Part 4: Recognition of work by faculty in the field of film and digital media

Part 4 is divided into four sections:

1) Faculty priorities within each domain are unique
2) Personal leadership
3) Creativity and faculty work in film and digital media
4) The non-teachable nature of creativity and art

As described in earlier sections of this chapter, there are a plethora of prescriptive and proscriptive solutions that address the question of evaluation in general terms, but scant few are directly addressing the specific problems that relate to the recognition and evaluation of faculty work in film and digital media. Those faculty who are doing artistic works in film and digital media, or those producing written works that are personalized or auto/ethnographic in approach, are guided by inherently different motivations and self-directed criteria than peers aligned with conventional and traditional methods, and therefore should be recognized and evaluated with criteria that are relevant to the specific nature of the work itself rather than generic, one size fits all terms (Diamond, 1993, Diamond and Adam, 2000). Chapters 3 and 4 describe the broad scope and nature of faculty work in the field of film and digital media, arguing that it can be considered as reasonably consistent and consonant in many ways with conventional and traditional forms of scholarly work; and Chapter 5 argues that faculty work in film and digital media is unmistakably distinct from conventional forms as delineated by the traditional template because of its inherently personalized and expressive nature, in comparison with traditional and conventional forms.

1) Faculty priorities within each domain are unique

      Remember that unique means 'one' (Jamison, 1984).

      As I have proceeded over time to build a meaningful understanding of qualitative research and the panoramic range of scholarship activities by faculty members, I have been reminded that faculty priorities are unique within each disciplinary domain and field of knowledge (Diamond, 1993a; 1993b; Braxton, Luckey and Helland, 2007). What is common and expected within one discipline cannot necessarily or interchangeably be expected in another. Conventional notions about what constitutes research inquiry or its products are not relevant or applicable to the work of many faculty members in various fields of scholarship, including those in the field of film and digital media.

      Diamond (1993) and others have argued that research and professional practices vary greatly from discipline to discipline, and the recognition of differences in scholarship must be considered (Lim, 2000; Bukalski, 2000). Scholarship in the field of film and digital media progresses from thoughtful (self-) reflection to the systematic effort of building knowledge and skills, to the developmental process of visualizing and realizing the creative idea through cinematography, scriptwriting and other means; to the creative and technical processes of editing where the raw materials get formed into a cohesive whole that gets disseminated as a completed work; to raising money for the work to be realized and of benefit to audiences and in any number of ways to the academic discipline (Bukalski, 2000). Unfortunately, understanding and sensitivity of nuanced differences from discipline to discipline is not in evidence in practice when faculty performance is evaluated and judged according to the guidelines of the traditional template. One size fits all is the norm in most cases of scholarship evaluation. An understanding

of the similarities and differences of creative research with conventional research must be reconciled with an acceptance that change and a plan for fair and proper assessment must emerge and be implemented so that all dimensions of academic work, not just to conventional forms of research, should be recognized, valued and rewarded by the academy (Boyer, 1990; Colbeck, 2006).

The uniqueness of artistic, scholarly and professional work by faculty in film and digital media outweighs its similarities with conventional and traditional expectations of faculty work, and this justifies the development of particular and relevant criteria for its recognition and evaluation in higher education settings. Tomasulo (2008) describes measurable (quantifiable) outcomes and results in the evaluation of work in film and digital media, as well as "the means by which to evaluate artistic qualities such as talent; beauty; and good screenwriting, cinematography, directing, acting, editing, sound and set design" (p. 115). Ultimately, according to Tomasulo (2008, p.116), the entire film faculty at Florida State reached agreement upon a 22-point criteria for measuring and assessing student works in film, including:

- Originality of premise
- Clarity of narrative
- Character development
- Dialogue
- Storytelling technique
- Shot design
- Acting performances
- Pacing
- Tone
- Shot composition
- Lighting
- Focus

- Editing for geography and space

- Conveying information

- Production design scheme

- Wardrobe, hair and makeup

- Set design

- Special effects

- Sound design

- Dialogue recording

- Music

- Sound mix (dialogue, music, sound effects)

Tomasulo (2008) provides an additional list of 54 learning outcomes by discipline, created by the faculty of the Florida State University film school (Appendix x). FSU developed 1.0-10.0 Likert scale that was used for evaluating each of the key areas of filmmaking, on the basis of the 22-point criteria above-listed (Tomasulo, 2008, p. 116). According to Tomasulo (2008), the benefits of establishing written criteria that are specific to work activities in film and digital media went beyond compliance with accreditation or other administrative concerns, and the use of quantitative data was found to be useful for students as they were given formative and summative feedback from the evaluation; plus quantitative data helped the department to identify, through low ratings, any deficient areas in need of improvement (or conversely, efficient areas through high ratings) within the departmental program such as teaching, facilities and others (Tomasulo, 2008).

On the negative side, Tomasulo (2008) acknowledges the risk of subjectivity in measuring works in film, and his ambivalence for "one size fits all measurements" such as the one adopted by his department (Tomasulo, 2008, p. 115). Aside from the obvious concern about

subjectivity as teacher-faculty evaluate and make a determination about grades based upon Tomosulo's (2008) template, I am concerned that Tomasulo's (2008) template for measuring student films seems to be solely applicable to narrative, dramatic filmmaking, with a possible lack of relevance to alternative approaches that faculty filmmakers might employ in documentary, ethnographic, artistic-experimental, industrial and other stylistic genres of creative scholarship and professional work.

For the sake of comparison, Richardson (2000, pp. 15-16) describes five factors that include analysis of both evaluative and constructive validity techniques that can be used when reviewing personal narrative papers, with relevance to the recognition and evaluation of faculty work in film and digital media. The five criteria are:

- Substantive contribution. Does the piece contribute to our understanding of social life?

- Authentic merit. Does the piece succeed aesthetically? Is the text artistically shaped, satisfyingly complex, and not boring?

- Reflexivity. How did the author come to write this text? How has the author's subjectivity been both a producer and a productive of this text?

- Impactfulness. Does this piece affect me emotionally and/or intellectually? Does it generate new questions or move me to action?

- Expresses a reality. Does this text embody a fleshed out sense of live experience?

Richardson's (2002) criteria provide constructive guidance to evaluators and feedback to the faculty scholar, and are a contextual starting point for building an evaluative framework to be used for performance evaluation of artistic, scholarly and professional work by faculty in film and digital media.

In the context of ethnographic writing, but relevant to the artistic, scholarly and professional work by faculty in the field of film and digital media, Van Maanen (1988, p xi) lists four central elements that can be used to form an initial framework for describing and recognizing (and evaluating) whether or not a personalized approach in scholarly inquiry can be considered as a form of scholarly work:

- Is there an assumed relationship between culture and behavior (the observed)?

- Is there a reflection of experiences by the fieldworker (the observer)?

- Is there a representational style of writing that joins the observer and the observed (the tale)?

- Is the role of the reader engaged in the active reconstruction of the tale (the audience)?

Van Maanen (1988) argues that conventional demands and standards for the reliability and validity of conventional ethnographies are overrated, unreliable, and misleading---and the same argument can be made in reference to work in the field of film and digital media. Although Van Maanen (1988) argues for the importance of theoretical and domain specialization of the sort that presupposes historical knowledge, linguistic competence, and deep personal experience, he also argues that significant priority should be focused upon jargon-free readability, authenticity, verisimilitude, and a very high level of cultural expertise and sophistication. The same argument can be made in reference to work in the field of film and digital media. Van Maanen (1988) justifies his argument(s) about readability, accessibility and the rest by writing: "since those who read ethnography for pleasure and general knowledge are as able to judge whether they (the combined goals of readability and specialized knowledge) are achieved as those who read for professional development" (p. 33). The same observation can apply in the field of film and

digital media because audience members who view, appreciate and perhaps evaluate a work in

film or digital media may or may not be professional practitioners.

Bukalski (2000) introduces the problems of evaluating creative activity by faculty in film

and digital media, but there are no theoretical connections that are established with Boyer (1990),

nor with other theoretical arguments for institutional change. As described in Chapter 4, there is

a large majority of faculty in the field of film and digital media that are not familiarized with the

theoretical groundwork of Boyer (1990) and others (Rice, 1988), and this dissertation is an

attempt to integrate their theoretical perspectives with the practical work of Bukalski (1990).

Bukalski (1990) does provide a very useful framework for systematically understanding how a

film is developed, produced and disseminated, and this approach has greatly influenced my in

depth analysis in search of a theoretical solution to the problem posed in Chapter 4 and in the

recommendations of Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

2) Personal leadership

Although the work of making a film or digital media project is collaborative, the notion

of personal leadership is fundamental to filmmaking. In creative scholarship and professional

work by filmmakers, as in action research, the work is collaborative, though it is important to

realize that the action research of a group is achieved through the critically examined action of

the individual group members (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1982). Filmmakers work in teams or

crews, under the direction of a client, producer, or other sole person with creative, technical or

financial powers or control; but the final responsibility for the realization of any detail of work

throughout the process rests with the individual who is doing a particular task. Borrowing from

theoretical literature about leadership, and applying it to the experience of being a filmmaker, Gemmill and Oakley (2001) write:

> While leadership is viewed as a having a positive connotation, we suggest that contrariwise it is a serious sign of social pathology, that it is a special case of an iatrogenic (as in a disease that is induced by the treatment) social myth that induces massive learned helplessness among members of a social system. As social despair and helplessness deepen, the search and wish for a messiah (leader) or magical rescue (leadership) also begins to accelerate. We argue that the current popular writings and theories of leadership clearly reflect this social trend" (Gemmill and Oakley, 2001, p. 273).

Gemmill and Oakley (2001) remind me that the process of filmmaking is a lonesome highway where the buck stops with me (the filmmaker), and of the palpable connection between practice, pain and learning; a distinct practical and theoretical relationship between personal responsibility, personal leadership and self-empowerment. Gemmill and Oakley (2001) continue:

> When pain is coupled with an inordinate, widespread, and pervasive sense of helplessness, social myths about the need emerges for great leaders and magical leadership, from the primarily unconscious collective feeling that it would take a miracle or messiah to alleviate or ameliorate this painful form of existence (Gemmill and Oakley, 2001, p. 273).

Chapter 4 provides a detailed discussion about the process of work in the field of film and digital media, demonstrating that the collaborative nature of the filmmaking practice is actually reliant upon a creative, technical, business and legal meeting of minds by self-reliant individuals.

Chapter 5 proposes a theoretical model for recognizing and evaluating the scope and nature of work by faculty in the field of film and digital media, considering the approach, unique values and processes, and the results of the work.

3) Creativity and faculty work in film and digital media

As discussed in Chapter 1, creativity is an important thematic aspect that underpins a discussion of alternatives to the traditional and conventional paradigm of expectations about faculty work, and in characterizing faculty work in the field of film and digital media. An overview of the relevant literature and program activity pertaining to creativity consists, at least in the English-language, of at least the following sources:

- There are two major journals devoted exclusively to creativity research and theory (Creativity Research Journal and Journal of Creative Behavior).

- There are many other psychological and educational journals that provide reports about creativity research as a major component of each issue (e.g. Empirical Studies of the Arts; Imagination, Cognition, and Personality; Metaphor and Symbolic Activity; Gifted Child Quarterly; Roeper Review).

- Many journals not primarily devoted to creativity research frequently include reports of creativity research (e.g. Review of General Psychology; American Psychologist; Journal of Personality and Social Psychology).

- There is a division of the American Psychological Association devoted to creativity (Division 10, Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity and the Arts) that also publishes a journal that features creativity research, the Bulletin of Psychology and the Arts.

- There are scores upon scores of books about creativity, including theoretical research about creativity (Csikzmentmihalyi, 1975; 1990; 1997), that are published in English each year, and in many other languages, from a multitude of perspectives---business, leadership, arts and design, personal development, psychology, education in the classroom, and many more.

- Creativity research is a major topic at many psychology and education conferences every year, and in professional development contexts for businesspersons, organizational leaders and other contexts.

An analysis of what is creativity and what is creative research, in contrast to conventional research and expectations, is another important aspect of this dissertation. There are many nuances and personal differences in the varied definitions and descriptions of creativity. Generally, there are two concepts that frame our common understanding about creativity (Sawyer, 2006), including:

- *Originality,* something (an idea or thing) that has not been done before. The creative idea or thing should not be an obvious extension of something that already exists.
- *Functionality,* something (an idea or thing) that "has to work, or be adaptive or be functional in some way or for some purpose…it has to meet some general criteria of usefulness" (http://www.apa.org/monitor/nov03/creativity.html).

A range of literature about creativity emphasizes the importance of unique insight, relating or combining seemingly remote, contradictory or irrational ideas in recognizable and useful ways. The creative idea and its outcome must be different but also have value and be useful (Gorkin, 1985). In the USA, the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD, 1997) has articulated its philosophy concerning art and design as a profession, indicating an integrative definition where utility and purpose, learning, practice and theory converge with individual giftedness: "Talent without skills, inspiration without knowledge, and creativity without technique can account for little but lost potential" (NASAD, 2010, p. 1).   The

emphasis upon skills is a significant distinction that characterizes creative research in film, digital media production (and other forms of artistic practice too) in comparison with conventional scholarly research output that appears in text form.

Creativity is also commonly described as more than an incidental activity that is done on occasion (Sawyer, 2006). To create is a way of thinking, a mental, emotional and behavioral process that is a fundamental drive, forming shape and building to fruition in the heart and mind of the creative person (Durant, 1961). Some theorists have indicated that artistic expression is minimally or rarely creative at all because most artists are consistently working within a certain stylistic allegiances (Elkins, 2001), and for something to be literally considered creative it should not be imitative or replicating of what has been done before (de Bono, 1990). On the other hand, all one has to do is observe a painter while at work, doing each individual brush stroke in a specific and unique manner toward some end known only to the artist; or a composer selecting a sequence or cluster of notes to achieve a certain melody or harmony; an actor using Stanislavski's (1936/1988; 1938/2008; 1961; 1963) teachings for sense memory in the moment of character portrayal; or a skilled cinematographer or director that frames the camera to create a shot from imagination, and one knows that something special is happening, and that special something is usually called creativity. Art and creativity have long been held as synonymous in common parlance because both are primarily concerned with the invention of something that is new and different, and each brush stroke, each musical note or chord, each contour of line has a uniqueness unto its own.

Art has been considered as an alternative avenue of knowing and learning, an integral part of natural philosophy and necessary context for receiving, remembering, and valuing everyday living. Creative writing, fiction or non-fiction, would not be recognized as scholarship

either, at least not according to this extreme position.   Generating creativity and the impulse to

make art of any kind starts as a way of thinking, a mental, emotional and behavioral process that

emerges from a fundamental drive, perhaps primordial in origin, leading to action that forms,

shapes and builds, bringing the creative and the artistic to fruition from the heart and mind of the

creative person to the empirical domain. Durant (1961) writes:

> Everything in the world is moved by an inner urge to become something greater than it is.
>
> From the perspective of Aristotelian objectivity, every thing has a form and that form has
>
> grown out from raw material called 'matter.' In time, the form that emerged from matter
>
> may in turn become the matter out of which still higher forms will grow (p. 80).

The transformation of matter to form is a constant process of actuality over potential. As matter

can be formed and shaped into a work of art, so can filmmaking and the art of filmmaking be

viewed as an expression of understanding. Art, in its broadest context, could signify all norms of

creative expression, including film/video making, plus many other forms such as writing,

painting, sculpture, musicianship, dance and movement, photography, calligraphy, and more, to

name just a few well-recognized areas.

Fritz (1994) observed that the most important developments in civilization have come

through the creative process, but ironically, most people have not been taught to be creative.

While I must agree that the creative process has certainly been the catalyst in human

development throughout history, is the reason that most people have not been taught to be

creative the result of its impossibility---that it is impossible to teach or evaluate creativity? Is

creativity the mysterious, unattainable gift of genius that has been held throughout time, or can it

be reduced to teachable skills? Is creativity's absence, as argued by Fritz (1994), the result of

insufficient understanding about what is creativity, as a skill that can be learned, a skill and

knowledge-area that has been wrongly and generally neglected and underestimated in schools? Perhaps, can the ambiguity, difficulty or impossibility of *teaching* art (Elkins, 2001) explain the absence of fair and reasonable criterion for *evaluating* art, specifically the artistic, scholarly and professional work of faculty in the field of film and digital media?

From the theoretical perspectives of quantum physics and chaos theory, supported by nature itself, it is postulated that randomness and unpredictability are inherent, and that change is perpetual, constant, inevitable and infinite (Capra, 1996; Wheatley, 1992). In nature, it is not clear that change for the sake of change constitutes creativity or a creative action because there is no end point or finality, thus no clear function or reference for determining *originality* (Kaplan, 1966). Nature is adaptive and change seems to come about through fortuitous happenings and processes; so it is not clear that change in nature is creative at all, unless I assume a teleological perspective and consider our world to be the creative handiwork of a Creator. For example, water in the liquid state is not the same as water in the frozen state or the gaseous state. There is a logical explanation, the temperature changes so the water transforms to ice, but is this a creative response? At some point, the water experienced a transition, a change, and an observable difference. Change in the context of such difference is the contrary of equality or sameness, particularly with objects. Such differences "can only be stated on the basis of a comparison or categorization, and since a complete comparison of objects or things is seldom possible in practice, only relevant or defining attributes are used for stating equality or difference" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Difference). In this case, the comparables are the landmarks of water, ice and gas. Similar or different objects are only similar or different "with respect to attributes of discriminative value" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Difference).

Human creativity and the process of creative expression in any medium, including film or

digital media, is presumed to emerge from intentionality. It is considered to be a conscious, strategic action. Human creativity is different from the rest of the natural world's creativity, although human creativity arguably shares many dynamics with natural creativity in the context of change (De Bono, 1990; 1992). Inherent lack of understanding about the question of what is creativity, and what is the relationship of creativity to conventional and alternative understanding of scholarship and professional work in film and digital media, are inherently important areas in inquiry in my dissertation as I try to establish the relevance of creativity in the context of the traditional template---but it is a continuous process of reflection and possibly an unanswerable and limitless question.

4) The non-teachable nature of creativity and art

A connection between what can be taught and what can be evaluated has been established by Elkins (2001). Elkins (2001) argues the possibility that art cannot be taught and therefore are potentially not possible for evaluation. Rand (1990) supports the non-teachable nature of fine arts by stating: "…I am inclined to say that fiction writing---and the fine arts in general---cannot be taught. Much of the technical skill involved can be, but not the essence" (p. 2;). Elkins (2001) wrote: "There have long been doubts about whether art can be taught, going back at least to Plato's concept of inspiration, mania and Aristotle's concepts of genius and poetic rapture" (p. 95).

In Greek philosophy, a distinction was made between subjects that could be taught and subjects that could not (Elkins, 2001). Whatever could be taught had a theory, or a body of information, a set of methods, or something that could be written down and handed on to students. Such subjects were called "techne", and for the Greeks they included arts, crafts, and sciences. Other subjects could not be taught. Instead they had to be absorbed, or learned by example (Elkins, 2001 p. 105). Aristotle called them emperia: "…what we think of as art (today) is more like emperia, it does not depend on rules so much as on nonverbal learning, things that can not be put into words" (Elkins, 2001, p. 105). Elkins (2001) further identifies the Romantic art schools as claiming that art is not teachable because individual inspiration is central in art. From Elkins' (2001) point of view, before it can be said that art can be taught, one important shift is for a rethink of the role of technique is in fine arts, because it is impossible to separate art from technique---despite the common assumption that technique is ultimately separate from art. Elkins (2001) also argues that the teaching of art, at least in the classical sense is not teachable because:

we do not know how we teach art, and so we cannot claim to teach it or to know what teaching it might be like…Art schools would be very different places if teachers and students did not continue to hold onto the idea that there is such a thing as teaching art, even when they don't believe in it securely, or analyze it directly. That puts art departments and our art schools in a self-contradictory position (Elkins, 2001, p. 91-92).

Elkins (2001, p. 107-110) provides some "individual claims" that clarify his views that art is not teachable:

- The idea of teaching art is irreparably irrational. We do not teach because we do not know when or how we teach.

- The project of teaching art is confused because we behave as if we were doing something more than teaching technique.

- It does not make sense to propose fundamental changes in the ways art is taught (because you can't fix something irrational by trying to rationalize it).

- Art can be taught, but it seems as if it can't be since so few students become outstanding artists

- Art cannot be taught, but it can be fostered or helped along

- Art cannot be taught or even nourished, but is possible to teach right up to the beginnings of art, so that students are ready to make art the moment they graduate

- Great art cannot be taught, but run of the mill art can

- Art cannot be taught, but neither can anything else

Elkins (2001) openly acknowledges the high degree of skepticism and pessimism in his analysis, but does not waiver in his conclusion that it is pointless and futile to believe that we can teach art in our modern world. The same question(s) can be raised about filmmaking, namely, for example, what is filmmaking and what are the best ways to teach and empower learning, creativity and competence in filmmaking? With support from Plato, Aristotle, Rand, Elkins, and many more, it is arguable that filmmaking, like art in general, is not teachable because most teachers have no clear idea, beyond technical skills building and demonstrated memorization of facts and steps in processes, how filmmaking is best taught.