Curiouser and Curiouser: 
Down Exploring the Rabbit Hole

Joy G. Haerens
Professor, Business and Office Technologies
My family is my most valuable treasure and my greatest source of creativity and delight.

My husband, Tim, and I have been married for almost seven years. We have four grown children. Kimberly is a partner in a law firm specializing in insurance law in Santa Ana; her husband, John, is a general manager for Nordstrom Rack in Pasadena. Matthew has returned to school as culinary arts major at Chaffey; his wife, Liz, is a technician at an ophthalmologist in Upland. Christian is a junior high lead associate at a church in Fullerton; his wife, Monica, is a graduate student at CSU Fullerton and a special education intern at a school in Placentia. Emily is a registered dietitian at Pacific Hospital of Long Beach. We have four beautiful granddaughters: Jillian, Andrea, Keira, and Emily.

I was born in and reared just outside of Hot Springs, Arkansas, by perhaps the world's best parents. My father, Grady (nicknamed "Joe") taught me that life is serious, but almost always funny. He taught me to laugh at myself but with others. My mother, Dorothy, taught me to be independent and self-reliant. Mom sets the bar high: she is generous, kind, strong, caring, and yet powerfully assertive. I have many strong, beautiful southern women friends, and one of the finest of those remarkable women is my sweet mom. And, she can cook!

She is somewhat famous for her pies in her community. She has tried to teach me to make these culinary masterpieces, but I'm better with a microwave and takeout. I am reminded to be a better person each time I think of my parents, and I am thankful for them every day. I have an older brother, Larry, and an older sister, Janie, both are gifts to me and my family.

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Faculty Lecturer of the Year 2010–2011

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References


• Problem Finding: Creative people are constantly surprised. They don’t assume that they understand what is happening around them, and they don’t assume that anybody else does either. They question the obvious.
  o Find a way to express what moves you.
  o Look at problems from as many viewpoints as possible.
  o Figure out the implications of the problem.
  o Implement the solution

• Divergent Thinking: Try to enhance three dimensions of divergent thinking that are generally held to be important to creativity: Fluency, or the knack for coming up with a great number of responses; flexibility, or the tendency to produce ideas that are different from each other; and originality, which refers to the relative rarity of the idea produced.
  o Produce as many ideas as possible.
  o Have as many different ideas as possible.
  o Try to produce unlikely ideas.

Csikszentmihalyi outlines major obstacles to creativity:
• Attention is restricted by external necessity. There are real limits to how many things a person can attend to at the same time, and when survival needs require all of one’s attention, none is left over for being creative.

• Obstacles are often internal. In a person concerned with protecting his or her self, practically all the attention is invested in monitoring threats to the ego.

• A limitation on the free use of mental energy is an excessive investment of attention in selfish goals such as looking good or being the smartest.

Notes:
1In one study Csikszentmihalyi and his staff used the Experience Sampling Method to answer the question: Do people report more instances of flow at work or in leisure? The respondents were men and women working full-time at a variety of occupations. The experiment was designed to measure how often a person was in the flow state. The more time a person spent in flow during the week, the better was the overall quality of his or her reported experience. People who were more often in flow were especially likely to feel “strong,” “active,” “creative,” “concentrated,” and “motivated.” What was unexpected, however, is how frequently people reported flow situations at work, and how rarely in leisure.

The leisure responses were typically in the range we have come to call apathy, characterized by below-average levels of both challenges and skills. In this condition, people tend to say that they feel passive, weak, dull, and dissatisfied. When people were working, 16 percent of the response were in the apathy region; in leisure, over half (52 percent).

Thus we have a paradoxical situation: On the job people feel skillful and challenged, and therefore feel more happy, strong, creative, and satisfied. In their free time people feel that there is generally much to do and their skills are not being used, and therefore they tend to feel more sad, weak, dull, and dissatisfied. Yet they would like to work less and spend more time in leisure.

Joy G. Haerens
Lecturer of the Year 2011

If you asked Joy Haerens to write a description of herself, she would pen something like this:
“I have been a college teacher/professor for 36 years and taught at Chaffey for 22 years. I am fortunate to have a wonderful job which allows me to work with students daily. There is not a week during the school session that I do not learn something splendid and helpful from my students. I never lose sight of that superb gift! I view education as a creator of options and security. When you know more, you can choose more, and you sometimes become more indispensable. I also consider our relationship as student and teacher to be collaborative.”

This does tell us something about Joy. But it is just a quick view, one that tells us much about her priorities and attitudes about higher education, but just ask her Chaffey colleagues what they think of her, and we learn so much more.

Joy seems to have the ability to inspire co-workers to burst into poetry! Recently, when asked to comment on working with Joy, a colleague wrote this:
“Joy is Sunshine!
‘Joy is Great!
‘Joy is always there for you...
‘When you are down and troubled . . . just call Joy!”

Another faculty member wrote this haiku in response to the same inquiry:
“Joy Joy Joy oh Joy
She brings me joy night and day
A perfect name match!”

Others responded with pages of heartfelt prose. Here is a sampling of their comments:
“If there ever was a model teacher, Joy is the one.”

“I had re-entered the teaching profession when I started with Chaffey College ten years ago. Joy has been a tremendous leader, mentor, coach and friend.”

“Joy’s soothing mannerisms and personality makes it a “joy” to work with her.”

“If Mother Theresa had conceived a child with Sun Tzu, Joy would be their baby girl!”

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“If Vito Corleone and Mahatma Gandhi had been cloned into a woman, the result would be Joy!”

“She is a master tactician who can make everyone feel like they walked away a winner.”

“Joy is always there, with an ear for listening, to provide a sounding board, or to kick you when you need kicking, without regard to the other demands on her time.”

“She is the sage friend and mentor who has the uncanny ability to look for the best and remain optimistic while remaining pragmatic.”

“Well, I could go on. But if I did, I would have to answer to Joy, who would not want all of this praise lavished upon her. Rather, she would, I know, prefer to have it rebound to all of her colleagues instead.

So, I will close by paraphrasing some comments by another of Joy’s good friends, who tells us that one of Joy’s favorite books is WHAT HAPPY PEOPLE KNOW, by Dan Baker. Joy’s life is a virtual illustration of the twelve qualities of happiness described in Baker’s book.

Joy lives her life with love for those around her – her husband Tim, her mother Dorothy, her children and grandchildren, her students, her colleagues, and her friends. She takes on each day with a sense of optimism, forging her own destiny, and creating her own happiness. She is courageous – clearly not afraid to choose who she is, and where she is going. She gives a three dimensional meaning to the phrase “live well and thrive.” She has a sense of getting outside of herself, to give to others without thought of receiving anything in exchange. Regardless of her daily challenges, and we know that there have been plenty of these for all of us this past year, Joy has been able to maintain her perspective, and to turn problems into possibilities, while maintaining her sense of humor all the while. Happy people know their purpose. Joy embraces her purpose. She is doing what she was meant to do, and she does it every day, with passion, with warmth, and with so much class.

For all of these reasons, and many more, we are lucky to have Joy Haerens as a friend and colleague. I won’t keep her from you any longer. Please welcome our 2010-2011 Faculty Lecturer of the Year, Joy Haerens.

Appendix
Notes on Creativity:
Abraham Maslow, who founded humanistic psychology and created Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs, eventually extended his theories to include innate curiosity. The creative process represents the highest degree of emotional health as the expression of self actualization.

In CREATIVITY: FLOW AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF DISCOVERY AND INVENTION CsIKSZENTMIHALYI offers these observations to lead readers to enhance creativity.

The Acquisition of Creative Energy.

• Curiosity and Interest: The first step toward a more creative life is the cultivation of curiosity and interest, that is, the allocation of attention to things for their own sake.
  o Try to be surprised by something every day.
    • Stop to look at the unusual car parked at the curb.
    • Taste the new item on the cafeteria menu.
    • Actually listen to your colleague at the office.
  o Try to surprise at least one person every day.
    • Instead of being your predictable self, say something unexpected, express an opinion that you have not dared to reveal, ask a question you would not ordinarily ask.
    • Break the routine of your activities: invite a person to go with you to the show, a restaurant, or a museum that you never visited before.
  o Experiment with your appearance.
  o Write down each day what surprised you and how you surprised others.
  o When something strikes a spark of interest, follow it.

• Cultivating Flow in Everyday Life
  o Wake up in the morning with a specific goal to look forward to.
  o Do what you do well. (If you do anything well, it becomes enjoyable.)
  o Take charge of your schedule.
  o Make time for reflection and relaxation.
  o Shape your space.
  o Find out what you like and what you hate about life.
  o Start doing more of what you love, less of what you hate.

• Internalize as many of these supporting structures into your personality as possible.
  o Develop what you lack.
  o Shift often from openness to closure. (Finish things.)
  o Aim for complexity.

The Application of Creative Energy

• Problem Finding: Creative people are constantly surprised. They don’t assume
coming managerial leaders, etc., who also listens to me hold forth about managers and leaders who have influenced my thinking, and who gets as excited as I about new Tom Waits releases.

Leona Fisher, who expertly edited the text and also encouraged me to add more personal relatedness to the presentation.

Timothy Haerens, who encouraged me every day and told me that I was up for the challenge. Who also did more than half our share of our “chores” to give me time to work on the document, and who edited and listened.

Emily Haynes, who is my cheerleader, who encouraged me daily and listened to my ideas before they were fully formed.

Dave Karp, who excitedly talked with me daily about this task, read drafts of the work, and routinely connected me to resources to expand ideas.

Jan Rathiel, who encouraged me and nudged me when I sometimes became stuck. Jan also helped me select the work for the front cover of this booklet.

Eva Rose, who supported and encouraged me every day. Eva reminded me constantly that I had things to offer and listened to me has I learned new things and formed new ideas.

Michelle Tardiff, who splendidly edited this document for grammatical and punctuation flaws.

Donna Walker, who is superwoman. Donna is a taskmaster. She is encouraging and can do anything. Donna knows everyone at Chaffey and knows how to get things done. Donna is indispensable!

I would also like to extend special thanks in assisting with this presentation to Debbie Van Dyke and the Lithography Department; Cherie Ventola, Graphic Services; Gary Reinschmidt, Theatre Arts; and Information Technology Services.

Others who have given me support and encouragement, connected me to resources, listened to me agonize, and kept me on tasks include but are not limited to:

Misty Burrue, Abel Chen, Orville Clarke, Kendrik Davis, Carol Dickerson, Terri Helfand, Elayne Lavitt, Laura Luszcz, Cynde Miller, Shelley Marcus, Carmon Navarro, Joanne Osgood, Marylee Requa, Robert Rundquist, Jackie Tchakalian, Cindy Walker, Judith Weingartner, and Teresa Williamson.

Appendix
Notes on Creativity:

Curiouser and Curiouser: Down Exploring the Rabbit Hole

“Curiouser and curiouser!” cried Alice (she was so much surprised, that for the moment she quite forgot how to speak good English); “now I’m opening out like the largest telescope that ever was!”

~Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, by Lewis Carroll

When I was being encouraged to accept the nomination for Faculty Lecturer of the Year, I could think of many reasons to run away from it. I offered justifications to refuse the proposal, which were summarily deflected: “I’m too busy,” I protested. “We are all too busy,” you countered. “My schedule is too unpredictable,” I defended. “Duh, you work at Chaffey; that’s part of the excitement which keeps things interesting,” you replied. “I’m too scared,” I admitted. “Do it anyway,” you challenged. I was confronted with relentless pressure to get over myself and just do it. I’m happy that I did accept this privilege and thank my colleagues who did not allow me to hide behind my excuses. This is one of the greatest honors of my professional life. Yet, I tremble from the doubt that I am enough to stand stammering before my impressive and talented colleagues and friends. I am moved by your faith in me. I am awed by this audience. This auditorium is filled with scholars and life-long learners—surely you already know everything. I have so many questions to ask you; in fact, I thought about constructing a list of questions for you and using my allotted time to exploit your genius.

I do humbly thank those of you who nominated me, who voted for me, and who have showed up today to share this day with me.

Shortly before I accepted the nomination for Faculty Lecturer and while I was still resisting, Marie Boyd and Ardon Alger asked me the question asked of all faculty lecturers, “What are you passionate about right now?” I responded spontaneously, “Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s and Daniel Pink’s works.” They asked what it is that has me so excited. The answer to that question has led me to this presentation.

I have lost count of the many authors and experts who have stirred my interest as I’ve prepared this presentation. After Marie Boyd, who was the Faculty Lecturer in 2006, introduced us to Malcolm Gladwell’s The Tipping Point, I found myself reading feverishly and talking ad nauseam with my friends about Gladwell’s works, which also include The Outliers, Blink, and What the Dog Saw. I am intrigued by Gladwell’s revelations about what we think and how we react, about the processes leading to success, and about his notions that it is as much, if not more so, about time and timing—the number of hours invested in practicing as well as the timing of markets, science, technology, and individual chronological age when players enter an
Daniel Pink, who studies the changing world of work, is convinced that we need to use the skills our right-brains control – creativity – if we are to compete in today's global economic markets, that is, to prepare ourselves, our children, and our students for jobs of the near future. As educators, we may need to elicit our students' abilities to not only solve a problem but to create something, whether it is a product or service, that goes beyond function and is beautiful, whimsical, or emotionally engaging. Pink is convincing as he awakens us to the increasing need to foster creativity if we in the United States are to continue to compete successfully in business.

Daniel H. Pink is the author of several bestselling books about the changing world of work. 


His articles on business and technology appear in many publications, including *The New York Times, Harvard Business Review, Fast Company,* and *Wired,* where he is a contributing editor. He also writes a monthly business column for the U.K. newspaper, *The Sunday Telegraph.* Pink has provided analysis of business trends on CNN, CNBC, ABC, NPR, and other networks in the U.S. and abroad. And, he lectures to corporations, associations, and universities around the world on economic transformation and the new workplace.

A free agent himself, Pink held his last real job in the White House, where he served from 1995 to 1997 as chief speechwriter to Vice President Al Gore. He also worked as an aide to U.S. Labor Secretary Robert Reich, and he has held other positions in politics and government.

He received a BA from Northwestern University, where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, and a JD from Yale Law School.

I am committed to chiseling away that thick cloud covering my right-brain functions. Here are a few of my plans: Starting April 20 – the day after this presentation – I will, with intention and purpose, begin my own Flow/Happiness/Creativity project. I will model a goal-setting monthly journal based on Gretchen Rubin’s *THE HAPPINESS PROJECT* in which I will incorporate Csikszentmihalyi's creativity suggestions. Among my goals will be to continue to take art and dance classes and continue to learn foreign languages. I will take keyboard or guitar lessons and maybe even try to learn to read music. I will clear clutter from my home, my office, and my head. I will openly share with my friends and colleagues, and when appropriate, with my students, my discoveries along this journey.

**Acknowledgement:**
Thank you for the honor of being Chaffey College’s 31st Faculty Lecturer of the Year. It’s been a huge challenge with equally huge blessings. This has been a profound journey for me. And, while I was never able to squelch or completely turn off the sometimes sheer panic of standing before you today, the angst was lessened as it was accompanied by excitement and curiosity. Thank you for calling me to overcome my fear and reach beyond my comfort zone.

I offer my gratitude to the many people who make this yearly event possible. There are many too many to thank. However, I will try to list a few who have generously given to me throughout this mission:

**Ardon Alger,** who encouraged me to accept this challenge and gave of his time and expertise to photograph the art work on the front cover.

**Quinton Bemiller,** my art teacher, who doesn’t laugh when I paint. Quinton pulls art out of his students and exemplifies creativity. Quinton has created a safe place for me give creative ventures a try.

**Marie Boyd,** who encouraged me to accept this challenge and spent evenings editing, making suggestions, and tutoring me. Who told me to give up some of my fear and put more of myself, more “Joy,” into the work. She has been an invaluable gift.

**Thierry Brusselle,** who links me to interesting articles, music, news items, up-and-coming managerial leaders, etc., who also listens to me hold forth about managers and leaders who have influenced my thinking, and who gets as excited as I about new Tom Waits releases.
Repression can also stop flow. When people restrain themselves out of fear or invest so much in being liked that the only feedback they take into account is approval and admiration, they will have difficulty reaching the flow state.

What makes activities conducive to flow is that they are designed to make optimal experience easier to achieve. They have rules that require the learning of skills, they set up goals, they provide feedback, and they make control possible. They facilitate concentration and involvement. Extrinsic goals such as wanting to impress an audience, being the smartest, and other forms of needing attention stop flow. Csikszentmihalyi warns us that there is a danger that the person who has mastered a domain of information will use it to become an overbearing bore. We all know people who can’t resist flaunting in order to impress others. It is less likely that one will become a bore when one is intrinsically motivated.

Closing notes:
Perhaps we could work to achieve flow or optimal experiences within our classrooms to achieve better learning. Flow experiences seem to be key elements of things that make us happy. Being happy helps us to be healthier and more creative; being more creative helps us get jobs and gives us a competitive edge in local and global markets. Flow drives individuals to creativity and outstanding achievement. Recognizing this new direction that institutions will need to take, whether we deliver education or other business involving products or services, I am convinced that Csikszentmihalyi has at least part of an answer for educators and businesses.

If ever there was a time when we, as a country, a state, and an institution need new solutions, new energy, new directions, it is NOW. I challenge my fellow colleagues – faculty, staff, administration – to consider the principles of “Flow or Optimal Experience” to solve some of the challenges we face. Flow theory leads us to engage in divergent thinking to develop cultures of inquiry and creativity that may enhance

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who has conducted many extensive studies and authored numerous books on creativity and happiness, asserts that we are more productive and happy when we are in a state he calls flow. Flow is the mental state of operation in which a person in an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and success in the process of the activity. Csikszentmihalyi argues persuasively that we can learn to reach this flow state to become more creative and increase happiness.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (pronounced chick-sent-me-high-ee) is a psychology professor at Claremont Graduate University in Claremont, California, and is the former head of the department of psychology at the University of Chicago and of the department of sociology and anthropology at Lake Forest College. He is noted for his work in the study of happiness, creativity, subjective well-being, and fun, but is best known as the architect of the notion of flow and for his years of research and writing on the topic. He is the author of many books and over 120 articles or book chapters. Martin Seligman, the former president of the American Psychological Association, described him as the world’s leading researcher on positive psychology. He is one of the most widely cited psychologists today, in a variety of fields related to psychology and business.

In his seminal work, FLOW: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF OPTIMAL EXPERIENCE, Csikszentmihalyi outlines his theory that people are most happy when they are in a state of flow — a state of concentration or complete absorption with the activity at hand and the situation. The idea of flow is identical to the feeling of being in the zone or in the groove. The flow state is an optimal state of intrinsic motivation, where the person is fully immersed in what he or she is doing. This is a feeling everyone has at times, characterized by a feeling of great freedom, enjoyment, fulfillment, and skill — and during which temporal concerns are typically ignored.

Csikszentmihalyi and his books changed my attitude about work, play, and retirement. I had been in a state of much reflection as my peers were making plans to retire over the last few school years. Of course, I injected myself into scenes of my life without these cherished friends and colleagues walking about the campus with me and of my fate as I, too, within only a few years, will enter a world without clocks, meetings, and paper grading. Work and leisure have been transformed for me. Csikszentmihalyi’s studies routinely and convincingly revealed that we are happier at work than at leisure despite our preoccupation with retirement.1 Additionally, as I began to absorb his flow concepts, I reflexively became engaged and excited. I wanted to talk about these things and to try on his flow principles in my work with students and the college as a whole. And, to my surprise, I began to feel that there would not be enough time for me to accomplish all that I wanted to accomplish — notice I no longer used the phrase needed to accomplish — before I left my work.
In the classroom. I was filled with the hope and optimism of a neophyte. I was reminded of my first years of teaching over 36 years ago when one of my more seasoned colleagues, Jim Phillips, would lovingly refer to my “Oh, my my! I love this job!” enthusiasm as “piss and vinegar.” I was stirred and stirred up back then and wanted to teach, to learn, to enjoy my work and my students. Over the days and weeks as I was absorbing Csikszentmihalyi’s notions, this flow mentality began to insinuate its way into my psyche. I was excited again.

In fact, while reading Csikszentmihalyi’s FLOW: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF OPTIMAL EXPERIENCE, I became a Csikszentmihalyi groupie. I immediately read his CREATIVITY: FLOW AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF DISCOVERY AND INVENTION, which has led me to believe that there is hope for even me to become more creative and expressive in both my personal and professional lives. I am in a ceaseless state of rethinking how I view and relate to my work, my leisure time, and the approach I will use to convey information to students.

Just as I was getting into my new focus of doing what I already do, but with more energy, meaning, purpose, and positive effect, Marie handed me DRIVE: THE SURPRISING TRUTH ABOUT WHAT MOTIVATES US by Daniel Pink. I was confronted with rethinking how I had viewed the future of education, especially career education. My mission expanded.

In A WHOLE NEW MIND: WHY RIGHT BRAINERS WILL RULE THE FUTURE and DRIVE: THE SURPRISING TRUTH ABOUT WHAT MOTIVATES US, Pink questions the conventional wisdom of the way we do business. He alerts us that the United States is moving from an industrial world dominated by left-brain logical thinking to a right-brain intuitive world. He asserts that the nation is entering into a new age, which he calls the Conceptual Age, and holds that the future will call for creators and empathizers, pattern-recognizers, and meaning-makers.

I do not want to sound apocalyptic. It is not my intention to drench you in fear and admonitions that we are not enough, for, in fact, we are marvelous here at Chaffey College. We are already achieving much of this. Chaffey is a magnificent pool of creative and talented resources! And, we have direct access to each other. Surely we can pool these talents to meet the challenges Pink forecasts.

Csikszentmihalyi hypothesized that people with several very specific personality traits may be better able to achieve flow than the average person. These personality traits include curiosity, persistence, low self-centeredness, and a high rate of performing activities for intrinsic reasons only. People with most of these personality traits are said to have an autotelic personality.

The autotelic self transforms potentially entropic experience into flow. Therefore the rules for developing such a self are simple, and they derive directly from the flow model. Briefly, they can be summarized as follows:

1. Setting goals. To be able to experience flow, one must have clear goals for which to strive.
2. Becoming immersed in the activity. After choosing a system of action, a person with an autotelic personality grows deeply involved with whatever he is doing. To do so successfully one must learn to balance the opportunities for action with the skills one possesses.
3. Paying attention to what is happening. Concentration leads to involvement, which can only be maintained by constant inputs of attention. Having an autotelic self implies the ability to sustain involvement. Self-consciousness, which is the most common source of distraction, is not a problem for such a person. Instead of worrying about how he is doing, how he looks from the outside, he is wholeheartedly committed to his goals.
4. Learning to enjoy immediate experience. Being in control of the mind means that literally anything that happens can be a source of joy.

Csikszentmihalyi discusses several things that stop or get in the way of flow experiences.

As flow experience or optimal experience is intrinsic and achieved when the participant loses himself or herself in an activity, extrinsic goals such as grandstanding or showing off in an effort to impress the group when not rewarded will not lead to flow experience, but will frustrate the performed and interrupt, if not derail the flow experience for others. Any lapse in concentration will interrupt the flow experience. An obstacle to experiencing flow is excess self-consciousness. Preoccupation with the self consumes psychic energy because in everyday life we often feel threatened. In flow there is no room for self-scrutiny. Because enjoyable activities have clear goals, stable rules, and challenges well matched to skills, there is little opportunity for the self to be threatened. A person who is constantly worried about how others will perceive her, who is afraid of creating the wrong impression, or of doing something inappropriate, is condemned to permanent exclusion from enjoyment.

This is true also for people who are excessively self-centered. A self-centered individual is usually not self-conscious, but instead evaluates every bit of information only in terms of how it relates to his desires. For such a person everything is value-

“Ours has been the age of the ‘knowledge worker,’ the well-educated manipulator of information and deployer of expertise. But that is changing. Thanks to an array of forces—material abundance that is deepening our nonmaterial yearnings, globalization that is shipping white-collar work overseas, and powerful technologies that are eliminating certain kinds of work altogether—we are entering a new age—the Conceptual Age. This new phase is ‘...an age animated by a different form of thinking and a new approach to life—one that prizes aptitudes that I call ‘high concept’ and ‘high touch.’ High concept involves the capacity to detect patterns and opportunities, to create artistic and emotional beauty, to craft a satisfying narrative... High touch involves the ability to empathize with others, to understand the subtleties of human interaction...’”

~ Daniel Pink, A WHOLE NEW MIND: Why Right Brainers Will Rule the Future

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people feel a nearly intolerable sense of emptiness when they are alone, especially with nothing specific to do.

Csikszentmihalyi says that it is not surprising that in our studies of the quality of daily experience it has been demonstrated again and again that people report the most positive moods overall when they are with friends. This is not only true of teenagers: Young adults also are happier with friends than with anyone else, including their spouses. Even retirees are happier when they are with friends than when they are with their spouses or families. Because a friendship usually involves common goals and common activities, it is “naturally” enjoyable. Let’s face it; many of our students seem to view their roles connected to the college as a place to hang out with friends and the time they spend in the classroom as time to catch up with text messaging and to access their social networking sites. Activities such as work groups, study groups, teams, and other forms of collaborative teaching seem to be a perfect setup for developing specific activities to capitalize on socializing or interacting with others.

I agree with Csikszentmihalyi that it is important to realize that flow experiences are just as real as being hungry, or as concrete as bumping into a wall. When a person invests all her psychic energy into an interaction, she becomes part of a system of action greater than what the individual self had been before. This system takes its form from the rules of the activity; its energy comes from the person’s attention. But, it is a real system—subjectively as real as being a part of a family, a corporation, or a team—and the self that is part of it expands its boundaries and becomes more complex than what it had been.

One of the most frequently mentioned dimensions of the flow experience is that, while it lasts, one is able to forget all the unpleasant aspects of life. This feature of flow is an important by-product of the fact that enjoyable activities require a complete focusing of attention on the task at hand—thus leave no room in the mind for irrelevant information. While in a state of “flow,” a person is challenged to do her best, and must constantly improve her skills. At the time, she doesn’t have the opportunity to reflect on what this means in terms of the self—if she did allow herself to become self-conscious, the experience could not have been very deep. But afterwards, when the activity is over and self-consciousness has a chance to resume, the self that the person reflects upon is not the same self that existed before the flow experience: it is now enriched by new skills and fresh achievements.

Csikszentmihalyi describes the Autotelic Personality:
Any activity contains a bundle of opportunities for action, or “challenges,” that require appropriate skills to achieve. For those who do not have the right skills, the activity is not challenging; it is meaningless. For those whose skills are so great that the activity is too easy, the activity becomes boring.

Why are some people weakened by stress, while others gain strength from it? Basically the answer is simple: those who know how to transform a hopeless situation into a new flow activity that can be controlled will be able to enjoy themselves, and emerge stronger from the ordeal. There are three main steps that seem to be involved in such transformations:

Pink acknowledges that “Peter Drucker’s knowledge workers—mostly left-brain skills—have made us rich but that these left-brain skills will no longer be enough to keep us competitive.” Pink allows that while left-brain directed aptitudes are still necessary, they are no longer sufficient. We need both approaches in order to craft fulfilling lives and build productive, just societies.

For clarity the chart below will help illustrate the characteristics which are known to reside on each side of our brains:

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<th>LEFT BRAIN FUNCTIONS</th>
<th>RIGHT BRAIN FUNCTIONS</th>
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<td>uses logic</td>
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<td>detail oriented</td>
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Left Brain/Right Brain by Dan Eden

The **left** side of our body is "wired" to the **right** side of our brain, and vice versa.

The right side of the brain is considered to be more creative, while the left side of the brain is considered to be more logical.

Pink begins his convincing theory that we will need more right-brain skills by telling us that there are broad forces in the economy that are changing the way we do business in the United States. He calls these forces the three A’s:

1. **Abundance**
2. **Asia**
3. **Automation**

**Abundance:** We in the United States simply have more than we’ve ever had. The information economy has produced a standard of living that our grandparents could not even imagine. My parents and grandparents, as surely many of yours, lived through the Great Depression and were defined by scarcity. On the other hand, many of us in the United States today are shaped by abundance.
With sadness I acknowledge the economic divide existing in the United States, and I consider with much concern that many, including an alarming number of our own students, are living below the poverty level. Under bridges, in boxes, in cars, and shelters. This is tragedy and shame for all of us. Yet, in spite of the recession we are experiencing, there is evidence of abundance. Most of us could drive within 10 miles of our homes to find department stores, stores catering to all sorts of niche markets, super stores of all kinds where you can buy not only household and office staples, but designer and whimsical items that we do not even know we need until we spot them seductively displayed on shelves. Some of you would say that you have moved to more remote and civilized places just so that you can escape this sort of consumerism and nonsense; let me say this: “Internet shopping.” Yes, we can troll the Internet to find things we didn’t know we needed. Do we need all the stuff we are collecting? Pink asks us, “What’s in our garages?” How many of us park our cars outside so that we can keep our stuff, our extra stuff, in the garage? Owning a car used to be a grand American aspiration. Today, there are more automobiles in the U.S. than there are licensed drivers.

Still, for many of us, our garages do not have sufficient space to store our extra stuff. Self-storage is a booming business devoted to housing this collection of things we are not using. The first “self-storage,” as we know it today, was started in the mid 1960s in Texas, and in 1972 Public Storage built its first facility in El Cajon, California. Self-storage is now a $17 billion annual industry in the U.S., nearly double Hollywood’s yearly box office take. Pink tells us that there are more storage facilities than there are McDonald’s restaurants, Wendy’s restaurants, and Burger King restaurants combined. We have a lot of stuff. Americans have duplicates of many durable and luxury items today.

Many who are reading or listening to this presentation not only own homes, but also own second homes or timeshares. It stands to reason that as our basic physiological needs are being met, we will be looking for something besides function in the goods and services we purchase. Pink contends that The Information Age has unleashed a prosperity that in turn places a premium on less rational sensibilities – beauty, spirituality, emotion. For companies and entrepreneurs, it’s no longer enough to create a product, a service, or an experience that’s reasonably priced and adequately functional. In an age of abundance, consumers demand something more. Look about your home. Look at your towels, teapots, and trash cans. Are they strictly functional or are they pretty or whimsical or artistic? Do you have an iPod or an iPad? Think about your cell phones and their magical features. Aren’t they products of design?

If you’re like a few million Americans, you’ve got a Michael Graves toilet brush or a Karim Rashid trash can that you bought at Target. Try explaining a designer garbage pail to the left side of your brain! Or consider illumination. Electric lighting was rare a century ago, but now it’s commonplace. Yet in the U.S., candles are a $2 billion a year business – for reasons that stretch beyond the logical need for luminosity to a prosperous country’s more inchoate desire for pleasure and transcendence.

~Daniel Pink

Faculty Lecture of the Year

Having strong connections with families, friends and co-workers gives you a 50 percent lower risk of dying in a given period of time. And research has found that having poor social connections can be as bad for you as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day, being an alcoholic, worse than not exercising and twice as risky as being obese. This information has been collected from over 148 different studies on social connections and a person’s wellbeing. When looking for different reasons why this is, there are many theories. Some believe that people that have more social connections are just more active. People with social ties are also more likely to seek out medical attention; this may be due to the fact that their social connections promote well being and good health. Another idea is that if person in a social network gets sick due to lifestyle, the people around them are more likely to change their lifestyle so the same does not happen to them. There is also the idea that social connections lower a person stress which in the long run as benefits to the persons health.

~Colleen Vernola, “Can Social Connections Actually Improve Your Health?”

retain more, and better relate the information to the task at hand. Not only did I learn how to work more effectively with students, I learned how to apply these skills to my own researching. I have repeated much of that workshop to my colleagues and other friends. This workshop was transformative for me. But, the question remained, “How can we attend to our students’ reading deficiencies and still teach the intended content of our classes? We don’t have to face this challenge alone at Chaffey as we have access to the services of our Success Centers where the goal is to help students learn how to learn and think about the subject they are learning and apply those skills. This team helps students and teachers not only with reading skills, but also math, writing, language, English as a second language, and most other disciplines in the district.

Another universally enjoyable activity is being with other people. Studies on flow have demonstrated repeatedly that more than anything else, the quality of life depends on two factors: how we experience work, and our relations with other people.

We may not think of socializing as an activity that requires the types of skills that Csikszentmihalyi would include in acts that could produce optimal experience. It may seem that chit-chatting or casual conversation requires little proficiency. But, in fact, we use many skills when we are socializing. Ask any shy person about feelings of anxiety and of being marginalized by dread and self-consciousness when around others in not only formal gatherings, but also informal settings. Yet, the fear of being left out of the flow of human interaction is certainly one of the worst. Most people feel a nearly intolerable sense of emptiness when they are alone, especially with nothing specific to do.

Curiouser and Curiouser: Down Exploring the Rabbit Hole
As I learn of Csikszentmihalyi’s optimal state, I recall times of my rare but thrilling experiences are reported to occur within sequences of activities that are goal-directed and bounded by rules—activities that require the investment of mental energy, and that could not be done without the appropriate skills. What a great set up for our classes and our students!

Of interest to many educators might be that one of the most frequently mentioned enjoyable activities is reading, which requires the concentration of attention and has a goal. To read one must know how to decipher written language. One must infer word meaning from context, follow a plot and empathize with characters. As well, he has to recognize contexts and be able to criticize and evaluate the author’s style. In this broad sense, any capacity to manipulate symbolic information is a ‘skill,’ such as the skill of the mathematician to shape quantitative relationships, or the skill of a musician in combining musical notes.” In other words, we must have both left-brain skills and right-brain skills. I am reminded that we faculty spend much time lamenting that our students lack reading skills. Judy Weingartner, a reading instructor and
dent tells junior employees to have patience and work hard, because one of these days they will be promoted to the executive ranks. At the end of the long struggle for advancement, the golden years of retirement beckon. “We are always getting to live,” as Ralph Waldo Emerson used to say, “but never living.” Csikszentmihalyi talks much about the need for us to release ourselves from social controls in order to feel flow.

Csikszentmihalyi’s studies reveal that the phenomenology of enjoyment has eight major components. When people reflect on how it feels when their experience is most positive, they mention at least one, and often all, of the following.

- First, the experience usually occurs when we confront tasks we have a chance of completing.
- Second, we must be able to concentrate on what we are doing.
- Third and fourth, the concentration is usually possible because the tasks undertaken have clear goals and provide immediate feedback.
- Fifth, one acts with a deep but effortless involvement that removes from awareness the worries and frustrations of everyday life.
- Sixth, enjoyable experiences allow people to exercise a sense of control over their actions.
- Seventh, concern for the self disappears, yet paradoxically the sense of self emerges even stronger after the flow experience is over.
- Eighth, the sense of the duration of time is altered; hours pass by in minutes, and minutes can stretch out to seem like hours.

The combination of all these elements causes a sense of deep enjoyment that is so rewarding people feel that expending a great deal of energy is worthwhile simply to be able to feel it.

As I learn of Csikszentmihalyi’s optimal state, I recall times of my rare but thrilling flow experiences and think how magical it would be if I could facilitate flow experience within my classes with my students. It seems within reach somehow as Csikszentmihalyi tells us that by far the overwhelming proportion of optimal experiences are reported to occur within sequences of activities that are goal-directed and bounded by rules—activities that require the investment of mental energy, and that could not be done without the appropriate skills. What a great set up for our classes and our students!

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In this conceptual age people are looking for aesthetic, meaningful, emotionally fulfilling products and services, which will require workers who excel in right-brain-directed areas. As abundance increases, we are turning to interests such as religion, meditation, and yoga classes and spending our money on the paraphernalia needed to enjoy those pursuits. We are investing our resources on things that make us feel good, make us feel smarter, make us think about things beyond making us better employees and satisfying our basic physiological needs. Many are actually looking for ways to spend money. Our parents and grandparents went to stores to look for things they knew they needed; today many go to stores to look for novel and uniquely designed items to buy. How many times do you go to Target to pick up a single item and leave the store with a basket filled with items that you were not even looking for, did not know you could not live without, when you arrived there?

Asia. Another broad force Pink identifies as changing business in the United States is Asia. He defines Asia as a generic reference to outsourcing and offshore knowledge work to high-aptitude/lower-cost countries including China, Hungary, India, the Philippines, Russia—anywhere but Europe and North America. Anything routine, that can be reduced to a series of instructions, is racing to wherever it can be done the cheapest. “Think of a task. If you can write down the steps, and if there’s a right way to do it, that job is a goner.” In the long run, the impact of Asia’s rise is profound. Many of the “knowledge worker” jobs that have made this country rich are being done just as well by well-educated international knowledge workers for the wages we pay employees at fast food counters. Consider these points:

- A typical chip designer in the United States earns about $7,000 per month; in India, she earns about $1,000. In the United States, a typical aerospace engineer earns about $6,000 each month; in Russia, his monthly salary is closer to $650. An accountant in the United States can earn $5,000 a month, an accountant in the Philippines brings in about $300. These are huge salaries in India where the annual per capita income is $500.
- One out of ten jobs in the U.S. computer, software, and information technology industry has moved overseas. One of four IT jobs moved offshore in 2010.
- At least 3.3 million white-collar jobs and $136 billion in wages will shift from the U.S. to low-cost countries like India, China, and Russia by 2015.
- Nations such as Japan, Germany, and the United Kingdom will see similar job loss. The United Kingdom alone will lose some 25,000 IT jobs and upwards of 30,000 finance positions to India and other developing nations in the next few years. By 2015, Europe will lose 1.2 million jobs to offshore locales.

Let’s not forget that there are more English speakers in India than in the United States and that more people are studying English in China than there are citizens in the United States. Consider, too, that left-brain directed works can be done for a lot less overseas and delivered to clients instantly via fiber optic links. As the cost of communicating with the other side of the globe falls essentially to zero, and as devel-
Curiouser and Curiouser: Down Exploring the Rabbit Hole

3. Am I offering something that satisfies the non-material, transcendent desires of an abundant age?

Automation. Automation also leads to the disappearance of jobs. Last century machines replaced muscles. This century, software is replacing much of what our brains did for us. But at least for now, it can't replace the right-brain side – the creative. You can now go online and get divorces and construct wills. An uncontested divorce, Pink tells us, costs $2500 in Boston. He tells us that an uncontested divorce is mostly paperwork – it can be performed overseas or reduced to lines of code. Completescase.com offers an online uncontested divorce for roughly a tenth the price of the same service in Boston — $249. Software also replaces some work done by doctors, and accounting services are being outsourced to India and tax software such as Turbo Tax. If you are going to keep jobs in the U.S, you have to be able to do work that is hard to outsource or automate. You have to focus more on artistry, empathy, design, story-telling, contextual thinking, boundary-crossing thinking, and playfulness. Those things provide an economic edge.

The evolution of human economies, Pink tells us, “moves from farmers to factory workers to the information age… and now to the conceptual age. It’s the big ideas that make money, and we’ve got to find ourselves new, conceptual jobs in a new economy.”

Answers to these questions are the essential conditions of business success for the future:

1. Can someone overseas do it cheaper?
2. Can a computer do it faster?
3. Am I offering something that satisfies the non-material, transcendent desires of an abundant age?
advancement, and the nature of the work itself. He says that everyone needs a challenge if only to prevent boredom. He touted that the number one reason employees leave jobs is boredom. He would surely say that when our jobs or classes lack opportunities for flow experiences, we become bored. Bad things happen when our students become bored. They stop performing, they behave in disruptive ways, or they stop coming to class altogether.

We have to resist giving in to “dumbing down coursework” to appease students. I am reminded of my former colleague and dear friend Annette Walgreen with whom I worked at National Park Community College in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Annette could get her students to engage in learning that routinely led them to high levels of achievement and responsibility. When a student, dismayed by Annette’s high standards, would come to her to protest an assignment or try to negotiate a grade by telling her of how well he or she has done in the past, such as consistently high grades in high school and the praise he or she has always received for “being so good” at the tasks being discussed, Annette would say something to this effect: “The time for potential is past. Unspent potential is useless and a waste. If you want the benefits and the credit for potential, apply it.” Annette, called on her students like Gretchen Rubin calls on herself in THE HAPPINESS PROJECT, to turn potential into action. Flow theory suggests actions we can all take to our classrooms so we get our students involved in actions that lead to students performing at maximum potential.

Gretchen Rubin in THE HAPPINESS PROJECT refers to studies which reveal that happy people are healthier, recover more quickly from injury and illness, perform better on tests, and stave off Alzheimer’s disease for longer periods. We are learning today that creative pursuits make us happier. Rubin, like Csikszentmihalyi, believes that we can learn to be happier, and both these experts outline small and large actionable steps we can take to increase happiness.

It is helpful to review some of the obstacles to fulfillment implicit in the human condition so that we can learn how the optimal flow experience can be attained. Since the first recordings of prose and verse, storytelling has been loaded with adventures of heroes conquering evil villains and warding off threats to one’s own or others’ safety and well being. “And they lived happily ever after” is not an ending, but a pause before the next battle against a series of wicked interlopers. Csikszentmihalyi asserts that the primary reason it is so difficult to achieve happiness centers on the fact that, contrary to the myths mankind has developed to reassure itself, the universe was not created to answer our needs. Frustration is deeply woven into the fabric of life. And, whenever some of our needs are temporarily met, we immediately start wishing for more. This chronic dissatisfaction is an innate obstacle that stands in the way of contentment.

Csikszentmihalyi asserts that to achieve the autonomy needed to reach optimal experience, a person has to become independent of the social environment to the degree that they no longer respond exclusively in terms of its rewards and punishments. A person has to learn to provide rewards to herself. She has to develop the ability to find enjoyment and purpose regardless of external circumstances. This

When these questions are present, creativity becomes the competitive difference that can differentiate commodities. Pink said that the key to success in the future is having the ability to fuse right-brain activity with left-brain action. He outlines six essential senses that we have to tap into in the conceptual age.

Design – Moving beyond function to engage the senses. Create something that is not only functional, but is beautiful, whimsical, or emotionally engaging. When you go to Target to buy a toilet bowl brush, what makes you chose the one you buy out of the fifty different ones on the shelf? Design of course. Workers are going to have to creatively design products that are easier to use and have high aesthetic value to continue to have job security. Abundance gives us these types of choices in almost any store in the country.

Story – Narrative added to products and services – not just argument but STORY. The ability to fashion a compelling story so that the facts stay in the mind of the listener will become highly valued. Pink gives an example of attorneys needing this skill in the courtroom: “Basically, in relaying information, if you say, ‘the Queen died and the King died,’ you are reciting facts and there is nothing memorable about that. However, if you say that the Queen died and the King died of heartache, you have turned such facts into a memorable story.” There is now a whole industry of courses and books to teach business students and managers the art of making stories.

Symphony – Adding invention and big picture thinking (not just detail focus). Synthesize, see the big picture, cross boundaries, and combine disparate pieces into a new whole. Business success will depend on the ability to merge data and facts and detect underlying trends and harmony. Synthesis, not analysis, combining the pieces into an arresting new whole will be a key quotient for the Conceptual Age worker. This says something about specialists needing to also become generalists.

Empathy – Going beyond logic and engaging emotion and intuition. Understanding another’s point of view and forging relationships and care for others. The ability to stand in another person’s shoes will distinguish those who thrive. The ability to create relationships successfully and express empathy in work such as nursing will be highly valued. Today’s workers will need emotional and social intelligence. We will need listening skills.

Play – Not just seriousness, but also play. High value is placed on play in the conceptual age. We are encouraged to bring humor and light-heartedness to business and products in order to get people to choose them over the strictly or mainly functional products of the recent past. We are being encouraged to seek healthy personal and professional benefits, as well as, creative innovations from laughter, light-heartedness, games, unusual juxtapositions, and humor. Research shows that people who play are healthier and more creative. Even our medical insurance companies are encouraging us to play – to jump rope and skip or play games to increase creativity and, therefore, have better health. We are being encouraged to add play to our teaching as it stimulates creativity and learning. Pink talks about the gaming indu-
try and its positive impact on learning, creativity, and performance in seemingly unrelated areas.

**Meaning – Weighing the significance and purpose of our lives.** Pink tells us that the purpose is the journey and that our buyers and users of our products are looking for ways to give meaning to life from inside ourselves – not just accumulation but also MEANING. We are pursuing more significant desires: purpose, transcendence, enduring ideas, and spiritual fulfillment.

The first baby boomers turned 60 in 2006; 7,900 baby boomers retire every day. What are baby boomers doing now? Yes, retiring. Statisticians are telling us that in the U.S. 8,000 to 10,000 people a day enter retirement. While some will embrace the traditional notions of spending days relaxing and playing golf, others, are looking for new hobbies and finding new adventures. Nearly all my recently retired Chaffey friends are taking classes, learning how to master marvelous things, traveling to adventurous and exciting places, and involving themselves in all sorts of physical activities to keep themselves healthy and pursuing mental activities to keep themselves interested and interesting. In other words, they are looking for meaning and substance.

Csikszentmihalyi gives us hope that we can increase our abilities to accomplish the creative things Pink asserts we will need to survive in this conceptual age. Csikszentmihalyi outlines steps we can follow to increase our creativity. It is clear that he views creativity and its expression as a major force leading to happiness. With **FLOW: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF OPTIMAL EXPERIENCE**, he outlines his theory that people are most happy when they are in a state of flow — a state of concentration or complete absorption with the activity at hand and the situation. The idea of flow is identical to the feeling of being in the zone or in the groove. The flow state is an optimal state of intrinsic motivation, where the person is fully immersed in certain kinds of goal-directed activities. This is a feeling everyone has at times, characterized by a feeling of great freedom, enjoyment, fulfillment, and skill — and during which temporal concerns are typically ignored.

I was taken aback by Csikszentmihalyi’s study which reveals that most people are happiest when they are at work and unhappiest when they are participating in leisure activities. In fact, some of the things that make people the happiest are very physically or mentally demanding. He explains that although we have seen that people generally long to leave their places of work and get home, ready to put their hard-earned free time to good use, all too often they have no idea what to do there. Ironically, jobs are actually easier to enjoy than free time, because like flow activities, they have built-in goals, feedback, rules, and challenges, all of which encourage one to become involved in one’s work, to concentrate and lose oneself in it. Free time, on the other hand, is unstructured, and requires much greater effort to be shaped into something that can be enjoyed.

Csikszentmihalyi asserts that activities that require little effort of us such as watching television are unlikely to stimulate flow. This is not new. Rollo May, an existential psychologist and artist, said in *THE COURAGE TO CREATE* in 1975: “We live in a modern, hectic civilization, amid the constant din of radio and TV, subjecting ourselves to every kind of stimulation whether of the passive sort of TV or the more active kind of conversation, work and activity that people with such constant preoccupations find it exceedingly difficult to let insights from unconscious depths break through.”

There is a common thread that runs through Csikszentmihalyi’s work: happiness is a product of our own minds, and it is ultimately in our own power to possess it, even in the most desperate circumstances. All we have to do is to change how we think. He makes it sound simple. However, most of us find it difficult to change our patterns of thought. Despite the growth of the self-help industry that has us lining our bookshelves with books, CDs, DVDs, journals, reports, etc., containing advice that promises to make us happier and more fulfilled and the rapid growth of psychotherapy, we continue to repeat habits that clearly are not working for us.

Twenty-three hundred years ago Aristotle concluded that, more than anything else, men and women seek happiness. While happiness itself is sought for its own sake, every other goal – health, beauty, money, or power – is valued only because we expect that it will make us happy. Much has changed since Aristotle’s time. We have conveniences of which even the richest and most powerful people of Aristotle’s ancient Greece could not have conceived. Imagine explaining a computer or iPhone to a Roman emperor. I doubt that Aristotle was sending text messages to his friends during Socrates’ lectures. We’ve learned much about the world, stars, planets, and solar systems, yet, we still cannot truly understand what happiness is much better than Aristotle did. We have made little progress in learning how to achieve this elusive and mysterious state. Regardless of all the stupendous scientific knowledge we can summon at will, people often end up feeling that their lives have been wasted, that instead of being filled with happiness, their years were spent in anxiety and boredom.

Fredrick Herzberg, a clinical psychologist and an expert in the area of motivation, proclaims that individuals are not content with the satisfaction of lower-order needs at work, for example, those associated with minimum salary levels or safe and pleasant working conditions. Rather, individuals look for the gratification of higher-level psychological needs having to do with achievement, recognition, responsibility,