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Female Visual Artists' Perspectives on Creativity and Creative Talent Development: Obstacles and Opportunities

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into creativity and creative talent development in order to address the problem of underachievement of creatively talented females. The experiences of ten female visual artists were investigated from a feminist, interpretive perspective using open-ended interviews and a focus group, which was observed by a reflecting team.

Using grounded theory, the data analysis identified seven themes. The themes are: educational experiences, urge to create, gender issues, talent is not enough, connections, obligations and expectations, and need for support.

Results revealed that talent alone is not enough to ensure realization of potential. A variety of supports are critical to the development of talent. Strategies to promote talent development included mentor programs and career-training programs specific to the needs of creatively talented females. There is also a need to provide professional development for teachers in both art and creativity.

A further result demonstrated that while life and work may, at times be distinct, they are not separate. They are inextricably linked and influence each other in reciprocal ways. As such, in determining how to support talent development, one must consider supporting life choices.

A model of creative female talent development was developed to represent the intersection and influence of professional and personal lives of the participants. It is in the form of the two rails that make up the double helix framework of the DNA molecule. One rail represents aspects of personal life and the other rail represents career components of creatively talented females. The rails connect the various parts of a life together. The rails are meant to convey the fact that the career development of creatively

talented females is not a linear process. There may be many ups and downs, twists and turns. The two strands are ultimately connected and, as such, events or developments in one area, can affect the other.

DEDICATION

To my grade 8 teacher Mr. Sacco and countless
other teachers who make a difference without ever knowing!

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

To engender creativity, first we must value it.
R. Sternberg and T. Lubar

There have been remarkable changes in the lives of women and girls in the past several decades both in the world of work and education. Women are entering fields once reserved for men, and they are helping to redefine the work roles of men and women. While there has been an increase in the amount of research focused on women and work to reflect these changes, there is still a lack of knowledge regarding the actual development of female talent necessary for specific fields of work in various domains such as education, athletics and the arts (Arnold, Noble & Subotnik, 1996).

The educational needs and psychological development of talented females are not necessarily the same as those of talented males (Walker, Reis & Leonard, 1992). At present, however, much of the literature in this area documents the needs and psychological development of males (Gilligan, 1994). What is needed is a more complete picture of the developmental patterns of talented females (List & Renzulli, 1991).

Introduction to the problem

This study is situated within three problem areas. The first is the trend of underachievement. It is becoming increasingly clear among educators and researchers that there is an under-utilization of available talent in terms of both intelligence and

creativity (Rimm, 1997). In particular, females are at risk of not achieving their potential (Betz, 1994; Eccles, 1985; Kerr, 1997; Reis & Callahan, 1996) despite the fact that females have consistently higher or equal marks in diverse areas such as mathematics, science and language throughout elementary, high school and college (Betz, 1994; Csikzentmihalyi, 1999; Eccles, 1985, Reis, 1991, Stein, 2000).

There is mounting evidence that high ability females are at risk of not realizing their potential (Leroux, 1992; Kerr, 1994; Reis & Callahan, 1996). Many female students who demonstrate creative promise finish high school disinterested and unmotivated. Often they do not realize their creative potential. Other students fail to have their creative talents recognized and thus never receive adequate educational interventions (Arnold et. al., 1996; Reis & Callahan, 1996). In order to adequately address this problem, more research is needed to gain information on specific ways that education may contribute to the realization of talented females fulfilling their potential (Kerr, 1994; Walker, Reis & Leonard, 1992).

Attempts to redress this situation through educational programs and guidance interventions are beginning to be implemented. However, given that there is not enough research available on the development of female talent, it is difficult to design suitable, effective programs (Noble, Subotnik & Arnold, 1999; Kerr, 1997). Gaps in the literature include issues encountered by talented females in both their professional and personal lives and the factors that enhance or inhibit the development of their talent. This information is needed in order to provide environments and programs that foster its development (Kerr, 1994).

The second problem area is a growing concern over the lack of creative talent in Canada. For example, a recent report released by the National Research Council stated that apart from small segments of creative industry and schools, the present climate of creativity is bleak. Arthur Carty, president of the National Research Council of Canada, highlighted the importance of creativity. He noted that "...creativity and imagination are the wellsprings of both scientific advancement and artistic expression [and]... the capacity to conceive new ideas and develop new technologies is the essence of creativity and essential to the process of building an innovative, knowledge-based economy (Carty, 2000, p. 3)." Investigating how to support underachieving females with creative ability reach their potential may help address the concern of the lack of creative talent.

The third problem area is that much of the past research on creativity is based on the personality trait approach to creativity. There is a growing consensus among creativity researchers, however, that creativity is not an individual phenomenon, which can be attributed solely to personality traits of creative people (Csikzentmihalyi, 1999; Montuori & Purser, 1995). Indeed, what is deemed creative is the result of the "...social process of negotiation and legitimation" (Csikzentmihalyi, 1999; p.328). The attribute of creativity is not inherent in a person or object itself, but is given by social consensus. As such, it is no longer sufficient to examine creativity in isolation from the social, cultural and historical contexts that affect the life experiences of individuals and hence their creativity (Amabile, 1996; Csikzentmihalyi, 1999; Harrington, 1990; Hunsaker, 1992). Given that much of past research on creativity has focused on the individual, there are gaps in our understanding of how various contexts influence creativity.

Purpose of the study

In order to address the problem of underachievement, it is necessary to know why females are not achieving at a level commensurate with their ability (Kerr, 1994). As such, there needs to be more information on the needs unique to high ability females in order to nurture and foster their development. Researchers such as Walker, Reis and Leonard (1992) stressed the need for more research in order to develop an "...understanding of the current trend of underachievement in females" (p. 201).

Adopting a feminist, interpretive perspective, the goal of the research was to document the experiences of a group of creatively talented female visual artists using open-ended interviews and a focus group. Instead of asking why are there so few creative women artists (Piirto, 1991), the purpose of this research was to gain insight and knowledge from the participants in order to achieve an in-depth understanding of their creativity and the development of their creative talent in an effort to contribute to helping talented females fulfill their creative potential.

A feminist perspective means that it is the perceptions and perspectives of the participants that are of importance. Gruber and Davis (1989) insisted that the central problem of creativity is to understand how one organizes and constructs a life to form a system of knowledge, purpose and affect that can produce creative work. As such, the focus of the research included the actions, beliefs, intentions and feelings of the participants as well as the participants' perceptions of their own experiences (Mies, 1983).

An interpretive perspective means documenting the perspectives of the participants. It recognizes that there are multiple perspectives and as such, it necessitates discovering the meaning events have for the people who experience them. The goal of

interpretive research is to gather data which may produce "...authentic insights into people's experiences" (Silverman, 1993, p. 91).

It is important to note that creative ability is more than artistic talent. Creativity can be found in all fields, but this study is limited to female artists. There are two reasons for choosing the visual arts. First was the need to limit the scope of the investigation. Wallach (1971) maintained that limiting investigations to a specific area at a time produces better insights into the nature of creativity.

The second reason for limiting the study to the visual arts is that the artist has been the archetype of creativity in Western culture for centuries (Getzels & Csikzentmihalyi, 1976). Furthermore, it is in recognition of the importance of art to the culture of many societies. As Hegel maintained, it is through works of art "...that nations have deposited their profoundest intuitions and ideas..." (Paolucci, 2001, p. xix).

Based on the review of the literature outlined in chapter two, the following research questions will guide this study.

Research Questions

1. What factors facilitate or enhance the development of female visual artists' creative talent?
2. What factors serve as obstacles to the development of female visual artists' creative talent?
3. How do females with creative talent structure their lives to foster talent development and/or overcome obstacles?
4. What role has education played in the development of creative talent?

5. What is the process whereby creative talent is transformed into actual achievement?

Organization of the study

This study is presented in six chapters including the present introductory chapter. Chapter two reviews the literature. It is divided into three sections. The first presents the literature on creativity. The second section outlines what is known about women and creativity. Finally, the third section examines the literature on female talent development.

Chapter three describes the methodology used in the study. Among the topics included in this chapter are the research design and the data analysis. As well, selection of the participants and the setting will be discussed. In addition, considerations of trustworthiness and authenticity will be addressed.

The results of the study are presented in chapter four. The themes identified through data analysis will be presented. As much as possible, the themes will be illustrated using the participants' own words.

Chapter five is the discussion portion of the study. This chapter is divided into sections based on the themes from chapter four. As well, the research questions listed in chapter one are addressed.

Chapter six examines the implications and theoretical contributions of the study. It also considers the limitations of the study. Recommendations for future research directions are also discussed.

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

I never painted dreams. I painted my own reality.

Frida Kahlo

The purpose of this study was to investigate creativity and creative talent development from the perspective of a group of talented, female visual artists. The literature review will begin with an overview of the literature on creativity. It will then turn to a consideration of the literature on women and creativity. This will be followed by a review of female talent development.

While male experiences of creativity warrant examination, they are not the focus of this research. Much of the current literature on creativity is based on the lives of men (Reis, 2001). There is a need to document the creative experiences of women. As Simonton (2000) observed: "Psychologists still have a long way to go before they come anywhere close to understanding creativity in women..." (p. 156).

The literature on female talent development is part of the larger area of gifted females. The terms *gifted* and *talented* are often used interchangeably. For the purposes of this study, the two will be distinguished. Giftedness refers to an ability that is a "...mature power rather than a developing ability" (Piirto, 1994, p. 9). Talent refers to performance or the potential to perform at high levels of achievement (Piirto, 1994).

Creative females are often included in the giftedness literature. Creative potential, however, is not always fully developed, so it may not be labelled creative or identified as gifted until much later in an individual's life. Given this nature of creativity, it is important to make the distinction between gifted and talented.

Freeman (2000) argued that talent is a more preferable term than gifted. She noted a trend in the literature away from using the label gifted, which has become associated with fixed ability and identified by high achievement. This distinction, however, is fairly new so until recently creative females have often been included in the gifted literature. As such, the review of literature will include studies of both gifted and talented females.

Creativity

There is little consensus among researchers as to what creativity actually means, or how it is to be measured or operationalized (Albert, 1990; Amabile, 1990, Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Indeed creativity has been described by Cropley (1997) as a Abundle of paradoxes@. While there is no commonly accepted definition, the concept of creativity usually includes novelty and the cultural appropriateness or utility of the product (Ford & Harris, 1992; Young, 1985).

For the purpose of the proposed study, creativity will be defined as the ability to "...regularly solve problems, fashion products or define new questions in a domain in a way that is initially considered novel but that ultimately becomes accepted in a particular cultural setting" (Gardner, 1993a, p. 35). While there are almost as many definitions of creativity as there are creativity researchers, there are two reasons this particular definition was chosen. The first is because it includes the two elements necessary for creativity- novelty and appropriateness (Amabile & Tighe, 1993). The second, and distinguishing reason, is because this definition of creativity also recognizes the role of cultural influence on the assessment of creativity.

Creativity researchers often make a distinction between everyday creativity and eminent creativity. While all individuals have the capability to approach tasks in an original way that is appropriate to their completion, there are few individuals- male or female- who are able to achieve recognition by others deemed experts in their field (Albert, 1990).

An important finding regarding creative production is the result of the work by Amabile. She maintained that creativity requires more than intelligence, talent and personality traits. It also requires that an individual engage in the creative process for the sheer enjoyment of the activity itself, which she called intrinsic motivation. Based on her extensive work in the area of creativity, she has identified three requirements necessary for creative production: 1) acquisition of skills specific to the field of interest; 2) possession of skills specific to the creative process (e.g., demonstration of flexible thinking); and 3) intrinsic motivation (Amabile, 1996).

The study of creativity has been traditionally separated into four components: (1) descriptions of the creative person; (2) investigations of the creative process; (3) evaluations of the creative product; and (4) examinations of the environments conducive to creativity.

The existing creativity literature is characterized by several limitations. The first is that it has tended to focus on only one of the four components of creativity at a time- usually the person or the product. Current creativity researchers are beginning to stress that creativity is not due to an individual spark of genius, but rather, is the result of the relationship between the individual and her environment (Csikzentmihalyi, 1990; Montuori & Purser, 1995). It is important to focus on the interaction of factors in the

environment of creatively talented females as it becomes increasingly clear that a full understanding of creativity must take into account the interaction of the four components of creativity (Amabile & Tighe, 1993; Woodman & Schoenfeldt, 1989).

In determining what qualifies as creative, there has been an emphasis on the evaluation of the product. Some investigators have criticized this emphasis on the product; they suggested that a restricted focus on the end product diverts attention away from the process of development and intention that precedes a finished product (Meyer & Shaver, 1996). Hennessey and Amabile (1988) argued that the end product is only one component of creativity. The difficulty in examining the creative process, however, is the lack of methods for evaluating the creative process or observing the workings of the mind, including thoughts and inspirations.

Another limitation of much of the existing creativity literature is that it has largely been based on a small, homogenous group. Until recently, most creativity research was based on the study of white, middle class men (Bethel, 2000; Kirschenbaum & Reis, 1997). Variations based on race, class and gender were largely ignored. When these variations were included, they were often based on how they conformed to or diverged from the findings based on men (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986).

A further limitation is that most of the creativity research has been conducted using a quantitative approach. Research was often carried out in laboratories under experimental conditions, through standardized tests, case studies based on historical documentation, or a psychoanalytic approach. While these approaches have their merits, critics point out the limits of using only this type of methodology (Amabile & Tighe, 1993). Given that researchers now believe that creativity is the result of the interaction of

multiple factors, studies based on measuring one variable cannot adequately capture the complexities of creativity (Harrington, 1990: Hunsaker, 1992).

Addressing the limitations of much of the past research has resulted in new approaches to the study of creativity. For example, Gruber and Davis (1989) developed the evolving-systems approach. They described the creative individual as a system that constantly changes and adapts to conditions and shapes the environment. This approach includes an examination of the context of the creative person.

Woodman and Schoenfeldt (1989) proposed an interactionist approach to the study of creativity based on the idea that creative behaviour is the result of interactions between a person and the environment. A person is made up of influences such as family position, cognitive style, values and motivations. The environment includes social and contextual influences. Creative behaviour is the result of the interaction of all these factors. The environment is integral to the production and labelling of creativity.

In recognition of the importance of the environment to creativity, Csikzentmihalyi (1999), proposed a systems model of creativity. According to this model, creativity is the result of the interaction, and reciprocal influence, of three factors: the field, the domain and the individual. The field refers to the social and cultural components of a craft or a profession. The domain includes the structure and organization of a set of knowledge specific to a given craft or profession. The individual is the unique and developing configuration of a number of personality traits and experiences. All three factors are interrelated. Investigations of creativity need to consider all of these factors.

There is a growing consensus among researchers that creativity cannot be examined solely on the basis of individual factors, but must also include a discussion of

factors external to the individual (Amabile & Tighe, 1993; Meyer & Shaver, 1996). Factors that affect female visual artists' talent development include the environment in which they live and work as well as their unique creative abilities, preferences and motivations. These cannot be viewed in isolation. An examination of women=s creativity and creative talent development must include the richness and complexity of the interaction of all these factors.

Female Creativity

There is a limited amount of research on females and creativity (Reis, 2001). What does exist has concentrated on documenting the lack of female artists and trying to account for this finding. A variety of explanations have been presented. These include biological differences, inadequate education and training, a lack of role models, and insufficient motivation.

Baron (1972) suggested that having children was the main channel for women=s creative energies. This limited a woman's intensity of commitment to her artwork. He concluded that woman couldn't have children and be successfully creative at the same time. Phillips and Rozendal (1983) believed that women could create in two ways- indirectly through giving birth or directly through material objects. As such, they face a dilemma. Most women are forced to choose between creating an idea or a child. Women have to choose. If they did both, they would feel guilty about doing an inadequate job at both.

Other researchers compared the creative production of men and women to determine if there were gender differences in creative talent. Abra and Valentine-French

(1991), for instance, surveyed the creative accomplishments of men and women. They noted that women have made some contributions especially in the fields of the performing arts, choreography and literature. Despite these contributions and based on their observations that men have produced substantially more creative works than women, they concluded that men and women have different creative abilities (i.e. men have greater creative abilities). They argued that these differences in abilities could not be attributed solely to environmental factors.

Piirto (1991) asked if the lack of women creators might be due to personality differences between men and women. She reviewed various fields such as the visual arts, music and mathematics and compared males and females in each for possible gender differences. Her findings revealed that there were little differences in personality traits between creative males and females. The one difference she noted though was a difference in task commitment. Males showed greater intensity and perseverance than females.

Ochse (1991) investigated the degree of intensity and task perseverance exhibited by creative individuals. In an attempt to explain the lack of eminent women creators, she argued that task perseverance, or single-minded dedication to one's work, is the most salient characteristic of creative people. She noted that while in the past, women had little time for uninterrupted, creative work, women today have more freedom to pursue their work without interruption, but they are less able to single-mindedly devote themselves to their work. She believed this is because women need more social interaction than men. As a result, they are more likely to interrupt their work to seek out social situations.

Some researchers have focused on the social differences between men and women. Helson (1990), for example, stated that social roles and expectations have been structured so that, for women, creative achievement was hardly possible. The differences in creative production are the results of cultural demands placed on women (Popiel, Pollard, & Pollard, 1993).

Silverman (1995) believed that the lack of women creators could be attributed to social factors such as inadequate education and a lack of role models. She presented a history of the social subjugation of women. She observed that given the social conditions of women, it is incredible that they have been able to achieve any success at all.

This has led some investigators to look for examples of great women artists who have been ignored or forgotten. Pollack and Parker (1981) believed that efforts to find women artists and insert them into the history of art are not sufficient. They argued that the framework of art and art history is built around stereotypes of masculinity and femininity which are tied to concepts of art and artists "...that systematically exclude women and their contributions" (p. 77).

Nochlin (1994) argued that the explanation for the lack of women artists couldn't be attributed to a lack of talent. Rather the lack of women artists is probably due to the nature of the social institutions and what they allow and forbid. She challenged the question itself. As she noted, asking why there are no great women artists does nothing to question the assumptions lying behind the question. Instead, asking the question tacitly reinforces its negative implications. Research became focused on trying to explain the lack of women artists instead of attempting to foster or support creativity.

Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976) followed a cohort of male and female student artists in art school. When they were followed up years later, none of the women had achieved recognition. The men in the study, however, who had been judged as having less potential than the women, became productive, successful artists. As this study and others demonstrated, asking why there are so few women artists does little to contribute to methods of encouraging women with creative potential and talent. It would appear that a more practical question might be to ask: "What are the barriers that women with creative talent face?"

Kerr (1994) reported that she was determined to find out what was holding talented women back from realizing their potential in order to solve the problem. To her surprise, she discovered that the problem of finding out why creative females are not realizing their potential is complex and not so easily answered (Kerr, 1997). Additional research is needed in order to gain more information on specific ways that education and counselling may contribute to the realization of talented females fulfilling their potential (Walker, Reis, & Leonard, 1992).

Female Talent Development

Facilitators of talent development

Facilitators of talent development are factors that aid in the attainment of goals. Factors that are repeatedly reported to facilitate talent development are career counselling, role models and mentors (Arnold et al, 1996; DeFour & Paludi, 1995; Leroux & Butler-Por, 1996). Cangelosi and Schaefer (1991) found the most important factor in facilitating talent development is a supportive environment.

The role of the mentor, as outlined by Torrance (1983), has several components. The first is to provide encouragement, praise and even prodding. The second is to act as a role model. The third is to induct one into the workings of the culture of the field and learn the rules of the game. In assessing the suitability for a prospective mentor, Reilly (1992) suggested the following criteria: expertise, time, instructional skills, people skills and the ability to evaluate. In the case of creatively talented females, an important function of a mentor is that of role model.

Defour and Paludi (1995) distinguished two functions of the mentor. The first is to provide vocational information. The second is psychosocial in nature. It would seem that the psychosocial function is especially necessary for talented females. This function would address talented females' need to know about challenges of a particular talent domain, what sacrifices one might have to make and specifics related to level of achievement (Noble et. al., 1999).

The female talent development literature includes investigations of successful talented women. For example, Kerr (1994) interviewed a group of eminently successful women in an attempt to identify common characteristics. Some of these include spending time alone, the love of reading, feeling special or different, individualized instruction, intrinsic motivation, not allowing themselves to be restricted by gender roles, and the ability to integrate multiple roles. She recommended gathering more information concerning the needs unique to talented females in order to design curriculum and counselling interventions suited to their needs.

Leroux (1998) conducted in-depth interviews with 40 eminent Canadian women in a variety of fields. Her results suggested that several factors were necessary for

success. These include having role models, being intrinsically motivated and the importance of support in the form of relationships. The results indicated that there was a need to develop a model of career development that was specific to females.

Barriers to talent development

Barriers to the realization of talent are factors, which result in, or are related to, not attaining a goal. The barriers identified in the literature are referred to by a variety of terms, such as blocks or obstacles, but they are similar in content. Researchers often group the barriers into two categories: internal barriers and external barriers.

Internal barriers include anxiety, learned helplessness, low self-confidence and attributing success to external factors (Popiel, Pollard & Pollard, 1993). Defour and Paludi (1995) described internal barriers as personal blocks. These include procrastination, lack of confidence, fear of meeting people, fear of failure and perfectionism.

External barriers include sex role stereotyping, socialization according to traditional conceptions of gender, lack of role models, teaching styles and discrimination based on gender (Reis, 1998). Defour and Paludi (1995) described external barriers as social blocks. These include lack of opportunities, financial pressures, gender, age and the opinions of others, especially family and friends.

Walker et al. (1992) described three types of barriers to the realization of potential. They distinguished between interpersonal obstacles, intrapersonal obstacles and sociocultural obstacles. Interpersonal blocks relate to one's relationships with others. Negative judgements, disapproval or rejection by family, teachers and peers are examples

of this type of barrier. As well, one's talent may not be recognized or, if it is identified, it may not be acknowledged or valued.

Intrapersonal barriers are similar to internal blocks described by other researchers. Walker et al. (1992) reported that a lack of confidence was the most significant barrier to the realization of potential. This self-doubt can cause females to modify their career goals. In a study of talented females by Noble (1989), one-half of the participants listed a lack of confidence as the main obstacle impeding the development of their talent.

Sociocultural blocks are barriers to talent development based on traditional gender roles and expectations. This may include limited access to education or inadequate training. Wolleat (1979) noted that socialization into traditional gender roles means that many women are denied access to experiences necessary to further one's talent. The lack of access to education and training is often unintentional on the part of parents. Rather it can be attributed to the fact that parental wishes and expectations are different for males and females. Parents' expectations for their daughters often focus on making a suitable marriage choice (Kirschenbaum & Reis, 1997).

Lovecky (1993) elaborated on the roots of sociocultural blocks. She noted that in our society talent is identified by performance in those domains that are valued in society. The domains that are valued tend to be those that are the realm of men. As a result, even when women are creative, their work was not part of the domains valued so their works were not accepted into society at large. Pollock and Parker (1982) argued that the very structure of art history is built on traditional stereotypes of male and female which frames the way artists conduct their work and about which judgements on what is art are made.

Arnold et. al. (1996) distinguished between the public and private sphere of social life. The public sphere has been associated with stereotypical male activities and traits. The composite of the stereotypical male is based on the white, middle class male. The private sphere has been associated with tasks and traits assigned to women. What has been deemed valuable in our society is based on the traditions, values and practices of males in the public sphere.

Awareness of these barriers was highlighted in the 1980s. Given the changes in society due to the women's movement, it might seem logical to assume that these barriers have been broken down. This does not, however, appear to be the case, as these same barriers are still being reported in the current literature. Schwartz (2001) maintained that many of the barriers that were recognized beginning in the 1980s continue to exist. She stated that the socialization process of females both at home and school still does not promote risk taking and autonomy. Furthermore, females are still socialized to put the needs of others first which limits the amount of time available for reflection and creative production.

Implications of underachievement

A study conducted by Walker and Mehr (1992) illustrated the underachievement of talent. They investigated a cohort of talented graduates from Hunter College, a school designed to provide an environment conducive to the needs of talented females. The participants were graduates who attended the school from the period of 1910 to 1980. Despite the environment and social changes designed to address gender inequities, the overwhelming majority of women in the study reported that they felt as if they had not

fulfilled their potential. The reflections concerning the gaps between their potential and their achievement were similar across the eight decades. Reasons cited for the gaps include: traditional school experiences outside of Hunter College, social expectations, lack of challenging curriculum, and the fear of being labelled talented.

This and other findings are not surprising in light of what is known about the psychological development of talented females. Investigations by Kline and Short (1991) revealed significant changes in the emotional and social development of talented females. Decreases in expectations of success, self-esteem and self-respect are noted. As well, feelings of hopelessness, discouragement and level of perfectionism begin at puberty and increase throughout the high school years.

Counsellors who work with talented young females note that some females hide their talents and that there is a "...gradual disengagement with goal setting..." (Kerr, 1997, p. 483). These talented females report growing anxiety concerning role expectations and become confused about their goals. In order to address this problem, it is necessary to know why females are not achieving at a level commensurate with their ability (Kerr, 1994).

When females try to hide their talent, it follows that they are often not identified as talented. As a result, many do not receive adequate educational interventions (Garrison, 1993) and are not able to realize their potential. There are at least two implications of this underachievement. The first is that society does not reap the benefits of the realization of the development of its human resources. The second is that individuals themselves are not reaching their true potential and as such lose out on the opportunity for personal growth and self-fulfilment (Arnold et al, 1996).

It should be noted that some researchers such as Hollinger and Flemming (1992) have questioned the very concept of underachievement. They believe that the definition of achievement is based on a male standard derived from careers typically associated with men. Furthermore, these researchers contend that females' lower career aspirations and career achievement are acceptable due to different values and sense of achievement. Others such as Betz (1994), however, argue that the differences in values regarding achievement may be due to gender role socialization. This view is also expressed by Astin (1984) who maintained that the motivation to work and the satisfaction gained from one's work was the same for both men and women

A review of the female talent development literature highlights two major issues. The first is that despite the many signs of progress that can be seen in all areas of both the arts and sciences, females with high abilities are still at high risk of not realizing their potential. This is particularly notable in areas traditionally viewed as male domains (Betz, 1994; Eccles, 1985; Handel, 1994; Kerr, 1997; Callahan, Cunningham & Plucker, 1994; Reis & Callahan, 1996).

Women in the creative arts such as painting and sculpture, for example, are growing in number and are receiving recognition. Nonetheless, these women lament the fact that having children, and a home to take care of, leaves little time for creative work and the fulfilment of their creative promise. Gilligan (1990) theorized that this is because women have different career and productivity patterns than men. While this is probably true, it does not account for the fact that while women are making gains in some fields, they still remain underrepresented in others. For example, while the number of women

artists has grown, the number of women composers is still disproportionately low (Piirto, 1991).

The second issue apparent from the review of the literature is that talent development has often been examined within the framework of the life cycle. This approach attempts to construct a picture of the experiences of life as a coherent, cumulative whole. The picture that is constructed, however, varies depending on the perspective of the researcher. The traditional perspective in the social sciences has been from a male point of view (Cook & Fonow, 1990) given that the majority of researchers have been men. The choice of topics and focus of research has thus been from a male perspective. As well, the subjects used to create such pictures have been largely male (Kirschenbaum & Reis, 1997). There is a need to construct a model of talent development based on the unique needs and experiences of women (Fitzgerald, Fassinger & Betz, 1995).

A theory of creative talent development should address multiple, interrelated factors. Career and talent development are not linear, straightforward paths. Mangione (1993) described women's career development in stages because a straight path does not represent their reality. Theories about talent development need to include examinations of the social context in the formation of individuals' characteristics and choice of life paths (Noble et al, 1999). Factors that are important to women such as the importance of relationships and the need to for co-operation influence career choices and should be included in a theory of career development (Leroux, 1998).

A theory of talent development should also reflect the developmental nature of talent. Investigating talent and career paths from a developmental perspective has become

a distinct approach in the vocational counselling literature. This approach conceives of career development as a pattern of a person's career choices evolving over time. It also acknowledges that career choices are just one aspect of an individual's total development (Jepsen, 1990).

While researchers have begun to formulate models of talent development that consider the factors important for females (Leroux, 1998; Noble et al, 1999; Piitro, 1999; Reis, 1998), the task is not complete (Reis, 2001; Schwartz, 2001). In order for education to incorporate models of talent development into their planning and in order for programs to contribute to the realization of talent, creativity and creative talent development need to be understood more thoroughly (Walker, Reis, & Leonard, 1992). Without an adequate understanding of creativity and the development of creative talent, it is difficult to nurture or support.

It is hoped that listening to the stories of the participants in this research study will further the understanding of the experiences of creative women and the development of their talent. The next chapter will outline the ways in which the participants will be invited to share their stories and thoughts on creativity. It will also detail the methods used to analyse the information collected.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

Women's conversations are splendid things- diverse, profound, humorous, complex and vivid. They reflect the fact that we as women are splendid and diverse.
Jaroldeen Edwards

Research Design

Two perspectives guided the research design of this study: interpretivism and feminism. An interpretive approach recognizes that there are multiple realities. Each individual perceives, understands, experiences and develops meaning of her world in different ways. The aim of interpretive research is to understand the experiences of individuals and relate them to the experiences of others and the researcher herself (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). An interpretive perspective means documenting the perspectives of the participants. It involves discovering the meaning events have for the people who experience them. The goal of interpretive research is to gather data which may produce "...authentic insights into people's experiences" (Silverman, 1993, p. 91).

While there is no one feminism (Olesen, 1994) or one feminist methodology, there are feminist principles, which may be applied to a consideration of research design and methodology (Kirsch, 1999). Creswell (1998) described a feminist perspective as one of five ideological frameworks that guides qualitative research. As such, feminism and qualitative research share many foundations that shape the research process.

Both qualitative and feminist researchers insist on confronting the assumption that the researcher is an objective observer detached from the process or that research is value free. Rather, the researcher is a person with a particular perspective, which should be

available to the reader. The role of the researcher should be open to scrutiny (Miller & Glassner, 1997).

There are features of feminist research, however, that make it distinct from qualitative research. The most notable distinguishing feature of a feminist perspective is its "deliberate focus on gender combined with an emphasis on emancipatory goals" (Kirsch, 1999; p. 7). As well, a feminist perspective acknowledges that girls and women are disadvantaged politically, legally and socially because of their sex (Overall, 1998). A feminist approach means that research be *for* women, not just *about* women (Westcott, 1990). The research process should acknowledge and validate women's experiences (Kirsch, 1999).

Data were collected from ten female artists between the ages of 25 and 68 using open-ended interviews and a focus group. In order to understand the experiences of the participants, it was important to uncover the meanings they attribute to their experiences. Open-ended interviewing and focus groups are the most appropriate method for doing this (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Fontana and Frey (1994) argued that open-ended interviews allow for more breadth than structured interviews. They also maintained that open-ended interviews are appropriate for the goal of understanding the behaviour of participants without imposing pre-conceived categories, which could, in fact, limit data collection and interpretation.

This study and particularly its methodology were designed around the principles of feminist research as described above. For example, the interviews and focus group held for this study were open-ended so that the participants could talk about issues that were important to them rather than issues that were framed by direct questions (Kasper, 1994).

Open-ended interviews are well suited to the application of feminist principals in research. They allow the participants to decide on the topics of importance to them and make the process participant guided rather than research driven (Kirsch, 1999; Reinharz, 1992). For, as Klein (1983) observes, the "...questions we ask determine the answers we get" (p. 92).

A focus group was used in this study for several reasons. The first is the fact that the focus group is a way to acknowledge and validate women's experiences (Kirsch, 1999), which adhered to the feminist expectation that research be *for* women, not just *about* them (Westcott, 1990). The focus group allowed women to come together and share their experiences.

A focus group is also well suited to the feminist principal of research that insists that consciousness raising should be part of the research process (Cook & Fonow, 1990). In this way, the research process moved from merely giving voice to the participants in an interview. The focus group discussion was meant to involve the participants in building an awareness and understanding of the causes of the status quo (Gorelick, 1996).

Role of the researcher

My own position as a researcher is, to borrow the phrasing from Olesen (1994), "...sympathetic to postmodern currents in both interactionism and feminism" (p. 169). The postmodern theme is succinctly stated by Richardson (1994). It is the doubt that any theory or methodology has an universal claim as *the* generator of authoritative knowledge. Rather, knowledge claims are based on serving the interests of those who make them (Westcott, 1990). A healthy skepticism is needed in evaluating any claim to

"truth". This, however, is not the same as denying that any knowledge of the social world may be obtained.

I believe that knowledge of the social world is possible through the "...achievement of intersubjective depth and mutual understanding" (Miller & Glassner, 1997, p. 106). It is not possible to achieve a truly objective truth. The purpose of my research was not to produce truth. Rather, my aim was to achieve an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of interest. My goal was to gather data which would result in "...authentic insights into people's experiences" (Silverman, 1993, p. 91). As such, my concern was not truth, but trustworthiness (Mishler, 1992).

Fontana and Frey (1994) described a dilemma of presentation that researchers face: trying to fall somewhere between two poles- the 'expert' at one end and 'just one of the group' at the other. The position one takes and thus the impression one makes, affects how participants respond. One way I attempted to address this was to present myself as not one of the group, but on equal footing with its members- an outsider who was genuinely interested in hearing what the participants had to say. I let the participants know that I felt they were the experts on the subject of creative talent development.

A description of the role of the researcher must include revealing the social relations that produced the interview itself (Acker, Barry & Esseveld, 1996). The participants were referred by personal and professional contacts. All of the participants were educated, successful professionals. Nonetheless, I was well aware of the possibility of the exploitation of the participants as "objects of knowledge" (Cook & Fonow, 1990). So while the risk of abuse of research relationship did exist, the level of education and interest in the study moderated it. The participants all expressed interest, even

enthusiasm, in participating in the study and welcomed the chance to talk to me and the other participants about their experiences. For instance, after contacting one participant who had said she would like to participate, I did not hear from her again. I assumed that she did not want to participate in the study after all so I did not pursue the matter. In fact she had misplaced the informed consent information and actually spent several months tracking me down because she really wanted to be in the study.

I developed a relationship with the participants that could be characterized as collegial. I tried to develop rapport with all the participants prior to the interviews and focus group. I spoke to them about my interests and the research process and talked about my commitment to feminist principles and informed consent. I did not try to force a friendship, but was open to developing the relationship beyond the research process. I did not develop any life long friendships, but I did develop some collegial relationships. For example, I continue to correspond with one participant about women's art and we exchange ideas and recommendations for reading.

Throughout the research process I tried to heed the dictate of Fontana and Frey (1994) and let common sense and moral responsibility be my ultimate guide. While my vested interests in the study were to understand my own creative process and obtain a degree, my interests as a researcher were to the participants first, the study second, and to myself last.

Participants

The participants in the study were a group of ten female visual artists who are creatively talented. The criteria for being designated as creatively talented included being

recommended by colleagues or experts in the field, having had work accepted at galleries or exhibitions and having won prizes or awards (List & Renzulli, 1991). All of the participants met at least two of the criteria. All of the participants had had their own shows and had exhibited at art galleries including prestigious galleries such as the Art Gallery of Ontario. Many of the participants had published in scholarly journals related to their particular art form. One of the participants, for example, wrote extensively for international sculpture magazines. And all of the participants were recommended by their colleagues as examples of successful artists in their field.

The participants were selected using a combination of professional and personal contacts in a large, urban area's artistic community and using the snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling is a method of recruiting participants in which the researcher begins with a few participants and then asks them to recommend other participants who are known to have the profile and attributes desired.

From possible participants, the actual sample was chosen to be as diverse as possible in terms of race, class, socioeconomic status and sexual orientation. A varied sample selection is important if patterns of commonalities across differences are to be identified (Morse, 1998). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that 10 is an adequate number of participants to yield information about a group or a phenomenon if they are selected using purposive sampling, which ensures as wide a range of information as possible can be obtained.

The choice to use as varied a sample as possible was also made in recognition of the fact that there is no one composite picture of women. There are many women whose experiences differ according to race, class and sexuality (Krus, 2001). As Gorelick (1996)

stated, it is necessary to document the experiences of a variety of groups of women if we are to understand the processes that create the differences.

The guarantee of informed consent, protection from harm, privacy and confidentiality are ethical imperatives. Participants were provided with an Information Sheet and Consent Form, which explained the project, ensured confidentiality, and requested their signature (see Appendix A). The Information Sheet and Consent Form was given to participants prior to the commencement of the study in order to give them adequate time to review the study and make an informed decision.

For the individual interviews, I was able to guarantee confidentiality of the data as the agreement was between the participant and myself. For the focus group, however, I could not guarantee that every member of the focus group and reflecting team would honour the right to have confidentiality protected. While there were no measures available to ensure confidentiality, the possibility of a breach of trust was discussed with the participants before the focus group. This allowed anyone who thought she might not be able to keep information private a chance to withdraw. It also gave anyone who felt uncomfortable with this possibility the opportunity to decline participation (Berg, 2001). No one withdrew for either reason.

Given that the interview and focus group involved possible disclosure of personal information that might bring up painful emotions, participants were assured that they could stop the discussion at any time. The names of counsellors were available in case issues raised by taking part in the study caused any of the participants distress. Fortunately, there was no need to refer any of the participants to outside support.

Setting

The interviews took place in the setting of the participants' choice, which was usually their home or studio. It was hoped that this would allow for maximum convenience and feelings of comfort for the participants. The focus group was conducted in the studio of one of the participants, which was located on a farm. A setting that is comfortable and familiar to the participants can help reduce the hierarchal structure characteristic of most laboratory and survey research (Kirsch, 1999).

Procedure

Phase 1: The first phase of the study consisted of conducting interviews with the participants. Participants who agreed to participate in the study were contacted and an interview was scheduled at a time and location to suit their convenience. The interviews lasted approximately one hour and were recorded on tape recorder. All the interviews began with the prompt "I would like to hear about your life as an artist". As the interviewer, I tried to listen and if I did have questions, I tried to wait until the participant finished a thought or story rather than interrupt.

Phase 2: All of the participants were asked to participate in a focus group, but only eight took part due to time and scheduling constraints. While a participant may find it difficult to elaborate her creative process, a discussion of how one creates and the different stages one may go through may be better illuminated in a discussion type format. The participants welcomed the chance to meet some other artists to talk about their experiences. One of the participants offered to hold the focus group at her studio on

her farm. We arranged car pools and spent the afternoon together before conducting the focus group. The focus group lasted one hour.

A reflecting team, composed of four participants, did not actually take part in the focus group discussion. (The participants decided amongst themselves who would be in the focus group and who would make up the reflecting team.) Rather, they sat and listened. A reflecting team observes the focus group dynamics and then later talks about what they heard and observed during the discussion. The observations and comments from the reflecting team were included as a source of data. The reflecting team was instructed prior to the focus group on the purpose and methods of a reflecting team.

Reflecting teams were first used in counseling by Andersen (1987) as part of family therapy. They grew out of his unease with giving an expert opinion to clients. He felt it would be more beneficial to receive feedback from a peer group. While the reflecting team has been used mostly in counseling settings and as a method for training practitioners, Andersen (1995) stated that the reflecting team can be adapted for a variety of purposes and its applications are limited only by imagination.

Reflecting teams involve a three-step process. The first is to allow the team to observe the participants talk. The team may not make any comments while the focus group is in session. The second step is to let the team reflect on what they saw and heard. The final step is a debriefing of the focus group. This allows the focus group participants to discuss the teams' comments and it provides a sense of closure.

Guidelines for the reflecting team were outlined by Paré (1999). The first is to make sure that the participants are comfortable and agree to the process. The reflecting team needs to be prepared in advance. The team must talk to other team members, not to

the participants. The team should include all of the participants in their reflections. The reflections should be situated in the team's own experiences and should be phrased as tentative hypotheses.

The reflecting team was useful for this study in three ways:

1. The first is that it was in keeping with the feminist aims of research. It is a method of involving the participants as collaborators in the process and it allows for the inclusion of many points of view.
2. A second reason is that it was also a tool for consciousness raising. The use of the reflecting team provided participants an opportunity to hear different interpretations of their own experiences. This exposed participants to various versions of the same world and thus may have created a wider view of their reality. It may have opened up the possibilities of considering alternative interpretations of issues and ways of doing things (Jenkins, 1996).
3. Finally, the reflecting team also addressed the fact that researchers are subjective beings with particular orientations. The adequacy of interpretation is made stronger when there are multiple interpretations.

Phase 3: Some of the participants were asked to grant a second interview. Participants were contacted for a second interview as the data analysis unfolded and there were questions or issues that warranted further elaboration or clarification. Participants were told before consenting to participate that they may be asked to grant a second interview. They were also informed that even if I did not request a second interview, they

would be granted one if they felt either the need to talk more or if, as the result of reflection, they wanted to change their thoughts or feelings.

Phase 4: The final phase was conducting member checks. This required sending a copy of the transcript interview to participants to let them read their interview(s). This was to allow participants to reflect on the meaning of their experiences, which involved asking participants if their account made sense to them. It was also a way to verify the accuracy of any claim of my ability to represent the participants' meanings. Then I met with the participants, or in some cases, communicated via electronic mail. I shared the themes I had identified and the interpretations I had made.

The participants were very generous with the feedback that they gave me. They were enthusiastic about receiving the transcripts and the opportunity to follow up on their interviews. None of the participants objected to the content of the transcripts. A few participants said it felt strange to read their words in print and several participants said that reading their interviews gave them additional insight into their own attempts at understanding their creative processes. Many of the participants commented on the fact that I had identified several themes. They felt it was important to stress the interaction of many factors rather than just one.

Data analysis

Data analysis was based on the procedures set out in grounded theory. Before this method of analysis is described, it is necessary to address two criticisms of grounded theory. First, grounded theory has been criticized for being designed around the positivistic assumption that there is an external reality to be discovered (Miller &

Glassner, 1997). Other researchers, however, contend that grounded theory can still be used in an interpretive approach because its method of "...building interpretations up out of observations and interactions with the world..." is still appropriate (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; p. 577). Charmaz (1995) argued that grounded theory results in rich data that can be used for comparisons of behaviour and processes. She maintained that while there is no one external reality, we could learn to share the language and meaning of the participants we study.

The second criticism of grounded theory is that there are many versions of the method. Indeed, the originators of grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss (1967), can no longer agree on what grounded theory is or how to use it. Dey (1999) contended that there is not a single method known as grounded theory. Various researchers have taken it and adapted it to their own purposes. As a result, researchers need to specify which type of grounded theory they subscribe to (Wilson & Hutchison, 1996).

The method of grounded theory used for this data analysis is based Glasser and Strauss (1967) and refined by Charmaz (1995). It begins with the insistence on the use of the data itself as the source of theory in order to avoid the practice of fitting the data into pre-conceived categories and theories. The data analysis procedure is based on the constant comparative method, which is the essence of the method (Keddy, Sims & Stern, 1996). Data collection and data analysis occurred concurrently. As Coffey and Atkinson (1996) noted, data analysis is not a "...separate set of procedures applied to an inert body of data" (p.11).

Data analysis began with transcribing. I transcribed all of the data sources-interviews, focus group discussion and reflecting team comments. The caution of

transcribing the interview in its entirety, including indicating tone and verbal noises was heeded in order to maximize the accuracy of the transcripts. Intonation, utterances, pauses and silences were included in the transcripts as much as possible.

The data were analyzed in three steps. The first was the creation of concepts. Lincoln and Guba (1985) characterized this process as grouping together data bits that seem to be related. This involved reading each line of the transcripts in an attempt to label the actions, thoughts or events present in the data. Words, sentences and descriptions were compared with others all the while asking what, where, how, when, how much and what else. Concepts are formed when the label aids in understanding or explaining what is going on (Charmaz, 1995). The concepts need to be more than just descriptive or representational; they should also be to be analytical. Thomas (1993) cautioned the researcher in addition to asking 'what is this' to also ask 'what could this be'?

The next step in data analysis was the formation of categories. This involved grouping similar concepts derived from the interview, focus group and reflecting team together into more abstract groupings. It also involved rereading the data over and over in order to become thoroughly acquainted with it. Through further thought and interpretation it was found that certain concepts were similar and thus could be combined. I tried to remain open and maintained the willingness to revise, drop or add concepts and consider alternative interpretations (Dey, 1999). Grounded theory guidelines state that the categories must be mutually exclusive, which was a consideration in the category formation.

The final step was the linking of the categories together into themes. This involved interpretation as to how the various categories are related (Dey, 1999). Themes were identified based on ideas and events, which began to emerge through the formation of categories. This involved identifying several themes, based on ideas and events, which began to emerge through the formation of categories. The data was reread and a central theme, known as the core variable was identified based on its ability to link the other processes found in the data. The choice of the core theme was made based on its ability to integrate the other themes rather than on the frequency of its occurrence (Wilson & Hutchison, 1996).

The last phase of data analysis also includes theory generation. Theory generation involves developing ideas so that diverse, often unrelated experiences can be linked together in a simple model that can be used beyond the actual study (Morse, 1998). The categories and themes were compared to the research literature in order to develop a more general level of analysis. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) stated that theory generation can never be accomplished using the data alone. The ideas generated from the data source have to move beyond the data.

An ongoing process in the data analysis at all phases was speculation about the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). This entailed trying a number of different ideas in the formation of concepts and categories. This involved a constant review of the data. As well, it meant living with the puzzle of uncertainty rather than trying to form concepts and categories too soon (Morse, 1998).

Memos were especially useful. The use of code memos was related to the process of categorizing the data. Ideas about how to code the data and reasons for

grouping data bits together were written down. I would return to these memos from time to time to see if the reasons for forming a concept or category still made sense or were appropriate. Theoretical memos concerned evolving ideas about the research findings and how the various ideas might be related. I also read the literature and made notes on how my data seemed to fit into existing literature and how it seemed to differ. Questions, concerns and puzzlements were also recorded.

I also referred to my field journal during the data analysis. I kept a record of personal feelings about the process, participants and my own enthusiasm or anxiety. This was a forum for recording and recognizing bias and the role of the researcher, which is called a reflexive journal by Guba and Lincoln (1999). It is an avenue for exposing one's assumptions and recording why the study is of interest and how it is being carried out. I would reread my field journal and compare them to the data analysis and ask myself questions such as, "Was there a bias I recorded after an interview that was reflected in the formation of a concept or category?"

An important consideration in the data analysis noted by LeCompte and Schensul (1999) is the attention to the negative case. In comparing data an important factor is the search for the disconfirming incident. Similar cases can confirm hunches and theories, but it is necessary to attend to incidents that do not fit themes. These negative cases help recognize the variations among a population and can lend to an elaboration of the nuances in meaning and perceptions that could be overlooked if such cases were ignored. I kept this in mind during the research process. For example, my initial analysis seemed to generate a category I called 'making the mundane memorable' to characterize the subject of the participants, art. I had been to a well-known gallery to see an exhibit,

however, and noted that the subject of an artist's creations were international and politically motivated. I contacted her through the gallery and requested an interview. She agreed and we explored the motivation behind her art. As a result, I returned to the data analysis with a broader perspective.

Throughout the data analysis I was aware of the problem of how to produce an analysis that goes beyond the experiences of the participants while at the same time acknowledging their uniqueness. "How do we explain the lives of others without violating their reality?" (Acker et al., 1996, p. 71). The findings are presented alternating back and forth between using abstract categories and letting the data speak for itself.

Authenticity and trustworthiness

A consideration of authenticity and trustworthiness are important factors to consider when making a claim that the findings represent the reality of the participants. Authenticity is the "...degree to which findings can be [transferred] to other settings similar to ...the one in which the study occurred..." and trustworthiness is "...the degree to which findings correctly map the phenomenon in question" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.100).

The descriptions and the knowledge claims generated by this research are framed by time, culture and my point of view. Absolute knowledge is not possible, nor was it my goal. Nonetheless, measures were taken that can be used as a gauge to the degree of authenticity and trustworthiness present in the findings (Perakyla, 1997).

Guba and Lincoln (1999) suggested purposive sampling to ensure as wide a range of information as possible can be obtained. This enhances the degree to which findings

can be transferred, which will increase any claims to authenticity. For while a sample based on a small size is difficult to transfer, a varied sample does make it more plausible to discuss similarities and differences across settings and individuals (Perakyla, 1997). It is possible to make meaningful generalizations from in-depth and detailed understanding of specific contexts (Jacob, 1992). In order to meet this criterion, from possible participants, the actual sample was chosen to be as diverse as possible. For example, I actively sought out artists from a wide variety of cultures including Aboriginal, African and Asian.

The findings can be said to be representations of reality, rather than reproductions of reality (Perakyla, 1997). There were several measures taken to make these representations as accurate as possible in order to increase the trustworthiness of the findings. All of these measures were used as I collected data.

The first was to build a rapport and a sense of trust with the participants. This was in order for participants to feel comfortable enough to talk about their experiences and feelings on a personal level, rather than presenting a public account intended to meet perceived expectations of the researcher. Another way I tried to build rapport and trust was to "talk back" to the participants. This meant answering their questions and revealing personal information about myself (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

The way we present ourselves can influence our participants' capability and willingness to speak from a more private, or inner, voice as opposed to a public voice. If the interviewer is perceived as being committed to ruling interests and upholding them, or conversely, if the interviewer is seen as opposed to them, the respondents may alter and tailor their narratives accordingly (Miller & Glassner, 1997). Miles and Huberman (1984)

referred to this as "researcher effects". The trustworthiness of the research findings depends on getting information from the participants' points of view, not what the participants think the interviewer wants to hear. I tried to present myself as someone who was genuinely interested in what the participants had to say, even though I was not part of their group.

Another measure was to ask the participants if they would like to add anything else. Parrington (1995) suggested a series of questions to probe for trustworthiness: "Do you think you have described your experiences as fully as possible given language constraints and my limited background?" "Did I lead or bias you in any serious way?" "Is there anything else you would like to clarify now?" "Is what you have described really you, the [artist]?" "Do you feel that there is anything else important you would like to explain or talk about?" (p. 12).

Acker et al. (1996) addressed the issue of trustworthiness and authenticity by referring the findings back to the basic goal of the research itself. Do the findings contribute to the emancipation of women's lives? Do they further the objective of consciousness raising by revealing the conditions of women's lives to individual women?

While I cannot be sure that this objective was reached in the course of this study, I made all attempts to make certain that it did. This is especially apparent in my choice of research methodology. The use of a focus group and reflecting team was a way of bringing women together to share ideas and stories. As Reinharz (1992) noted, there are many benefits of women interviewing women. The quality of women's conversations is different from conversations in mixed groups. Another benefit is that when women come together as a group they may discuss topics that "have no name"; topics that men would

not know to ask about because they are not formal components of everyday or academic discourse (Reinharz, 1992).

Instead of asking why are there so few creative women artists (Piirto, 1991), the purpose of this research was to gain insight and knowledge from the participants in order to achieve an in-depth understanding of their creativity and the development of their creative talent. There is insufficient information available on experiences and needs of creatively talented females. More information is required in order to design appropriate educational programs and interventions.

The research design was based on the principles of feminism and interpretivism. The goal of the research was to document the perceptions of the participants. As such, the research process was designed be open-ended. Data were collected from ten female artists between the ages of 25 and 68. The data sources were open-ended interviews, a focus group as well as the reflecting team's observations of the focus group.

The results of the data analysis will be presented in the next chapter. Using grounded theory, seven themes were identified. These themes will be presented in chapter four. Excerpts from the interviews, focus group and reflecting team will be included to illustrate the themes.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS

Our lives are our artwork
Dottie Moore

Data collected from field notes, interviews, a focus group and the notes from the reflecting team that observed the focus group were analysed. Using grounded theory, concepts were merged to create categories. Categories were in turn combined into themes. As a result of this data analysis, seven themes were identified.

This chapter will present the seven themes identified through data analysis. As mentioned in chapter three, the dilemma of presenting an analytic report versus staying true to the participants' stories will be addressed by presenting both the participants' own words and the results of the analysis. For a description of the participants see appendix B.

Theme 1- Educational experiences

Educational experiences were central to the lives of the participants given that they all talked school and their various experiences throughout the data collection process. There was a marked difference between the way they spoke about early educational experiences in elementary and high school versus later educational experiences in university. Elementary school and high school were viewed as places that required conformity or imposed boundaries whereas university was a time of skill development and intellectual stimulation.

Early educational experiences

All of the participants talked about experiences relating to early education. For the most part, however, their conversations were not about their own experiences in elementary or high school. Rather, the participants talked more about their experiences as adults related to early education. Maybe this was because for many of the participants, early education was a long time ago.

For the participants in this study, school in the early years was viewed as a place that did not promote or value creativity. During a conversation about creativity and the creative process Zoë's reflections turned to the role of school in the creative process. She noted:

> *I think there's just something inside people. I think creativeness is in a lot of people, but in a lot of cases it is dampened early on. And, you and I have discussed this before; school is the big killer of it.*

Another participant discussed at length the influence of school on young children's creativity. Peggy had trained as an elementary school teacher. She no longer taught in the school system but was involved in giving private art lessons to students:

> *But I've been in schools often enough now to sort of see that they're unless the teacher's really interested in the art work, it doesn't feature at all. That's why I get children for art-classes. I guess a lot of stuff is duplicated out of packages. I mean I never forget the turkeys cut out for thanksgiving. The kid colours it in you know... um just not creative.*

Peggy continued to talk about the conformity in the school system. She said:

I've only taught three years in the school setting. I've taught more years with kids at home and its very different because I make the kind of surrounding I want. I can even teach what I want or I can have them doing the sort of things I think they should be doing or could be doing albeit with some direction because they've been used to being given so much direction. They don't know how...they flounder when you don't give them any directions if I just gave them a sheet of paper.

Some of the participants elaborated on the conformity required in schools. Part of conforming in the school environment includes making sure the physical environment is clean. The creative process, however, is not a neat and tidy endeavor. Several participants talked about the reluctance of teachers to let their students create a mess. Lisa, for example said:

Teachers didn't want to take out paint because it's messy. The kids make a mess yes because you don't give them an environment that...like mine knew you know if somebody knocked something over it was OK. They could clean it up later- no big deal.

It would seem that the structure and requirements of the school system such as keeping the floors clean were dictating the actions and choices of teachers instead of the needs of the students. It is as if the students were required to adapt to the system rather than the system being in place to serve the students.

Teaching qualifications

The participants also talked about the teaching qualifications, or lack of, that most art teachers have. Some of this participant felt that the lack of training reflected an undervaluing of the arts. One participant spoke of the requirements necessary to be a high school art teacher and asked: "Are two art or painting classes enough for someone to be qualified as an art teacher?" Sophie suggested:

> *...constant upgrading for teachers, keeping them in touch with developments in contemporary art. Sometimes things my students tell me that their high school teachers told them make me cringe!*

Later educational experiences

An important function of later educational experience appeared to providing a forum for intellectual stimulation suitable to their needs. All of the participants mentioned the need for a connection to an intellectual discourse, or theory, in which to place their artwork. There were many examples of this desire to be in an environment where the level of discussion was appropriate to the needs of the artists. For example, Jenny stated:

> *I think I was really determined when I went to art school...I really had to... I had some life experience so I really appreciated it. I was really serious and I worked really, really hard because of all that stuff. My undergraduate was really good for getting a technical grounding like learning how to draw, learning how to paint, looking at lots of art, sculpture, ceramic and then an artist for a while. It was the masters that was the real intellectual challenge: why are you*

doing this? What's the point? You're work is not communicating what you say it's communicating. Who are you? Really big questions. It put me in touch with a whole other professional level of artists. And not that you have to do an M.F.A. to have access to that level of discourse, but it sure helps.

Lilly reflected on the need to connect her work to theory as her talent progressed:

I wanted to talk about my pots. I wanted to tell people about my pots. I didn't want people anymore to tell me what they were about. I wanted to write about them so then I went to university in my early 30s and did my BA and after that my MA and I really enjoyed that. It was the right time to get into theory. And I really enjoyed learning how to write and I really enjoyed being part of a bigger discourse... to be able to defend or influence my work according to that discourse or find out that the stuff I was doing was already a part of that and that was really cool because of the way I was putting my work together. And that aspect, that constructive aspect of the materials, I've learned since I've come out of high school played a big part in me understanding really quickly things like post-modern theory like deconstruction, reconstruction, carrying things through.

Education was also recognized as a means of gaining credibility. It seems that art is becoming more like so many other professions in our society that require a degree for legitimacy or recognition. Winnie noted:

So I guess it's that idea that art comes out of an art context. You're an artist if you've got that stamp of approval and it's...that can be a complex process. It doesn't...it means more and more all the time that you go to school.

You get a B.F.A. and then you get an M.F.A. We're becoming more academized all the time and I think I'm part of that first generation of artists in Canada that are getting their M.F.A. as routine. That you really can't get too far without an M.F.A. and even people who have been artists for a long time like S. W., she's just getting her M.F.A right now. S. B. got her M.F.A in her late 40s. So people who are accomplished artists are going back to school...

Cleo, however, believed that the motivation to continue education was about more than just getting a degree. She said:

I think it's partly recognition but it's partly the challenge to boost your work up to another intellectual level and to have that discussion with your peers that would be hard to find otherwise. Maybe our world is too fractured for artists to find that in their community.

The importance of education was noted, but the choice of which school to attend was mentioned as a mediating factor. The value of education seemed to be about more than simply getting a degree. The whole experience was important for the participants. Joan stated:

If you just want the piece of paper so you can teach, then any little school will do, but I choose Concordia because they already had a reputation that there was lots of feminist theory. It was urban. It was downtown Montreal. It was multicultural. So I already knew, this was the perfect place for me. So I was bit fussy I guess. But I'd been an artist for 8 or 9 years in between so I knew what I wanted to do.

Maggie said:

I'm a really big fan of the M.F.A. degrees. I'm also a big fan of picking the right school and getting one that's going to be compatible with why you're getting the degree.

While the participants valued their educational experiences, they had conflicting views as to its role in the development of artistic talent. For instance, Winnie, who had spoke positively about the role of education in her development as an artist, also reflected on the constraints that can result from placing an emphasis on the need for a degree. She also discussed the possible negative effects school can have on creative talent development:

There are tons of incredible people out there. And I do wonder. Are we breeding out that kind of fire that can exist outside the school? Does the school put a damper on people's creativity? I'm always questioning things like that. Are we academizing and theorizing things so much that we're taking out that spirit? So I'm very...I do...I'm very questioning about the whole process and I'm wondering if an art education shouldn't be related more to real life. Maybe I should be getting my students out in the street...I do to a certain extent. I take them to shopping malls to draw stores and stuff. Anyway, I'm always thinking. They are huge issues.

The school environment, including later educational experiences, also provided less than ideal conditions for some of the participants. For example, some of the artists talked about the fact that they had all male teachers in art school. Others talked about the lack of female role models in their school experience. Sophie said:

I went to school in the bad 70s- from '78 to '82 and I had all male teachers. There were a couple of women around but they were just given contractual positions and stuff like that. It turned out that I had all men and I had a really hard time with some of them. Not in terms of sexual harassment thank goodness but lots of other ways.

Jenny said:

How I hated school and my teachers. I had no women teachers.

Many of the participants lamented the lack of women teachers. They said that the lack of women teachers meant that there were no role models or shared perspectives between a teacher and student. A few participants recounted that they felt they could not penetrate the bonds that their male teachers and the male students had formed. One of the participants remembered feeling like an outsider.

While there were negative experiences, they nonetheless seemed to influence the participants and resulted in helping to propel their talent forward. For instance, Joan talked about her work. She was a textile artist and purposely chose to use pink yarn in her work. What started out as a protest became a part of her work that had the most meaning for her:

...but the second part of the pink story is that I've been using pink for probably 20 years at least in my art and I think it came about when I went...when I was a student at the university of Manitoba. And I was told that you aren't supposed to use pink in art [laughs] I was just thinking at that time, "f... you", you know. Sorry to be so crude...

So I started using pink in my work and that's where this work started developing that was feminine and was about who I was and I wasn't going to do the big steel sculpture stuff.

Despite the variety of sentiments expressed, school and education were a big part of all the participants' lives. At the time of the interviews, all of the participants were involved in teaching. Several of the participants taught at established schools of art while others taught at local art centers or community centers. Some of the participants taught at colleges and universities on a full time basis. Even though some of the participants were highly acclaimed, it seemed that teaching was still their primary source of income.

Wherever they taught, however, they all regarded teaching as more than imparting a technical skill. As Cleo stated:

I teach first year sculpture and second year drawing and in my teaching I do this really hard thing. I try to teach them really basic, fundamental skills like a really good foundation like traditional skills, but then I also try to teach them how to be creative and how to express themselves and how to go beyond reproducing the world or copying or imitating. So it's very big...it's difficult...

In describing their educational experiences, the participants in this study reported both encouraging and discouraging incidents. At times the participants spoke very excitedly about their experience while at other times their words were delivered in a tone of hopelessness. There seemed to be very little neutral ground. This seems to indicate that education has a strong impact on talent development-- either supporting or squashing it.

Theme 2: Urge to create

A picture of the participants' talent development began to emerge as they spoke about their lives. Although they were never directly questioned about the evolution of their talent, their stories and reflections provided some interesting insights. It seems that their talent development moved forward partly because of their urge to create. The need to create as a means of exploring personal issues and concerns and according to one's own convictions appeared to be an important factor in their lives. There was a motivation to create as a means of self-expression and as a way to sort through issues. For example, Jenny talked about the subject of her work:

> *My work reflects ideas I've encountered through life and issues that I felt strongly about. There's a thread of anti violence through it all, of course.*

The urge to create was often fuelled by strong feelings. Lisa talked about a sense of anger for the state of the world, which was communicated in her latest show:

> *The anger is a little different because it comes out of incredible deep sadness for our world.*

Sometimes the motivation to create was fuelled by positive feelings and/or experiences. For example, Lilly was interested in celebrating the female body. She was not concerned with addressing images of the female body portrayed in the media. She said she wanted to focus on the aesthetics of the body:

> *It's a celebration of the female body and how beautiful they are.*

Zoë talked about experiencing a feeling that made her want to paint:

> *...those of us that paint in a sort of semi traditional manner and produce semi traditional pictures still consider that we're creating because you're creating*

something from a feeling you have. Either something has stopped you to want to paint a scene. It may not be exactly the same as a Constable or a Turner or some of the world-renowned painters, but there's been a special feeling that has to get you to paint. Most people who paint outside rather than paint in a studio have that. There's something that makes them stop and say, "I have to paint this". And as a result, there's liveliness and a feeling because they stood there and looked at this thing.

For some of the participants, the urge to create was born of the need for self-discovery and/or personal growth. For example, Maggie reflected:

...maybe creativity isn't this constant state of flowing through you all the time...like you open up a tap and its there. Maybe creativity is something that ebbs and flows-you know, sometimes you're creative and sometimes you're not. You know, we all have these misgivings and doubts all the time. I don't think misgivings and doubts are bad because they make you think more.

Another example came out of the focus group when the discussion turned to movements in contemporary art. This included the use of computers in art. When it was time for the reflecting team to make their observations, Joan noted:

...even women that I know who are artists using just the computer, generally they are still producing very intimate stories and interactive pieces.

The urge to create was present in all of the participants in this study. Given the strength of their motivation to create, it was not surprising to find that they all had strong motivations that fuelled their work. It seems that ultimately, the participants created to

satisfy themselves or a personal need. No matter what context they worked in, or from, their ultimate goal was to produce work that met their own needs and satisfied their own criteria. This seems to suggest the strength of intrinsic motivation and maybe why many of the participants noted that they had difficulty producing a work on commission.

Theme 3: Gender issues

For the participants in this study, experiences of gender affected their creative experiences and talent development. The influence of gender appears to have had both positive and negative influences on the lives and work and the participants.

Lilly was particularly focused on gender and its implications. She used her work to explore issues around being female. For example, she used her art to explore the theme of female sexuality:

> *I wanted to make a vase and its V shape and I'm thinking about the word vessel and woman as vessel so its always happening...an analogy...I didn't want to make a phallic vessel straight up and all that. I wanted to make it really look like a uterus and I've been making this sort of vessel for a while now and it works for all those reasons about why I'm making it that shape etc, etc*

While the participants recognized that considerations of gender may result in undervaluing their work, and it appears to have placed some limits on the artists, some of the artists are able to use gender stereotypes to further their work. Jenny discussed the influence of gender on both male and female artists. She believed:

> *Art is kind of a unique, weird endeavor in the first place. So I think males have funny, unique needs that are related to their gender. Like they're not*

supposed to take on the naked, female body. They are not supposed to...you know the politically correct thing. How do they do work about masculinity? How do they do work about themselves and be self-revealing? Men are not supposed to be self-revealing or emotional. Those are the male things. The female things are just being trained to not be assertive and to limit your ideas and think small. Stuff like that...not be ambitious. But then sometimes those very things like the things that I'm saying...like the ambition and the assertiveness is part of a masculine culture and I think if you are less assertive and less ambitious sometimes you can do work that is more unique and more true to yourself. So I talk to students about the position on the margins [that] *can be a position of strength.*

Winnie was aware of the possibilities of limitations and stereotypes based on gender. She was determined, however, to use her gender as strength:

I'm teaching on purpose as a woman and how you can be a woman and you know... be a teacher, have a show at the AGO, be an artist and be sort of happy with your life, but still really angry and I'm hoping that the women...like it's part role model and it's part just talking at them and real honesty and this is what the world is like.

In considering the influence of gender on the talent development of participants, it appears to be one of many factors that shaped their perspectives and influenced their choices. In some cases it influenced or limited the options available to them. Even when gender might have stood in their way, the participants in this study were able to overcome these obstacles or turn the experience around to benefit their careers.

Theme 4- talent is not enough

There is little to dispute the fact that the artists in the study were talented. They had all won prestigious prizes and awards, exhibited in major national and international galleries and often had their work commissioned. It was very interesting to listen to the participants talk about the elements required to achieve success. Artistic ability was never mentioned. Rather, the participants repeatedly mentioned several other variables. One that all of the participants talked about was the ability to market oneself. As Jenny noted:

> *So I guess my biggest draw back to me being an artist is that I'm not good at marketing. I just can't figure it out at all or very successfully.*

Lilly talked at length about the ability to market one's self. She felt that it was very important, but she felt that she lacked the necessary skills. She wondered if it was a skill she had not learned due to her working class background:

> *As far as promotion on a professional level. How to move in circles that professional...you can get to certain places with talent and after that its getting... It is a way of marketing, but its not outright sales. It's kind of.... I don't feel I have a lot of access, but again I don't know if I don't know how to smooze that way because of what I'm calling a class distinction. Where I grew up and where middle class people grew up, I don't know how those things work in the way of self-promotion or self-entitlement for different things, but I do know a number of successful, international woman artists, but still, not ultra famous. There gets to be a lot more distinctions for different reasons other than I'm creative when you start talking about being professional.*

Joan also discussed the need to market one's talent:

I did apprentice for three months with a couple in New York City. They are both artists in their late 70s and they are just getting famous now. Even though they might pull in more of an income, they use that towards marketing. And they employ other artists part time to help operate and spend a lot of their energy in self-promotion and not a lot of time in the studio per se.

The ability to market oneself had the potential, however, to interfere with the art. As Maggie noted:

So if I want to make any money from my pottery, my best bet would be to make tableware. But if I try to do that, which I have tried to do, its very hard for people to understand that a mug can cost $12.00 when they can get it for $5.00, $4.00 or $1.00 somewhere else. It seemed at least for me a little bit hard to compete with mass-produced things and also I would have a hard time making a series of identical objects. They would be a series but everything would be changing a little bit so that if I was making a series of vases, they would all have handles on the side of them, but the shapes and sizes would be different. They would be made in a similar way with a similar premise...and that's what makes doing that kind of work interesting.

I: I just had a vision of a cool dinner set all different and funky.

Oh sure that would be a fun thing to do but there's not that many people that would like it or I don't have or haven't figured out how to access people that would know those kinds of people.

Peggy discussed the conflict between marketing and one's art. She said:

Unfortunately, there is something crass about painting too, if you want to make it that you sell a few pieces. You work for a market too, which can be a deadener to the actual creative part of you

Participants also discussed other factors involved in their success. A factor related to marketing was the need for contacts. Here is a part of a conversation Maggie and I had:

I mean, I'm 51-years-old and, sure I'm selling my work, sure I'm having shows, but I'm not way up there.

I: Do you want to be?

Sure. Yes, of course I do. It would be great not to teach or anything else. I've always had to have other jobs to support myself. So, it would be great to have freedom for that.

I: And, how do you get there?

How do I get there? Ah, I'm gonna sound very cynical, but I don't think it's always talent. I had another professor who said, talent isn't everything, darling.

I didn't know what he meant at the time, but I sure do now. You have to have connections; you have to have someone who is willing to go to bat for you, to promote you. Or, you have to be a type that can really promote yourself and your work. That's kind of hard because that's two different personalities.

Another factor that plays a role in the development of talent was luck, chance or serendipity. Zoë, for example, recounts a story that illustrates this nicely:

The older I get, the more I'm trying to keep my eyes open to other things. And see those things. See those opportunities...a friend of mine, an acquaintance really, they were out west on a holiday. They came back and said come over for dinner, which was strange really. I knew them, but I had never socialized with them. Lo and behold, they had been promoting my work out west and talking to people. They had all these cards and "here, phone this guy he's really interested in your work". And it all worked out. I'm going to be showing out there. Those types of things that just fall in your lap.

Sophie also talked about luck:

But I'm always panicking a little bit about money. But I'm at a stage where I don't want to take on too much. I've been very, very lucky, actually. Because every year something comes up that I make a lot of money at.... Just when I think, oh my God... Something, something happens that carries me through.

It was very clear from the qualifications of the participants in this study that they all had talent. For example, they all met at least two criteria established at the outset of this study (being recommended by colleagues or experts in the field, having had work accepted at galleries or exhibitions and having won prizes or awards) and most of the participants met all three criteria. Yet all of the participants communicated the very strong message that ability alone was not enough to ensure the development of their talent. The participants mentioned the need for connections and the ability to market one's self. This seems to have implications for counseling creatively talented females. It is important that

they are equipped with the skills apart from their creative ability that are necessary to the development of their talent.

Theme 5- Connections

Throughout this study, the importance of a variety of connections were repeatedly referred to or illustrated in the participants' stories. It was particularly evident during the focus group when one participant mentioned the need for connection to a community of like-minded artists. This led to a discussion of the need for connection. Through this discussion and the various interviews, several types of connections were identified.

The importance that the participants placed on relationships with others can be seen in the variety of ways they talked about connecting with people. Jenny, for example, was talking about her choice of jobs in order to support herself and make time for her artwork:

> *I do like teaching a lot better to get some kind of income and I get to hang out with people.*

While talking about her work, Lisa mentioned the factors that influenced her work. One consideration in choosing the type of work to do was whether there were opportunities to be around people. She said:

> *My work is semi-physical and I like that. And there is always contact with different people so it's invigorating for that reason too. So I think that motivates the type of work I do.*

The importance of connecting with people also included the connection with other artists. Joan noted the importance of a sense of community among artists. She challenged the myth of the artists as a loner:

> *I'm very committed to artists working as groups or not as the singular artist, genius idea. I am able to do this because of all these people who went ahead of me. I'm standing on the shoulders of a whole lot of people and there'll be people standing on my shoulders too so I think we all have to acknowledge that we're part of these great big groups. So I see creativity as being linked to group activity as well as coming from an individual urge.*

The focus group acted as a catalyst for most of the other participants to talk about the importance of connection in their lives. One type of connection that was deemed as vital was the connection with an audience. All of the participants in this study had a message or statement that they wanted to communicate. As such, a consideration in their art was ensuring that their work received attention. This was just as important as the other stages in their work. Jenny, for example, discussed getting attention for her work. A way of drawing in the viewer was a characteristic of her work:

> *Well I've used...for a long time I've used attractiveness in my work as a way of pulling in the viewer. And one reviewer way back in the 80s wrote that the work pulls you in because it is so pretty and attractive and then you're standing in front of it and all of a sudden you realize what its about. He said it's like a hammer blow to the back of the head [laughs]. That was worded a bit strongly, but it's really a strategy I use and I think a lot of artists use whatever strategies*

they can to draw in the viewer if you have some kind of message you want to deliver, you really want to communicate.

Joan took me on a tour of her house. Her studio was located in the basement but the whole house was devoted to her work. It acted as a gallery and a testament to her talent. The bathroom door was totally covered by a large canvas. She had tiled the bedroom floor in a mosaic of a dragon; it was a work of art and I wanted to look at it, not walk on it. She showed me a group of paintings that she had done for a show that depicted nudes holding cell phones or using other forms of technology. Her theme was communication and the inherent paradox in technology:

There is a contradiction between the advertisement and reality in those slogans 'reach out and touch someone' and 'keep in touch'. In actuality the phone keeps us apart in that we don't need to get together. There is no touching.

All of the participants wanted their work to say something. As a result, their work included a consideration of the viewer or audience. As Cleo said:

You never know what effect work has, but it has to have some kind of effect. I'm really optimistic. I think art is really powerful.

Furthermore, an audience was vital to giving a sense of closure to their work. For example, Peggy spoke about expressing her views through her work. Having someone view her work was a vital component of her art. She said:

It's not complete until it's shown and someone gets it.

Another type of connection that was mentioned by all of the participants was the connection between their personal and professional lives. Maggie reflected:

I was really trying to do work that was about myself and my life...not so

navel gazing but just things that I bumped into going through life.

Winnie participant said:

I do this longer-term work that is more involved with life issues, which sometimes feels old fashion, but I do it anyway.

Maggie reflected on the source of her work. Her work was aimed at raising awareness about the effects of war on developing countries. For her the work connected her personal life to her hope to make a difference in the world. On talking about the death of her father she noted:

...it just seems like me picking up on his work about issues in the third world. I kind of feel that I'm picking up his work or picked up his idealism and that feeling of connection with a part of the world we don't usually feel connected to.

The participants in this study were intelligent and articulate. It was clear from the interviews and the focus group that they had thought a lot about their creativity and what it means to be an artist in our society. They seemed to recognize that their work was connected to the time and place in which they lived. Winnie, for example, noted:

I think that what people see as create is really like everything else- driven by the context and culture.

The connection between the participants' personal and professional lives was evident in all of their stories and discussions. It seemed to be a fact that everyone recognized and accepted. They did not try to keep the two separate. Rather, they sometimes felt the relief of having their art to work through issues or they used events in

their personal lives as inspiration for their work. Unlike many other professions, the visual artists in this study did not try to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

Theme 6- Obligations and expectations

The participants' careers and talent development were influenced by expectations held by others. These expectations were based on both traditional gender roles and stereotypical images of artists. An example of this is given by Joan. She talked about choosing a career and the fact that the image of artist was not seen as a viable career choice. Indeed, a career as an artist was not even considered to be an option:

> *I started out in design and, because it was...you could make money...and that's what you were pushed into. I was in the architecture department when I was young. I was very young coming out of high school. My mother was worried about me going into university. Worried about.... I was 15 when I finished high school.*
>
> *She was concerned about my ability to make a living. But there was never the prompting to be an artist.*
>
> *So I didn't even think about it. I wanted it. But it was kind of over here and you didn't really say it. You didn't say it. You didn't say,' I want to be an artist'.*

There were many examples of expectations from others based on traditional gender roles. For instance Winnie talked about the different types of artwork and what is valued by society is shaped the art world, which did not always value activities associated along traditional gender stereotypes:

But creativity in fine art, it's always limited by the culture of the field. You know when Judy Chicago went to art school and she did these big modernist paintings and then she started sewing. Like, people didn't see it as creative. They just saw it as stupid, you know and it took a whole lot of women doing the same thing. Miriam Shapiro and Joyce Wieland in Canada and finally, what is it now, 20 years later it's ok to sew in your art. Of course, we never know how long that is going to last. I think what people see as creative is really like everything else- kind of driven by the context and the culture.

Sometimes the very definition of art and what has been judged as art is based on traditional gender roles. Females have been involved in craft whereas males were involved in art. For example, Sophie made the following comment:

All those things you think of as being traditional to craft often apply to art. Like craft is something that is functional while art is really not functional. Why is jewelry not art because it's functional? And why is the decorative bad...because it is just decoration. Well so are paintings. So there are all kinds of arguments like that. When you look at contemporary art does, when you look at its physical characteristics, it's very close to how people used to talk about craft. And what you're hearing me say of course are opinions piled on opinions, you know.

Jenny also discussed the distinction between art and craft:

I have a talk I do about art and craft because I don't think they should be divided the way they've been divided historically. But those boundaries are breaking down because artists like myself are using a lot of processes that might

be called craft, but we don't even talk about it anymore. It's a dead issue. It's gone.

Peggy indirectly referred to this distinction. She spoke about the different values placed on the creative activities traditionally associated with males and females:

There's another layer that we have to get to which is...the criticism I have is that an artist can pick up any tool, any process and it is still art whereas somebody who...a woman sitting here in NFL knitting socks for everyone in the family, but she has these amazing colour combinations, but she is not an artist. So, I think...or people wouldn't consider her an artist even if she said, "you know, I think these are as good as any modernist painting". You know people ...like it would be a hard sell.

The expectations of other people are often based on traditional gender roles. For some of the participants this directly influenced their career development. Joan, who was a single mother while enrolled in a B.F.A. program. She gave an example of the expectations and assumptions held by her professors based on the fact that she was a woman raising children. While it is a lengthy example, it is revealing and worth noting:

We'll, I'll give you an example. There was an... I'll always remember this because it was quite a lesson for me.... It shook me up. I was doing very well...and I guess I was in third year by then. I was putting work together because I had shows before I had gone to university and I was continuing. So, I was stretching my work up to have a show at a local university pub/restaurant-type thing. So, everybody who was coming in to the text room were saying, "Oh, you're stretching your stuff for the Mexico thing, no New York thing..." That's

what it was it was. The New York thing. That's what it was. So, I didn't know what they were talking about. It kept going on so I had to find out what the hell they're talking about. So I went to the offices and asked, "What's this New York thing?" Oh, it was a, a six, it wasn't even a long time. Six weeks or eights weeks or something like that.... program where your professor has to elect you. You can't put in for it. The professor has to elect you for it. And then they will pick who goes, right?

So I said, oh, OK. I was having a critique that day of my work. So, we have this experimental class. It was sort in an experimental class I was in. And a lot of it was putting your work up in a room and having a professor come in and just brown-beat you (laugh). So, he came in and he was going on and on and giving me all this praise for my work. So, I turned to him and told him, either you're full of shit or, I don't know. Because why when you're telling me all of this, why wouldn't you elect me for the New York thing?

And he said, and I quote: " I didn't want to offer you a carrot you couldn't accept". And I looked at him and said, "What? What are you talking about?" "Well", he said, " you have other responsibilities", meaning my children.

I was furious, furious...that he would decide for me. That he wasn't gonna put it in because I had dependents. And, was he asking men the same thing? Do you have dependents? Oh well, I'm sorry. I don't want to offer you something you can't expect.

I mean it was. I was so shocked; I made him put me in. I said, "you know, that's none of your business if I received it. How do you think I got as far

as I'm getting right now."? You know. That shouldn't enter into it at all. Do you ask everybody what their responsibilities are? And, do you not think I'm handling my responsibilities. And where do you get off doing this?

I: Um.

So, he did put it in but it was kind of a moot point by then. It wasn't gonna happen. You know. But just to prove a point. (Laughter) It was all academic at that point. I would have loved to go on and...I started to take some courses actually for my masters. But, they hauled me in their offices I don't know how many times, saying "how are you gonna support your family...and how, you know...

Sometimes role expectations were made by the participants themselves to define their work and, indeed, their identity. For example, Peggy was more comfortable thinking of herself as a teacher rather than an artist even though she had only taught for three years and had worked as an artist for over 20 years:

But I don't think until you've done...I think somebody suddenly asks you for a form to be filled out and you have to write down and you don't want to write down homemaker again (laughter). That was one area, or getting a passport or something. I think I put teacher and artist with a slash. I think still in my mind, and even now, when I look to doing a job that I can actually do is to... I still think of the thing I trained for, which is teaching so the artist is subsidiary.

Obligations were also discussed by all of the participants. Obligations took time away from their artwork. The obligations discussed by the participants were often based on traditional gender roles. The responsibility of childcare was the obligation that was mentioned most often. For example:

And, would've have gone on but of course, money. By that time I was a single parent with two kids. I was in...I did a four-year course in three years because that's all the money I had for.

Lisa said:

It really makes me angry that women are carrying these multiple burdens and on top of it we're supposed to be wonderful, creative artists.

Joan echoes this:

A lot of women have children and that factors into the work.

Sophie spoke about her decision regarding the obligations of raising children:

Like I choose not to have kids...that was back in "78 because I knew what I was getting into and I knew that there was no way I could have children and be an artist. People like S.B., the superwomen can do it, but I knew I wasn't a superwoman, you know?

Zoë gives an example of how obligations can influence or interfere with talent:

You need the time and the space and its awfully hard for anyone with a family to find the space. But now thank God for basements and extra rooms like that cause you can trap something off and have your work set up. So you can leave paint set up. It works to have the stuff there. If you have no material at hand and you have to bring it out every time, it makes the act of setting up harder.

The participants also had to confront assumptions that were often based on traditional responsibilities associated with gender. Jenny was telling a story about a show that a group of artists had been commissioned to work for. The show was to be held at City Hall:

... one of the guys at city hall kept on about the stay at home moms...several of my artist friends stay home because they still have kids at home and it gives them a chance to do their work at same time, which is really hard. Ohm, but they immediately say they're artists. He kept on about the fact that they were moms. He did not see them as artists. What he was doing was he was trying to say we were just hobbyists.

A prescription for keeping the expectations and obligations in check is mentioned by Lisa:

So I think somehow women have to keep their own lives. A few women can do it and be married and have kids and everything but I think they have to go in it strong and total support from the husband. And not the kind of, "Oh, look at my wife; she paints." You know? It bugs me. You know what I mean? Like a little trophy.

Although expectations are changing and females may be perceived to be equal, the results of this study indicate that many inequalities still exist. Winnie noted:

I'm renting a house and sharing it and the man in the house is another sculpture professor that I work with and his wife just graduated from art school and she doesn't have a good studio. She puts all her energy into the house and... I don't know what to do...how do I get her...get him to spend the money on her studio. Like he's got this amazing studio in the backyard. Is he going to build her an amazing studio? I don't think so. You know...men just don't value women's production. And she may turn out to be the most amazing artist in the world.

The issue of gender needs to be placed in the larger, social context. It seems as if their career development is affected by several contexts: living as a female in society, being an artist in society and more specifically Canadian society. As Lilly stated:

> *Canada doesn't have that same kind of public market yet so...most of the funding...the only way you seem to access funding is if you are exhibiting in commercial galleries. It seems the potential for actually making a living, as an artist is a little bit narrower in Canada or its just not as developed as it is in the States and England.*

Maggie also talked about the context in which she lives and works:

> *So that goes back to the bigger picture, which is credibility as an artist. In Canada there is not any credibility for artists. Once they've made it sure society in general will revere or ogle, but certainly not as you're building your work.*

It seems that obligations and expectations were the greatest obstacle to the participants' talent development. The excerpts of the data presented here provide examples of the ways in which the expectations of others can act as an obstacle. As well, the obligations that the participants had to deal with took away from their time and energy to engage in their work.

Theme 7- need for support

The one theme that kept reappearing throughout the conversations and which was intertwined with the other themes was the necessity and importance of support. The types of support mentioned include professional acceptance, networking as a way to establish support from like-minded artists, emotional support and encouragement from family and

friends. An example of the need for professional support was discussed by Winnie. She said:

> *I became an artist in Winnipeg and there's an incredibly strong, feminist artist community in Winnipeg. It's amazingly strong and so that's where I developed as an artist and that's something I would like to do here and maybe that's the rest of my question is how do we nurture creative women or creativity in women, giving them communities where they are nurtured and welcomed and esteemed and they have...but not only that...not just sort of the consciousness sitting around the living room, "oh you're wonderful", but giving them the professional opportunities and mentoring.*

Sophie talked about the professional support necessary to the development of her talent. She recognized a variety of types of support including the artists before her who had their work recognized, which helped her art gain the recognition it has:

> *I'm very committed as artists working as groups or not as the singular artist genius idea. I'm able to do this work because of Joyce Wieland and Miriam Shapiro because of Janice Morton in Toronto...because of all these people who went ahead of me. Because textile work is in art magazines so I'm standing on the shoulders of a whole lot of people and there'll be people standing on my shoulders too, so I think we all have to acknowledge that we're part of these great big groups. So I see maybe creativity could be linked to group activity as well as coming out from an individual human urge, which I have to believe in that because you just see it everywhere.*

Lisa emphasized the role of emotional support. She indicated that one needs to be resilient, but one also needs encouragement for one's talent. This is the advice she has for her students:

> *So, if you're...maybe I got this from bell hooks...I can't remember...but I tell the students who don't think they fit in. they come into my office crying, "I don't fit in and nobody likes me." Well, I say, "perfect'. That's where you should be. Make it strength. Find one other person who feels the same way and bond with them. And who supports your work? Do you have a sister or cousin? Also they have to have support, but the fitting in part...I tell them if you're not part of the major gang in school you can do your own work. That was my experience in school.*

Another type of support that was discussed by the artists is financial support. It is difficult to manage everyday life and still have time and energy to create. For example, Joan said:

> *Creativity will not change until there is support from governments, local community...*

Maggie reflected on why many talented artists she knew where not producing work. She felt that she knew the reason:

> *So, why aren't – whether they're men or women – why are they not creating? Because they have a lack of funds. They have to be working at something else to support themselves.*

Zoë spoke of the need to work taking away from the ability to produce work that reflected one's abilities. As she noted:

And therefore creative energy is usually tired energy, right? (laughter).

The need for support was mentioned by all of the participants. All types of support were necessary, but financial support was seen as crucial. It is difficult to find time to engage in one's work, indeed one's creative passion, if an artist is required to work 40 hours a week or more. The participants in this study were working to support themselves, raise a family, contribute to their partner's income or care for elderly parents. For many of them, as the participant above noted, "...creative energy is usually tired energy..." and this has a major impact on their talent and career development.

The results of the data analysis have been presented in seven themes. Although each theme is separate, the themes are also interrelated. For example, for one of the participants, her negative experiences in school were used in deciding to focus on being a female artists and encouraging younger, female artists (i.e. her students). These negative educational experiences also motivated her urge to create. It appears that the personal and professional lives of the participants intersect and influence each other.

Understanding the creativity of the participants and the development of their creative talent requires an understanding of the many factors that have shaped their lives and continue to influence their goals, interests and decisions. As researchers Noble et al., (1999) noted, the development of female talent is complex and interactive characterized by a system of relationships among various key elements. These elements are represented by the themes presented in this chapter. The next chapter will discuss the themes identified in the present chapter in relation to the literature.

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION

Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.
W. B. Yeats

This chapter is presented in two parts. The first is the discussion of the themes identified in the previous chapter. The second part of the chapter will address the research questions presented at the outset of the study. In both parts of this chapter the discussion will be linked to and compared with the research literature on female talent development and creativity.

Theme 1: Educational experiences

Given that both the interviews and the focus groups were open ended, the fact that everyone talked about education appears to make it a significant factor in the lives of the participants. There were, however, many variations within this theme, which were linked to the variety of levels and types of schooling (i.e. elementary, high school, university and graduate school and informal educational experiences). Some experiences were seen as very positive while others were discussed quite negatively.

In terms of formal schooling, there were clear distinctions between early educational experiences and later educational experiences. When discussing schooling at the elementary and high school levels, the participants were not very positive. The participants spoke of several negative factors, which included the conformity present in

the school art program, too few qualified teachers and the lack of emphasis on the arts in the curriculum.

The creativity literature suggests that early educational experiences tend to thwart creativity rather than promote it. A report released by Harvard Project Zero (1999), for example, concluded that the present North American school system is not designed to encourage its students to develop their interests or passions, develop a commitment to their work or develop connections to the community at large.

The finding that school thwarts creativity is true for both males and females. And while there is a need to support both genders in the realization of their potential, the present study is concerned with females. This is not meant to discount the male experiences. Both perspectives are important. We cannot ignore the experiences of the male. If we do then we lose the opportunity to see gender as "...a relational process, a dynamic between men and women within a system of structured social inequality (Nelson, 1991, p. 17). This, however, is beyond the scope of the present study.

Conformity

This study's finding that school can both help and hinder creativity is consistent with the current literature on talent development. Piirto (1999) identified school as one of many environmental factors that influence the development of talent. School can either shape talent in a powerful way or it can be a deterrent. Unfortunately, there is more evidence that school is a deterrent rather than a facilitator.

Literature on the link between school and creativity reveals that not only are many educational settings not facilitating the development of ability, some are actually

hindering it. Creative students do not flourish in the conformist atmosphere of school. They either deny their creative potential or they abandon it (Clark, 1992).

List and Renzulli (1991) looked at the influence of societal factors on the development of creative artists, focusing on the role of school and educational experiences. The participants in their study spoke negatively of their formal school experiences. They described school as a place that emphasized rote learning and did not encourage creativity or aesthetic education. All of the participants felt that they needed to go outside of school to receive the training and stimulation necessary to their field of interest.

The participants in this study expressed negative feelings about their early educational experiences up to and including high school. For instance, one of the participants described her experiences in high school. She described the assignments required in her art classes as constraining her creativity and her desire to experiment. She said that what she really enjoyed and what helped her explore her artistic talent was going to galleries and museums. Another participant recalled that during her elementary and high school years she only received encouragement and recognition for her talent at home.

Sternberg and Lubart (1995) contended that many of our students leave school believing themselves to be less able than they really are. This is largely due to the uniformity of the curriculum and pedagogy in the schools:

> *The consequences of this system are potentially devastating. Through the grades and test scores, we may be rewarding only a fraction of the students who should be rewarded. Worse, we may be inadvertently disenfranchising multitudes of*

students from learning. In fact, when researchers have examined the lives of influential people, whether in the creative domains, practical domains, or both, they have found that many of these people had been ordinary- or even mediocre students (Sternberg & Lubart 1995, p. 20).

Growing evidence demonstrates that while teachers say that they value creativity, they prefer and reward students who exhibit behaviour that is not conducive to creativity. Teachers reward students who conform to school rules and accept authority without questioning it (Cropely, 2001). They often label behaviours associated with creativity as disruptive and not appropriate to classroom conduct despite the fact that creativity requires a degree of non-conformity (Schwartz, 2001; Westby, 1997). Creative students do not flourish in the conformist atmosphere of school. The often end up hiding their creativity or giving up on their creative potential (Clark, 1992).

Most of the participants in this study talked at length about the conformity that the educational system either requires or is the end result of its policies and practices. Both classroom practices and conformity were major concerns for several of the participants. One of the participants worked as an artist in several schools. She said she was aghast at the type of activities that passed for art. For example, she said that in many primary classes, art consisted of colouring reproduced shapes and pictures.

Teachers often evaluate student work on guidelines that are developed before students complete an assignment. The problem is that real creativity results in a novel product. Given that assessment guidelines are formulated in advance, this can limit the evaluation or judgment of what is artistic or creative (Amabile & Tighe, 1993).

Several of the participants talked about concerns relating to their own children's experiences. One participant recounted how her daughter was turned off of art after two years in school. She said she could not believe it given that art was such a big part of their home life and her daughter had always shown an interest in it before starting school. Another participant told a story of her son making a mother's day card. She said that her son was so proud of what he had done, but the teacher made him redo it because it did not look like the sample she had shown the class. This has serious implications for nurturing creative talent given the finding reported by Daniels, Heath and Enns (1985) that in order for creative talent to flourish, it must be detected early.

Teaching qualifications

The participants expressed concern about the teaching qualifications, or more specifically, the lack of qualifications that characterized many of the art teachers they had met. Their experiences with teachers was that, apart from the teachers with a degree in art, many of the teachers displayed a lack of fundamental knowledge regarding art education. One participant rhetorically asked if two art or painting classes was enough for someone to be qualified as an art teacher.

Unless a teacher has a background in art or art education, most teachers have little training in how to teach art or nurture artistic talent (CAEA, 1999). In most teacher education faculties, for example, the course offered for teaching all areas of the arts is a forty-hour program. It would appear that teachers need more training in the arts. They also need support in delivering the art curriculum.

One of the participants had volunteered at her children's school. Her daughter's teacher had asked for help in implementing the art curriculum. Without formal training, the teacher could read the curriculum documents, but did not have the background to understand or implement the curriculum. The way the participants described the elementary and high school teachers they had met appears to suggest that teachers seem to express anxiety surrounding art and the creative experience.

Is it possible that teachers have an art anxiety, much like the math anxiety documented in research literature? As one arts educator noted, "All teachers must teach dance, drama, music and visual arts, Kindergarten to grade 8. The problem of course, is that not all teachers have had training in the arts and there is a great deal of anxiety out there about how to deliver this very prescriptive and rigorous curriculum" (CAEA, 1999, p. 1).

Training in the arts should include ongoing professional development. Even teachers with training in arts education need constant upgrading in order to keep in touch with developments in contemporary art. Tomlin (1995) investigated what constitutes a quality art education program. Among the findings was the need for ongoing professional development for teachers.

Lack of emphasis on art in elementary curriculum

It would seem that the problem of nurturing creative talent is made more difficult due to a prevalent attitude in society, which is mirrored in schools. Art, culture and creativity are not valued (Westby, 1997). This is evident in the under funding of arts and cuts to existing budgets. For example, a statewide survey of art teachers in Kansas,

U.S.A. found that art teachers expressed concern over the lack of funds and the low status art programs receive (Jeffers, 1996).

In the last five years, $2.3 billion dollars has been cut from the education system in Ontario, which has a direct impact on the money available for funding in arts education (OSF, 2001). It is often viewed as an "extra" and therefore among the first programs to be cut. An irony pointed out by the Canadian Actors' Equity Association (1999) is that there is finally an excellent curriculum document in Ontario, but now there are no resources or money for training in order to implement it. As a result, students are not receiving an adequate arts education. Currently, they receive little, if any, specialized instruction in elementary school. Then in high school, they have the option of taking an art class; however, as one of the participants noted, by then it is too late for most of the students to develop any talent or passion for the arts.

The participants in this study received little, if any, art courses in high school. One participant recalled taking a needlecraft course in high school, not because she liked to sew, but because she wanted to do something creative and needlecraft sounded like it might be creative. Another participant related that after high school she never thought she would become an artist. It was only after attending teachers college that she took some art courses as part of her teachable subjects and realized that she wanted to become an artist. Many of the participants spoke of their friends and families, not high school, as the means having their talent acknowledged and appreciated. Some of the participants said that their families paid for courses outside of school. A few of the participants said that their families could not afford to pay for lessons, but they were made to feel special because of their talent.

Creativity is more than art, but the undervaluing of creativity can also been seen in other subject areas. The emphasis in the traditional classroom is on the transmission of knowledge. There is often a focus on finding the right answer without giving recognition to the process of finding the answer or alternate ways of demonstrating learning.

A participant in the study recounted she had a learning disability that made reading and writing difficult. While she eventually went on to receive a M.F.A., she described her school experiences as rigid. She said the school environment was not open to different ways to express her understanding of ideas. She liked to build things, but this was not recognized as a form of knowledge or talent.

The lack of emphasis on art and fostering creativity may be partly due to lack of qualifications. It would make sense that teachers would emphasize subjects in which they had training and felt comfortable. The lack of emphasis may also be due to the undervaluing of art. One participant recounted her experience teaching in elementary school. She was appalled at the way art is often seen as an extra that can be cut when there is not enough time or it is denied to children as a form of punishment.

Later educational experiences

The participants spoke more favorably about their later educational experiences. These experiences included attendance at community college, university and graduate school. According to the participants the value of their university experiences was not so much the technical training they received. Rather, the participants spoke of their university training as a time of being exposed to ideas.

Indeed, some researchers question the validity of teaching one to become an artist. Singermann (1999) contends that art cannot be taught. While educational environments may teach a particular craft or artistic tradition, in order to be supportive of talent development, they must also establish an environment that includes thinking about and questioning a particular tradition. Schor (1997), for example, asks, "What can be taught and what can be learned?" One can acquire the skills necessary to an art or craft, but does that make one an artist?

Many of the participants in this study had attended graduate school and received a MFA. While their experiences in elementary, high school and even undergraduate were viewed as not supportive to their talent, this is not the same for their postgraduate experiences. In fact, it is quite the opposite. The participants spoke of the stimulation they received from their graduate experiences. This was a time for many of the participants to connect theory with practice. They spoke excitedly about the process of applying what they had learned. There was a sense of community and a feeling that there was a level of discourse that was not available outside of the university even with other artists in the community.

Some of these later educational experiences, however, were not always conducive to their talent development. One inhibiting factor that was repeatedly mentioned was the lack of female art teachers. Many of the participants felt that their perspectives were not represented. Some participants expressed disappointment at the lack of role models. Creative talent development requires same-sex role models (Daniels, Heath & Enns, 1985). Unfortunately, this is not always possible.

Theme 2: Urge to create

The participants in the study spoke at length about the reasons they engaged in their art. They discussed many reasons. Though there were several reasons given, they were all fuelled by a very strong drive or need to create.

For many of the participants, the urge to create was related to social or political factors. The participants felt a need to communicate a message. For some of the other participants, the urge to create was related to aesthetic considerations- a search for beauty. What was common to these diverse motivations was the strong need to express one's self. Judy Chicago (Dossor, 1987) reflected on the purpose of art. For her, art can be a tool for social change, but it can also be about beautiful images.

Another participant spoke of the fact that ultimately she created for herself. She commented that when she was younger she did it for other people. It was something she was good at and a way of receiving praise. But now it is about herself as a means of learning more about who she is through her artwork. She is not doing it for anyone else.

The need to express one's self seemed to be related to why some of the artists said that they had trouble producing work on commission. Their work was a connection to an internal process that did not necessarily correspond to external demands. Reis (2001) maintained that women define their success in their own ways, but success is more than just a drive to accomplish according to traditional indicators of educational level and occupational level. Success is also linked to fulfilling personal goals and contributing to the greater good of society.

This was echoed by many of the participants in this study. One of the participants was concerned about the environment. She felt that her work went beyond the personal

realm; she wanted her art to have a political and social impact. Another participant noted that because she is an artist who operates from a feminist perspective, her actions were political. Yet another participant had an exhibit at a prestigious gallery. She talked about her work being more important than her, but she felt hesitant about the show. She said that she did not want to make money from other people's pain. Ultimately she decided that she does not have to feel guilty about showing the work and advancing her career because the reaction to her work is positive and she feels that she is doing a lot of good.

In a study of female artists, Schwartz (2001) asked participants why they created. Their replies were similar to the findings of this study. For example, one participant talked about quelling a thirst. Another mentioned that it filled a need. One researcher described it as a compulsion (Kavaler-Adler, 1993).

A similar finding is reported by Reis (2001). She used the term "thorn" to describe the motivation to create. This refers to the need for one to see the social importance of using one's talent. This includes fulfilling one's potential for both personal satisfaction and for the benefit of society. The need being great enough cannot be ignored, much like a thorn in one's side.

There was an element of intensity in the participants' description of their urge to create. This level of intensity seemed to reveal a commitment to their work and a willingness to work hard, even twice as hard as men to get equal recognition. Indeed, the literature on talented women suggests that women in the arts demonstrate more intensity and commitment than successful women in other fields such as business (Brooks & Daniluk, 1998). This intensity is characterized by a high degree of risk taking.

A part of the intensity of the urge to create seemed to be involved in a self-discovery process. The participants explored ideas through their art, but their work was also about getting to know themselves. The importance of the self-discovery process has been noted in the literature on female talent development:

"...self knowledge is a vital component of talent development that must be encouraged and promoted throughout a woman's life span. It is an ongoing process, not a solitary insight, one that begins long before adult status is reached. Self-knowledge demands deep and determined awareness of one's evolving values and needs, personality traits, psychological issues and existential states" (Noble et. al., p.147).

The sociopolitical context in which the artists live and work seemed to influence their concerns and issues and hence their art. Most of the participants were over 40. They were schooled during the 1970s and 1980s. Their lives and work were partly influenced by the sociopolitical context of their time. For example, the influence of the feminist movement in the 1970s can be seen in the lives of the older participants in the study. They were able to reject traditional gender expectations in order to pursue their work. The younger artists in the study were in their mid 20s. They spoke more optimistically about combining roles and they hoped to have art as a major source of their income. The older artists talked of activism in response to the social conditions of the time.

Kerr (1985) examined factors that distinguish eminent women from less accomplished women. One distinguishing characteristic was having a mission in life. It is as if the urge to create is a mission-- a creative mission. For the participants in this study, the purpose of their mission varied from participant to participant, but in all cases it was a strong one. For example, one of the participants talked about having chosen quilts as her

art medium, but she noted that it was the process of creating itself that was her true passion. She noted that the creative process is what gave her life meaning.

Theme 3: Gender issues

The choice of the theme title "gender issues" is meant to reflect that for most of the participants, their experiences of being an artist included the fact that they were female artists. Most of the participants in this study were aware of gender as an element of who they are as individuals and where they fit into society. For many of the artists, their work reflected their thoughts about gender. For some, work was a vehicle for exploring who they were and what their place was, as an individual, as a female and as an artist.

A discussion of gender is not meant to suggest that women make art in a particular way. Rather, it is meant to acknowledge the socio/cultural and historical factors, which include gender, that shape the culture in which the participants live and work. It is intended to recognize that a variety of elements external to the participants, such as economic, political and social factors, influence the development of their talent (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Porter, 1999). It addresses the fact that their participation in and acceptance by the art world, which is still dominated by males, is affected by virtue of their gender.

An example of an historical factor that has shaped the culture of the art world is the traditional distinction made between art and craft. Art can be defined as a process in the service of meaning whereas craft is a process that is an end in itself (Dossor, 1987). Art has been the domain of men and craft assigned to women. Art has been more highly

valued. This structure affects the art that women produce. Even if individual women themselves do not pay heed to this structure, art critics still judge and compare their work to the standards set by men (Kauffman, 1995). There is still a tendency to focus on and value the creative productions produced by the dominant culture (Ford & Harris, 1992).

As females, the participants are on the margins of the art world. Judy Chicago (Dossor, 1987) argued that art is part of a cultural commodity pool, which is a market-based system. She maintained that women are part of the disenfranchised groups that are excluded from this market. Indeed, the domain of art in Western society is controlled by a small group of gatekeepers that decide what works are exhibited and added to museum collections (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999).

It would appear that the creative activities of the participants were affected by their own and society's labels and role definitions, which included being female. This is not to say that they were confined by it. A good example of this is Joan who decided to use the colour pink as a statement in her art. She deliberately used pink as a way of showing who she was, which included her femininity.

Powell (1994) argued that part of the process of creating in any of the arts involves women (and minorities) addressing the images transmitted through social conditioning, images deemed suitable by the dominant culture. For example, women are conditioned to think of themselves as nurturer and this could find its way into their work whether they were exploring the idea or rejecting it.

One of the participants in the study, however, did not think of herself as a 'female artist'. In her mind, she was an artist. Nonetheless, some of the factors that influence her art are based on her gender. She is the primary care giver in her family and she talked

about feeling frustrated and resenting motherhood and its demands. She said she has finally reconciled motherhood and being an artist and is less resentful of motherhood. She realized that the struggles she has faced in reconciling the demands of motherhood with demands of being an artist makes her who she is and the person she is reflected in her art. So indirectly, issues of gender also seemed to affect her.

The other participants also had roles that involved nurturing. These roles included their children, their students, family and even gardening. The participants were not uncomfortable with this role, even those participants who had a strong feminist perspective. Many of the participants found the role of nurturer to be a source of inspiration. The key seemed to be whether the role was chosen or forced upon them.

The issue of gender as a factor in the development of female talent is consistent with the literature on talented women. Reis (2001) proposed a theory of creativity in women. She maintained that it is different from men. The difference is that women's creativity is diverted to many outlets rather than being focused on one area. Creativity is demonstrated in work but also in other areas. Among these areas are work, spirituality, family, relationships, volunteer work, hobbies, and taking care of one's home. She maintained that women are less able to focus only on one area since they derive satisfaction from having a variety of areas to use their talents.

All of the participants spoke about their creativity as being more than their artwork. They gave numerous examples of having many interests rather than focusing on just one. One of the participants felt that she was creative when doing math or housework or even figuring out a new way to put a latch on the door. She felt that it really depended on how one defines creativity. Another participant noted that she was conscious of being

creative for herself and creative as a professional person. For her, the distinction was whether or not someone else was going to view or get something out of her work.

For some of the participants their creativity was not in just one area even within their artwork. One participant talked about wanting to try new things and as a result she constantly changed mediums. She noted that this was not always viewed favorably. When she was asked to exhibit her work she said the mix of styles and themes did not show the continuity that the critics were looking for. Another participant described her love of experimenting with all types of creative forms. Sometimes she just liked to play with colour and as a result much of her work never got finished. While she is highly regarded, she said she realized that she would be more successful if she concentrated on one form of art, but she said she was not willing to compromise her creative spirit and sense of experimentation and fun.

Theme 4: Talent is not enough

All of the participants in the study clearly had talent. They all fit two and even three of the criteria for creativity and talent. Interestingly, the participants almost never mentioned their actual talent. The participant who did talk about her talent referred to the fact that she wasn't a "clever" artist. She did not see herself as particularly talented yet she was probably the most publicly recognized artist of the group.

The findings revealed that talent was not enough for the participants' careers to succeed. Rather, the development of their careers depended on a number of factors including the art world, the ability to market one's self and the role of luck or chance.

A number of the participants discussed the fact that Canada is not conducive to the development of artistic talent. The fact that Canada is not supportive of the development of artists is true for both females and males. A recent report by King (2002) profiles an internationally known artist from the same urban area as the participants. Galleries and collectors alike seek the artist's work and he is able to earn a living commanding respectable prices for his work. Yet he is barely known in his hometown or his country.

Another factor besides having talent is the ability to market one's self and one's work. This prompted some to speak of the business of art. While it may seem that art and business do not mix, Bello (2002) argued that artists need to "carve out a niche with the same care as their creations." He cited examples of artists that have looked for a market for their work and actively pursued developing it.

The finding that talent is not enough is consistent with findings reported in the literature. Schwartz (1980) noted that many females have creative potential, but they need opportunities if they are to realize their potential. This continues to be reported in recent research findings. Piirto (1999), for example, stated that the realization of talent requires more than talent. It also includes opportunity. As well, talent development depends on the ability to find one's calling or desires to pursue one's talent.

Another factor necessary to talent development, which is widely reported in the literature, is that creative talent development requires certain personality traits. These include ability to take risks, autonomy, hard work, and both emotional commitment and task commitment to one's work (List & Renzulli, 1991). While the personality traits of

the participants were not formally measured, their stories reveal determination, strength, hard work and perseverance.

One participant, for example, talked about the need for having a determined attitude. She said it was important to adopt an attitude of resilience and to realize that one just has to keep going. Using herself as an example, she noted that she had eight years of university and yet she does not make minimum wage for her artwork. Without such a determined attitude it would be tempting to trade the life of an artist for work that recognized one's education and experience.

Some of the participants could definitely be described as risk takers. They decided to pursue their art against the advice of friends and family. Others described their work as not fitting in with contemporary trends. One artist purposely choose to ignore what was happening in contemporary art to do something different, something that felt that was right for her. She said that she did not expect to make a career for herself because of her choice, but took the chance anyway.

All of the participants could be characterized as hard workers. Many of them held part time jobs, raised children and assumed the role of wife while going to school and trying to do their work. One participant did a four-year degree in only three years because that was all the money she had. She was a single parent with two small children, but she was determined to obtain her B.F.A. she described herself as stubborn, but others might characterize her as hardworking and determined. Another participant related that she always had to have other jobs to support herself. She started her own art store and had hoped to have other people run it but she ended up working in her store 40 hours a week, teaching at night and still painting and putting on shows.

Determination, strength, hard work and perseverance were qualities that the participants had in addition to their artistic talent. Taken together, these talents may be viewed as resilience. Kelly (1996) defined resilience as the ability to overcome obstacles or setbacks. She believed resilience is more than strength of character, which might allow one to get through hard times. Resilience is the ability to get through difficulties and use the experience to spur one on to success despite obstacles.

The finding that talent is not enough to ensure realization of one's potential suggests that perhaps the concept of talent itself should be reconsidered. Talent is defined in the literature as skill, ability, and/or performance or the potential to demonstrate skill, ability or performance (Piitro, 1994). Perhaps the very definition of talent needs to be widened to include the factors that support its development, which is similar to the attribute of creativity being widen to acknowledge that creativity is an attribute which is given to an individual or object rather than inherent in the person or thing. It appears that talent does not exist in isolation of other factors in an individual's personal life and the society in which she lives.

The systems view of creativity developed by Csikszentmihalyi (1999) maintains that creativity is the result of the interaction and reciprocal influence of three factors: the field, the domain and the individual. The field refers to the social and cultural components of a craft or a profession. The domain includes the structure and organization of a set of knowledge specific to a given craft or profession. The individual is the unique and developing configuration of a number of personality traits and experiences. All three

factors are interrelated. Each factor needs to be considered, even if one is singled out for emphasis.

Theme 5: Connections

For the participants in this study, the need for connection was demonstrated in many ways. They planned their lives and their work around the connections that were important for them. Indeed, their lives and their work were often connected in fundamental ways whether it was the choice of a theme, the decision to teach, or the resolution not to have children. For the participants in this study, art was intimately connected to the other areas of their lives.

An important aspect of the connection discussed by the participants is the environment. The participants wanted to feel connected to and supported by the environment in which they lived and worked. The participants in this study were aware of their environment and influenced by it both negatively and positively. The negative aspects of the educational experiences described by the participants were related to conformity and the lack of support due to the didactic nature of the school environment. The positive descriptions centered on the support received from the sense of community and the stimulation from interacting with other like-minded people.

Lovecky (1993) stated that women's focus on relationship is part of their artistic expression. Tomlinson-Keasey (1998) wanted to understand what she called the puzzle of women's development. She found that "...intimacy, relationships, and commitment spill over into the other pieces of the puzzle, modulating the woman's sense of identity and

self, increasing the serendipitous aspects of her career, and tempering the goals she sets for herself" (pp. 23-24).

It is interesting to note that the theme of connections can be said to characterize the very notion of creativity itself. Creativity is often described as "connecting" or putting elements together in new ways. In addition, the theme connections characterizes the field of art itself.

In doing art, there is a direct connection to one's field (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Artists use existing patterns and structures- ideas, techniques and problems. They build on or change them in new ways. Furthermore, connection to one's field is necessary for acceptance for it is the gatekeepers in one's field that determine whether a product or idea is indeed creative (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). And finally, there is an element of connection in an artist's life as their work is a connection to the past and a link to the future.

Theme 6: Obligations and expectations

Based on the experiences recounted by the participants, a distinction was made between obligations and expectations. Obligations are stereotypical female tasks especially childcare and household chores. Expectations are attitudes based on two sets of stereotypes: the female gender roles and the image of the starving artist.

The participants spoke at length about obligations and expectations that are based on traditional gender roles. This was not surprising in light of the current literature on women and creativity. For example, Helson (1999) used data from a 30-year longitudinal study of gifted women to determine creative women's talent realization. Participants

reported pressure from the conflicting demands of family life and career. They also experienced tension between pursuing a career and the expectation to adopt a traditional feminine role. Traditional roles and obligations leave little time for reflection and solitude, which are part of the creative process. It is difficult to find the time or energy when other obligations have more pressing needs or become a priority.

A participant in the study talked about creatively working around everything that had to be done in order to live and trying to find the time to do her art. She described her creative energy as tired energy. Many of the participants expressed similar feelings about finding time to engage in their work. It usually seemed to be at the end of the day when everything else was taken care of. One of the participants wondered why when both she and her husband were working full time she was still expected to assume the housekeeping chores and take care of the children. For her, the chance to do her art came after the children went to bed. She finally was able to quit her job and become a full time artist. Nonetheless, the time she had for her artwork was dictated by the schedules of her children and her husband. She described getting caught up in her painting only to realize the time and she would have to race home from her studio in order to meet the school bus.

Stohs (1992) conducted a study in which she compared the career patterns of male and female artists. She hypothesized that given art allows for a more flexible work schedule, males and females would have similar career outcomes. Instead, she discovered that females reported that they struggled to meet the demands of work and family. As well, she noted that the female artists had more interruptions to their career. The career

interruptions of the female artists, as measured by paid work, were correlated with the number of children living at home.

Some of the participants in this study experienced interruptions in their careers as artists. For one participant, the interruption was due to moving because of her husband's career. She had to give up her studio and start anew. She said that it was two years after the move before she found a new studio. She had concentrated on settling her children and helping her husband. She described trying to work in the basement, but because her sculptures are very large and require torches and other equipment, it was not very practical. Another participant described the interruption to her career due to the fact that she was a single parent with two young children. She had to wait until they were in school full time before she could pursue her career. She wanted to go back to school, but could not afford to pay for childcare on the little money she made working.

While this finding has been widely reported, it is still important to note. For the prevailing attitude among new generation of young females is that things have changed and that it is no longer an issue (Hollinger, 1995). This clearly does not seem to be the case. Expectations based on traditional gender stereotypes still exist (Simonton, 2000).

Schwartz (2001) reported that the socialization process that results in traditional gender roles has not changed much in the last 20 years. Gender bias and socialization according to traditional stereotypes still affect women's development. Research suggests that even though females may be rewarded for their achievements, the messages are still overwhelmingly based on gender rather than ability expectations (American Association of University Women, 1992).

Many of the participants in this study had experienced the effects of gender expectations first hand. One participant talked about the different types of artwork she had experimented with. She said that she showed talent in many areas, but was encouraged to concentrate on textiles because, after all, even if she wanted to be an artist, she was still a woman. A participant who often works in schools as an artist made the comment that teaching practices have not changed since her days in school. She said that she notices that boys are still called on more than girls and that girls are not encouraged to speak up, which is supported in the literature on teacher student interactions (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995).

Another participant said that she had experienced expectations based on the fact that she was female so she was determined to do what she could to alleviate such expectations. As an art teacher, she said that included discussions of gender in all of her classes. She perceived that the 17 to 24 year old women whom she taught felt that women had achieved equality. She felt it necessary to point out the many areas that still need to be changed.

Stereotypes of the artist

Many of the participants in this study talked about the stereotypical image of the artist. These participants said that they were discouraged from pursuing a career in the arts. Their parents, teachers and extended family saw art as a lonely, poor occupation. This did little to encourage their choices.

Attempts to identify barriers to women in the arts have been identified by several researchers (Bepko & Krestan, 1993; McCaughey, 1985). Among the barriers to success

in art is the stereotypical association of the role of artist with men and using the work of male artists as a standard for success. This results in the devaluation of the art and the careers of women artists, both by themselves and others.

Kauffman (1995) remarked on the stereotype of the artist. She stated that women artists are caught between a myth and a stereotype. The myth of the artist in Western culture is the product of the Romantic Movement in the 19th century. The artist was portrayed as a genius and a social deviant, eccentric in art and lifestyle. There is also a stereotypical image of a female artist. This is based on the Victorian image of a lady dabbling in art without taking it too seriously.

Kauffman (1995) stated that as a result of the two stereotypes, there is a certain stigma attached to the identity of a woman artist. On one hand, they cannot meet the expectations of the mythic image of the artist. On the other hand, they reject the image of the lady dabbler. So they fall short of one and disassociate from the other, which may leave them feeling confused about their role.

This seemed to apply to several participants in this study. One of the participants, for example, had wanted to be an artist from an early age, but ended up working in architectural design for 15 years. She talked about the messages she received from family and friends who were worried that she would end up as a starving artist. Another participant related the experience she had setting up a show at city hall. The personnel who were in charge of overseeing the show thought that they were hobbyists. They were not taken seriously as professional artists. One participant was born and raised in England. She described the support she received as she pursued her art as a girl and young woman. When she expressed an interest in pursuing art as a career, however, she

was told that while it was acceptable for a lady to paint, it certainly was not fitting to become an artist.

Theme 7: Need for support

The central theme revealed in the findings is the importance of support to the development of creative talent. This includes support in both their personal and professional lives. Support was necessary on many levels: social, emotional, political and economic. This finding has also been reported in the literature. Bloom (1985) determined that no matter what the domain of talent, the process of talent development is long and intense and requires training, education and, most importantly, encouragement and nurturance.

An environment conducive to creativity and the development of one's artistic talent requires support. A positive, supportive environment is vital to the development of creative talent. The creativity literature demonstrates that co-operative learning environments encourage creativity (Honig, 2001; Powell, 1994). Curiosity must be seen as acceptable and support provided for experimentation and exploring ideas.

Schwartz (1980) examined the achievements of a cohort of gifted women. Her findings revealed that while stimulation, self-confidence and feelings of independence were important factors in realization of talent, the most important factors necessary for realization of potential were recognition and acceptance.

A study of the lives and careers of female artists conducted by Brooks and Daniluk (1998) further confirms the need for support. They explored the meaning careers

had for a group of visual artists and identified themes common to the participants. One of the central themes identified was the importance of recognition, acceptance and support.

Core Theme

While the core theme is, as its name suggests, central to the study's findings, it is presented at the end of this section. This is due to the fact that it ties all of the other themes together. It was felt that the core theme should be presented as a conclusion to the discussion of the previous themes so that the reader has a better understanding of the first six themes and so may see the links for herself/himself.

The participants in this study identified the need for support as the core theme. It permeates all the other themes and links them together. Within each of the other themes identified in this study are elements of support. The

The educational experiences that were of benefit to the participants were due to the support the participants received. For example, teachers served as mentors. The community of learners in later educational experiences was a vital support.

As for the urge to create as described in Theme 2, the support of other people was important to the art making process. The urge to create was accompanied by a willingness to work hard. The urge to create was also motivated by a need for self-discovery and personal growth. Both personal discovery and growth as an artist and a person were facilitated by a supportive community of artists as well as the stimulation received from being part of an intellectual discourse that allowed the participants to connect theory and practice.

The issues of gender identified by the participants in theme 3 revealed the need for support from other like-minded females artists. Both the findings of this study and the literature on talented women demonstrate that females need same-sex role models. The support of other talented women would help females with creative potential make realistic appraisals of careers in artistic domains.

Theme 4 identified that talent alone is necessary but not enough to ensure creative females realize their potential and suggested that perhaps the definition of talent itself should include factors necessary to its development. The development of talent needs financial support. There is a need for studio space or a proper working environment. Financial support is required in order to allow talented females to devote time to their work. There is also a need for places to exhibit work so that one's talent can be seen and recognized.

Theme 5 noted the importance of connection with an audience and other artists especially given the need for feedback and encouragement. This helped the participants build their confidence in their abilities and in the relevance or importance of the work they did. Many factors beside actual ability influence one's conception of competence. These include self-appraisals and feedback from others.

Feedback from others is a component of the assessment of one's capabilities. Competence is not a fixed trait. It can vary based on other skills namely, cognitive, social and behavioural skills. Bandura (1997) maintained that the essence of psychosocial functioning is the capacity for self-reflection and the assessment of one's ability to manage situations, which is called self-efficacy.

Without support, the obligations and expectations discussed in theme 6 make it difficult, if not impossible, to devote the amount of time necessary for prolonged periods of uninterrupted work or reflection. There was a need for support from family in terms of help with daily routines and emotional encouragement for their art. Without support, there is little time or energy available for creative work.

This may explain why the older women in this study talked about rediscovering their creative passion. They now had more time for themselves and their work. This is in contrast to the younger women in the study who were still raising children. These women talked about the fact that, for example, they had to leave the studio in time to meet the school bus which meant they did not have enough blocks of time to devote to their work.

The importance of family support has been repeatedly mentioned in the female talent literature. List and Renzulli (1991) noted the importance of support. All of the participants in their study had supportive families and at least one mentor outside of school. A study by Reis (1998), however, reported that the women had little support or encouragement from their husbands. Rather, they received negative feedback and criticism about their choices and their work. Nonetheless, "the need for family, community and institutional support cannot be overstated" (Noble et al., 1999, p. 140). As articulated by the women artists in this study, however, support must be more than encouragement and praise.

Research Questions

Question 1: What factors facilitate or enhance the development of creative talent?

For the women in this study, post secondary school served as a facilitator in the fact that it provided training and more importantly, the support of other artists. The role of education was more than receiving technical training. It was a place where there was discussion and exploration of ideas and where intellectual ideas could be supported. The participants valued their educational experience because it provided support in the way of community and a chance to engage in the discourse surrounding their work- not because of the technical training.

The results of this study revealed that a variety of ways to support talent are possible. These include: financial support, opportunities to exhibit, mentor program and psychological or community support. These supports were not always available for the participants in this study.

One participant noted that the two things women lack are education and money. As a result, she felt that they lacked empowerment. Another participant commented that until there was more financial support from government and local community, there would continue to be a lack of women artists. One of the participants said that she had wanted to do a MA. She started taking courses but she could not afford to continue. She felt that the financial pressures were daunting and could not stand the pressure. Still another participant told me that she did a three-year program of studio courses after high school. The reason she choose the art program over college was because the studio program was free.

Other participants spoke of the desire to show their work. They wanted to exhibit their work, but it was not always possible. While in art school, the choices of which work to exhibit was usually made by professors. Once they left school, they were not always adept at making the necessary connections to get their work into local galleries.

While most of the participants talked about the lack of formal female role models, some of the participants had some positive experiences with mentors. This usually occurred on an informal basis. Some of the participants lived and worked in places where there was a strong sense of community among the female artists. The artists in these communities made sure that the younger artists had support and guidance. One community felt so strongly about the importance of mentors that they started a formal program that includes women artists across Canada.

Question 2: What factors serve as obstacles to the development of creative talent?

Based on the findings of this study, post secondary educational experiences acted as a facilitator of talent development. The findings of this study reveal, however, that education could also be an obstacle to creativity. It would appear that school was often an obstacle, especially in the early years. This is supported by the literature on creativity in school, which reveals that creativity takes a marked drop after the age of eight. (Torrance, 1981).

One result apparent from this study is that often school does not facilitate the desire to pursue one's talent. List and Renzulli (1991) focused on schooling and educational influences. Their findings indicated that the school environment does not encourage or foster creativity because they were not able to "...satisfy emotional and

intellectual needs" (p. 117) pursuant to the development of their talent. This was supported by the life experiences of the participants in this study.

While the finding that education and schooling may be either a facilitator or an obstacle to talent development appears to be a paradox, the two are not mutually exclusive. The nature of one's educational experiences could make it either an obstacle or a facilitator. Perhaps, if one can make it past the early years with motivation and curiosity in tack, then perhaps school later becomes a facilitator. Or if one is able to find an stimulating teacher, then school can be a facilitator. In a study of talented teenagers, Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, and Whalen (1997) reported that most highs school students described their teachers as boring and unenthusiastic; however, students who had marked talent often reported having an inspired teacher or indeed it was a teacher who first discovered their talent and continued to support its growth.

Another obstacle that all the participants discussed was role expectations and obligations, especially time commitments. This is consistent with findings reported in the literature on talented women. For example, Cangelosi and Schaefer (1991) interviewed a group of talented females who had graduated from high school 25 years earlier. They reported that the greatest barrier to the development of their creative talent were the demands of everyday living such as raising children.

The women in this study expressed similar sentiments. For those who had children, raising a family was seen as an obstacle to their developing their creative talents. Factors such as financial pressure to put older children through university, money to pay for childcare so a participant had time to work in her studio, as well as the sheer exhaustion of taking care of children were mentioned.

For the women in this study who did not have children, the demands of everyday living still took their toll. For example, one participant expressed frustration at coming home from work too tired to work on her art. She lamented the fact that earning a living left little energy for her art and that the time and energy she did give to it was less than optimally possible.

Question 3: How do females with creative talent structure their lives to foster talent development and/or overcome obstacles?

The participants were actively involved in shaping their lives to promote their development. This took many forms. For example, one of the participants structured her teaching scheduled to fit into a three-day block so that she could devote stretches of time to her artwork without the interruptions and focus of other responsibilities.

Another participant structured her life in a more dramatic way. She decided against having children because she felt that she could not be a "superwoman". This is not to say that she was not a hard worker. Rather, she realized that she only had so much time and energy and she decided to concentrate on her work.

The research shows that successful career development depends not only on having talent and responding to opportunities, but also creating opportunities. A key factor in the educational and career development of talented females identified by Ancis and Phillips (1996) is behavioural agency. This refers to a variety of behaviours and competencies that aid in advancing one's career and talent development.

Specifically these include "[i]nitiative in creating and taking advantage of opportunities, risk taking behaviour, persistence in goal pursuits, and willingness to

change one's situation to achieve a better fit with interests, aspirations and expectations..." (Ancis & Phillips, 1996, p. 131). It is the ability to create opportunities, not just respond to them. Harrington (1990) maintained that an examination of creative females "...would benefit from careful attention to the processes by which [they] choose and shape their environments in order to facilitate their creative growth and activity" (p. 161).

The stories that the participants told during the course of the data collection reveal that they were able to create their own opportunities when necessary. A good example of this was the story told by Joan. She was not chosen for an apprenticeship position in New York because her professor felt that the demands of caring for two young children would prohibit her participation. She arranged to spend the summer in New York with her children conducting her own personal apprenticeship.

Question 4: What role has education played in the development of creative talent?

The fact that school was mentioned by all participants and discussed at length is a testament to the fact that it has been an influential factor in the lives of the participants. All the participants in the study spoke of education as important, but not necessarily education in the traditional sense of the meaning (i.e. transmitter of information and skills). Rather, there were many types of educational experiences mentioned-- both formal and informal experiences.

There is no doubt that formal education played a large role in the development of the participants' talent. For example, their education gave them technical training and it gave them the credibility of a degree. In addition, education supported their intellectual

growth. Some of the artists in this study had achieved success and recognition, but decided in their 40's and 50's to go back to university to pursue a BA or an MA. One participant spoke of the backlash in contemporary art against theory. She did not agree though because she felt that the theory supported her work. Another participant explained that she went back to university partly because of the recognition a degree would bring, but mostly because it was a challenge for her to boost her work up to another intellectual level.

Sometimes talent development was seen as happening in spite of the formal educational experiences as not all of the educational experiences were positive. Yet the participants talked about other educational experiences that occurred outside of the formal walls of school and university. Sometimes these informal experiences were even more valuable to the development of their talent than the experiences at the various educational institutions.

The informal educational experiences reported in this study included working as an apprentice in a studio. It also included mentoring relationships. For many of the participants, it was often an informal group of other female artists that gave them the support of their work and the chance to take risks and envision possibilities.

Interestingly, education continues to play a role in the talent development of the participants given the fact that all of the participants taught art in various forms. Some participants made a conscious decision to teach. They felt it kept them connected to a community of artists. One participant felt that she wanted to teach because she felt it was important to go beyond the basic, fundamental skills. She wanted to teach her students how to be creative, how to express themselves and how to go beyond reproducing the

world to seeing the world in new ways. Other participants, however, would have preferred not to teach but needed to make a living. Teaching for them was a way to stay connected to art while supporting themselves in order to do their art.

The creativity literature demonstrates that creativity needs to be nurtured from an early age if it is to flourish (Rimm, 1995). This finding has implications for the role of the school in nurturing creativity. Given the finding that school, especially elementary school, serves as a hindrance to the development of creativity, it is imperative that current policies are examined for ways to make school environments conducive to creativity (Gowan, Khatena & Torrance, 1981).

Question 5: What is the process whereby creative talent is transformed into actual achievement?

Based on the results of this study, it seems clear that the process of transforming creative talent into a career is not straightforward. Rather, it is full of active and resting phases, peaks and valleys.

The transformation of creative talent into a successful, viable career appears to depend on a number of factors. Creative talent is an ability that unfolds and develops on its own time: it is unusual to be recognized overnight. Talented artists must be able to do other jobs to earn a living. They must have skills in addition to their creative abilities. Graduating with a B.F.A. or even an M.F.A. does not automatically give one access to a style and/or a market or trade unlike other degrees and professions. As well, it takes time to promote one's self and establish contacts.

Then there is the fact that one's talent and style evolves. Given the nature of the creative talent, it is likely that one will grow and change as an artist. Furthermore, the creative process is fuelled by intrinsic motivators (Amabile, 1996). There is an aspect of self-fulfilment to one's work. Talent development is also the result of experimentation and self-fulfilment, not money or the need for success. As a result, sometimes pieces of work do not get finished. They are done as experimentation or for pleasure not as pieces to show or to sell.

There is some evidence to suggest that creative talent development for women does not follow the same timeline as it does for men. Reis (1996) conducted a study in which older women reflected on their career success. The participants the study said that reached the peak of their talent development after age 50. They said that they slowed down in their 80s and 90s but their 60s and 70s were a time of energy and productivity. This is contrary to findings of List and Renzulli (1991) who maintained that the ages of 26 through 33 are the years when creative productivity is at its peak.

Creative talent may develop, but its recognition is dependent on the culture in which one lives and works. Part of being creative is the fact that one may be ahead of one's time. A history of creative achievements is full of stories of society initially rejecting many ideas and products, which are later recognized as creative. Waiting for recognition may be long and may not be achieved until after death.

There also seems to be a paradox inherent in the nature of the work. The fact of producing one's best work could be the end of one's career, either because one does not want to pick up a brush again or because the recognition of being at the top can either put

too much stress on the expectation to succeed or produce. In addition, the public can be fickle and may want to move on to the next new trend.

One participant talked about success and noted that when you are at a peak you may be at the end of your career. For what is in vogue and considered successful gives way to being yesterday's news. Unless one can reinvent oneself, then one's work can become passé. A few other participants also discussed this. For instance, one participant talked about her goals as an artist. She said that ultimately she wanted to do something that would "knock her own socks off", something that she would be so utterly delighted with that she would never do art again. Another participant told me that she was often asked if she thought she had done her best piece of work. She said that while she really likes the work that she does, she would not want to do her very best work for fear of never being able to attain that level again.

This study adds to the growing evidence that the development of careers in the visual arts for females is not a linear process (Brooks & Daniluk, 1998). Instead it can be a long, circuitous journey. It can include multiple interruptions often due to the choice and responsibilities of child rearing (Stohs, 1992), which is similar to the career patterns of women in other professions. Instead of speaking of career development in stages, Mangione (1993) proposed using the construct of life themes. This might better account for the changes and patterns that emerge over the course of a career.

The way the participants described their experiences with their artwork seems to support creative talent development as a circuitous route. For example, in recounting her career as an artist, a participant commented that many contemporary artists feel that they have to show every year and that their work has to be bigger and more brilliant than the

year before. She said that she was not like that. She thought of her work as more long term and felt that it was involved with life issues rather than going through stages according to what is current in the art world.

Another participant used an analogy to describe her career. She likened her talent development to the growth rings on a tree. She said that each new phase merged with the past and became like a new growth ring.

It is important to note that the various themes have been defined for the purpose of presenting the findings in an organized, coherent manner; however, the themes are very much interrelated. The results of this study indicate that there are multiple internal and external factors that influence creative talent development.

Porter (1999) describes the factors that influence one's development as a complex web of intrapersonal and interpersonal variables, family, school, community, health and psychological issues, which are embedded in complex social, political and economic structures. This can be seen in the way that the questions and themes are linked in this study. For example, it is difficult to talk about how the participants structure their lives without touching on the obstacles and opportunities present in their lives.

When I conducted the member checks, the feedback I received was positive. This was because the participants were glad that my interpretation included a number of factors. The participants felt it was important to recognize that promoting creativity and developing talent was not an easy, one step and linear solution.

Issues surrounding combining family and career are rarely addressed specifically in career programs. As Noble et al. (1999) maintained, working with talented females should include discussions of what one can expect if a talented female wants to do both.

Talented females should receive support for their choices, whether they are made along traditional or nontraditional lines. They also recommended increasing their resilience, which entails understanding the many issues facing talented women.

The findings of this study support such recommendations. The results of this study demonstrated that the participants did not know what to expect when choosing the career path of an artist. It was only as their careers unfolded that they realized the number of obstacles to becoming an artist and to fulfilling their potential. The women proved to be strong, resilient individuals who were able to overcome these obstacles. How many other young women with potential, however, are not able to overcome the obstacles, not because of character flaws but because of the nature of the obstacles? Perhaps if there were a more realistic picture of what a career as an artist entailed then one could better prepare for the challenges ahead. Perhaps a more realistic picture could also better inform attempts to support the development of creative talent, which is a possible method of addressing the underachievement of potential.

CHAPTER SIX
IMPLICATIONS

Better than a thousand days of diligent study is one day with a great teacher.
Japanese proverb

The purpose of this study was to gain insight and knowledge from a group of female visual artists in an attempt to understand their creativity and the development of their creative talent. It was anticipated that listening to the stories of successful, creative women would add to our understanding of creativity. The more we understand creativity and the talent development of creatively talented females, the more we can properly help and support these girls and women to realize their potential.

The results of this study highlighted several key issues for creatively talented females. These include the finding that in order for female talent to develop to potential, a variety of supports are necessary. Furthermore, talent alone is not enough to ensure realization of one's potential. The results of this study confirmed previous findings (Cropley, 1992; Schwartz, 2001; Sternberg & Lubart, 1995) that school is not always a facilitator of talent and, in fact, can hinder creative talent development.

Based on these results, several implications have been identified that could contribute to increasing the probability of talented females realizing their creative potential. These implications will be presented in three sections. The first section will present implications for educational policy and practice. The second will outline implications for a theory of creative talent development. Finally, the third section will suggest implications for further research.

Implications for educational policy and practice

Results of this study suggest several implications for educational policy and practice that could help creatively talented females fulfill their potential. The following implications will be presented: 1) the necessity for specific career training for creatively talented females, which include an affective component that addresses self understanding and self efficacy; 2) the importance of establishing mentor programs; and 3) the need to support teachers' efforts at fostering creativity in school, which includes professional development for teachers.

Career training

The findings of this study demonstrated that having talent is not enough to ensure realization of one's potential. For example, participants in this study emphasized the role of marketing, (of both themselves as artists and their work) in the development of their talent. Creative talent development requires a variety of skills including skills that are not directly related to creative ability. Realization of talent requires other skills such as the ability to find a niche, market one's self, and learn the business of art. (Interestingly, it should be noted that the process of marketing may be seen as a creative endeavor in and of itself.)

As such, based on this study's findings, the first educational implication arising from this study is that the education of creatively talented females should include more than training in their particular talent domain. It should also address other skills necessary to succeed in one's chosen field. One method of doing this would be through the use of career training skills that promote competency in all areas of pursuing a career-- not just

the skills necessary to the job itself. The types of skills necessary could be identified through the use of career competencies and exemplars.

While schools do use a variety of career training programs, the findings from this study suggest a need for specific programs for talented females. Models of career counseling programs exist that could be used to develop specific program for females. For example, Ohio State University has developed a system of competencies and information for careers in a variety of spheres including the arts called the Integrated Technical and Academic Competencies

The Integrated Technical and Academic Competencies (ITAC) is a career education program whose purpose is to integrate the various aspects of academic, technical and employability skills that are necessary for career success (Ohio Department of Education, 1999). The program is made up of three general components: core competencies, career competencies and specialization competencies. The competencies can be integrated into courses by linking them with learning outcomes. Some of them may be used to plan courses to ensure certain technical skills are covered.

This program could be used to develop a career-training program for creatively talented females. The ITAC program has identified specific skills and competencies that are required for careers in the visual arts field. Components of the ITAC could be adapted for inclusion in a program for creatively talented females.

The Blueprint for life/work designs is another vocational/career training program, which has been developed jointly by Canadian and U.S. human resource agencies (Human Resource Development Canada, 1998). It is an initiative designed to provide specific guidelines for career development competencies for children, adolescents and

adults in a variety of settings: elementary schools, high schools, post-secondary institutions and workforce training organizations. It has three broad areas of competencies, which are personal management, learning and work exploration, and life and work building. The blueprint program can be used either to set up a career-training program or to supplement existing career training programs.

The ITAC and/or the Blueprint for life/work designs vocational programs could be used as templates to design vocational programs that are specific to providing support for females with talent in the arts. A more detailed program should include an examination of all the talents, abilities and skills needed for specific careers, not just the academic prerequisites. Such a program should also explore the many variations of skills and abilities required within a career area as well as the possibility of integrating life goals with educational and career plans (Hollinger 1995).

The importance of addressing needs that are specific to creatively talented females should not be overlooked. For example, many talented females are not aware of possible obstacles they may face. In program designed to support talented young women develop their talents called PROJECT CHOICE, Hollinger (1992) reported that less than 10% of the participants were able to identify even one potential barrier they might meet in pursuing their career goals. Young women need to be aware of the obstacles that they may face. In addition, they need to be taught strategies that will help them cope with and overcome the challenges they will encounter. (Noble et. al., 1999).

One potential barrier that females should be aware of is the almost inevitable conflicts that will arise between work and relationships. The importance of relationships in the lives and choices that women make was first identified by Gilligan (1982). Career

programs for females should respect this and tailor career interventions appropriately. Young women must be made aware of the likelihood of experiencing tension between achieving one's career goals and maintaining nurturing relationships. This is a more realistic message, which should replace the current notion that women can, and should, have it all. This sets up pressure and sense of failure when women later experience conflict (Tomlinson-Keasey, 1998). Rather, young women would be better served if they were prepared and equipped for the challenges of balancing work and family (Rimm, 2001).

The career development of creatively talented females appears to be a long-term process. This has implications for career counseling. Creatively talented females need to be responsive to this. This way, they can also explore and develop other skills and opportunities to complement and support their creative talent development.

The findings of this study revealed that talent development is not linear and may be interrupted due to a variety of events in one's personal life. Young women need to be given a realistic picture of the realities of combining a career and family. They need to know that the development of their talent may be later than their male, single and married without children peers (Reis, 1995).

Career programs specific to the needs of talented females should also include the development of self-efficacy. The transformation of talent into performance is mediated by self-appraisals of abilities (Bandura, 1997). Personal goal setting is influenced by self-appraisal of capabilities. The stronger the self-efficacy, the higher the goals people set for themselves and the firmer their commitments to them (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Given that goals, including career goals, are influenced by self-efficacy beliefs, it is important to

aid talented females develop realistic self-appraisals of their abilities. This is especially necessary given the reported findings that talented females underestimate or downplay their talents (Kline & Short, 1991).

Betz and Hackett (1997) found that it is possible to design interventions that result in increased career self-efficacy. These interventions can be individual or group career counseling sessions using a trained facilitator. The result of increased career self-efficacy was increased behaviour directed towards career goals.

Sullivan and Mahalik (2000) established a 6-week career group for young women. Compared to the control group, the participants in the career group demonstrated increased career choice self-efficacy and commitment to pursuing goals. This finding was still evident in a 6-week follow up.

Based on the finding that talent is not enough, an important component of a career-training program that is specific to the needs of talented females should address skills related to agency (Ancis & Phillips, 1996). Talented females need opportunities, but they need to be able to recognize opportunities and feel confident enough to take advantage of them. An investigation of females in math and science programs by Siegal and Shaughnessy (1991) found that females had to be encouraged to take advantage of available opportunities. Young women also need the ability to create their own opportunities because there are not always opportunities readily available.

The career counseling literature contains recommendations that females receive career counselling specific to them both individually and in groups (Reis, 2001). Unfortunately, there is a lack of detail as to what the career counselling should include.

The types of recommendations presented in this section might contribute to developing career-counselling programs suitable to the specific needs of talented females.

Mentor programs

The central finding of this study was that a variety of supports are necessary if a talented female is to realize her potential. One means of providing support for creatively talented females is through the use of mentor programs that are specific to providing support for creative talent. The literature on female talent development confirms that females need role models, including modeling provided by mentors, not just career counseling (Hollinger, 1995).

The idea of using mentors to encourage students is not new. Jacobi (1991) noted that its origin could be traced to Greek mythology. Despite its history, however, Jacobi (1991) reported that a definition of mentor lacks both clarity and consensus among researchers.

Based on a review of the mentoring literature, Jacobi (1991) has identified five components of the concept of mentoring. These include: 1) the transmission of knowledge from mentor to mentee in order to facilitate goals; 2) direct assistance from the mentor including emotional support and role modeling; 3) a personal aspect to the relationship; 4) the mentor has more experience, influence and achievement than the mentee and 5) the relationship is reciprocal.

There are many mentor programs in schools already. For the most part, however, they are not structured to meet the needs of creatively talented females. Packard (2003), for example, characterized the traditional mentor program as hierarchical and dyadic. She

questioned if perhaps the traditional mentor-mentee relationship encourages dependence on one's mentor as the mentee is taken under the mentor's wing. Instead Packard (2003) proposed a model of mentoring that would involve a network of mentors that would include peers rather than a one-on-one relationship.

Informal mentor programs have been reported to be more effective than formal programs because there is voluntary participation and a choice in the matching process (Ragins, Cotton & Miller, 2000). These might be important considerations in designing an effective mentor program for talent females.

A further concern with existing mentor programs is that they are usually based on an enrichment or reward framework. Specific criteria are usually required in order to qualify for a mentor program. Eligibility is often based on grades, standardized test scores, attendance records or a teacher determining that a student has a need for advanced learning (Reilly, 1992), which may exclude some of the creatively talented. A mentor program specific to the needs of creatively talented females would be beneficial.

Females at all levels of schooling should be have the opportunity to participate in mentor programs given another key finding of this study: school itself is not always a facilitator of talent. One reason that high school and post secondary schools might not facilitate the development of talent is that there continues to be a lack of role models or female teacher mentors for creatively talented females. A recent survey of university hiring practices, for example, revealed that between 1998 and 2002, only 25% of newly hired faculty at McGill University have been women (George, Mayer, McKinnon, Parker, Pereira, & Roberts, 2002).

An example of a mentor program for women is the Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) project that began in 1984 in Winnipeg, Manitoba (mawa@escape.ca). The program was created by a group of artists who had experienced first hand the inequalities faced by women artists in the art community and in art school. They felt that there was a need to define the special needs of women artists and they believed that in order to facilitate their growth, developing artists needed support, encouragement and information resources. While this program is for adults, many of its features could be adapted for mentor programs in schools. For example, the MAWA program emphasizes creating good work habits in the studio and it also stresses the importance of communication between the artist and the community (i.e. other artists, museum programs and galleries).

Mentor programs could be established as early as the junior grades in elementary schools through high school and university with mentors at a level above. Junior high could mentor elementary school; high school could mentor junior high, university mentoring high school, young professionals mentoring university and established professionals mentoring young professionals. Young girls need to learn about mentors and how to seek them out. Learning about mentors could be included as part of vocational training or in programs such as the annual education plan in use throughout schools in Ontario.

In Ontario high schools students participate in a career guidance program called Choices into action (Ministry of Education, 1999). Part of this program includes completing an annual education plan which includes a selection of courses based on strengths, needs and interests as well as courses that provide opportunity for exploration

of possible careers. It should also contain long and short-term goals, extracurricular pursuits and possible post secondary goals. A teacher-advisor and parents are asked to assist the student with the plan.

The mentor experience would also benefit the students who serve as mentors. Research on mentors reveals that students who act as mentors benefit from the position. Acting as a mentor promotes personal growth and is shown to have a positive impact on goal setting (National Collaboration for Youth, 2000).

The Pittsburgh Children's Museum started a program that involves youth mentoring youth. Established in 1994, Youth Achievement through Learning, Involvement, Volunteering and Employment (YouthAlive) provides opportunities for students aged 10 to 18 to mentor or be mentored. The program takes place after school at the museum. Participants have the opportunity to talk, explore their interests and enhance their skills. Evaluation of the program revealed that it has been highly successful. It has been so successful that there is a waiting list to join the program.

Professional development for teachers

The last educational implication stems from the finding from both this study and the literature on creativity, which reports that early educational experiences tend to thwart creativity rather than promote it. This is particular disturbing given evidence which claims that the early years are critical in the development of creative talent (Honig, 2001).

It is important to note that creative talent and creativity are not synonymous with the arts or artistic talent. Creativity can be evident in all subject areas and every facet of

life. For the purposes of this study, however, the possibilities for fostering creativity will be examined within the context of the visual arts.

Associating creativity and the visual arts is not without merit. Current research reveals that there is a link between involvement in arts education and increased student creativity (Lubart, 1995). Eisner (2002) stated that creativity could be enhanced through participation in the arts or by the opportunity to experience art in an appreciative manner through art appreciation or art history lessons. He argued that "...many of the most complex and subtle forms of thinking..." (p. xii) occur as the result of arts education.

A recent survey by Oreck (2003) found that 98% of teachers said that they valued the arts. Only 20% of these same teachers, however, reported that they had any training in the arts. Most teacher education programs in Canada do not give emphasis to the arts (Upitis, 2001; Vagianos, 1999). This might explain why in many Canadian schools "virtually no arts instruction takes place" (Upitis, & Smithrim, 2003; p. 5). Clearly there is a need for professional development for teachers in two areas: training in creativity and, given the link between the arts and creativity (Eisner, 2002), training in the arts.

Creativity training

It was clear from the results of this study that school can have a negative effect on the development of creativity and creative talent due to the degree of conformity that is expected from students. Perhaps if teachers understood more about creativity, they would be able to recognize creativity. This might be a first step in nurturing creativity and creative talent in students. It appears that teachers need both professional development and support in order to promote creativity, not just in art, but also in all subjects.

There is widespread support for fostering creativity in the classroom, at least in theory. A survey conducted by Feldhusen and Treffinger (1975), for example, found that 95% of respondents favoured encouraging creativity in the classroom. In practice, however, promoting creativity is often in conflict with classroom expectations and practices. While encouraging creativity is an ideal goal, the reality of promoting creativity in the classroom can be problematic for both teachers and parents.

Misconceptions about creativity can interfere with its promotion. As Cropley (2001) observed, many teachers and parents conceive of creativity as non-conformist, messy, careless or even mischievous. Creativity requires a certain level of autonomy and the ability to take risks. It is characterized by impulsive, even rebellious behaviour without fear of deviating from the norm (Gardner, 1993).

There is concern among parents and teachers that promoting creativity would both de-emphasize and take time away from basic skills and measuring outcomes Cropley (2001). This is especially applicable in the current North American educational climate, which can be characterized by a concentrated emphasis on performance standards. The effect of this focus is "to circumscribe the system in which teachers operate, and consequently, to constrain imagination and leach the creativity from the teachers themselves" (Craft, 1997; p. 108).

As a result of the shift to performance standards, the role of the teacher has become that of transmitter of knowledge or information technician (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde & Whalen, 1997; Schor, 1997). Likewise, the role of the student has moved from one of apprentice to one of receiver of knowledge. This in turn results in a more structured classroom environment, which does not foster creativity. (Csikszentmihalyi et.

al., 1997) argued that much of the current educational environment in North America is governed by extrinsic demands, grades, rewards, rules and bureaucracy. Amabile (1996) maintained that external control or constraints hinder creativity.

Strategies for fostering creative talent have been available for the last 30 years. Torrance (1984), for instance, developed guidelines for supporting the development of creative talent. Treffinger, Sortore and Cross (1993) have identified over 250 available programs designed to help teachers promote creativity. Nonetheless, creative underachievement continues (Rimm, 1995). As McIntosh and Meacham (1992) noted, "In a world where creativity is so important and teachable, it is ironic that schools seldom teach the skills necessary for developing and using creativity" (p. 3). This suggests that training cannot be left to the interest or initiative on the part of individual teachers.

Learning more about creativity might help teachers expand their conceptions of what is creative and allow a wider variety of student responses, especially since the teacher's role in fostering creativity is a pivotal one (Goree, 1996). This is particularly germane when examining the ways many teachers respond to males and female.

Fuchs and Fuchs (1995) reported that teachers often respond differently to males and females: girls get less attention than boys, girls get less praise than boys and girls get reprimanded more often than boys for speaking out of turn. This has implications for the creatively talented female. If she is receiving different messages than her male counterpart, then it is not surprising that she develops a different set of beliefs, expectations and skills.

If females are continue to be socialized according to traditional values and roles, they are encouraged to develop passive, nurturing, kind, conformist and approval seeking

traits. These traits, however, are opposite to those necessary for creativity to develop. Hollinger (1991) noted that that this type of sex role socialization is the most limiting type of barrier to career development.

Teachers need support in developing and maintaining positive learning environments for both females and males. In order to foster creativity in the classroom, Goree (1996) suggested that students be given time to reflect and think. As well, she insisted on offering a variety of environments suited to a variety of learning styles with each type of environment allowing students to take risks and test their ideas and beliefs. What is needed is an awareness of and strategies to counter constraining environment.

Training in the arts

There is growing evidence that arts education positively impacts other areas of learning. These include the development of the imagination (Greene, 1995), greater motivation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and increased social skills (Catterall, 1998). Various initiatives to support teachers in delivering appropriate arts curriculum have been implemented.

One type of program fosters collaboration between museums and schools. As museums throughout the country re-evaluate their roles, many are beginning to shift from their role of collecting, preserving and displaying to assuming a more educational, community role (Attenborough, 2002). This educational role is evident in the growing number of educational programs they offer. The National Gallery of Canada, for example, has professional development workshops for teachers at the elementary, intermediate and high school levels.

Workshops for teachers of elementary and intermediate students include discussions of how using art can provide students with opportunities to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills. The workshops show teachers how to allow students to develop their own creative expression through a combination of art appreciation, art making and activities and exercises to develop visual literacy. Also included are methods of integrating art across the curriculum, identifying resources and methods of supporting art education in the classroom. Teachers are also introduced to the museum's on-line virtual museum and given suggestions and lesson plans for its use.

Another type of collaboration museums and schools is the museum as educational partner. This type of program requires the museum and school to plan and deliver sections of the curriculum together. It moves beyond merely visiting a museum for a visit. While a class trip to a museum is an educational experience, some researchers question how much can be learned in a few hours (Knutson, 2002).

An example of an educational partnership is the ChevronTexaco Glenbow Museum School, which was formed between the Glenbow Museum and The Calgary Board of Education. Funded by ChevronTexaco, the program involves a class spending a week at the museum. The museum has two designated spaces available for visiting classes. Planning for the weeklong visit occurs in three stages. It begins with a Museum School Experience workshop for teachers during July. The second stage is the director's visit to each teacher's school. At this time, the director conducts a hands-on workshop with the students on using museum artifacts, how to look deeply, as well as museum rules. The final step is a planning meeting at the museum school between the teacher and the museum's educational staff.

This type of partnership is important in supporting creativity and artistic development as it allows prolonged engagement in the museum setting. It is a means of offering additional resources and perspectives than those available in the school setting. It also provides the opportunity to interact with people in the field of art, who may serve as a source of inspiration or role model in ways that the classroom teacher is not able to do.

Artists in the classroom

Another method of supporting classroom teachers develop arts based programs and deliver appropriate art curriculum and encourage creativity is through collaboration with professional artists. A variety of collaborative programs have been developed that link artists with classroom teachers. An example of this type of program is ArtsSmarts (Canadian Conference of the Arts, 1998).

ArtsSmarts is a national, bilingual program used from kindergarten through high school. One its primary objectives is the formation of sustainable partnerships between students, artists and arts organizations, schools and community in order to improve art education. The program involves forming partnerships between artists and teachers in order to deliver a unit of study with art as a central or integrated component. The artist and teacher each contribute to the unit based on their area of expertise. The art may be music, drama, creative writing or visual arts.

Now in its third year, evaluation of the ArtsSmarts program described a variety of factors necessary to a successful collaboration (Andrews, 2001). The first is that the teacher-artist partnership should involve the entire school staff. In this way, the art activity is integrated into various subject areas across the curriculum. A second factor in

building a successful collaboration is to emphasize the artistic process rather than the end product. Another factor is to use a variety of learning strategies focusing on the collaboration between students. A further requirement for a successful partnership is ensuring that final product is shared with an audience, usually from the community.

Evaluation of ArtsSmarts by Andrews (2001) has also identified factors that can interfere with implementation of a successful program. A significant hindrance is when there is a conflict between the artist, who is focused on the artistic process, and the teacher, who is concerned with learning outcomes. Other factors that can interfere with a successful program include leaving students out the planning stage and a lack of time to properly implement the program.

While these types of programs have their merits, they are not without their critics. Arts education researcher Hanley (2002), for example, pointedly asked, partnerships-good for whom? She contended that too often the partnership serves the needs of administration trying to appease parents that their schools are participating in the arts. A further concern with this type of partnership is that it frequently finds the teacher sitting on the sideline as the artist gives the lesson(s) (Graham, 2002). There are also misgivings teacher-artist partnerships because often the artist is not trained in the art of teaching (Goldberg, 2003; Upitis & Smithrim, 2003). In questioning the qualifications of many of the artists in artist-teacher partnerships, Hanley (2002) inquired, "Can anybody teach?"

Evaluation of professional development programs that have been implemented over the past ten years has identified factors that are necessary to success. One of the key findings is that for professional development programs to be effective, the program must support the development of participating teachers' own creative and artistic skills (Oreck,

2003). In a study aimed at increasing the level of arts education in Canadian elementary schools, Upitis, Smithrim and Sorren (1999) found that teachers' beliefs about the value of arts education and teachers' implementation of arts curriculum increased when professional development initiatives allowed the teachers to explore the art process through making their own art.

To be truly effective, professional development programs in the arts must be ongoing and include a component that helps teachers assess the impact of the arts on their students' creativity and learning (Goldberg, 2003). Professional development programs must also include elements of support for teachers, including a wider supportive community of staff, administration and parents (Oreck, 2003). It must also be customized to meet the needs of individual classes Goldberg (2003).

Based on the findings that teachers are not always qualified to teach art and that the elementary school expects conformity, it appears that teachers need support in order to teach art, both for arts sake and in order to encourage creativity. The prospect of effective professional development offers possibilities to counter some of the negative effects of schooling on creativity and creative talent development. School has the potential to have a positive, nurturing influence on creativity and the development of creative talent. The suggestions presented here may help provide the beginnings in order to transform the role of school from barrier to facilitator of creativity.

Implications for theory

The theoretical implications of this study are related to the theory of talent development. The specific contribution to theory and the extension of existing knowledge of female talent development are the formulation of two models of female talent development. The findings of this study were presented in seven themes. Taken together, these themes support the beginnings of a theory of creative talent development.

Factors Influencing the Development of Female Creative Talent

The findings of this study and the findings reported in the literature on creatively talented females clearly show that having talent is not enough to ensure the fulfilment of one's potential. There are many factors that contribute to realization of one's talent. As such, the first model represents factors that can influence the development of female, creative talent.

The factors that influence and intersect with each other are presented in the model presented in figure 1. The model is in the form of the double-strand structure of the DNA molecule. This is meant to represent creativity and creative expression as a life force, which is based on the urge or compulsion to creative, which the participants spoke of. It is also a fitting representation of the creativity and the creative process as the story of DNA is similar to the history of many creative products and ideas. DNA was first discovered in 1869 by a German chemist, Friedrich Miescher, but its discovery was ignored for a long time because the field of biology was not advanced enough to integrate its knowledge into its framework (Curtis, 1983).

The framework, or rails, of the DNA double helix in this model is made up of support factors such as time, mentors and career skills that all participants require. The internal rungs of the molecule such as family background, education and personality represent and recognize individual variations of each female artist just as each person has her own unique makeup based on her own unique DNA. The whole structure twists and turns which represents the influence of chance. It is also acknowledges that talent development is not a linear or straightforward process.

This framework was also chosen to represent the fact that the structure has a whole depends on all of the parts. The individual parts are recognized as important, but so too is the structure itself. There is a symbiotic relationship between the internal and external components of the framework. While each part has its own function, it also acts as part of the larger structure. In this way, the individual components are acknowledged, but they are ultimately part of a context. The individual components are influenced by the support or the context of the structure, but the structure itself is shaped by the individual elements.

Extrapolating from this figure, one can talk about creative talent development as the interplay between personal and social aspects. While life and work may, at times be distinct, they are not separate. They are inextricably linked and influence each other in reciprocal ways. As such, in determining how to support talent development, one must consider supporting life choices. Considering the two together may result in more beneficial development in both areas.

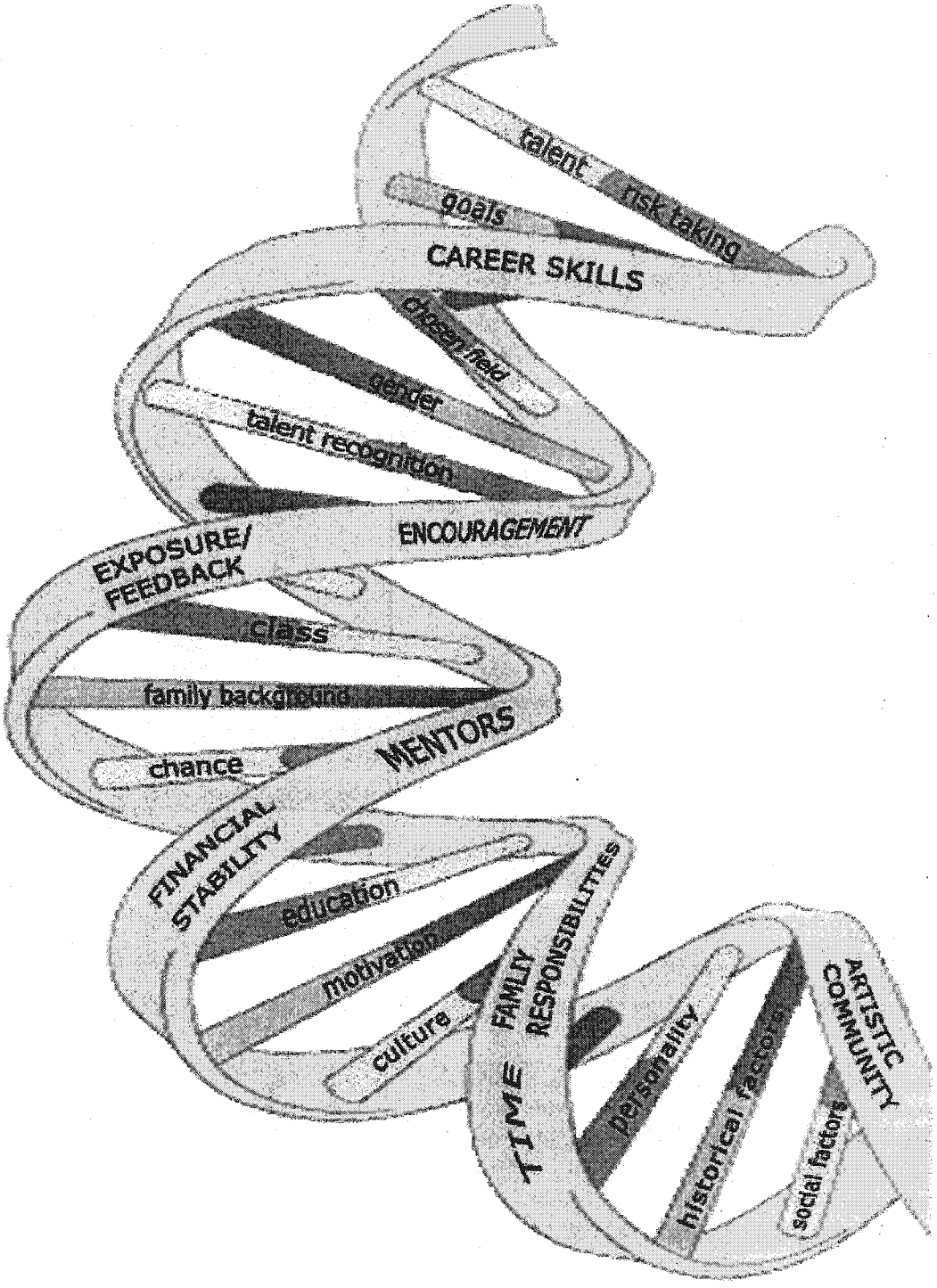

Figure 1
Factors Influencing the Development of Female Creative Talent

A model of women's creative talent development

A central finding of this study is that professional and personal lives of the participant intersect and influence each other. This means that a theory of female creative talent development must include personal factors and their resulting variations. As Hollinger (1995) noted, career choices are not made in isolation from other areas of one's life.

A theory of talent development and career for women should be able to capture the totality of women's experiences (Porter, 1999). As such, it is necessary to include personal, as well as professional, elements. Personal elements in life can interrupt a career, but they can also be another source of inspiration that drives one's need or urge to create.

With respect to the personal elements of creatively talented females, relationships and/or the desire to have children are among the most significant factors affecting their personal lives. A theory of talent development should include responsibilities of child rearing (whether planned or unplanned) in the theory. What is important is to build the awareness of the impact of child rearing on one's career into the vocational training programs for females.

Based on the findings of this study and the current literature on career counselling and talented females, a model of women's creative talent development has been formulated and is presented in figure 2. It is in the form of the two rails that make up the double helix framework of the DNA molecule. One rail represents aspects of personal life and the other rail represents career components of creatively talented females. The rails connect the various parts of a life together.

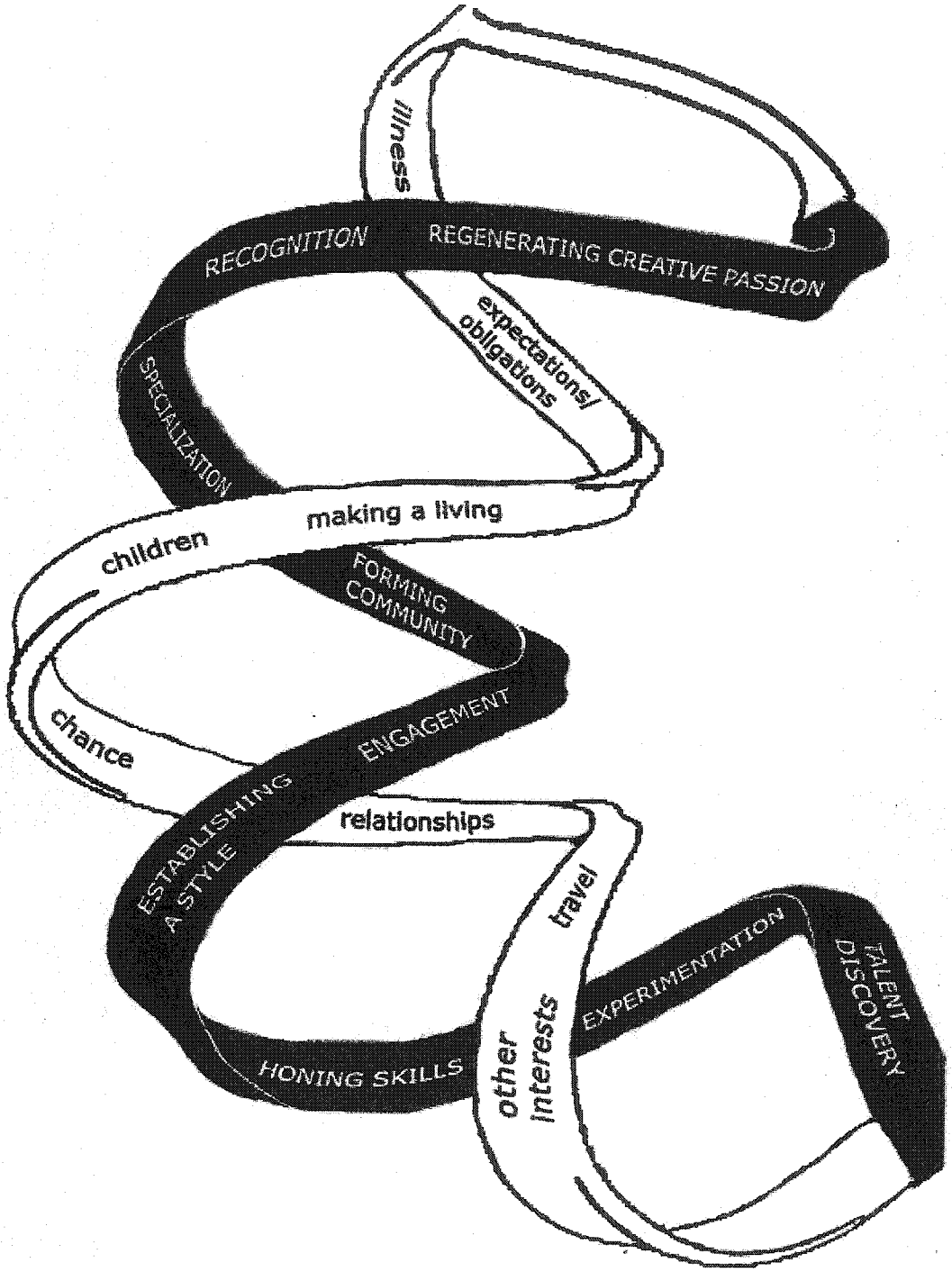

Figure 2
A model of women's creative talent development

The way that the rails connect the different parts of life together suggests that one's personal life and one's work may be separate but are related. It is also meant to convey that while one's life and work may be planned, it must be continually redesigned due to the fact that not all plans unfold as expected. Career plans are not static but change as with new experiences and unplanned event. As a result, career plans may need to be redesigned.

The rails are meant to convey the fact that the career development of creatively talented females is not a linear process. There may be many ups and downs, twists and turns. The two rails are separate yet connected and so events or developments in one area, can affect the other. The decision to marry, for example, could give one the economic freedom to spend more time on one's creative work; it could alter the choose of themes explored in one's art; or it could allow less time to devote to one's art.

One rail represents the various stages of career development. These stages were created based the findings of this study. While all the participants were unique and had their own stories, they also shared certain experiences. Based on these experiences, the following stages were identified: 1) *Talent discovery*- all of the participants knew by the end of elementary school that they had a creative talent. While only one of the participants reported having their talent recognized at school, they all spoke of their family's role in recognizing, appreciating and encouraging their talent.

2) *Experimentation*- university was a time for this as well as activities conducted outside of formal educational experiences. The participants spoke excitedly about the chance to experiment with ideas and mediums. For some it was also a time of anxiety when they experienced pressure to concentrate in one area either because they were not

yet sure of their chosen field or because there was pressure to choose an area such as textiles associated with women.

3) *Honing skills*- the participants consciously worked on their skills. They were well aware of the level of skill and proficiency they developed, which was reflected in decisions around their career. For example, for some of the participants, the decision to continue their education was made once they felt they had enough experience with their skills in order to derive the maximum benefit from pursuing a graduate degree.

4) *Establishing a style*- all of the participants talked about the influence of ideas and life experiences on their work. They explored issues through their work and they talked about how the issues influenced their work, both in choice of themes and mediums.

5) *Engagement in work*- for many of the participants, the ability to engage in their work was paramount to their lives. One participant, for example, chose not to have children because she felt that she could not do it all. For many of the participants, the lack of time and energy to fully engage in their work was a continual source of frustration.

6) *Finding/forming community*- the need for a supportive community was mentioned by all of the participants. For some, the sense of community came from joining artist groups or pursuing a graduate degree in fine arts. For others it was achieved by the conscious decision to work in an environment such as a school of art in order to have access to a group of likeminded women. Some of the participants felt joined through history to the artists who came before them and felt obligated to do their part in supporting the artists who were developing.

7) *Specialization*- all of the participants discussed a period of specialization in their work. For some of the participants, specialization was seen positively, allowing them to refine their work and take their talent to a higher level. For other participants, specialization was viewed as restricting their desire to change mediums and experiment. These participants said that they were expected to produce in a certain style or medium and tried to reconcile their ability to sell their work with the wish to try new things.

8) *Recognition*- over time, all of the participants received recognition from their field and, for some, from the public. For the participants in this study, recognition was important, not for themselves, but for their work. All of the participants wanted their art to communicate a message. For many of the participants, their message involved social issues. Recognition was important because they felt that their was receiving the attention it needed to advance their cause.

9) *Regenerating creative passion*- over one half of the participants in this study were in their late 40s and beyond. They talked about the renewed energy they had experienced in their work. For some it was due to their children having left home and for others it was the achievement of financial stability that allowed them to pursue their work without financial pressure or having to divide their time between making a living and pursuing their art.

The rail connects the various stages in a career. They may be discussed as separate phases, but the stages flow into each other and can overlap and reoccur. Experimentation, for example, may take place many times over the course of a career. As an artist explores new ideas or responds to developments in the art world, she may

change mediums. Working with a new medium, she may experiment or sample new techniques and may explore new themes.

The other rail represents the personal side of life. There may be interruptions or changes in direction in one's career due to the personal events in one's life. For example, the decision to have children or take time off to travel can either interrupt a career or contribute to growth and new directions. Sometimes changes or interruptions are unplanned, or due to chance, but they are influential nonetheless. These may include caring for aging parents or other family members, changes in economic conditions due to divorce, unemployment, sickness or the death of a loved one- in short, all the unpredictable events that may occur over the course of life.

An important aspect of the model is that it loops back on itself so that it is a closed figure. While this is not an accurate depiction of the structure of DNA, it represents the fact that creative female talent development not linear. The talent development process may begin at different points for different people. For example, experimentation may precede the discovery that one has talent.

The closed structure also represents the cyclical nature of talent development. For example, some of the participants in this study spoke of renewing their passion for their work as they got older and had less obligations and more financial security that allowed them to devote more time to their work. It was as if these participants revisited the developmental process again. The fact that the model is closed also indicates that the development process may continue at any point-- whether it be experimenting with a new medium or forming a new community.

Implications for further research

Based on the findings of this study, several directions for further research are apparent. The first is that there is still a need to gain more information on specific ways that education systems might contribute to the realization of talented females fulfilling their creative potential. The findings demonstrated that school could be both a facilitator of, and a hindrance to, creative potential. How can school become a facilitator of creativity?

What is needed is more research on how schools can positively influence and support the development of talent. What specific policies and programs can be put in place that would allow creatively talented females (and males) to fulfill their potential? How can schools integrate gender equity teaching and learning practices into the curriculum in a way that would support the development of talent? In addition, more research is needed in order to identify best practices for the formation of relationships between schools and artists in the community.

More research is also required to establish partnerships between museums and schools. How should programs be established? How would these programs be evaluated? How would their effects on learning be measured? How would their effects on aiding students fulfill their creative potential be measured?

Further research is needed in order to determine the most suitable methods of providing professional development for teachers in order to demystify art and learn how to promote creativity, not just in art, but also in all subjects. How to evaluate its effectiveness? Teachers seem to express anxiety surrounding art and the creative

experience. Is it possible that teachers have an art anxiety, much like the math anxiety documented in research literature?

Further research in professional development for teachers need to assess whether professional development in arts education, including fostering teachers' own creative results in changes in teaching practices and changes in attitudes towards the arts. As well, there is a need to investigate if these changes are sustained.

The examination of the experiences female artists is important in order to document their unique experiences and needs. The needs of creatively talented young males also require further investigation. There may be factors that are unique to being a male artist. Future research needs to include their needs as well.

The finding that graduate school was the educational experience that participants spoke most highly of, and acted as a facilitator to creative talent development, deserves further attention. What is the difference between the B.F.A. and the M.F.A. that makes one so amenable to learning and creative talent development? What best practices from the M.F.A. can we use in other arts education programs and programs in general to foster creativity? What best practices can be used to promote creativity and excitement at all levels?

The findings from this study were similar to findings in previous studies on women and creativity. The qualitative, open-ended method used appears to be appropriate and, in addition, points to trustworthy and authentic findings. It also gives support for including the participants as collaborators. Further research studies using this method are needed to support the methodology and test its merits.

It became apparent during data analysis and even more so during the discussion just how much the various themes were related. The social, economic and political contexts influence each other. What is needed is a research method that allows researchers to examine the various factors, their interrelationships, and how they influence each other.

Future research might also examine the themes that the present generation of female visual artists are exploring to determine how they may be influenced by the present context. Has the social context that affected the lives of the participants in this study changed significantly in the decades since the 1970s? How are the creative productions and the lives creatively talented females related to and/or influenced by the economic and sociopolitical contexts in which they live and work? What impact has the increasing number of women artists had on the culture of the art world?

There are many questions that are still unanswered. Further research is needed if the lack of creators, both female and male, can be adequately addressed. As Kerr (1997) noted, the solution to addressing underachievement seems to be find out what factors are holding back talented females and then remedy them. The issue, however, is more complex than it first appears. Further research is needed in order to adequately support the development of creative talent.

Limitations

The first limitation is a question posed by Lincoln and Denzin (1994): "Can we ever hope to speak authentically of the Other, or an other?" (p. 577). I am not trying to speak of the Other or for the Other. Rather I am presenting my interpretation of some of

their experiences related to creativity. My own perspectives mediated the interpretation presented here. Even though I checked with the participants to see if my interpretation made sense and agreed with their interpretation, the interpretative process is full of contradictions and conflicts, even for the participants themselves (Dey, 1999). The way we view our stories today, may not be the way we interpret them tomorrow. New information and experiences affect our interpretations. And, of course, multiple interpretations of any given story are always possible.

A further limitation is that no matter how I might try to allow the participants to be co-creators and include their voices, ultimately I am the one who interpreted the data and selected which quotes to include (Acker et al, 1996). Despite efforts at eliminating the hierarchy of the research process, I was still in a position of power and privilege (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

The findings presented in this study were shaped by the interpretations I made both as a researcher and a white, middle class female. The questions I asked, the method of data collection, the issues identified in the data and all the decisions made throughout the research process were shaped by my own personal biases, experiences and goals. It was not possible to totally suspend my preconceptions, prior knowledge, experience and theoretical perspectives.

The results of this study also need to be considered in light of the five following limitations, based on list of questions posed by Gardner (1993b). 1) Was the choice of sample the right one? Was in fact, the sample, representative of female visual artists so that it is possible to gain authentic insight into their experience? 2) Was the particular choice of the visual arts appropriate for this study of creativity? Would dance or music

have been a better choice? 3) Was the focus of the study limited by my choice of methodology? Perhaps I neglected important areas that would have been discovered using direct questions rather than open-ended ones? For example, without direct questions, it was not possible to ascertain the participants' cognitive style, psychological style or creative style. Did the lack of this knowledge influence my interpretations? 4) Did this study really tap into creative ability? Maybe the results were a portrait of other types of abilities such as practical intelligence? 5) How much of the current study's findings are framed by and limited to the current cultural and historical context?

The ultimate limitation is the fact that no one picture can ever be complete. There needs to be many pictures or perspectives that are heard before it is possible to come to an in-depth understanding of any social phenomenon (Lincoln & Denzin, 1994). As such, other interpretations need to be heard. More research is needed in order to build a composite picture.

Conclusion

My art is a visual documentation of my life. I never know its going on when I'm involved in it, but when I look back at slides of my work last year, I remember where I was and what I was doing at that time; it's quite imprinted on the work.

Participant

The purpose of this study was to learn about creativity and creative talent development from a group of female visual artists. It was anticipated that the results would further our understanding of the needs unique to creatively talented females, which is necessary in order to support their development. In addition, a greater understanding of the needs and talent development of creative females could help address the problem of underachievement of creative potential in young girls and women.

The results of this study contribute to understanding the needs of creatively talented females in three ways. The first contribution stems from the finding that ability or skill is necessary but not sufficient for creative talent to develop to potential. It appears that talent cannot be examined in isolation from a variety of factors necessary to its manifestation. For the participants in this study, art could not be separated from other aspects of life. Rather, art and life were intimately connected.

Talent is often discussed as a characteristic or trait of an individual. The results of this study however, suggest that talent cannot be examined in isolation from other factors. These include education, the creative impulse, gender issues, the importance of connection and the need for a variety of supports such as financial and feedback from an audience and other artists. The concept of talent might need to be expanded to include the

personal and social environment. Talent could be conceived of as the integration of skill or ability with opportunity and support.

The second contribution this study makes to our understanding of female talent development is the knowledge that creative talent development is not a linear process. Creative talent does not develop or unfold according to career stages that characterize many other types of careers. Rather, creative talent develops in conjunction with the events in one's life as well as

Vocational choices are not made in a vacuum. Rather, one's choices are affected by many other considerations in other areas of one's life including goals and dreams. For many women in the study, their choices were affected by consideration of family and the importance of relationships.

It is clear from this study and from the literature that an understanding of creative talent development must begin by recognizing that it is not a linear process. Nor is it a simple process. Rather, it includes multiple, interrelated factors. Attempts to promote creative talent development, therefore, must address multiple issues, especially issues specific to women.

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APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANTS' BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Participant (real names are not used)	**Art Area**	**Age**	**Marital Status**	**Children**	**Perspective Of Note**	**Education**
Winnie	painting	late 30's	divorced	2	Black	B.A.
Lilly	ceramics	early 40's	single	0	Working class; Lesbian	M.F.A.
Joan	painting using a wax technique	early 50's	divorced	2	Working class;	B.F.A.
Margaret	oil and water colour painting	mid 50's	married	1	British	B.F.A.
Lisa	sculpture	mid 40's	single	1	Black	High school
Sophie	textiles	early 50's	single	0	Feminist	M.F.A.
Zoe	sculpture	late 40's	married	3	Asian	B.F.A.
Cleo	painting	early 20's	single	0	White	B.F.A.
Maggie	ceramics	mid 30's	married	1	Jewish	M.F.A.
Jenny	textiles	mid 60's	married	3	American	M.F.A.