

# **A Key Founding Influence for the Field of Creativity: An Ode to Joy**

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Joy Paul Guilford was born in Nebraska on March 7<sup>th</sup> in 1897, and he passed away in Los Angeles on November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1987. What many people remember him for is the rejection of the idea that intelligence could be reduced to a simple and single thing. Instead, he built on the work of Thurstone, and others, to develop an entirely new way of thinking about human intelligence. Along the way, he created a foundation for the future of creativity research and reiterated that creativity was something that should never be reduced to one simple concept.

I remember a gentle man, who sat down to lunch with me during an Annual Creative Problem Solving Institute in 1971, while I was working as an undergraduate student to make copies and ensure that the faculty of the institute had everything they needed. What Guilford never knew was that I had read a few of his articles while I was taking courses in the Creative Studies Project. When he sat down and I looked at his nametag, I was speechless. He looked right at me and asked if it was OK to join me. When I finally gained enough composure to indicate that it would be a pleasure, he was already sitting and smiling. I thought, what an honor, but now what do I do?

He made it so easy! He started right in with “So what brings you to Buffalo, young man?” I told him the story of choosing to go to Buffalo State because of my interest in teaching – and then I had the opportunity to join the Creative Studies Project and take courses on creativity. He said, “That’s great, what do you think about the courses?” The conversation went on and on. He seemed genuinely interested in what a young and not-so-important student thought about creativity. Little did I know that he was serving on the International Advisory Board for the experimental program!

That CPSI, I had the chance to attend one of his sessions on the Structure of the Intellect Model (SOI). Guilford was a well-known and established creativity researcher, so there were many people in the session when it started. I sat in the back of the room after making sure that all the chores were taken care of. I noticed that many of the participants left the session after the first 10 or 15 minutes – and overheard a few of them remark about how boring the session was. So I had the chance to join the few who remained in the front of the room. Dr. Guilford seemed to be more at ease with a smaller group, and the session became much more interactive. To my surprise, he remembered having lunch with me earlier that day, and asked what I thought about the SOI model.

I was terrified! Thankfully, Ruth Noller, my creativity professor, had strictly enforced her reading assignment policy so I had indeed read about the SOI and had a perspective

to offer. My response turned into a small group discussion – and one of my most memorable CPSI moments. Fortunately, Guilford was able to attend a number of other CPSI's and when he noticed me at his sessions, he smiled and remembered our first meeting at lunch.

Years later, after I joined the faculty at the university, I worked on a *Frontiers in Creativity Research* conference. It was more of a “conference within a conference.” I had noticed that fewer and fewer creativity researchers were attending CPSI, so I worked with the Creative Education Foundation to invite some of the more established creativity researchers, along with some of those who I thought were doing some cutting edge work in the field, to come to CPSI and hold some special sessions. It was June of 1984, and the symposium included keynotes by Teresa Amabile, Dean Simonton, Michael Kirton, and Conrad Toepfer. E. Paul Torrance gave the opening address, and discussants included Sidney Parnes, Morris Stein, among others.

Following the conference, Angelo Biondi, the Executive Director of the CEF, approached me with the idea that I should edit a book with the same title as the conference. At the time, I was only an Assistant Professor seeking tenure, so I took on the project. The goal was to provide an edited collection that provided an up to date summary of the key accomplishments of our field, and to provide some glimmers into the *Frontiers of Creativity Research*.

After giving the project some serious thought, I decided to invite the key creativity scholars within the field. Jacob Getzels, Donald Treffinger, Donald MacKinnon, Calvin Taylor, Sidney Parnes, E. Paul Torrance, Joe Khatena, Carl Hausman, and Morris Stein, along with a few additional classic pieces were to be included. I also invited a few scholars that were just beginning to have their work recognized including Susan Besemer, Min Basadur, Teresa Amabile, Dean Simonton, and Michael Kirton. I also wanted to lead the book off with a contribution from J. P. Guilford.

When I contacted Dr. Guilford, I asked him if he wanted to join the project. His first response was interesting. He was reluctant to take on the task of writing a chapter. He told me that he had more fully retired and that he no longer had graduate students to do the literature searches and ensure that what he wrote was up to date. I explained that what I wanted to do was reprint his now famous, but sometimes hard to access, 1950 presidential address to the American Psychological Association. Then, as a second part of his contribution, I wanted to reprint his twenty-five year retrospective on progress that had been made within the field of creativity research. The third and final part of his contribution was not to update the additional dozen years of progress, but to write as if he were giving advice to future researchers. He agreed that he could and would do that – so we decided to call this section *A Vista of Future Research on Creativity*.

In retrospect, I realized that this truly was a gentleman-scholar of the highest level. Although initially reluctant to contribute, I recognized that the reason for his reticence was his inability to do the scholarly work. I could tell during the conversation that he was much more receptive to the idea of offering a future vision. In fact, there was a long

pause in the conversation after I asserted that he, of all creativity researchers, had certainly earned that right. It was followed by a humble comment: “I think I can and want to do that.”

Serious work started on the book in 1985, and it was published very late in 1987. Dr. Guilford and I worked together on a few drafts for his contribution and I sent him the final draft during September of 1987. His wife, Ruth, was kind enough to send me the final piece just following Dr. Guilford’s death in November. With this keystone piece, the book was ready for printing. This was to be the last piece of scholarly work J. P. Guilford would do in his lifetime, and I was so honored to be able to include it.

Since then, many scholars have recognized Dr. Guilford for his contributions to the field of psychology and the emerging discipline of creativity. The Journal of Creative Behavior published a short memorial shortly after his death, his University has established a center and scholarship program in his name, and an entire special double-issue of the Creativity Research Journal commemorated Dr. Guilford’s 1950 Presidential Address. His foundational influence on the field has been clearly recognized, but the character of the man – integrity, kindness, humility – and his dedication to advancing scholarly inquiry for others will always remain with me. His song continues to be sung.