Some Relationships Between Creativity and the Reading Preferences and Choices of a Group of Sixth Graders

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Introduction

Toynbee's (11) appeal to Americans to cherish and nurture all the creative ability available and Russell's (7:305) dictum that the progress of civilization depends on people with new solutions attest to the urgency of identifying and cultivating creative potential.

The importance of literature in the life of an individual is also recognized. Hazard warns that "we can disregard the literature for childhood only if we consider unimportant the way in which a national soul is formed or sustained" (1:111). Educators and society in general have to some degree

heeded these exhortations, but little attention has been focused on whether or not there exists any relationship between creativity and literary experiences. The need to investigate this problem was justified by the results of a review of pertinent research. Kheiralli's (3) study of the free-reading of students of varying degrees of creativity was the only directly related inquiry found.

The Problem

Since reading is a medium of communication which is unstructured and leaves much to the reader, literature experiences are perhaps one of the best stimuli for developing creative potential. To explore this supposition and perhaps provide direction for implementing the ideas inherent in it, a study
of the reading preferences and choices of a
group of sixth graders ranging from high
to low in creative ability was undertaken.

The purposes of this study were to de-
termine whether or not more creative chil-
dren differ from less creative in reading
choices and preferences and if these prefer-
ences agree with a panel of authorities' pre-
dictions of them. Choice was defined as a
child's reading a book and preference as his
stating he liked it. Answers to the following
questions were sought:

1. Do more creative and less creative
children differ in the number of books they read,
in the number of "likes" they express for a list
of titles, and in their preferences for book cate-
gories?
2. Do boys and girls differ in their pref-
erences for book categories?
3. Do book preferences of children of
varying degrees of creativity differ from authori-
ties' predictions of them?
4. Do more creative and less creative
children differ in their reasons for liking or dis-
liking books?
5. Do children's reasons for liking or dis-
liking books differ from authorities' predictions?
6. Is there any interaction effect between
intelligence and creativity in relation to the
number of ideas per response children offer in
reaction to a book?

Procedure

To obtain data for answering the pro-
posed questions, one hundred sixth graders
in three schools in central Pennsylvania were
enrolled in the Explorers' Book Club. Scores
on three verbal tasks of the Minnesota Tests
of Creative Thinking were available for each
subject. The composite scores which ranged
from 28 to 248 were ranked from high to
low, and the subjects in the top, middle, and
bottom thirds were designated as high, mid-
dle, and low creative respectively. Scores
on the Lorge Thorndike Intelligence Scale
for this population ranged from 78 to 143.

During a three-month period the chil-
dren were asked to read from a set of thirty
titles provided by the investigator. Twenty-
five titles had been selected from books which
children's librarians nominated as popular
with sixth graders, and five were chosen from
among the best juvenile books of 1964 as
designated by the children's editor of the New

The children indicated in a log whether
they liked a book, if it was all right, or if they
did not like it. They also gave reasons for
their reactions. A panel of authorities in
children's literature rated each of the thirty
titles in terms of its appeal to the most or
least creative child. The judges also gave
reasons for their predictions. The contents
of the children's logs and the judges' re-
sponses in rating the books provided the data
for statistical treatment.

Analysis of Data

Analysis of variance was employed to
test the significance of differences among the
high, middle, and low creatives in their pref-
erences for book categories and in the num-
ber of books they read. A summary of
analysis of variance is presented in Table 1.
The interaction effect of creativity and intel-
ligence on the number of ideas expressed in
reaction to the books read was also tested
by analysis of variance. The significance of
differences between book category prefer-
ences of boys and girls and among high,
middle, and low creatives was tested by chi-
square, and children's reasons for liking or
disliking books and authorities' predictions of
them were subjected to content analysis. Pre-
liminary analysis indicated that in this study
reading choices and preferences were not
a function of intelligence.

Findings

The high, middle, and low creatives
differed significantly (p < .01) in the num-er of books they read from the total list
and from those rated as appealing to the most
creative child but not from those titles rated
as appealing to the least creative. Signifi-
cant differences among the three groups also
occurred when the number of "likes" or pref-
erences they stated for all books was tested. When preferences for book categories among the three groups were tested by chi-square, biography was the only type literature for which differences among the high, middle, and low creatives were significant (p < .01). In this case, the $x^2$ was observed to be 10.25 at two degrees of freedom. Contrary to this, boys and girls differed significantly in preferences for fantasy, realistic fiction, biography, and information but not poetry.

The high, middle, and low creatives did differ significantly (p < .05) in their preferences for books judged to appeal to the most creative child but not for those judged to appeal to the least creative. The preference means for books rated as appealing to the most creative child decreased in value from the high creative to the low, but preference means for the titles judged to appeal to the least creative did not increase in value from high to low as might be expected. The failure of the preference means for the latter group of books to increase in value from the high creatives to the low suggests a lack of agreement between authorities' predictions and children's preferences for these titles. It should be noted that in the analyses testing differences among subjects of varying degrees of creativity the means for the high and middle creatives appeared to cluster and together differed more from the means for the low creatives than from each other.

Content analysis of children's and authorities' reactions to the books revealed that the children commented more on factors relating to the literary components and format of the books, whereas the judges spoke more of character, reader involvement, and external influences. High creatives commented more frequently about reader involvement, literary components, and format than did the low.

The interaction effect of creativity and intelligence on the number of ideas per response that the subjects gave in reaction to

### Table 1. Summary of Analysis of Variance for Testing the Significance of Differences Among Book Preferences and Choices of High, Middle, and Low Creatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor Tested</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Analysis of Variance Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preferences for Books Rated as</td>
<td>High Creative</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>Between: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to Most Creative</td>
<td>Middle Creative</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>Within: 95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Creative</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>Total: 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferences for Books Rated as</td>
<td>High Creative</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>Between: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appealing to Least Creative</td>
<td>Middle Creative</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>Within: 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Creative</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>Total: 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferences for All Books on List</td>
<td>High Creative</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>Between: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle Creative</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>Within: 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Creative</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>Total: 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books Read (Choices) of Those Rated</td>
<td>High Creative</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>Between: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as Appealing to Most Creative</td>
<td>Middle Creative</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>Within: 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Creative</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>Total: 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books Read of Those Rated as</td>
<td>High Creative</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>Between: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appealing to Least Creative</td>
<td>Middle Creative</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>Within: 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Creative</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>Total: 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Books Read</td>
<td>High Creative</td>
<td>9.06</td>
<td>Between: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle Creative</td>
<td>7.88</td>
<td>Within: 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Creative</td>
<td>5.91</td>
<td>Total: 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction Effect of</td>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>Between: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity on the Mean</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>Between: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Ideas Expressed in</td>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>Between: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction to the Books</td>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>Between: 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05  **p < .01
the books was negligible and assumed to be zero. The analysis did reveal, however, that on an average the more intelligent subjects offered a greater number of ideas than the less intelligent, and the middle creatives more than either the high or low creatives.

Conclusions and Implications

Since the high and perhaps the middle creatives in this study liked and read more books than did the low creatives, less creativity appears to be more of a detriment to reading than more creativity an asset. The reading patterns of the low creatives in this investigation suggest that the onus for opening the doors of literature to this group be placed on the classroom teacher.

Efforts to provide worthwhile literary experiences for such children might encourage and cultivate their imagination and sense of wonder. The greater appeal that reading had for the more creative child concurs with Selye's (8) statement that some creative scientists can be classified as bookworms. C. W. Taylor's (10) findings also support this conclusion.

Results of this investigation suggest that children's preferences for types of literature generally appeared to be related to sex but not to creativity. The one exception in relating category preferences to creativity was biography. Since biography was preferred by the high and middle creatives, and since both groups commented more on factors relating to reader involvement as reasons for liking a book, perhaps group readings and discussion of biography would be profitable. Both the high and low creatives might benefit from this activity even if the low creatives participated in an audience capacity at first.

In addition, since the high creatives tended to be the least fluent, discussion may encourage verbalization of the empathy felt and at the same time assure them that their ideas do have merit. C. W. Taylor (9) proposes that a person can be so critical of himself that the outward flow of his ideas is restricted.

The findings of this study also suggest that to some extent book preferences of children of varying degrees of creativity tended to agree with a panel of authorities' predictions of them. This agreement is consistent with the findings of Landau (4) and Jefferson (2). On the other hand, the disagreement in this study is supported by Norvell's (6) findings. Further insight into the reading of children might be obtained by asking children of varying degrees of creativity to recommend books for their peers.

References
