can you work on more than one idea at a time?

Just playing around in my head, sure. But writing, no. I have to devote myself to one.

Do you use a notebook or any kind of notating…

Usually I’ll do outlines. I do a lot of outlines. I guess that I hold off for a long time from actually putting any writing on paper – dialog on paper. But I’ll make outlines fairly early on in the process.

How do you capture all the germs? Do you use anything to do that or do you just let them float around a bit?

How do you mean?

The initial ideas for a play. Do you do anything to capture those?

I usually…actually, I kind of figure, well, if I forget them they weren’t all that good anyways. I may be totally wrong. I may have forgotten the best ones, but I’ll never know, so…

Do you have any rituals while writing?

There are times…usually I don’t listen to anything while I’m writing but…especially for editing. I have a compilation tape of demonic music that is specifically for that, to give me energy while I’m getting through that. Energetic music.

Do you have any rituals while writing?

Is there a time of day that you get the most ideas or work done?

My biggest inspiration is at night in the winter. The whole thing about overcast, snow on the ground, the little bit of light refracts everywhere, just makes a blue wash and I find that really meditative and a good place
to turn inside the mind and think about things. So much so that I’ve even thought about moving to Alaska for the three months of darkness because I’m convinced I could do an incredible amount of writing there. What I generally find is I can write on a yearly cycle because usually in the Fall I get this kind of energy that comes to me in the Fall. Like the chipmunks burying away their nuts or whatever, stocking up for the cold months ahead and I usually in that energy come up with some bad ideas and then usually by the time of winter and the darkness I can take those little possibilities and start sitting down and actually try to write the stuff. Then hopefully if I got stuff done in the summer I can go back to living in the day light. I used to be a night time cab driver. There would be times, especially during the winter where I would come up with a lot of good things.

Welton: Do you think you came up with those things just to keep your mind busy while doing that?

[Subject 2]: Well, actually the reason I went into cab driving is because I wanted to write a play about cab drivers. I was already in playwriting by then. It kind of helped me find a time of day when I could think about these things. It also helps take away your will to live. So it’s sort of a mixed blessing. I finally finished my play about cab drivers four year later.

Welton: How much time would you say you devote to writing a play on average?

[Subject 2]: If I have a plot to write I’ll devote weeks or months to write it. Some of the ideas I get sick of them and I don’t want to write at all.
Welton: I know I already asked about the rituals but is there any special thing or special way or place you need to write?

[Subject 2]: I envy people who have a study or a studio to work in because it is easier. I just have my living room and it’s hard to set aside…especially with my dog. He doesn’t understand, “I know you see me sitting here, but I’m actually at work.”

Welton: What is the most inviting place for you to work if you could have any place?

[Subject 2]: Wow. On an ideal level I would probably have some loft somewhere downtown with a really swanky heating system. I guess that would be it. Or like I said, going up to Alaska.

Welton: Have you tried collaboration or working with others?

[Subject 2]: I have. Part of the excitement of playwriting is very intricate plot lines that revolve around a lot of twists and sudden shifts and surprise ending type of things. It’s very hard to make people understand what it is before it is completely written. So the only way to collaborate with someone would be to completely write the play…and then what do I need them for? Yeah, I worked with [name of person] a year ago. Doesn’t really matter what the project was, but I was sitting there saying, “Yes, then we can be in 1913 and then we can flip forward to 1958. Where he would say this…and then we can flash back to…” They just had no…it they had been able to see my vision they would have loved it, but, you know, trying to explain it
they just had no idea. They were just like, “yeah, why don’t we just stay
with one time?”

Welton: What kind of work would you say you do? What kind of genre?

[Subject 2]: You know, I used to call myself a neo-socialist realist. Now I might call
myself a neo-neo-classicist. I could go on a long time about this if you
want. [discussion on theater styles cut]

Welton: How do you know when a script is finished?

[Subject 2]: The computer breaks down. No. I think most playwrights say that it is never
finished. Mainly, there’s a point when I find myself, when I can get up
every day and change a little bit, change a little bit, change a little bit but I
feel like I’m spinning my wheels. Then I really feel it’s okay to have a
staged reading. Then I feel after a staged reading, I get as much feedback
as I’m going to get, I have a general idea of what other people are saying.
You find out which section of the audience I’m going to disappoint,
because no play ever satisfies everybody. So you just have to make
decisions. The fun part is that you can always go back and disappoint the
other part of the audience.

Welton: Have you won any contests?

[Subject 2]: Yes.

Welton: Do you submit your own work is it more on the encouragement of
someone else?
[Subject 2]: I’ve done it all myself. My dream is to find a girlfriend who will push me to do these things because I don’t do it nearly enough. So, if you know anyone.

Welton: Have you had any productions without your involvement?

[Subject 2]: Actually, there was a play I wrote in college, a short. I was supposed to be involved in production with that but then I was arrested in a protest in Albany and I didn’t come back for a few weeks. So it was accidentally without my involvement. I didn’t even get to see the final show. I hear it went very well. They were all offended I wasn’t there, but I really tried.

Welton: Have you ever been commissioned?

[Subject 2]: That collaboration I mentioned, we were asked to do that by [name of theater company]. It didn’t go so well, us all trying to collaborate, but…

Welton: Have you done anything else once the play was performed? Like publishers, etc.

[Subject 2]: I’m now in the process of directing and producing my own show but in terms of having an agent or something, no.

Welton: If you had to choose only one creative outlet, would it be playwriting?

[Subject 2]: Yes.

Welton: What other areas of theater have you participated in? I know you’ve been a director, producer, publicity, have you done any acting?

[Subject 2]: Actually, acting is the one part of theater I don’t want to touch. Like, they’re the puppets that other people are pulling the strings for, so I haven’t done too much of that. I’ve done stage management. I’ve done
lighting design. I really, probably, other than playwriting the thing that I really enjoy is lighting. It’s different because you are dealing with physical things and the certain laws of physics. It’s not like the psychology of directing or the second guessing of playwriting.

Welton: What do you think led you to playwriting?

[Subject 2]: I have a lot of philosophies about why playwriting is the art form for me. I think that a problem with the way our society works is that it is constantly keeping people away from one another. You can do bla bla bla in the comfort of your own home. Good, now you don’t have to go out and be around other people. Something I really like about theater is that it forces people to all get together in the same room and, unlike film, it has the possibility for interaction between the art form and the audience. It’s a collaborative art form. In film the guy who does the editing controls the whole thing and the guy who does the editing may never meet the guy who does the cinematography or the guy who acted in it. Theater is completely the opposite. You are all working together. The societal thing is better to work together than to work in separate little alleys. So, I have all these philosophies and also, if you really want me to get philosophical…But I don’t really know if any of that is really the reason why I write plays.

Welton: Have you tried other types of writing?

[Subject 2]: Well, I’ve done journalist writing, reviews and stuff like that. I’ll always see myself as a theater person writing for the paper and not a journalist
who writes plays. I don’t feel like I’ve really tried journalism. I feel like my brain can only devote a certain quota of itself to putting printed words on a page. So, I get really frustrated writing reviews because it’s that much less time I can devote to writing plays because after a while my brain is like, “go play volleyball.” But, I guess that would be the only…I have done political essay type writing, if you count that. So, other than that no.

Welton: Did you have a mentor or idol?

[Subject 2]: Sure. Do you mean on a personal or artistic level? I can name a lot of them. On a personal level, people I have known, Manny Fried has been an inspiration to me and he might be the only one I could personally name.

Welton: Could I get your response to a couple quotes? “You can make a killing in the theater but not a living.”

[Subject 2]: It’s funny. You can’t make a living in the theater as a playwright. Only one playwright in the world’s income is solely derived from playwriting. That might not even be true anymore. I feel like it’s something you do just because you have to. Nobody in their right mind would do it.

Welton: [Explanation of FourSight assessment cut] Your highest score is Ideator, which is actually the highest possible score and your lowest score is clarifier. From what I’ve said, does that seem to fit you?

[Subject 2]: I do do a lot of research, but not in an analytic kind of way. Much more haphazardly.

Welton: I notice that the other three scores are all down at the same basic level. Do you really think that coming up with ideas is that much stronger in you?
[Subject 2]: Yeah. If anything I would keep that up and move the Implementer score way down. That’s my biggest criticism of myself. I have trouble doing it myself. See, I’m waiting for this girlfriend to come along and do it for me. Yeah, I guess that would be my only change.

Welton: Of the people that have taken the test a majority have Ideation as their highest point. The common shape is high Ideation and Implementation. Which would seem to imply is that they come up with a lot of ideas and spend less time in development. Do you see anything like that in the other playwrights you know?

[Subject 2]: Sure. Not to sound like an asshole saying it, but I do feel like a lot of people are too quick to throw their stuff out there without enough development. They don’t develop their stuff as well as they should. Not that I’m that much better.

Welton: Those are the basic questions that I have. Is there anything else you can think of that would be helpful to know about you and your playwriting?

[Subject 2]: Actually, I’m not from this planet. No, not really.

Welton: Okay, well thank you for your time.
APPENDIX H: Transcript of Interview with [Subject 5]

Welton: I’d like to start with a little personal information. Please feel free to answer only what you feel comfortable answering. Are you married?

[Subject 5]: Yes.

Welton: Do you have any children?

[Subject 5]: Yes. One.

Welton: Does your child live at home?

[Subject 5]: Yes.

Welton: Do you think that interfered with your ability to write in the way you wanted?

[Subject 5]: No.

Welton: Would you describe yourself as creative?

[Subject 5]: Definitely.

Welton: Would you consider playwriting a full-time job, part-time job or hobby?

[Subject 5]: I really have three jobs. I do freelance writing for industrial companies that hire me to script materials for corporate presentations. For example, I’ve done speech writing for business meetings, video scripting for modules at sales meetings, product reveals, sales training, annual gatherings, brochure composition, web text composition, fundraising letters and public relations materials. Then I also do playwriting and run the [name of theater], which is a non-profit organization dedicated to the development and production of new American plays. We run a weekly workshop composed of a staff of seven playwrights and 45 actors and
directors. Playwriting also encompasses the marketing of my plays. Then thirdly, my wife and son are both full-time commitments founded upon a deeply and undying love.

Welton: Do you work at home?

[Subject 5]: I work at home and also in my office. My playwriting is done very early in the morning before my wife and son are up, then when I go to the office, if there is any time from my corporate work during the day, I do more playwriting.

Welton: Does your corporate work interfere with your playwriting?

[Subject 5]: Generally not. There are times, not in the current economic climate, when I have an overload of corporate work and I don’t get as much time as I would like to devote to my playwriting, but I always do that creative writing in the early morning so I am in touch with a theater project at least once a day. Additionally, I was concerned many many years ago when I first started writing corporate materials that it would compromise my creative writing. Conversely, what I’ve found is that the playwriting enables me to bring a creative twist to my corporate work and the corporate work ha trained me to focus more succinctly on what I’m after in my playwriting, to focus more clearly on my character’s objectives.

Welton: Can you think of anything else that might not allow you to write plays the way you want to?

[Subject 5]: Not really.

Welton: What part of the creative process do you find the easiest?
[Subject 5]: Nothing comes easy in the creative process but I suppose that relatively the easiest part is when I’m writing and enter the zone. Meaning, I get on a writing roll and become completely unaware of the time passing and totally absorbed with the words and ideas pouring out of me without any thought involved. I’ve heard other writers, musicians, etc. describe it as feeling as if you are a conduit for creativity to flow through you and I could ascribe to that. The writing becomes easy because it seems to be happening of its own accord without effort or thought. Needless to say, it doesn’t happen all the time. I’d say, in general, the Edison quote is applicable to the creative process. “Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration.”

Welton: What part of the creative process would you say is the most difficult for you?

[Subject 5]: Most difficult part of the creative process is trying to discern what the core issue is in a play I’m developing. While I know what I’m writing about, the topics, subject matter, characters, themes, even the structure and style appropriate to the play, it takes a good long time for me to be able to state, to my own satisfaction, what the core conflict is at the center of the play. In other words, who wants what from whom and why. I suspect this is because developing a character is something that evolves over a period of time and rarely springs onto the page without a great deal of thought and musing on the “supposes.” Certainly, after the play is completed the
marketing process, which is another form of creativity, is also high on the list of playwright difficulties.

Welton: Could you describe how one of your finished works developed from the first awareness that a story was there to the finished product?

[Subject 5]: A play of mine called, [name of play], started when my step-son was an adolescent and having a difficult time with his mother and myself. I attempted to interest him further in a curiosity about chess and took him to a game room in our neighborhood. It was up a flight of stairs and the décor, or lack of same, was from another era. A smoke-filled room with hissing radiators and a dozen elderly gentlemen sitting around and playing cards, backgammon and chess. I knew immediately that this was a setting for a play. When I realize that several members were Jewish and had leftist leanings, I thought that might prove valuable. I started with a premise of, what if one of these impoverished, elder Jewish gentlemen was a staunch Marxist and suddenly won the lottery? I wrote several scenes of that play and had he and his friends offended by a street-walker who plied her trade in the area. It didn’t work so I put the play in the drawer for several years. When I took it out again, I threw away the streetwalker and the lottery and wrote a play about a street-wise young girl coming to the store in an attempted robbery because she was being chased by a Russian thug to whom she owed money. The older Jew with a Marxist outlook is confronted with the pragmatism of a young girl who will not wait for the fall of the capitalist state. They soon find they share
another person in common and the mystery begins as to what happened to that person. After that, there were revision after revision, more revisions after public readings, more revision after a production and revisions, smaller ones, to the present day.

Welton: Do you complete every play in the same way or is each play different?

[Subject 5]: I think I complete every play in pretty much the same way. Meaning, I stay with it everyday, refining it, asking the hard questions about what is working and what is not. Continual refinement until the music of the play flows and it feels seamless. In short, constant writing and working at it until satisfied.

Welton: Do you come up with a lot of ideas before you pick the right one or do you work until one idea is just right?

[Subject 5]: I have a notebook of ideas and scene possibilities as well as some plays that I’ve started, came to an impasse and then put them in my drawer. Years later I may pull them out to work on again. How I pick which of those ideas to follow through on and devote a year, two or more of my life to, really depends upon an instinctual hunch. It’s not an exact science by any means, but I’ll look over a couple of dozen ideas, narrow them down to half a dozen and then stare into space for a while. Soon enough, either when I’m thinking about it or thinking about something completely unrelated, I’ll realize there is one project that is demanding my attention, arousing my curiosity and compelling me to go down that road. After I’ve decided on one play, idea or topic I generally stay with it until I’ve
completed it to my own satisfaction. That’s the other piece of working until one idea is just right. The idea is only the seed. How it will grow is beyond my capacity to know. The play concept I’d originally intended or was intrigued with may morph into something entirely different by the time I’m finished.

Welton: Do you have any brainstorming techniques that you use to come up with more ideas?

[Subject 5]: If you’re referring to large ideas, as for a play, no I don’t brainstorm about that. If you are referring to techniques for re-conceiving a scene or character because the current incarnation is not working, then yes. First, the 180 degree approach in which I have the character radically change his or her objective. For example, if Alex wants to seduce Jill and she’s not willing, and the scene is not gelling I try writing the scene from the point of view that Jill wants to seduce Alex and he’s not willing. Another technique for a form of writer’s block is to simply write prose as opposed to dialogue about my thoughts on the play, a character or a scene. Attempting to find what I’m after by writing stream of consciousness sometimes helps. I will also speak my difficulties with a character or scene with a trusted playwriting colleague to see if I’m overlooking an angle or getting in the way of myself without realizing it. That helps for clarity also. Then the last resort…throw the writing into a drawer for a couple of days and work on something else to see if it will appear solvable when I return.
Welton: How long do you usually think about a new idea before you begin to work on it?

[Subject 5]: Depends what is meant by “think.” I believe plays are sitting inside me for years and even decades awaiting the right time and place to surface. I usually start consciously thinking about my next project when I’m three fourths of the way toward the finish line of a current project. From the perspective, I suspect I cogitate on a new project for a few months before sitting down to write it. Maybe make a few notes along the way.

Welton: How much research do you do before you begin writing?

[Subject 5]: Depends entirely on the play. Where and when it is set. Some plays I do almost no research at all. Others, like the one I’m working on now that takes place in 1955 and deals with a woman who has contracted [name of medical condition], I do extensive research to understand the period and the technicalities of a medical condition, as well as personal accounts of the [name of medical condition] experience. Research is vital to some projects and unnecessary, or at least minimal, for others. Like the [name of medical condition] play. It requires a fair amount of research because it’s vital that I get the details correct about the time period, meaning the cultural, political and economic milieu. I also need to understand the mechanics of the disease and how it affected diverse groups differently. In a project of this sort, research is mandatory for me. A few years ago I wrote a play that is based on my own adolescent experiences and so the amount of research I needed to do was very small. Oh, a few factoids
about the era were important and I needed to look them up but not the same as reading scores of books for background materials as I am doing for the play dealing with [name of medical condition].

Welton: You mentioned an analogy of building a house. Is research important to the foundation or are there other elements that are important to that foundation?

[Subject 5]: Yes, when researching is necessary I believe that it adds to the foundation but that’s not exactly what I mean when I’m referring to the foundation. For me, that foundation are the knowledge of the characters, not intellectual knowledge but their voices, and some kind of vague idea, in the beginning, of what issues I’m attempting to tackle with the play. In a reductive way, what the play is about, which means defining and redefing the essential core conflict between the main characters. This search goes on through the project but the foundation becomes clearer and clearer as the writing progresses. Then, once that is defined, the rest of the house, detailing plot and events, usually goes fairly quickly. Research can help build that foundation, but isn’t always necessary. Doing research can sometimes trigger new creative ideas. For example, in researching the play about Polio I communicated with a number of people who had been through the ordeal at the time period. Their personal stories gave me ideas for my characters. So the foundation is crucial and can include research but not necessarily.

Welton: Do you enjoy doing the research?
[Subject 5]: Most of the time, I do. There are moments when I’m pouring through material and I wonder if I’ll ever put it to use and if it’s relevant to what I’m writing but ultimately, everything I read affects what I write. The large percentage of the time, though, I’m fascinated by what I discover during the research period.

Welton: Do you have any rituals while you write?

[Subject 5]: Aside from praying, I don’t have any rituals per se. I do find that I’ll generally nibble on some non-nutritious substances such as pretzels, crackers, anything that won’t spoil my appetite. Years ago, it was problematic for me to write when the area where I was working was unkempt or a mess. Now, that doesn’t concern me so much. Sometimes when I get stuck I can lie on the floor, close my eyes and place a blanket or cloth over my eyes, relax my muscles and let my mind wander. But I’m not certain it enhances my creativity.

Welton: What time of day or activity do you find you get the most ideas?

[Subject 5]: Every morning from four to five at least. Then I’ll grab an hour or so during the day and another hour or so in the evening after putting my kid to sleep. When do I get the most ideas? I don’t think there’s a pattern. In some ways I’m more able to focus early in the morning because there are less distractions, my mind is fresher and there seems to be more instinctual writing. Perhaps I’m more able to take chances at that hour, but it’s really not all that significant. I get good writing done at all times of the day. I do come up with some interesting thoughts and solutions in that time just as
I’m falling asleep at night. That is a moment when some creativity coalesces.

Welton: How much time is devoted to writing each day?

[Subject 5]: At least one hour. Generally two to three and on a good day four to five hours.

Welton: What is the most inviting place for you to work?

[Subject 5]: In a log-cabin-type ranch house on a bluff on the coast of Maine overlooking the ocean through an enormous bay window, listening to the crashing of waves, while a gray sky consists of went foggy clouds rolling out to the ocean. Except for the wind, it’s quiet. There’s a crackling fire in the fireplace, a wood-burning stove brewing a large pot of tea, and the day stretches out in front of me. Seeing as how I don’t have access to anything like that, the most inviting place for me to work is anywhere that I won’t be disturbed.

Welton: What steps do you take once the initial writing is finished?

[Subject 5]: It depends upon what you mean by initial writing. If you are asking about finishing a final draft, there’s still a great deal of creative writing to do. Many more drafts, readings with feedback and critique, more rewrites and so on. If you mean what do I do once the play is in a condition that I’m ready to share it professionally there are several steps I take. Certainly, having a public reading for audience members who are not in my artistic inner circle to get an audience response is important. And the marketing. That includes entering all play contests that are appropriate for the play.
sending one-page queries to regional theatres and artistic directors here in New York city as well as attempting to contact actors of note who might be compelled by one of the leading characters to take an interest in the project. Meaning, helping to advance it to production.

Welton: What sort of additional strategies do you use to make sure an idea goes from concept to completed project?

[Subject 5]: I think I’ve covered most, if not all, of my strategies.

Welton: Do you finish all your projects or do you start a lot of projects that you don’t finish?

[Subject 5]: Generally I finish all of the projects I start. Rarely, I will hit a road block with a play and put it in the drawer until I pull it out again. The longest a play, which has been written, or at least a portion of the play, has sat in one of my drawers is probably 10 to 15 years but that’s the exception. This is different from ideas for a project which can be notes for a play, up to ten pages or so, that remain in a notebook of mine, there are literally dozens of these, for years and years.

Welton: What type of style do you usually create?

[Subject 5]: My playwriting is based on character. I don’t believe in plotting a play. The longer I work on a play, the more I get to know and understand the characters I’m dealing with and they determine where the play, ultimately, is going to go. I favor dramatic comedy, which means, once again, that the humor, as well as the drama, is driven by character. I don’t attempt to write funny lines. They are lines that are determined by character need and
desperation. I favor well-constructed plays. Plays that follow the unities of Aristotle whenever possible. Not to say that all my plays are well-made because some of them have entered into ritualistic and nonrealistic and theatrical realms. But even in those cases, there is a beginning, middle and end to the central conflict and it follows to a resolution and denouement.

I’m a big believer in the axiom that, “in order to break the rules, you have to follow and understand them religiously.” My plays have all taken place in the 20th and 21st century and are generally American whatever their locale. Some have a nonfictional basis and some are purely fictional.

Welton: How do you know when a script is finished?

[Subject 5]: A script is never finished. Each production enlightens me to new aspects of the play and generally will elicit a change of a line or two here and there. During the writing process the only way I know a play is completed to the point where I’d believe it’s ready for production is if my gut instincts, dependent upon self-honesty, tell me so. That being said, my gut instincts rely on the following: Feedback from the Harbor Theatre Workshop, feedback from trusted playwright colleagues and friends, and audience feedback from public readings.

Welton: You say that you’ve entered the plays in contests. Have you won any?

[Subject 5]: Yes, many. Some of which even carried cash prizes with them. Some have readings and/or productions connected with them.

Welton: Did you submit your own work or do you have someone who either does it for you or encourages you to do it?
[Subject 5]: I submit my own work. No one encourages me to submit.

Welton: Have you had your work performed without your involvement in the production?

[Subject 5]: Yes, I have.

Welton: Have you been published?

[Subject 5]: Yes, I have.

Welton: If you had to choose only one artistic outlet would it be playwriting?

[Subject 5]: Yes.

Welton: Why playwriting over other forms of writing?

[Subject 5]: It’s the most challenging in terms of restrictive format. Structure, Aristotelian unities, keeping an audience’s attention for two hours, no expository language, etc. Also, it combines a solo artistic creativity and a collaboration with fellow artists conceiving and mounting the production and also a synergy with an audience. I’m a stronger dialogue writer than I am a prose writer. And also because it appeals to my essentially dramatic personality.

Welton: What do you think led you to become a playwright?

[Subject 5]: I started as an actor and found the life too creatively restrictive. I could wait for an audition, wait to get cast and then find that I wasn’t crazy about the script, or possibly the director and so I wanted more creative control. While I’ve been writing since I was very young, I started writing plays seriously when I was living in Los Angeles and between jobs. I needed a creative outlet and started to discipline myself to write every day.
From then on, when I didn’t write, I felt there was something missing.

Simply put the creative writing helps keep me sane…most of the time.

W: Did you have a mentor or idol in playwriting?

S5: No. I learned about playwriting by reading about five to ten plays every single week for at least a decade. All kinds, modern, classic, American, European, Eastern, you name it. As for an idol, I admire a great many playwrights for their individual strengths. Sophocles for tragedy, Miller for his commitment to social issues, Williams for his poetic language and on and on.

W: What other areas of theater have you participated in?

S5: I was an actor and I still do a fair amount of directing. In running the [name of theater], I’m also called upon to do a decent amount of producing including a large amount of publicity, marketing, audience development, etc.

W: What do you think of the quote, “you can make a killing in the theater but not a living?”

S5: I think it’s quite accurate. The number of people who actually can support themselves in the theatre is miniscule. The number of playwrights is probably even less. On the other hand, any kind of achievement is that much sweeter as the road has been longer and more arduous.

W: [Explanation of FourSight assessment cut] You scored evenly across all four scales with Clarifier being your lowest by three tenths. Do you think this reflects you?
[Subject 5]: Yes, it sounds as if the scores reflect my particular personality.

Welton: From your experience with your workshops and theater can you give any insight into the process of other playwrights that you have seen?

[Subject 5]: My only comment is that everyone works differently. There is no one right or wrong method to playwriting. I think they are equally valid depending upon the person. The ideal is to find the methodology which works for you, use it and continue to incorporate new ways of working to modify and improve your own way of writing plays. One of the best attributes of the collaborative creative process of the theater is learning from artists with whom you are working. Growing from the interaction with other people and their ideas. Simply put, you can’t get better at playing tennis if you don’t have a partner who is going to challenge you. And of course it depends on the project. Some plays write themselves, others are more of a struggle and one has to use all kinds of tricks to get the characters to express their voices and objectives.

Welton: Can you think of anything else that you think would be relevant to add?

[Subject 5]: Not really.

Welton: Thank you very much for your time.

[Subject 5]: Good luck. And if I can help in any way, let me know.
APPENDIX I: Transcript of Interview with [Subject 4]

Welton: First, a little personal information. Feel free to answer only what you feel comfortable answering. Are you married?

[Subject 4]: Yes.

Welton: Do you have any children?

[Subject 4]: Yes.

Welton: Were they at home when you were trying to write?

[Subject 4]: Yes.

Welton: Do you feel that trying to work at home while married with children limited your ability to work in the way you wanted to?

[Subject 4]: No. I always stayed up after they were in bed. Most of my writing life was spent staying up until one A.M. and getting up for my job at six.

Welton: What is your ethnic background?

[Subject 4]: Caucassion. Mixture of German and Irish, Catholic and Lutheran.

Welton: Do you consider your playwriting a full-time job, part-time job, hobby, or something else?

[Subject 4]: It’s an addiction, like tobacco or drugs. No matter how many rejections, I bounce back and try again.

Welton: If you had to choose only one creative or artistic outlet, would it be playwriting?

[Subject 4]: No. I would also like to write novels and learn music so that I could write musicals, but it’s a little late at 72.

Welton: What led you to become a playwright?
[Subject 4]: Wanting to be a writer. Plays were the thing I wanted to do most. To me they are the easiest – not that I am any great success.

Welton: Do you have or have you had another job?

[Subject 4]: I worked as a federal employee at a local army depot for 37 years. During that time I was a clerk typist, a computer operator, computer programmer and finally a computer administrator.

Welton: Did you like the job?

[Subject 4]: No.

Welton: Did your “real” job ever effect your playwriting at all?

[Subject 4]: Do you mean effect or affect? If it weren’t for my “real” job I would have starved to death about 1951.

Welton: Did your real job ever limit your ability to write in the way you wanted?

[Subject 4]: Yes. I could write only at certain times. Once I was hot with ideas and dying to get them said, I would have to limit myself because I couldn’t stay at it as long as I wanted.

Welton: Would you describe yourself as creative?

[Subject 4]: I would like to.

Welton: How many years have you been writing plays?


Welton: When would you consider your first success happened?

[Subject 4]: My first success was in 1995.
Welton: What is your favorite or the easiest part of playwriting for you? Considering all aspects from the first seed of an idea to the final selling or producing of the play.

[Subject 4]: My favorite part is editing. Finding the best word. Cutting out a sentence that is too long, adding a sentence that defines character or explains the plot better.

Welton: What is the hardest part of playwriting for you?

[Subject 4]: Marketing. I hate reading the market reports and realizing just what kind of jerks run playhouses.

Welton: What do you struggle with?

[Subject 4]: Getting accepted. The works I have had accepted have been by just one or two companies in New York or by local community theatre or other local organizations who sometimes commission a historical play.

Welton: Could you describe how one of your finished works developed from the first awareness that a story had begun through to the final script or performance?

[Subject 4]: First the idea hits me and I might or might not write it down. Then I look at the idea and think about it. Does it work? Is it just an idea that has been done before? Next I mull it over for a few days and begin to think how I can fit it for the stage. How many scenes and acts do I need? How can I get the story across without going outside or without having fifty or sixty scenes. Usually I like to have very few scenes. Then I think of the characters and what they will be saying in some climatic scenes or if a
drama, some of the dramatic scenes. Next I begin making notes about the characters and a few rough paragraphs about the chronological order, the structure. Problem, complication, crisis, climax and denouement. I study these notes and when I am pretty well engrossed and can’t wait to get started, I make a few little moments of dialogue. These may be scattered throughout the play. Now it’s time for the scenario. It may take a good many tries before I come up with one that fits. By this time I have worked out all the stagecraft that will be needed to get the story I want to fit the stage. Then I begin. I write according to the very strict format demanded by theatres. The universal format. And as I write, I take time to underline, to punctuate, to do it according to the proper format. Once in a while I’ll get carried away and just cut loose until I get a scene finished, then go back and put it in the right format. But usually I can contain myself. So I go on with this for however long it takes me to finish each act. Usually there are only two even in a full length. I am considered very fast and have done one-acts in a single setting. But we’ll say it takes two weeks for the first draft, everything, the whole play. Then the fun begins. I usually put it aside for a few days and do other works, other plays, etc. When I think I can look at my play objectively, I drag it out again and begin the long process of revising, rewriting, making better, etc. This may take twenty or more attempts before I get it. There have been times I have let it go again after the twentieth time and still rewritten it completely. Next comes marketing. This is not the ultimate or last step, but really perhaps the
middle step. With each rejection, I look the play over and revise. If it accepted, I make copies and while preparing to make copies find some other things I want changed. If I am on hand for the auditions I usually find that the actors auditioning find a page with mistakes or unclear meaning. And so on through rehearsals. Usually by the fifth or sixth rehearsal I have corrected everything. Then comes the criticism from the actors and/or the director. Some of this is true and I make changes to suit them. If I don’t think it’s true I just let them forget it and leave the script as it is. And that’s pretty much it.

Welton:  Do you think you complete every play with the same process or is each play unique in its creation?

[Subject 4]:  Each is unique in its creation. There have been many which I have done just that were just ideas I had. Others have been suggested to me or commissioned. Usually the commissions are for historical plays and I am furnished with the research material from which I cull all the facts and events I will use. Once I wrote a musical. The idea was suggested to me by a friend. I worked on it and did it as a comedy. Then I met a composer and asked if he would like to do the music. So I changed everything to transform it into that. There are many ways.

Welton:  Do you do anything to help “the idea hit” you or are you satisfied letting them come to you? For example, do you use any brainstorming techniques?
No brainstorming necessary. I may get an idea in an instant from the most unlikely source. For instance, just thinking about the rocky coast of Maine that I once visited and then reading a few stories about the islands near Maine gave me an idea for a play. Or on several occasions I had dreams that upon waking seemed not only the germ of the plot, but pretty much the entire plot.

Welton: Do you come up with a lot of ideas before you pick the right one to create a story around?

I once had so many ideas that I had to put them in a notebook and go through them one by one, using them for one-acts and even a full-length. But after several years I have found that the ones in the book were not so great on second glance.

How long do you usually think about a new idea before you begin to work on it?

I have to discipline myself to stow away an idea if I am in the middle of a play and wait until I am completely finished before trying to do anything more than write the idea down. So that may take anything from two weeks to a year.

Do you find it easier to work on more than one idea at a time?

Not easier, no. It’s just that I must do the logical thing and finish one thing before getting too involved with another.

Do you finish all your projects or do you start a lot of projects that you may not finish?
I usually finish one before starting another but there have been exceptions.

Welton: Do you do research before you begin writing? If so, what type and how much?

[Subject 4]: Depending on the play I may do no research or quite a lot of research. For historical plays I do several days research and look at several sources. For example, I did a full-length play about the burning of my nearby town of [name] during the Civil War. The town was burned by the confederates in 1864. I was encouraged to write this play and did several days of typing the notes into the computer from several source books. Then I did several more days of research putting them in the exact chronological order. I always have to do that because my mind cannot tolerate a mixed up mess of events. After that I picked out the events that would work best and decided that I would do the play like one of those disaster movies beginning with the different people of the town anticipating the arrival of the troops, little side glances at the personalities and lives of a selected few. This was followed by a bit of plot about the romantic leads and then the actual warnings and advances of the troops until the final hours of the demand for ransom, the refusal by the citizens to pay and the ultimate burning. I ended with the courageous banding together of the citizens in their determination to rebuild. That’s for historical plays. For others I sometimes have to do a lot of checking on, for instance, Britism customs and slang words. For a British mystery or for my farce about New York
City a lot of research about the actual streets, restaurants, life in an apartment building, etc.

Welton: Do you have any rituals you do while writing?

[Subject 4]: At first I would have only the ritual of clearing off a table and getting my typewriter in place. Now I have a computer in our family room. I have no rituals, but I do have sort of a schedule, working mostly in the afternoon between one and four.

Welton: Is there any special thing you need or special way in which you need to work?

[Subject 4]: I prefer to be alone but can work with others in the same house. Probably not too well if in the same room.

Welton: Have you worked with others and did you like it?

[Subject 4]: Yes. I wrote a play with a historian by the name of [personal name]. The play was a dramatization of her novel and concerned the Civil War. It was called, [name of play] and worked out rather well. But there were a few problems as we began staging and producing it. I would probably not want to do it again. Then there was a joint effort with four others on a Christmas play. This was with a playwrights’ group. Each wrote his or her character’s part instead of each writing a part of the plot. This was a dreadful experience. When it was all over one of the group had to whip it into shape and I was the one left feeling rejected because they were all buddies with me. As it turned out, I didn’t even go to see it.

Welton: What is the most inviting place for you to work?
[Subject 4]: In a comfortable room by myself, daylight, classical music playing, especially modern classical. My entire family room is fine for this during the day. Curtained windows keep out superabundant sunlight. I prefer working or reading for that matter on cloudy or rainy days.

Welton: If you could have your work area, environment, time, or place exactly as you wanted it with no limitations, what would it be like?

[Subject 4]: I’m pretty happy with it as it is. I am married with five grown children, none of whom live with us. My wife, age 71, still works during the day, leaving me alone. She is also willing to go to bed alone if I really get going on a play at night. So I have it pretty much my own way.

Welton: How do you know when a script is finished?

[Subject 4]: I don’t think any playwright ever knows. I have seen several versions of the plays of Williams and several endings for one of Inge’s plays. I can’t ever pick up an old play of mine, even the oldest, without wanting to grab a pen and change a line here and there.

Welton: Excluding your children and work, were there any additional distractions that limited your ability to write in the way that you wanted?

[Subject 4]: I absolutely cannot write or even try to write when someone is playing a TV program. I cannot tune out the voices. The same with someone playing rock or country music in the same house where I have to listen. Since I enjoy only classical music I think it is a matter of having more trouble tuning out something you hate rather than something you like.

Welton: How do you overcome distractions?
[Subject 4]: Distraction goes away if it is the actual creation of dialogue, etc. But a lot of writing is editing, rewriting, etc. This I can do with no worry about distractions.

Welton: How do you overcome blocks?

[Subject 4]: Never had a writing block. But now ask me about rejection and how that can knock all your creative spirit out of you and make you feel you should never bother to write again. I am pretty much in the middle of one of those right now.

Welton: Did you originally submit your own work or did someone do it for you? Or, did you submit your work due to someone’s pushing or persistence?

[Subject 4]: I submitted my work myself because I had the drive in me even though I hate that part of the job. I have done this mainly by mail, but for some local groups and playhouses I have gone in person to the people in charge and suffered through that agony.

Welton: What other steps have you taken to get your work performed?

[Subject 4]: There are things like hanging around community theatre and trying to submit to their playreadings committees. I have joined a reading group and have asked them to do readings, which they have. In fact, they were the ones who did my first production.

Welton: Have you entered any contests? Have you won?

[Subject 4]: Yes. I’ve won three or four. My play, [name of play] won publication by [name] in an off-off Broadway contest. I have also won in Lebanon, Pa. and again in the American Globe Festival in New York City. Probably
close to being a winner was [name of play], a full-length which was a 
finalist in the Panowski contest.

Welton: Have you received any other awards?

[Subject 4]: Pennsylvania partners in the arts grants.

Welton: Do you involve yourself in the performance of your pieces?

[Subject 4]: Yes. I have been an on-looker at most, but did direct a short play and just 
lately was producer of a full-length comedy, mystery of mine. All of the 
off-off Broadway plays I’ve had produced were without any involvement 
from me except a phone call now and then from the director.

Welton: What other areas of theater have you participated in?

[Subject 4]: I acted three times in my life. Once in high school and once for one of my 
own plays at a small gathering. I have also done readings. I directed my 
own play, a one-act. Just recently I produced my own play. I devoted over 
six months of back-breaking and nerve racking work, eight hours a day, 
doing all the publicity, all the fundraising, all the everything including 
holding auditions with the director, getting the stage designed and then 
actually getting it constructed, making the program, etc. I’ve done sound, 
lights, stage hand backstage, prompter...just about everything. I haven’t 
been a stage manager though. Too much responsibility and split-second 
timing. Stage managers are the cream of the theatrical community, about 
two steps higher than director and absolutely soaring over the playwright 
when it comes to knowing what’s going on.

Welton: How did you attract publishers and companies?
[Subject 4]: I attracted [personal name] because I was a finalist in their contest. All other productions were done by answering announcements in the Dramatist’s Guild Resource Book. I joined the Dramatist’s Guild shortly after my first play production. Or I answered an announcement in the newspaper. This is not counting my own footwork in submitting to community theatres or at local colleges. And it does not include commissions which may just come out of the blue because someone heard that I am a playwright who was done historical plays.

Welton: Have you received any theatrical reviews?

[Subject 4]: Yes, from local papers. All were favorable.

Welton: Earlier you said that playwriting is the easiest form of writing. One author of a playwriting book was quoted as saying, “it is generally conceded that playwriting is the most difficult form of writing.” Would you care to comment more on this?

[Subject 4]: The one who said that probably wants us to think he is doing the hardest possible form of writing and succeeding at it. I think it is the easiest, but then I am probably not succeeding because I do not treat the difficult art of playwriting with all the respect that it should have.

Welton: [Explanation of FourSight assessment cut] Your test revealed that you are strongest as an Implementer with a score of 4.1, then an Ideator with a score of 3.4, then a Clarifier with a score of 2.2 and lastly, a Developer with a score of 2.1. The combination of the four is called the “Driver.”
That is someone who plays with lots of possibilities and when the spirit moves leaps to action. Do you think this describes you?

[Subject 4]: No. I don’t play with lots of possibilities. I work on a single idea at a time, one that strikes me, or I go to one that I have jotted down. I don’t leap into action when the spirit moves me either. I am very industrious and keep at my work in a regular routine. So I don’t think very much of your diagnosis.

Welton: An interesting note is that out of all the subjects tested, you were one of only four Implementers. From your knowledge of other playwrights do you see any relationship between this fact and your own playwriting?

[Subject 4]: No. But I do agree with the Implementer assessment.

Welton: Is there anything else that you think is important for me to know about you as a playwright?

[Subject 4]: No. I have nothing to add. I thank you for your interest and hope you get your master’s.