

SCIENCE NEWS®

A Science Service Publication
Vol. 111/May 14, 1977/No. 20
Incorporating Science News Letter

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COVER: Radar image shows what may be a gigantic volcano, about 700 kilometers across, on the planet Venus. If so, it would dethrone Olympus Mons on Mars as the largest known volcano in the solar system. The "image" portion of the cover photo shows variations in radar reflectance or brightness (percentage of the signal returned). The elevation contour lines were extrapolated from differences in "range"—the distance from earth to a given point on the surface of Venus. See p. 313. (Photo: R.M. Goldstein, R.S. Saunders, M.C. Malin/JPL)

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Editorial and Business Offices
1719 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Subscription Department
231 West Center Street
Marion, Ohio 43302

Subscription rate: 1 yr., \$12.50; 2 yrs., \$22; 3 yrs., \$30. (Add \$2 a year for Canada and Mexico, \$3 for all other countries.) Change of address: Four to six weeks' notice is required. Please state exactly how magazine is to be addressed. Include zip code.

Printed in U.S.A. Second class postage paid at Washington, D.C. Title registered as trademark U.S. and Canadian Patent Offices.

Published every Saturday by SCIENCE SERVICE, Inc., 1719 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. (202-785-2255) TWX 710-822-9433 SCIEN NEWS.

LETTERS

Discovering creativity

The article by John H. Douglas "Discovering Creativity" (SN: 4/23/76, p. 268) will undoubtedly bring an avalanche of mail so I want to reply immediately, hoping to stay ahead of that onslaught of reactions.

Two statements specifically prompt my reply—one says "creative abilities mastered in one field probably are not much help in preparing one to be creative in another field." The other is "they find only specific sets of creative abilities for each task, not generalized problem-solving skills."

These statements need to be challenged or tested by more survey data. Observing the most contributing members of society I find that those who are creative in one area are often (but not always) creative in other areas. Some persons approach all challenges of life with creativity, looking for new ways to do things, better ideas, more stimulating programs and innovative approaches. They are modern-day Leonardo da Vincis. When someone chooses to concentrate creativity in one area only, then only that area will evidence the creativity. (Using your words—only that "set of creative abilities is used" when other "sets" are available.)

Is it not possible that an intelligent person might use convergent thinking by choice for tasks not challenging—and divergent, creative thinking for tasks more intriguing? Isn't it an open choice for those capable?

*Ellen Brashares
Plymouth, Ind.*

(In response to reader requests, we have compiled a bibliography of books and reports on which the series of creativity articles was based. To receive a copy, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Creativity Bibliography, SCIENCE NEWS, 1719 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C., 20036.—Ed.)

'Childfree' semantics

Concerning your article, "Avant-garde Parents: 'Traditional' Infants" (SN: 4/23/77, p. 262), I would like to call your attention to the word "childless." Like "penniless" and "homeless," the term "childless" carries the implication that an adult who is "less" something is lacking, deprived, unfortunate. The vast majority of adults who have chosen a lifestyle free of children certainly do not feel this way.

Might I suggest that you substitute the

word "childfree"? Young adults today are constantly subject to a barrage of subtle pro-natalist influences, and parenthood, after all, should be a responsible choice and not the mindless fulfillment of an obligation, as is so often implied.

Linda Drain Underhill

Clifton, Colo.

(The writer adds that she is "a mother, by the way, by choice."—Ed.)

BART's energy efficiency

The report that BART and other rail rapid transit systems may waste energy (SN: 2/12/77, p. 106) is based on the questionable conclusions of a study by Charles Lave which was summarized in SCIENCE, Feb. 11. Bruce Hannon, in the same SCIENCE issue, characterizes Lave's thesis as inappropriate and his conclusions unwarranted. We have refuted Lave's work in a discussion paper presented for publication to the Transportation Research Board. Our major conclusions are the following:

1. BART is now two-and-a-half times more energy efficient per passenger mile of travel than the average urban automobile; during peak periods, for peak direction trips, BART is eight times more efficient than automobiles. Even if the fuel efficiency of the average automobile on the highways is increased to the level recently recommended by the Secretary of Transportation, BART's energy requirement for each passenger mile of travel will be 40-45 percent less than that of automobiles.

2. The energy cost of constructing a highway alternative to BART is almost twice that of the energy required for building BART. When the energy cost of building auxiliary facilities such as parking structures is added to the cost of the highway alternative, BART's energy construction costs are less than half those which would be incurred in building the alternative. Therefore, BART has provided the bay area a considerable energy savings.

Controversial studies such as those by Lave receive considerable publicity. However, because of its serious implications for public policy, this research deserves careful scrutiny. Hannon stated in reference to the Lave article, "Controversial ideas must meet the highest possible standards" (SCIENCE, Feb. 11). Unfortunately, Lave's calculations do not meet such standards and his conclusions are unwarranted.

*Miriam Hawley
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