

OPENING DOORS CREATIVITY IN NURSING

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THE PRACTICE of nursing is a continual challenge to the imagination. Creative imagination plays a vital part in the development of all professions. It is the *sine qua non* of scientific and technological achievement.

Today, the word creativity is "part of a growing resistance to the tyranny of the formula, a new respect for individuality, a dawning recognition of the potentialities of the liberated mind".¹ There is need for freedom of thought and inquiry if this unpredictable, capricious, open, independent, zealous, synthesizing process of creativity is to flourish.

Creativity may be defined as the ability to bring a new or different perspective or approach to a situation, the ability to perceive a new way of organizing an existing situation, and the ability to see a new and deeper order or unity in the end product. Creativity defined in this manner receives considerable support in the current literature relating to creativity.

Some Background Literature.

Rogers defines the creative process as the "emergence in action of a novel relational product".² The individual is able to bring forth this product through the intermeshing of his own uniqueness with the materials, people, events and circumstances of his own life.

Bronowski,³ in writing the lead article for the September, 1958 issue of *Scientific American*, defines creativity as the product of a single mind which perceives a deep new unity in disorder. This unity results from the discovery of unexpected likenesses within the diverse. Scofield, similarly, sees creativity as the "idiosyncratic perception of intellectual relationships"⁴ between two or more stimuli which the individual has never before experienced.

Guilford,⁵ at the University of Southern California, was the first

to envision creativity as a continuum and a dimension of the personality that had many components. The following factors of creativity were extracted: synthesis, associational fluency, ideational fluency, originality, adaptive flexibility, spontaneous flexibility, redefinition and sensitivity to problems.

The work of Guilford and his associates served as the basis for most of the work that has attempted to utilize tests for the purposes of identifying the creative person, or the person possessing creative talent. Leaders who have pioneered research on creativity in the educational setting are Getzels and Jackson at the University of Chicago, and Torrance at the University of Minnesota.

Getzels and Jackson⁶ adapted some of the Guilford tasks of creative thinking for use with children. Studies have been conducted comparing intelligence levels and creativity levels of various groups, as well as differences in career aspirations of the highly intelligent individuals as compared to highly creative individuals. The authors found a low correlation between high intelligence and creative ability with the creative group selecting more unusual and numerous occupational choices than did the highly intelligent group.

Torrance, as Getzels and Jackson, began his work in the area of creativity in education by adapting some of the tasks devised by Guilford for use with children as well as with adults. However, Torrance developed complex tasks, which were models of the creative process as a whole. Individuals were then scored on various types of creative thinking factors involved.

Wallace⁷ used some tests from the Minnesota Tests of Creative Thinking to investigate the relationship of creative thinking to high sales productivity and to customer service. He found that salespeople employed in creative departments (e.g. ladies dresses) were found to have significantly higher mean scores of creative thinking than did salespeople working in non-creative departments (e.g. notions and candies).

Research on creative thinking and its relation to nursing has been limited. Dr. Ann M. Hart did her doctoral dissertation in 1962 "to determine in what manner creative thinking was related to nursing performance."⁸ Her findings indicated that the creative factors of spontaneous flexibility, originality and elaboration are significantly associated with nursing performance; that the verbal ability of nurses is not significantly associated with nursing performance; and that the quantity of ideas does not tend to contribute to a high level of nursing care practices.

It would seem that the nurse has a great opportunity to utilize

some aspects of creativity in patient care. The nurse, by meeting the needs of the individual patient through a meaningful nursing diagnosis, would be manifesting an ongoing aspect of creativity. The individualized nature of the nurse-patient relationship would also seem to provide further opportunity to approach each patient in a creative manner. Of course, the educational setting provides an excellent setting to foster creativity.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges today in the nursing profession is to provide a setting to stimulate and nourish the development of individual creativity.

The Creative Setting

There are degrees of creativity. Many could achieve fairly impressive levels under favourable circumstances.

Creativity requires mastery of the subject area in which work is to be done, but as the limited review of the literature indicated — there is something more than sheer mastery. Creativity is an individual phenomenon — the climate to foster creativity is necessarily that which nurtures overall individual growth and development.

Only three special groupings of characteristics of the creative setting will be mentioned here: hope and encouragement, freedom and richness of ideas, and finally effort and guidance.

Hope and Encouragement. Even though Thomas Carlyle was right in saying, "a certain amount of opposition is a great help to a man," creativity is so delicate a flower that praise tends to make it bloom, while discouragement often nips it in the bud. The discouragement that hurts creativity the most is that which comes from those whom we regard most highly. Consequently, it is essential to have a setting which encourages ideation, one which even welcomes mistakes. The very essence of creativity is to keep on trying and trying, harder and harder — and that is almost too much to expect of human nature without an expression of encouragement.

Basic to expression of encouragement is the acceptance of the individual for his own worth. Today, in much of the literature, there is a search for meaning — "a rebirth of faith and confidence in the human person."⁹ Groups, organizations and societies are important, but they can be only as creative and productive as the individuals comprising their structure. Consequently by fostering encouragement and instilling hope in the individual one can help provide the climate for creativity.

Freedom and Richness of Ideas. A setting rich in ideas is vital to the development of creativity. Freedom to change directions, shift strategies, try new experiences, develop new systems of thoughts and patterns helps to evolve more ideas — an augmenting type of experience. The creative person is noted for remarkable zeal or drive. He is wholly absorbed in his work. This energy is not only intense but sustained. The individual must be free to fulfill this drive which permits all kinds of combinations and recombinations of experience with a minimum of rigidity.

Effort and Guidance. Effort - concentration - tends to make association of ideas more fruitful. James Ward, English psychologist and philosopher, stressed how association can be enriched by selective attention. The more persistent our interest is, said he, the more we can profit from association.¹⁰

It takes hard work to be creative. Not everyone is willing to put the effort into thinking, trying, feeling, relating. Through guidance, efforts can be channelled and assisted.

The nursing profession not only has the opportunity to provide the creative setting — it has the responsibility. It must open the door to creativity. This door may be opened through hope and encouragement, freedom and richness of ideas, and, effort and guidance. In order to open doors for others, doors must also be open for us — it is that simple.

In Revelations 3:8 — “Behold! I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.”

Footnotes

1. John W. Gardner, *Self-Renewal: The Individual and The Innovative Society*. New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1963, p. 32.
2. C. R. Rogers, “Towards a Theory of Creativity,” in *Creativity and Its Cultivation*, edited by H. H. Anderson. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1959, p. 71.
3. J. Bronowski, “The Creative Process,” *Scientific American*. Vol. 199 (September, 1958), p. 64.
4. R. W. Scofield, “A Creative Climate,” *Educational Leadership*. Vol. XVII (October, 1960), p. 5.
5. J. P. Guilford, “Creativity,” *American Psychologist*. Vol. V (September, 1950), p. 444-454.
6. J. W. Getzels and P. W. Jackson, “Occupational Choice and Cognitive Functioning:” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*. Vol. 61 (July, 1960), p. 119-123.
7. H. R. Wallace, “Creative Thinking: A Factor in Sales Productivity,” *Vocational Guidance Quarterly*, Vol. 9 (Summer, 1961), p. 223-226.
8. A. M. Hart, *A Study of Creative Thinking and Its Relation to Nursing*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 1962.
9. E. Fromm, *The Revolution of Hope*. New York: Harper and Row, 1968, p. 174.
10. Alex F. Osborn, *Applied Imagination*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963, p. 310.