Chapter 7
The Artistic Environment

7.1. Context for this discussion

One of the research questions of this thesis was to inquire into the family and immediate social circumstances that help create the artist. There is considerable research to show that environment matters in creativity. Each and every one of the researchers who spoke of the creative personality gave equal emphasis to the environment in which such creativity thrives. Guilford (1958) addresses the issue of developing creativity by saying that the role of teachers and others in reinforcing conventionality and punishing unconventionality is important. If there is too much over respect for the sacredness of methods, if our attitude towards knowledge is incorrect, creativity is hampered. Is not the fault of the knowledge acquisition per se. Knowledge he says, is very much required for creativity to happen, but if it leads to rigidity, then it can be detrimental to creativity. Torrance’s work has focused more on the traits and other characteristics of creative individuals, but in his article on individual differences, he describes an earlier study by Torrance and Dauw (1965, 1966) where the high Originals reported more frequently than other groups special problems involving parental disagreement and estrangement, while the high Elaborators and those high on both Originality and Elaboration were more concerned about meeting the high expectations of their environment. In general, he said, the environment of high Originals does not seem to have very high expectations of them, tending instead to disparage them and hold them back from achieving what they feel confident they can attain.

Eysenck (1993) says quite categorically that Newton, Hokusai, Einstein, Confucius, Shakespeare and Wagner are unlikely to have made their creative contributions if they had been living in a Hottentot kraal, an Eskimo igloo or an Apache wigwam. Lack of education, political stability, culture and finance, he says, might not kill creativity altogether, but it will certainly make its appearance difficult. Gardner (1993) conceives a triangular dynamic relationship between the individual within himself/ herself (Relation between the Child and the Adult Creator), between the individual and his/ her work (Relation between the Creator and His or Her Work) and between the individual and society (Relation between the Creator and Others). Reddy and Rao (2003) in a study on junior college students (i.e. 12th standard) found evidence for greater creativity among girls compared to boys, among urban compared to rural students and among science compared to arts students. These relationships they say may be moderated by socio-economic status, opportunities in rural India and intelligence respectively.
Sternberg (2006) says that for creativity to thrive, the environment should be supportive, but this is frequently not so. The obstacles could be minor such as mild negative feedback on an idea or major such as threats to life for having produced institution-challenging ideas. Challenges in the environment are omnipresent, and part of this is determined by who is doing the evaluating of the creative output. He further says that one can teach students to think more creatively. In an experiment at Yale Summer School, Sternberg and his colleagues assigned five categories of students (High Analytical, High Creative, High Practical, High Balanced on all three, Low Balanced on all three) to four different discussion sections in a psychology course. The discussion sections either emphasized memory, analytical, practical or creative instruction. Firstly, they found that students who were High Creative and High Practical were much more heterogeneous in terms of racial, ethnic, socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Secondly, they found that all three ability tests – Analytical, Practical and Creative – significantly predicted overall course performance. Thirdly, they found that when instructional conditions matched the student’s own way of thinking, performance was much better. In another similar study, the found that students who were taught using a combination of analytical, practical and creative thinking outperformed those taught only with analytical or only with memory instruction.

A closer look at all these studies reveals widely differing definitions for the term ‘environment’. Some are talking about the immediate family, while others are talking about instructional methodology in school. Still others speak of the socio-political climate. In this research, we look at environment as the immediate family and social environment. The larger canvas is roughly held constant since the artists interviewed are contemporaries, and the artists biographed belong to the same historical time period. The idea of inquiring into the impact of environment, especially immediate family environment was with me right from the start of the research. Accordingly, I was looking out to meet artists who came from backgrounds where their parents or significant others were artists; as well as artists who came from non-artistic backgrounds. Presumably, the experience of growing up in an environment full of art would be different from environments where other achievements were valued more. The preliminary field data on college students also indicated that there might be some parental influence to what hobbies children took up and I wanted to find out whether having artistic parents impacts in any way, the trajectory of the artistic individual. Early in the inquiry, however, I found that there were not two, but three different categories of family backgrounds present in the data. The discovery of three different background categories is an output of this research and has been discussed in detail in the Research Methodology chapter. Here, I will recapitulate the highlights relevant to the discussion on Artistic Environment.

The three family backgrounds are not really entirely separate categories, but form more of a continuum. The categorization has been drawn from the data for conceptual clarity. The data itself
is of course, far more continuous. That said, the three categories that emerged were Artistic Heritage, Arts Sensitive and Non-artistic. The definitions arrived at for the three are given below:

Artistic Heritage: A family background where one or both parents are deeply into an art form, an early social environment where the arts are viewed as integral to life, even as a career option, a family setting where the individual can observe and participate in the artistic process on a daily basis. A good part of the individual’s artistic learning happens within the family group where there is a rich artistic heritage.

Arts Sensitive: A family background where both or more often one parent is inclined towards the arts, where one or both parents have received training in some art but not pursued OR where they have not received training and are hobbyists, an early social environment where the arts are viewed positively but not as the mainstay of existence. While practice of the art is encouraged at home and they may even receive feedback from family members, considerable learning happens in “classes” that the individuals attend outside the home.

Non-artistic: The kind of words that research participants used to describe this type of background was “nothing to do with the arts”, “very different (from me)”, “they are all lawyers and accountants type..”, etc. Hence the term non-artistic was used to describe this kind of background in a single term. It refers to a family background where neither parent nor any significant other is involved with the arts. Acquaintance with the artistic process is limited to occasional observation. There is a lot of experimentation in the learning process of these individuals, and there is very little direct contribution that the immediate family makes towards their artistic careers. Most of their learning happens outside the home.

In this chapter, the impact of this family background on the artist’s choices and development is analyzed. To organize the themes that came up with reference to Artistic Environment, I refer to Csikszentmihalyi’s (1996) concept of access to a Domain and access to a Field. In formulating an answer to the question, ‘Where is creativity?’ Csikszentmihalyi says that there are three components to Creativity with a capital C. First is the Domain – a system with its own symbols and rules such as mathematics or music. The second component is the Field which includes all the individuals who act as gatekeepers to a domain. It is this Field that decides what new works of art get to be exhibited, recognized and remembered. The third component of Creativity is the Person. We have dealt with the Person at length in an earlier chapter. In this chapter we discuss the access that each of the interviewees and biographed artists had to a Domain and to a Field. The role of the family and immediate social environment is examined in this context, for each of the groups – Artistic Heritage, Arts Sensitive and Non-Artistic backgrounds.
7.2. Access to Domain

All the artists I interviewed were well into their artistic lives, except perhaps Siddharth who was the youngest of the artists and whose choice point was the most recent. They had had opportunity to train and become quite accomplished in their respective domains. But the manner in which the access to domain took place for the artists was quite different depending on their backgrounds. For access to domain, I have considered the primary domain for each artist, the one by which that person is known as an artist, as for several artists, there is more than one domain of investment. Table 7.1 highlights the observed pattern.

Table 7.1: Relationship between age at start of training and family background for research participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain exposure</th>
<th>Artistic Heritage</th>
<th>Arts Sensitive</th>
<th>Non-Artistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Started before 10 years of age</td>
<td>Divya, Venkat, Pavan, Soumita, Soumya</td>
<td>Shiva, Geeta, Gayatri</td>
<td>Anjan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 10 years of age, during or after college</td>
<td>Avik, Dinesh</td>
<td>Rajeev, Anagha, Cyrus, Anurag, Neela</td>
<td>Anil, Amey, Amrita, Prema, Siddharth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The predominant difference that emerged between those with artistic backgrounds and those without is that exposure to their domains and in most instances formal training too, began very early. For those coming from a rich Artistic Heritage, by and large training began before they were ten years old, i.e. in primary school. Divya started performing when she was three and a half. Same goes for Soumita, whose official Kathak training began at six years of age, although she had already debuted at four. Both Soumya and Pavan have performed as child artists and Venkat cannot think of a time in childhood when he did not learn music. He said, ‘We had a lot of musicians home always – there was no “going to music class” as a separate activity; music was always happening at home.’ Although Dinesh did not begin his formal foray into photography until much later, what he had to say about his growing up years is quite indicative. He said, ‘On Sundays, there would be darbar (assembly) in my house with father’s students coming to share their work – that’s how I learnt how to read art…I did not pursue fine arts professionally because my hand was not good, but the visual medium was deep rooted in my heart.’ His father being a head of department at the JJ School of Art, Dinesh had a lot of opportunity as a child to explore the visual medium. He spoke of how they would keep discussing art, creating art works, at home. This aesthetic slant is evident in his photography, his work being known particularly for the ‘fine art’ touch in the composition of the pictures. Avik too did not begin training in film until after graduation. But perhaps that is the nature of the domain. He did not report training formally in any other domain either, but he made a pretty powerful statement about his home environment – ‘Art was very important in the house, more than formal education.’ He also said, ‘I did not go to school till I was nine years old, so I saw a lot, met a lot of interesting people and had exposure to
all sorts of things.’ The groundwork, so to speak, of their becoming artists was laid at a very young age.

Of those coming from an Arts Sensitive background, three artists started their training quite young. Shiva described how he used to ‘play all the dabbas (boxes) in my house when I was small…’ At the time that he started training, his small hands could barely make it across the mridangam that he was training to play. Gayatri started training in dance at the age of six and although Geeta started playing the flute in her teens, her exposure to Carnatic music started during her childhood. For the rest of those coming from a similar background, the training really started during their teens (Cyrus being the earliest at twelve years old). Among the Non-Artistic backgrounds group, Anjan was the only one who started playing around with his chosen medium when he was eight years old, but he is by and large self-taught, never having attended any course in photography. Anil started training in dance during secondary school, Amey started getting into painting around seventh standard, Amrita and Prema did not do any structured work in their domain until they joined college and Siddharth is an entirely self-taught musician who has not done any structured training at all. The data therefore clearly indicates earlier and perhaps deeper access to domain for those coming from an Artistic Heritage. It is also a curious point that the two individuals in the group who are self-taught both come from Non-Artistic backgrounds.

The pattern for the biographed artists is even starker. In the Artistic Heritage group, all four started working in their domains very young. Kelucharan Mohapatra started training in Gotipua dance when he was five years old or so, Kamala Das started writing poems even as a young girl in primary school, Raj Kapoor featured as a child artist in a few films and plays and M.S. Subbulakshmi gave her first professional concert at ten years of age, her training having commenced many years before that. Among those coming from an Arts Sensitive background, only R.K. Laxman seems to have been experimenting a lot with his chosen medium at a very young age. He says that he cannot remember a time when he did not draw. As a child he was always drawing things on the floor, on the walls and any surface he could find. Bhimsen Joshi was reportedly fascinated by music as a child, R.K. Narayan loved to read and Uday Shankar would secretly go to watch the nautch girls perform and was impacted by the performance of Mata Din, a Chamar (low caste) who performed outside the village. However, all three began their training only after ten years of age. Bhimsen Joshi ran away from home at eleven years of age to obtain taleem (musical instruction), R.K. Narayan began writing in his lost school year when he was around fifteen and Uday Shankar really started working on dance only when he left painting to join Anna Pavlova. Of the four, R.K. Laxman, R.K. Narayan and Uday Shankar are all self-taught. The four artists coming from a Non-Artistic background all began their formal training and work only after they were done with school (MF Hussain studied up to ninth standard), although MF Hussain and Zohra Segal had been experimenting with their respective
media during their school years. Table 7.2 shows the relationship between family background and access to domain for the biographed artists.

**Table 7.2: Relationship between age at start of training and family background for biographed artists**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain exposure/training</th>
<th>Artistic Heritage</th>
<th>Arts Sensitive</th>
<th>Non-Artistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Started before 10 years of age</td>
<td>Kelucharan Mohapatra, Kamala Das, Raj Kapoor, MS Subbulakshmi</td>
<td>RK Laxman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 10 years of age, during or after college</td>
<td>RK Narayan, Bhimsen Joshi, Uday Shankar</td>
<td>Mrinalini Sarabhai, Guru Dutt, MF Hussain, Zohra Segal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I cannot but believe that this difference in the age of starting training makes some impact on the artist. But as yet, it is a little difficult to ascertain what this impact is. Some artists begin their journey earlier and others later. It is not that those who started later are any less eminent or less skilled in their domains than those who started early. To hazard a guess based on the data, I would say that for some art forms such as literature/poetry, film and maybe even photography, probably the age at which one starts does not matter. It is not that technique is unimportant in these domains; perhaps just less important than worldview and the story that one wants to tell which one can develop with age. But for art forms such as dance, music and theatre, technique is critical. The early start gives artists in these domains a good deal of confidence in their technique. Secondly, the struggle to master technique has been done with long before they enter adult life and they can concentrate on other aspects of their art such as marketing their work or finding new fields to showcase their efforts. Critics are also easier on young students who make mistakes compared to adult entrants into an artistic field. Painting and sculpture I think, fall in the former category with poetry, film and photography, although some forms of painting and sculpture that involve creating more realistic likeness for instance, might be better started early.

It has to do with the level of structure in a domain. Classical dance or music is highly structured, whereas, film is not. A highly structured domain has several complicated rules, boundaries, and limitations, and the sooner the artist gets exposed, the easier it is to learn the rules. In a less structured domain, the artist is free to even create his/her own rules. This creation of rules may or may not move an entire domain forward, but it certainly gives the artist a niche within which to practice his/her art, often with great success. Among the research participants I interviewed, Anil is the only one who started relatively later and who works in a strictly structured domain, i.e. Bharatanatyam dance. So it is difficult to examine the interview data from that point of view. Also, the research participants are all mid-career, so it is difficult to estimate whether they will or will not make major artistic contributions during the course of their lives.
But consider the data on the biographed artists. I contrast Kelucharan Mohapatra with Uday Shankar and Mrinalini Sarabhai. All three operated in the broad area of dance. Kelucharan Mohapatra’s name is today synonymous with Odissi. His prolific composing and life-long commitment to teaching put him at the forefront of the Odissi revival movement so that a lot of the credit for the current aesthetic of Odissi is attributed to him. There were of course several other dancers, teachers, and scholars who worked just as hard, but his style remains the most popular and pretty much dominates the Odissi landscape across the globe. He was able to do this because of his strong training in the dance traditions of Orissa which began at a very young age.

Uday Shankar evolved his own style which is now continued primarily through his daughter Mamta Shankar. But he was not trained in any style of dance and the niche that he created for himself was in presenting what he called the ‘Hindu dance’ to the Western world. It was an eclectic style, a precursor to what is today called contemporary dance. It is less structured and relies more on fluid movement and a lot of stagecraft than any one style of dance. In this niche that he made for himself, he was a phenomenon, but the best of what he had to offer ended with his death. Mrinalini Sarabhai is said to be one of the first to use Bharatanatyam to address social issues such as dowry. It is no doubt a creative twist to a traditional art form and it probably helped bring awareness among audiences about various social problems. But it has not moved the domain itself.

If we apply the same analysis to the two musicians, there also we see a difference. MS had several early triumphs that marked her mastery over the domain of Carnatic music, but Bhimsen Joshi’s ascendance was a lot more arduous and he sustained a lot of criticism for his departure from the Kirana gharana, which was officially his style of music. In the film world, Guru Dutt never saw as much success as Raj Kapoor during his lifetime. His films came to considered classics much later. Can Kelubabu’s substantial contribution to the domain be traced to his early training? Can MS’s purity of musical expression be traced to her early experiments with the tambura at home? Can RK’s understanding of how to emote be traced to a childhood steeped in theatre and film?

The links are complicated and the answer may not be so direct or satisfactory. This could be because the sample is a select one, where individuals have been chosen for having made a certain level of creative contribution in their respective artistic disciplines. Perhaps there are several other factors involved. Keeping in mind the limitations of the sample and based on the data, I would like to propose a certain arrangement of the relationships between some of these factors. Illustration 7.1 attempts to visually depict these complex relationships. To phrase it hypothetically:
In a highly structured domain, it is easier to make domain changing contributions if the access to domain takes place at a young age, i.e. the earlier the start within a structured domain, the greater the chances of creative achievement in that domain. In an unstructured domain this factor may not be important to predicting success. Those coming from an Artistic Heritage are more likely to start training in their domains at a young age (below ten years) and are therefore at an advantage, more so in a structured domain.

Illustration 7.1: Showing the concept of family background and Access to Domain; its impact on Artistic Achievement

Clear definition of these terms, with measurable criteria and a lot more data will be needed to verify this set of relationships, perhaps in a separate study. Further, artistic contribution could take many forms. Within the domain of dance and music, it could be in composition or performance. In theatre, it could be acting, directing, scripting, and so on. Film-making too has several creative roles including production. Creative achievement in an artistic discipline is impacted by several others factors too. Most important of which is access to a field in which to display the talent and get recognition. This factor of Access to Field is also discussed with reference to the family background of the artist.
7.3. Access to the Field

This is where one would presume that Artistic Heritage really helps, and the presumption seems to be borne out by the data. Among the research participants, those coming from Non-Artistic backgrounds have reported more struggle to find their footing compared to those coming from families with a lot of art in them. In Amey’s words, ‘I felt that there is no one in the family who has done this… each and every experience was new and every decision was on my own. If there had been somebody to guide me, it was easier… to tell me how to organize, do some promotional activities, what themes to do… but through websites and galleries it is better now. We know how to work, how to put the art in front of people…’ For Anil, working with prominent theatre personality Chetan Datar was instrumental in opening him up to possibilities on stage. He said, ‘In 1998 I started working with Chetan Datar and got introduced to good art. I loved going on stage, it really brought me out. I had some good reviews in dance, but with theatre, gates opened for me…that time I did not do much dance, but with theatre, poetry and literature came back into my life’. Prema spoke of how understanding the requirement of the field has been a learning process for her. She mentioned an order that she had got for some terracotta lamps. This was during Diwali and the client wanted to gift these lamps. The client wanted the lamps created in a particular shape and it took a while for her to figure out how it could be done. In the meanwhile, however, she lost the order. Prema says that through instances like these she has learnt to balance her creativity with marketability.

Amrita and her husband started their own theatre company so that their entry into the field would be easier. She said, ‘Because it was our own company, we got good parts to play. It was a dream coming true.’ Managing the financial side of the theatre company was also a challenge that they learnt to address over time. Anjan did different things and spent some time looking for work in his preferred domain until he got his job with Indian Express in 1991. He recalls how he used to work till the early hours of the morning developing pictures. There were no mobile phones in those days and if there was some important news, whoever was around would be sent to cover it. Because of the hours that he put in, he was often ‘around’ and he got to photograph a lot of exclusives apart from the general work that he did. Since Anjan has been in employment, the reality of his access to field is different from the other non-artists. Access was there once he got into Indian Express, and later in 2001 into Reuters. But the effort of ensuring continued access in a competitive environment was his. Siddharth had a difficult time after he quit his job finding a footing as a musician. He was living off his savings and finding it difficult to get work because most of his contemporaries had entered the field earlier and were already on their way to getting established. Slowly he started getting ‘gigs’ as he put it and now he is able to compose and perform his own music for which he says he has a good audience.
In contrast to these individuals, Divya, Pavan, Soumya, Venkat and Soumita all got access to field at a very early age under the protective wing of a parent/parents. It is not that they did not put in their own effort. Hard work is a given in the arts whether one comes from an artistic background or not. But it is unlikely that children coming from non-artistic backgrounds would have had the opportunities that these artists did. For Divya and Soumita, their debut took place even before formal training in the domain began. Venkat’s struggle in the field began when he stepped out to create film music, which was different than what his mother and siblings were involved with. Dinesh too had to struggle initially because he got into photography and that was not his father’s mainstay. Although Shiva, Geeta, and Cyrus did not have practicing artists in their families, they still had the benefit of parents and relatives who were sensitive to the arts. And their initial field was restricted to their own cultural sphere. For example, Geeta and Shiva are both Carnatic musicians and their practice also is largely among the Tamil speaking population. Cyrus’s first client was also a family friend, a Parsi, and architect. They got reinforcement from their own communities that valued their artistic output. For Gayatri, access to the field was initially through her teacher, and on moving to Mumbai, she started teaching dance in a school, which led to her cultivating a lot of students. Anagha, Rajeev, Anurag and Neela all have family members who have been supportive and even inspirational. However, the path that they have struck out on has been largely their own. Rajeev had the most difficult time getting access to the field, and his fortunes took an upswing when the global brand Getty Images agreed to represent him. Anurag and Neela are still in the early stage of their careers. Anagha has won lot of acclaim in literary and academic circles, probably through sheer effort.

Among the biographed artists too, there was a difference in the way Access to Field took place for those coming from an Artistic Heritage. This was a given for Kamala Das, Raj Kapoor and M.S. Subbulakshmi, whose significant others were in a position to promote their work and did so. For Kelucharan Mohapatra, the path was a lot more difficult probably because he got into dance instead of painting like his patachitrakar father and forefathers. But his father did take him and leave him with Mohan Sunder Goswami under whose guidance young Kelu gave his first performances. Mrinalini Sarabhai did not have artists in the family, but it was easy to access a field through her politically active mother. Her first stage performance was arranged by Harindranath Chattopadhyay who was a part of her mother’s social circle. Through marriage to Vikram Sarabhai, money worries, such as the ones that plagued other artists of her time were eliminated. She was free to create, to build the exemplary theatre Natarani.

But for the other artists coming from a non-artistic background access to the field was a very difficult process. Guru Dutt went through a period of unemployment and he started work as a dance choreographer and had to work his way up. MF Hussain started getting recognized only after he joined hands with the Progressive Artists Group and Zohra Segal worked as dance choreographer at Prithvi Theatres for quite a while, doing small roles before major ones came her
way. Guru Dutt’s job as dance choreographer at Prabhat Studios was secured on a recommendation from his mother via his maternal uncle B.B. Benegal and Zohra Segal’s job at Prithvi Theatres was possible due to her sister already working with the theatre group. For Bhimsen Joshi, the meeting with Govindrao Joshi who was a veteran recording executive with HMV and a musicologist, was serendipitous. The LPs on which he recorded the maestro’s voice became a huge commercial success making Bhimsen Joshi a household name. Similarly for Uday Shankar, the meeting with Anna Pavlova changed his life and gave him access to the world stage as a dancer. But Bhimsen Joshi had been performing for some time before the recordings were made and Uday Shankar had attracted Anna Pavlova’s attention by performing at an event arranged for by his father. R.K. Narayan had to go about it the hard way enduring much rejection and it was only by seeking help from Graham Greene that he was able to publish his first three books. It was slightly easier for R.K. Laxman who was already illustrating his brother’s stories much before his first job.

What is important for Access to Field is being embedded in a community, not necessarily an artistic community, but a community that values the artistic product. For those coming from an Artistic Heritage, Access to Field could happen either through professional/ work contacts of the parents or family or through the social community contacts. For those without the advantage of an Artistic Heritage, the struggle is more since the need to break into a new community. If their social contacts enable this, then the family background may matter little. But if not, the struggle to establish oneself can be considerable and even dependent on luck. This has little to do with the form of art practiced or the skill level of the artist. Artists entering a new community need mentors and sponsors from within the community without which their art will not get positioned well. If there are parents or other closely related well-wishers who can perform this role, it is that much easier for an artist to be accepted. These ideas have been visually represented in Illustration 7.2. Hypothetically:

*Access to field gatekeepers through family/ community contact is important to translate artistic commitment to achievement. Artists coming from an Artistic Heritage background have the advantage of these contacts extending to the field through a social network or alternately a professional one. For those who do not have either network supporting them, the struggle to find appreciation in the field can be very intense.*
Illustration 7.2: Access to Field for artists of different backgrounds

This sounds like common sense and indeed most artists know this through experience. But more systematic study of the field of art – the place where art finds its value could inform the policies laid down by governmental and private organizations for the promotion of art/ artists, it could impact the programming and funding of arts projects and even trickle its way down into arts education calling for mentoring programs for young artists, placement/ apprenticeship opportunities where such can be conceived of, and so on. Understanding the field through systematic research can be important to arts management on a macro level. What we learn within the limited objectives of this research is that family is important not just for the artistic heritage that they might be able to pass on, but also for the positioning of individual family members and friends as gatekeepers to the artistic field. Artistic achievement is of course a combination of many more things including luck.

7.4. Chapter Summary

In brief, almost all research that studied the creative personality also talked about the importance of environmental factors in creativity. The definition of environment varied from one study to another. In some cases, the researchers studied the school environment, in others the macro socio-political environment. But in this research, I focus on the immediate family and early social environment that the artist grew up in to understand whether it makes any impact on artistic development or not. From the interview data and the biographies, three categories of family backgrounds were identified – Artistic Heritage, where one or both parents are heavily involved in the arts at a professional level, Arts Sensitive, where the parent(s) is perhaps trained in some art, but does not practice professionally or is a hobbyist, and Non-artistic, where neither parent or any significant other is involved in the arts. To examine how artists from each of these backgrounds differ from one another in terms of their artistic achievement, I applied
Csikszentmihalyi’s concepts of Access to Domain and Access to Field. The data suggests that Artistic Heritage influences entry into the domain by starting training at a young age, often below ten years of age. I inferred that in a structured domain such as dance or music, this is especially advantageous and is more likely to lead to major artistic achievements than in cases where artists enter their domain later in life. Artistic Heritage also seems to matter immensely in garnering Access to Field. Those from such backgrounds tend to enter the field under the protection and guidance of their parents or mentors and do so at a young age. The entry is possible either through the family’s professional connections or community network. For those coming from Arts Sensitive or Non-Artistic backgrounds, Access to Field is more difficult. The data shows that these individuals reported more struggle to establish themselves and relied more on community network to gain entry into the field. Where individuals from Non-Artistic or Arts Sensitive backgrounds entered the field through professional contacts, the struggle that they shared in their stories was much more intense. The immediate family and social environment is therefore not just important for the talent that they pass on to the individual, but it also influences opportunities to train and develop as an artist as well as opportunities to find a field that values the artistic product of that individual. We have touched upon only in the factors in the artist’s immediate environment and the role that they play in his/ her success. This far, we have discussed the Artistic Mind, the Artistic Personality, the Artistic Choice process and the Artistic Environment. These are the different pieces of the puzzle and putting them together will help us get an idea of the Artistic Composite.