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The 7 Secrets of People Who Have Found Their Passions

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Buffalo State
State University of New York
Department of Creative Studies

The 7 Secrets of People Who Have Found Their Passions

A Project in
Creative Studies

by

Nicolas C. Drayton

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science

May 2016

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An Abstract of a Project
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Abstract

A wide range of factors contribute to an individual's success in life. This study presents 7 "secrets" seen in 10 individuals who have successfully made fulfilling connections with their passions. Torrance (1983) identified a direct link between individuals who discovered their passions and their creative productivity. The Appreciative Inquiry model (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) is used to garner a collection of stories and anecdotes. A questionnaire was developed using Rhodes' (1961) 4P's model. Secrets identified include: developing a comfort level with risk-taking, seeking out mentors in one's life, developing one's spiritual side, and practicing mindfulness.

Keywords: Passion, Torrance, Appreciative Inquiry, lives, interview, positive, mindfulness.



May 9th 2016

Date

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May 9th 2016

Dr. Cynthia Burnett
Assistant Professor



May 9th 2016

Nicolas C. Drayton
Student

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I would like to dedicate this paper to my four siblings, Gregory, Dale, David and Philip, each of whom in their unique ways, facilitated, mentored and tolerated me in my quest for my passion, creating a safe space in my formative years, feeding my hungry mind, even if at times with made-up answers, and to this day, continue to love and support me through my journey. And to my tribe, The Jewels, who welcomed me home to the community of creatives. Especially Paula Pearlman, whose midnight text messages and words of wisdom kept my engines fueled and kept me focused. Finally to Dr. Cyndi Burnett, my Master's advisor, whose guidance repeatedly pulled my feet back down to earth, lightened the load I kept putting on myself and in so doing probably helped me most of all to hold on to my sanity.

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SECTION 1: BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Introduction

This study documents and examines stories and anecdotes from the lives of 10 individuals who have found their passions in life and are living them, those who have a sense of having found their purposes and are doing the things that they couldn't *not* do. They are in their Element (Robinson and Aronica, 2009). It narrates their life experiences, with the objective of identifying seven basic commonalities in the lives of these individuals. The collection of narratives will be useable by parents, teachers, mentors, life coaches and others to help to nurture individuals' discovery and focus on their destinies from early ages, ultimately leading to more fulfilling lives and greater adult creative achievements. I hope that these anecdotes will be inspirational to others and that the 7 "secrets" will be used to provide some basic insights into ways that we might create environments and nurturing experiences through which more youths and even older individuals can connect with and develop their passions.

Personal Goals

This project fulfills a range of personal, professional and social/educational objectives: I have a heart for young people who demonstrate unusual passions or interests in anything. I believe this stems to a large extent from my own lonely journey through knowing what my passion was *not*, but not knowing, what it *was*. I felt constrained by my school's formal curriculum, where I was not allowed to explore my general love for nature in the context of the classroom. I know that there are many others like me in today's student population. This project provides me with the personal gratification of knowing that I will be ultimately helping some

students to avoid some of the pain and confusion that I personally experienced as a student, by helping them to get in touch with their passions and inspiring them to embrace and pursue them. In a similar vein, I would like to help teachers and parents to understand how to better support youths as they explore their passions.

This study also gives me great satisfaction in knowing that it will open doors to further explore the passion/performance relationship as it relates to creativity in individuals. Additionally, on a professional level, it demonstrates my ability to conduct scholarly research as it moves me closer to the completion of my second Master's degree and to a new and exciting professional realm for myself. Finally, to identify the "The 7 Secrets of People Who Have Found Their Passions" will be to provide many individuals with insights into their own lives and career paths and will ultimately help to create improved levels of personal and professional gratification as well as potentially enhanced creativity and innovation in a wide range of vocations.

This study contributes to my personal understanding of what gives some people the drive to accomplish their passions. The case studies will help me to gain some insights into the relationship between knowing one's passion and how that plays out in terms of greater levels of creativity and innovation in such individuals. The process will also strengthen my qualitative inquiry skills and provide some hands-on experience with using the Appreciative Inquiry model.

Rationale for Selection of the Appreciative Inquiry Model

I chose the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) model (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999) for use in my study because it is one of the more contemporary models and it appears to be gaining currency of usage over the more traditional problem solving models that start with identifying

the problem(s) and focus their energy on merely fixing them. I believe that AI has so much more to offer beyond simply fixing an existing problem and that it promises to become one of the more widely used the models of the future. I want to become more proficient in using it.

The Appreciative Inquiry model (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999) is used to identify the positive factors that contributed to the subjects' finding and living their passions. I find the AI approach intriguing. It takes me into what feels like the transformative cutting edge of a new paradigm and inspires me to really want to test-drive this approach, not just on the proven track, but to test its flexibility. I was curious about its application in retrospect, which is not the traditional way in which AI is applied. AI is a change tool, more commonly used for visioning. My application facilitates my subjects' looking backwards to the positives that effected changes which have already occurred. So while AI in essence asks the question, "How do you become your dream?" I am using the same tool to ask the question, "How *did* you become your dream?"

The Qualitative Approach to Inquiry and Assessment

The qualitative inquiry approach to gathering information provides opportunities to identify nuances and details that cannot be revealed through quantitative assessments. Secondly, because the qualitative approach is made up essentially of interviews, observations and examination of documents, it calls for strong skills in listening, observing and at times, on-the-spot processing to accommodate real-time digging deeper. At this exploratory stage of the subject matter, I strongly believe that the qualitative approach is the most appropriate application for a study of this nature.

All of the above have contributed to my choice of approach to my Master's Project and to my strong motivation to do this study.

SECTION 2: PERTINENT LITERATURE

Introduction

While there has been extensive research on creativity in individuals (Chang, 2014) and on identifying giftedness (Stoeger, 2009), the literature seems to be relatively sparse in examining the connections between an individual's giftedness and passion and similarly between one's creativity and passion. The assumption seems to be that one's giftedness will be reflected by that individual's passion. However, it is possible for an individual to be gifted in several areas but possess no passion for any of them – or, conversely, to be very passionate about a given vocation, but not particularly gifted in that area. Robinson and Aronica, (2009) described the state of passionately loving what one is doing as being in one's Element. "When people are in their Element, they connect with something fundamental to their sense of identity, purpose and well-being" (Robinson & Aronica, 2009, p. 21).

My study is based on the assertion by E. Paul Torrance (1983) that the creative energy which results in outstanding accomplishments by individuals is sourced from their being in love with something (i.e. finding their life's passion) at an early age and continuing on in that vein into one's adult professional lives. Torrance (1983) identified a direct link between individuals who discovered their passions and creative productivity, and senses of professional fulfilment as adults. In the same study, Torrance (1983) acknowledged that in interviews with elementary school children, there were several who did not know what they wanted to be when they grew up. While this is not necessarily cause for concern, it does beg the question: What if those who did not know were in some ways assisted in the discovery of their passions and supported in the

exploration of them? How might this translate into more fulfilled adult professional lives and into greater creativity and innovation in a myriad range of professional spheres?

The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) model of investigation is described by Cooperrider & Whitney (1999) as “.....the coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations and the relevant world around them” (p. 3). Appreciative Inquiry assists respondents in focusing on the positive experiences that have made them feel most alive and energized. It helps to draw out from them the things that they value the most and helps to identify the synergistic experiences that fostered their journeys to their ultimate vocations or “callings”. Such a model is most appropriate for a project of this nature.

Below is a list of resources that have been used in the pursuit of this study and brief descriptions of how they have impacted me in developing this study.

Developing my Concept and Deepening my Thinking

Engel, S. L. (2015). *The hungry mind: The origins of curiosity in childhood*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

This book discusses curiosity in children and ways in which it might be actively (“People”) or passively (“Place”) nurtured to foster a child’s development into finding his or her Passion. While I have not yet read the book in its entirety, it gave me great insights and clues to what I should be looking for in my interview sessions. It helped to shape the nature of my basic interview questions.

Robinson, K., & Aronica, L. (2009). *The element: How finding your passion changes everything*. New York, NY: Viking.

Sir Ken Robinson’s discussion of one’s Element, while heavy on making the point of the inadequacy of our contemporary educational system, is also replete with case studies and

illustrative stories which will serve as guides for the elements of my Appreciative Inquiry study, both in terms of understanding who is truly in their Elements and the 4P's factors that helped to track these individuals to their Elements. Robinson's work also in a very general sense helped to sharpen my interviewing and analytical senses in terms of helping me to identify some of the things that I should keenly listen for during conversations with my respondents, or look for in my analytical comparisons of narratives, while at the same time remaining open to other nuances.

Torrance, E. P. (1980). Creativity and futurism in education: retooling. *Education*, 100(4), 298-311.

Torrance, E. P. (1983). The importance of falling in love with "something." *Creative Child & Adult Quarterly*, Volume(Issue)8, 72-78.

These are two seminal studies that have provided both the backdrop and context for my proposed work. These resources all struck a chord or resonated with me in some way and helped to pull together some fragmented thoughts, concerns and wishes that resided in my head.

Developing my Learning

Cooperrider, D., & Whitney, D. D. (2005). *Appreciative Inquiry: A positive revolution in change*. Retrieved from <http://www.amazon.com/Appreciative-Inquiry-Positive-Revolution-Change/dp/1576753565>

This literature enabled me to do some backfilling on a creativity tool with which I was feeling extremely inadequate. This piece served to both provide a deeper learning about Appreciative Inquiry and to whet my appetite for an even deeper familiarity and comfort with this tool and its potentially transformative value.

Developing my Skills

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

While this book is more focused than I was on the research and evaluation components of a Qualitative study, it does have some good information on topics such as the purpose of Open Ended responses and Appreciative Inquiry which were very useful. This resource gave me some invaluable guidelines on how to successfully conduct interviews.

Designing my Project

Cabra, J., & Burnett, C. (n.d.). *An interview guide* [Scholarly project]. Retrieved February 02, 2016. Interview questions developed for MOOC (2015)

This was heavily relied on, with permission, in the development of my interview guide. The questions were modified to suit the specifics of my inquiry.

Cabra, J. F., & Burnett, A. (2015). *Broadening participation in environmental biology: Exploring what works*. Retrieved from, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/288825930>

This provided an excellent model of how my write-up might be structured. While unlike this report, *What Works* is a full publication, the basic layout of introductory sections, followed by the case studies, followed by user-friendly discussion sections, is very instructive for the eventual layout of my report. However, the format used here was not followed exactly.

Rhodes, M. (1961). An analysis of creativity. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 42(7), 305–310.

This seminal work by Rhodes provides a good introduction, description and discussion of the 4P's which is the framework within which the participants' commonalities were identified.

In conclusion, each of the above pieces has contributed significantly to taking me on a journey to this point in my project. I am excited about my topic and I feel the power of the

personal and scholarly context within which it has been birthed. Without even having completed this project, I can already clearly see the extent to which my own learning has evolved on so many levels, again, to a significant extent, from reading and applying elements of the above resources. I feel much more proficient in designing studies of this nature and how to ask the right follow-on and exploratory questions.

Additional Resources

The following resources were also explored, but were not as central to my process as those discussed above:

Baermann, M. (2006). Exploring appreciative inquiry and its links to creativity. *Creative Studies Graduate Student Master's Projects. Paper 62.*

Dunlap, C. A. (2008). Effective evaluation through appreciative inquiry. *Performance improvement, 47(2), 23-29.*

Jewell, S., & Kambhampati, U. S. (2015). Are happy youth also satisfied adults? An analysis of the impact of childhood factors on adult life satisfaction. *Social Indicators Research, 121(2), 543-567.*

Langer, E. J., & Moldoveanu, M. (2000). The construct of mindfulness. *Journal of social issues, 56(1), 1-9.*

Michael, S. (2005). The promise of appreciative inquiry as an interview tool for field research. *Development in Practice, 15(2), 222-230.*

Pickard, A., & Bailey, R. (2009). Crystallising experiences among young elite dancers. *Sport, Education and Society, 14(2), 165-181.*

Schwartz, B. (2015). Rethinking work. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/30/opinion/sunday/rethinking-work.html?_r=2

SECTION 3: PROCESS PLAN

Introduction

This section describes the roadmap that I developed to take me to my desired outcome. The process took me through a number of landmark points and like any other planned journey, sometimes a correction of course is required.

Achievement of Goals and Outcomes

I achieved my goals and outcomes through a number of basic stages. Firstly, there was an extensive literature search on themes such as evaluating giftedness, finding your passion (or “Element”), qualitative research and evaluation methods, longitudinal studies of creativity in children and definitions of professional passion and Appreciative Inquiry. This literature search was invaluable in helping me to fully understand the context into which my work falls. It clarified what has been done to date, what gaps exist and how might I fine-tune my work to ensure that it is truly unique and groundbreaking. It was also essential in helping me to clearly define my working definitions for concepts like life-passion, giftedness, personal fulfilment and professional gratification.

In the second stage, I developed criteria by which my interview subjects would be identified and selected. Given the relatively short timeframe available in which to conduct this study, there was the need to establish some clear constraints and boundaries for the context and scope of selections made for the case studies. These were case studies of everyday individuals, ranging from age 18 to 90, who have clearly demonstrated identification of and a strong connection with their life’s passions and utilization of that passion in their vocations. – Individuals who for the most part, “...couldn’t imagine doing anything else with their lives” (Robinson & Aronica, 2009, p. 20). Notwithstanding, these stories and anecdotes came from a

cross section of individuals, with the absence of any biases towards gender, age, nationality, race or profession. The criteria used were based on three considerations essentially: i) Is the subject 18 years or older? ii) Does the potential subject demonstrate a clear identification of his or her life's passion? and iii) Has the individual made a career of his or her life's passion? A total of 10 subjects were identified for this study. They included: a fisherman, a conservationist, a singer/actress, a sushi chef, a domestic violence advocate, a pastor, a writer of children's books, a farmer, a hospitality services professional and a high school teacher. These were all identified based on my personal foundational knowledge of their ages and their identifications with their life's passions and the extent to which they have integrated these passions into their careers. An additional "backup list" of alternatives was also made, in the event that one or more of the 10 identified were not accessible within the available time frame.

Developing my Questions

In planning my interview questions, I had to decide, what questions do I really want to ask my 10 interviewees? There were so many questions that I wanted to ask. So I decided that I would start by listing all of the questions. It was obvious from the outset that I would not be able to ask all of the questions, but I wanted to get the questions down first before making any selections. I had my questions grouped by people, place and process. I listed the questions on Post-it's and performed a clustering of questions which helped to narrow down the volume of questions to some extent. The clusters were formatted into single questions and 10 questions were finally decided upon. In the final analysis, the questionnaire was developed with some assistance from an interview guide previously developed by Cabra and Burnett (2015) and in the context of the Mel Rhodes' (1961) 4-P's model (Person, Process, Press and Product). The questionnaire that emerged from the process appears in Appendix A.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) Process

As mentioned above, my journey through this process required a correction of my course. This came in the form of my discovery that an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was required in order to conduct my project, since my study involved collecting information from human subjects. This resulted in an incurred delay in my planned interviewing schedule and having to substitute two of the participants originally identified for the project, since their inclusion would have required an alternate paperwork and review process which was not practical given the remaining time available for the project. I was also required to complete my Collaborative Institutional Training Institute (CITI) training online and secure a pass grade in that training. The CITI training was extremely informative and interesting because it showed the protections that are in place to ensure that there is no inappropriate research conducted with humans of any age or status. It also provided guidance on the necessary legal approvals and informed consents that must be secured before research can be conducted on human subjects.

The Interviews

Once these interview questions had been reviewed and approved, the interviews were scheduled and conducted either in person or via Skype messaging. Before the interview was actually initiated, an Informed Consent form (Appendix B) was reviewed with the participant and signed. The questionnaire supported a semi-structured interview process. This allowed me to both ask some consistent questions of each of the respondents for purposes of comparison but also to give me the opportunity to dig deeper, if an interesting bit of information arose during the process. It also gave the respondents some latitude to “ramble” and to talk about whatever is foremost, positive and of significant relevance in their life stories. Once the questionnaire had

been developed and field tested, the interview sessions with the identified individuals were set up and conducted.

Process-wise, all interviews were recorded for post-session, detailed review, analysis, summarization and write-up. An analysis was conducted on their stories and anecdotes to identify recurring themes, such as persons of influence, family environments, moments of epiphany and other significant experiences related by the subjects. The final stage in the process was to record the positive essential elements of the interviews in case study format and to identify and summarize the recurring themes in their reports.

Project Timeline

As part of my process plan, a project timeline in weekly increments was developed. This is shown below in Table 1:

Week	Activity	Week	Activity	Week	Activity
Week 1 (Feb)	Meet with Advisor; Initiate Draft Concept Paper 9 HOURS	Week 2	Complete and submit Draft Concept Paper 8 HOURS	Week 3	Submit Final Version of Concept Paper; Continue readings and planning for interviews. 5 HOURS
Week 4	Design questionnaire ; conduct Pilot interview; modify questionnaire 8 HOURS	Week 5 (Mar)	Continue readings 6 HOURS	Week 6	Complete all IRB Paperwork 8 HOURS
Week 7	Complete and submit drafts of	Week 8	Complete interviews Nos. 6-10;	Week 9 March/April	Initiate analysis of interviews

	Sections 1, 2, & 3; Complete 1 st 5 interviews. 11 HOURS		and transcribe 15 HOURS		& write-up of Sections 4-6; 8 HOURS
Week 10 (April)	Complete analysis of interviews; Schedule meeting with Advisor 8.5 HOURS	Week 11	Complete and Submit Drafts of Sections 4, 5, & 6. 7 HOURS	Week 12	Complete all edits to Sections 1-6 Incl. references and Appendices etc. 6 HOURS
Week 13	Submit final project; 8 HOURS	Week 14 (May)	Final Editing and Digital Binding 4 HOURS	Week 15	Submit final master's project; 6:00 pm project presentation
Week 16	Deadline for submission to digital Commons				TOTAL: 111.5 HRS

Table 1. Process Plan's Project Timeline

SECTION 4: OUTCOMES

Introduction

As a result of the project, 5 outcomes were produced. I developed an Informed Consent Form (Appendix B) and an interview questionnaire designed in the Appreciative Inquiry style (Appendix A). These were used as the sole information gathering tools. I also successfully completed Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training and obtained Institutional review Board (IRB) approval, both of which were requirements, since my information-gathering involved human subjects. Interviews were successfully conducted with 10 carefully selected individuals, from whose information 7 “secrets” were distilled, along with a

variety of inspirational stories and anecdotes from their lives. This information is presented below:

The Interviewees

Each of the subjects elected is an individual whom I know personally and in whom I have observed intense passion, commitment and drive with regard to their very successful and fulfilling vocations. The interviewees included:

Chef Taj



As a member of the Gold Medal Winning Culinary Team representing the Virgin Islands, Taj Faraji Siwatu, more commonly known as “Chef Taj” has been impressing visitors and locals alike for over 5 years as the owner and executive Chef of Buddha Sushi. In that time Buddha Sushi has made USA Today's Top 10 Restaurants in The Virgin Islands. The team at Buddha Sushi has continuously won awards for Best Seafood Dining & Most Creative Caribbean Cuisine year in and year out. Chef Taj’s slogan is, "Come for Dinner and See How We Roll".

Stephanie Wear



Stephanie is a marine biologist and The Nature Conservancy's director of coral reef conservation. She has snorkeled in a jellyfish lake in Palau, come face-to-face with a Komodo dragon in Indonesia, swam with sharks in the Bahamas and camped in the deserts of Namibia. She has lived and worked in the Caribbean, Hawaii and the Florida Keys and is now settled with her family in Gainesville, Florida. She continues to travel the world with her two little ones as she works to develop a global network of coral reef managers.

Terry Burrell



Terry Burrell is a hugely accomplished Broadway musical actress. Her vast Broadway credits include starring roles in more major productions on the Great White Way than most, including: Thoroughly Modern Millie, Dreamgirls, Stephen Sondheim's Into the Woods, Eubie, and Swinging on a Star and she also starred as Julie in the first London production of Showboat. Based in Atlanta, her regional stage credits include: Ella in Bubbling Brown Sugar and Conchita in Barry Manilow's Copacabana. Terry is also a seasoned cabaret artist who has

performed her nightclub act for audiences from Monte Carlo to the Caribbean. She has performed with the Duke Ellington Orchestra in Venice, Italy and most recently for the Jazz Festival in Oslo, Norway. Terry was nominated for the Helen Hayes Best Actress in a Musical Award for her portrayal of Queenie in Duke Ellington's Queenie Pie.

Cristina Kessler



Cristina Kessler is an award-winning author of nine children's books set in Africa, where she lived for 19 years. She's received the Henry Bergh Children's Book Award from the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) for Excellence in Humane Literature for Young Readers and the Africana Honor Book Award, from the African Studies Association, honoring outstanding books about Africa for children and young adults and has been included many times on the Notable Books for a Global Society list. She always writes about nature or cross-cultural topics. Cristina is an avid bird-watcher who has a personal list of birds from all seven continents. She's even hugged a penguin in Antarctica! In 2001, Cristina and her husband, Joe, moved from the Sahara in Mali to the sea on St. John, in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

O'Neal Douglin



O'Neal Douglin is a pastor who specializes in “church planting” - that is to say, going into new areas, establishing a new church ministry, eventually handing it over to another, usually younger pastor and moving on to another area to repeat the same. Pastor O'Neal's geographic focus has been mainly throughout the islands of the Eastern Caribbean. His represents a sacrificial labor of love and commitment, marked by the especially difficult challenge of walking away from that which he has pioneered and worked to establish.

Gerson Martinez



A highly respected coral reef fisherman on the island of St. Croix, Gerson is well known not only for his fishing skills, but his strong conservation ethic. He has worked alongside champions of the marine environment such as the Nature Conservancy and Ocean Conservancy and publicly makes a stand for the wise and sustainable use of St. Croix's fragile coral reef systems, in the face of much opposition and abuse from other fishers.

Vivian St. Juste



Vivian St. Juste is the Executive Director of the Family Resource Center, an agency that serves St. Thomas, St. John and Water Island in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The agency serves victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse and other violent crimes. It is a 24-hour operation, featuring a 20-bed safe house where they host families who are running from danger, or have been displaced because of violence and abuse in their homes. The Center emphasizes that they are not a homeless shelter. Their focus is very specific. In 2011, Vivian expanded her operation to help meet the need for suicide prevention intervention, following the unexplained sudden spike in suicides in the Virgin Islands.

Grantley Samuel



Grantley's fame and recognition as a farmer, cook and apiarist extend way beyond the shores of his St. Croix residence. In fact, he was recently featured on the Travel Channel's Bizarre Foods America and was chosen by the farming and food and beverage communities to be the face on the "Taste of St. Croix" poster for 2016, an annual celebration of the culinary world

of St. Croix. Grantley's passion for farming is evident in the variety and quality of his produce, and the demand for his products across all the Virgin Islands.

Ann Marie Gibbs



“Ms. Gibbs” as she is known to all, is a retired high school teacher, called back into “full active duty” because of her recognized teaching skills, irreplaceable relationships with her students and the results she produces in the quality of graduates. Anne Marie Gibbs teaches science to grades 10 through 12 and takes students on wilderness / survival experiences on weekends. To call her a school teacher is to grossly understate who she is and what she does in the lives of scores of young people each year.

Veronica Champion



Hospitality runs through Veronica's veins. She loves to entertain and has made her profession out of it. Veronica has been involved in the food service industry across the globe from the British and U.S. Virgin Islands, to South Sudan and Djibouti, to Diego Garcia in the Pacific. Veronica recently purchased a 12-bedroom inn with a restaurant in Gulfport Florida, sinking her life's savings into the ultimate form of her passion.

Analysis of the Responses

A total of 7 "secrets" were identified. There were a total of 8 derived from the subjects' responses and three primary ones that emerged from clustering the self-descriptors. One of those three spoke to an adventurous risk-taking personality trait, which also emerged from the general responses. Risk taking was therefore counted as one, but it is worthy of note that it emerged twice in this process.

The 7 Secrets

Secret No. 1: Strive to develop a personality that is friendly, trustworthy and loving; Live your life according to the principle of the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

There are a myriad of tools available that seek to assess individuals' personalities, in order to point them towards personality-appropriate passions. I was interested in finding similarities and trends in the personas of my 10 subjects, in order to shed some light on personality-type "prerequisites" for finding and holding on to one's passion. I wanted to look at it from another way: Instead of having one's personality determine the nature of their passion, ask the question, "How might I develop my personality type to serve as a facilitator to attaining and holding on to my true passion?" There are individuals who are very clear about their

passions, but whose personalities keep the realization of those passions constantly out of their reach. Who they are, serves as the greatest hindrance to becoming who they want to be.

At first glance, the words chosen by my 10 respondents to describe themselves seemed to be wide and varied and having no readily identifiable uniformity across them. But when I applied the clustering technique, two major groupings emerged! The first cluster spoke to a personality trait that is friendly/trustworthy/loving (“giving”, “helpful”, “trustworthy”, “friend”, “loyal”, “friendly”, “compassionate”, “empathetic”). This was further reinforced by the consistency of responses to the question of what was the guiding principle that helped to keep them connected to their passions. 7 out of the 10 individuals immediately responded with some variation of the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”. There is no mystery in this secret. Our life journeys are often assisted by others who offer guidance, facilitate connections or provide resources. Frequently within this context, people are attracted to an individual because they see attributes of the above nature in that person and they are more likely to offer a helping hand when these qualities are evident in an individual.

Secret No 2: Develop a comfort level with risk-taking. Be curious, playful and positive in your outlook on life.

The second major cluster spoke to the risk-taking, adventurous, positive personality type (“not afraid to make mistakes”, “basically adventurous”, “curious”, “motivated”, “optimistic”, “happy”, “playful”).

Nearly all of the interviewees saw themselves as risk-takers on some level and could readily point to this element in their passions. Gerson Martinez pointed out that every time he gets into a boat, he’s taking a risk. “The weather alone can be unpredictably hazardous, the boat can crack and spring a leak, the engines can go bad.... there's a lot of risk that I take every day.

Sometimes I ask myself, what am I doing out here in this little boat, exposing myself to waves that can be 6 or 7 feet high?”

Both Terry Burrell and Cristina Kessler pointed out that when you are in the arts, your craft is at the mercy of critics and there are always huge emotional and self-esteem risks. “I put my heart and soul onto every page that I write”, said Cristina, “so to expose yourself that thoroughly to somebody else’s critical eye, that to me, takes courage.” Interestingly, Stephanie Wear started out by describing herself as “risk-averse” but as she developed her response, it became clear that some activities that might generally be considered as routine to most people, such as public speaking, were in fact major undertakings for her, which required her to push herself way beyond her comfort zones and so were, in her context, huge risks. Risk taking and playfulness are commonly recurring factors in creative individuals.

Curiosity is one of the forces that drives us to take risks. It is difficult to separate curiosity from individuals who are living and sustaining their passions, or from highly creative individuals. Susan Engel, in her book, “The Hungry Mind” (Engel, 2015), stressed the importance of encouraging the curious and exploratory nature in young children. A nurtured curiosity will produce an active risk-taker and an active risk-taker will contribute to one’s willingness to pursue and hold on to his or her passion. I also believe that even for the more risk-averse types like Stephanie Wear, the practice of risk-taking can be learned and cultivated even in later life stages.

Secret No 3: Always maintain the attitude that there is room for growth in your life. Never say, “It’s too late for me to find my passion”.

It is possible to connect with your passion at any age in your life. Fisherman Gerson Martinez said, “When I was 12 years old, I used to walk from home down to the dock which is

about 6 miles away with my backpack, fishing lines, a little piece of fishing net and I would enjoy those moments to the maximum.” For Chef Taj, it was around the age of 9. He was a chubby kid who loved to eat. His dad told him one day, “You do so much eating, you’re going to have to learn to cook for yourself!” Chef Taj took on the challenge and developed a love for experimenting in the kitchen from working with their limited food options to make his meals interesting. This has led to success in his award-winning creativity with sushi.

More towards the other end of the age timeline was Cristina Kessler’s experience. She was aware of her interest in writing from her pre-teen years. “I was always telling stories to my classmates, to my friends, to my siblings. Then they would say, ‘Ok, you’re such a story teller, tell us a new story.’ That probably started when I was nine.” But it was only in her late 30’s that her career as a publisher was established through a chance meeting with a woman whom she met at a writers’ conference in upstate New York. Her name was Patricia Lee Gauch. Cristina sat next to her at dinner time, not knowing who she was and started chatting with her. The woman turned out to be the head of *Philomel*, which is the publisher responsible for Penguin’s children’s line of books. Patricia was also the evening’s keynote speaker! By the end of their conversation, “Patty” told Cristina “I’m going to mentor you. Before you leave this conference, I want the first five pages of a picture book.” This was the beginning of a new phase for Cristina and her passion. On a personal note, I am feeling very privileged, because having lived one passion, my desire to protect the fragile coral reefs of the Caribbean, I feel that I am personally discovering a totally new passion in the realm of creative thinking at almost age 60!

All 10 of these individuals share a love for life and a passion whose flame still burns brightly regardless of their age or stage in their personal or professional lives. They see their passions as constantly growing, evolving and opening new doors. Teacher Anne Marie Gibbs is

officially retired, but you would never be able to tell if you followed her around for a week. She sums up the sentiment expressed by many of the others: “I feel that there is always room for growth and for helping, there is never a shortage to help others to grow in what I know or what I can share. So, that in itself motivates me to keep going and I do a lot of self-reflection and self-evaluation and I always want to be better than I was the year before, or the day before.” A mindset that is constantly open to opportunities will see opportunities when they present themselves, regardless of our age.

Secret No 4: Focus on fostering the positive, impressionable childhood (or later-in-life) experiences.

At 12 years old, Cristina Kessler was hit by a car. She was always a reader, but after the accident, she spent 7 of the next 10 years on crutches, so she read a lot. At age 13 she had read the entire set of *Lands and Peoples Encyclopedia* and she knew from then that when she grew up, she was going to be a writer and a traveler.

Similarly it was reading in his childhood years that guided Pastor O’Neal Douglin to his passion. He recalls sometime between the ages of 7 and 10, lying on the living room floor of his pastor’s home, leafing through a missionary magazine and seeing stories about missionaries in various parts of the world and feeling The Lord speaking to his heart. “From that time I could remember wanting to go to the mission field.” Conservationist Stephanie Wear has a vivid memory of an experience which came at a very early age. She tells, “I have very, very vivid memories of the first time seeing the ocean. I remember my dad took my sister and me to the very edge of the ocean in Oregon and he said, ‘This is where clouds are made.’ And there was all this low-lying fog that was rolling off the Sound into the ocean and I remember this magical

moment. So he fostered this magical view of the ocean from a very early age. I was probably 4 or 5 at the time.”

Others told of similar childhood events that left imprints on their lives that lead to the births of their areas of interest, which they nurtured and were allowed to nurture into their adult lives. This secret is therefore more instructive for those in a mentorship role, who have the ability to shape and control the experiences of their protégés. The time taken to create or facilitate youth’s connections to things they seem to have an interest in can yield immeasurable dividends in their future years.

Secret No 5: Seek out, be open to, and empower mentors in your life.

If secret No. 4 is for the mentors, secret No. 5 is for the protégé. Several of the interviewees spoke readily and always with deep admiration and respect for memorable individuals, parents and bosses in particular, who played life-changing roles in linking them to, or fostering their relationships with their passions. In Gerson Martinez’ case, it was a neighbor who played a pivotal role in connecting him with his passion. “I remember one summer in particular I used to go fishing with my neighbor. He was a person that would teach you. You know, he doesn't just take you out and say ‘Do this, do that.’ He used to explain everything. How to navigate, how to tie a hook, what's good, what's bad, stay away from drugs.... He's that kind of person that used to teach me all kinds of things, everything in life, the good and the bad and that summer was one of my greatest summers. That's when I decided what I was going to be. I saw it as a hobby that makes money.”

Domestic violence advocate Vivian St. Juste told of a conversation that she had one day with the mother of a special needs youth, that changed the direction of her life: “I was working in the school system as a teacher’s assistant in a classroom with children with special needs and I

was also working on weekends with a young guy named Patrick who had special needs and I had two sons. I had left my ex-husband and the boys were in their early teens, which came with its own basket of needs, you know, you want your children to participate in this and that, there are enrollment fees, you have to buy uniforms for them and their shoes are constantly getting too small so quickly..... and so I said to Patrick's mom that I needed a 3rd job and she said, 'Why don't you go back to school?' I said, 'How can I go back to school? I have my two boys....' she said, 'When would you work this 3rd job?' I said, 'Maybe the 3rd shift.' And she said, 'Listen Vivian, you need to go back to school.' I said, 'How??' And she said, 'I'll tell you what: What if I sponsored your books? I will get the ladies at my job...' (she worked as a respiratory therapist) '....and we will help you to get your books.' I thought, ok, but what about tuition? I was so borderline with my income from my two jobs, that I didn't think I would qualify for any financial assistance. Anyway I did some digging and I found out that I could qualify for assistance since I had dependents and I did have a mortgage and all that and I could end up going! And that began my trek back to school! My wanting that third job and somebody saying 'No. A 3rd job is not for you. Go back to school.' so that was the change agent for me. Absolute change agent for me. May she rest in peace."

Worthy of note is that guidance and support does not come only from "elders". In Stephanie Wear's case, direction came through a peer: "In the middle of my third year I met Brian (a fellow student who later became her husband!) and I had one casual conversation with him. We were both selling tickets for something and he was telling me about his summer. He was a year older than me and he was telling me that he had just done a research project in REU (Research Experience for Undergraduates). It's a National Science Foundation program. He had planned to go to law school and a professor was like, 'Oh, why don't you come and do this? We

have an REU available this summer. Why don't you come?' So Brian went and studied salt marshes that summer and made this really incredible observation that's kind of been the foundation of his incredible academic career, but when he told me about the fact that he had been in the field working out on a salt marsh in Virginia and that you could do that at UVA, I was like 'What??' I didn't see him again for like six months but I went and changed to my major environmental science and I finished the degree in three semesters, because I had to do the whole program in three semesters, because that was all the time I had left in school. And that conversation directed me back to what I love because when I had heard about it, I was like, I can be outside and collect data? And I can study? It was like a rediscovery of what my real true passion was." When secrets 4 and 5 are in operation together unimaginable potential is activated.

Secret No. 6: Develop your spiritual side.

Several of the interviewees spoke of a deep spiritual grounding that has served as a source of guidance and sustainability during challenging phases. As a pastor, O'Neal Douglin of course places all credit in terms of his calling and his walk, to the Lord God. In fact he asserts that if he did not have a close walk with God, "I think I would be a total failure." Pastor Douglin chuckles, revealing his delight in the experiences of his passion. He recounts a simple prayer that he prayed in one instance of his church-planting career: "'God I am going to plant this church with Your help and without any money in advance for this work. Help me.' And God did it! So when I look at the church now and see what it has become. It is a beautiful structure and it's all to God's glory!"

Farmer Grantley Samuel simply points to his relationship with "The Most High" as the most positive attribute about himself, while Anne Marie Gibbs says, "To me it's almost like

divine intervention. It's almost like because I took a step, then the universe opened other doors for me..." and Gerson Martinez puts it this way: "When God blesses me and I see other people in need I always open my heart to them and I help them out too. Having faith in God is the main one. Learning to listen to Him for Him to guide me to do what I do and being grateful for what He gives me. Never wanting more than what He gives." Acknowledgement of a Higher Power in one's life enables greater resilience through the moments of uncertainty and challenge and can facilitate re-centering when it is necessary.

Secret No. 7: Practice Mindfulness. Pay attention to your epiphanies; see your life's events as connected and directional rather than disconnected and random.

While for some there was a clearly defining moment, for others it was more of a gentle drift into the discovery of what they couldn't see themselves *not* doing. Anne Marie Gibbs, for example, indicated that she could not think of anything that clearly or definitively marked her awareness that she really wanted to buckle down into science, but the fact that she was good at it and showed some aptitude in it all the time and that she gradually evolved it.

Veronica Champion also spoke about "falling into" her passion. "Oh, I fell into it by accident and then once I started working in hospitality, working with people, I realized I was good at it. It was never my first choice. I always felt I would end up in business with my father." This roundabout pathway did not seem to in any way affect the intensity of their passions.

Epiphanies were wide and varied and, as would be expected simply by the definition of the word, very personalized and very powerful. Several of these passionate individuals told of some sudden intuitive leap of understanding of their destinies or callings in life, not necessarily at the outset, but at some pivotal point in their journeys with their passions. O'Neal Douglin

tells, “.....I was in Grenada during the time of the American intervention. It was a difficult time and several pastors abandoned their churches and returned to the mainland. I was left with responsibility for three churches. It was then that my mother contacted me from her home in Barbados and she told me that before I was born, she had seen me, carrying a wooden cross from island to island in the Caribbean. This left an indelible impression on my life.”

For Gerson Martinez, it was simply his very first SCUBA experience: “....I only saw the bottom part of one of my relatives’ boats in about 4 feet of water with scuba gear, but that experience of being able to breathe underwater, awakened something inside of me. It was a great experience. I was hooked! My father said, ‘You're not going to dive unless you take formal SCUBA classes and become certified.’ So I took the classes and I started diving part time.”

Grantley Samuel’s epiphany was purely a fiscal revelation, but nonetheless equally as powerful as any of the other stories that were shared: “When I filed my first income tax returns as a part time farmer, it hit me that I managed to make more as a farmer, than when I was working for 40 hours. That was when I realized that I needed to be farming other than doing anything else!! So I jumped into farming full blast! I just quit my job and jumped into farming and here I am 12 years later!

Several of the interviewees spoke of other memorable moments when a single event, act by someone else, or timely word delivered to them, made all the difference in knowing, pursuing or holding on to their passions. Most notably was an incident related by Terry Burrell which not only helped her to continue in her acting career, but also contributed to the resounding success that she is today. Terry recalled: “I was having a difficult time with a particular show and I felt that they were being racist and there was a guy named Charlie Blackwell, who was the first black stage manager on Broadway and he looked at me and he told me something that I never forgot.

He said, ‘Honey I understand how you feel,’ he said, ‘and you can be angry if you want to be, you deserve to be, but that kind of anger will eat you alive. You can choose to be angry or you can watch, you can listen and you can learn.’ And when he said that I knew exactly what to do and that's what I did. I stopped complaining I stopped fussing and I watched. I watched the professionals. And I listened, I learned.” And it has made all the difference in the caliber of performer that Terry has become.

Mindfulness

Most of the 10 individuals seem to have a keen sense of awareness of and receptivity to opportunity or key instruction when it presents itself. Stephanie Wear sums it up this way: "You have to realize you are in that moment, right? Because it's not serendipitous. It's your ability to recognize what's happening. To recognize the signs really. And that sounds kind of weird but it's like listening to what the world is telling you and going AH!! Pay attention right now. This is cool, this is going to be fun! You know what I mean?" The common thread was that they did not see life events as singular and disconnected, but as building on and leading ultimately to, some unforeseen but positive outcome. This held true equally for apparent setbacks or challenging situations. Mindfulness is a characteristic that is clearly present in many of my respondents. Langer and Moldoveanu (2000) identified the benefits derived from Mindfulness to include, (1) a greater sensitivity to one's environment, (2) more openness to new information, (3) the creation of new categories for structuring perception and (4) enhanced awareness of multiple perspectives in problem solving. The values of these attributes to finding and holding on to one's passion need little elaboration.

The 7 secrets of people who have found their passions are summarized below:

SECRET NUMBER	SECRET
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1	<i>Strive to develop a personality that is friendly, trustworthy and loving; Live your life according to the principle of the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”</i>
2	<i>Develop a comfort level with risk-taking. Be curious, playful and positive in your outlook on life.</i>
3	<i>Always maintain the attitude that there is room for growth in your life. Never say, “It’s too late for me to find my passion”.</i>
4	<i>Focus on fostering the positive, impressionable childhood (or later-in-life) experiences.</i>
5	<i>Seek out, be open to, and empower mentors in your life.</i>
6	<i>Develop your spiritual side.</i>
7	<i>Practice Mindfulness. Pay attention to your epiphanies; see your life’s events as connected and directional rather than disconnected and random.</i>

Table 2. Summary of the 7 secrets of people who have found their passions

SECTION 5: KEY LEARNINGS

Introduction

I fully expected this project to yield some interesting results. I also expected it to stretch me academically as I learned and applied Appreciative Inquiry. I never expected this project to be so transformative that I would find it difficult to report on. I am actually still processing my learnings and the transformative and potentially transformative forces that are still in process, so I will not be able to report on them all comprehensively.

Building on the Work of E. Paul Torrance

I have a deep appreciation for E. Paul Torrance's (1980, 1983) work, especially his focus on some minorities and issues related to their perceived poor performance relative to others, which he revealed, was more the product of inappropriate testing and assessment tools, than of the capabilities of these underrepresented minorities (Grantham, 2013). Torrance's (1983) work played a major role in inspiring this study. I really wanted to understand how I might begin to build on some aspect of his work in meaningful ways to help underrepresented groups. The observations and applications highlighted in this study transcend gender, race, age and socio-economic status of individuals. The process has helped me to see individuals falling into two basic categories: The Influencers (parents, teachers, coaches, mentors, peers) and the Influenced (youths in general and those desirous of finding their passions in life). The Influencers are further subdivided into those who have found their passions and are in a position to speak authoritatively into the lives of the influenced and those who have been placed in positions of authority or influence, who may not have themselves found their own passions but who can both learn and apply the "secrets" to their lives, as well as the lives of their protégés. I consider myself to be among the ranks of the key influencers and so it is important to me that I not squander the opportunity given to me, to be a change leader in the lives of those placed in my sphere of influence, both Influencers and Influenced.

Choice of Words and Expressions in the Questionnaire Design

In asking the questions on the survey, I tried to stay faithful to the wording as developed on the questionnaire. However I realized that in some instances the words or phrases I had used did not always connote the same meaning to all of my respondents. This realization was again instructive for future questionnaire design, as a reminder to keep all wording and terms simple.

Recording and Documenting the Interviews

In all instances the interviews were audio recorded. The participants were informed in advance that the interviews would be audio recorded and they all approved of this procedure. The audio recordings were transcribed with some assistance. In one instance, an interviewee shared some personal information that was potentially sensitive. I ensured that this was one of the audio recordings that I transcribed personally and I modified the wording to capture the essence of the information without including the detail provided in the interview. These interviews were all saved on a hard drive with password protection and each file was given an encoded name. Transcription of the 10 interviews was time consuming. In preparation for future interviews, I will experiment with the use of audio voice recognition software, so that the interviews could be audio recorded into text directly.

The Power of Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

After having completed roughly 1 year of various aspects of Creative Problem Solving (CPS), my use of the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach took me on a journey that I never anticipated. It has been like changing trains on the way to my destination and riding in first class on the second leg! I am truly grateful for all that I learned prior to this second leg with regard to CPS, but I found AI to be such an elegant and positive tool in this study, that I know I will seek out further training and certification opportunities in its use. I have seen the difference in the weightiness that can come through focusing on “the problem” and the positive energy that is derived through the use of AI. In the initial stages, I told myself that it was not the power of the tool, but the nature of the topic under investigation. After all, this was not a topic that was seeking to address total derailment of a group’s dynamics, or to rescue a company from economic ruin. But as I moved through the interviews, I saw that potential pitfalls of negativity

did exist and needed to be handled in a positive way, ensuring that the respondent's full participation was not short circuited and that deeper insights were brought out. The AI approach was perfect for this function. For example, in one instance Vivian, who works with domestic violence, was discussing the emotional toll which work of that nature can have on an individual. I felt that she was slipping into a negative place and I needed to do something to bring her back to her positive, upbeat delivery of her stories and anecdotes. I also realized at that point that I had somehow omitted the very first question. So at that point I asked her to tell me about the peak experience or high point in her professional or personal life, a time when she felt most alive, engaged and really proud of herself or her work. This caused a mental shift from the negative back to the positive and produced feel-good thoughts about herself and her passion. I had taken her out of the emotionally dark area into which she was slipping. This was instructive to me, as it showed the importance of starting on a high, positive note in an Appreciative Inquiry interview, but also to end on a similarly high and positive note. This is an approach that I will use in future AI questionnaire design. I was also very pleased to find that the AI model was very effective in its application for looking backwards. This gives me the confidence to approach either visioning or retrospective situations, (or situations combining the two) with the AI model.

At the end of each interview I asked my interviewees how were they feeling and they all responded saying that they felt positive about themselves and in some instances, had feelings of a renewed sense of inspiration and encouragement with regard to their passions. This was both very gratifying experience for me and an affirmation of the value of the Appreciative Inquiry mode of investigation. It has continued to whet my appetite for learning more about using the AI tool.

Rushed Interviews

In one instance, several attempts to schedule an interview session with one of my subjects were met with the need to postpone and reschedule. When we finally locked down a time, the interviewee again encountered some unexpected distractions which in the final analysis afforded us about 20 minutes of time together as opposed to the minimum of one hour allowed in every other case. In this instance I was committed to taking a flight immediately following the set interview timeframe. We rushed through the interview, with my primary objective being to ensure that all of the questions were asked. I should have simply rescheduled once again, because I can see that the quality of that interview was compromised as a result of the rushed session.

Connecting with the Interviewees: The Unexpected Journey Back Through my Childhood and Youth.

As I listened to my 10 respondents share their stories, I often had such deep empathy with what they were sharing, that I found myself at times, not so much listening, as much as waiting for them to be done, so that I could say, "Yes! I know *exactly* what you mean! Here's *my* story:" It was very difficult sometimes to let them share without interrupting. I related to Gerson Martinez' and Stephanie Wear's childhood connections to the sea. They were different experiences in each case, of course, but each of our stories guided us to a common passion and ultimately to each other in a bond of friendship that will unquestionably endure. I could see how loving parents facilitated my freedom to explore the sea life that always aroused my curiosity and my gratitude to them has deepened through this process. I could relate to Pastor O'Neal Douglin's being considered "weird" or "different", but being undaunted in the pursuit of that which called him. Again, I felt similar connections with Chef Taj's being given free range in the

kitchen - no pun intended - and his resulting love of culinary experimentation. Likewise, I felt I knew firsthand Terry Burrell's feelings of make-or-break as you step onto a stage and the exhilaration of applause at the end that said it was a "make" not a "break". Similarly, I connected with Anne Marie Gibbs' deep concern for youths. The roles of mentors in my life, the spiritual dimension that has been a real and powerful source of guidance from an early age - all of these have been real parts of my life and my personal growth and development, spoken to and reconnected with in deep ways by various respondents.

The Interview Process Itself

As stated above, there were a few times during the interviews when I was more concerned about wanting to share *my* story than truly actively listening in a focused manner. Thankfully all sessions were recorded, so I was able to review them at leisure. I became painfully aware of my sometimes weak, inactive listening. I can only wonder what truths I lost from not actively listening at times in ways that would have enabled deeper digging in the interviews. I need to practice my skills of fully concentrating, understanding and processing in ways that can lead to digging deeper and deriving a much richer interview experience. This is also wrapped up in Mindfulness, an area that I need to explore and embrace more deeply. I do recognize that there is the balance between digging deeper and drifting too far off-track. In that regard, the semi-structured interview helped me to stay focused.

SECTION 6: CONCLUSION

Introduction

There are a wide range of factors that contribute to an individual's success in life. These may vary from professional qualifications, to personalities and attitudes, to "being in the right place at the right time". Success is viewed here as simply the ability to connect with that which

gives a person the greatest sense of gratification and fulfilment in the context of an income earning career. Finding one's passion is certainly one of life's greatest accomplishments, yet so many of us go through our lives without ever fully making that connection. This study presents seven points of light seen in individuals who have successfully navigated the labyrinth and have made that connection. These "secrets" are made available here for consideration and adoption. They are of particular value to parents, teachers, mentors, life coaches... anyone who is a nurturer and Influencer of others, particularly youths. These secrets can potentially empower individuals to discover and focus on their destinies from an early age, ultimately leading to more fulfilling lives and greater adult creative achievements. Torrance (1983) identified a direct link between individuals who discovered their passions and their creative productivity and senses of professional fulfilment as adults. As such, the Appreciative Inquiry approach used in this study, has proven to be invaluable in producing the desired objective: A creativity tool, used to point others to their creative potentials.

Next Steps

This process has been extremely enlightening for me both personally and academically. This is my first experience with the use of the Appreciative Inquiry model and it has given me tremendous insight into its power to highlight the positives of situations and to serve as a source of inspiration. As stated at the outset, the AI approach is most frequently used for visioning of the future, but in this instance it is used to look backwards to identify historical positives. It has done this very effectively.

This study also opened very important doorways for me in terms of understanding how people identify their passions, how they connect with their passions and turn them into lucrative vocations and how they sustain productive, enjoyable and fulfilling relationships with their

passions. Notwithstanding my full acceptance of the Scientific inconclusiveness of this work I believe that this study has resulted in a rich, valuable product that can be used by others, firstly, to inspire and secondly, to instruct and provide guidance for individuals who want to connect with their passions. I believe that I have identified some key elements which are worthy of further exploration. Moving forward I will do four things:

1) I will continue to interview other individuals who are clearly enjoying productive and fulfilling relationships with their passions. I will also refine the 7 secrets identified in the study and continue to explore these factors through my interviews, while at the same time exploring other secrets that might have been missed in my initial surveys. I believe that individuals can use these elements as guides to finding their own passions and tracking towards them, whatever they may be.

2) I will seek out opportunities to share this information with individuals who are in mentorship roles, whether they are parents, teachers, counselors, coaches or any other position that provides guidance services to young people. It is my hope that the information will be employed by mentors to help young people develop personality, attitudinal and behavioral characteristics that will enable them to become more in tune with their passions.

3) I would also like to try to apply some of these principles to the lives of young people in more of a test mode or longitudinal study, to start to monitor for effectiveness even while I am refining the elements through additional surveys and additional information collection. I believe that field testing these identified elements for effectiveness will inform ongoing investigation.

4) I believe that the information derived from my study can form the basis for the publication of a book of inspirational examples and guidelines for individuals desirous of

finding, embracing and sustaining fulfilling, productive and enduring love relationships with their life's passions.

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Appendix A: The Interview Questionnaire

FINDING YOUR PASSION QUESTIONS INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interviewee's Name:

Date:

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of my Buffalo State's Master's program in Creativity and Change Leadership. Before I get started, let me take a minute to share with you what I'm doing in this interview, and why I am doing it. My Master's project at Buffalo State College is looking at people who have found their professional or personal passions in life. I want to hear their stories, and to both create a collection of inspirational pieces as well as to see if there are any common threads running through the lives of those that I interview.

I have selected you because you represent one such person who has found their passion, and you are embracing it and deriving much energy and personal satisfaction from it. Typically no one lives out their passion 24 hours a day, and 7 days a week, and living one's passion is not without its discouraging and challenging moments. Nonetheless I believe that you are one who, to a large extent, lives and enjoys what you are most passionate about, and that your life story is both interesting and potentially inspirational to others.

I am going to ask you about the people (including yourself, of course!), your environments and the things that have happened in your life to connect you with your passion, and enable you to embrace it to the extent that you have. These can be from any period of your life.

-So, to help us in this conversation please think about, remember, and tell me as much detail as you care to!

Do you have any questions?

OPENING

Tell me about a peak experience or high point in your professional or personal life – a time when you felt most alive, most engaged, or really proud of yourself or your work.

PERSON

Describe who you are in not more than 5 key words. What are the principles, (including habits, attitudes, values etc.) that guide you in living your passion?

What's the most positive thing about you that keeps you connected to your passion?

PRESS/PLACE

What are all the things that have enabled you to discover or develop your vision, purpose or passion?

Can you tell me when was the earliest point in your life that you had a sense of your passion?

Can you describe an epiphany or defining moment that clearly identified a "before" and "after" in the story of you and your passion?

What can you tell me about the role that others played in helping you to find and hold on to your passion?

PROCESS

Tell me the story of your life that's related to your passion. Is there a memorable quote or event that cemented your passion, or got you through a rough patch in your journey?

Have you taken any risks with regard to your passion?

What is the most challenging, passion-related, "impossible" task you have been faced with, and how did you overcome that challenge?

(Final Question?) Do you have any yet-to-be accomplished goals related to your passion?

12) Do you have any yet to be accomplished goals related to your passion?

APPENDIX B: The Informed Consent Form



BUFFALO STATE
The State University of New York

INFORMED CONSENT

The 7 Secrets of People Who Have Found Their Passion

NAME AND TITLE OF RESEARCHER: Nicolas C. Drayton

Telephone Number: 340-513-8256

Email: DRAYTONC01@mail.buffalostate.edu

Faculty Researcher: Dr. Cyndi Burnett

Chase 239

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STUDY LOCATION(S): U.S.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to document factors that foster individuals' discovery of their vocational passion at an early stage in their lives, to produce a collection of short accounts of these factors.

SUBJECTS

Inclusion Requirements

You are eligible to participate in this study if you:

Are 18 years or older

Demonstrate a clear identification of your life's passion

Have made a career of your life's passion

PROCEDURES

The following procedures will occur:

I will conduct a semi structured interview using a questionnaire. A recording device will be used to capture all the details of the interview.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Risks will be minimal in the sense that they will be no greater than might be encountered in everyday life.

BENEFITS

The possible benefits you may experience from the procedures described in this study include:

You may find renewed vision, and new energy for your life's passion.

You may even be inspired to explore new depths in your passions.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Since you enjoy some renown based on public recognition of you and your passion, and since the use of the Appreciative Inquiry style of questionnaire will ensure that the information will focus on the positive, on one level it is assumed that there will be no need for anonymity. However, you will be given the option of whether you wish your information to be confidential or not. All of your data will be stored on a password-protected computer.

Data Storage

Your research records will be stored in the following manner:

All identifiable information about you will be removed, with only a code to identify you. The code that links your name to the data will be kept separate from the study data.

All data will be retained for at least three years in compliance with federal regulations.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS

If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research, please contact the researchers at the top of this form.

If you are unable to contact the researcher or have general questions about your rights as a participant, please contact Gina Game, IRB Administrator, Sponsored Programs Office/SUNY Buffalo State at gameg@buffalostate.edu.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with Buffalo State. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this informed consent and have had a chance to ask any questions that you have about the study.

SIGNATURES

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

Permission to place this Project in the Digital Commons online

I hereby grant permission to the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State college permission to place a digital copy of this master's Project (insert title) as an online resource.

Name

Date