Synthesis of Theory and Practice Self-assessment
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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).

OK -- I did a fair job in conveying my subject, audience, and purpose. Conveying audience was a difficult prospect for me because my experience on my target is largely intrapersonal, but my goal for interpersonal goals. I structured my synthesis product on my personal encounters with creativity. But my hope is that readers of my thesis will be able to take something away from my text to use in their own lives. Conveying such a complex audience like that was difficult. I feel like I did a fair job in communicating this idea.

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.

** -- On the advice of just about everyone at my synthesis presentation I added in excerpts of my writing that elucidated my topic. Adding bits of my own creative product enhanced my written product. The addition of these writing excerpts also made me aware that these bits of fiction were incredibly relevant to my topic. Without the advice of my audience at my presentation I would not have come to this idea. Now I feel like I have incorporated the majority of ideas that are relevant to my topic. However, I found that in writing about my topic for different classes (i.e. Psych 650 and for my Independent Study) I saw my idea of creative style in a fresh perspective. This fresh perspective showed me that there is still much to be learned and incorporated if my ideas will ever become widely useful for others.

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.

OK -- As hinted at in the last question, there are avenues that I might choose to take my idea of creative style in the future. I might delve further into cognitive methods other than the ones I have used in order to discover elements of creative style. I might also go forward with more action-based activities to experiment more with a creative product. There are any number of directions that I can take this in the future. But for the time

allowed within a single program I have teased out my topic as far as I could have taken it. Using CCT techniques in the future should provide the necessary framework to move forward.

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.

** -- My synthesis has a clear organization and details every step I took as a creative person to find creative style. Other people might use different methods to find their creative style, but my path is clearly described. I think that I can describe counter-arguments in adequate detail, though there are always more perspectives to be learned.

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 synthesis project includes pieces of my fiction work that show a reader some of my creative product. My synthesis also goes into rich detail about my process of learning. The majority of my written synthesis is about my process, both cognitive and external. I can't say that I organized myself into clear deadlines, though. I just don't work that way. When I see a task in front of me, I try not to procrastinate. I immediately attack the task to get it completed. Some projects in the CCT program, like long essays, took more than a few days to complete. The written synthesis required every bit of time available to complete. But I rarely delayed in getting things done in an expeditious fashion. I could learn to organize my time better when I am faced with large-scale projects in the future. This is something that I intend to work on in the future.

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

** -- My creative journey, spurred on by the CCT program, took many turns. Many of these turns required me to experiment with different methods for writing creative fiction. The experimenting with different writing techniques that I devised myself provided me with a rich store of experience available nowhere else. No book taught me every writing technique I made up. I gained experience that no one else can attest to.

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

** -- The clarification of key points and the narrative's progression was a focused-on goal of mine while writing the synthesis. I feel like I was successful in this goal. More

than one of my readers praised my opening paragraphs for every chapter because these initial paragraphs were a synopsis of the prior paragraph's principles. Writing these out helped me to clarify and emphasize the main points in most chapters. This is a technique that I must continue to cultivate if I want to write nonfiction books in the future.

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 try to use that active voice whenever I can in my writing. It's not easy staying in the active voice. I frequently slip into the passive voice. I think that I cleansed the majority of my text of passive voice so that the reader can better understand what I am trying to say. I was also very systematic and focused on building up a strong chronology of my creative path. I could work on developing "grabber" lines, which would pull the attention of the reader closer to my words. But for my purposes I feel like I wrote in an interest-enough manner that people from many backgrounds might enjoy it.

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

-> -- This is one area that my topic didn't delve into much. I remained focused on the creeative process within individuals. I looked to narratives of people who have described their creative process, but I didn't do many formal interviews of creative individuals. This is something that I'll have to focus on in the future. Interviewing people who have similar goals as mine can build contacts as well as provide further enlightenment in a topic.

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

** -- The central tenet in my synthesis was that a person needs to continue to revise their methods in order to adapt to their creative style. The outside world is also mentioned as being something that needs to be adapted to. To adapt well, a person needs to take stock of what has been done and worked well in order to determine what needs changing. This was an overall theme throughout my synthesis project. I intend to continue using this style of learning in the future.

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.

** -- For just about every class that I have taken, I have incorporated some new CCT tool into my inquiry. One tool in particular I learned in the Evaluation course: action learning. The idea that research ought to spiral through its course has revolutionized how I see and work within an personal inquiry. I do not shy away from unpredictability and messiness as I used to and I expect the unexpected to occur—and welcome it. One can always appreciate refinement of the process to make dealing with uncertainty a bit more fluid, but that is something that will take time.

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

** -- As stated in the previous question, just about every course has provided me with a new tool to use. I intend to pursue personal interests in the upcoming summertime and I can see CCT's effect on this intended course of study. There is a focus and a rationale behind my personal inquiries that was lacking before my CCT experiences. Still, I feel like the courses were rich enough that I did not learn every scrap of learning that was available. I expect that reflecting back onto the courses will reap a few more lessons that were missed the first time around.

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

OK -- I have attained a heightened awareness and appreciation for bibliographies. When writing my synthesis I thanked myself (and my instructors) for doing all the hard work of doing annotated bibliographies and detailed notes. Having all the details handy about a source proved to expedite the writing process immensely. I could focus on the writing first. Searching through files could be a mere minor task. I still could use a little more help on organizing my time.

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.

** -- For the most part I did try out the tools that were assigned/recommended to me. One of these tools, free writing, proved to be of immense value in my creative goals. Supportive listening also proved to be very important to my development. A few of the tools I wish I could have spent more time on...like dialogue. Dialogue Processes was the first course I took in the CCT program and I felt like the tool of dialogue possessed the most interpersonal potential of all. But unfortunately, dialogue is something that cannot be incorporated into all classes—at least in its full incarnation. I would like to pursue more dialogue learning in the future. I intend to re-read Martin Buber's I and Thou as well as his book Good and Evil to gain a firmer understanding of the dialogue philosophy. Hopefully I will be able to transfer this knowledge to more practice of dialogue 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.

** — I have done well with clearing away obstacles primarily with the free writing tool. Other tools play a role—supportive listening, diagramming, seeking uncertainty—but free writing is the primary tool I use for this purpose. The reason for this is that free writing is a method that unlocks a great deal of inner thought that I normally keep in the cellar of my mind. Free writing quickly brings obstacles and barriers to the forefront of my consciousness, from where I can easily discount negative thoughts. But I feel like every person can use outside help more. I need to reach outside of myself more often. I tend to become so self-reliant that I fail to see the obvious benefit of getting outside help.

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.

-> — For those people that I have reached out to, I feel like I have established a solid base of respect, understanding, and mutual help. I think that every person who has interacted with me feels like they have competence in my eyes and likewise for me. But I can't say that I have an overabundance of contacts. I have a few very important contacts that I hope will be maintained in the future, but I haven't established a huge number of these contacts. Some of the fault for this originates in my overly self-reliant disposition, and the other part of the fault lies in the nature of the program. My peers are mostly working adults who have little time to spare in their lives to cultivate lasting relationships. The diversity and hard-work that my peers exhibit gets in the way sometimes to building up friendships and business contacts.

7. I have taken the lead, not dragged my feet, in dialogue with my advisor and other readers. I didn't wait for the 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.

** — I definitely feel like I have stayed one step ahead of the game in almost all of my courses. I am proactive in reading comments and actively seek them out. Many times, my readers were too busy to read my synthesis. I learned that due to the scale of this last project I could not rely on them to get back to me in a timely manner. I was on my own for a good portion of the project. And that was fine. I knew what needed to be developed and I took care of what I could on my own. Once the comments came in from my readers I could quickly incorporate and decide if I agreed and disagreed with what they had to say. When I disagreed with a reader's comments I would ask myself why I thought this way. This line of thinking exposed many errors in my thinking and was highly beneficial. If I did the synthesis project all over again, I would have sought out more than the four readers I had reading my stuff. Having more readers would have eased the burden on my readers and would have produced a more reliable timetable for revision.

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).

** — Whenever I received feedback I immediately added them as comments in my MSWord master document. This allowed me to read through the text easily and to see

what changes were major and what were cosmetic. It also permitted me to take every comment seriously. As one example, Nina and I came to a disagreement about the role of external things to creativity. I said that all creativity originated from the individual and that external events and objects were just something to react to. She believes that the external world produces thinking that takes a life of its own outside of the individual. I still disagree with her, but the lively discussions we had over the topic gave me a deeper understanding of what I believed. I also came around to understand her point of view on the matter better. Consequently, some phrasing and conceptualizing was altered in my synthesis text. I didn't bow to Nina's vastly superior expertise for the sake of her higher credibility. I thought about what I really believed and placed precedence on that to find my beliefs. Still, I shouldn't be so quick to discount someone else's opinion. Disagreement yields intellectual fruit even when the two sides stay separated. My synthesis was greatly enriched by the disagreement that Nina and I shared.

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.

** -- Grades are trivial for me and have been throughout the program. At this level, the only thing that matters is what you learn and take away from a course. I think that setting up my own criteria began before CCT courses began. The discipline I needed to get through the program's demands was instilled in me before I started. But the program itself gave me a reason to initiate this discipline and a reason to continue using it. CCT was difficult at times to keep up with and if I hadn't the necessary discipline to complete tasks on time or ahead of time I would not have made it through. But the thing that I need to continue to develop in the future is to learn to organize my focus. Discipline for organizing my time is in demand in my life. This is what I intend to develop in the future.

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.

OK -- In the philosophy course, I was called a "student liaison" by my professor. She used my opinion frequently in order to gauge class opinion. This meant that I would tell her what seemed to be working in class and what didn't. So I did see that the course was a work in progress. I tried to do this for other courses as well. But I admit that I accepted the illusion that the classes had a clear structure to them, even when I didn't see it yet. I could have offered my opinion more often in class. I intend to try and voice my opinion more often in the future.