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# My Creative Life: A Journey of a Lifetime

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SUNY – Buffalo State  
International Center for Studies in Creativity

*My Creative Life: A Journey of a Lifetime*

A Project  
in Creative Studies  
by  
Deborah Provenzano

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

May 2014

ABSTRACT OF A PROJECT

*My Creative Life: A Journey of a Lifetime*

As I continue pursuing my studies in Creativity and Creative Thinking, I am developing, synthesizing, and practicing my creative talents; discovering all that I am and who I want to be; and further developing my creative leadership abilities. Now is the time for me to discuss what legacy I will leave or what contribution I will make in this world. This paper is a reflection of my personal philosophy on creativity, motivation, and engagement; and how I will make a difference in society as a Creative and Change Leader of tomorrow. My journey has been the ride of a lifetime and I look forward to continuing to pursue my dreams each and every day.

Key words: Assessment, Creativity, *FourSight*, Leadership, Problem Solving

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Candidate: Deborah Provenzano

### **Acknowledgements**

I dedicate this paper to my family: my husband Michael G. Provenzano, who always supported my endeavors, loved me unconditionally, and made me smile every day; my children: Chris & Katie, Matt & Megan, Mikey and Meghan, who make me proud every day and who enrich my life beyond any expression of words; and my daughter Melissa, who gave me such love and joy in her short precious life.

I would also like to acknowledge the many individuals who have helped me on my journey to discovering and nurturing my creative abilities: Mr. J Michael Fox, who I first met at a Graduate School Open House, introducing me to the Creative Studies program at SUNY – Buffalo State, and hooking me from the very first moment; Dr. Cyndi Burnett, Ph.D., whose spirit and enthusiasm for creativity helped ignite my own passion for creative thinking; and the many creative friends I have met and have had the pleasure of sharing our passion for Creativity.

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## Section One: Background to the Project

*“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose.”*

*-Dr. Seuss*

### Purpose and Description

Every day, people everywhere make choices and decisions about any and all aspects of their lives. Some of those choices or decisions are conscious, subconscious, or may even be made by others for us. When we face life’s challenges, sometimes we can be defeated, sometimes we can be triumphant, or maybe, we might even stop and ask ourselves, “What do I do now?” Whatever approach you take, you are using your thinking abilities to analyze the situation and make a choice to proceed in a specific direction.

I’d like to think that you, the reader, can see how you can tap into your own thoughts, your own creativity, and your own self-discovery from my story. We all seek inspiration – sometimes it’s from other people’s influences; sometimes it’s from music, literature, arts; and sometimes it’s from within by exploring our own thoughts and experiences.

Personally, I have experienced many challenges in my lifetime, made many choices, and am who I am today because of my thinking skills and my approach in life. As my journey into the intriguing realm of Creativity, and the Creative Solving Problem process has evolved over the past three years, I have come to realize that there is a wonderfully powerful and exciting ability within each of us to see and create new possibilities, opportunities and realities.

Creativity is an essential life skill that enables us to live our lives to the fullest (Puccio, 2011).

This project came to life as a result of self-exploration of my life experiences, my journey to understand myself better, and my pursuit of my Master of Science Degree in Creative

Studies. By reflecting on one's own creativity and abilities to seek new and useful ideas, each one of us has the capability of using one's own talents to motivate himself/herself and approach life's challenges with energy, excitement and commitment.

The purpose of this project is to show how I have been able to synthesize my learning about Creativity and Creative Problem Solving, and paying it forward by sharing this knowledge with others. Teaching and training others about how they can realize their own creative abilities and use the creative problem-solving process to enhance their lives is my "dream job" or creative purpose.

As I have grown older, and moved through the various stages of my life, I know that I am still on my greatest journey ever - knowing who I am, what I can do, and what I have left to accomplish. So here I am today; a graduate student in the Master of Science Degree program at SUNY – Buffalo State in the International Center for Studies in Creativity. I have been exposed to a whole new world of insight, passion, excitement and energy by learning about creativity and how I can incorporate it into every aspect of my life.

### Creativity and Its Foundation

Creativity goes back thousands of years to the first cave man and his creative ability/thinking which he tapped into when he invented the wheel. It follows one of the most basic definitions for creativity, which is to produce ideas/works that are new and useful. The history of our civilization shows that "creative ideas have been modified, combined, transformed, borrowed and built upon to form new creations" (Davis, 2004).



Through the years, creativity has emerged in majestic architecture such as the Egyptian Pyramids, artistic paintings by da Vinci and Michelangelo, music by Mozart, and inventions of every kind. Creativity is also as simplistic as a flower growing in the ground, the sunset, or a smile on a baby's face. Hopefully, as a child we have all been encouraged by a parent or teacher for our ideas or drawings and heard "how creative!" Creativity in children is refreshing for its freedom of expression and its simplicity. Creativity is everywhere, it's unique to each of us, and is simply in the "eye of the beholder."

The concentrated study of creativity did not really start until the 1800's and has recently been a much-researched and ever-growing phenomenon in the past 50 years. Fortunately, The International Center for Studies in Creativity (ICSC) was founded in 1967 at SUNY – Buffalo State. In their book, *Creativity Rising: Creative Thinking and Creative Problem Solving in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Puccio, et al. (2011, p. 8) define the vision of the ICSC as "Igniting creativity around the world: Facilitating the recognition that creative thinking is an essential life skill." What a wonderful concept that Creativity and Creative Thinking are present in each of us, that it can be taught, and that tapping into this energy provides a life skill that can be used for every-day situations.

## Section Two: Pertinent Literature

*“Logic will get you from A to Z, imagination will get you everywhere.”*

*-Albert Einstein*

From participating in the Creative Studies program at SUNY – Buffalo State I have been fortunate enough to learn about, embrace the concepts of, and put into practice the many theories of creativity that have been introduced to me by the multitude of leaders in this field. For example, I have found inspiration in the teachings of Carl Jung (1965), who is an expert on dream analysis and correlates one’s dreams (involuntary psychic activity) with one’s conscious state of mind. Our dreams can represent one’s daily life, can make you think about yourself, and provide many opportunities for self-reflection, soul-searching and personal growth.

Considered to be creativity’s founding father, Alex Osborn (1953) gave us brainstorming, which describes group problem-solving, and teaches us to defer judgment, be spontaneous, seek quantity, and build on ideas. He believed in the creative potential within everyone, and his gift was teaching us that imagination, applied in all aspects of life, will develop one’s creative abilities.

Along those same thoughts, I have learned about Divergent and Convergent thinking from J.P. Guilford (1967), who created the *Structure of the Intellect* model (SOI) to measure brain activity and creative thought processes (Davis, 2004, p. 256-258). In summary, his SOI model, a three-dimensional cube, measures 180 cognitive abilities and how humans function with ones’ brains.

The cornerstone of creative thinking comes from Osborn and Parnes’ (1981) Creative Problem-Solving process (CPS) which is a step-by-step process for creatively approaching,

dissecting and resolving problems (Davis, 2004, p. 44-45). Their original four stages of creativity: preparation, inspiration, incubation, and verification evolved into today's model of Assessing the Situation, Clarification, Transformation, and Implementation (The Thinking Skills model).

Mel Rhodes's 4P's of Creativity, which examines the creative connection of the Person, the Process, the Product, and the Press, makes our thought process relevant to self and our influences (Rhodes, 1961, p. 306). Looking at the individual engaging in a deliberate process, with a specific product in mind, and environmental influences creates a successful outcome.

A creative expert who made me see the important motivational aspect of creativity and the creative-thinking process is Teresa Amabile, and her inspirational studies on both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Individuals and organizations can gain valuable insight from her studies in which she emphasizes the inner work life, being valued, and creativity in *The Progress Principle: Using Small Wins to Ignite Joy, Engagement, and Creativity at Work* (Amabile & Kramer, 2011). A very special and captivating moment for me was attending SUNY – Buffalo State Speaker Series Interview with Dr. Amabile in October 2013 and having the privilege of meeting her in person afterwards.

Lastly, I have discovered more about myself and my thought processes from Gerard Puccio's *FourSight* model, which defines one's thinking profile and how it can be used for innovative and creative problem-solving activity (Puccio, 2011); as well as from the Myers-Briggs MBTI (1991) preference type assessment, which analyzes one's personality type and preferences in relation to interactions with others (Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc., 1976). Making the personal

connection to one's own creativity and one's thought preferences and styles has been a most educational and insightful experience.

### Section Three: My Philosophy of Creativity

*"Don't be pushed by your problems, be led by your dreams."*

*-Ralph Waldo Emerson*

My 'aha' moment in understanding creativity and creative thinking, and really defining my self-awareness was from taking the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment. This assessment identifies 16 different types of personalities and the preferences that people engage in when interacting with others. I am an "ENFJ," Extraverted Feeling with Intuition. As the assessment (Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc., 2011, p. 1) describes,

"ENFJ people radiate sympathy and fellowship. They are concerned chiefly with people and they place a high value on harmonious human contacts. They are particularly warmed by approval and sensitive to indifference. Much of their pleasure comes from the warmth of feeling of people around them and from their own warm feelings."

This personality type fits me perfectly because I am a classic example of a person who wears her heart on her sleeve, who thrives on fellowship with others, and who is most comfortable with other human contacts. I love to talk and love to engage in conversations with others. My intuition tends to heighten my thoughts, my vision, and my future possibilities. Taking this assessment made the connection for me as to why I am the way I am, and how I interact with others

So, when I define my personal philosophy about creativity, I see it as a unique talent/gift/ability within each person that enables him/her to express oneself and share a piece of oneself with the world. It is that expression of new and novel ideas, concepts and thoughts that allows one to uniquely contribute to his/her environment and be the best that he/she can be. Creativity is my way of being me, allowing me to interact with others as only I can, and

supporting me being the best Mom, the best friend, the best co-worker, and the best leader I can be.

I also view creativity and creative thinking as a process of skills that not only enhance your inherent abilities, but can also be acquired or learned. Through the teachings of creative leaders such as E. Paul Torrance, founder of the *Torrance Incubation Model of Creative Thinking and Learning* (TIM), I have been able to enhance my creativity by “highlighting the essence, putting ideas into context, combine and synthesize, and looking at it another way” (Torrance & Safter, 1999). This model provides the fundamental skills of creativity and how I can bring its effect into every aspect of my personal and professional life.

According to Murdock and Keller-Mathers, in their article, *Teaching for Creativity: Where There’s a Will, There’s a Way*, the TIM model of deliberate activities that occur before, during and after instruction promotes a creative skill base that enhances the learner’s experience: Heightening Anticipation; Deepening Expectations; and Extending Learning (Murdock & Keller-Mathers, 2002).

As my creative learnings have been expanded, I have also been introduced to Alex Osborn and Sid Parnes, cofounders of the Creative Problem Solving process (CPS). They gave me one of the first sets of creative thinking skills. The CPS process is a creative and imaginative approach to finding a solution to a problem or a challenge. The organized steps include “mess finding, fact finding, problem finding, idea finding, solution finding, and acceptance finding” (Parnes, 1992).

Further development of this process resulted in *The Thinking Skills Model*, (Puccio, Mance & Murdock, 2011), which defines the problem-solving steps as exploring the vision,

formulating challenges, exploring ideas, formulating solutions, exploring acceptance and formulating a plan. With all the adversity and challenges that we face each day, big or small, it's nice to know that we can use tools and resources to explore our challenges, generate ideas and prepare for action in seeking viable solutions. It now feels so natural to me to look at things and ask, "How to..., How might..., or, In what ways might...!" I definitely see myself progressing from learning about CPS, to using CPS, and subsequently, living CPS – I will make it to the level of the "Unconsciously Skilled!" The CPS process, creativity and creative thinking are now ways in which I can be more productive, be a better person, find satisfaction, and live a more enriching life.

Creativity is also a way of influencing oneself and others. Another important aspect of being creative is one's frame of mind or attitude. If you are positive in your thinking, windows and doors of fresh ideas, concepts, and even opportunities begin to open up for you. I know that I would much rather be around and interact with people who are positive and happy than those who are negative. Be positive and upbeat in your thinking, your approach, and your attitude. I like to think that looking for the "pot o' gold" at the end of the rainbow, or seeing the clouds, with a silver lining are ways of keeping your faith and hope for future possibilities alive.

Being positive also promotes productivity, and productivity promotes progress. More people are motivated by positivity rather than negativity, and positive influence also happens to be at the core of leadership.

#### **Section Four: Leadership and Its Foundation**

What does it mean to be a leader? Is a leader merely the person who manages a country, a corporation, or a group of individuals participating in an activity? A standard dictionary definition of leadership, as listed in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2005), is the act of leading; the ability to be a leader (a person whose example is followed); the leaders of an organization or movement collectively. Looking back in history, leadership has most often been described as the role of the person in charge, the manager, the leader. That being said, management and leadership have also been previously viewed as leading a group of people to accomplish a goal— a very task-oriented relationship. This type of leadership/management works for some people and some situations; however, we humans are more complex than ever these days, and require more personal interactions.

Moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, leadership theory has taken on a new perspective. According to Zacko-Smith (2010), a leadership researcher and educator at the International Center for Studies in Creativity at SUNY – Buffalo State, the “Three T’s Framework for Leadership Education” takes us from the most basic concept of leadership into the new world idea of manifesting social change. His framework shows how leadership theory evolves from Transactional (basic ‘give and take’), to Transformational (relational between a leader and stakeholders), and finally to Transcendent (whole world thinking; global). I definitely see myself as a transformational leader as I work best in my relationships with the people I interact with on a daily basis. I would like to develop my understanding and awareness, as well as my skills, so that I can be a transcendent leader and be an integral participant in the greater good of the world in which we all live.



Additionally, as John Maxwell states in his book, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (2007, p. xxi), the fundamentals of leadership are constant; can be learned; and once you learn them, you have to practice them and apply them to your life. Some of the basic laws he defines are the laws of influence, process, respect, intuition, connection, buy-in, priorities, and legacy. We are probably all aware of these basic concepts, but we just need to acknowledge them, embrace them and reinforce their value by the thoughts and actions we portray each day. It's very similar to a saying often quoted from the Holy Bible, "Do to others as you would have them do to you" ([www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com), 2012).

### My Philosophy of Leadership

As I have progressed through the Creative Studies program, I have learned about the history of leadership, about what it means to be a leader in today's world, and most importantly, what it will mean for me to be a leader in the future. I have learned about *authenticity* and what it means to be true to self. An authentic leader is genuine, trustworthy, and reliable. An authentic leader is someone who has a subtle positive influence without even trying. A leader is a person who through his/her influences empowers others. For me, the following people are examples of leaders who have made or continue to make a difference because they genuinely interact with others for the benefit of the greater good: Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Oprah Winfrey, Bill and Melinda Gates, and Randy Pausch.

The national bestseller, *The Last Lecture*, written by Randy Pausch (2008), is a compelling and heart-tugging story of a man, with limited time left here on Earth, and his

desires to live for the moment alongside his wife and kids. In his book, he says, “We cannot change the cards we are dealt, just how we play the hand” (Pausch, 2008, p. 17). He wanted to share his insights with his students, his colleagues, his family and friends, and most importantly his wife and children, so that they could see that life is a wonderful journey.

I came across this book at a very challenging time of my life, after the premature death of my husband, and his story touched me more than I can express in words. I cried, laughed, and reflected on my life’s journey as I read Randy Pausch’s story. I was so connected to this man’s compelling story that I read it through to the end in my first sitting and just embraced his inspiring thoughts and the ways that I would like to lead my life. His courage, his wisdom, and the legacy that he so graciously gave to us provide many a thought-provoking opportunity for reflection about life – one’s philosophy, one’s vision, and one’s focus on what matters most. I believe that I am truly a happy person, and I am blessed for all that I have and have experienced, as challenging as some of those moments have been.

Whether learning right from wrong, who and what is important in life, or dealing with life’s challenges, Pausch reminds us to approach our lives with honesty, integrity, gratitude, and to do the best we can at all times. His parents taught him the basic fundamentals of being a good person and working hard; his coach taught him the fundamentals of teamwork, perseverance, and sportsmanship; James T. Kirk, captain of the starship *Enterprise* taught him leadership skills; and Walt Disney taught him about dreams- ‘If you can dream it, you can do it’ (Pausch, 2008). It’s all about how you want to lead your life. It’s about keeping an open mind. Life is about being creative in your thoughts, your actions, and your dreams.

We are all going to be faced with many challenges during our lifetime, and according to Pausch “the brick walls are there to give us a chance to show how badly we want something” (Pausch, 2008, p. 52). *The Last Lecture* encouraged me to self-reflect, look at my values and beliefs, see the wonderful world of opportunities awaiting me, and strive to make my difference in the world.

There are many people who I admire and have had a positive or profound influence on me. For example, my 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Cheryl Hanna, had a genuinely pleasant and wonderful connection with her students, encouraged her student’s creativity, and gave me positive reinforcement with all my endeavors. Her passion for teaching was positive, energizing, and admirable. My Grief Counselor, Carol Coles, helped me work through my emotions and fears, helped me gain perspective, confidence and strength in my own abilities, and assisted me in overcoming adversity. Her job role was to counsel and provide advice about self-exploration in working through one’s problems, but she did it with such compassion, expertise and ease that you felt as if you were having conversations with a really close personal friend.

Lastly, my sweet husband, Michael Provenzano, who many described as the “nicest person they ever met,” was a special individual. He was a loving, kind, happy person, who loved life and his family, and really and truly was a “nice” guy. He never had an unkind word about anyone, and was happiest when he spent time with his family, did a good job at work, and always had a smile on his face. He would never consider himself to be a leader, but he exemplified the qualities of a person who was authentically himself. These individuals were just being genuine, and doing their best in their defined roles. By authentically being themselves and being their best, they provided positive influence to not only me, but to many others. I

have the greatest admiration for their dedication, their compassion, and their leadership which they shared with me.

Leadership is having a positive influence on those around you. According to Puccio, Murdock & Mance (2011, p. xviii), Change Leadership is “the process of positively influencing people, contexts, and outcomes through a deliberate creative approach that is applied to open-ended, novel and ambiguous problems, both opportunities and predicaments.”

By better understanding myself and who I am at the core, I am authenticating myself and being truthful in my interactions with others. Another revelation for me is that even though I have an undergraduate degree in Business Management and have had several roles in management; I am truly a better leader than I am a manager. I am more personally satisfied and fulfilled being a positive leader by working and interacting with others, than I was as a business manager of a process. As I gain the education, the experience and the insights of creativity and leadership, I see that I am on the right path to being one of the next Creative Leaders and Change Leaders of tomorrow.

### Section Five: Key Learnings

*“Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside awakes. “*

*-Carl Jung*

#### Creative Leadership and Change Leadership

So what is the difference between Creative Leadership and Change Leadership? Is there a difference? Creative Leadership is about being open-minded and thinking “outside of the box” so that one creates a positive culture or environment for all constituents. Change Leadership is looking at the psychology of the change process and being able to influence those involved in the changes. In my CRS 635 class, *Creativity and Change Leadership*, we reviewed and discussed both concepts to conclude that Creative Leadership is Change Leadership. With creative and positive influence, there will be a creative environment, the constituents will feel valued, and the necessary changes will be successfully integrated.

#### My Creative Future

My vision for the future is to be an effective and creative change leader. I believe that I can utilize my life experiences, my work experiences, and my educational background in Creative Studies to be a facilitator/ mentor/teacher of the CPS process. By sharing my knowledge with others, I can make a difference in teaching people how they can use creative approaches in meeting life’s challenges. Everyone can make a difference, but I know that making a difference begins with me.

I have learned that my strength is in relational leadership, in which one uses humanistic approaches to bringing people together in an attempt to accomplish positive change. Through introducing and teaching people about Creativity, Creative Thinking, and the CPS process, I believe that I can help others learn essential life skills that not only benefit their personal and professional lives, but will assist me in accomplishing the goal of “Modeling the Way.” I can and want to be one of the next positive change leaders, make a difference, and be an active participant in the communities (family, work, and society) in which I live.

### Finding my “Voice”

How often do you listen to the little voice inside of you? Did you know that we all have a voice; not just an ability to speak and express words, but a way of vocalizing your beliefs, your passion, your energy, your heart? Your voice is your conscience, your passion, your expressions of self. Maybe it’s not so little; maybe it’s a loud voice that champions a cause or two. Through my life experiences and learning over the years, I have come to understand that my voice is about me; about who I am; and about who I will become. This same realization can be said of my creative abilities – they have always been there – available for me to tap into and use them.

My voice and my creativity are my passion for life, my personal desires, my spirit within and how I’m going to utilize both for my personal happiness as well as a way for me to do my part in making the world a better place. I was not always aware of the power of my voice or of my creative abilities, or focused on what my needs were until I really had to rely on them to help me overcome challenges in my life. I have grown as a person and become emotionally and psychologically stronger by embracing my inner strengths, my creative spirit and my passion for

living. I have also come to realize that I use my voice and my creativity daily to help me to see, to listen, to speak, to write, to think, to do and to act.

I am discovering more about me, about what I have to offer and what I can do to 'pay it forward' for all which I have been blessed. I see my voice of the future as a skilled professional in Creativity and Creative Thinking so that I can facilitate or mentor/teach others about Creative Problem Solving skills and techniques, and being a contributor to raising society's understanding of Creativity. Our creative abilities live within each of us; however, sometimes we have to explore them to appreciate them and to use them. I enjoy helping others, and I want to make a difference. I am a people-person; I enjoy interacting with people every day. Talking, working, teaching, laughing, crying, listening- I like to make people smile, and it puts a smile on my face.

I have found inspiration about my own passion for approaching things the way I do from E. Paul Torrance (1983, p. 73), as he stated, "One of the most powerful wellsprings of creative energy, outstanding accomplishment, and self-fulfillment seems to be falling in love with something- your dream, your image of the future."

### Section Six: Conclusion

With my vision outlined as being one of the future Creative and Change Leader of tomorrows, my plan of action is attainable with dedication, hard work, and a positive attitude. Being able to enlighten others with positive influence, share my knowledge of creativity, creative thinking, and the CPS process, and teach creativity skills to others is my “dream role.” Whether a challenge is personal, career-oriented, short-term or long-term, simple or complex, there are ways to help identify, dissect, and resolve that challenge. Creativity, Creative Thinking, and the CPS process are the wave of the future.

#### The Good Word

Currently, my plans are to complete my Master’s Degree in Creative Studies, with a concentration in Creative Training and Consulting at SUNY – Buffalo State. Graduation is just a few weeks away – May 17, 2014. I am very curious about what motivates people, and believe that this topic will assist me in my future goals of positively influencing others in my interactions with them. Each day I approach my tasks with commitment and pride in doing my best.

Another fulfilling role that I currently have is that I coordinate our department’s Employee Engagement activities and am deeply committed to our involvement with the annual Employee Satisfaction Survey. When you interact with a group of people more than 40 hours per week, you want the workplace environment to be pleasant, productive and fun. As Amabile & Kramer state in their book, *The Progress Principle: Using Small Wins to Ignite Joy, Engagement, and Creativity at Work* (2011), the best workplace atmosphere is one in which



there is progress in meaningful work. Our perspectives are critical to our positive or negative work attitudes, and we have to feel valued and connected to be productive. As with any task or project I undertake, my workplace environment is truly a “work-in-progress,” and we are slowly moving towards being a more cohesive team.

A great tool for encouraging better teamwork and engagement is the *FourSight Model* of thinking profiles (Puccio, 2011). I was fortunate enough to participate in the Creative Expert Exchange (CEE) conference in 2013 (this conference is held each year at SUNY – Buffalo State); as well as the *FourSight* Certification conference, which equips participants with the tools, experiences and confidence to share *FourSight* with others. My key learnings from the *FourSight* training are that I can now teach, share, and examine the qualities of being a Clarifier, an Ideator, a Developer, or an Implementer and work towards appreciating the strengths and opportunities of each thinking profile.

The eye-opening connection that each participant sees within themselves and the associated groups in which they interact is one of a teacher’s/trainer’s critical goals of making a difference. Within these types of sessions, the ability to review the thinking profiles, gain an understanding and appreciation of one’s similarities and differences in approaches to things, and realizing that diversity works is a great teambuilding exercise.

### Next Steps

Upon completion of my educational requirements, I will revise my resume to incorporate and emphasize my Creative Studies concentration, continue my volunteer work (the *Food Pantry of WNY* and *Special Spaces Buffalo*), remain connected to ICSC and creativity

by staying involved with the center (ICSC Press, the ICSC Alumni, and participation in the annual CEE conference). I plan to begin searching for the right fit for me in the job prospect area.

Currently, I have been with M&T Bank for over 25 years, and would like to continue working for this company; however, I am looking for a job role that incorporates the Creative Studies background, and my vision of being a Creative and Change Leader of tomorrow. M&T Bank has a Corporate Training Department as well as a Human Resource Department, both of which I see myself being able to find a training/facilitating role and incorporate my Creative Studies background into the responsibilities.

A Case Study documented in *Creative Leadership: Skills that Drive Change* (Puccio, et al., 2011, p. 303-308), presents the reader with an individual who created her own job description and was hired as a full-time CPS Coordinator at Rich Products Corporation, in Buffalo, NY. She made a commitment to the company that she would apply the CPS process throughout the organizational structure for a two-year period in support of creativity and innovation. I found this story to be very inspiring and uplifting to know that there are people, organizations, and communities that are recognizing the benefits of creativity and how it supports the concept of it being an essential life skill.

Additionally, in my job search I also plan on looking at organizations that have training departments, human resource departments, and development areas to use my expertise in Creativity and Creative Problem Solving. The doors are many and they are swinging open to me as I seek out a position at a business, a school, a non-profit company, or any organization in which I am able to interact with people, positively influence their personal and professional lives, and make my difference in society.

As for staying connected to ICSC, my learning experiences in the Creative Studies program have provided me with invaluable insight and real-world application of the Creative Problem Solving process. There is the annual *Creative Expert Exchange* (CEE) and the valuable support for creativity and the incorporation of its concepts in every walk of life. There is *ICSCreativity* on Twitter, the new *ICSC Press*, Tedx talks, and other global media options for finding creativity everywhere, and I am inspired by so much more each day due to my exposure and understanding of creativity.

For example, in one of my Creative Studies classes, we reviewed a Tedx talk by Shawn Anchor (May 2011), entitled “The Happy Secret to Better Work.” The humor, positivity, excitement, and optimism he exuberated during his talk provided the kind of inspiration that I connect with. I would also like to be able to provide this same type of influence to the people that I interact with each day.

So whether I see myself working for an organization, or possibly being a self-employed consultant to accomplish my goals for being a future Creative and Change Leader, I am now an expert in the field of Creativity, and continue on my journey.

### My Final Thoughts

Although none of us has all the answers to approaching life’s challenges, and I certainly do not know what will be your inspiration, I do know that I continue to learn something new each and every day. There is a plethora of information about Creativity, Creative Problem Solving, and many other inspirational aspects of Creative Thinking that have not been explored and reviewed in this paper.

I continue to enjoy and embrace each day of my life's journey, and think that my best advice to others about one's thinking skills, one's creative abilities, and one's approach to life's challenges can be summarized in a few phrases. Be positive and look at the glass half-full, rather than half empty. Strive to do your best at all times, if for no other reason, but, because it's the right way to approach things. Embrace diversity as we can learn from each other's differences and may even find comfort and joy in our similarities. Have faith, hope and love of self and others. Be authentic, be passionate (finding your heart of hearts), and be yourself, as only you can be. Be gracious and thankful for what you have. It's ok to make mistakes, as being wrong usually is how we figure out what's right. Lastly, learn to enjoy the season you're in, and don't forget to enjoy the moment.

*"Life isn't about finding yourself...life is about Creating yourself"*

*-George Bernard Shaw*

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