

I. "MY SYNTHESIS PRODUCT SHOWS THAT..."

(adapted from the "Phases of research and engagement" in the Practicum course in the expectation that these are also relevant goals for students' work in moving towards the synthesis product)

A. I can convey who I want to influence/affect concerning what (Subject, Audience, Purpose).

As I went through the process of writing the synthesis, it became clear to me that I was experiencing a kind of "narrative therapy." I wanted to make sure that I was writing for myself. My goal was to reflect on my life, to have a dialogue with my inner creator, who I needed so badly to confront. I struggled with whether or not to make my work more of a 'self-help' booklet for people trying to reconnect to their creativity, but I decided to focus on getting my story down on paper. Only after finishing the project do I feel able to say: Now I might be able to explore designing a manual for folks like me who are searching for ways to create a life of creativity. A month ago I am not sure that I could have said that. Now I feel able to tackle another dimension of my project, which could focus teaching others what I have learned and what has helped me.

B. I know what others have done before, either in the form of writing or action, that informs and connects with my project, and I know what others are doing now.

Since beginning the CCT program I have been collecting sources that relate to my project (even if I didn't know I was doing it at the time). I have an amazing wealth of information relating to the various topics that play into my project: Not only creativity, but critical thinking, cognitive psychology, music theory, personal narratives, etc. I have known for some time the power of personal narrative, of storytelling, and I will continue to seek out individuals who use this medium for sharing their lives with the world.

C. I have teased out my vision, so as to expand my view of issues associated with the project, expose possible new directions, clarify direction/scope within the larger set of issues, and decide the most important direction.

I was not at all sure what I was setting out to do when I began writing my synthesis paper. What I discovered as I began writing was that in order for me to move forward in my life, I needed to write about where I have come from, what I have learned, and where I want to go. Within the program I was able to face my fear of failure, of not being a creative person, then within my paper I went a step further and said: Where did these fears come from and where do I stand NOW? Now that I have given myself a forum in which to tell my story I want to keep going with this. I will continue writing poetry and I hope to get my work published.

D. I have identified the premises and propositions that my project depends on, and can state counter-propositions. I have taken stock of the thinking and research I need to do to counter those counter-propositions or to revise my own propositions.

Facing Fear, uncovering dreams, self-reflection, honesty, unwillingness to compromise my self, and acknowledging myself as a creator are all themes of my work. I am not sure that I understand fully what counter-proposition means. In my mind, a counter to the idea of honesty is failing to tell the truth. In the context of my project, I have forced myself to be honest, to tell the truth about my situation and how I look at my life. I know now the circumstances and points of view that hinder my ability to be honest with myself if I want to grow as an individual. If I allow myself to censor the things I create, I know I will not be able to create anything that is truthful or genuine. I want to be genuine and truthful in my life and my art, but I realize that it will just take time to get a place where I can create without fear, without censors (when I am able to do this, I create a product I am happy with). I can say though that I am making notable steps towards getting to that "place" of freedom I write about.

E. I have clear objectives with respect to product, both written and practice, and process, including personal development as a reflective practitioner. I have arranged my work in a sequence (with realistic deadlines) to realize these objectives.

My objective has been to write about my life as a creative person. What hindered that progression, then and now? How have I come to view my own creativity in a new light? I attempted to answer these kinds of questions and I feel that in doing that, I uncovered layers of my thinking that I never knew existed. Only

through confronting my past was I able to point to specific experiences that contributed to the process of doubting my worth as an artist. I have to say that I wrote my paper very much as a narrative that formed as I went along. As I wrote, things became clear. I confronted demons I had not known existed, and in doing this my work shifted in response to the confrontation. This style lent itself to both clarity and confusion, both of which were needed to write an accurate account. I would like to be able to explore 'narrative therapy' more in the future, to see what other dimensions it might take on for me.

F. I have gained direct information, models, and experience not readily available from other sources.

I was able to speak with a few people who run their own creative small-businesses, and hearing their perspectives on living a creative life were very helpful. However, I feel I need to do much more in terms of seeking out people who are doing interesting creative things with their lives. Being able to get in contact with a broad range of creative people might also help me to feel more connected to a city that is still quite new to me (a place where I am forced to make new contacts). I would also like to speak with more small-business owners, artists, and creators who might even turn me on to opportunities I didn't know existed - by doing this I would be working on building a community of support for my own creative endeavors. Also, I hope to get in contact with some publishers who might be able to direct me in trying to publish some of my work.

G. I have clarified the overall progression or argument underlying my research and the written reports.

It took me a while to really clarify where I was going with this project. There were so many potential directions I could have taken, but I chose to reflect on my own experiences and this was something that made itself apparent as I wrote. The tool of 'freewriting' has been extremely helpful to me and I drew on it as I began writing my synthesis. Things started out a bit disjointed, but as I stepped back and asked myself: 'what do you really want to write about?', things flowed. The key seems to be that this project, for me, is a progression that is continuing even at this moment. If I can keep freewriting and charting the progression, then the work I began here will continue.

H. My writing and other products Grab the attention of the readers/audience, Orient them, move them along in Steps, so they appreciate the Position I've led them to.

I did my best to orient the reader through my process by focusing on specific pivotal periods or turning points in my learning. Because I was trying to keep with a certain kind of narrative, these turning points flow together. In retrospect, I think it also would have been effective to pull out these specific a-ha moments and to really hi-light them (by using side-bars, having shorter chapters, etc.).

I. I have facilitated new avenues of classroom, workplace, and public participation.

Just being able to state the personal nature of my project has been difficult at certain stages. I would sometimes wonder: 'is it ok for me to work on something so personal?' At times I think I even tried to steer my work in other directions because I was afraid to focus too much on myself. Once I really decided that my practicum and synthesis work was going to be about my creative journey, I think people really responded well. I wanted to challenge other people to really delve into making changes in their lives (if that was their desire), to see that they could do it, even if they didn't have a definite, set plan. I know that in my own life, just being around a person like Ben Schwendener opens my eyes and makes me think: Look at what this person is doing with their life - they are fulfilling all of their creative dreams and living a life of creativity and fearlessness. That is an inspiration to me and I hope that in some small way, my journey opens someone's eyes and helps them to give themselves permission to explore their creative self.

J. To feed into my future learning and other work, I have taken stock of what has been working well and what needs changing.

Freewriting has consistently been an amazing learning tool for me. The thing is, I know that in order for it to be effective, I need to commit myself to it and to write every day. Doing this is much easier said than done. I have found myself getting busy and ceasing my free writing for weeks at a time. I simply cannot do that because it propels me backwards instead of towards the future. I know that freewriting works for me, and I would like to make a commitment to do it each day.

## II. DEVELOPING AS A REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER, INCLUDING TAKING INITIATIVE IN AND THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

1. I have integrated knowledge and perspectives from CCT and other courses into my own inquiry and engagement in social and/or educational change.

Having almost completed the CCT program, I cannot pinpoint an area of my life where I have not integrated knowledge that I have gleaned from CCT. In the past, I have seen "social change" as being this huge entity that I had no power to effect. I have come to see that social change can be something that not only changes your life, but effects others, like getting involved with community gardening or talking to your friends about the importance of art and music education for kids. The "change" refers to challenging your own thinking and that of others, even in small ways. It is really powerful to feel, for the first time, that you are part of social change just by voicing your thoughts, collaborating with a peer, or starting a community garden.

2. I have also integrated into my own inquiry and engagement the processes, experiences, and struggles of previous courses.

I struggled with the Evaluation course in particular because I think I had somehow internalized the message: You are only one person, how are you going to affect change in the world (when its hard to affect change in your own life)? As time went on I began to see that change constitutes quite a bit more than I had believed. In working to change how I think about my life and my future, I am able to visualize myself as a person who can also make a contribution to society. When I began the program I looked at all of my strengths and labeled them 'hobbies' that weren't all that important in my life. As I progressed through the courses it became clear that I had been losing a vital part of myself in continuing to downplay the things I enjoyed being part of. Slowly I was able to figure out how to reclaim that.

3. I have developed efficient ways to organize my time, research materials, computer access, bibliographies, etc.

Because I am often a procrastinator, I made a conscious decision early on to work on my synthesis every day. That was really a big deal for me because in the past, it has been my inclination to put things off. By setting aside a portion of my day for working on the synthesis I was able to stay very engaged with what I was doing - I would not have wanted the experience any other way and but I had to work hard to make sure I worked on things progressively. My plan really worked for me and I see it as a big turning point in how I organize my time. I also recognize that using the computer is a skill I am getting better at, but I still have quite a bit to learn about utilizing certain programs and working with databases. I feel I have broadened my knowledge considerably since beginning the CCT program.

4. I have experimented with new tools and experiences, even if not every one became part of my toolkit as a learner, teacher/facilitator of others, and reflective practitioner.

One of the most amazing aspects of this program, in my eyes, is the interactions I have had with my classmates. Often when I was feeling unsure or confused I would turn to them (and vice versa) and the support and feedback I was offered was incredible. Often, people would say to me: I think this book would be great for you to look at, or I know of a person who could really help you. I am continually making an effort to give this same kind of help back to my peers, and I know I have quite a ways to go in learning how to do this more effectively. A year ago it would not have been my first instinct to pick up the phone and call a classmate to talk about class, now I can say that I do it frequently. Along with helping me to clarify my thoughts and work through problems, it has also helped me to build friendships that are invaluable in my life.

5. I have paid attention to the emotional dimensions of undertaking my own project but have found ways to clear away distractions from other sources (present & past) and not get blocked, turning apparent obstacles into opportunities to move into unfamiliar or uncomfortable territory.

It is always a struggle not to get blocked. The nature of my project deals with uncovering some of the large blocks that have stopped me from being creative (and progressing in my life). It has been crucial for me to recognize distractions and to even free-write about them in order to move past that and into a space where I can just create/write. I will say that a large block when I first began working on my project was asking myself: Why does this even matter? Why are you doing this project in this way? I had to acknowledge the fears that were there and the fact that they were blocking me from progressing. I free-wrote about the fear, I talked to those close to me about the problems I was having, and then I realized that FEAR had been (and to a big extent still was) a major block to my creativity and being able to move forward. If I ignored the block and failed to identify it, I knew for sure that it would come back and really jeopardize my work. Seeing blocks, figuring out how to face them, and working through them has been vital to all of my work in CCT.

6. I have developed peer and other horizontal relationships. I have sought support and advice from peers, and have given support and advice to them when asked for.

As I mentioned before, peer relationships have played one of the biggest roles in working through this time in my life. During the Practicum class I became very aware that I was receiving incredible advice and support from my peers but I asked myself: Are you doing the same? I think I was, but I really felt like I wanted to do a better job of giving feedback to my peers. I feel I am really progressing in this, but I know I can do even better. Knowing how important my CCT classmates have been to this experience has made me very conscious of the power of peer support AND how having this vital component helps you to do your best work. I hope to carry this into the next phase of my life.

7. I have taken the lead, not dragged my feet, in dialogue with my advisor and other readers. I didn't wait for them to tell me how to solve an expository problem, what must be read and covered in a literature review, or what was meant by some comment I didn't understand. I didn't put off giving my writing to my advisor and other readers or avoid talking to them because I thought that they didn't see things the same way as I do.

Going into the synthesis, I really felt like I was undertaking the project for myself, to reflect on where I had been and where I was. It had taken me quite some time, but in the Evaluation course I had a realization: This whole experience is not about pleasing someone else or going for the 'A', this is about me and no-one is standing over my shoulder telling me what to do; I have to do this on my own, because I WANT TO. It seems simple, but seeing that and really knowing it, was a turning point for me. During the synthesis process I knew that my peers, my advisor, and my reader were there to help me in any way they could but this was my baby. If I wanted feedback, I needed to send my work out, or ask for advice. Standing back would have served no purpose if I was hoping to keep moving forward. In the beginning I was a bit hesitant to speak with Nina, simply because I really did not know her well. Initially, I was a scared to show her my work because I was afraid of how she would react. Once I got over that (and it didn't take me long) I realized that her insight was invaluable and she always seemed to see things in my work that no one else had picked up on. I really worked hard to take the lead with my synthesis, to take responsibility and to have control over what I was doing. I had learned early in the program that if I got comments back that I did not understand, I needed to clarify things instead of sulking around and taking things personally - this did me no good at all, but I needed to experience this phase in order to see what I needed to change.

8. I have revised seriously, which involved responding to the comments of others. I came to see this not as bowing down to the views of others, but taking them in and working them into my own reflective inquiry until I could convey more powerfully to others what I'm about (which may have changed as a result of the reflective inquiry).

Revision has led me to see aspects of my project that I did not see before. When you are writing every day, it is easy to just keep on breezing through without stopping to reflect on where you are. After getting comments (which came from classmates, my advisor, my reader, and my fiancé) I would sometimes be overwhelmed by all of the information. For a time I would think: How do I process all of this feedback? But I learned to work things one step at a time, and I would write a few chapters, let folks read them, and then sit down and look at what people said. Then I would take the advice that seemed relevant and leave the comments that didn't seem to work for me. I had to remember that I didn't need to take all of the advice I was given but I certainly needed to consider it, and to reflect on it. Again, revision is something that I feel I will get even stronger at doing and I want to make a conscious effort to be a better revisionist. It is sometimes difficult for me because when I write poetry, I often don't do a lot of revising because I really like to see what just comes out of me first, without picking at it and trying to make it perfect - I often like the imperfection of not revising when it comes to my poetry.

9. I have inquired and negotiated about formal standards, but gone on to develop and internalize my own criteria for doing work—criteria other than jumping through hoops set by the professor so I get a good grade.

Early on in my schooling I decided that grades did not matter to me. Often I would study for hours each night only to receive a 'D' on a chemistry or algebra test - I knew that a 'D' did not reflect my knowledge of the subject or the time I had put in trying to grapple with it. I honestly just do not put much stake in grades. I feel that if I give it my all, then I will hopefully get a good grade, if I don't, I really should not be surprised by a bad grade.

10. I have approached the CCT synthesis course and the CCT program as works-in-progress, which means that, instead of harboring criticisms to submit after the fact, I have found opportunities to affirm what is working well and to suggest directions for further development.

I distinctly remember a conversation I had with a fellow CCT classmate wherein I really began to GET the idea that this program is part of a process. It was an a-ha moment where everything seemed to make sense and

I was able to let go of some of the frustrations I had had about not understanding where I was within the CCT program. My moment happened after I had received some comments back from an instructor, comments that I misunderstood. I was confused and a bit upset but through a conversation with a peer, I was able to step back and say: Ok, this is an opportunity for me to learn something here. In the past, I had been so used to getting a certain kind of feedback where an instructor told me what to do. So now here I was with feedback, plain and simple, and it was up to me to ask questions, clarify (if need be) and then to use the feedback to change things on my own. All of this was new to me, but when I really realized what was going on (and I saw how my past thinking had hindered me) it was like: I get it; this makes sense to me now!