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### Christmas, Creativity & Press: The Ability to Dream Again

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#### Recommended Citation

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SUNY Buffalo State College

International Center for Studies in Creativity and Change Leadership

*Christmas, Creativity & Press: The Ability to Dream Again*

A Project

in Creative Studies

by

Keri Marrs Barrón

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

December 2014

## ABSTRACT OF A PROJECT

*Christmas, Creativity & Press: The Ability to Dream Again*

This is the story of my creative journey. It begins with this love story of a childhood dream for the Christmas season. My goal is to explain that two P's of the 4-P creative model defined by Rhodes (1961), a person and one's environment, are connected through the creativity behavior skill, dreaming. The end project will be a dream workshop that will be designed using Torrance's Incubation Model focusing on the creativity skill "be aware of emotion." The workshop will emphasize the person and press and the development of dreams along with creating an action plan to start achieving one's dream. The session will be delivered to a community group who just participated in FourSight breakthrough thinking training and will be approximately one hour in length.

*Keywords: intrinsically motivated, dreaming, environment, personal characteristics.*

Ken Man Barr

December 8, 2014

Date

SUNY Buffalo State College

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Dates of Approval:

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Project Advisor: J. Michael Fox

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Candidate: Keri Marrs Barrón

## Christmas, Creativity & Press: The Ability to Dream Again

*Author's Note: This story shares a love for Christmas and the celebration of the birth of Jesus. I realize not everyone's Christmas memories are pleasant nor all readers share a faith in Jesus Christ, so please note the leap skill, "be aware of emotion" as you continue your reading.*

Creativity can be understood through examining one's emotions, behaviors, and thoughts. In this document, I plan to share a thread or a behavior that unravels and connects two of the P's in the 4-P model of creativity. In order to share effectively this skill, I must begin by telling my story and how my creativity is woven together as a tapestry.

### **My story**

With Christmas approaching, I begin to think about the birth of baby Jesus and the gifts and treasures He brings to all. Abruptly, this thought is interrupted by other thoughts of all the tasks that I need to do to fulfill our annual family of five obligations (decorating, baking, cooking, shopping, and wrapping). A true college student, I put that thought and the tasks onto the back burner as a Master's project must be finished before I begin the Christmas task list. I walk into the local Walgreen's drug store with a purpose: to pick up a prescription. The Christmas music plays loudly, the decorations hang the smells of baking cinnamon candles and sprays are wafting throughout the air. I cannot stop smiling, even if I had no intentions of purchasing "Christmas items" nor was I in the mood for Christmas. As I continue to think of this topic, I continue to wonder: 'why are my emotions so different from the moment I walk into the store to the moments I leave?'

I began to explore these joyful memories of decorating the house with family heirlooms, making ornaments and singing Christmas songs. I can envision my mom dancing and wrapping

presents happily. My dad fussing with the one string of lights that will work if he tests every light on the string and the cuts he endured from trimming the fresh tree (so it was just right). I remember sitting on the stairs looking at those presents in the early Christmas morning hours before everyone woke up, dreaming of what Santa brought me and what might be under the tree with my name on it. As I had learned over the years, I had to wait until the 6:00 A.M. hour to awake anyone and as the clock hands moved, I ran up the stairs and would jump into my older sister's bed, yelling, "Santa came, Santa came!" Everyone would wake up and we would tear apart the presents to see what Santa had delivered. Of course, I had already eyed the empty plate of cookies, empty milk glass and remnants of carrots; I even checked the garbage can before anyone woke up to make sure that Santa and his reindeer had eaten their treats. As I pondered these memories, it occurred to me why I left Walgreen's smiling, it was the Christmas lists and the Santa letters that I wrote dreaming and hoping for the one gift I wanted delivered Christmas morning.

Fast forward several years and I have become a parent and I have noticed, in our house, we are happiest when Christmas time is around. There are many decorations around the house, smells of pine trees, plans for baking cookies and treats, shopping trips for buying gifts and time for wrapping presents. I wait with enthusiasm for Christmas morning to see the look on my children's faces as they open presents. What are the thoughts running through their mind as they shake a present to death with heightened anticipation that it might be that one special gift? As presents are opened and paper is thrown and small pieces are misplaced, I smile ear to ear with the satisfaction that I was able to fulfill someone's dreams as someone once filled mine.

As presents are played, leftovers are eaten for the following days, decorations stored for the following year, the realization sets in that children return to school and adults have to go to

work and return to their normal schedule. It is as if the book closes, the story ends. I keep wondering what happened and why did we go from such fun to such sadness?

### **Observations**

I have pondered this thought and started observing those around me. One observation was that, as distance students in the Creative Studies program, we have this similar experience. Excited to go to Buffalo State College to experience something new (two weeks of introductory classes) and set aside our "everyday life" for this adult college life: knowledge, friends, living in a dorm for two weeks, enjoying the experience, learning about one self and dreading the thought of re-entering the "real world." The feeling of returning home and to work are not bad, one reconnects with their family after two weeks of being away. It is the reality of the dissolving of the group bond that was shared from the Buffalo experience. In Buffalo, support is given as creative ideas are shared and the thought of returning to those who really do not understand the principles of creativity nor share the enthusiasm to follow a creative adventure is the same struggle I have as I pack away those Christmas items. I love change so I really struggle with both of these ends (Christmas and Buffalo). So why do I dread packing up these things and moving on?

The next observation was built off of both experiences. The environment of Christmas and Buffalo State College are very positive. The excitement that one feels when leaving for vacation (or school) or to open that special present, is surrounded by a positive welcoming environment to explore something new. I think of leaving Buffalo and putting away Christmas as similar to changing the environment to be routine, the fun and the adventure are no longer

present. Routine consists of the chaos of life, family, and work, etc. The environment has changed, yet that does not mean it has to be towards the sour. So, why am I making it that way?

The final observation I made feels like I am holding the last piece of the puzzle, not ready to let go yet. These two examples fit into an area that I have struggled with. I believe that over the past two years I have learned a tremendous amount about myself, from childhood memories, to my experience as a wife, a parent, a sibling, a daughter, an employee, a business owner, and a Master's distance student at Buffalo. The final observation and piece of the puzzle is that I discovered over the period of so many years, I quit dreaming, unintentionally. As a child, I loved Christmas. As an adult I love Christmas as I can vision the decorations and the presents and the smiles on my children's faces. Yet, through all of the chores of life and my work experience, my tasks kept me overly busy. I did not have time for my dreams, so I set them aside to help others. Now, I have made many changes and my experience at Buffalo State College has encouraged me to see that I can dream again. As I finish this dream, a second Master's degree, I want to share my gift of helping others to find their dreams.

### **My project**

My goal is to explain how a person, one's environment, and dreaming, is the main thread that keeps them connected. The end project will be a dream workshop that will be designed using Torrance's Incubation Model with emphasis on dreaming, the environment and creating an action plan to start achieving one's dream. The workshop will be delivered following a FourSight workshop where the attendees will have already learned their creative problem solving preference. The layout of the workshop will be submitted in Appendix A.

## **Creativity**

Do you think you are creative? Are you a person who assembles lists to complete things, someone who starts projects and midway through discover a better idea and consistently, start new projects without completing one? Are you a writer or artists that are reaching to new levels in your work? Each example lists people who are creative. We all are creative. "Creativity is a process that results in a novel product or idea which is accepted as useful, tenable, or satisfying by a significant group of others at some point in time" (Stein, 1975, p. 253). This definition encompasses everyday living. So for those who answer, "No, they are not creative." I disagree as I believe one cannot make it through everyday life without creativity. Creativity is the foundation of everything. In the *Holy Bible*, God created the earth and man in the first week, Genesis 1 (1982, p.1). Our ability to change, innovate and adapt happens because the word "create" is a verb.

## **4-P Model**

Rhodes developed a model that encompasses creativity called the four P's: process, product, press, person (1961). Each of these elements would be a project itself. So I am choosing to just focus on two of the 'P's' and their relevance to this story. The first 'P' is defined as the person and will be evaluated using cognitive thinking, the emotional or affective side and the behavior side of creativity. The second 'P' will be the environment or the climate in which creative exists. The connection will be the thread that holds the two together in this story of Christmas and that is the behavior skill of dreaming.

### **FourSight preference, the person**

As I began my journey at Buffalo State College, I completed the FourSight breakthrough thinking training and discovered my preference for creative problem solving. With no surprise, I was a pure implementer and enjoyed the training I received on the way others engage in the problem solving process. What was a profound insight was how I was irritated by others as they wanted to ask questions and not complete a task. As questions were asked, I responded by rolling my eyes and jumping into moving towards the solution. I had not allowed others the time to process the problem in reflection of another's creative preference. I also learned that my actions irritated them with my "get it done attitude" so I learned that I needed to collaborate in the problem solving process so all parties would be content. This process has been two years in the making and still a work in progress.

Dr. Firestien's book, *Why didn't I think of that?*, has always intrigued me (1998). The book helped me understand why I struggle with coming up with ideas. Recognizing that I had the characteristics of an implementer, I decided I needed to stretch and grow in other areas of the problem solving process, like idea generation. A book that I read, *The happiness project*, reminded me that I could try something different for a month and evaluate whether it added to my happiness or not (Rubin, 2011). The book references that there is no pressure to be great; yet, if you do not try something you will never find out if it can contribute to your happiness. I started by organizing my house (developing), painting rooms in my house (ideation) and asking questions of why my children did what they did (clarification). What I quickly found out was when I took the pressure off of doing great, I had a phenomenal time. I realized that I allowed myself permission to learn, to laugh and enjoy my creation. Research shows creativity is increased based off of expectations (Hsu & Fan, 2010). If one is expected to create, some very

creative elements are designed when under pressure. If the expectations are low, the pressure drops and creativity can also occur (Hsu & Fan, 2010). The product just might not be the most novel and useful creation and yet, something has been created. I also learned that painting can be quite fun when you realize what you can dream and make. I was having so much fun painting; my son joined me and learned how to paint a bedroom. What a learning experience my painting was! It provided a positive environment with laughter and joy, bringing dreams to life.

### **Cognitive Thinking**

Unfortunately, the "what next tasks?" of the implementer preference never seems to end so, I take these tasks in stride as I explore myself. As I was reading *Creative Leadership*, I was captivated by the cognitive processes: diagnostic thinking, visionary thinking, strategic thinking, ideational thinking, evaluative thinking, contextual thinking and tactical thinking (Puccio et al., 2011, p.71) that are associated with the creative problem solving model. I wanted to learn more on how I might strengthen my own thinking skills in the other problem solving areas. I jumped into "self-help" books to develop my cognitive process, my confidence, my leadership skills, to tame my extroverted self and to become a better story teller. I struggled with the emotion that I felt as I read these books. Appendix B is an accumulation of 'self-help' books to explore one's personal development. I am working on my second Master's degree so I feel like am quite aware of cognitive thinking. However, I am still not satisfied. Am I a failure? Why do I feel that I must improve? What are the goals that I am trying to accomplish? What am I trying to accomplish besides finishing this Master's degree in creative studies? Like a true implementer, daily I struggle with this one question.

**Affect (Emotions)**

Zhou (2008) showed that emotions are related to an individual's thought processes (Puccio et al., 2011, p. 72). . I feel the 'self-help' books are a connection to my emotions and my thought processes. Emotions in the creative world are influential in everything one does. Qualities such as energetic, daring, risk-taking and courage are traits of highly creative professionals and are emotionally based (Puccio et al., 2011, p. 63). Puccio et al. continue to explore the affective side of creativity and they have discovered the emotional skills that complement the cognitive skills (2011, p.73). Affective skills impact thinking. I have high sensitivity to the environment and my risk taking skills get the job done many times, a common behavioral pattern of an implementer. Is this possibly why I love Christmas time? I sense the changes in the environment and I have task lists to complete. However, I do not always feel the same other times of the year when the environment changes and there are still lists to check-off.

In exploring emotion more, I took a course on emotional intelligence to gain insight and leverage my emotion for success. I realized that emotional intelligence is a relevant topic, however, it did not answer my questions about my journey and is beyond the scope of this document. I plowed ahead and did the next best thing, I listened to my kids. I talked to my five-year-old daughter about her love for her personal space and her music. Listening to her questions about unicorns, music and why she does not have blue eyes, I left smiling from her creative imagination and felt full of energy and sadness for her distaste for her brown eyes. Perplexed that my own emotions change from happy to sad so quickly, I passed my twelve-year-old son's room and asked him about his dreams and career aspirations. He responded: "Mom, I don't have any." I stopped and was startled. Why not? Who does not have dreams? Who does not have aspirations for a better life?

**A-ha**

His response was my "a-ha" moment as a parent and as a creativity practitioner. "A-ha" is the moment that Torrance and Safter explain has significance that it is spelled the same forward and backward. "A-ha" is an expression about the environment, "a-ha" backward is an inward expression of our self (1999, p.128). I realized I had quit dreaming and my lack of sharing my dreams were being transferred through my parental actions. Realistically, I did not quit dreaming, yet, I was unaware of my dreams. Research shows that dream recall is reduced when one is not disturbed during the REM phase of a sleep cycle or within eight minutes of ending the sleep cycle (Dement & Kleitman, 1957). My professional answer is that I was exhausted and just slept without disturbances and am unlikely to recall those dreams I had during my sleep cycle. I jumped back into my creative books and remembered that dreaming was an affective skill of ideational thinking (Puccio et al., 2011, p.73).

**Behavior**

I recalled my vivid childhood dreams and I loved to dream as a child. My adult responsibilities expanded of step-sons, to my own children, caregiver to an ill parent and the added job responsibilities of a leadership role, there was very little time for me, or fulfilling my dreams. The result is that I put my dreams aside. Dreams were too far away and seemed to be an unrealistic expense and aspect of my life. It all seemed to be coming together here. I realized the reason I love Christmas is because Christmas allows me to dream. When I dream, I apply my implementer skills: I assemble my action plans to follow up on my dreams. Yet, other times of the year, I no longer dream. I have no aspirations to dream and when I need to pack away my Christmas treasures or pack away my Buffalo friends and memories, I feel such sadness as I have

no further dreams to implement. My Christmas memories are packed away, my Buffalo friends are returning to their home and we resume everyday routine. The reason I do not want to return to work or the "normal routine" is I miss the enthusiasm and climate that a welcome and open environment brings.

### **Environment**

The second 'P' of the 4-P model of creativity is press or environment (Rhodes, 1961). Creativity is influenced by our surrounding environment. If we are working in an area where the physical and emotional environment is hindered, creativity may be stifled. If the environment is more inviting, the probability to be more creative is present. Ekvall has explored environments through the creative climate questionnaire he designed and determined that creativity depends on the creative outcomes that are expected (1997, p.201). Creative outcomes are defined as those similar to products: what are the usefulness, novelty and elegance of your outcome? (Ekvall, 1997, p. 195). If at work, I am expected to be creative then I will notice how well the environment does or does not support my creative efforts. Hsu & Fan (2010) discovered:

"Empirical evidence has determined that social factors of the environment within an organization (i.e., climate dimensions such as organizational encouragement, workgroup support, and sufficient resources) influence employees' intrinsic motivation, and thus affect their creativity (Hunter, Bedell, & Mumford, 2007)."

A-ha, social factors of encouragement and resources can influence creativity as well as intrinsic motivation. Amabile & Kramer discuss intrinsic motivation and how engaged in one's work is based on one's own internal excitement and enthusiasm for the topic (2011, p.34). It is about the climate. If one is held hostage in a hostile work environment, one's ability to create is

diminished. I love Christmas as the environment is about thriving in a warm and welcoming, delicious smelling climate. This environment has so many positive adjectives to describe the imagery that I could add a page of up-lifting words to this inquiry. Those same parallel words describe the field of creativity. When one feels support and encouragement, the ability to thrive and create is contagious.

I believe that the physical environment can be addressed and the temperature of a family can be adjusted. The most destructive climate that one creates is within one's own head. My challenges have been set in front of me because someone said—or I said—“ that I could not do it. " I was not willing to change my perception to change my problem. When the climate in my mind changed, that I can do this and I will do this, my problem became a solvable problem. Napoleon Hill captured this same sentiment in the book, *Outwitting the Devil*, a must read if one's mental climate needs changing. Christmas affords me this mental uplift and creativity has provided me the tools and support that have allowed me to take risks like I have never taken before. Yet, there is one thread that holds me together, and that is my new found love for dreaming. One of my creativity heroes, Dr. Noller, stated "found something (creativity) that I didn't know existed and it changed my life" (Quotes, n.d). I have a similar feeling for dreaming. However, I did know it existed. Yet when I realized the power of dreaming, it changed my life.

### **Dreaming**

Dreaming defined by Puccio, Mance, and Murdock is "the ability to imagine as possible your desires and hopes" (2011, p. 78). In exploring one's dreams, a person can stretch beyond the possible and reach for the impossible. In August of 2013, I left the field of higher education administration to complete this Buffalo State College degree. It did not start as a dream, rather a

task off my list. Now, I have learned that, when I open up my mind to dream and share my dreams, I inspire others. In helping others reach their goals I also fulfill my goals.

I checked out several books on dreams and the one that held my attention was titled, *Dream Manager*, by Matthew Kelly. Kelly wrote about a company that was struggling with high turnover rates, high cost of supplies and the need for change in order for the company to survive (2007). As the corporate team was struggling, one team member suggested listening to the way others communicated. If someone asked an employee what he did, he would repeat the mission, vision or prepared statement. If you asked about a personal goal, he would respond full of energy and passion. Therefore, as an employer we should work on helping our employees fulfill his individual dreams so he may share his same energy and passion for the company (Kelly, M., 2007, p.25).

### **Dream Manager**

The story of the *Dream Manager* continues with the company making a drastic change by hiring a dream manager. This employee was to assist all employees with fulfilling their dreams. The dream manager would meet monthly to set up goals, financial strategies and be assisted as needed. It was a slow start. Yet, as the first dreams of a tropical vacation, language classes and home ownership were met within six months, the leaders were optimistic. As the company started to make a profit, employees began to develop their loyalty to the company. Co-workers began sharing their dreams, and the number of call-offs decreased (Kelly, M., 2007). Workers moved from being extrinsically motivated—working toward a reward to being intrinsically motivated—enjoying the love of doing their work (Amabile, 2011, p.34.) Yes, they were reaping rewards of pay and dream manager guidance. I believe that, as their dreams were

achieved and more dreams established, they became intrinsically motivated. The reward they were working for was their own personal achievement which is the most satisfying of all. The concept of working to achieve one's personal dreams, one's work goals should be completed faster and with more accuracy and increased production as one move closer to achieving one's own personal goals. This ties right into my new found love of dreaming and Christmas.

### **Christmas, Creativity and Conclusion**

Christmas changed my world. I see a happy place with amazing smells of balsam trees and goodies, beautiful colors, fresh snow and smiling, happy family and friends. It is my time of joy and gratitude for the birth of Jesus. In essence, I am intrinsically motivated when I celebrate Christmas. Those smiles I carry as I hear Christmas songs and drive down the road with the reindeer antlers and red nose on my vehicle remind me of the dreams I once had and still hold. It makes complete sense to why I am such a Christmas nut. It parallels the two "P's" that I focused on in this document; the person, and the press. It takes a person and an environment yet, if the two "P's" are not interwoven one's output is decreased. The thread that holds my "P's" together is dreaming, that behavior skill that is recognized as a creative trait. In my newly evolved creative world, I recognize the importance of dreaming. Dreaming is something that I once thought I did not have time for. I now realize, dreaming is what I should be doing every day. Dreaming permits me to envision something unrealistic, something real. It keeps my mind moving towards a positive environment of something that I can do and something that I can learn, so I always have something to do. Two years ago, I thought I was taking a cognitive journey. Instead my journey turned out be a creative one, one of discovering myself. Now, with my newly-found knowledge and insight on the value of creativity and dreaming, I can encourage someone to dream and fulfill their dreams. Thank you!

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## Appendix A

Here is the lesson plan that I designed using the TIM model. The workshop was delivered on December 4, 2014 in Michigan City, Indiana.

### **Santa Claus, Dreams and Creativity**

1. Audience: A group of community members who just completed FourSight training
2. Content Topic: Human Relationship and Bottom Line Impact
3. Content Objectivity: To develop an environment to encourage dreaming
4. Creativity Goal: To help someone develop an action plan to follow through with a dream
5. Creativity Skill: Be aware of emotion, my lesson refers to Christmas and I realize not everyone has pleasant Christmas memories, nor may follow in the Christian faith, so please Be aware of Emotion.

**\*\*Heightening Anticipation:** Asking each group member before the session for two things.

1. To bring a list of dreams they would like to complete.
2. To bring a toy replica they received that bring positive memories of a past Holiday Celebration (i.e. a train that I received reminds me of my dad, so I will bring a toy train.)

As participants walk into the room, the room will be decorated with Christmas decorations, a scent of warm cookies and music playing in the background.

**\*\*Digging Deeper:**

-I will share my story of loving the Christmas holiday. The idea of dreaming of that one gift that Santa Claus would bring me and the anticipation I had waiting for 6:00 A.M. to occur on Christmas morning, when I could open the Christmas presents I received.

-Share 2 minute video from the Christmas Story. All he wanted for Christmas was a Red Ryder BB gun and all of his family, teacher and Santa told him he would shoot his eye out.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YleZvTSDC6s>

-What emotion did you notice?

-Looking at the 4-P model of creativity, I will be reviewing the person and the press.

-Discussing the ABC's of creativity and emphasizing dreaming as a behavioral skill. Do people recall their last dreams? Are they working on an action plan to reach that dream? --

-Have others shut off their ability to dream? Looking at research that shows when people are happiest, they have higher job productivity (Amabile), intrinsically motivated.

-When environment is positive, productivity is increased, when dreams are being fulfilled and supported (M. Kelly), relationships are established, productivity is increased and bottom line is positively impacted. When one can only focus on the negative and other concerns, relationships and bottom line are also impacted, hence the need to be aware of emotion.

-I will first take the time to recognize the emotion of walking into a room full of Christmas chaos. Look at setting up the environment. An activity will be presented to review their dreams when it is a very stressful scenario, and a very relaxing scenario.

-Next, I would like participants to review their assembled dream list and add several different categories of dreams (i.e. spiritual, financial, recreational, etc.) and put together an action plan that participants can leave with a to do list to get started fulfilling one dream and the tool to start another.

**\*\*Extend the Learning:**

Another activity. Each person was asked to bring their favorite toy replica. On the table in front of them is a very large piece of paper that resembles a gift tag. I would like you to write out to a friend, a stranger how this toy fulfilled one of your child hood dreams.

Here is my story: About 9 years ago my mom & dad bought my son this very large train to place around the Christmas tree, you see my son already had a toy train but my dad insisted my son have this toy. The following year, we battled this big train and we placed it under the tree with the delight in my son's eyes and my dad's too. I asked my mom why was dad so giddy over this train, my dad did not collect trains or cars, so I was not sure. My mom answered. "He always dreamed of one and never had a toy train as a child as he was from a huge family." With only daughters, we were not really into trains so he was able to pass along a dream fulfilled to his first grandson. This story is so precious to me as my dad died the following summer.

--You see, right now as a society we are teaching our kids to quit dreaming and using their imagination, so I ask you as you fill out your gift tag, think of who you may share your favorite toy dream with and give them a toy and a story so they may keep dreaming. Remember keep your climate open with ideas and be Aware of your Emotions, they can get the best of you!

Last video...Few minutes to write so I leave you will this last 2 minute video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXc5-x-k55M> Polar Express , Can you hear the bell?

Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and keep dreaming!

## Appendix B

### Books to Explore for Further Review

#### **Dreaming**

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