5-1992

Accessing the Creative Process

Jeanne Bolt
University of Massachusetts Boston, eabrons@earthlink.net

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.umb.edu/cct_capstone

Recommended Citation
http://scholarworks.umb.edu/cct_capstone/28
ACCESSING THE CREATIVE PROCESS

A Thesis Presented
by
JEANNE BERG ABRONS

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies and Research of the University of Massachusetts at Boston in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
May 1992
Critical and Creative Thinking Program
ACCESSING THE CREATIVE PROCESS

A Thesis Presented
by
JEANNE BERG ABRONS

Approved as to style and content by:

John R. Murray, Chairperson of Committee

Hiary Hopkins, Member

Steven H. Schwartz, Member

Patricia S. Davidson, Director
Critical and Creative Thinking Program
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With an abiding deep appreciation for:

The Begatters:
Norman and Hannah Pauline Scheer Berg

The Bemused:
Elliot Norman Abrons

and

The Begotten:
Debra Kate Abrons
Lisa Rose Abrons
Nina Jo Abrons
Ron Owen Abrons
David Saul Abrons

as well as

The Ever Eclectic Faculty and Staff of CCT

"The World is so full of a number of things, I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings."
Robert Louis Stevenson (1931, 30)
How many times have we said that we're not creative?
What do we mean by "not creative"?

This paper looks at the creative process as an innate and ongoing process which exists in each of us, with or without our being aware of it. We call on this process daily without knowing that we are participating in a creative process. We use creative processes for avoiding engagement in the creative process. We use creative processes for avoiding situations which might involve our perceived noncreativity. Because we are unaware of our participation, we assume that our creative processes do not exist. These issues are discussed in Chapter I.

Chapter II looks at how we regard our own previous panoramas of the creative process, our perceptions of our own and other persons' creative processes, Einstellung as one way by which we lock into these views beyond the time when they might be applicable, and the possible use of reperception as an unbinding of
the past and a new viewing of the present for considering creative processes in ourselves and others.

As an overview of the creative process, Chapter III is a literature search which helps us understand why creative processes are so difficult to recognize and describe. We learn that no two writers view creative processes in the same way, that creative processes have many facets and exist on numerous planes, that we cannot return to a specific point in a creative process and describe it exactly, and that creative processes are basically inexplicable because we lack a specific creative process vocabulary for an explanation.

One commonality emerges if we look at creative processes from a wide overview: creative processes are basically processes of reperception.

If we are to view ourselves as creative then we need to look at ourselves anew, to reperceive ourselves as being creative. Having decided to view ourselves as being creative, we will be more able to access our innate creative process and build on it to enhance our lives.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I  REPERCEPTION</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Creative Processes: Inborn and Innate</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The primary creative process is our shared heritage</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity is an ongoing, ordinary process</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are we giving up our access to our creative processes?</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity in Daily Life</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our hidden creative processes</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How we manifest our creative processes</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Creative Process as Reperception</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How we integrate reperception</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels of consciousness as we reperceive</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II HOW DO WE VIEW OURSELVES AND OTHERS IN RELATION TO THE CREATIVE PROCESS?</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Histories: Do They Help or Haunt?</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaping “right” and “wrong”</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How old interferes with new........................................26
Interactions with Other Persons........................................28
We need to examine our "standards"...........................29
We need to reexamine interactive influences......................30
What we need to recognize before we can change...............32
Mindsets...........................................................................35
The strength of Einstellung............................................36
How we might identify Einstellung....................................40
Can We Reperceive Ourselves and Others?.......................42
Should we change?..........................................................43
Can we change self-perception?.........................................44
Can we use reperception?...................................................46
Summary...........................................................................48

III THE CREATIVE PROCESS: AN OVERVIEW..........................50

Introduction........................................................................50
Identifying the Creative Process.......................................52
What Are Some Components of the Creative Process?...........56
Adaptation as part of the creative process..........................56
Contradictory elements and unpredictability as part of the creative process..............................................57
Janusian process as part of the creative process..................57
Other components of the creative process..........................60
Perceptual shifts within the creative process.........................61
What Happens if We Engage in the Creative Process?............66
How do we respond to the creative process?.......................66
What do we find if we engage in the creative process?...........68
Do real humans actually experience this process?..................70
Can we explain this creative process?.................................73
Summary...........................................................................75
INTRODUCTION

How many times have we said that we’re not creative?

How many times have we commiserated with a friend who has said the same thing?

What do we mean when we say that we’re not creative? Do we mean that we lack the innate inborn creativity shared by infants and adults? Or do we mean that previous experiences have caused us to believe that we have no conscious or demonstrable access to our creative processes?

Creativity is innate. The ability to participate in the creative process exists to some extent in each of us. We may not be able to see ourselves as capable of engaging in this ongoing creative process because of factors within ourselves or inherent in the creative process.

Creativity is inevitable. Life events require that we respond with creative responses. Even as we state that we are not creative, we are finding creative ways to avoid our own creativity and to avoid our own perceived noncreativity. Discovering these ways is part of the creative process, a part so obvious that we accept it in life without realizing that our creative processes are involved in an ongoing, individualized, subtle manner.

We access our unconscious creative processes in an unconscious manner daily. We rarely become aware of our creative processes as they join together previously unrelated concepts or items to formulate a totally new conclusion or action plan. If we are unaware of these processes, we assume that they do not exist.
We feel that we are not creative. We will look at this aspect of the creative process first, in Chapter 1.

Our self-concept as being creative or as being uncreative builds throughout life. Each life experience builds on previous experiences and each experience, in turn, forms a part of the base for future experiences. We associate these experiences, often unconsciously, and build them by successive layers into a construction of “I can” or “I can’t.”

“I can’t” results from feeling less than capable in meeting our own expectations and the expectations set for us by others. We rarely stop to consider whether these expectations are realistic or whether we are capable of meeting these expectations with our available skills and our experiential base.

Each successive experience which we or others associate with ourselves as negative or “bad” causes us to become more fixed in our perception of ourselves as “I can’t.” Soon, “I can’t” becomes an automatic response to any situation which we see as similar to those in which we “failed” previously.

If we are to view ourselves as creative, to experience the flavor and enjoyment of creativity in our lives, then we need to unbind ourselves from fixed preconceptions of ourselves as not creative. Whether these preconceptions are due to our own or to others’ perceptions of us, they cause us to carry the “I can’t” baggage with us as we travel through life. We need to understand that creativity means using our innate, internal creative processes each day to look at daily situations. We need to understand that the creative process is a process of reperception.
If we are to view ourselves as creative, we need to shift our perceptions of ourselves from "I can't" to "I can" be creative. This shift may be difficult. We may even be tempted to stop trying to change these negative views of ourselves before we have expended sufficient time and energy attempting to change. Our basic inertia, our need to stay as we have been rather than to change, is deeply ingrained. In some ways, this inertia can protect us from hasty or dangerous behavior. But in many ways it binds us to previous behaviors which have hindered our ability to access our creative processes.

Our personal "lens" for viewing ourselves as capable of accessing our creative processes evolves unconsciously, layer by layer, experience by experience. As we will see in Chapter II, we need to stop and consider how we have developed our views of "I can" and "I can't.”

Before we can access our creative processes or see ourselves as capable of accessing these processes, we need to define what we are accessing. We have difficulty defining what constitutes the creative process.

When we search the literature for information on what constitutes the creative process, we find that the creative process is cited as being unpredictable, chaotic, exhausting, and exhilarating. It operates by associating multiple previously unassociated facets and planes. The creative process is inexplicable both because we cannot return exactly to the process once it has ended and because we lack the language tools with which to describe the creative process itself. Our literature search in Chapter III
shows variations among the authors' perceptions of the creative process which add to our difficulty in explaining it.

Instead of looking so closely at the literature on creative processes, perhaps we need to look for an overview of our creative processes as a whole to identify their scope throughout our lives. Only one commonality shows in the wide view of literature about creative processes: creative processes ultimately involve, however large or small, however blatant or hidden, a process of reperception.

Reperception happens when we look again at what concerns or should concern us. This looking again, this trying a new view, allows us to unbind ourselves from previous experiences, to open our minds, to look at ourselves anew, and to find new meanings in old relationships. If we can look at ourselves anew, then we will be engaging in the creative process of reperception.

In accessing our creative processes, we find ourselves in a double cycle of reperceptions. The creative process is a process of reperception. If we are to access our creative processes, we will need to perceive ourselves as creative. This reperception of our ability to access our creative processes is in itself a creative process. We have reperceived as we have accessed and we have accessed as we reperceived.

Having decided to view ourselves as being creative, we will be more able to access our innate creative processes and to build on them to enhance, enrich, and add flavor to our lives.
CHAPTER I

REPERCEPTION

Introduction

If we are to reperceive ourselves as creative, as “I can,” we need to ask: How are we to access this creative process? We cannot see ourselves as being capable of something we cannot find.

In this chapter we will examine “I’m not creative.” We will establish the creative process as inborn and innate. We will discover how we use this innate process to avoid being creative and to avoid our perceived noncreativity. We will see that the creative process is there for us to access consciously even as we have accessed it unconsciously during efforts to deny its existence.

We will see that the creative process continues even as we say “I’m not creative.”

Our Creative Processes: Inborn and Innate

Educational psychologist Gary A. Davis feels that the biggest step toward becoming a more creative person is taken when we
become more aware of our own "unused creative capability" (1983, xii).

In light of the "I'm not creative" comments we have uttered and heard from friends, we would seem to need to ask first whether this creative capability is unused. Are we not tapping into the innate abilities available to us? Or are we tapping into these abilities without being aware that our behaviors actually constitute participation in the creative process? Are we not accessing or are we not aware of accessing our creative processes?

If we are not tapping into these abilities, are we so totally into fixed patterns that we simply apply the same rituals over and over without variance? Are we compulsively claiming no ability and therefore not tapping into the innate abilities described by Abraham Maslow (1968, 1971)?

The primary creative process is our shared heritage

Maybe we need to begin by accepting Maslow's contention that a creative process always occurs. This process interrelates us with the world (in May 1975) and grows out of our individual uniqueness in relation to events, circumstances, or other people in our lives (Rogers 1961).

Maslow asks whether creativeness is part of our human heritage. He answers that it is, but that creativity "does very frequently get lost, or covered up, or twisted, or inhibited, or
whatever, and then the job is of uncovering" (1971, 79) this creativeness within each of us.

He sees primary creativeness, the inspirational phase of human processes which arises from the unconscious, as being "very probably a heritage of every human being. It is a common and universal kind of thinking ... (which resides in the) ... unconscious layers" (1971, 82-83) of each person.

For Maslow, this "universal creativeness that we are all heir to" (1971, 100) is an ability to integrate what is inside us with what we do on the outside (1968).

Maslow fully believes that this unconscious and inborn process exists in all of us as we relate to our environment, no matter how "twisted or inhibited" (1971, 79) or even invisible the creative process may seem to us.

Creativity is an ongoing, ordinary process

What do other sources say about our creative processes as inborn and innate? Eric Klinger's studies reinforce Maslow's theory. Klinger's studies have shown that the "central fact of human consciousness" (1990, 1) is our mind's continual flow, the simultaneous yet separate interaction between reality and inner processes (1990). For him, a challenge is not a necessary stimulus for activation of creative processes because we pass unceasingly between inner creative processes and outer reality.
David Perkins points to creativity as occurring when "ordinary mental processes in an able person are marshaled by creative intentions" (1981, 101). For him, creativity is a process of selecting from among many possible outcomes in a skillful and responsible manner which depends on both inborn ability and learned behaviors. His concern is what we do with these abilities (1981).

Bill Oakes views the creative process as "an innate dimension of thought which needs only the ideal situation, (challenge) to spark the various aspects of the process" (Oakes 1988, 20). He agrees with the innate aspect, but adds the dimension of outside challenge.

For Perkins and Klinger, a challenge is less important than utilization of inborn abilities in interaction with and applied to outer reality as we perceive it situation by situation and instance by instance in daily encounters. This involves the application of our personal lens for viewing situation and terrain, which we will discuss in Chapter II.

Perkins' and Klinger's view is confirmed by E. Paul Torrance and Laura K. Hall (1980), who are awed by the apparent infinity of ways in which we might be creative. Torrance (1965) also addresses accumulated information from developmental studies of creative thinking ability. He concludes that viewing children's ideas with interest encourages children to create more ideas. He feels that unnoticed efforts cause children to lose confidence in their ability to create and cause children to make less use of their inborn abilities.
Are we giving up our access to our creative processes?

In view of Maslow, Klinger, Perkins, Oakes, and Torrance and Hall, perhaps we need to address the fixed nature of our beliefs regarding our creative processes (Baer, 1991), rather than a lack of innate creative process ability, as the source of our “no creative” cycle.

If we are not tapping into our innate creative processes, is it because we are so locked into “I can’t” that we no longer consider whether “can’t” is what we really mean to say? Have “can’t” and “not” become such automatic responses to creativity, or to other chances in life, that we do not realize their automatic response status?

How often do we stop and actually listen to what we are saying? Do we look for precision in our automatic phrases? Or do we remain in the “can’t” cycle because it is more comfortable for us to stay with what is familiar in life?

Perhaps we need to listen more closely to ourselves as “I can’t” passes our lips. Maybe we need to consider changing “I can’t” to “I’m not comfortable with that idea,” or to “Give me a chance to think about what you have suggested and ask me again later.”

Changing the automatic response set, a form of set behaviors called Einstellung, may be difficult, as we will see in Chapter II. Research confirms that fixed behaviors may be so formidable, in fact, that we may give up before we have spent sufficient time and effort trying to break the set pattern. Giving up due to the difficulty involved forms a reinforcing cycle which grows with each
experience and becomes even harder to break (Baer, 1991). We gradually give up our ability to access our creative processes.

Creativity in Daily Life

What if we are aware of what we do, but feel that the doing is not creative? Maybe we say “I'm not creative” even as we engage in a creative process. We alter the seasonings to make a new recipe more palatable to us. This is “just an adjustment, no big thing” as we prepare for dinner. But in combining inner memories of our previous experiences with what we like to eat and outer requirements of a new recipe we join two previously unassociated experiences. We act as described by Maslow, integrating what is inside us with what is happening on the outside. We experience (without realizing that we are experiencing) the reason why Maslow considers “a first-rate soup” (1968, 136) creative.

Our hidden creative processes

Perhaps our fixed “I'm not creative” is automatic, even as we tap into our innate abilities. We use our creative processes when we find a way to “take out” an opposing soccer forward early in every game, just to establish our dominance over other teams. But we
"take out" an opposing player in a different way each game so that
the same referee will not become suspicious.

Maybe we have nicknames for family members and code words
for places we have visited and experiences we have shared. When
our whole family is together, we seem to be conversing in our own
family language.

Perhaps we take twice as long as our coworkers when we
organize an office project. We know that in the end our
responsibilities will be carried out with greater finesse because we
have thought about the project in greater depth for a longer period.

All of these experiences are examples of creative behavior.
We link the separate planes of what we have enjoyed eating and the
new recipe before us (Koestler, 1964). We try to look at a specific
situation from a new angle each time (van Oech 1990). We develop a
shared family-based vocabulary over the years (Dacey 1989a). We
spend longer setting up for a project, looking at all of its aspects,
knowing that we will reason more rapidly in the end as a result of
our more lengthy preparation (Sternberg 1988).

Eileen Pickard calls this process of looking at a task in a new
way "creativity." She states: "Creativity is essentially a
qualitative phenomenon; a reperception of reality; a new emphasis
on a familiar experience..." (1990, 1).

Arthur Koestler states that perception is what we do, not what
happens to us (1964). As such, reperception would be what we do
after the initial perception, a looking again at what concerns, or
should concern, us. This looking again, trying for a new view of
what we are being confronted by, is a characteristic of the creative
process (Torrance 1979). We may not be aware that we are taking a second look, we may even deny the possibility; but every time we say “What about ...?” changing the spices or proceeding in a different manner, we have looked at the situation anew. We have reperceived.

We tap into our creative abilities unconsciously as situations arise. We quite literally access our unconscious in an unconscious manner continually throughout the day. We discover the “meaning in relationships that are obviously relevant” (Parnes 1981, 99). This discovery is part of the creative process but, because it is so obvious, we accept the discovery as part of daily life. We don’t realize that discovery is a reperception of familiar relationships, a manifestation of the creative process. We continue to consider ourselves “not creative.”

**How we manifest our creative processes**

Although creative ability is “normally distributed ... all of us possess this talent to a lesser or greater degree” (Osborn 1963a, 16), our efficiency within the process seems to be related more to the energy we utilize in the process than to our inborn abilities (Osborn 1963a).

Some of us may use our energy to tap more openly into our creative processes. We may be considered more creative by our peers. Others of us may be bound into an ongoing litany as “not creative” fuses into a cycle of: “I’m not creative, so I won’t put any energy into creativity. See? No evidence of creativity here.” We
may spend more time in avoidance or in denial than we would have spent simply drawing on our innate creative processes to accomplish the task at hand.

We find creative ways to avoid creativity. Example: Because I'm not creative, I simply cannot arrange these flowers you've given me. I appreciate the thought, but you know how uncreative I am. I just never get the flowers to look right. I'll just pop them into this old ewer with the same color roses painted on it. ... Could you put it over there on the window sill? Thanks.

We even manifest our creative processes in problem solving as we attempt to avoid what we know is our noncreativity. Example: This rusty car door looks pretty tacky. I know I'll never be able to mix a matching paint color. Even if I could, there's no way I'll ever be able to do a good touch-up job. Maybe if I just take these other colors and kind of use them like this nobody will realize. ... Ah, that looks better. No rust now. Colors kind of brighten up the car, too.

In both of these examples, utilizing our creative processes is inevitable. It happens because life brings us a series of events which necessitate creative thinking (Weisberg 1986). Whether we respond by outright use of the creative process or by using the creative process to avoid its own use is a function of our personal history of creative experiences.

In life, our responses themselves are creative even as we claim lack of creativity. "Creativity concerns what we do with our abilities" (Perkins 1981, 287). We use our abilities to see the similarity between flowers painted on a ewer and real flowers. Ewers are jugs for holding water. This ewer can substitute for the
vase in which I could never possibly arrange any flowers. The combination "works."

We can be creative without being artistic, "whether or not we engage in activities that are called creative and artistic" (Smith 1990, 90). I "can't" mix paint very well and painting smoothly is beyond my ability. But I can use these other, unrelated colors. They don't match the car but they will cover the rust. They kind of personalize that rusty area on the car door. The painting "works."

In both instances we have looked at a given task in a new way. We may not have been aware that we were taking a second look. We may even deny the possibility that we have looked and looked again, that we have perceived and reperceived.

If only we could unbind our "not creative" preconceptions and understand that creativity means accessing our innate internal ability in situations like these in daily life!

The Creative Process as Reperception

How does this concept of creativity as reperception relate to our experiences with components of the creative process?
How we integrate reperception

Our ongoing use of perpetual choice, a form of reperception, helps us decide how we will “take out” opposing soccer forwards in a new manner each game. We cannot plan ahead because each game, each interaction of our situation as forward and the terrain of the playing field and the other players will necessitate a different approach. We evaluate how the referee is “calling” the game, the opposing players’ skills, and the field’s playing surface before deciding who to “take out,” when, and how. Our ongoing perpetual choice mode is part of reperception as we consider, modify, reject, or accept each possibility until we finally choose and execute our “take out” strategy.

Our need to cover the rust on our car is the ideal situation for starting our innate creative processes into action. We recall past experiences with attempts to match paint swatches. We remember uneven applications of paint. In an attempt to avoid repeating these perceived “not creative” experiences, we open our minds to new possibilities with paint. We try to see the car as it is now and as it might be in the future. We try to reperceive.

We select from many possible outcomes as we spend more time than coworkers organizing an assignment at work. We stay longer in the inspirational primary process stage of the creative process as we consider actions and reactions. Eventually, our “ordinary mental processes” (Perkins 1981, 101) based on our inborn abilities and our learned behaviors, allow us to choose what we hope
will be the best procedures to reach the desired outcomes. We have looked at the situation anew. We have reperceived.

The unpredictable experience of receiving flowers, after we have spent decades discouraging the practice, forces us to reevaluate how we will display this gift. We have no vases available. We look for "water holders." We see what is available. We look at what is available in a new way. We think based on previous experiences: flowers need water, an ewer holds water, flowers can go into the ewer. We reperceive.

We have nicknames and code words for family members. Some of these nicknames may change daily or within the day per se. An infant or a teenager is "Mr. 2:00 a.m." if he disturbs our slumber at that hour, but he is "Little Sweetheart" or "My Responsible Son" if he sleeps alone in his own bed until after dawn. A toddler is "The Terror who Destroyed Texas" after a long day afoot, yet he becomes "My Snugglebunny" during a bedtime snuggle session. These infinite, ongoing ways in which we view and nickname family members manifest our ability to reperceive.

If we were to look closely at these examples as we experience them, we might even discern the existence of our innate creative processes, which in themselves are processes of perception. In each of these ways, reperception as a part of the creative process relates to how we have reacted to situations in daily life. We can function as suggested by Pickard (1991), with our creative processes as a reperception of reality (1991).
Are we even aware that these experiences involve accessing the creative process? Are we aware of how our minds work on a daily, hourly, second-to-second basis? Do we really need Oakes' "ideal situation" (1988, 20) to stimulate creative activity?

Klinger (1990) states that our minds flow continually. His research has found that the human consciousness is an ongoing process by which our minds stay busy. Beneath our surface awareness is an ongoing competition for access to our consciousness as the brain seeks to process all of its daily input (Klinger 1990). This is how we handle the "give me some time to think about it" incidents in life.

Koestler calls this "give me some time" a period of incubation which allows the mind to shrug off conventional constraints and become more fluid, more adaptable, and more easily imposed upon. It allows the unconscious to match previously unassociated images, to shift emphasis, and to "reason in reverse gear" (1964, 210-211). The result of this activity is the sudden insight which may arise during or after our incubation time (1964).

This breakthrough seems to emerge as if by magic when we are detached from conscious attention to the problem (Parnes 1981). A solution often seems so obvious and self-explanatory that we wonder why we haven't thought of it before (Rosner and Abt 1970).

Incubation time has allowed the processes of our creative subconscious level (Goble 1970) and unconscious level processes to function, releasing ideas to the conscious levels of our minds.
Maslow refers to this as primary creativity which rises from the unconscious and is a source of new discovery (1971).

Albert Rothenberg also feels that creative thinking is nonconscious, occurring when persons "are fully conscious and in possession of their senses" (1990, 55), yet not necessarily trying consciously to be creative. This view is confirmed by Robert Olson's (1980) description of creative ideas rising during relaxation or transition to relaxation after work.

How many times has an idea "hit" us as we left either work or home (usually in a hurry); hit us with such an insistence and clarity that we turned around and returned to the place where we might either explore or record it before its fleeting presence vanished? And how many times has this idea seemed to rise from nowhere as the creative process shaped and integrated unconscious material in the preconscious (Yau 1991), transforming itself from unconscious to usable (Olson 1980), from filament to fact in an inexplicable yet nearly tangible fashion?

This experience of "being hit with an idea" is a result of what Torrance (1983) describes as the imagination being able to let go, to feel free to synthesize without analyzing, to shed previous images as part of the creative process. The experience is evidence of our integration of all levels of consciousness within the creative process. It happens as we are on the way out the door, effectively removing time and place pressures. "Being hit with an idea" is how we finally decide to use other colors of paint to form a design rather than to try matching and painting evenly with the same color of
paint. It is evidence of our reperception of the problem we have been considering unconsciously. It is our creative process at work.

When J. S. Bach was asked how he found his melodies, he replied: "The problem is not finding them, it's -- when getting up in the morning and getting out of bed -- not stepping on them" (Langer 1989, 118). His conscious had been transforming ideas from unconscious to usable at night and "hitting" him with evidence of his creative processes in the morning. He then used his energy during the day for composing rather than for denial of his innate and ongoing creative abilities.

**Summary**

We seem to experience cycles of perception about our creative processes and ourselves. One cycle is the creative process as a process of reperception by which we look anew at reality. We are born with this innate ability to engage in the creative process as we relate to the world.

We engage in this creative process daily, from devising more ways to "take out" opponents to adjusting the seasoning in a new recipe. We rarely see this process as it operates on subconscious and preconscious levels to join previously unrelated concepts or items so that a totally new conclusion or action results.

The other cycle is our perceived lack of creativity. We deny continually our ability to participate in the creative process. We
form a functionally fixed litany of "I can't" without realizing that our actions simultaneously manifest the fact that we can. We even use our creativity without realizing its involvement when we find ways to avoid using our creativity. This perceived lack of creativity is another cycle.

To break this cycle, we need to be aware of the ongoing innate nature of these perceptions and reperceptions. We need to be able to shift away from perceptions of ourselves as "I'm not creative." We need to unbind the long-forgotten origins of "I can't" and to open our minds to the concept that we are creative in daily actions.

We need to recognize and to access the innate creative processes operating within us. We need to see ourselves as "I can."
CHAPTER II

HOW DO WE VIEW OURSELVES AND OTHERS IN RELATION TO THE CREATIVE PROCESS?

introduction

Having discovered that we engage in creative processes daily, often without realization, we need to look more closely at how we, as humans with diverse life experiences, view these varied processes on a personal level, both for ourselves and for others we know.

Do we view each person's creativity in the gestalt, the organism-as-a-whole (Perls 1975), on an on-going level? Do we focus on individual instances and generalize universally from these single instances? Do we change ourselves or others to match our perceptions? How do we even know what these perceptions are? Our responses to these questions will relate directly to the lens we use for viewing our own and other persons' creative processes.

This view-as-a-whole approach was in evidence throughout World War II. The United States Army adjured its recruits to be especially aware of all factors involving the situation and the terrain. A single small change in either factor could impact decisions on a global scale. The concept of the situation and the terrain reminded military personnel of the interrelationship
between what was happening or about to happen (situation) and the possible areas (terrain) potentially involved in these events.

The concept of the situation and the terrain also applies to creativity. Just as each person is unique, even as identical twins raised together still have individual traits (Franklin 1989) and experiences, so does the potential for creative growth vary with situation, with terrain, and within the age span of an individual.

This chapter will look at (1) how we regard our own previous panoramas of the creative process, (2) our perceptions of our own and other persons' creative processes, (3) the concept of mindsets, especially of functional fixedness, and (4) the use of reperception for viewing ourselves and others.

Despite a culture which values products of creative processes and largely ignores the less visible processes from which products result (Whiting 1989; Maslow 1971; Matson 1991), we will focus only on the concept of creative processes per se in their more universal aspects. This focus on process rather than product should allow us to bypass the effects of our own perceptions of others' products and their views of our products. As we will see, our views of other persons and their views of us are related directly to the "I can't" cycle.

It is hoped that we, as adults, will be able to increase our ability to recognize the influences of previous experiences and of functional fixedness as they occur in ourselves and others in various situations and terrains.
Mildred Renfrow (1984) from the University of Washington discusses early childhood in terms of hypothesis building, the way by which children learn about the world and their places therein. She cites learning from mistakes in hypotheses as a valuable source of knowledge, a trial and error effort, with reinforcement from successes and encouragement for the learner to evaluate and try again after errors. She feels that "the child who sees error as 'bad' or 'wrong' is cut off from ... a vast and invaluable source of knowledge" (Renfrow 1984, 234).

Her concern is with children entering grade school who learn that red marks on papers indicate error in the negative sense, as in 'this work is not good,' especially when they have tried something new. Children quickly adopt this focus on accuracy in their youthful eagerness to please teachers -- and parents -- in early school years (Renfrow 1984).

Shaping "right" and "wrong"

Renfrow's concerns are well-founded on the educational level. Most adults can summon images of their early school years: classrooms, classmates, the returned test paper with a red-checked border visible from thirty feet as papers are passed across the
classroom, the after-class discussions about who "flunked" the test.

Renfrow's concerns are additionally well-founded on the non-educational level. Adult and peer reactions to all aspects of our performance throughout the years stay with us, shaping our image of "right" and "wrong" in relation to our own and our friends' abilities. How others see us shapes how we see ourselves, just as how we see our peers affects both who we choose as friends and how they react to and interact with us.

Other persons view us based on their own cultural orientation, past experiences, personal prejudices, and expectations which may affect their perceptions. Whatever they remember from viewing us will be shaped according to these expectations and played back during subsequent encounters (Loftus 1979). Thus, other persons regard us according to their own idiosyncratic perspective rather than according to where we are in relation to our own lives. This is a characteristic of the ongoing, cyclic interplay between ourselves and others.

If these persons are immediately important to us (parents, teachers, peers), then their pronouncements have prominence in shaping how we see ourselves. If they are less important to us, then we place less value on their reactions; but the reactions, nevertheless, stay with us. In this way, we are shaped by others as well as by what we experience ourselves.

How does this relate to the creative process, the presence of which tends to be determined mainly by observation of outward manifestations?
It is the peer/parent/important other's reactions to outer manifestations of inner creativity which stay with us, forming the "bugs" in our creative process programs as we proceed through life. Other persons' reactions set up "demons" much like the "demons" built into computer programs which lie dormant until triggered by a stimulus related to previous events, often forgotten. Then these demons pounce upon us like evil spirits, causing us to act based on their demonic presence rather than on the presenting situation (Papert 1980).

This is seen in the statement "I'm not creative. I can't draw." Taken literally, "I can't draw" says that I am incapable of grasping implements for figure formation. While this may be true if I am physically manually "challenged," it has little relationship to my intended meaning that "I don't draw in a manner meeting my expectations."

Since we all draw to some extent -- circles, squares, doodles, or underlining in texts -- the statement reflects previous experiences in varied situations and terrains in which our own or other's expectations regarding our drawing ability were not realized to the degree we sought. Rather than coding these experiences as situation-specific, we generalize them into the "I can't draw" response and proceed to build on this premise. We allow this hidden demon to haunt the viewing of our drawing operations throughout life.
How old interferes with new

What causes us to be haunted by the demons of drawing experiences long past and assuredly forgotten on the conscious level?

To begin with, studies have demonstrated unequivocally that "old material interferes with memory for newly learned material (proactive inhibition) and new material interferes with memory for previously learned material (retroactive inhibition)" (Howard 1983, 158) as we progress through life. The word "material" is used in the generic sense to indicate positive, negative, neutral, and/or content centered input from our environment. Simply stated, what we already know will color what we are learning and what we are learning will color what we remember about what we already know.

In this way, comments which we consider negative concerning our "artistry" will overlay previous praise, convincing us that our talent is waning. Conversely, praise for a new project may be shrugged off if former efforts have been responded to less effusively.

Consequently, complex perceptions regarding our artistry can be formed, retained, and replayed without our conscious awareness (Loftus 1979). Each emerging attitude, useful or useless, "makes us a little less receptive to alternative ways of thinking and acting" (Parnes 1981, 79) and leads us to repeat exactly what we have done well previously. We try this exact repetition to protect us from experiencing glaring "errors," but this protection works only if we are able to apply the previously learned patterns appropriately.

26
Fewer "errors" means more comfort for us, but also limits our potential for finding new ideas for our personal growth and development beyond these patterns. This is how we program ourselves "to see things in stereotyped or habitual ways" (Parnes 1981, 79) without realizing either cause or source.

Such habits of thinking and perception hamper our problem solving ability (Osborn 1963a, 43-50). We form a cycle of self negation: "I can't draw. I know I can't draw. I've never been able to draw. I won't even try to draw. There is no way you can get me to draw." This mindset becomes a lifetime litany effectively obscuring and/or hindering any residual desire of the internal creative process. We no longer want to illustrate our thoughts by putting a few well-intentioned lines on a piece of paper, even to aid our dissection of simple problems such as "Would the couch fit better against that wall if the piano were moved over here?"

We seem unaware that these habits, these mindsets, these fixed forms and reflections cloud our lenses. We simply assume our inability to draw, or even to sketch, how the room would look with furniture moved. We push, pant, and perspire until piano and couch are moved; only to discover that neither couch nor piano fits well against its new wall space. We need what Sidney Parnes terms "new, original ways of viewing our problems and challenges ... (by breaking) ... old mental associations or connections" (1981, 85). We need reperception.
Interactions with Other Persons

We have seen how other persons' reactions influence our behaviors before we are able to recognize that cycles are being established or to compensate for negative aspects involved. We have seen how we internalize these ongoing experiences, storing and building on them, to form our self-image and our expectations. This happens to each of us individually within our peer group, before or during, in or out of educational settings. Each of us reacts individually to the same presentation due to our own personal make-up and our own life experiences.

In childhood we learn to measure success and failure by what we can and cannot do. If demands made on us exceed our abilities or our perception thereof, we judge ourselves as being incapable. We start to develop a cycle of negative perceptions about what we are capable of doing.

If we do better than another person in the same setting or if we perform better than others expect us to perform, then we develop a success expectation. We also internalize the reactions of the important adults, including family members, in our lives. If we think or act as others feel we should, we build confidence as we proceed (Solomon 1978).

However, if our actions, our expressions, or our thoughts are at variance from the stated, inferred, or unexpressed expectations held by family members, friends, or peers significant to us at our current
age and stage of development, then their reactions will cause us to lose confidence, to have lower self esteem.

We need to examine our "standards"

During childhood as well as adulthood, we need to examine the standards set for us by ourselves and others. "We entertain certain notions, on some level of consciousness, about how we hope things will turn out or how we want people to behave" (Beattie 1987, 192). Results matching our expectations reinforce ourselves as "good;" variances reinforce ourselves as "bad."

When our creative processes neither match the standards set by others nor measure up to our own expectations, we are likely to label these processes "bad," much as we have labelled other experiences with negative or unexpected outcomes "bad." For most of us during early childhood, "good" is conformity; "bad" is nonconformity, is not following directions, is daring to raise questions in taboo areas (Joseph 1974). Because each person views other persons through a lens formed by personal experience, another individual reacting negatively to our questions really reflects the other person more than it reflects us.

When we are young, nobody tells us that these responses are really another person's perception of us. Because we are young, we tend to internalize these responses by other persons as we form our self concept. In this manner, the formation of our self concept as capable or incapable of ongoing creative processes is influenced as
much by significant outsiders as it is by our own pleasure or displeasure in creative processes.

We need to reexamine interactive influences

Are we capable of changing another's behavior or outlook?
Would we want another person to change us?
As we have seen, our personal belief systems govern expectations "by triggering subtle, yet predictable, patterns of behavior and interaction" (Lobuts and Pennewill 1984, 243).

"No matter what we are told, our own perceptions of ourselves will always seem substantial and solid to us" (Moustakas 1956, 7). We may be told nine times that our new sweater fits perfectly, but until we see ourselves as being perfectly fitted we will not agree. Similarly, what we say to a friend may not cause the friend to change if he/she is unready to change, but our friend will store what we say for retrieval later.

Using our lens for viewing a friend is fine if we acknowledge its presence, but we must be careful. "The power of context over our reactions and interpretations also makes us susceptible to context confusion" (Langer 1989, 40) when we confuse others' context with our own. We cannot deduce another's intentions regarding a specific topic (Fisher and Ury 1981). We cannot expect another person to share our intentions if that person has not experienced all that we have experienced within the same context in life.
Our context for judgment has developed through our own individually unique experiences with situation and terrain and is inappropriate when projected beyond ourselves to persons who have not shared every second of our existence. We need to understand that we cannot succeed in evaluating another's goals using our own criteria, which may not be relevant to the other person (Langer 1989). We need to be aware of these problems with projection. We need to recall context when we evaluate the other person.

This applies to our perspective on the creative process. We may feel that we know about creative processes, based on personal experience, but it is impossible to project our understanding of our own internal process onto another person. “One does not recognize the otherness of a person as a reality by projecting into him someone else or abstracting out of him transferred feelings or attitudes” (Moustakas 1956, 7). Nor does one assume that one’s own processes necessarily match or even march parallel to another’s processes in any context.

Each of us has a singular, unmatched, unprecedented history of creative processes, consciously and unconsciously realized. To expect another person to share this is unrealistic. Because of this, judgments relating to another individual’s creative processes must lack both validity and accuracy. We simply cannot assume knowledge of what lies within another person.

Nor can we try to change that person’s processes to match our own. O. W. Markley emphasizes this succinctly, saying that “it is more appropriate to change ourselves than it is to change others ...
to heal our own projections about people or things we don't like than it is trying to change (heal) them" (1988, 89).

Thus, judgments by others regarding our creative potential, ability, or processes lack the validity attached to them either at the moment of judgment or in retrospect. Yet it is these very responses on which we build our concept of self as "I can" or as "I can't" regarding creativity in lifelong perspective.

Any decision regarding change in perception of our own creative processes must include consideration of where we are now, where we would like to be, how others view and react to us, and what needs to be unbound from our past to help us reach any new goal.

The reverse also applies. Other persons should be aware that their self images are formed by and bound in part by our views of them over the years. We all need to reexamine how we react to interactive influences.

What we need to recognize before we can change

If we are to break these interactive influences, we also need to recall how distortion and reinterpretation of past information causes us to change the old for a better fit with the new. In other words, "the more distant the event, the more material the mind adds from its store of world knowledge ... (causing us to) ... mistake falsehood for truth, if the falsehood buttresses" (Campbell 1989, 238) our views. We need to be aware that our "mind has a way of
remembering strong points of evidence that confirms its beliefs, and the weak points of evidence that disconfirms them" (Campbell 1989, 238).

Having seen ourselves once, most likely in a circumstance we no longer recall (Howard 1983), as having difficulty within a creative process or as having been told that the result of this process was "wrong," we start an association which gains power both as it influences new perceptions to match its content and as it gains in size (Loftus 1979), much as a snowball gathers volume and momentum en route downhill.

Because "we remember things easily that have powerful associations for us" (Rose 1987, 2), and because our previous experiences always influence our attitudes, forming a solid core of beliefs, we become "brainwashed to accept that we're limited in potential and that can become a self-fulfilling prophecy" (Rose 1987, 133-34).

Every time a creative process ends in frustration, often due to unrecognized previous frustrations, we form a powerful memory of failure which influences our decision making when similar or even dissimilar processes start. The power of reinterpretation within our memory processes (Howard 1983) combines with our interpretations of subsequent events, which were colored by our interpretation of the original event, to influence what we expect to experience as an outcome for the particular activity (Loftus 1979).

Thus, we unknowingly distort the past, add material selected and tailored to support our own view of it, and act on this
combination as an expectation for the present and/or for the future. Our distortion becomes a self-fulfilling expectation.

Another aspect of the self-fulfilling expectation is the manner by which "events and outcomes all become woven into a single seamless mental fabric" (Campbell 1989, 237) which causes us to think that we have known all along what the result would be. We unknowingly create coherence by reinterpreting evidence to make it more consistent with our expectations (Campbell 1989). We are able to say "I'm not creative" or "I can't draw" because we sincerely believe this to be the truth due to how we perceive memories of the past and establish expectations for the future.

We need to acknowledge reinterpretation-caused coherence before we can consider shedding it to rebuild our perception of ourselves as being creative, even potentially creative, within current contexts. We need to stop sabotaging ourselves and to open our closed minds if we are to see ourselves as capable of accessing our creative processes.

Until we can transform, we will continue to carry the "baggage" of "I can't" and "I'm not" into our opportunities to participate in the creative process. It is this "baggage," this defense mechanism, which causes us to protect ourselves by saying "I can't" rather than face what we perceive as the potentially uncomfortable "I can" in situations either unfamiliar to us or potentially related to previous negative experiences (de Mille 1976).
Mindsets

Can anything be done to minimize reinterpretation-caused coherence, defense mechanism "baggage," or information bits accepted at face value without our ever considering closely their implications? Can new associations be prevented from anchoring to old, functionally fixed associations? Can we prevent the new impression from settling in and anchoring without any direct relevance to situation and terrain (Langer 1989)? How do we deal with mindsets from our past which interfere with our present (Langer 1989)? How do we know whether our concept of our own abilities in a specific area has been delineated or narrowed by our experiences without our conscious realization?

The answer lies in proceeding as if the ability might be there, might be improvable, if we first unbind unconsciously applied false limits (Langer 1989), and then open our closed minds and break down defensive areas. These steps allow us to reach the imagination which is larger and safer than we have thought it could be (de Mille 1976) since our own childhood. These steps allow us to reperceive.

To do so, we need to recognize that our biases exist, however buried the distant causes. Then we must unbind ourselves from these false limits. We must find a means to represent the couch, the piano, and the rest of the room, possibly on paper, in a nonthreatening manner. We must discount our biases about our supposed lack of drawing ability and focus instead on the
representation as a means for minimizing backache, frustration, and migraine.

Unbinding false limits and opening our awareness help minimize the mind’s tendency to brush aside information which may be necessary for correct thinking. We become more able to tune into common sense which Campbell describes as "the way in which human memory is organized and how it processes information" (1989, 238). Unbinding rids us of the perceptual rigidity caused unconsciously by previously unsuccessful drawing experiences and allows us to seek new approaches to the couch rearrangement problem (Shouksmith 1970). But unbinding, opening, and brushing aside mindsets can be difficult for numerous reasons, the most pressing of which is a rigidity of approach often called Einstellung (set attitude).

The strength of Einstellung

Einstellung's strength seems to lie in our being unaware that set attitudes exist within each of us. Einstellung is difficult to identify in a scientifically precise manner because it is "affected by individual differences in particular problem solvers" (Shouksmith 1970, 89), compounding the possible number of hidden or visible effects for each person. Einstellung may make us feel that we lack skills or cause us to avoid situations without realizing why. Being unaware of fixedness means that we make no alterations: see no need, meet no need.
The set attitude of *Einstellung* may be due to past experiences as well as to individual differences. It determines how our perceptions of past experiences influence the way we look at the possibilities available in new situations. *Einstellung* is so powerful that it influences how we think in general as well as in specific circumstances. It limits our ability to function by blocking us from our creative processes and locking us into fixed patterns of thought. *Einstellung* prevents us from being able to "look at something and think about what else it might be" (van Oech 1990, 132).

We may know that we have always rearranged the furniture until it suited us, and been pretty tired thereafter, but we don't realize that there might be other ways for us to decide about furniture placement. Our friends know that we tend to push furniture around periodically. It's just our "way," how we have acted since they met us; but true friends are willing to accept quirks and so they accept ours.

If friends were to suggest drawing a floor plan first, what would we reply? Would we say "That's OK, but we've always been this way," and grimace at the recurrent psychosomatic back twinges accompanying mention of furniture moving? Or would we thank them heartily and rush home to try sketching the room?

A set attitude means that, having declared our inability to draw, especially a room in which a "bad" drawing might result in even more work for us moving furniture, we are unaware of both the original can't-draw situation and of its effect on our current response. This causes a "Catch 22" type of cycle: we can't draw because we think we can't draw and therefore we won't try to draw
because we can't. This negative mindset prevents us as problem solvers from seeing the problem in new ways to foster the formulation of new solutions (Allinger 1982a). No wonder Einstellung's vicious circle of fixed attitudes is so hard to overcome!

Is there any hope that we will lose the rigid habitual thought processes of this set cycle and start exploring numerous facets of each concept to avoid development of fixidity (Allinger 1982b)? Will we, like cheese or fine wine, improve with age? Gestaltist Barry Stevens indicates that it's not likely. As we age, "we tend to accumulate more fixed memories and to impose more fixed expectations on our immediate experiencing, gradually crowding out the awe, wonder, newness, freshness, and surprise" (in Stevens 1975, 242) of being able to see the whole picture in new ways, as when increased background noise or static blocks the clarity of spoken messages (in Stevens 1975, 242). And if the messages are unclear, we certainly cannot be expected to act on them.

Whether or not we subscribe consciously to this concept, we need to be aware of this possibility in ourselves and in others. Then we must use this awareness to unbind ourselves from this accumulation of fixed memories and fixed expectations. We do not need to expect rigidity as a coefficient of age.

John Dacey shows a need for research in this area, stating that there is no real information on ideal periods of life for adults to foster creativity (1989b).

Teresa Amabile feels that creativity "can and should be part of the daily life of all children and adults" (1989, x). She cites
intrinsic motivation as the key factor to ongoing creativity. Her view is that people will be most motivated by “interest, enjoyment, satisfaction, and challenge” (Amabile 1989, 51) felt internally. Her research shows that creative people habitually question what they see, take new perspectives, and find new ways in whatever they do (Amabile 1989).

Perhaps the majority of us do become more fixed over the years, as Stevens suggests. Perhaps we have identified no ideal periods for fostering creativity as Dacey states. Perhaps only the more highly creative persons among us habitually consciously question what we see or look beyond fixed perspectives to find new ways when somewhat comfortable habits would suffice.

We are fortunate. The existence of adults asking questions indicates that questioning CAN occur, even for adults, as an ongoing part of daily life. This, in turn, might explain why no ideal periods for creative growth are evident to Dacey.

As any physicist or high school physics student can tell us, the principle of inertia means that it is much easier to remain at rest. There is a tendency to stay with previous instructions and habits until the possibility or the need for forming new habits sounds out imperiously loud and clear. We need to be aware of our inertia as part of the “I can’t” cycle.
How we might identify Einstellung

The tendency to remain at rest, to live as we have always lived, sounds very good as the world swirls around us. We all long for a chance to escape from pressing problems.

Einstellung allows us to remain with static perceptions derived from long-forgotten episodes stored in our subconscious and called up for active duty by demons triggered during our current experiences. We tend to see as we want to see and to act in patterns predicated on previous performances which may be based on even more distant instances.

We tend to view our creative processes this way, too, based on irretrievably “buried” instances. We may never be able to trace the multiple and compounded origins which formulate our self-image as “not creative” or “cannot draw.” We may not realize the generalizations involved.

We are whole persons with numerous facets working together (Wallach and Gruber 1989). Any facet may or may not have been involved originally; but past associations, once internalized, can cause a facet to seem involved in an experience which we have encoded as “bad.” This involvement may have been by association only, without our conscious realization, but the negative association has stayed with the new facet.

Rather than trying to disengage buried and intertwined instances, we can try to look at our preconceptions of creative process in light of Einstellung. Perhaps realizing the set nature of a behavior will help us unbind ourselves from that behavior. We can
start by sorting out which preconceptions still apply and which are outdated.

We can try to identify when we are victims of our habits, looking rigidly at a specific problem and then tranquilly continuing with a method which worked previously, even though we may have heard about or even experienced a better way. This is a "response set" (Howard 1983, 414-15).

We can try to sensitize ourselves to times when we perceive or encode a project from only one perspective without considering that there might be a second (or third or fourth) aspect available for us to view. This fixed singular view, the opposite of reperception, is a "perceptual set" (Howard 1983, 415).

We can try to be aware of "when the use of an object in one way inhibits solution of a problem requiring its use in a different way" (Shouksmith 1970, 89). We can try to consider whether we might be perceiving objects as having only their most common and/or most recent functions or manifestations. This form of personal coding can cause us to have difficulty seeing objects or problems in new ways, in reperceiving, even when a slight variation might enable us to move ahead. This is "functional fixedness" (Howard 1983, 416-17).

We can try to realize that we have adopted and persisted rigidly in one way of approach. Then we can consider whether this approach is insufficient or unlikely to lead us to a solution (Howard 1983).

We can try to concentrate on making ourselves aware of all these times when we "spin our wheels" in frustration and use our
awareness as a caution. We need to say: "Warning!!! Wheel spinning means we may be locked in a fixed predicament. Let's reconsider our position, ask why we're wheel spinning, and look for alternate solutions," rather than muttering "I'll take two aspirins and tackle it again in the morning."

We need to realize that all of us have experienced times when involvement in the creative process evoked our own "turn off" or provoked those we value to react negatively to our behavior. We must question whether these instances have colored our view of the creative process: it is too much trouble; it alienates those we care for; we can't explain it to others. Then we must ask if these memories have influenced our view of ourselves as not creative.

Having become aware of our wheel spinning, we also need to build on the realization to consciously seek plausible alternatives within ourselves. We need to recognize and to unbind the set ways from our past which have not led to our goals. We need to be ready in our minds to utilize our inherent abilities and to build on positive past experiences to unblock our situation (Schwartz 1992). Having recognized an opportunity, we must connect our current narrow paths with our hidden inner abilities and free ourselves to start traveling toward our goals (Hopkins 1992). This willingness to act when opportunity combines with ability and preparation is what distinguishes persons more able to access their inner processes from the rest of us (Boden 1990).

We need to recognize Einstellung in its many manifestations, to label it, and to look for ways to minimize its effects. We must alert ourselves to the interrelationships between mindsets,
previous experiences, current opportunities, and our own innate abilities. We need to remember to reperceive.

Can We Reperceive Ourselves and Others?

Having recognized the various ways in which previous experiences and mindsets influence our perceptions of ourselves and others, we should be ready to discuss looking anew at ourselves and at our creative processes.

Some questions arise before we can start the discussion. Do we really want to look at ourselves and others in a new manner? Do we really want to reperceive, or are we happy in our current mode? If we are satisfied with our current status, is this satisfaction true or is it due to being securely settled in our mindsets? Are we really open to looking at situations and terrains in new ways, are we contented with our locked-in abilities and our behaviors, or have we achieved a balance of reperception and fixedness which is serving us well?

Should we change?

What happens if we are perfectly comfortable saying "I can't" about our creative processes? What happens if our minds take the "sting out of rebel facts and figures by fitting them into a context
where they will cause the least trouble" (Campbell 1989, 243-44)
for us? Do we really need to review our conscious and unconscious
decisions regarding our own creative processes if we are happy
saying "I can't" to and about our processes?

Clark Moustakas tells us that "no one can force the individual
to permanent or creative learning. He will learn only if he wills to"
(1956, 10). Moustakas describes a child's self-opinion as developing
from an awareness of what she/he does as eliciting favorable or
unfavorable responses. The child begins to expect a pattern of
reactions from others and builds on this to form her/his own image.
This child "primarily believes about himself what he sees reflected
in the eyes of others" (Moustakas 1956, 10).

Any thoughts about changing either ourselves or our
perceptions of ourselves as capable of engaging in the creative
process must take into account how we view and have viewed
ourselves and how we are viewed and have been viewed by persons
important to us.

*Can we change self-perception?*

What happens when our previous experiences cloud our lens
without our awareness? How do we react to knowing "I can't" but
not knowing why "I can't" when faced with new situations?

Do we try to clarify these situations and discuss them with
each other, seeking new viewpoints (Fisher and Ury 1981)? Do we
"debug" the problem ourselves, narrowing it area by area, and
checking for hidden "double bugs" (Papert 1980, 112) like a computer program? Or do we respond in a functionally fixed manner, resisting newness as a threat and applying old patterns to control it?

We have seen that, without intervention, the majority of us will allow our mindsets from the past to continue blotting out our present chance to know and to grow in new situations (Langer 1989). We will tend to repeat previous patterns within our fixed ways.

We all have histories of success and failure as seen by ourselves and by others. We remember the art teacher's "you can't draw," so we submerge the wish to attend art school; but the desire niggles at us until we overcome the teacher's comments and apply to the college of art anyhow. We recall the ache from not being chosen for leading roles by the high school theater director, but we remember the excitement and the exhaustion of experiences in performing arts elsewhere and decide to become a theater arts major on both undergraduate and graduate levels. We are told that marketing is a difficult field, but we find pleasure in controlling other's ideas and decide to investigate both marketing and advertising.

These examples show how we might unbind unconsciously applied false limits, open our minds, heed our positive experiences, overcome negative factors, and then succeed where success has been denied previously. This looking again in a new light might allow us to apprehend, to grasp a new perspective on an old situation or problem, and then to apply it appropriately (Papert 1980). This
looking again is an act of reperception. We reperceive daily without realizing the why's and the how's of our behavior.

We say "I know what we've done before, but ..." and proceed to outline a whole new way of organizing or operating or functioning in a familiar situation. We shed our preconceived notions about a candidate when he shakes our hand and smiles.

Each reperception is situation-specific. Each meets Feldhusen and Treffinger's (1985) criteria for creativity as a process of change in thinking and action, a combination of previously unconnected ideas into a new idea or concept which requires change. And each changed view is essentially a qualitative phenomenon, a new emphasis on a familiar experience (Pickard 1990). Because we have been able to look beyond unconsciously or externally applied limits and unbind them from our past, we have been able to open our minds to new possibilities. We have reperceived.

Can we use reperception?

Because reperception is situation-specific, we have to be aware of each situation and how it seems to us. This is difficult, again, due to previous experiences and expectations which can tint or taint our lens without our knowing. This awareness may not touch the origins of functionally fixed concepts, but it can provide a useful means for looking at new situations with lessened bias from previous experiences.
We can use reperception in our dealings with others to heighten our awareness of when we project our ideas on them. We can listen more closely to their perspective, not blocking it with preconceived notions, labeling "right" or "wrong" in word, in deed, or by inference. We can try to look at the other side of the story, the aspects which don't appear on the five o'clock news.

Personally, we need to consider whether we have heard so much about our "irrational ideas" that we have stopped sharing them. Have we put away our favorite "projects" because someone we respect has said incessantly that our annoying muddling ways and disorganization must be cleaned up now and forever? Are we busily engaged on so many levels that friends complain because we never have time together? Have we repeatedly panicked the Pup because our concentration is so complete that we do not hear entreaties to be taken outdoors? Has internalization of incidents like these caused us to shut down our creativity so tightly that even trying to view anew is difficult?

Ultimately, we may be tempted to ask why we can't draw, can't do, can't be creative and how we came to view ourselves this way. We need not ask this on the psychoanalytical level, for which few are sufficiently trained, but on the personal level.

We need to ask whether we can develop the capability to look at all aspects of situation and terrain, aware of our lens, and reach new decisions about ourselves. We need to decide whether we can make "sense of the present, in an act of perception or problem-solving" (Campbell 1989, 231) which is essentially the same as making sense of the past (Campbell 1989).
We must decide whether reperception is an acceptable option for reconsidering previous experiences. Robert Fulghum's philosophy exemplifies this level of reperception. Fulghum feels that a person's perception of a door determines whether the door is for coming or for going. "One depends on the other. Every exit is an entrance. The door swings both ways. The only way out is always in" (1991, 92).

Summary

We have seen how reactions by and interactions with others, many of which we cannot recall, influence our self perception by shaping our image of "right" and "wrong" over the years and how we apply our perceptions when viewing both ourselves and other persons.

We seem unaware of our habitual ways and fixed mindsets which cloud our views of ourselves and others. We need to recognize and label the previous experiences and the set behaviors involved. We must sensitize ourselves to the influence of these factors in our lives.

We tend to view our creative processes, too, without being able to cite or to trace the multiple experiences which have compounded to formulate our current self image and our image of others as either "can" or "can't."

48
It is essential for us to reexamine how we consider ourselves and others without the superimposed experiences garnered from scattered, often unrelated, instances across the years. We need to look at ourselves, our friends, our family members, our situation, and our terrain with new, clear, situation-specific lenses. We need to shed preconceived notions and to view all aspects for fresh insights.

We need to reexamine our "single seamless mental fabric" (Campbell 1989, 237). We need to reperceive.
CHAPTER III

THE CREATIVE PROCESS: AN OVERVIEW

Introduction

How do we reexamine a "single, seamless mental fabric" (Campbell 1989, 237) of preconceived notions when both the warp of our experiences and the woof of our perceptions are invisible to us? Perhaps we need to examine the components of the creative process per se for clues to why we have preconceived notions in this realm.

This chapter is an overview of the literature, intended to help us examine the whole picture of the creative process. It is a discussion of creativity's unpredictability, inexplicability, dichotomies, and occasional manifestations. Its purpose is to help us assemble the assorted pieces of the puzzle concerning our creative processes, rather than to reduce the creative process into such miniscule specific or specialized components that we fail to recognize creativity in our daily existence.

This variety of components, in itself, is evident as a characteristic of creativity. We can see how our response to a situation varies with the situation per se and the terrain, making it difficult for us to activate a concrete reapplication of what we have learned previously.
In this chapter we will read quotes or synopses of information from over forty published perceptions regarding creativity. We will reconfirm the ongoing nature of creativity.

We will see that creativity functions on many levels of reality and consciousness, often joining previously antithetical ideas or objects to form a new whole. Creativity is innate, unpredictable, messy, inexplicable, and exhausting. There seem to be as many views of the creative process as there are people reading and writing about it!

We have found in Chapter II that each person looks at creativity in a slightly or even a completely different way, each person's view of creativity being clouded by his/her own previous experiences and/or expectations. In this chapter we will discover that the varied views of creativity may be due to the nature of the creative process itself.

We have found that people can become functionally fixed in a specific pattern of behavior beyond which they cannot move. We have also seen that creativity includes perceptual shifts, the ability to look at a familiar problem or situation in a new way. Functional fixedness blocks our ability to unbind ourselves from the past and open our minds to new possibilities. It blocks our ability to experience perceptual shifts which are part of the creative process.

The ongoing cumulative nature of our experiences with the creative process has both positive and negative effects on how we view ourselves and others as having a history of or being capable now of enjoying the creative process.
One commonality emerging from Chapter I and Chapter II is that we all do hold views, some of them strong views, about creativity. We range from believing that “I’m not creative” to seeing creativity as an innate and ordinary mental process. These views all reflect our perceptions of creativity for ourselves and for others.

We may need to reexamine our perceptions, to consider ourselves and others as being capable of participating in the creative process despite years of superimposed “I can’t” or “You can’t” experiences.

Even if we have been able to access our own creative processes, we may need to reperceive ourselves as being creative to some degree. But before we can see ourselves as being creative to any degree we need to know exactly what kind of processes we are getting into.

Identifying the Creative Process

If we are to discuss the creative process, we need to start by forming a shared identification of its components. One possible approach would be to build a model.

Attempts to design an explicatory model of the creative process would have to account for the perpetual choice process inherent in the human mind (De Bono 1970). The mock-up would need to show creativity’s pervasive, illusive, universal, definitionally
difficult nature (Cooper 1991) and its diverse and complex scope (Marsh and Vollmer 1991). The pattern would be messy, filled with contradictory interpretations, and lacking certain conclusions (Thompson 1991). The prototype would work to change fixed linkages, an activity that many of us find uncomfortable, despite existing forces holding them in place (Thompson, 1991).

These attempts at replication would need to include the creative process's numerous aspects, as seen in the literature search which follows. The process is unpredictable, inimitable, chaotic, nonconscious, innate, infinite, ordinary, emotional, healthy, and occasionally disruptive of relationships with peers and pets. It is relaxing, exhausting, exhilarating, trancelike, and timeless. It causes us to be cranky. It relates or reconciles two previously unrelated or incompatible levels or realms. It is inexplicable and lacks sufficiently domain-specific descriptive language.

Numerous researchers and authors have identified what they consider "peak" periods of potential for creative growth within childhood. The research and commentaries don't necessarily share the same chronological boundaries or examine the same characteristics of creativity. The disparities make it difficult for us to compare and to draw specific conclusions from these studies. The commonality is that the potential for creative growth exists within each normally developing child during different ages and stages in life (Alexander 1984; Amabile 1989; Auerbach 1972; Dacey 1989c; Davy 1980; Erikson 1963; Gardner 1980, 1983; Hoffman 1988; Howieson 1981; Lutzer 1991; Maslow 1968, 1971; McCabe
Some researchers feel that peak periods for creative growth either exist or can be encouraged within adults, also citing different ages and potentialities (Dacey 1989c; Gordon 1961; Gordon and Pose 1981; Patterson 1986; Rosenman 1988).

As we have seen in Chapter II, one author also denies this possibility, stating in one article that he can isolate no real information on ideal periods of life for adults to foster creativity (Dacey 1989b).

Such findings add to the complexity of identification, rather than its simplification. At times, we find it difficult to separate environment from heredity, the latter being the innate creativity which "all babies are, in principle, born with" (Maslow 1971, 79). Other researchers and authors have addressed this puzzle as well (Amabile 1989; Franklin 1989; Torrance 1965; and Willemsen 1979).

Thus, the first difficulty in examining the creative process through a literature review is that authors vary in what they report so that we have difficulty finding commonalities. Whether this is due to author bias or to the topic per se is an issue for examination in another paper.

Another difficulty in identification of the creative process comes when we try to look too closely, to focus on miniscule pointillistic points rather than on the complete picture. Any explanation resulting from this reductionistic type of approach makes sense only within the narrow confines of the specific assumptions being addressed (Csikszentmihalyi 1988). Looking
closely does not allow us to step back and view the whole picture, the gestalt of our creative processes. It simply provides us with a view of one piece of the creative process puzzle.

A third difficulty occurs if we reflect our own biases as observers or if we temper our observations, knowingly or not, with self-fulfilling expectations (Arasteh 1976; Getzels and Jackson 1962; Rose 1987; Shouksmith 1970; Sternberg 1988; Torrance 1965). Seeing only what we expect to see does not allow us to identify our creative process beyond this expectation. We have discussed this in greater detail in Chapter II.

Could this be why clinical examination of a process is so difficult? Does the application of personal lenses, influenced by past experiences, situation, and terrain vary so greatly among individuals that no real consensus can be found? Can this be why Wallach and Gruber (1989) refer to contradictions and gaps in the existing literature which demonstrate the impossibility of generalizing about creativity and the creative personality? Is this why the creative process seems so clear when we experience it individually and so murky when we try to define it?

When we look too closely, when we reduce the creative process into too many small components, when we identify only what we expect to identify, then we miss the full extent of our creative processes.
What Are Some Components of the Creative Process?

If we look at what various authors describe as components of the creative process, without losing the essence of the process, what do we find?

**Adaptation as part of the creative process**

We find that creative processes interact and facilitate each other continually (Mansfield and Busse 1981). This overlapping is one of the factors we have already seen in the negative sense of "I couldn't and I still can't." However it can exist in the positive sense as well. Whenever we use a positive ongoing experience as a basis or as a part of our response to a new situation, we have allowed one process to interact with another.

Adapting the application of any previously successful thought process, even in similar instances (Weisberg 1986), is an application onto the current situation and terrain. This adaptation is useful if the situation and the terrain are sufficiently similar to our previous experiences. The adaptation can be less than useful if we adapt rigidly, using previous experiences which are insufficiently similar (Howard 1983). If the "fit" is not exact, then we need to adapt the previous to fit the present. This process of adaptation is a part of creativity.
How we feel about the results of this adaptation will be evaluated in the light of both current and previous experiences (Marsh and Vollmer 1991). As we have seen in Chapter II, this evaluation is part of the “lens” which we use for viewing choices available to help us the next time a process is needed. Because we all have different life experiences, another person’s lens will vary with his/her experiences, opening other possibilities while we both view the same situation and terrain.

As part of this cycle, our success in a situation determines how we view our own creative process ability now and also influences the future, adding layers of previous experiences to later considerations. Each success increases our confidence and our chance for greater success in accomplishing subsequent goals. Each failure has the opposite effect.

Contradictory elements and unpredictability as part of the creative process

If our experiences with the creative process meet with difficulties as we attempt to match previously useful responses within the situation and terrain, then we are likely to see the creative process as an “unpredictable pattern of progress indigenous to each creative endeavor” (Bargar and Duncan 1990, 66). Perhaps we will see it as an impractical hindrance as well. How can an unpredictable pattern be useful to us? We feel “good” when we predict, act, and see our prediction materialize as a reality.
Unpredictability feels like "failure" to us, like Renfrow's (1984, 234) "bad" experience. Predictable patterns are so much easier to apply that we may be tempted to continue using generalized predetermined responses rather than trying to vary them in the new situation. This variation is a part of the creative process.

How comfortable can we be if we are expected to engage in the "series of polar behaviors" (Torrance and Hall 1980, 10) exhibited by the more visibly creative persons which may make them seem to be operating in opposite directions mid-process? We have been trained from childhood to meet expectations of understandable behavior. To be operating simultaneously in opposite directions cannot be comfortable unless we have experienced positive results and reinforcements from this process on previous occasions.

How comfortable can we be if we function in the dichotomies described by Abraham Maslow (1968), such as being mature and childlike at the same time? As children, we are told to "act our age" and to "grow up." As adults we rarely hear anybody tell us that it is permissible to be childlike adults romping through the exploration of an idea which has just "hit" us. This childlike adult contradiction is part of creativity, part of what allows us to view a situation on various planes, part of what allows us to reperceive.

Another contradiction has been observed among people who we consider more visibly creative. At times they may seem to be "fired up," to be using more energy than we seem to possess. They may be accessing their creative processes so fully and so deeply that their concentration cannot be broken. They seem to be on a "creative high."
At the other end of this pendulum swing, the more visibly creative person may have what seems like an equal and opposite reaction: he/she is so exhausted, so worn out, that movement is impossible. The "high" is gone. Responses are flat, if not outright depressed.

Some of the visibly highly creative persons seem to swing further end-to-end and deeper top-to-bottom in accessing and utilizing their creative processes. The intense "high" from creativity far exceeds our own sense of enjoyment following engagement in our own creative processes. The depressed opposite swing goes far beyond our feeling of relaxation or exhaustion after we have accessed our creative processes.

No literature has been found regarding this contradiction, but both the author and her Advisor have observed this phenomenon and the cultural reaction to it in highly creative members of their own families (Murray 1992).

If creativity is oriented more toward personality than toward achievement (Maslow 1968), and if achievement is valued more in our culture, then how can we be comfortable reconciling the personality opposites of more creative persons?

If a highly creative person has greater success in reconciling the opposites of his/her nature, while less visibly creative persons may have more difficulty identifying their own opposing facets (Torrance 1979), can we be comfortable with the wide extent of reconciliation on a continual basis?

Are we seeing creativity as unpredictable due to this "presence of seemingly contradictory elements in the personality of
creative individuals" (Domino 1970, 50) which manifests itself within the creative process? Is unpredictability in our processes a cause or an effect of our creative behaviors? Are our more visibly creative processes likely to seem unpredictable or is unpredictability what drives our processes? This whole issue takes on characteristics of the chicken-and-the-egg debate.

Janusian process as part of the creative process

Edward De Bono describes more creative persons thus: They find the distinction between forward and backward thinking to be arbitrary; they look "backward in a new way in order to move forward" (1970, 105); they feel that being effective means "being right only at the end" (1970, 107). If this is true, then the more creative person's concern with generating new patterns may confuse those of us who have been brought up to fear the "wrong" idea. We are not accustomed to hearing that a "wrong" idea may yield the "right" idea later on (De Bono 1970). We are far more accustomed to "wrong" is "bad" and needs to be corrected.

Calvin Taylor and Frank Barron (1963) feel that the more visibly creative persons attempt complex syntheses of and solutions for problems by special attention to disorder; that they have an especially strong need to find order where none appears; and that they devote full attention to the unclassifiable in this manner. If we are equally unaccustomed to this concept of "good" disorder, of "good" in going multiple ways at once, then we may feel
uncomfortable thinking about accessing this aspect of the creative process.

Albert Rothenberg tells us that looking backward/forward is a "janusian process" (1990, 15) of multiple simultaneous conceptions of multiple opposites, of antitheses existing side by side or on equally valid planes, which leaves "the mark of implicit unexpectedness and paradox" (1990, 15). Surely multiple aspects and antitheses on equally valid planes happen in all of our lives without our awareness as we sort out activities at home and at work. Yet we may never relate our own experiences to seeing openly creative persons engage in this janusian process.

Do we feel comfortable looking backwards at issues, intentionally living with disorder, and looking at multiple opposites on equally valid levels? The answer is "yes, to some extent." We all engage in various degrees of these aspects of creativity on an ongoing level without conscious realization. Looking more closely simply puts us closer to the individual trees so that we miss the gestalt formation of the forest. In so doing, looking closely may also make us feel uncomfortable about the more intense aspects of behaviors exhibited by more visibly creative persons.

Other components of the creative process

Because we have seen that each of us views our own creative processes in an individualized manner it is interesting to see how
various authors view creative processes in ways similar to yet different from authors we have considered already.

Arthur Koestler claims that creativity "always operates on more than one plane" (1964, 35-6).

A. M. Poreh and A. D. Whitman describe creativity as a "multifaceted construct" (1991, 177).

Timothy Thompson cites creativity as "often messy, full of contradictory interpretations, and unlikely to provide certainty regarding conclusions" (1991, 47).

Robert Bargar and James Duncan consider creativity a "generic human psychic process" (1990, 68).

William J. J. Gordon (1961) calls creativity a process in which the emotional is more important than the intellectual and the irrational is more important than the rational.

Richard Woodman and Lyle Schoenfeldt (1990) say that creativity involves the full variety of variations possible per person based on his/her processes and behaviors in a complex interaction with the situation.

It is no wonder that most researchers today cannot agree on what happens in the creative process (Dial 1991). Each acknowledges in his or her own terms a part or parts of the same general view held by all.

We have seen that components of the creative process may include adaptation, unpredictability, janusian views, and complex syntheses of previously unassociated or disassociated objects or concepts from various planes.
What all of these descriptions share is the aspect of reperception. We look and look anew (reperceive) before we can adapt. We use the views afforded us by polarities, by a return to childlike inspections, or by the janusian process to aid in our synthesis of multiple experiences from our multiple planes of existence. This synthesis is a new perception fused from the old. It is reperception.

How we and the authors cited view this list is a product of our own experiences, our own perception of the creative process.

**Perceptual shifts within the creative process**

Common to all of our experiences in perception and reperception at any level is the concept of perceptual shifts. These shifts allow us to alter slightly how we view a given event or problem. We may be more aware of these shifts than of any janusian process or multilevel synthesis as we select and rearrange in everyday life.

Perceptual shifts occur when we look at a familiar problem or object in a new way. We need a new hat. The geranium has died. Its pot has a straw cover. When we decide to use the flowerpot cover as a new straw hat we look at the familiar and reach a new conclusion. This process is a perceptual shift.

Alicia Pagano suggests that agreement does exist among writers that the creative process is a part of our daily life in the "selection and the rearrangement of materials, ideas, and actions ...
(into) ... an order that makes a statement about the world in which we live" (1979, 131).

Rollo May views creativity as occurring in an act of encounter between two poles of being and nonbeing which changes the world-self relationship (Rutenbeek 1965).

May and Pagano reinforce Koestler's concept of creativity as operating on more than one plane (1964) in a "bisociation ... (of) ... two habitually incompatible matrices" (Koestler 1964, 59).

This discovery of hidden similarities as a pattern within the creative process (Koestler 1964) is a means for us to cope with life's daily situations and terrains. It is how we use our lens to help us search through previous experiences from varied planes and decide whether to apply these experiences within new venues.

Perhaps we consider persons more creative if they are able to search and to apply the results of this search more rapidly than we do. Creative persons seem to find, state, and solve problems of which we are only marginally aware. They look at the familiar environment in strange ways or turn strange settings into the familiar to facilitate coping skills, much like Gordon's Synectics (1961) process for analytical and analogical thinking.

Possibly they see the world in alternate ways, "take different perspectives, do so quickly, and realize their implications more fully" (Lindauer 1983, 2), looking beyond the obvious to find the familiar in the unusual (Lindauer 1983).

Or maybe more creative persons are more able to function as described by Sartre, to use the power of imagining as well as of perceiving. Perhaps they perceive things both as the things are and
as they are not, forming images for a so-far nonexistent future (Sartre 1972). Perhaps these more identifiably creative persons know the "difference between being grasped-as-nothing and being given-as-absent" (Sartre 1972, 209) in applying what can and cannot be seen to both immediate and distant situations and terrains.

Feasibly, this perceptual shift allows us to reconcile unfamiliar, habitually unrelated, or incompatible poles and planes as we find (or are found by) and attempt to solve life's problems. Perceptual shift helps us prepare for the foreseeable and/or the unforeseen future. In this way, perceptual shift is ongoing for us but may seem more visible in acknowledged creative persons.

Perhaps the perceptual shift's inherently multilevel, multiple time frame helps cloud our lens on creativity in our life if we try to view too specifically, try to be too exact in our replications of previously useful experiences. We find it difficult to "pin down" what we need when our perception is changing, is adjusting continually as new aspects of the situation appear.

Perhaps perceptual shift is the true way in which we cope with situation and terrain, chaos and inconclusiveness, emotional, irrational, and unpredictable in life by allowing us to adapt. Perhaps perceptual shift is a necessary mechanism for reducing functional fixedness so that we can adapt, we can reconcile, we can engage in the creative process of reperception.

This reperception, in return, can free us to grow and to change. By shifting our perceptions, by reperceiving, we can move on to a new level of coping with a new situation or terrain.
What Happens if We Engage in the Creative Process?

How do we respond to the creative process?

While we engage in the creative process in an ongoing manner daily, from recognizing a new possibility for a straw hat to scheduling a conference call for two dozen persons in several cities, few of us actually experience and respond to the insistence ascribed to the creative process by persons more visibly involved in it as a profession.

How might we as less visible creative persons respond when an idea rises with insistence? Would we think hurriedly at first, changing thoughts rapidly as suggested by George Shouksmith (1970), followed by pressing on to pursue other methods of developing our new idea? Would we focus on the first flash of insight without worrying what might happen, as suggested by Maslow (1971)? Would we heed author Ray Bradbury's admonition: "The instant lightning strikes, jump out of your chair and run and go do the poem or the story or the novel ... Get it done." (Zdenek 1983, 76)?

Or would we go with the evidence which suggests that "creative endeavors cannot be forced or hurried" (Bargar and Duncan, 1990, 66) and allow them to flow at their own speed? Would we follow Alex Osborn's "truly creative is seldom automatic" (1963b, 35) or M. Csikszentmihalyi's "flow" (1988, 36) of action according
to an internal logic without conscious intervention (1988)? How would we respond?

The answer would seem to be based in our perception of ourselves as creative or not creative, in how we cope as individuals with situation and terrain, in how we apply our individual lens to the immediacy of idea versus time constraints and other obligations. Considering Jack Matson's theory that "the best, most creative ideas are usually those which look the lousiest, stupidest, or most ridiculous" (1990, 277) we might be more likely to discount the seemingly irrational last-minute idea and proceed to our next task.

We might ignore the immediacy unless we are among those persons more disposed to view creative thought processes as inimitable and impossible to practice in advance, with outcomes we cannot predict (Pickard, 1990). In this case we would answer the insistence, like poet Amy Lowell who feels an acute awareness of the "imperious insistence which brooks no delay" (Ghiselin 1952, 112) of her words when they are ready to be written. Lowell describes a "suffering ... (that is) ... almost physical" (Ghiselin 1952, 112) and unrelieved until the poem has been completed.

Again, it would be our personal lens, shaped by past experiences, filtering out possible responses to our predicament: do we discount the irrational, follow to the unpredictable, allow the insistence to reach closure? This would be how we decide whether to sustain the original insight, evaluating and elaborating and developing it to its fullest (Shouksmith, 1970) or to continue to our original destination as we left home or work. This would determine whether and/or when we access our creative process.
What do we find if we engage in the creative process?

If we should choose to follow the creative process rather than the day’s preexisting schedule, what would we find? Again, the authorities vary. Teresa Amabile (1989) has divided the creative process into the five stages of problem presentation, preparation, generation of ideas and possibilities (including the incubation phase), testing and/or validation of various possibilities, and assessment of outcomes.

Following this formula might constitute following the creative process as viewed by Amabile on a step-by-step level, but it does not account for the unpredictability, polarity, multiple plane, janusian aspects inherent in our unconscious ongoing creative processes. If we decide to follow this step-by-step, we become formulaic rather than spontaneous. We lose the flavor of our own inherent abilities as they rise. We are bound by “reductionist” (Els 1991, 104) rules rather than allowed to follow the insistence.

Gordon Vessels (1982) divides the creative process into these phases: openness, problem recognition and clarification, scanning of inconsistencies, imaginative insight, evaluation and elaboration and communication, a series more compatibly applied to what we have already learned about the creative process.

Diane Marsh and Judith Vollmer (1991) discuss the psychological perspective of the creative process: that it is both primary (emotional, intuitive, primitive, holistic) and secondary (intellectual, logical, rational, analytical) in aspect.
Maslow's earlier writing (1968) isolates three types of creativity; primary (processes), secondary (consolidation of others' ideas), and integrated (from philosophy or science). However, he focuses more in later writings (1971) on primary creativeness as the inspirational phase and secondary creativity as the working out and development of inspiration which relies on hard work and discipline as well as on creativity.

This "doing" aspect of interrelating our creative processes and the world is what we experience daily as we vary behaviors, choosing actions and reactions, being creative but "not productive in the ordinary sense" (Maslow 1968, 135). We have been considering the inspirational primary process phase of creativity underpinning these behaviors, what Gordon (1961) calls the satisfying aspect of creativity, in this paper.

What happens when these primary processes interrupt our lives, when they stop us at the door and say "Turn back!"? Do we tune in, tune out, turn back, or step forward? Most likely our response varies, once again, with our perception of previous experiences with creativity, and our personal view of the process. If previous calls have been heeded and have resulted in positive experiences, we are likely to view the "turn back" as an opportunity, a chance to advance by listening to what rises in transitional times as ideas transform from unconscious to usable. If previous calls have not resulted in experiences matching our expectations, or if answering these calls has resulted in less than positive experiences, then our lens may show us a less favorable view of this summons.
If we do decide to turn around and to follow the muse, to jump at Bradbury's lightning strike or to answer Lowell's imperious insistence, what will happen? Will we be guaranteed a successful session and relief from the "almost physical" feeling of impending creative experience? Not exactly.

Do real humans actually experience this process?

Author Susan Els (1991) describes her writing process as marvelous, miraculous, and defying organization. In her words: "Every time I pinned down a corner of the writing process, an opposite corner would pop up in rebellion" (1991, 13).

This frustration, added to Lowell's and Bradbury's description of urgency, doesn't make the creative process more easily coped with, more easily comprehended, or more comfortable for us to experience. How tempting it would be to look at the muse eye to eye and say: "You win. I'm leaving. And this time I'm out of here to stay!"

Thompson echoes Els, citing "muddling" (1991, 46) as being useful, usually necessary, in the creative process. In this muddling he includes chaotic action, hurried pace, disorder, messiness before resolution, the large number of variations possible for exploration, and the multiple try-reject-try sessions involved in the creative process. For those of us with tight schedules, other responsibilities, or a great need for order, even attempting to view
this spectrum causes panic, if not outright alarm, and a need to ask very clearly: "Am I brave enough to endure this again?"

If we do, indeed, choose to weather the creative process from chaos to completion, can we breathe deeply, put our coat on again, and leave at last? Not really. Lowell describes what comes next as a "semi-trance" (Ghiselin 1952, 112) experience which must not be broken into as she concentrates on poetic revisions.

Is this spectrum from chaos to trance worthwhile? Is it even healthy?

E. Paul Torrance (1965) says yes; increased levels of creative behavior can contribute to our general welfare and our mental health. Rothenberg agrees, stating that "key aspects of creative thinking ... consist of healthy thought processes that generally rise from healthy minds" (1990, 12). It seems that we need to remember, amid the imperiousness, chaos, and concentration that this is good for us. What else?

Marsh and Vollmer describe the creative process as an "incredibly energizing, draining motion that drives us" (1991, 112).

Liam Sherlock says of his father, entrepreneur and author Paul Sherlock: "It was the process that was important, rather than the result" (Lundstrom 1991, 8B).

Koestler, the social scientist, describes himself as being "irritable and hard to get along with" (Rosner and Abt, 1970, 140) when he is writing, followed by "an exhausted emptiness" at day's end (Rosner and Abt, 1970, 140).

Gordon (1961) attributes the fatigue, felt at the end of Synectics sessions, to the variable balance necessary as we
oscillate between the problem in mind and our efforts to illuminate it. "Individuals who ... entertain a great variety of variables without becoming confused are much more apt to be effective in a creative situation" (1961, 56), but they pay the price of an "exhaustion which is physical" (1961, 56).

This is the relaxing, timeless, satisfying, almost sleepy sensation associated with right brain directed activity which needs to remain intact until satisfaction is achieved (Edwards 1979). Interruption results in a crankiness, which is as justifiable as when we are awakened abruptly, and tends to cause social isolation (Torrance in Toth and Baker 1990).

This isolation is described by philosopher Sidney Hook's wife: "When Sidney works, it is in an inspired way. Once he starts working, you could sit on his head." Mrs. Hook's mother, the dog, and the cat know that it is best to get out of his way as he paces; that "you can talk your head off to him without getting a rise out of him." She concludes her portion of an interview with Rosner and Abt by adding: "And ill-tempered -- I want this to go on the record" (Rosner and Abt 1970, 297).

So, having decided to heed the insistent message, we find ourselves energized and drained, irritable and exhausted, disordered and isolated by both peers and pets. What happens if we don't return, if we keep the appointment for which we are bound?

British suspense novelist Ken Follet met as scheduled with interviewer Marian Christy, who described him as serious, with a blank stare. Follet admitted that he was shifting into active involvement in the creative process as they talked: "We're here
together, chatting, but at this moment I can see myself on the control deck of a space ship . . . " (Christy 1991, 44) a clear indication of his creative process continuing as they spoke.

It is no wonder that we mortals can't decide whether to stay or to go, to answer the more pressing forms of creative persistence, or to get on with life. We face the choices from exhilaration to chaos to exhaustion to noncommunication. If the persons most visibly involved in professional aspects of the creative process admit these dichotomies, then it is justifiable for us to view creativity through the occasionally clouded lens.

Can we explain this creative process?

Can we explain why we both feel (exhilaration and exhaustion) and experience (childlike adult behavior) dichotomies during the creative process? Can we explain why accessing our ability to reperceive a situation can be associated with so many varied perceptions?

Not exactly, but we can gain glimpses of insight from seven persons, all of whom point to inexplicability as a prime aspect of the creative process.

Vera John-Steiner explored the processes of persons acknowledged as creative in the arts and science, visible manifestations of the creative process. She found that it was easier for them to think about how they store information as a way to
introspect on how their minds function than it was to answer
directly the question "How do you think?" (1985, 17)

Martin Rosenman agrees: "... people are usually unaware of the
exact thinking processes preceding a discovery" (1988, 136) and
thus lack the ability to "provide a completely accurate account of

Gordon suggests that the creative process stops when we try
to self-analyze; that we cannot perform true analysis once the
process per se has ended (1961, 5).

Richard Mansfield and Thomas Busse perceive that the "lack of
controlled studies of creative processes ... forces a reliance on
descriptive personal accounts, which are subject to bias and
distortion" (1981, 86), as well as omissions (1981).

Rothenberg states that "Because creativity is unconscious ... it
cannot be explained or adequately understood" (1990, 48).

Torrance feels that problems with original ideas might be due
to lack of descriptive words for those ideas (1983).

Els offers a suggestion: "Other frameworks and languages
need to be developed to describe unconsidered processes of
creativity" (1991, 118).

Together, these seven authors show us that the creative
process may be inexplicable for lack of both explicatory language
and the ability to return to the process exactly as it happened.

These authors don't explain the variations, but they do give us
a better idea about why the literature regarding creative processes
shows such varied views of creativity. Maybe inexplicability, as

74
well as personal views, explains why authors' explanations of the creative process vary.

Authors, more visibly creative persons, and we mere mortals all view the creative process differently. We all vary in our perception of the creative process of reperception. It is this set of variations which influences our access to our creative processes.

Summary

Our literature search has shown that the creative process cannot be pinned down, that its manifestations vary with each of us; vary with our experiences, the current situation and terrain, and the lens through which we view ourselves.

Although we experience the creative process on various levels, we remain unaware of its existence. We don't think of ourselves as creative when we coordinate complex schedules for car pooling in a different order each day or schedule a conference call. We may not comprehend what happens when a flower pot cover becomes a hat, we just know that the idea has come to us.

A creative process is not completely transferrable because no two situations are exactly alike. Thus, attempts to reduce the process to formula and to pigeonhole more visibly creative people into specific characterizations are difficult, as Wallach and Gruber say, because "it is not possible to generalize about creativity and the creative personality" (1989, i). This indescribability of the
creative process, the essence of which is novelty, makes judgement difficult and may be a major reason why no accurate description exists (Rogers 1961). This is compounded by the lack of sufficiently descriptive words to help us “see” and thus understand the concept (Rose 1987) of creative processes.

We have seen that attempts to describe the creative process have to account for unpredictability, polarity, disorder, adaptation, perceptual shifts, and janusian processes on multiple levels. They illustrate the inimitable, chaotic, nonconscious, innate, ordinary, emotional, and occasionally disruptive nature of creativity. They highlight relaxing, exhausting, exhilarating, trancelike, and timeless aspects. They show how we relate or reconcile two previously unrelated or incompatible levels or realms. All this is difficult, however, because the creative process is inexplicable and lacks sufficiently domain-specific descriptive language.

The picture of variations, unpredictability, and inexplicability which emerges as endemic to the creative process must be questioned: is this what causes all of us to view creativity in so many ways? Is this why we are unaware of accessing our creative process daily? Is this why we see ourselves as "I can't" even as we "can" in a given situation? Is this why we rarely perceive ourselves as being capable of reperception?

Four factors emerge: (1) the creative process has varied aspects and varies within each individual, (2) our perceptions of the creative process vary due to our unique histories of life experiences, (3) we cannot return to and describe accurately a specific experience within the creative process once it has passed, and (4)
we lack a language specific to the creative process with which we can communicate on the topic.

These characteristics would seem to account for the murky nature of our attempts to describe the creative process for common communication, especially when we try to look too closely at or for components of the creative process. How we reconcile these factors will affect how we view the creative process as a whole, for accessing, experiencing, and enjoying, for ourselves and for others.
CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have seen that each person views creative processes through a personal "lens" which differs from any other person's lens.

We have discovered that researchers and authors in the field of creativity view the creative process in different ways. We have read that creative processes are innate, ongoing, multifaceted, and unpredictable. Creative processes are inexplicable because of the nature of the process itself, our inability to return to the process once we have moved on, and the lack of descriptive language specific to the process.

Our own views are based on previous experiences, many of them long forgotten, which either help or haunt us through life. Our experiences color our views of ourselves and of other persons as "I can" or "I can't."

We have seen that we utilize our primary creative processes unconsciously in our daily experiences. We use creative means to avoid using our creativity. We use creative means to avoid having to use what we see as our "noncreativity." Because we are unaware of our creative processes in action, we assume that they do not exist. We say "I can't."

If we are to access rather than to deny our innate creative processes, we need to be able to unbind our "I can't" mindsets, to break our functional fixedness, and to open our minds to the perceptions and reperceptions possible in our lives.
The thread of the creative process as a process of reperception, of looking at a situation or a concept in a new way, weaves through our discussion of the creative process. We find ourselves in a double ring of perceptions. We need to perceive ourselves as creative if we are to access our creative processes. Creative processes are processes of reperception. Thus reperceiving ourselves as creative is in itself a creative act. As we access, we reperceive; and as we reperceive, we access our creative processes. Accessing these creative processes enhances our life and brings us enjoyment as well as exhaustion with our creative experiences.

As any dieter will tell us, if he’s honest at least, the act of breaking a cookie makes it more edible.

The formula is simple. A perfectly straight break across the center of a cookie allows calories to escape equally from both sides of the cookie, rendering it into two harmless noncaloric broken bits to be consumed.

What is tasted in its consumption? Each piece has only half the taste of the original cookie, and thus must be eaten with its mate to provide a complete experience of gustatory recognition.

When a cookie is broken into even smaller pieces, each contains fractional amounts of the original taste-producing components, making it harder for us to identify what the taste and type were in the intact-cookie state.

We need to contemplate creativity as we do the cookie: to be viewed, tasted, and savored in its entirety. We need to view our own creativity as an ongoing process, less than visible for much of our
lives, yet contributing to the flavor throughout our lives. To do less is to lose the flavor, and more importantly, the enjoyment of our experiences.

It is hoped that we might be able to grow in our understanding of creativity as our own innate and ongoing process of reperception which enhances our lives subtly by adding flavor and enjoyment to our lives.
As with any creative process, writing this paper has offered opportunities to view creative process theory in action.

When this paper was turned in to my Thesis Committee on Wednesday, April first, it was complete in all aspects. It was done.

Fifty-four hours later, a niggling incubation finally struggled forth from the subconscious subconscious regions, gained a fingerhold in the unconscious, peeked into the preconscious, and poked a green sprout of doubt into the consciousness of the exhausted creative mind: WHY is the literature search section, the most difficult to comprehend, first? Why are readers being tossed directly into deep theoretical inexplicability? Is it because the guidelines say that literature searches go first? Bah, humbug, and fixed mindsets. Those rules are for linear thinkers. Convergent creative types don't always work that way. We like going backward to go forward. We're charter members of Janusians Anonymous.

During six hours of sleep the unconscious sought solutions. "Eureka!" and elation came at dawn. Polar opposites! Edition I could be adapted into Edition II, the reversed revision.

Disorder reigned as pencil, scissors, and tape were wielded with childlike glee. Introduction and conclusion were reversed and revised. Old Chapter I was less ominous as New Chapter III. New Chapter I had the post position it deserved. Exhaustion reigned.

The paper on reperception had been reperceived. The flavor was complete. There was joy in Creative Processville.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


Hopkins, Hilary, instructor, Critical and Creative Thinking Program. Interviewed by author, 24 April, 1992, Boston, MA. University of Massachusetts at Boston, Boston, MA.


Lundstrom, Mack. "Paul Sherlock, 59, Entrepreneur, Teacher, 'Enemy of Bureaucracy.'" San Jose Mercury News, 1 November 1991, 8B.


Murray, John R., Professor, Critical and Creative Thinking Program. Interviewed by author, 15 April, 1992. Telephone. Boston, MA.


Schwartz, Steven H., Professor, Critical and Creative Thinking Program. Interviewed by author, 24 April, 1992, Boston, MA. University of Massachusetts at Boston, Boston, MA.


Alice laughed. "There's no use trying," she said: "one can't believe impossible things."

"I daresay you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible thing before breakfast."

Lewis Carroll (1989, 118)