

Educating Into Creativity: Creative Pedagogy and Composition

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Overview

Initially inspired by Sir Ken Robinson's assertion that "we don't grow into creativity, we grow out of it. Or rather, we get educated out of it," this project immersed me in an eclectic and interdisciplinary research and creative experience. Aware that I felt a lack of creativity in my own life, personally and professionally, and suspecting that students in my classes might feel the same, I set out to understand this better. I wanted to know what we mean by "creativity" in the first place, what it means for us individually and as a society if we do lose our creative energy and abilities, and how we might get those back -- especially if, as Robinson claimed, education is where the loss is happening. My planned pursuits involved a mix of traditional research, "creative reading," and a variety of creative activities (with reflection to connect my own experiences with what I was learning elsewhere).

Prior to the project, I had researched enough to become somewhat familiar with the field of "Creativity Studies," and I was eager to engage in the creative work that I had lined up. With two years' delay due to the pandemic, my specific plans for creative activities changed somewhat, but I was able to stick with the general plan of different types of activities, in different settings, and to which I'd had different levels of exposure over my lifetime.

I expected it to be fun, I expected to learn a lot about creativity through a variety of disciplinary "lenses," and I expected I would indeed discover ways that I could be more creative as a professional, as well as encourage creativity among my students. I did not realize just how important this work would feel at the end of my eleven weeks, or how it would challenge me to not only do different things but to think differently about my work and my approach to problem solving and decision making, or how connected it would be to values I hold most important as an educator.

Purpose, goals, and objectives

Purpose

The original purpose of this project, as described in my proposal, was to better understand "creativity" in interdisciplinary terms -- so, not only as a mode of expression, but as a cognitive process relevant to the kind of problem solving, analysis, decision making, and generative learning that we all do in our classrooms and lives. I wanted to discover how this skill that we often think of in relation to the arts might actually have a place across the curriculum, and how introducing creative approaches to learning might contribute to a society of people who can approach problems with the creativity and imagination that we need very much.

As a professional, I wanted to cultivate my own creativity, so that I might find new approaches to the work I do, and I wanted to understand how I might support and guide my students in pursuing and developing their creativity.

Goals

The specific goals originally articulated for this project are the following:

- To better understand creativity: what that means to us, as human beings; what's involved in being creative; what constitutes a "creative" endeavor, etc.
- To explore what role creativity has (or could have, or should have) in education across the curriculum.
- To articulate what a creative approach to teaching "creative" Composition would look like, and what particular benefits that might have for our students.
- To explore how someone like myself might go about guiding students in developing their creativity as writers and citizens, particularly in our community college setting.
- To develop my own creativity, in order to better understand the experience of being creative, and to make me better able to approach my own work with creativity and imagination.

Objectives

My objectives for this project were divided into two parts: research and creative.

1) Research objectives

I set out to engage in two types of research.

The first was more conventional, scholarly research, to understand the work happening in the Creativity Studies field, and learn what is currently understood about creativity from various disciplinary lenses. My overarching questions for this part of my project were: What can I do to apply thinking about the creative process that's happening in other disciplines, and by experts in Creativity Studies, to my pedagogy? What difference would that make for students as writers and citizens?

Specific questions guiding this area of research were:

- What is creativity? How is it defined and discussed among scholars in different disciplines, and in the field of Creativity Studies?
- Why do we need creativity — as individuals, as professionals, and as a society?
- What does it mean to be a creative professional in my field? How can I develop creativity as a professional?
- What does it mean to cultivate creativity among my students? What are the barriers to creativity, especially in a community college setting? What pedagogical approaches can I take in order to value and promote creativity in my classes?
- How can we recognize creativity when we see it? What does a creative product look like? How can we measure or assess a creative process?

I called the second type of research "creative reading," which I described as an "informal, adaptable" approach to reading, focusing on creative people writing about their own work and / or creativity in general, from a variety of disciplines and "lenses," and in a variety of types of texts. My approach here was a sort of "intentional meandering" -- I started with a list of possibilities, but was then guided by

what I was learning, and what I discovered along the way; I selected things to read that would help me think about new ideas I was generating, and sought out new voices as I learned about them.

The stated objectives for this second, "creative reading" research area were: "to learn from artists and other creative individuals who have contemplated the role of art and creativity in our society, their own creative process, and their relationship with their work; to connect that to Creativity Studies scholarship and to my teaching; and finally, to be guided by them as I pursue my own creative work, personally and professionally."

2) *Creative objectives*

Later in my project, I came across this assertion from David Bohm:

"I would first suggest that it is a wrong order of approach to try first to solve the social problem. Rather, the key is in the state of mind of the individual. For as long as the individual cannot learn from what he does and sees, whenever such learning requires that he go outside the framework of his basic preconceptions, then his action will ultimately be directed by some idea that does not correspond to the fact as it is. Such an action is worse than useless, and evidently cannot possibly give rise to a genuine solution of the problems of the individual and of society."
(23)

Because of the creative portion of my project, I feel like I deeply appreciate what he meant by this, and I hope this report will reveal something of why.

At the proposal stage, in addition to learning from experts, I intended to immerse myself in my own creative endeavors. I had multiple reasons for doing so:

- I wanted a mechanism to apply, first-hand, some of the methods and techniques I was learning about, in order to understand how they function and might impact a creative experience.
- I wanted to put myself in the learner's / practitioner's seat, so that as I learned about creativity, I'd have a way of understanding that from the perspective of someone who is herself working to become more creative (to understand something of the student / learner role, in other words).
- I wanted to try different types of creative work, in terms of environment, level of challenge, level of importance to me, and level of skill I felt I had, to see how my experience differed and how the theories and approaches I was learning might be applied differently.
- I wanted to dust off and develop my own creativity, both personally and professionally; in order to implement a more creative approach to my professional work, I would need to develop my own creative abilities.
- I wanted to feel energized and excited for implementing new approaches to my teaching, and develop creative habits that could continue long after the project ended.

Methods and processes

Because I deferred my project twice (due to the pandemic), there were some changes in the originally stated methods, particularly in the area of creative activities. Also, by design, I set up a project that would be somewhat flexible, while still keeping the original core goals, objectives, and general methods in mind.

Methods

Research and journaling / reflection

The research methods did not change significantly. My reading list did change some, of course, as I encountered new things that felt more relevant and important (particularly the "creative reading" texts, which was by design). Reading and notetaking became at times inseparable from the journaling and reflection activity that was also part of my original proposal; these were most often the times when I found myself articulating connections between my research / creative reading and my creative activities.

Online course in Creativity

As proposed, I attended a 7-week, self-paced online "MOOC" (Massive Open Online Course) through the International Center for Studies in Creativity at SUNY Buffalo: "Ignite Your Everyday Creativity." This provided a solid understanding of how creativity research is being applied broadly to helping people engage in their lives creatively. I also was introduced to many of the foundational concepts in Creativity Studies, and experienced first-hand what it was like to apply those to my own thinking, in a somewhat structured way.

Creative pursuits

In this category, there were some changes from my original plan: three years after writing my original proposal, some of the activities were no longer available, but I identified other things that seemed promising and worked out very well. I was able to maintain my original intention of a variety of pursuits as well as activities involving different types of learning experiences / circumstances:

- In-person Beginning Drawing class, Maude Kearns Art Center. This was focused mainly on technique and skills development.
- Online art / creativity class: "Making Art a Practice" taught by Cat Bennett through Carla Sonheim Presents (self paced). This was focused mainly on art as creative expression, rather than honing skills / techniques. The two art classes complemented each other very well.
- Musical collaboration with my son: I arranged David Bowie's "Changes" for tenor/bass a cappella. My son and I recorded it together (he sang all the parts; I ran the sessions and had one little vocal moment at the end); I engineered the final version. This was an extended (months long) experience in creative collaboration between two people with different roles in the project.
- Theater stagecraft: I worked as a carpenter and painter with the Cottage Theatre set crew on sets for two productions. This was very much a collaboration: individual creativity is not evident in the final product, for the most part; the collective nature of the creative work was unique in my project.
- Creative writing: I wrote, revised, and then put away a short story. This is the only creative activity that was entirely on my own.

Process

I do want to make a special mention of process. In the time leading up to this project, I knew that I wanted it to be a different kind of experience: while there would be a research component, I did not want to approach it in a conventional way. I wanted to disrupt my usual way of learning and being a scholar; I wanted to shake things up a bit in my brain, to see if it would do something different. While

creativity as, in part, the idea of stepping back and re-shaping a problem did not fully form until after the project was underway, I did have a sense that a project about creativity should not simply mean reading about it and studying what others have said. It should be creative at its core; it should re-think the way research projects are approached.

The creative work and "creative reading" portions of the project were part of this. But I did other things, too. For instance:

- My "reading list" was a bunch of paper bags, each labeled with a question that corresponded to a question from my weekly plan. In those bags were slips of paper containing titles of texts I'd found that I intended to read. When it was time to read, I'd grab a slip from the bag for the week; if it sounded good, I'd read it. If it felt like it should be put off for a later week, I'd slip it in another bag. If I just felt like reading something a little different that day, I'd put it back and choose another.
- My notetaking took two forms, neither of which I'd really done before: one was in a large sketchbook, and was very non-linear; I'd scribble notes and quotes and thoughts in little chunks scattered all over the pages; I'd print off bits of text and glue them in, and paste in pictures from my reading; I'd draw arrows and stars and exclamation points, and go back later to write thoughts in circles around some of my chunks; and so on. The other form was verbal: I used voice-to-text to read passages that I encountered, and talk through my ideas. Later, I'd print some of those off and paste them in my sketchbook.
- I took a retreat, away from home, in a little spot by a river, for an immersive creative experience. For that week, there was no conventional research; just "creative reading" and creative activities, along with hiking, birdwatching, and other outdoor activities.
- My method of organizing my final presentation and this report involved a giant piece of cardboard, a couple of packs of index cards, and a lot of push pins, which led me to connections and relationships among ideas that would not likely have occurred to me otherwise.

These and other strategies would have seemed like small things to me before the project started, but as part of the larger process, they caused me to continually re-imagine the work I was doing, and the connections I was making between different moments in the project. I also was able to see the work of the project itself as a creative endeavor, and apply some of my learning to the very process of learning it.

What I learned, and how I learned it

I think of this project, and my process, in stages, with some pivotal moments that were defined by particular things I read, or moments of realization or connection.

1. Stepping back

First, I articulated my own definition of creativity.

The early weeks of my project were focused on the field of Creativity Studies, which I was not familiar with prior to this project. This is an interdisciplinary field (neuroscience, sociology, education, various areas of psychology, etc.) focused on everything from what happens in the brain to how creativity

functions in society. The first thing I set out to learn was how scholars were defining creativity. Most seemed to start with something like this:

Creativity means ideas or solutions that are both *novel* and *appropriate*.

Sometimes, words such as "new" or "original" are substituted for "novel;" sometimes "appropriate" is reimagined as "useful" or "effective." (See, for example, Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity* 23.)

Often, scholars offering this definition will then go on to discuss ways in which they are adding to it or doing something a little different, but this seems to be the baseline definition. And of course, this shared understanding has provided the basis for research in this field: How can we similarly understand what "creative" is, in order to share research and make progress in the discipline? What sort of processes encourage or hinder creativity? What sort of environments hinder creativity, or allow it to thrive? Are there personality types that are more likely to be creative? What happens in the brain when we do something creative? How can we measure creativity? Can we learn to be more creative? And so on.

Results from some of these questions have led to some ways of understanding creativity, in terms of process, product, and environment / circumstances. Several writers have followed closely the careers and work of "eminent" creative individuals (Csikszentmihalyi, Gardner, and Shekerjian are some examples) in order to better understand how one achieves that level of creative accomplishment. In some cases to resist the idea that only "eminent" individuals are truly creative, some scholars have identified different "levels" of creativity (for instance, the "4 C Model of Creativity:" mini-C, which is personal creativity; little C, which is everyday; Pro C, which is expert; and Big C, which is "eminent") (James C. Kaufman and Ronald Beghetto, cited in Sawyer, 10-11). There are lists of characteristics common among "creative people" (Csikszentmihalyi, "Creative Personality" for instance); a wide variety of ways to describe and guide someone through a creative process; and studies that demonstrate certain environmental factors or types of tasks are more or less likely to result in creativity. Teresa M. Amabile, for instance, is often cited for demonstrating that extrinsic motivators and constraints (rewards from someone else, evaluations, deadlines) tend to inhibit creativity, while intrinsic motivators (such as culture of fairness and making progress on something we value) will encourage it. And so on.

(I should pause here and say that it would be unfair to say that all Creativity Studies scholarship is completely aligned in these ways; it is a varied field, and there are a lot of other ideas out there about what creativity is and how to recognize it, and much of what I've described here has been simplified for space and time reasons. I've done my best to characterize the baseline, of sorts, of the scholarship that I found, and the starting point that much of what I read used to build their own particular investigations.)

I expected that a deep understanding of all of these factors in creativity and the creative process would play a major part in what I would take away from this project. And I did learn a great deal, described in a later section of this report, that I am eager to apply to my classes. But at this stage of the project, I became unsettled. In part, I believe this was because a good portion of the research did not seem relevant to my purposes. I, and likely most, if not all, of my students, are not going to be considered "eminent" creative individuals, recognized at the same level as Einstein, daVinci, Picasso, etc. And I was also noting that women and people of color were rarely recognized as "eminently creative," which was troubling, to say the least. Furthermore, the question of whether creativity falls more often to certain personality types, or people with certain backgrounds, did not matter to me. Regardless of whether that is true (I believe it is not), all of my students need to be on equal footing in my classroom.

In short, there are things that those psychologists, neuroscientists, biologists, and others needed to do (define, categorize, study, and measure, to better understand what's happening in our brains and / or in our environments, etc.) that I don't need to do, as a writing teacher, and that I thought would actually get in the way.

But most of all, the "standard definition" was troubling me: who decides what is appropriate, and what criteria are used? Or, useful, or effective? "Novel" to whom, and in what contexts? What if it's new to me -- have I not been creative, even if someone else whose work I'd never seen or heard of also came up with it? What about inhibitors, such as confidence, resource barriers, even skill barriers -- if those are the factors in the way of creativity, does that make someone less creative?

"To define originality would in itself be a contradiction, since whatever action can be defined in this way must evidently henceforth be unoriginal," David Bohm noted (4). Keith Sawyer adds, "Because a work's appropriateness can be defined only by a society at a given historical moment, it becomes hard to distinguish creativity from worldly success and power" (9)

And, I found Paul J. Silvia: "Appropriate, useful, and effective are not features of an idea but social claims about those objects -- claims involving social, political, and economic power." And, I'll add, they are rooted in cultural values and beliefs. Csikszentmihalyi also noted that "eminent" creative individuals achieve eminence partly through circumstance (being in the right place, at the right time, with access to and acceptance by the right individuals) and, quite frankly, luck. So, my interests and some of what I was learning seemed to be diverging in important ways.

But I did want a way to think about creativity, one that I could embrace as I thought about how I wanted to help my students, and how creativity and imagination might contribute to a better world. An early assignment in my "MOOC" class was to write our own definition of creativity. Here's what I wrote:

It's about seeing a problem or opportunity or task and, rather than jumping in and doing it as we know how to do or are told how to do it, we take a step back (or maybe, we are forced to by circumstance). Before we revise our approach, we revise our idea of the problem: we rearrange its parts, we re-imagine the purpose of its components, we re-assess the function of our resources and tools; we dismantle before starting again in a whole new way.

This definition would continue to evolve, but two things felt very important at the time. The first was the focus on process, rather than product, as the thing we look to in order to determine whether something is creative (or, more importantly, the extent to which someone may have been creative). The second, most critically, was this idea of "stepping back" -- of not accepting existing frameworks for understanding either paths to solutions or the problems themselves.

This began my move away from research that defined and explained creativity in measurable and research-able terms, to a much more process-oriented and hopefully inclusive way of understanding creativity.

2. The novel *and* the familiar

I began seeking out less concrete definitions of creativity, ones that were less intended to support structured, reproducible research results (which is most certainly valuable! It was simply not what I

was seeking) and more philosophical in nature. I found myself reading, together, the work of two individuals with very different backgrounds: Elkhonon Goldberg, a neuroscientist, and David Byrne, founder, songwriter, and lead singer for Talking Heads.

Goldberg writes of studying the human brain at a time when, in his words, "tomorrow will be unrecognizably different from today, and our brains will be increasingly challenged by novelty" which will require "a major change in the way the human brain processes information" (Preface). He notes that creativity is not abstract; if there is one thing that just about everyone probably agrees on, it is that creativity happens in, in his words, "a particular area of human endeavor; building on a particular body of knowledge, experience, and skills" (20). He suggests, too, that there could very well be "multiple creativities" (similar to multiple intelligences) and rejects the notion of creativity as "a unitary, monolithic process" (20).

In other words, creativity is rooted in things we already know. It starts with the familiar. Furthermore, "the very impulse to embark on a creative quest usually finds its origin in the sense that existing, established knowledge or theories are incapable of providing a solution for the problems at hand; or that existing aesthetics and artistic forms fall short of resonating with the sensibilities of the time or the individual's need for self expression." But the "old," or previously existing knowledge, plays a critical role in creativity, according to Goldberg. (Chapter 3.)

As a neuroscientist, he of course discusses specific implications for how we understand the brain (or, how understanding the brain might help us understand creativity). He notes a long history of understanding the two brain hemispheres and their respective functions. But he revises conventional understanding. Building on brain imaging studies, he connects the left hemisphere with "cognitive familiarity," or "processing information by applying well formed cognitive patterns and strategies." The right hemisphere, meanwhile, is responsible for "cognitive novelty," which kicks in when none of the "well formed cognitive patterns and strategies" can be applied. He described a couple of relevant brain imaging studies. The first involved music: most people in the study processed the music in the right hemisphere (as "cognitive novelty") -- except for trained musicians, whose left hemispheres handled that input. The other study involved faces: imaging revealed that familiar faces were processed by participants' left hemispheres; unfamiliar by the right. (Chapter 6)

He also compares the "tightly organized circuitry" of the left hemisphere, where existing and already developed information lives, with the right hemisphere's ability for "mental wandering" -- to "connect elements drawn from domains which are far apart." They work together in creativity, he says; the right hemisphere is more likely responsible for the "creative sparks" and "sudden revelations" that come from new connections and encounters; the left stores and preserves knowledge as it's gathered (134). "The brain does not spin novel knowledge or creative ideas out of thin air," he explains. (Chapter 3.)

Why did this captivate me so much at this point in my project? I was seeking a way of understanding what is happening when we're actively being creative, and what we can strive for if we want to pursue and support creativity. The interplay between established knowledge and novel thinking was an excellent start.

Especially when paired with David Byrne, whose book, *How Music Works*, offers a collection of personal essays revealing much about how he understands his approach as an artist. "I had an extremely slow dawning insight about creation," he says. "That insight is that context largely determines what is written, painted, sculpted, sung, or performed." He notes that this is the "opposite of conventional wisdom" and of the "romantic notion of how creative work comes to be:"

The accepted narrative suggests that a classical composer gets a strange look in his or her eye and begins furiously scribbling a fully realized composition that couldn't exist in any other form. Or that the rock 'n' roll singer is driven by desire and demons, and out bursts this amazing, perfectly shaped song that had to be three minutes and 12 seconds -- nothing more, nothing less. (13-14)

Instead, he says, "opportunity and availability are often the mother of invention." It does not mean that there's no passion, or that a creative piece "must be cold, mechanical and heartless." It does mean that "we work backward, either consciously or unconsciously, creating work that fits the venue available to us." He notes that music evolved to be heard, to sound good in its contexts and in the venues where it was heard. As society and technology have changed through history, so have the venues and mechanisms for hearing music; music adapted to these new venues and mechanisms. Certain types of music fit well in symphony halls, he explains, and are tailored to do so; other types work well in dance clubs. What's more, when creations succeed in certain venues, more venues appear to make those creations available. Venues shape the art; art shapes the venues. Art is shaping the constraints, as well as constraints shaping the art. (13-14)

"What's interesting to me is not that these practical adaptations happen (in retrospect that seems predictable and obvious)," he explains, "but what it means for our perception of creativity. We do express our emotions, our reactions to events, break ups, and infatuations, but the way we do that -- the art of it -- is in putting them into prescribed forms or squeezing them into new forms that perfectly fits some emerging context. That's part of the creative process ..." (29-30).

Applying this to his own art, especially to his early years with Talking Heads, he talks about their intention of being something entirely new. But, he said, "we communicated by referencing music that we all loved. ... Though we may have combined those influences in a skewed and mangled manner, we could hear bits of the music that preceded us all over our material." (202)

"Complete freedom is as much curse as boon," he says. "Freedom within strict and well-defined confines is, to me, ideal." (208)

While I've focused on just two writers in this section, I will say that this thinking, that creative work absolutely requires a strong foundation of disciplinary knowledge and skill, was practically universal across everything I read.

Also: art, innovation, and society

Incidentally, both Goldberg and Byrne, anticipating later sections in this report, ultimately turn attention to social context, and the powers that can choose to validate or dismiss creative effort. Byrne describes the change in music education: prior to 1900, he explains (before recorded music), the goal was performance. Music had to be made locally, by friends, family, and neighbors, if it was to be heard, so students needed to learn how to play it. But in the last century, music became something most of us listen to, and only a few "solitary geniuses" get to perform for others. He extends a similar critique to art: large art galleries "let us know that here, in their museums, [is] the good stuff, the important stuff, the stuff with that mystical aura." "The effect," he says, "is to make you feel anxious and insecure about what you know or might already like, and show you how to fix the situation." (307) He calls the modern presentation of art as "a top down version of culture. We want you all to look at it,

and listen to it, and appreciate it, but don't even think you could ever make it yourself. Moreover, what has been deemed 'real art' has nothing in common with the reality of your daily life." (309)

Echoing the Ken Robinson quote that opens this report, Byrne quotes R. Murray Schafer: "for a child of five, art is life and life is art. Experience is a kaleidoscope and synesthetic experience, but once the child is in school they get separated -- art becomes art and life becomes life" (330).

Similarly, Goldberg notes that "ultimately, ... the fate of innovation is at the mercy of society, consisting of the multitude of not especially creative consumers who may either embrace the innovation and by doing so confer on it the recognition as 'creative,' or dismiss and ignore it and by doing so consign it to oblivion." In addition, a certain level of tolerance for the risk that comes from nonconformity is necessary, says Goldberg. "Whatever other traits a creative individual must possess, the ability to ... withstand the burden of being an iconoclast is among them, he says. And then he adds, "in some societies, the cost of nonconformity to a creative individual can be shockingly high." (158)

For both of these writers, then, inhibitions and risk, felt from external and often non-creative forces in society, can stop creativity in its tracks, perhaps by re-directing the creative person in a "safer" direction in their work than they'd like, or by stifling their creative sense altogether.

3. Getting out of the way

At this point, I was realizing how easy it could be (and, probably, has been) to actually inhibit creativity while attempting to encourage it. For instance: taking time in a class to draw ideas, or having a "creative" project at the end of a term, could potentially help open up student creativity. But without attention to way those activities function in the larger scope of the class, it seems they're more likely to inhibit it. What message do I send, if the "creative" work is separate from the rest of the work of the class? Those are the creative moments, and the rest of what we do is not? If the work is graded, then am I not telling students that I am the arbiter of what is creative, that I get to decide, based on what I see (rather than what they went through), and my own amateur ideas of what creativity is? Furthermore, so much research suggests that external "motivators" and the sense of being judged or critiqued inhibit creativity.

At this point in my process I found Kyna Leski, author of *The Storm of Creativity*. An architect and educator, she develops an elaborate storm metaphor for creativity as a process, one that appealed to me for many reasons -- not the least of which was that it helped me think more about "stepping back" as the first essential step in the process. She called this "unlearning." "If your starting point is to name and identify potential solutions before unlearning," she asserts, "it is unlikely to lead to anything creative or outside what you already know ... Creativity is about that which does not exist" (Chapter 2). She offers an analogy from her field:

Consider this problem given to an architect: 'put a window here.' The architect unlearns, redefining the problem. It becomes something dramatically different when the preconceptions are eradicated from the architect's mind, which which opens up the possibility for something new that is not based on preconceptions. The redefined problem is: 'an aperture is needed for light, air, and view.' (Chapter 3)

In other words, creativity is not about problem solving, but problem *making* -- not accepting existing frameworks, but instead dismantling them, and reimagining all of the existing knowledge that

undergirds the problem as presented. (I kept in mind, at this point, that dismantling existing knowledge is very different from starting with a blank slate; just about everyone I read, including Leski, emphasized the importance of understanding the domain, and of having developed domain skills and knowledge.)

So, as an educator, I started understanding that while asking students to solve a problem and providing a framework for understanding and solving it is likely necessary at some points in order to develop domain knowledge and skills, that is not likely to lead to the kind of creativity that fits my definition. In order to apply that knowledge and skill in creative ways, I needed to imagine different types of activities, and different approaches / instructions for students, as well as a different role for myself.

"Creativity," Leski says, following her storm metaphor, "arises out of a disturbance." It "displaces," "destabilizes." "Out of that negative pressure of undoing what you thought you knew, a field starts to gather ... and out of that sense of not knowing is the sense of wanting to know. And that sense of wanting to know begins this search that propels the process" (Chapter 1). (I recalled a similar assertion from Csikszentmihalyi, that creativity arises from a "felt tension" that something is not right.)

At this point in the project, I'd say my thinking about creativity in my classes was shifting. Along with that, a whole new area of questions was unfolding: how on earth does one help students experience that "negative pressure" that Leski talks about, in a genuine way? Especially when students have been conditioned to work toward criteria, grades, follow instructions -- in other words, to accomplish someone else's version of creativity, and be scored according to someone else's (an "authority's") idea of what creativity is and is not?

This is the point in the project where I started thinking about what I could offer, that students needed: disciplinary knowledge and skill; and what I could not and should not impose: a judgement about whether, or to what extent, they've been creative. I need to separate those from each other, in terms of my requirements and assessments. I need to somehow support and nurture a creative process that will likely look different from the process students are used to, and that I'm accustomed to using in my teaching. To return to Goldberg and Byrne: as a disciplinary expert, I can help with the established knowledge. Using what I'm learning about cultivating creativity, I can perhaps find ways to not interfere with the novelty part.

"Just as a meteorologist cannot tell you how to make a storm," explains Leski, "I cannot tell you how to create" (Chapter 1). In her teaching, she says, "some [students] ask, 'Is this what you want?' What I want is not the purpose of their education. They don't get an answer" (Chapter 2).

In other words, I've got a lot to offer them in terms of disciplinary knowledge, I was realizing. But to help my students really be creative, I need to separate creativity from knowledge and skills acquisition, and then, somehow, get out of their way.

4. Reality and perception

So what *do* or *can* we do? I know I'm not the only one who already works very hard to meet objectives, and to design assignments that I hope students will enjoy and that will engage their interests, while also targeting the specific skills and knowledge they will need to move forward in their education, career, and lives. Separating out the disciplinary content from the creative work is only part of the question. As I moved into what became the next phase of the project, the writers I encountered started my

thinking about what we are all up against, in that regard -- not just in education, but in all areas of our lives.

Earlier in the project, I'd read Lewis Hyde's *The Gift: Creativity and the Artist In the Modern World*. My thoughts turned back to that book now. He describes the ways that our ideas about, even definitions of, "creativity" and "art" in Western culture have changed over time, particularly with the rise of industrialism and commercialism. In early history and in some cultures today, art, and the creativity behind it, needs to be a gift, rather than something produced for monetary or other type of personal gain. In contemporary Western thinking, he says, much of what we think of as "art" or "creativity" tends more toward commodity, and cannot therefore be true art. His thinking about this is elaborate and complicated; I encourage anyone interested in this concept to take a look at this book. But there are several key points that undergird his discussion, at least in my mind. First, echoing so many creativity scholars that I read (including Csikszentmihalyi's influential and popularized work on creative "flow"), Hyde asserts that we need to "lay evaluation aside so that the gift may come forward ... the gift is lost in self consciousness" (188). In other words, if we are concerned about external judgement or motivators (echos of Amabile), such as recognition or sales or approval or promotion, we will be working toward someone else's notion of "creativity," suppressing our own.

Another key element of Hyde's discussion is the function of art and creativity to connect. Gifts, like creativity and art, are not intended to stagnate, he says; they're not to be owned or to be symbols of individual status or power; their value is in their movement, as symbols, and even agents, of connection. "Any exchange," he says, "will tend toward gift if it is intended to recognize, establish, and maintain community" (101). What's more, understanding art and creativity in this way nurtures art and creativity itself: "just as treating nature's bounty as a gift ensures the fertility of nature, so to treat the products of the imagination as gifts ensures the fertility of the imagination" (191).

His words came more into focus as I encountered two more of the writers who stood out among the many of my project: David Bohm and Oli Mould. Both, in their way, also discussed how our current definitions of and attitudes toward creativity are misguided and, ultimately, doing more harm than good. They also point to formidable obstacles to what they argue is true creativity.

David Bohm is a physicist who, in *On Creativity*, advocates for creativity in his field (and sciences in general). More particularly, he advocates for creativity that's attentive to the interrelatedness and interconnectedness of everything. If it's not attentive to these things, he says, it is actually destructive, and not true creativity at all. What's more, the problems we face in our world can be traced to this misguided sense of creativity, fueled by societal pressures and conditioning. We want to keep ourselves safe and healthy, we want to preserve a good image of ourselves; these motivations are powerful. And, they result in what he calls "fragmentary" and "mechanical" acts of creation (or decisions, or behaviors) which are not attentive to the interconnectedness of everything, and which therefore are ultimately destructive. "We have seen that society is in a mess," he says, "which is the result of the conflict of arbitrary and fragmentary mechanical orders of relatively independently determined actions" (23).

Important in his discussion is our inability to see what's really there, rather than what we are conditioned to perceive. We are guided by what we've learned, and we are afraid of making mistakes; this makes us typically unable to pierce through that filter and see things as they really are (to use language from earlier in this report, this seems a lot like taking on problems and frameworks and resources as they're presented, rather than stepping back and re-building them in order to tackle them in truly creative ways). A mind that is held "prisoner of its old and familiar structure of thought and

perception" is "not compatible with the harmony, beauty, and totality that is characteristic of real creation," he asserts (21).

While Bohm's sense of where the problem lies is much bigger than educational conditioning, learning is at the core of the path forward that he sees, and it is not difficult to see a role for educators in his way of viewing the problem: "A fear of making a mistake is added to one's habits of mechanical perception in terms of preconceived ideas and learning only for specific utilitarian purposes. All of these combine to make a person who cannot perceive what is new" (5-6). (Here, I was reminded of Goldberg: we need the familiar as well as the *novel* to be creative.) For these reasons, in order to condition ourselves to see and perceive what's really there, rather than to "mechanically" accept and build on only "preconceived ideas," he says this: "It is impossible to overemphasize ... the importance of giving the action of learning itself top priority, ahead of the specific content of what is to be learned. For the action of learning is the essence of real perception, in the sense that without it a person is unable to see, in any new situation, what is a fact and what is not" (5).

Oli Mould, a British scholar in Human Geography, takes on the idea of creativity very directly in his book, *Against Creativity*. Like Bohm and Hyde, his view is that the definition of creativity circulating in Western culture right now is not true creativity, and that it's actually harmful and destructive. He connects this directly to capitalism, which, he says, "has redefined creativity to feed its own growth" (3). "Today," he asserts, "the system that causes homelessness -- and the other related injustices: precariousness, racism, and emboldening of fascism, massive inequality, global health epidemics and the rest -- is the very same system that tells us we must be 'creative' to progress" (3).

He talks about the "creatification" of jobs; the new imagining of workspaces that blur lines between play and work, home and office, that reward "innovation" that's in the service of the corporation's profit goals (in other words, that fits ideas of "creativity" imposed by those in power, and for their benefit). He points out the way that rhetoric of creativity is used in places where individuals actually have very little agency to make even the smallest decisions of their own (a certain sandwich chain's "sandwich artists" is one example he gave) (22-23).

And, he discusses ways that, when creativity takes shape outside of capitalist structures, capitalism finds it, appropriates it, and therefore suppresses any true creative possibility it first held. True creativity threatens capitalism, he explains, and therefore capitalism will not tolerate it.

So, for both Bohm and Mould, the forces against what they view as true creativity, the kind we need, are formidable. But true creativity also holds the promise for the problems we face: "Creativity can be used to produce more social justice in the world," Mould explains, "but it must be rescued from its current incarceration as purely an engine for economic growth" (3).

Anna Craft, a British scholar in Education (who developed the idea of "possibility thinking" as a new form of approaching creativity in education) connects Mould's words to Bohm's, and connects both of them directly to the classroom, where she sees similarly harmful definitions of "creativity" being applied to student learning:

Challenging the predominantly neoliberal rationale for creativity in education is ... necessary as a point of principle. Framing creativity enhancement as primarily or even entirely an economic imperative promulgates a high-consumption approach that is environmentally, culturally, and spiritually blind, and that may ultimately fail to see beyond current horizons to ways of living

harmoniously while rising to the challenges of decreasing resources, increasing populations, rising fundamentalist belief-based conflict, rapid environmental degradation, and so on ... (306)

At this point in the project, the problems I wanted to understand were certainly taking shape, and felt tremendously daunting. According to these scholars, so many forces seem to be working against creativity. Furthermore, to engage in creativity as it's understood in our culture is actually to perpetuate anti-creative forces, and further shore up all the harm that's being done.

I felt my original definition of creativity expanding more: in addition to what's required in the process (the "stepping back"), I introduced the idea of creativity as the opposite of "destructivity" -- it must have an eye on the connectedness of things; it must do good; it must be "gift" rather than commodity. I also realized that, as Bohm warned, this makes creativity a very difficult goal. However, some awareness of the processes leading to both the destructive, misguided version of creativity and the connected, "true" version could perhaps help me work toward one and not the other.

5. Creativity of the possible

Creativity of the kind that Bohm, Mould, Craft, and others are suggesting means radically and fundamentally changing the questions, I noted at this point in my project. A truly original outcome means introducing new conceptions of the problem itself. And to truly do this is risky; it threatens the order of things, the ways that we've grown to understand our world, our paths to success and comfort, the narratives we tell ourselves about what we need to be safe and to thrive. This would be true on the large scale of capitalist society; it would also be true in the power structures of education and its individual classrooms.

James Baldwin knew this, of course. He calls the artist an "incorrigible disturber of the peace." Like Bohm, he says the artist is someone who knows that "visible reality hides a deeper one, and that all our action and achievement rests on things unseen." Society assumes stability, he says, and tries to maintain it, while an artist insists that "nothing is stable under the sun." He also connects art and creativity to the health of society: "a nation is healthiest that has the least reason to distrust (ostracize, victimize) the artist."

Along with Baldwin, I read Adrienne Rich's beautifully titled collection of essays, *Arts of the Possible*. There is far too much in this collection that influenced my thinking to include in this already very lengthy report. But I'd like to offer a few ways in which her work started to create a web of connections between much of what I'd read up to this point.

One thing that Rich accomplished for me is connecting the ideas from the writers I'd read so far to lived experience, particular the experience of those who are or would be artists. Her ideas are similar to Mould's and Craft's, who saw capitalism appropriating counterculture: naming it, making it mainstream, and commercializing it. And to Bohm's, who talked of the "fragmentary, mechanical" nature of creativity as we understand and practice it, as opposed to the need for creativity that is connected and harmonious. She asserts, "if it doesn't smell of the earth, it isn't good for the earth" and describes "abstractions severed from the doings of living people, fed back to people as slogans." ("Notes Toward a Politics of Location" 65). In a separate essay: "Every group that lives under the naming and image-making power of a dominant culture is at risk from ... mental fragmentation, and needs an art that can resist it" ("When We Dead Awaken" 49). For Rich, this "mental fragmentation" happens when we live with ideas of gender, race, class, sexuality, etc. that are different from our real,

lived experiences. This, of course, is extremely harmful on an individual level as well as destructive to society.

Like Hyde, she advocates for art that "is not produced as a commodity, but as part of a long conversation with elders and with the future ... uncanonized in the dominant culture" ("Blood, Bread, and Poetry" 61). Her discussions of art as "conversation," responding to what's been said (the familiar and established) with our own, original contribution (the novel) connect and add to Goldberg's ideas: "Maturity" in art, she says, "as in ordinary life, surely means taking our places in history, or accountability, in a web of responsibilities met or failed, of received and changing forms, arguments with community or tradition, a long dialogue between art and justice. It means finding our rightful, necessary voices in a greater conversation" ("Defying the Space that Separates" 114).

She also reminded me of Byrne's observations about the way art, in recent history, became the domain of the elite: "As the social compact withers, fewer and fewer people will be told "Yes, you can do this; this also belongs to you" ("Why I Refused the National Medal for the Arts" 103).

Ultimately, two things grew from my encounter with Rich: first, yet another dimension to my evolving definition of creativity, which was that it must be part of a much larger process or conversation that values, even requires, voices that don't already fit dominant frameworks. Second, the element of the possible (I was reminded of Anna Craft): that while creativity launches from what is familiar and known, it is driven by a sense that something unrealized is possible; what's more, that creativity is a human pursuit that belongs to all of us (that it is possible for any of us to be creative, by this definition).

Of course, the implications for educators here are important: for creativity to happen in our classrooms -- and for our classrooms to be spaces from which creative individuals emerge to go on to other creative pursuits -- we must reckon with the power we wield individually and as an institution, and that our students are conditioned to respond to in certain ways. Not only must we let go somehow of our own power over what creativity looks like for our students, but we must somehow support them in the kind of risk-taking required for truly original work.

What is possible, in a community college classroom? And, how to offer my students that sense of possibility? My students are largely trying to get by, to carve out a more secure life for themselves and their families, hopefully while pursuing something that feels meaningful and important. Much of what Rich, Bohm, and others talk about is our conditioning. Education plays a central role in that, of course, though not the only one, and my single classroom is just one moment in a long process. So, I wondered at this point in the project, how do I imagine creativity in my classroom in a way that -- while it likely cannot completely shift the trajectory my students are on, can disrupt it? That can introduce new habits, approaches, and strategies that they might find rewarding enough to keep pursuing? That they can perhaps sustain and develop beyond that one class? And even more, perhaps discover that creativity gives them agency, confidence, meaning, direction, and / or perhaps helps them resolve the "mental fragmentation (Rich) and internal conflict (Bohm) that we live with? How can I guide learning that focuses on stepping back, taking a look at the systems that created the problems, that we move through mechanically, especially the systems that our problems and struggles are rooted in?

6. My own creative activities

Behind the scenes of everything I wrote above was a great deal of my own creative activity, and reflection work that helped me interpret these writers' words in much more concrete ways.

I included this quote from David Bohm early in this report; I'll reproduce it now, for its relevance to this section:

"I would first suggest that it is a wrong order of approach to try first to solve the social problem. Rather, the key is in the state of mind of the individual. For as long as the individual cannot learn from what he does and sees, whenever such learning requires that he go outside the framework of his basic preconceptions, then his action will ultimately be directed by some idea that does not correspond to the fact as it is. Such an action is worse than useless, and evidently cannot possibly give rise to a genuine solution of the problems of the individual and of society."
(23)

In other words, the deep, systemic problems that Bohm sees, and which he traces to the lack of creativity, cannot be solved by educators -- or anyone else -- attempting to alter the way creativity is approached, until they themselves have found ways to resolve this for themselves. This makes sense: re-imagining our approaches to teaching creativity means being creative ourselves. And if we're not fully stepping back and dismantling the problem, if we're not attentive to the connectedness of everything, our attempt to revise our approach will likely be fraught with the same systemic problems.

I do not claim that I have accomplished what Bohm advocates, but it does make my own creative and self-reflective work feel crucial to this project. In this section I'll offer a sampling of ways in which this is true.

Part of the motivation for this project was that I felt that I, myself, was not leading a particularly creative life. And if that's the case, I felt, chances are very good that I'm not helping my students be creative. So in addition to energizing myself creatively, I set out to understand my own creativity better, as part of this project.

Many of the things I did were small ones (described in the "process" section early in this report, such as a reading list in paper bags), which were intended to -- and did -- disrupt my normal way of doing things. These small disruptions led to bigger ones.

Drawing

My two drawing classes were very different. One was a more traditional class, that focused on particular techniques and skills. I learned a great deal, and truly surprised myself with what I was able to accomplish. However, I was not sure how creative I was being, because so much was imitation. My other class was really a creativity class that used art as its medium. There were a few techniques offered, but this class was mostly about expression and "letting go" of preconceived notions of what is "good" or "right." Not surprisingly, I did not feel like I learned much about art as a domain, but the two classes complemented each other extremely well, and helped me think about the importance of both domain knowledge and novel experience / approach (Goldberg's ideas, in particular, seemed enlightening here).

This was also one place where I experienced the power of external critique or judgment, and its potential to stifle creativity. I was the only one in the Introduction to Drawing class that had no training

whatsoever, and in the beginning, it truly showed. While drawing is a pretty low-stakes activity for me, I was still quite anxious about workshop day. For my students, the stakes are much higher, so I can only imagine the anxiety some of them might experience, and how that might inhibit their creativity.

Stagecraft

Working on a crew, doing carpentry and painting, for two Cottage Theatre productions, caused me to contemplate what we consider creativity in our classrooms, and especially how we measure it. Because we built and painted together, I realized there is no way anyone could assess my creative input by looking at the final product. They'd have to follow my process. And what's more, my own work and my own decisions are so reliant on those of everyone else around me, I'm not sure there was any such thing as my own creative process separate from everyone else's.

Music arranging, recording, and engineering

This project lasted the longest -- it went on for months, well into the summer after my spring sabbatical. It's also the project that involved two people (myself and my son) with different skill sets and roles in the project. Some of the work was independent on my part, and involved a steep learning curve: I had never arranged a cappella music before (and had only limited arranging experience of any kind, in my very distant past), and I needed to learn the music notation software I was using. Recording took a very long time, and involved a few moments of pretty intense frustration. And then once recording was finished, another learning curve for me with the engineering software.

This one nearly didn't get off the ground, and could have stalled in any number of spots; both my son and I are honestly a little bit surprised to see it completed, and feel quite the sense of accomplishment. Here, I experienced firsthand many of the strategies, states of mind, and habits that research tells us can help us persist and finish.

I had some second thoughts about sharing the final product, but I made up my mind that, to fulfill my goals in this project, I must. Once I decided this, and it felt more out of my hands (it wasn't a question of whether I wanted to, but rather a requirement I'd set for myself) it felt easier somehow, and even fun, to share it with others.

Creative writing

I wrote my short story in a giant sketchbook. There were no lines, and I wrote in big blobs with arrows and scribbles connecting bits of notes jotted in random places. The writing felt more fluid than what I do in a lined notebook or on a computer screen.

One important thing about this project: in order to write it, I had to decide, before beginning, that I would not share it. I couldn't even take a "wait-and-see" approach; I needed to know that it would not be read by anyone. Otherwise, it would not have been my original work; it would have been shaped by what I believe might sound "good" to others. I still could have written something. But it would not be what I wanted to write.

Of course, this connects directly to all of the problems with creativity as we understand it that are described in this report: in order to create something we have to think about its consumption, we feel inhibited by the critique and judgment that is in store, and so on. It makes me wonder how to help students be original if they have no choice but to share their work. It also makes me think about David Byrne, though, and his ideas about creativity needing those constraints; that the constraints give creative work form and direction.

General reflections

Overall, my creative efforts in visual arts, music, stagecraft, and creative writing were pretty tame. But they did disrupt my usual way of doing things. And smaller disruptions led to bigger ones. I could feel my mind working differently.

My reflections are full of ideas and questions that I brought to bear on my reading, and ways that my reading helped me learn from my activities. For instance:

- I experienced the value of persisting in activities where I was decidedly NOT an expert. This reminded me there's plenty to discover; it reminded me of the value of questioning, re-thinking, muddling through, piecing together, re-imagining. And, of not getting stuck in the "mechanical."
- I got just a taste of what it feels like to do something risky... to share my amateur efforts with experts. For students, the risks are much greater.
- I experienced firsthand the value of disciplinary skill / knowledge in order to be creative in that discipline — something that almost everyone I read agreed on.

Out of these activities, experienced in the context of all that I was reading, I also realized some things:

If I tell students that creativity is important, or ask them to be creative, but then the assignments I build and assess (and the criteria I use) do not include or value creativity — I would be stifling it. Even more, I would be contributing to the "unlearning" of creativity — those activities become decorative, separate, not really the ones to engage in earnestly.

And so it follows that they, as students, are not to put their efforts in that "creative" work: the important work of the class, the work they are expected to do, is "mechanical" (to use Bohm's term). In this way, I'd be teaching them that "creativity" is what I say it is, it's done when I say it should be done, it's what I assign, and it's judged by me.

Radical, problem-making creativity becomes separate from "real" work; it is something that experts do. Students, or anyone other than the experts or "masters," are disinclined from this type of creativity.

Now what?

Questions

The problem, it seems, is the problems. We're trying to solve problems based on frames that don't work, that perpetuate the problems rather than shaping solutions or improvements or resolutions. Looking to classrooms specifically, I realized that my own assignments may be examples of this.

Obviously, this will require a great deal more work and thought -- there are areas of inquiry that I did not get to, that I look forward to pursuing in the future. This is a project that could never be finished. So, here are some of the questions I will continue to ponder:

- How can my classes help build a culture where it feels less risky, and that provides the skills and knowledge, to share the things we really want to write, say, or contribute?

- How can my classes support students in starting to disrupt this conditioning, individually and collectively?
- How do I guide students in *making* problems?
- How can I re-make the problems I'm trying to address in my own teaching?
- How can I guide students in disciplinary knowledge and skills that they need to be creative in this field...

... but get out of the way of their creativity?

A few strategies and goals

My MOOC class included video interviews with creative individuals, talking about concepts from the course. In the first week, one video was by Brendan Bannon, a photojournalist, recounting his first day of working with Syrian refugee children to teach them photography:

You woke up this morning thinking you were gonna meet a teacher who was gonna teach you about photography. And I woke up this morning thinking I was gonna meet twelve kids who are gonna teach me about refugee life. ("Ignite Your Everyday Creativity")

This, to me articulates the type of distinction I want to make between disciplinary knowledge (he would be teaching them how to use a camera, frame a shot, etc.) and creativity. Not only was he going to get out of the way of their creative decisions, but he would learn from them -- they had something important to offer, that he was excited to experience, and he that would help them share with the world. These were children whose stories, and whose family's and culture's stories were mostly told for them; in this project, their stories were their own to tell. (The photos are easily available with an online search, and are captivating.)

Bannon's quote makes it sound easy. But I know I have much more thinking to do about how to apply all of this to my teaching. In the larger picture, it needs to start with shifting my own sense of the problem; I need to "step back," in other words, and approach this in a way that fits my new definition of creativity. For now, this is just a small sampling of strategies that are rising to the top of my mind, based on my reading and my experience; they are based on principles that the research I encountered seems in good general agreement about:

- Again, separating disciplinary knowledge and skills from creative process. Everyone I read agreed that a strong disciplinary foundation is crucial, to engage in that discipline to create something new. I can offer that.
- Evaluation inhibits creativity, whether that comes from an internal or an external critic. Deke Sharon and Dylan Bell, in their "how to" book for a cappella arranging, talk about three different imaginary helpers during a creative process: the "dreamer," the "editor," and the "critic." They should enter the room one at a time, in that order, and not be in the room at the same time. If work with one of them stalls, they can be temporarily dismissed, and the one before invited back in (27-31).
- Students need space and reason to examine what's behind the problems, and re-build them if needed, to better reflect their own lives.
- Habits (not simply one-time experiences) of rigor and persistence are crucial.

- It's important to think hard about how to ask students to take risks. Risk is very necessary, but it is — well, risky, and this is very real for students concerned for their futures in our classrooms. Risk, somehow, has to be success, not failure.
- Divergent thinking (making connections between things that seem unrelated) is so integral to creativity that in some ways it's become synonymous (though it shouldn't be, most researchers say -- it's a critical part, but there's more to creativity than this).

Significance of this project

While I certainly generated many, many ideas for revising my assignments and activities as well as my overall teaching approach, I cannot help but think in broader terms about the significance of this project to me.

This is not just about individual habits. This is about our habits as a society, and our values, and fears, and ambitions; it's about listening and hearing and approaching problems with compassion and a sense of connectedness. And it's about actively resisting and disrupting the ways of doing things that created the problems in the first place, and even the way we understand the problems themselves.

This is a tall order, of course. There are many pressures working against the type of radical creativity that Rich, and Bohm, Mould, and others advocate. Especially for our students, who have most certainly learned that this kind of creativity is at odds with the grades they need, the jobs they hope to succeed in, and so on. I cannot ask them to set those concerns aside.

As a result of this project, it has become even more critical, to me, to support students in taking risks, and to open up the possibility of radical, compassionate creativity. I hope to help students have an experience like I did -- to feel that disruption, to feel their brains working differently, and to understand what that kind of creativity might mean for them and those around them. They won't be able to be creative in this way all the time. None of us can. But I hope the experience of disruption, and the sense of possibility, and a sense of connectedness, will mean they'll recognize future opportunities to be creative, and they'll be able to meet those opportunities with imagination and compassion.

Beyond the classroom, this re-thinking and re-imagining of problems, and problem-solving processes, can be applied broadly. The idea of not accepting a problem as presented, but instead stepping back and re-imagining the problem itself, now seems to me an essential approach to the many difficult problems we face in our world, professional lives, communities, families, etc.

I am very grateful to FPD and the Sabbatical Committee for the opportunity to immerse myself in this experience.

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