

**THE
SIGFLUENCE
GENERATION:**

**OUR YOUNG PEOPLE'S
POTENTIAL TO
TRANSFORM SOCIETY**

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For John, Burdette, Heather, and Gretchen

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sigfluence is a word invented by me in 1984 and means significant, long-term, positive influence. It is impossible to thank all my sigfluencers, but let me begin.

The late Burdette Graham, who tragically lost his life in an unjust war, was a key influence in my eight books on sigfluence. Somehow we humans can turn great pain into creative endeavors.

My wonderful ninth grade teachers, Mary O'Connor Reynolds and Louis Rotando, were instrumental in my earning the first and last doctorate awarded by Columbia University in mathematics and psychology under the inspiring mentorship of Dr. Bruce Vogeli and the late Dr. Richard Wolf.

This book is the outgrowth of 542 Concordia College and Iona College students responding to a 104 item Marketing and Sigfluence Survey and the subsequent stellar work of my two exemplary Iona College graduate students, Teresa Osadnik and Grace Nayudupalli Dickson, in helping to discover that our 18-15 year olds are the Sigfluence Generation. It is essential to credit Dean Sherry Fraser of Concordia College for this book in that she authorized my distributing surveys to the entire student body of Concordia College and granted released time in the Fall of 2008 for me to complete this book.

Sigfluence is not limited to the world of work. In the personal realm, I wish to thank the late Reverend Harry Aufiero, whose friendship was instrumental in my marriage to his daughter Gretchen and to our marvelous children, John and Heather.

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CHAPTER ONE **INTRODUCTION**

THE SIGFLUENCE GENERATION

Sigfluence is a word I invented twenty-five years ago and means significant, long-term, positive influence. It is natural to ask: “Why did you invent a new word? What right do you have to invent a new word, and (as if we need a third question) if sigfluence is so important, why have I never heard of sigfluence or you?” These are three very fair questions, which deserve thoughtful response.

I invented the word sigfluence for two reasons – first I thought that sigfluence was neglected by society, academe, politicians, psychologists, teachers, and (need I go on) us all. Also as a college professor, I was safeguarding my academic work. In college it is not uncommon for professors to take credit for others’ work. I wanted exclusive credit for the coining of the new word, and in 1984 the New York Times credited me as developing a new word that emerged from the 1984 Harvard International Conference on Thinking. Now two decades later, it does not appear that my precaution was necessary. Few professors are studying sigfluence. It is their loss and a golden opportunity for our 18-25 year olds to change the face of the academic world.

We need tons of new words. Otherwise we neglect important concepts. This is the language relativity assumption in linguistics. To be fair, most linguists believe in the language independence assumption – namely that language is a passive vehicle to express our thoughts. Our young people have to change that direction as well. Our language shapes the way we think and currently neglects sigfluence.

As to the third question, why have you not heard of sigfluence or me? After twenty-five years of college teaching, I have heard about fewer than one percent of my college professor colleagues. We do not have cable television programs and usually stick to our narrow, esoteric discipline that few others understand or even care about. Our young people have to correct our worship of the short-term, and to my amazement they can. My recent surveying of 542 college students revealed that our 18-25 year olds believe they can positively change the world. But to change the world, we need to better understand our ability to achieve lasting positive influence. Let us start with Albert Sabin.

Dr. Albert Sabin

We currently live with a silent fear of not having lived up to our Potential for Sigfluence – even famous people. Dr. Albert Sabin developed the oral vaccine that led to the elimination of polio. At age 77, he was gravely ill. Bob Greene, a reporter for *The Daily News*, interviewed Dr. Sabin and asked his readers to remember Dr. Sabin for his enormous positive influence. Over 45,000 *Daily News* readers sent Dr. Sabin cards thanking him for his sacrifice and accomplishment.

Dr. Sabin later wrote to Bob Greene: “It makes me feel that I did something worthwhile. You always have a feeling of doubting whether what you have done with your life is worthwhile.”¹

There are many lessons from this brief anecdote. First, sigfluence, despite its absence from Webster's Dictionary, has universal recognition. Otherwise over 45,000 readers would not have expressed their gratitude.

Also, if it were not for Bob Greene, Dr. Sabin might have died without the appreciation and recognition he was due. This was not the only time I have heard this story. A physician, who worked exclusively with the terminally ill, was interviewed on National Public Radio (please forgive the incomplete reference). He was asked whether the terminally ill fear the pain of their final days or months. The physician responded that the patients rarely feared physical pain. What they feared was whether their lives had been lived to their (influence) potential.

Great people, like Dr. Sabin, may have inadequate perceptions of their sigfluence legacy. We die largely out of touch with the sigfluence we have achieved. Few thank the key influencers in their lives. We do not even have sigfluence in Webster's to focus our attention and energies. Dr. Sabin might easily have died without believing that his life had been worthwhile. It is time for change. It is time to recognize our interdependence. It is time for our young people to become the Sigfluence Generation. They have the potential to foster a heightened awareness and recognition of sigfluence. We are in the earliest stages of studying sigfluence. It is imperative for us to better appreciate the sigfluence we have achieved and the Potential for Sigfluence we can achieve. Too many people, like Dr. Sabin, may be dying believing (erroneously) that they have not made a difference in the world.

Sigfluence Survey

Several years ago, one of my colleagues commented that sigfluence was "inscrutable." I replied that we are at square one at exploring sigfluence. We can scrutinize people's responses to survey items related to sigfluence

Over the past two decades I have developed a Sigfluence Survey that measures your Actual Sigfluence (the sigfluence you believe you have achieved), your Potential for Sigfluence, and your Need for Sigfluence. It took over ten years to create questions that were reliable (consistent over time) and valid (this is a lifetime's pursuit). Then for a decade, my students tested hypotheses such as "Is there a relation between one's salary or job status and sigfluence?"

Many unexpected results surfaced. Sometimes teachers scored higher in Actual Sigfluence than other professionals – sometimes not. It seems that sigfluence is very democratic. Low status jobs seem to have as much sigfluence as high status jobs, or perhaps people with low status jobs are able to achieve more sigfluence outside of work. Sigfluence is a great mystery with myriad opportunities for research. But the academic world has not rushed to embrace the worthiness of this concept. Our 18-25 year olds could and should change this.

Sigfluence Breakthrough

Several years ago sigfluence study had a wonderful breakthrough. I had taught graduate mathematical modeling at Iona College for over a decade, but in 2002 two of my graduate students, Grace Nayudapalli Dickson and Teresa Osadnik, got excited about studying sigfluence. To my delight they joined me in a three year study. We distributed the survey to 532 college students at Iona College and Concordia College – NY. It took nearly two years for us to enter

the data – over 50,000 numbers. After the data was entered, I launched a study to determine the key factors connected to satisfaction with life (Item 6 of the Sigfluence Survey). Please take the Sigfluence Survey in Appendix A. Score yourself for Actual, Potential and Need. Then find your percentile score. If you scored 54 for Potential, this puts you in the sixty-ninth percentile (.691). Thirty-one percent scored higher; sixty-nine percent scored lower.

As a result of extensive statistical testing, we concluded that the strongest, overriding factors from our sample of college students were the sigfluence scores. The college students felt that sigfluence was more important than money, the number of cars in the driveway, and numerous financial measures. Sigfluence was prominent in their preferences, not money. And the most powerful sigfluence score was Potential for Sigfluence. Years ago I candidly admitted that Potential for Sigfluence was a category I invented. But I did not know what Potential meant in terms of its importance to a fulfilled life. Now it appears that our Potential for Sigfluence connects with living a fulfilled life. It is not the good you have done that animates you. It is the potential for effecting good in the future that energizes us. This insight took twenty-five years to uncover. We need to obtain jobs with Potential for Sigfluence to avoid burnout. However, we are at a very early stage of understanding the Potential for Sigfluence of different jobs.

In several focus groups and seminars, our young people cried out for guidance from us – “the elders.” It is unclear whether we are in the midst of a sigfluence revolution or the perpetuation of our comfortable malaise.

It is not clear whether society is ready or willing to seize this opportunity to help Generation Y fulfill their potential for lasting, positive influence. This book is a primer on how the elders can partner transformation in our language, the world of work, psychology, and our personal lives.

Exemplars and Examples

We learn best through examples and exemplars. Let us start with one of the twentieth century’s greatest heroes, Dr. Viktor Frankl.

Viktor Frankl

It was a slow summer of work in the Manhattan College bookstore. There, between customers, I discovered and read *Man’s Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl.

Dr. Frankl was an esteemed psychiatrist who was thrown into a Nazi concentration camp. His “search for meaning” became a personal mission. He devoted himself to helping his fellow prisoners find meaning in their great suffering and later became a guide for millions. His premise, simply put, is that humans have a fundamental need to strive for meaning in their lives. If Dr. Frankl was able to achieve meaning in a Nazi camp, we can find meaning in our lives.

Dr. Frankl was a leading psychiatrist, a partner with Freud in a journal article before the Nazis imprisoned him. He was nearly sent to the gas chambers when a tap on the shoulder of a lineup of victims meant instant death. He intuited correctly that he had to stand tall and convey strength. This saved him.

Dr. Frankl went on to inspire other prisoners to care for themselves and to maintain hope. Someday they would be free from their nightmare. He was personally inspired by his belief that he had a destiny to write a book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, that would motivate people to look for meaning in their lives even under the direst circumstances. Dr. Frankl passed up several opportunities for escape. He felt a responsibility for those who would be left behind.

Let us listen to Dr. Frankl's words:

“Man can give meaning to their lives by realizing what I call creative values, by achieving tasks. But they can also give meaning to their lives by realizing experiential values, by experiencing the good, the true and the beautiful, or by knowing one single human being in all his uniqueness.”

Even people in great distress benefit from Dr. Frankl's wisdom. A woman who visited Dr. Frankl to help her with terminal cancer was counseled by these words:

“Even a man who finds himself in the greatest distress,.... can still give his life a meaning by the way he faces his fate, his distress.”²

Viktor Frankl inspired my work on sigfluence. I had the honor of corresponding with Dr. Frankl, who resided in Vienna, during the last years of his life. I wanted to send Dr. Frankl my book, *Our Neglect, Denial and Fear* (Nova Science, 2000), but there was a several year delay in its release. Sadly, Dr. Frankl passed away before I was able to get his reaction to my emerging ideas on sigfluence.

Dr. Frankl wrote in a spirit that was consonant with sigfluence. He was an editor of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* along with other twentieth century giants Carl Rogers and Rollo May. He was an international leader in contemporary psychology. Unfortunately sigfluence was not a concept studied by psychology, a word in the English language, or for that matter any language.

In psychology, helping others was considered as an interest – like fly fishing or stamp collecting. Self-actualization was a notion developed by Maslow as the top of a hierarchy of personal needs.

Maslow's hierarchy of human needs makes a lot of sense. You first need shelter, food and clothing. This most basic need is at the bottom of Maslow's chart. But the top of the scale, self-actualization, has the same vagueness as Dr. Frankl's notion of meaning. In order for humans to self-actualize, we need to achieve something positive and lasting for the world. We need sigfluence. If Dr. Frankl equated meaning with lasting positive influence, there would have been no need for my eight books or twenty-five year sigfluence odyssey. It is very hard to get a new idea accepted or even studied by the academic world. One anonymous author quipped that “you have to wait for a generation of college professors to die before the acceptance of a new idea.” Thankfully, our family is long lived. Genetics is on my side.

Laura

Dr. Frankl was one of the leading figures of the twentieth century. We may justifiably relate more naturally to Laura.

My wife and I met Laura while exercising at a local health club. She was slowly recovering from a serious car accident. Laura had turned inexplicably into an oncoming car, causing a tragic head-on collision.

There was no airbag on Laura's side of the car. Her six-month old fetus died. Laura had spent nearly a year in successive surgeries, struggling to walk again. There was supposed to be an airbag in Laura's car.

Someone in America neglected to install a standard airbag. This neglect resulted in a lost child. The worker probably is not aware of the long-term negative impact of his/her oversight. Sometimes our actions lead to significant, long-term, positive influence – sigfluence. Sometimes they lead to negfluence – lasting, negative influence. We are usually out of touch with both the long-term positive and negative effects of our actions. Professor Jeffrey Blustein of CUNY told me that he could agree with my concept of sigfluence if I changed my basic idea to include both positive and negative influence, leaving a mark, as a fundamental drive in humans.

Shakespeare might agree with Dr. Blustein. In Richard the Third, Gloucester laments that the spoils of war, especially favors from the ladies, are not his because he is deformed. In his words:

“...since I cannot prove a lover...I am determined to prove a villain.”

Gloucester plots to set his brother Clarence and King Edward in “deadly hate, the one against the other.” Of course, Gloucester is not Shakespeare. But Gloucester eloquently expresses Dr. Blustein's opinion of human nature. Since we can never prove either side, it makes sense to present a noble vision of human nature, since it reinforces good, sigfluent actions. Our young people do not need Gloucester as a role model; they need Dr. Frankl.

Our young people need to transform the workplace. They need to infuse sigfluence into our definitions of jobs. Managers should become servants of their employees attempting to optimize worker sigfluence. Evaluations of workers, except the highly incompetent who have to be removed, should be rethought. Our evaluations at work are superficial at best. Our increasingly compartmentalized society and tiny specialties remove us from witnessing our long-term influence. Someone should be held responsible for Laura's loss. Many routine jobs have consequences that are not properly regarded by society, management, and the worker. Esteemed researchers, like Dr. Sabin, have moments where they question the value of their work. This means that factory workers and lower skilled employees probably have even lower confidence in the sigfluence of their jobs. We are more interdependent than we may care to admit and need a societal transformation to infuse pride in even the most humble occupations.

Some may answer that they are just too busy to monitor long-term influence in their personal and professional lives. There is a kernel of truth in this. We Americans have never worked harder or longer on the economic treadmill. But our overloaded lives leave some opportunities to monitor the long-term. However, we avoid long-term analyses because we fear them. We share a silent, unconscious fear that we have not lived up to our sigfluence potential. If we did not fear facing our unrealized sigfluence, why do we hide from sigfluence? Why do we have no word for

sigfluence? How could Dr. Sabin believe he had little sigfluence? How do we allow millions to die from starvation, while we tune in to gourmet cable programs? Why do so many die questioning whether their lives have fulfilled their potential? We could change that. Our young people, ages 18-25, are ready to positively change the world – with our active partnership.

Ram Das

To those of you who lived during the 60s, Ram Das was a symbol of the free love, drugs, psychedelic era. Ram Das left a professorship at Harvard to (in his words) search for meaning.

He was interviewed on WNYC in January of 1995 and spoke about his worldwide journey to do something meaningful with his life. He finally was able to start clinics in India to wipe out blindness in several villages. He saw the significant, long-term, positive influence of his actions. He was in direct contact with the people whom he helped, and was now richly satisfied with his life.

Psychology might rationalize the work of Ram Das by theorizing that it took a long time for Ram Das to discover his interest in helping others. Others might have been enriched by stamp collecting; still others might have found self-actualization in trout fishing.

Contemporary psychology is missing the boat. We humans have the rare ability to forge links between our current actions and their long-term consequences. Sigfluence focuses our attention on the key element in our search for meaning. Ram Das was achieving sigfluence toward many. Also, he saw the positive effects of his actions. This is not egotism. You do not need to brag about your sigfluence. You need to achieve sigfluence.

Our young people need the word, the focus, and a partnership with the elders to effect broad, societal sigfluence. They are ready. Are we? The following chapters will highlight our young people's Potential for Sigfluence and specific directions for them and the "elders" in transforming society.

Cheddie

Cheddie, one of my college students, described his reaction to sigfluence at one of our book discussions. He confided that his treatments for leukemia were very painful, and that he lives because his living and courage inspire others. He told us: "I live for sigfluence. I didn't think about this concept until I read your book."

Our society's neglect prevented Cheddie from capturing the central motivation of his life. A light bulb went on when Cheddie read about sigfluence. Cheddie is an exemplar for Viktor Frankl's thesis that humans are motivated by a fundamental need to find meaning in their lives. Cheddie found meaning and sigfluence by carrying on for his parents, friends and us.

Cheddie may never be famous. He may never achieve the status of Viktor Frankl or Dr. Sabin, but he is an exemplar.

He is also a hero and a guide for the Sigfluence Generation. Our young people are the Cheddies of tomorrow. But there are strong forces that militate against sigfluence. There are powerful

obstacles and inertia that our young people must overcome. In time we will explore these forces but let us shift gears and record the words of one of our twentieth century's most esteemed artistic giants.

Ingmar Bergman

Cheddie is an exemplar who, outside of family and friends, few have heard of. Ingmar Bergman is arguably the leading film director of the twentieth century. One of his masterpieces, *The Seventh Seal*, is widely considered one of the greatest films ever made.

Bergman's movie that is most relevant to sigfluence is *Wild Strawberries*, that featured an esteemed doctor who is traveling to his hometown to receive a distinguished service award. He drives with his daughter-in-law. Viktor Sjorstrom, Bergman's inspired lead for this movie, portrays beautifully a man who has lost his youth and animation (*Wild Strawberries*) for the trappings of societal status. Bergman makes us question whether we have sacrificed sigfluence for fame.

Thomas Mann made a similar point in his masterpiece, *Death in Venice*, where Mann's alter ego, Von Aschenbach, does not describe any sigfluence he has achieved from his writings, despite the applause of the critics and his high status. In fact, consider Mann's words describing Von Aschenbach's belief about his relation to young people:

“The young artist was taking away the breath of the twenty year olds with his cynic utterances on the nature of art and the artist life.”³

Mann may have been questioning his influence toward the young. Thomas Mann was a Nobel Prize winning novelist. Was his status justified by his influence toward others? Status should be given to those who dedicate their lives to effecting sigfluence.

Bergman demonstrated humble and profound insight in crediting his key influencers in the following:

“...I'm the sum total of everything I've read, seen, heard, and experienced. I don't believe that an artist has his roots in the air. I (am) a little brick in a big building, dependent on what is on either side of me, under me, and behind me.”⁴

Bergman does not have a positive view of human nature. Or perhaps he shows us the painful truth of human relations. In either case, he expresses an apocalyptic view of the future in the following:

“It's too late for revolutions and deep inside ourselves we no longer even believe in their positive effects. Just around the corner an insect world is waiting for us – and one day it's going to roll over our ultra-individualized existence.”⁵

As I complete this book, Ingmar Bergman passed away. Steven Holden gave a fitting tribute in the July 31, 2007 Arts page of the New York Times. Mr. Holden confirmed my belief that *Persona* was Bergman's finest film. The masterpiece features Liv Ullman in a stubbornly silent withdrawal from the world being cared for by her effervescent nurse Bibi Anderson.

Persona symbolizes our temptation to withdraw from worldly responsibilities, in Liv Ullman's case both family and career. *Persona* unsettles the viewer. It presents the perils and promise of engaging the world and living a "responsible life." It has no happy ending and hammers us with its stark depiction of our inner lives and psychic conflicts.

In Mr. Holden's tribute he refers to Bergman's ongoing fear of death from the perspective of artful depiction of death in *The Seventh Seal* (Bergman's first major masterpiece) to his daily pondering of death. Bergman spent much of his last years in semi-isolation on Faro Island. Fortunately for us, he closed his career with a stunning masterpiece, *Saraband*, that shows human relations as they are, not like we want them to be. The Sigfluence Generation will have to change "our ultra-individualized existences."

We fear death. But perhaps we also fear dying without achieving our Potential for Sigfluence. It might require decades to prove or disprove this conjecture. However, without sigfluence in our vocabulary, our 18-25 year olds may never consider these concepts.

Our 18-25 year olds report (as you will glimpse next chapter) a high Potential for Sigfluence. It is fashionable at college graduations to laud the potential of our young hopefuls to change the world. We have compelling evidence this generation of young people is different. It is also possible that this Potential for Sigfluence will be squandered. There are many strong vested interests in the status quo. Only time will tell who will prevail.

Supreme Court

My mentor at Columbia University, the late Dr. Richard Wolf, gave me a copy of the 1971 Griggs versus Duke Power Company decision. Dr. Wolf said: "It reads like great literature." It did.

Duke had developed their own "intelligence-aptitude" tests to screen for advancement. The tests looked fair. However, whites did much better than blacks.

The Supreme Court insisted that the tests had to be validated. The employer had the burden of proof to show that there was a connection between the test and eventual job performance.

The Supreme Court decision expressed American idealism in the following:
"If an employment practice...cannot be shown to be related to job performance, the practice is prohibited."

The Court questioned the fairness of Duke's tests in the following:
"...neither the high school completion requirement nor the general intelligence' test is shown to bear a demonstrable relationship to successful performance of the job. ...Employees who have not

completed high school or taken the tests have continued to perform satisfactorily.”⁶

The Griggs Decision empowered the disenfranchised. Dr. Wolf correctly described the written words as poetic. Thousands of discrimination cases flooded the courts. The employer had to demonstrate that hiring and promotion processes were fair.

In 1989 the Wards Cove Supreme Court case shifted the burden of proof of unfairness to the employee. The majority believed that there had been too many cases flooding the courts. Supreme Court Justices White, Rehnquist, O’Connor, Scalia, and Kennedy reversed Griggs and made it very difficult for job discrimination cases to go very far.

In the mid 90s Clarence Thomas presided over the EOC – Equal Opportunity Commission. The arch conservatives had won. The wolf was guarding the chickens. Mr. Thomas was ostensibly responsible for upholding the rights of people who were victims of discrimination. The courts provided the only remedy for the thousands of people who were denied employment or promotion due to the color of their skin or their accent. Mr. Thomas did not represent the poor. He represented the establishment and the wealthy. Few could uphold the Wards Cove decision with greater effectiveness.

Mr. Thomas reduced the number of job discrimination cases to a trickle. He was rewarded by a Supreme Court Justice seat. During his Senate confirmation hearings I was taking a class in interpreting the Rorschach (inkblot test). Each session we discussed Clarence Thomas’s facility in deceiving the panel. He claimed that he was the “victim of a high tech lynching.”

He was outraged by the personal attacks given (his words) “my 46 years of public service.” At the time he was 46. Do diapers count as public service?

The conservatives had won. Clarence Thomas serves a life term as one of the most influential people in America. The liberal defenders of Anita Hill, Sen. Kennedy and Leahy, could not have been more ineffectual.

A decade plus later, Cass Sunstein of the University of Chicago Law School comments on “the absence of anything like a heroic vision on the court’s left.” As far as the eye can see, the conservative justices rule the court. The average age of the liberal Justices is 74 – the five conservative Justices average age is 61 with Chief Justice John Roberts 52.

Professor Laurence Tribe of Harvard said recently that he has shelved his monumental writing on constitutional law to concentrate on “teach(ing) to the future (to)...make a difference 20, 30 or 40 years from now.”⁷

Professor Tribe of Harvard Law School has a long-term perspective on the practice of law. This is a transformational perspective. In a recent decision that surprised nearly everyone, the Supreme Court shifted the burden of age discrimination cases to the employer (*Workforce*, News in Brief, p. 1, June 26, 2008). The case was based on Knolls Atomic Power Lab’s decision to cut 31 employees, where 30 were older than 40.

Although this may prove sigfluent for older workers, there is nothing looming to protect the economically disadvantaged. Griggs has been overturned. A person's character can be judged as to how she/he treats the weak and disfranchised. In 20 or 30 years, the Sigfluence Generation will be occupying seats on the Supreme Court. Laurence Tribe is planting a seed for the next generation. Their Potential for Sigfluence is considerable. However, they need us to candidly admit our biases, errors, and limitations. Otherwise they may perpetuate the status quo.

Sigfluence does not have a liberal or conservative bias. Republican conservatives support pro-life positions. So does a long-term influence perspective on the sanctity of life. The liberal Democrats, who typically are pro-choice, are more sympathetic to the educational, economic, and health needs of the poor. Hillary Clinton fought a noble fight for universal health care – an exemplary focus of sigfluence. But she hasn't revisited the hot potato issue in a decade. Perhaps she has been educated by Washington politics. But we elect Washington politicians, who nominate Supreme Court justices. The Sigfluence Generation has a similar time frame for societal change as that evinced by Professor Tribe – 20, 30 or 40 years.

Barack Obama is now our President. This was no surprise to me. Our three year study of 542 college students revealed their yearning for societal change and effecting sigfluence. We may be on our way to societal transformation, guided by a focus on sigfluence. Will President Obama lead the way or will we fall back into our comfortable malaise? Only time will tell.

Responsibility Training

This first chapter of examples balances the famous and the not famous. I fall in the latter category.

Forty years ago I started teaching mathematics in a high poverty area of Yonkers in a junior high school. I had fewer than 30 textbooks for 180 students. As a new teacher, I taught in 10 rooms, lugging the books up and down staircases.

My curriculum was the abstract new math, but my students needed help with the times table. Several of my teacher friends taught in middle class schools. One of them told me that each of his students had two books – one for home and one for school. At the middle class school, students learned material appropriate for their grade. At my school, most kids were three or more years below grade level and deteriorating in basic skills. The poor were being certified as inadequate, poorly prepared for college, and unable to enter the economic mainstream.

After a year, it dawned on me that there had to be a better way to reach these kids. I formed a partnership with two local colleges, Manhattan College and Mount St. Vincent and trained dozens of juniors and seniors to become tutors and counselors to students who had been left back – a total of 100 students each year. The principal let me innovate a *Responsibility Training* program where retained students would be promoted early to their proper grade if they passed their major subjects. I monitored the 100 students' performance each week. It was magic. I was energized by the positive effects of our innovation. Eighty percent of the 100 students were promoted early and eighty percent of this group was promoted a second time in one year.

I felt like the Pied Piper. The students were so positive in their relation to their college student tutors and me that the year passed like a dream. I could not believe what a pleasure teaching could be. I was energized by sigfluence. Jeff called me years later, thanking me for helping him complete two years of work in one year and get back on track. He had become an executive in New York City and wanted to express his gratitude. These are the magic moments of sigfluence that sadly are all too rare.

Responsibility Training was highlighted as a national model in the *American School Board Journal* in 1982. The reader may believe that this program was an illustration of sigfluence, perhaps a foundation for sigfluence research. Well, it is, but not in the way the reader might expect.

After several years of innovating and running Responsibility Training, Yonkers had a budget crisis. Since I was a junior teacher, I was laid off. A year later I was called back and was interviewed for my old job by a new principal. She saw no value in Responsibility Training. In her words: "If a kid gets left back, they are left back."

I left the school and two years later became a guidance counselor at the high school that served my previous students. In a follow-up study, over ninety percent of successful Responsibility Training graduates failed to complete a high school diploma within four years. Their irresponsibility returned and the high school employed a "sink or swim" philosophy. They sunk.

I brought this heartbreaking tale to the attention of the Assistant Superintendent. He scolded me saying, "Do you want to spoon feed them all their lives?"

YES! The answer for the Sigfluence Generation is yes. We have to innovate continuous, intentional programs of concern for economically disadvantaged students from pre-kindergarten (perhaps pre-natal) through completion of college.

Dr. Dennis Littky has founded the Met School in Providence, Rhode Island. Nearly all of its students are subsidized by public assistance, and it has a ninety-eight percent graduation rate. Dr. Littky and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation are joining forces to increase the number of schools benefiting from Dr. Littky's intensive student centered and experiential curriculum. And of course, there is the college arena – with sixty percent of elite students failing to graduate within 5 years, according to a recent College Board study.

Power corrupts. And absolute power corrupts absolutely. Colleges wield enormous power over their students. It is puzzling how few colleges or professions scrutinize the validity of their degree or program requirements.

In the 1980s I explored the relation between the mathematics taken in college and the mathematics used on the job in the elite professions of actuary and computer science. I discovered an almost complete disconnection between the credentials to earn the job and the actual job needs of both professions. I called this gap "covert bias." In the 50s and 60s America was overtly biased against Blacks and Hispanics. In the 2000s the Supreme Court, starring Justice Clarence Thomas et al, institutionalized covert bias toward the economically

disadvantaged. Ironically, the elderly Baby Boomers appear protected from age discrimination. But it is a measure of our national character how we treat the weak and disenfranchised.

Yes. The Sigflurence Generation has to innovate programs of continuous concern. Colleges have to better serve the economically disadvantaged. This requires sigflurence and societal transformation.

A 2005 United States Department of Education report stated that mathematics was the biggest obstacle to college graduation in the United States. They described mathematics as an “insurmountable barrier” for the economically disadvantaged. In 2007 and 2008 *Focus*, the journal of the Mathematical Association of America, published two of my articles, highlighting both this problem and my proposed solutions. Only time will tell whether college will change. At present college serves as a screening mechanism to determine who enters the preferred professions. Our present system simply has too many who are not served.

Tom Christenson provides college with a visionary perspective for the Sigflurence Generation. Dr. Christenson calls for colleges to link love and knowledge. In his words:

“The linking of knowing and love should be a natural connection for Lutherans, as well as other Christians, to make.”⁸

I believe we should go further. All colleges should link knowledge and research to concern for society and to help their audience – the students. Knowledge without ethical values is dangerous. Too many colleges preach ethical values without showing adequate concern for their students.

Let us continue with examples, specifically the model of a twentieth century saint – Mother Teresa.

Mother Teresa

Mother Teresa, the winner of the *Good Housekeeping* most admired women poll, had experienced the calling to serve God while no more than twelve years old. The words of her mother - “When you accept a task, do it willingly. If not, don’t accept it.” - were very influential. Mother Teresa came from a very religious family. She commented, “I often remember my mother and father praying together, every night, with the other members of the family.”

Mother Teresa described her calling:

“It was at the feet of our Lady of Letnice (in Skopje) where I first heard the divine call, convincing me to serve God and to devote myself to His service.”

Mother Teresa’s “call within a call,” to renounce teaching as a Loreto Sister and to serve the poorest of the poor, came after twenty years of teaching in St. Mary’s High School of Calcutta – a school for middle and some upper class children. She described her spiritual guidance:

“I felt that Jesus wanted me to serve Him among the poorest of the poor, the uncared for, the slum dwellers, the abandoned, the homeless. Jesus invited me to serve Him and follow Him in actual poverty, to practice a kind of life that would make me similar to the needy in whom He was present, suffered and loved.”⁹

In tracing Mother Teresa’s development, one can easily see the connection between a religious family and Sister Teresa’s vocation. Also, the callings were cited as being instrumental toward her mission. Several other religious figures, such as Luther and St. Francis of Assisi, cited non-traditional influences in their advancement – for Luther, a thunderbolt and for St. Francis a personal message from a crucifix. Several pertinent lessons emerge. One is that while Sister Teresa’s family was religious, several influential figures enhanced her early environment which led to her development. The guidance of the Jesuit missionaries and her second calling were instrumental in her progression. While most people describe their significant influencers as peers or mentors, many are influenced by spiritual or intellectual forces without personal contact. These forces may be attributed to writers or religious figures, who inspire us by their thought and example.

Mother Teresa’s development was due to the coupling of her calling and her early religious environment. We have Mother Teresa’s words to pinpoint the influences that have shaped her “saintly” life and mission. I think that the best judge of a person’s key influences is that person. After all, would you like a statistician telling you what factors contributed to your development? No one knows you as well as you do. (This elementary but profound insight led this writer to qualitative research and the visionary work of Amedeo Giorgi.)

To return to message, many people believe Mother Teresa is one of our exemplary role models. Her ministry to the poorest of the poor brought her deep satisfaction and fulfillment. Interviews with Mother Teresa revealed a personal joy that few of us ever realize. My belief is that we all share Mother Teresa’s desire to make a positive difference in the lives of others. However, few are as single-minded or as in touch with their fundamental motivation. Our worldly immortality is linked to the positive influence we have effected toward others. Since we know our time is limited and our actions influence, it is puzzling that more people don’t turn toward helping others. Bill Gates recently gave up his CEO position at Microsoft to oversee his charitable foundation. Ours is a sigfluence era. The Sigfluence Generation should not take as long as Bill Gates to focus on helping others.

The Sigfluence Generation has Mother Teresa as a role model. They also have young Midases making lots of money early in their careers and sequestering themselves from the poor. Psychology might interpret Mother Teresa’s saintly work as sublimation or fulfilling a “helping interest” or being faithful to her “altruist” values. We have to transform psychology. The Sigfluence Generation has to build a new foundation for service.

Ronald Reagan

The Reagan legacy is now complete. As the scepter has long since passed, has anyone given Joy Hodges – the singer who introduced Reagan to his first agent – sufficient credit for her significant influence over the Reagan era?

In Bill Boyarsky's authoritative account of Reagan's development, Reagan's brother, Neil, provided a lot of information about Reagan's early years. Reagan was said to be shaped by the small towns of the mid-west. John Edward, his father, sold shoes and was hard working (most of the time). He had periodic drinking binges, but these did not shatter the bonds within a close-knit family. John constantly tried to better himself, while Ronald Reagan was a young child. The image of his mother making a big pot of soup for the main family meal with meat provided by a soup bone, and Neil begging some liver for a non-existent cat shows the poor but solid early environment. When asked to reflect upon his childhood, Reagan reminisced:

“(My childhood was) not a blissful idyllic thing, but as you look back through the rosy glow of time, yes, I realize now, looking back on it, that we were poor, but I didn't know it at the time....”

Perhaps his political philosophy was formed in the following framework:

“I think this is one thing that might be wrong today. The government seems intent on telling people they are poor. One of the reasons we didn't know it was that my mother was always finding someone who needed help.”

Reagan's father was very principled as revealed by two stories. His father refused to have his sons see “Birth of a Nation” because it glorified the offenses of the Ku Klux Klan. Reagan's father spent a night sleeping in his car because a hotel clerk assured him, “We don't permit a Jew in the place.” That made John so ill that he suffered a heart attack.¹⁰ John Reagan had principles, values so deep and uncompromising that he nearly died. Whether we agree or disagree with Reagan's political philosophy, Ronald Reagan appears to have been deeply influenced by his father's values. There is no debate that family provides deep influence. Our focus will be the influence that we can wield toward others outside our own family.

The Sigfluence Generation has to lead a focus on the long-term. Their orientation is not liberal or conservative, Republican or Democrat. Their concentration must be on fulfilling their Potential for Sigfluence.

Jimmy Carter

Ex-President Jimmy Carter perhaps correctly diagnosed America in a “malaise” over a decade ago. In characteristic form, the American people voted him out of office. We don't want to face unpleasant reality, whether it is that we are in a malaise, or that we deny our personal need to effect sigfluence toward others. To be fair, Jimmy Carter made several key political mistakes that likely cost him the Presidency, not the least of which were his handling of the Iranian hostage crisis and Cuba's exporting its criminals and mentally disturbed to Florida. Few, however, question President Carter's dignity and ethics.

Since he left office, Jimmy Carter has risked his own life to mend the most dangerous breaches in the world from Bosnia to Panama and Haiti. He recently spoke about his motivation:

“I have one life and one chance to make it count for something...my faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I can, for as long as I can with whatever I have to try to make a difference.”

Perhaps we have neglected sigfluence for so long because it may be considered a theological issue, such as Carter considers. Academics may consider it inscrutable, business leaders may view it as a quixotic quest –as do many of Jimmy Carter’s critics. The truth is that sigfluence is too broad, generalizable, and central a phenomenon to limit to one’s theological belief. Jimmy Carter defines his life in terms of trying to maximize the sigfluence he achieves toward others; my term for this is *Actual Sigfluence*. My theory simply states that striving toward achieving sigfluence coupled with seeing the positive effects (like Ram Das) enable us to live more fulfilled lives. This simple insight is considered revolutionary in the current state of thinking in psychology. We need a long-term influence revolution. This Sigfluence Generation has the potential to transform America.

Jimmy Carter was never a skilled politician and perhaps was part of a national overreaction to the corruption of Nixon’s administration. Skilled politicians may enable us to escape feelings of responsibility for the poor. They may sense that we don’t want to explore the long-term effects of our actions. If the healthcare debate is any indication, skilled politicians exploit our unconscious fear of sigfluence by neglecting to point out that thousands of people, perhaps hundreds of thousands, will prematurely lose their lives due to inadequate health insurance. Imagine the warm reception that a politician would receive by highlighting the tragedies of our current healthcare system. The politicians cannot be blamed. They mirror our fear and denial of sigfluence.

The Sigfluence Generation must get past our fear and denial of sigfluence. When they are in their final hours, it is hoped that they will not be filled with “quiet desperation” but a sense that they fulfilled their Potential for Sigfluence.

The Dalai Lama

When the Dalai Lama was interviewed by Rick Fields (Yoga Journal Editor, April 1994), he was asked about the relationship of spirituality and politics. The Dalai Lama responded:

“...the most important thing is another level of spirituality – that is spirituality without religious faith, which is simply to be a good human being – thoughtful, truthful, honest, warm-hearted...humanity cannot survive without that. ...It is very important today that we develop what people call secular ethics.”¹¹

The Dalai Lama spends several hours a day in meditation. He then spends much of the remainder of each day trying to be of service to people. He has studied widely and is an exemplar of wisdom and sigfluence.

The Dalai Lama led thousands of followers from Chinese persecution and commented that China's murder of so many of his followers enabled him to practice patience and love of the enemy. The Dalai Lama travels the world to promote the concepts of responsibility, our human interconnections, secular ethics and religious harmony. In 1989 he received the Nobel Peace Prize and in April of 2005, Time Magazine placed the Dalai Lama on its list of the world's most influential people. He practices sigfluence on a daily basis as a world leader for peace and as a spiritual leader for Buddhism.

His practice informs us that if we grow in internal spiritual development, we naturally promote basic human good. This is consistent with a philosophy of sigfluence. Both Christianity and Buddhism in their purely spiritual form (without religious faith) promote sigfluence as a natural activity for the fulfilled person.

The Dalai Lama stated that individuals could survive without this quality, but they would be very unhappy. Indeed so much of our malaise and burnout may be attributable to the reluctance of individuals, businesses, universities, and politicians to address sigfluence. Viktor Frankl and The Dalai Lama have consonant philosophical orientations. What is missing from each exemplar's teachings is the concept of sigfluence as an outgrowth of meaning (Frankl) or secular ethics (The Dalai Lama).

Viktor Frankl and The Dalai Lama were hampered by their languages' neglect of sigfluence, psychology's neglect of sigfluence, and society's neglect of sigfluence. Our consciousness is evolving. Even if the language independence assumption is true, sigfluence is timely. A new word honors the importance of the concept. This is an early priority for the Sigfluence Generation.

Alberto Salazar

Alberto Salazar is one of the premier long-distance runners in recent years. To compete at the world class level and ultimately win an Olympic marathon, Salazar had to train for several hours daily. His punishing training session would discourage most of us from even starting such a program.

On a morning news program (CBS, Nov. 28, 1983), Salazar was asked why he made such personal sacrifices. He responded that he ultimately wanted to be in a position to steer kids away from drugs and harmful habits. He said, "People with a cause are hard to beat."

Salazar was more in tune with his fundamental need to effect sigfluence than most of us. Indeed, by developing goals, achieving them and reflecting upon the sigfluence of our actions, we create a life that is hard to beat. Our increasingly alienated youth may be responding to valuelessness." And our reluctance to define sigfluence as a universal value may be part of our "valuelessness."

Athletes have the status and the podium to effect sigfluence. Great athletes have a forum from which to promote positive activities. After the New York Yankees won the 1979 World Series, Ron Guidry and Reggie Jackson won the Cy Young Award and World Series MVP respectively. Reggie Jackson devoted the off season to making a lot of money doing commercials. Ron Guidry's brother was handicapped, so Guidry devoted his off season to the Special Olympics.

Which avenue should the Sigfluence Generation pursue? The jury has not even been sequestered yet and may not decide for a few decades. Laurence Tribe and we must be very patient.

Albert Einstein

To learn Einstein's beliefs about personal influence, consider his words:

“It is right in principle that those shall (should) be the best loved who have contributed most to the elevation of the human race and to human life.

...the true value of a human being is determined primarily by the measure and the sense in which he has attained to liberation from the self.”¹²

Most overemphasize the genius of Einstein and are unaware of his humanistic motivation. Psychology might again state that Einstein had a high interest in helping. My perception is that he had heightened insight into our human motivation to sigfluence others. Neither position will ever be proven as neatly as a geometric proof.

In Euclidean geometry, one and only one line can be drawn through an external point parallel to the initial line. It took over 2000 years for mathematicians to accept Riemannian geometry, which changes this assumption and develops a separate geometry that was necessary for Einstein's Theory of Relativity.

Are humans motivated by leaving a mark (Gloucester), by fulfilling a search for meaning (Frankl), or by fulfilling their Potential for Sigfluence? Mathematics has discovered several consistent and very different geometries. Likewise, we can assume very different basic motivations of humans. Sigfluence seems like a more beneficial direction than leaving a mark. We have left too many scars as marks – war, hunger, neglect of the poor. It is time for change.

Death Row Inmate

Larry Longshar is a convicted mass murderer. One of his victims was the mother of a 10-month-old. Longshar sued the manufacturer who advertised “fingerprint resistant paint,” since his fingerprints led to his capture. Longshar represents pure evil.

In a recent news segment, Longshar, sentenced to execution, asked that his organs be donated. “At least my life could have some meaning” were the words he used to justify his final act of mercy.

Both Longshar and Einstein equated meaning with sigfluence without having the word in their immediate vocabulary. Though their lives are dramatically different in terms of the sigfluence that they achieved, they have converged in their equating their meaning in life with the sigfluence that they leave.

Sigfluence is very democratic. Esteemed researchers, like Dr. Sabin, may question whether their lives have been worthwhile. Convicted murderers may die with a belief that there was a measure of meaning they achieved, despite their appalling crime.

Sigfluence can be an outgrowth of great suffering (Viktor Frankl) or serendipity. Who is buried under the weight of misfortune? Who is inspired by tragedy to wield sigfluence toward others? This is a research avenue for the Sigfluence Generation. After 100 years of psychological testing, we have nearly as many different theories of intelligence as experts on intelligence. In 100 years of sigfluence research, we may have an equally muddled picture. But we will have made great progress in better fulfilling personal and societal potential for lasting positive influence.

Let us move from exemplars from the past to the voices of our 18-25 year olds and the early results from our three year study of their beliefs about money and meaning.

CHAPTER TWO

OUR YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICE

Even if the “elders” are not ready, our 18-25 year olds are ready to achieve sigfluence.

A few months ago one of my friends from the early days of my teaching career hosted a dinner party. He told me that he met Mary, one of our former students of twenty-five years ago. She was now a teacher. She told him that John Loase encouraged her to study, despite the poor academic environment at the economically disadvantaged high school. Mary credited me for her success in attending and graduating from college. She never thanked me. Without my friend's chance encounter, I would never have known about this sigfluence. The story still excites and thrills me. This is the animation we humans experience when we know we have made a positive difference in another's life. Unfortunately, we neglect, deny, and fear our sigfluence legacy.

Perhaps the sigfluence we believe we have achieved is the tip of the iceberg we see. The vast majority of our sigfluence is never communicated. We are interdependent but do not acknowledge our personal role in burnout of others. If sigfluence energizes the human spirit, most of us could use a fresh charge of animation through better capturing our sigfluence legacy.

Dr. Sabin did not think he had lived a worthwhile life, until tens of thousands of readers of the *Daily News* thanked him for his long hours of research in wiping out polio. If not for a chance encounter, I would not have known about my influence toward Mary. Ram Das had to search the world to find his sigfluence in curing blindness. The Actual Sigfluence you are aware of is probably a small fraction of the Actual Sigfluence you have achieved.

My theory is that you should aim for professional and personal activities that further your Actual Sigfluence. Sigfluence is the key for you to achieve meaning in your life. Mother Teresa is a role model for Actual Sigfluence. She was called to serve the poorest of the poor. She served the homeless and the unwanted. She witnessed the positive effects of the ministries she created all over the world. Few of us are willing to sacrifice all for others. However, reflect on the sigfluence you believe you have achieved. This is probably a small portion of the Actual Sigfluence you have actually achieved. We live in a shadow world, largely out of touch with our sigfluence. How does the recognition of your sigfluence make you feel? Is this a dimension of meaning in your life? Is your sigfluence important to you? Perhaps you are one of millions of Americans addicted to drugs, alcohol, sex, aerobics, money, status, and so on. Your addictions may be compensating for your fear of not achieving Actual Sigfluence.

Dr. Viktor Frankl wrote an inspiring sequel entitled *The Unheard Cry For Meaning*. In it he theorizes that our marathon runs, drugs and alcohol addictions are diversions from our neglected search for meaning. Consider further that meaning is tied to sigfluence. The antidote for addiction is sigfluence. The 2000s could be the millennium where, against the perceptions of most, we unite cultures through a recognition of our common humanity and our evolving recognition of sigfluence as an essential dimension of fulfillment.

Some of our college students already have sophisticated insights into sigfluence. Cheddie lived for others, despite the terrible pain from his treatments for leukemia.

In a focus group I recently held, Mary expressed a desire to become a guidance counselor. She was “guided” by a gifted counselor, when she was young. She expressed the desire to enter a sigfluence profession where she could do the same for others.

Joe quoted Viktor Frankl: “It did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us.” (*Man’s Search for Meaning*) Joe expressed a personal desire for overachieving – reaching for the stars. Joe did not equate overachieving with sigfluence, but Viktor Frankl had not equated meaning with sigfluence either.

Bill credited *Our Neglect, Denial and Fear* (my fifth book) with giving him a different perspective on life. He believed that Americans focus on the wrong things – cars, houses, jewelry. Bill thought that we should focus on helping or contributing to society. Yes, Bill hit the nail on the head, and he is poised to lead the way.

Now that you have taken and scored the Sigfluence Survey, let us explore through examples the meaning of Need, Potential, and Actual Sigfluence.

Need for Sigfluence

This is a measure of your need to achieve sigfluence toward others. You might say, I have little Need for Sigfluence toward others. I like making money and enjoy gardening.

Consider the possibility that you are denying your Need for Sigfluence. If you wait too long, you may be on your deathbed, regretting that you did not realize the importance of leaving a positive influence legacy.

To be fair, I cannot prove you are wrong. You cannot prove I am wrong. In time it will be clear whether you are living in richness or denial. Sigfluence is a theory that requires testing and a focus in the 2000s.

Psychology contributes to this muddle. In my graduate training in psychology, helping others was considered an interest, like baseball. And we have to wait for a generation of college professors to die before sigfluence is accepted as a new idea that is worth pursuing in the university. Let us not wait for a generation of college professors to die. Our Sigfluence Generation has to acknowledge that we need sigfluence more than a luxury car or McMansion.

“Everyone seems to be publishing a psychology in these days,” William James wrote in 1893 to a fellow psychologist. Little has changed since then. Freud speculated that we humans were enslaved by unconscious forces that we could better understand by analysis of dreams. His overemphasis on our human need for pleasure (sexuality) led to Adler’s hypothesis that humans had a fundamental need for power and Viktor Frankl’s modern emphasis on our need to search for and find a meaning in life.

Do you notice the pattern? SEXUALITY → POWER → MEANING → SIGFLUENCE?
Will our Sigfluence Generation recognize their Need for Sigfluence?

The obverse of sigfluence is evil. Great philosophers have explored the notion of evil in deep, complex arguments. Please consider Milton Steinberg's explanation for evil. Steinberg believes that evil is related to "the persistence of the circumstances of lower strata in us."¹³

Upon reflection, Professor Steinberg is right. We are not sufficiently evolved to identify sigfluence as a fundamental need of humans. We currently do not wish to face the unsettling realization that we have not lived up to our Potential for Sigfluence. That is why the title of this book is The Sigfluence Generation. Otherwise the title of this book could have been the Sigfluence Decade. It may take a millennium to effectively harness our sigfluence potential. Two hundred years ago we captured Africans for slavery. Those who perished at sea were "collateral damage" to use ex Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's phrase. We are evolving and need patience for sigfluence to be a part of our vocabulary and an integral dimension of our personal and professional lives. Evolution is a painstakingly gradual and slow process. But there are signs that our college students are going to accelerate sigfluence consciousness.

Our young people appear ready to partner a new direction with us – their mentors. Our three year study of their values was very encouraging. However, colleges, professional societies, our legal system all honor the status quo. Will the Sigfluence Generation be deferred for a decade or two, a century or two? Nobody knows, but sigfluence is a fundamental human need – not an interest like tennis or bird watching.

Bill told our focus group that he believed Generation Y wants to make a difference. He went on to say that Gen Y needs the elders to share guidance and candor about their disappointments.

Gordon Marino wrote a superb essay, "In Praise of Disappointment," where he observes that we do not candidly discuss our disappointments in life. Instead, we convey a strong, untroubled persona. Professor Marino makes a strong case for sharing our disappointments more openly and giving disappointment its due.¹⁴

If we do not heed Professor Marino's advice, our young people will have a hard time engineering a societal transformation. If we do not admit our disappointments to them, they may follow our paths and perpetuate disappointments, that may not be necessary.

Terminally ill patients rarely fear the physical pain of their final days. Their overriding concern is whether they have lived life to their potential.

We have to share disappointments. I am disappointed sigfluence is not in Webster's. I am disappointed that, despite seven published books, sigfluence is not part of college study, except in my classes. I am disappointed that the professions continue their selective practices to exclude workers based on untested criteria, such as performance on tests and completion of academic programs. I am disappointed but not depressed. One antidote for depression is engagement in sigfluent activities.

There are very positive signs that we are in the midst of a sigfluence revolution. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is one of the leaders in a new vision of helping for the world. Bill

Gates knew how to build Microsoft, but it took the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for Mr. Gates to translate his business acumen into philanthropy. He recently quit his day job at Microsoft to devote himself to charity. Giving is hard work. We can do more harm than good by trying to satisfy our Need for Sigfluence without better understanding ourselves and the potential harm that “good deeds” sometimes bring.

William was one of the repeaters, who I helped complete two grade levels in one year. I counseled him, tutored him, and even loaned him money for lunch (I thought). He visited my house regularly. I was also regularly missing twenty or forty dollars. One of the toughest things I ever did was to confront William and ask about my missing money. He answered, “John, if I needed money, I would ask you.” I apologized. I believed that I had wrongfully accused an innocent. A week later, William’s brother saved me from myself. He cautioned me that William had been stealing money from their parents. Helping is hard work. And some people do not want to be helped. Others view helpers as “weak.” And some people require unlimited and unreasonable resources of help. There are few axioms or guidelines for effective helping. Our Sigfluence Generation would benefit if we shared our disappointments, enabling them to avoid some of the pitfalls we encountered.

President Clinton’s model of welfare reform appears to be a successful and sigfluent program. Millions were led from welfare to work. As my late Adirondack friend, Paul Matthews, wisely observed, “The worst thing you can do is take the fight out of a man’s life.” Paul is right. Effective helping provides the recipient with the tools for them to help themselves. Fostering dependency or placation is not constructive.

Mary contributed this insight at our focus group:

“Generation Y has more desire for a positive influence, but they don’t participate fully. The need is there, but laziness and a lack of education is keeping them back. The image is that ‘it isn’t cool to help others’.”

Mary is wiser than her years. She has observed a need for lasting positive influence. But there are two obstacles (at least) for our young people to fulfill this need. Mary reiterated a need for education on helping. Also, we have to change the image of “helping.” America is not currently fostering an image of helping. The United States is increasingly hated in the world. Advertisement on television and in the media glorifies consumption. Mary correctly noted that we have to spread a message that “helping is cool.” President Obama is trying to change our national image, but he needs Generation Y as partners.

Things are not entirely dismal. New programs in education to place Ivy League graduates in economically disadvantaged schools have gotten off to a great start. But over half of poor students are taught math by uncertified teachers. Sometimes their teachers lack the skills they are trying to teach. Then mathematics becomes an “insurmountable barrier” to college graduation for the economically disadvantaged. We are falling so short of American ideals. We need to convince everyone that he/she is neglecting their fundamental need for positive influence. Then we have to admit that we do not have a technology for helping or even the

language to properly define desired benefits of philanthropy. Sigfluence has not reached Webster's yet.

Rasheed said it well in our focus group:

"I agree the 90s were greedy. But since 9/11 it's not just about ourselves, but everyone else in the country. Yes, this is a positive influence generation."

Yes. The 90s produced billionaires in record numbers. Leo J. Hindery, Jr. sold the Yes Network in 1999 for \$200 million. He stated, "Jeter makes an unbelievable amount of money....but I cannot find another ballplayer with that same set of skills."

Mr. Hindery went on to say:

"I think there are people, including myself at certain times in my career.... who because of their uniqueness, warrant whatever the market will bear."¹⁵

Mr. Hindery is referring to money. Derek Jeter, besides being very wealthy, is a great role model to kids for his positive leadership on and off the field. One of the rewards of attaining Jeter-like stature is the concomitant Potential for Sigfluence.

Consider Warren Buffet's philosophy expressed in the following:

"Society should place an initial emphasis on abundance....then should continuously strive to redistribute the abundance more equitably."¹⁶

Mr. Buffet puts his money where his idealism is. He has pledged nearly all his wealth to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. It was no accident that Bill Gates announced his stepping down as CEO of Microsoft to assume leadership of his Foundation at the same time that Warren Buffet announced his forty billion dollar pledge. These financial geniuses recognize that they could easily be throwing their money away if they do not employ sound judgment in effective helping. A Need for Sigfluence is not enough. We have to fulfill a Potential for Sigfluence. Warren Buffet has become a mentor for Gen Y. He and his close friend Bill Gates have turned their focus to optimizing their Actual Sigfluence. They have a great deal of wisdom to share with Gen Y as they encounter disappointment as well as personal rewards in helping others.

Potential for Sigfluence

It should come as no surprise that your Potential for Sigfluence score corresponds to your belief about the future lasting, positive influence you can achieve. The biggest surprise of my twenty-five sigfluence odyssey is that Potential may be the most important of the 104 dimensions of money and meaning that we studied.

For twenty years I thought that Actual Sigfluence was the key to our fulfillment. Meaning equals sigfluence. High sigfluence, that we achieve, nourishes our spirit and leads to a meaningful life. I still believe this. We are all biased. Sigfluence is my bias. But biases may prove correct. We will never rid scientific research from bias. The questions and directions we

explore are rooted in the hypotheses we are testing. Our beliefs are then analyzed with statistics as the arbiter. Statistics has been the foundation for the survey you have taken and for the early sigfluence results, that confirm Actual Sigfluence as a factor that contributes to a satisfying life. This book has almost no statistics or formulas. I listened to the Director of Marketing. For a summary of the statistics that were the foundation for this book, please read *The Positive Influence Generation* (Loase, 2007).

I believed that Need for Sigfluence was very important as well. If people thought they had low Need for Sigfluence, I told them they were in denial. Humans have a universal need to achieve Sigfluence, despite the infantile treatment psychology gives to “helping others.” The goal of my first seven books was to introduce sigfluence as a universal strong need of everyone. The significant lasting influence we believe we achieve toward others is a measure of our well being.

My three year study revealed that Actual, Potential, and Need for Sigfluence together provided an excellent measure of one’s satisfaction with life. And the strongest predictor of Satisfaction with Life was Potential for Sigfluence. For twenty-five years I had no idea as to the practical value of Potential for Sigfluence. After twenty-five years, Potential appears to be one of the most important dimensions in your life.

If you score high on Potential, you are very likely to score high in satisfaction with life. If you score low on Potential, you probably have low satisfaction with life. This was the strongest single result we could find. If you had high Potential, Need and Actual Sigfluence, you scored (on average) very high in satisfaction with life.

Which measure was the strongest? Hands down – Potential. Sometimes it takes decades to discover the obvious. What energizes you during your romantic years? Potential. What excites you at work? Potential. If nothing excites you at work, look for a job with more Potential for Sigfluence. Meaningful jobs have opportunities for lasting, positive influence. And after you have made your millions, follow the leadership of Bill Gates and Warren Buffet. Devote yourself to activities with Potential for Sigfluence. Be patient. It took Mr. Gates over thirty years to change gears and pursue Potential.

In my early 20s I was animated by running the Responsibility Training program for students repeating their grade. I saw the students improve their attendance and effort in class. For many, I was their lifeline.

I trained the dozens of college tutors on Saturdays. I never worked harder. But I was rarely tired. We helped dozens of economically disadvantaged students complete two grades in one year, regain their self-esteem, and advance to high school with their classmates.

When we do good, we feel good for a moment, an hour, a day. Then we need something else to energize us. Potential for Sigfluence is the energizer bunny. It renews us. We get up energized if the day has Potential for Sigfluence. We get up depleted if the day has little hope for making a difference.

Viktor Frankl suffered the tortures of Nazi concentration camps. He bravely overcame the physical and psychological hardships of the Nazi regime, because he had goals. As a psychiatrist, he felt that he had a lot to offer his fellow inmates in terms of advice and encouragement. He also was developing notes for his masterpiece, *Man's Search for Meaning*. He recognized, as few can, his Potential for Sigfluence. He fulfilled his potential to the fullest and, like Mother Teresa, is an exemplary role model for the Sigfluence Era.

America creates many false icons. We are bombarded on a daily basis by marketing experts, trying to convince us of the necessity of things we do not need. Noam Chomsky quipped, "things that we do not (even) want." The image of Madison Avenue, shamelessly promoted everywhere, is "spend money on our products, which will make you look younger and feel better." Unfortunately, things do not lead to personal fulfillment.

Money is a great motivator, when we are young. As we mature, we recognize the emptiness of wealth without a social contribution. My college students watched the tobacco executives testify in Congress several years ago. To my amazement, my students observed that the leaders of tobacco looked depressed and defeated, knowing that tobacco was addictive. Thousands, if not millions, lost their lives prematurely as a result of their deceit. My students got it. They did not need hundreds of statistical studies. If our financial and professional success is a result of lying, cheating, and harming others, it is not success. A picture is worth 1000 words. Television footage of these executives taken to the woodshed is all you need to decide whether Potential is important in living a fulfilled life..

Heather put it well during our focus group:

"There is lots of good in people. In adverse situations, you see the best come out....we want to help, but the balancing act is that we must help ourselves first. If I can, I will. People will help out if it's not a big inconvenience (relating to time and money)."

When I helped William, I was too giving. I gave William access to my home. I gave William money for lunch. I tutored William whenever he needed help and set no limits on time or place. William believed correctly he had found a "sucker" who he could rob for whatever end he had in mind.

Heather is in complete accord with Carl Jung, who believes that our first responsibility is development of the self. A stronger self has greater Potential to sigfluence his/her environment. Imagine the benefits to America if President Bill Clinton had resolved his personal issues before Monica Lewinsky arrived at the White House. Of course, sometimes great achievement emerges from unresolved conflict. Bibi Anderson (one of Ingmar Bergman's stars and friends) told American viewers on the Dick Cavett Show, that Bergman's psychiatrist was wary of curing his famous patient. He believed that Bergman's neuroses were driving his film genius. The world would lose a great body of work if Mr. Bergman were cured. Most of us are not geniuses and ordinary rules follow. Helping is hard work, and we have to first develop ourselves so we can be of optimal value to others.

Please rent Luis Bunuel's classic movie, *Viridiana*. Sister Viridiana tried to help the beggars, thieves, and underclass of a city, before she was ready. Christ's message from Luke calls for generosity:

“If you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled.” (Luke 14-12).

The ex-novitiate Viridiana left the convent because she believed that she had been raped. She still possessed her Christian zeal to help, but she was young, uneducated, and unprepared for the evil of the world. She invited the poor and crippled to a banquet but acted with little insight or caution. We suffer potentially grave consequences by unreflective helping. Sister Viridiana is a fictional figure vividly captured in film by Luis Bunuel. Geniuses, like Bunuel and Bergman, educate us in the complexity of our human relationships and the roadblocks we erect in connecting with others. The truth hurts and deep messages often challenge our convictions, assumptions, and comfort. However, we can be lobotomized by the effects of popular culture. The 2000s can be characterized as the era where we are united by *Man's Search for Sigfluence*. A word, not yet in Webster's, may serve as a focus for our self-development and for our personal meaning.

Helping is a science and an art. I counsel my college students to focus on their intellectual growth in college. Go on for two masters degrees. Gain increased self-knowledge. We help others best after we have reached high levels of insight. Shallow insight coupled with good intentions is an explosive combination. Many years of Christ's mission are missing from the Bible's New Testament. Perhaps Christ was developing himself, so that he could emerge as an exemplar. The Buddha renounced worldly riches and became a guide for millions. He too developed himself over many years, so that he could become a spiritual leader. The Dalai Lama rises before dawn and meditates for hours each day in order to fully serve others. Helping is hard work. As we attain higher levels of self-insight, we increase our Potential for Sigfluence.

One of my students visited me last year, announcing that he wanted to leave college at the end of his sophomore year and help others in Asia. I encouraged him to stay in college, pursue advanced degrees, and then pursue helping with greater education, stature, and self-knowledge. In our increasingly credentials dominated international job arena, you gain entry and respect as a result of your educational background. Then you have an opportunity to achieve sigfluence. Without the right credential, you may not be given an opportunity to achieve satisfying levels of sigfluence. As Alberto Salazar wisely noted, “People with a cause are hard to beat.” If you pursue education for the economic return, you may drift into a comfortable malaise. Alberto Salazar, Viktor Frankl, and so many exemplars were animated and inspired by their potential to make a positive difference in other's lives.

Carl Jung analyzed his pastor father's tendency to perform good deeds. Jung believes that his father attempted to help too much to the detriment of his own family. Jung thought that his father's later difficulties with his own faith and constant family problems were rooted in this inability to balance one's personal and professional life. Further, Pastor Jung's problems were rooted in (according to genius Carl) his shallow theological training and psychological insight. Of course, most of us would have a hard time meeting the expectations of Carl Jung. It is little fun having a genius child.

Whether you are a genius or not, effective helping is fraught with a labyrinth of potential problems. In *Diary of a Country Priest* Georges Bernanos expresses this notion with literary art.

“The smallest seed of good needs more than ordinary good fortune, prodigious luck, not to be stifled.”¹⁷

Diary of a Country Priest inspired Bergman’s *Winter Light*, one of his many masterpieces. *Winter Light* reflects Bergman’s harsh evaluation of his father’s inner life as a pastor. Both Jung and Bergman are tough critics of their fathers’ personal development and consequent limited ability to help others, despite their high social stature. The Sigfluence Generation has to change the way we grant status. Instead of Hollywood glitter, fame, and fortune, and conspicuous consumption, status should be awarded on how close our Actual Sigfluence corresponds to our Potential for Sigfluence. Note the Sigfluence 2000s is the central concept of this book. It may take a millennium, not a century, to advance sigfluence so that we feel individually responsible for the long-term impact of our actions and our interdependence.

You do not need a high status job to have a high Potential for Sigfluence. Geniuses, like the film director Kurosawa, have deep insight into Potential for Sigfluence, even if the English and Japanese languages lack the word. His masterpiece *Ikiru* will inspire you to see new avenues for sigfluence in your life or may inspire you to change jobs. My colleague’s husband was the editor of a prestigious New York magazine. Shortly after he saw *Ikiru*, he quit his high status job. He went looking for a job with a higher Potential for Sigfluence.

In viewing *Ikiru*, the editor rethought his life. He had wealth and status. However, Kurosawa inspired him to give up esteem and search for sigfluence.

Bergman, Jung, and Kurosawa are not guiding you in terms of how to fulfill your individual quest for sigfluence. But they are breaking down the typical roadblocks that hinder our search for sigfluence – comfort, money, status, power, and denial.

After viewing *Ikiru*, I decided to innovate the Responsibility Training program. I enrolled in a second master’s degree in Counseling Psychology. Potential for Sigfluence was the basis for this redirection. Like Sister Viridiana (but without the tragic consequences), I discovered how difficult it is to effect long-term, positive influence. My impressive eighty percent success rate short-term was followed by a ninety+ percent failure rate of my students to earn a high school diploma in the traditional four years. Our African American 18-25 year old males are more likely to be in prison than college. The school failure rate among Hispanic youth in urban areas is even worse. As a society, we accept the relatively heightened probability of being involved in crime instead of sigfluencing the economically disadvantaged. Sigfluence is a revolutionary and unsettling concept whose denial has personal and societal consequences.

Ram Das searched for sigfluence. He did not find it in the status of teaching at Harvard or in drugs. He eventually discovered his path to sigfluence in India by aiding the blind. He saw the before and the after (sight). The gift he gave others was sight. Most of us lack the resources, courage, or will to find our optimal zone for sigfluence.

Jack, one of my focus group participants, spoke about his score for Potential for Sigfluence, which was a little below average. He attributed the low score to his working as a clerk for Old Navy. He went on to conjecture that after his summer job as camp counselor, his score for Potential would have been higher. Jack was referring to the influence he believed he would have toward his charges during summer camp. We all believe that teachers wield extraordinarily high levels of sigfluence. This is partial compensation, since their salaries are usually lower than other professionals. There is no disputing the lower salaries of educators. However, Bill Gates and Warren Buffet appear to be using their wealth wisely in sigfluencing many lives across the world. One of the strongest of my early findings was that there was no relation between the status of your job and the sigfluence you believe that you have achieved toward others. In a century or two we may confirm or dispel the myths about the influence of teachers. Few teachers could ever hope to effect the sigfluence of the Gates-Buffet partnership in philanthropy.

The Sigfluence Survey, despite twenty-five years of research, is still a preliminary measure of sigfluence. Jack believed that his Potential score would increase, after he had the influence opportunity of a camp counselor. This is probably not the case. The Survey scores have been very reliable. This means that your results do not vary very much over time. Of course, it will take years to improve my survey, that is if the Sigfluence Generation changes the college curriculum.

One of the outstanding sentiments of our focus group was that our young people need education on how to help others. Most view teachers and clergy as key influence mentors and guides. Sadly, some teachers and clergy betray the trust of their positions. *Winter Light* by Bergman and *Diary of a Country Priest* by Bernanos present the conflicted inner lives of fictional characters. The tragic sex abuse scandals involving priests are real and illustrate how some abandon their Potential.

Our movies about teachers are largely superficial and misleading. Recent Public Broadcasting documentaries have shed light on the difficulty teachers have in getting through the day, much less inspiring the young. I have had magic moments of effecting positive influence toward my students, but during my early years I faced high stress and severe discipline problems, that could erode one's spirit. If we were completely candid about the problems we experienced in our professional lives, we may scare young people away from a fulfilling profession. But our widespread silence about the pitfalls and secrets of each profession force the innocent and young undue suffering. At the minimum Generation Y could be made to understand that every profession has rites of initiation. Their Potential will only be fulfilled after a partnership is established with the elders. Are we ready, willing, and able? In 20 or 30 years, we will know.

Main Early Results

Sigfluence explains our motivation to give lost motorists correct directions. It underlies the joy we observe in grandparents. Their sigfluence legacy continues. It makes clear our malaise at work if we are not performing a job that helps people. It demystifies our vitality at work, if we believe we are achieving sigfluence. We cannot measure sigfluence the way we calculate blood pressure.

Your Sigfluence Survey measured your personal beliefs about Need, Potential, and Actual Sigfluence. The survey is consistent (reliable). People tend to respond the same way in a week or a month. In ten years you may have higher scores. This will be an indication that you have better fulfilled your Need for Sigfluence, which leads to greater personal fulfillment.

An entire book, *Theory and Measurement of Sigfluence* (University Press of America, 2005), is devoted to the technical details of the Survey. It is not geared for the general reader. To you, the general reader, the Sigfluence Survey is a start to measure something one of my colleagues called “inscrutable.” In time, we will have a much better handle on sigfluence, if our young people achieve their potential.

The early results, twenty years of interviews and studies, yielded some expected and some not expected results. These include:

1) THERE WAS NO RELATION BETWEEN THE STATUS OF A PERSON’S JOB AND THEIR ACTUAL SIGFLUENCE

Some believe that their job is not important. They consider the famous and high status people lucky to earn all that money and achieve such positive influence. This is not the case.

Dr. Sabin was typical. He had enormously high professional status – medical researcher. And Dr. Sabin had a woefully inadequate perception of his Actual Sigfluence. Tens of thousands of readers of *The Daily News* helped Dr. Sabin face his final days believing that he made a difference.

A physician, interviewed on National Public Radio, confided that his terminally ill patients rarely feared the physical pain of their final days. They feared whether they had “lived their lives to their POTENTIAL.” I will always remember the closing phrase. “Lived their lives to their potential.” The commentator did not ask “What Potential?” I believe that the physician and his terminally ill patients were referring to Sigfluence Potential. We need that word now for our Sigfluence Generation to have a label and focus for their direction.

The Sigfluence Generation has a lot of work to do. Otherwise, they will die doubting whether they have “lived their lives to their potential.”

2) FEWER THAN HALF TELL THEIR KEY INFLUENCERS

In nearly every sigfluence workshop, I find that fewer than half of the participants have told the key sigfluencer in their life about their positive effects. I told both my ninth grade algebra teachers about their sigfluence in my life. My first algebra teacher, who left in mid-year to marry, was embarrassed and unable to respond. Some people are overwhelmed and incapable of accepting the remarkable power of what they considered normal and unexceptional.

We have to learn to thank people more for the lasting influence they have achieved. And the recipients have to be better prepared to receive positive feedback. Our malaise at work is related to our silence, embarrassment, and indifference about sigfluence, both the sigfluence we have

received and the sigfluence we effect. The Sigfluence Generation has to open our minds, eyes, and hearts to the animation of being in touch with the positive legacy we leave. At the same time our increasingly rarefied specialties are placing us in isolation from the sigfluence of our work.

President Clinton eloquently expressed his perception of personal influence in the following:

“I’m getting to do what I believe in – though I’m also humbled to find out how hard it is sometimes to translate convictions into policy and into people’s lives.... Second, I really think we’re making a difference.”¹⁸

President Clinton was reported to have one of the highest IQs of modern presidents. He was able to assimilate briefings while reading the newspaper and smoking a cigar while taking a bath. His expression of the difficulty of achieving sigfluence and witnessing it is a profound insight that has been confirmed by my twenty years of research.

3) IT TAKES 28 MONTHS ON AVERAGE FOR PEOPLE TO RECOGNIZE SIGFLUENCE

Imagine that. You make a lasting, positive difference in someone’s life. Then it takes 28 months for the person to recognize your remarkable gift. And perhaps forty percent of the time you will be told about your sigfluence. We live in a malaise and, like a comfortable shoe, we wear it. Only people who regularly exercise cannot do without physical activity. For people who shun aerobics, they live in a familiar moderately depressed state. Since they avoid exercise, they accept the status quo.

The Sigfluence Generation has to change all this. Sigfluence feedback loops must be created. Management should shed the illusion that an omniscient administrator can evaluate our professional work. We are programmed to accept an ALPHA figure, who can judge our professional worth, our strengths and our shortcomings. Perhaps ALPHA bosses can screen out the ten percent or so of incompetents from any field. However, ALPHAs and the Sigfluence Generation could synergize to put us in touch with the positive effects of our work. Sigfluence is a natural motivator. If we better understand the good we can effect at work, we will do it. Administrators could become partners in helping us to achieve higher levels of sigfluence.

Sigfluence can easily be abused. Managers, instead of focusing on facilitating sigfluence, could use imperfect and preliminary measures to evaluate employees. It is destructive to abuse sigfluence by promoting or firing based on a concept that is in its infancy.

This requires a transformation. Teachers and most professionals get evaluated once a year. Traditional job evaluation is inherently out of touch with long-term influence. Yet, sigfluence is the key to a vital, energized workforce. The tobacco executives had loads of financial compensation. Over time, their success in marketing tobacco cost lives. My students wisely observed their depressed demeanor during congressional testimony about their false claims of non-addictive chemicals in cigarettes. Their congressional testimony could inspire the Sigfluence Generation to do better. Warren Buffet and Bill Gates are leading the way.

A remarkable study of job performance was done by Pete Pedersen, past vice-president of McGill University.¹⁹ Pete studied the twenty year influence of an exemplary first grade teacher. This marvelous teacher inspired her students to high professional achievement. We often see a connection between household income or parents' level of education and the level of students' job status. This special teacher was more influential than money or parents' educational advantage. She transformed her students' aspirations. She is a model for the Sigfluence Generation. I spoke to Pete recently. We became friends shortly after I thanked him for the role his article played in my development of the concept of sigfluence. He told me that his article was the most frequently asked for title from the distinguished legacy of Harvard Educational Review. Pete was one of the first people, who clearly understood the concept of sigfluence, before I coined the word.

Teachers may be the sigfluence leaders in the world. Most believe they are. However, the future may hold a great many unexpected sigfluence discoveries. One thing is for sure. Annual evaluation is missing the boat in terms of sigfluence, which in Pete's inspiring article, took twenty years to unearth.

4) THE AGES 14-18 APPEAR TO BE THE TIME OF OPTIMUM INFLUENCE TOWARD US

During high school, if we are lucky, we encounter a teacher or counselor or professional who serves as a role model. Typically this special person unlocks a door for us. We discover that we have an ability and interest that direct our future.

If 14-18 is the key age for sigfluence, we should relieve guidance counselors of a lot of paperwork that impinges on their job. In economically disadvantaged schools, counselors may have caseloads of 400 students or more. And they are buried with paperwork, responsibilities to refer for special education, disruptive and violent students, and scheduling the entire school.

We have to better coordinate the right professional with the student's readiness for sigfluence. Otherwise we are squandering human potential, particularly sigfluencing the poor. They have few voices of advocacy. How we treat the poor and helpless is a measure of our character. The Sigfluence Generation has to improve on our record. Currently more young African-American males are in prison than in college.

5) SLIGHTLY OVER TWENTY PERCENT HAVE THE SAME CAREER AS THEIR SIGFLUENCER

One participant in my workshop said sigfluence was simply another word for mentorship. I responded that mentorship was a little circle inside a big circle of sigfluence. Mentorship is a small part of sigfluence.

America is consumed by job status and professional achievement. On the survey, men tend to identify significant influencers as people who led them to their current profession. The survey does not specify the nature of the positive influence or the effects. Many cite influencers who introduced them to close friends or their spouse. Women are more facile at putting career in

perspective. Or they were until gender equity in the workforce subjected them to the same opportunities for achievement (and workaholism) as men. A recent National Public Radio report revealed that the vast majority of women want to stay home and raise their children. There is much evidence that a sigfluence transformation is already underway.

6) THE SIGFLUENCE OF DIFFERENT JOBS IS AN OPEN RESEARCH DIRECTION

We all (or nearly all) believe that teaching is a profession high in Actual Sigfluence. Business executives make a lot of money but may sacrifice Actual Sigfluence.

At a Manhattan College reunion a decade ago, I was sitting next to a stockbroker. After he bragged about his income, I brought up the topic of sigfluence and suggested that teaching compensated with the satisfaction of achieving sigfluence, while his work resulted in high financial rewards and lower sigfluence.

He quickly corrected me. He told me that his clients entrusted their children's education, their retirement, and their family's finances to him. They trusted him. His planning for clients resulted in high Actual Sigfluence. One client made him the executor of his will.

I have been teaching for forty years. My current college position has rewarded me with numerous instances where I helped students achieve their professional goals. And I saw the sigfluence. In my first few years of teaching in an economically disadvantaged school, I did not witness much sigfluence. The vast majority of my eighth grade students were over three years below grade level. Over a hundred students were left back each year in my school. I wanted to sigfluence these students and designed a Responsibility Training program that was so successful it was featured in the American School Board Journal as a national model. Unfortunately, I found that ninety percent of my successful students failed to graduate high school. My impressive short-term results faded. Sigfluence is complex and demanding.

We believed the earth was flat centuries ago. Now we use the term ellipsoid to describe the surface of the earth. In a century or two we may be able to guide students into various occupations based upon the Potential for Sigfluence of the future jobs.

In my early studies, sometimes our biases hold up. Teachers scored higher than salespeople in Actual, Potential, and Need. But the sample was from Westchester County and was small – ten for each group.

Pete Pedersen discovered dramatic lifelong influence of an exemplary first grade teacher. Her students were significantly more likely to enter high status professions than the students of the other two teachers. Pete's study inspired me to explore sigfluence. After all, twenty years is long-term, and this special elementary school teacher was more sigfluent than any of the other professionals that trained the students.

In another of my studies, attorneys scored the same in all three sigfluence measures as secretaries. However, again, the sample was small – five for each group. A similar result was

found for secretaries and managers working for the same company. The sample was a modest twelve.

A further result found that nurses scored higher than blue collar workers in Actual and Potential. There was no significant difference in Need. Perhaps some blue collar workers could change occupations to nursing to better fulfill their Need for Sigfluence.

College professors scored equal in Actual Sigfluence as compared to elementary school teachers. The elementary school teachers scored higher in Potential and Need, based on samples of five.

Perhaps the high status of college professors may be compensation for their lofty education and the stress and sacrifice they endured to obtain their esteemed positions. This idea is not entirely new. Thomas Mann developed a character in *Death in Venice*, Von Aschenbach, who expressed one view of how we grant status to certain professions.

Mann described the shallowness of societal status:

“Men do not know why they award fame to one work of art rather than another. Without being in the faintest connoisseurs, they think to justify the warmth of their commendations by discovering in it a hundred virtues, whereas the real ground of their applause is inexplicable – it is sympathy.”²⁰

We give status to Dr. Sabin in that we are offering him sympathy for his years of sacrifice and isolation as a medical researcher for our benefit. We console workaholics with status and privately rejoice that we benefit from their hard work without personal sacrifice.

Politicians are typically workaholics and do not even receive our sympathy. We lambaste the powerful without properly recognizing their sacrifice or our responsibility if their work is not sigfluent.

The Sigfluence Generation has the potential to transform society and the workplace. We may find that humble, low status jobs may have Potential for Sigfluence that belies our elementary school notions of status.

In short, the first twenty-five years of my research largely upheld the high sigfluence of teaching but revealed a confusing and contradictory set of findings in other occupations. For a complete report of the early studies, please refer to J. Loase, *Theory and Measurement of Sigfluence* (University Press of America, 2002).

You have now learned about sigfluence from a lot of examples. And we have shared a brief summary of highlights of my research. It is time to report the remarkable findings from our surveys of 542 Generation Ys – 18-25 year old college students.

The Sigfluence Generation

Our 542 college students showed a strong link (positive correlation) between their satisfaction with life (item 6) and all three sigfluence factors. This does not mean that sigfluence causes satisfaction in life but that satisfaction with life and sigfluence go hand in hand.

The strongest connection with satisfaction with life was Potential for Sigfluence. Potential may be the key to transforming society. We put too many people in jail, robbing them of their Potential for Sigfluence. We place the elderly in nursing homes with little opportunity to fulfill a Potential for Sigfluence. Our jobs do not have sigfluence as a consideration for job entry, evaluation, or morale building.

One of the strongest findings of our three year study was the superiority of women's scores in Actual, Potential, and Need for Sigfluence. If sigfluence leads to a more satisfying life, women already get the message. Women may live longer due to their social networks and connections with others. Classics like *Death of a Salesman* (Miller) and *The Iceman Cometh* (O'Neil) depict the isolation of the American male. It is time to address the frequent social isolation of the American male and its possible health consequences.

I tried to find what factors connected to living a satisfying life for our Gen Ys. The Need, Potential, and Actual Sigfluence scores were the strongest I could find. This confirmed my bias. Just because I am prejudiced in favor of sigfluence does not make me wrong.

I used financial and health responses, grades in school, economic status and income together to try to predict satisfaction in life. The correlation for the financial/health factors was .177; for the three sigfluence factors, the correlation was .518 – nearly triple the strength. Correlations range from the lowest of -1 to +1 (the highest). The .518 correlation was highly significant, since we had a large sample (542). There are millions of combinations to link to life satisfaction. In fact, life satisfaction is only one of 50 key concepts to highlight. But after three years of study, society should focus on sigfluence as a component of self-actualization, a new direction in mental health research, and the key to unlocking human potential.

If twenty-five years of sigfluence study can be encapsulated in one voice, consider the words of Chris:

“I agree the 90s were greedy. But since 9/11, it's not just about ourselves but everyone else in the country. Yes, this is a positive influence generation.”

Our young people express a burning desire to make a difference. Consider Jason's belief:

“Political leaders' first responsibility is to improve society. I don't see actual work being done. ...where do the dollars go and how are they being used to improve things.... I want more concrete evidence. Don't underestimate us; we want to make a difference.”

Jason has given us all several lessons. He wants to see “actual work being done.” This is essential for realizing the Potential for Sigfluence of our young people. They want to see the “sigfluence.”

Jason is calling for concrete evidence. The No Child Left Behind program sadly has ushered in a slew of high paid consultants to hide problems – not face issues. The dropout rates in high school are systematically underreported. Students, who have stopped attending school, are assigned to phantom schools with phantom teachers and phantom programs. While our prisons are bursting at the seams as a result of the long-term negative influence we wield toward the economically disadvantaged, we deny our role in their misfortune.

Jason wants concrete evidence that we are making a difference in the lives of the poor. He wants to make a difference. The Sigfluence Generation wants to make a difference.

Again and again, our young people reveal their motivation to help others. At the same time they confess to a lack of education and understanding on how to effect lasting influence. Listen to Chris:

“Money is what drives us and we’re not educated on how to help others.
(I) would like more education on how to help others.”

Chris is placing the responsibility and blame on us, the mentors, for not educating the young on how to help others. To be fair, we do not know ourselves. Helping others effectively is both a science and an art. We have to confess that effective, long-term, positive influence is difficult to achieve. My short-term success in helping students, who were left back, was largely wiped out when they entered a high school with few special programs. The students’ irresponsibility returned and they flunked out. It is hard to explore long-term influence because there are so many obstacles for the economically disadvantaged before they can enter our social mainstream.

When my Responsibility Training students reached high school, there was no special tutoring or counseling. They were on their own. As a result, they missed class, studied little, and failed to graduate. When our young people are left on their own, they do poorly – even the advantaged. In a seldom quoted study by the College Board, it was found that only forty percent of top students (upper 20 percentile of their high school class) graduate college within five years. The rate for economically disadvantaged is depressingly low. My recent article (*Focus*, “How to Excel at Math Transformation,” May 2009) revealed a nineteen percent eight year graduation rate of college students who require three or more remedial courses. Of course, economically disadvantaged students frequently become college remedial students. I called upon my fellow college professors to give pep talks in local high schools focusing on the need for students to take harder courses in high school and not rely on college to remediate their problems. We need to continuously care for all our students, K – college. Until then, we rely upon low graduation rates and high incarceration rates to maintain the economic status quo.

We are the only major industrialized nation without universal healthcare. In 1995 I was invited to deliver a lecture at Harvard’s International Conference on Health Policy. Governor Michael Dukakis departed from his keynote speech at our banquet and debated the researchers about why

our health policy was so negligent. I had not planned on speaking, since I had no special knowledge on healthcare. The two researchers who debated Governor Dukakis were rebutted so elegantly that I decided that I couldn't sound worse than them.

I conjectured that any politician who made Americans more aware of the suffering and premature death of millions of poor people, resulting from no health coverage, would not be elected by the American people.

Gov. Dukakis asked me for my evidence. I responded, "No one would know the costs better of being overly candid with the American people than you."

Gov. Dukakis did not respond. He had no rebuttal to my simple and tragic insight. We all neglect, deny, and fear our sigfluence legacy. We prefer to live in denial. Change costs money – a lot of money. Will the Sigfluence Generation join the elders in transforming society, or will they slip into our comfortable malaise?

The Sigfluence Generation need to transform business. When we asked our focus group about what they would like to say to business leaders, Julie replied:

"The more a company promotes something that is socially responsible, this could turn into a trend."

Julie may be right. Memes, or thought patterns, could be positive and spread. Already the late Paul Newman and others led the way with a portion of their profits going to charity. In Newman's example, one hundred percent goes to charity.

An estimated 78 million American Baby Boomers are beginning to retire. Nicholas Kristof, one of our most distinguished journalists, highlighted the example of Bill Gates and several other Boomers as exemplars of humanitarianism for our Sigfluence Generation. Dr. Peter Agre, a Nobel Prize winning chemist, turned from his research lab to presiding over a team of doctors to overcome malaria. He stated: "It wasn't a matter of being a Mother Teresa. It was a matter of, boy that sounds like fun."²¹

Dr. Agre was being modest, but fun describes the joy I had in helping the repeaters make up for past failures. I was animated, having a lot of fun, witnessing student success. However, it was no fun witnessing the long-term failure of the students. The Sigfluence Generation has to continuously care for our people. We have to overcome pervasive denial.

The glass is half full for the Sigfluence Generation. Juanita gave this glimpse on futuristic marketing:

“If (a young person) had a family, then more health conscious and socially positive choices would likely be made (in buying products).
...Marketers need to segment their targets.”

Juanita is right. There are remarkable differences within segments of the Sigfluence Generation. Gender was the strongest separator.

Gender

Although both male and female college students reported significantly greater Potential for Sigfluence than the earlier generation, female college students reported significantly higher Actual, Potential, Need and Satisfaction with Life than male college students. We can conclude with high confidence (ninety-eight percent plus) that today’s women are in better touch with their Need, Potential, and Actual Sigfluence than their male counterparts.

There is a pattern. More young women are choosing to be stay at home with their children. Fewer want the demands of a full-time job, that takes a toll on family. Young men are accepting primary responsibility for earning money in order to keep their wife at home with the young children.

Our young women are fulfilling their Potential for Sigfluence and Need for Sigfluence. Our young men are largely denying their Need and Potential for Sigfluence. *Death of a Salesman* mirrors their eventual isolation, unless we change.

Not everyone believes that Generation Y is the Sigfluence Generation. Rashid made the following point:

“More people (Generation Y) are selfish – and take, take, take. A lot of students are like the greedy 90s. Gen Y is worse.”

It will take a generation to determine whether our Sigfluence Generation followed our comfortable malaise or transformed America. It is difficult, if not impossible, to label a group of tens of millions Americans. Statistics and focus groups are powerful tools for analysis, but they have limitations. My sample of 542 college students was not large and focused on two Christian, Northeast private liberal arts colleges. We did not sample the South, the West coast, or Alaska and Hawaii. It takes millions of dollars to sample the United States and perform the analysis properly. Everyone is a critic, but I would prefer to be a participant.

Please recall that my most important finding was the relation between satisfaction with life and Potential for Sigfluence. This is not surprising. Potential for Sigfluence animates us. We are energized by opportunities to make a difference. Our Sigfluence Generation could be energized by their partnership with “the elders.”

Young women have a better understanding and appreciation for their Potential and Need for Sigfluence than young men. We assume that the longevity of women is greater than men because of genetics. In a few decades, we may discover that Need and Potential for Sigfluence play roles in women’s longer average life span. In the early 1900s, Binet tested intelligence in

what would seem today a Neanderthal approach. The Sigfluence Generation will discover an astonishing body of sigfluence insights, if they join forces with “the elders” to make a difference.

Tom Friedman, Pulitzer Prize winning columnist for the *New York Times*, calls our young people the Quiet Americans. Mr. Friedman has a daughter in the class of 2007 and has first hand experience with our college students from his lectures and his daughter’s friends. He described Generation Y as the following:

“(They are) quietly determined not to let this age of terrorism curtail their lives.... or steal the America they are about to inherit.it seems to me that they go off and volunteer for public service or for military service with as much conviction as any generation, if not more.”²²

Mr. Friedman is correct. Our Sigfluence Generation has conviction. They have a Potential for Sigfluence that surpasses other generations. But, and this is a big but, they need the “elders” to partner societal transformation. This is the fundamental message and calling of this book.

Let us now explore how language influences the way we think and act.

CHAPTER THREE

LANGUAGE

Our language not only expresses our thinking. It shapes our thinking.

The Sigfluence Generation inherits a language that perpetuates the status quo. For example, look at our synonyms for wealthy – rich, moneyed, opulent, prosperous, well-to-do. Did you consider wealth as your positive influence? Wealth is an open ended term. This is a bit like a Rorschach (ink blot) test. If you considered sigfluence as wealth, you are rare and precocious.

The Sigfluence Generation has to create language for gradations of sigfluence. Sigfluence could result from serendipity or chance. Viktor Frankl became sigfluent after great suffering. Many of us have been sigfluenced by an exemplary professional, such as a special teacher. We need a new word for short-term promising innovations with effects that fade over time. Some of our best intentioned programs in education have remarkable short-term success. However, our current high school dropout rate, college completion proportion (embarrassingly low compared to other countries like Japan and England), and incarceration rate of African-American and Hispanic males belies any optimism about societal transformation through No Child Left Behind or similar panaceas. Our Sigfluence Generation need to distinguish between pageantry and sigfluence. Language is critical. As a start, I have focused on three dimensions of sigfluence – Actual, Potential, and Need.

Language Relativity Assumption

We are imprisoned by our language. This is the language relativity assumption. Different languages condition us to inhabit separate worlds. The world of the English language is a materialistic one that the Sigfluence Generation has to transfigure. My partiality toward the language relativity position is not shared by most linguists who believe that language is a passive instrument to express thought – the language independence assumption. Let me make the case for language relativity.

We commonly think that separate languages use different words but capture the same concept. A good translator conveys the same concept from one language to another. Or perhaps not.

It is entirely possible that different languages do not translate. We may be imprisoned in our birth language. Our thinking may be determined by our language. This is the essence of “language relativity.”

Edward Sapir, one of the twentieth century’s leading linguists, stated the “language relativity” principle in 1921 as follows:

“(Language) conditions all our thinking about social problems and processes. Human beings...are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society.... The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached.”²³

If there are many synonyms that mean wealth and each has a positive connotation, this conditions us to value and pursue wealth. There is certainly nothing wrong with financial wealth. America is one tough place for the poor. When Mother Teresa visited New York, she was saddened by what she called the poverty. When she was reminded that New York City was one of the wealthiest cities in the world, she responded that the “spiritual poverty” unsettled her.

Financial wealth without sigfluence is empty. Bill Gates and Warren Buffet embrace sigfluence without knowing the word (yet). If our language lacks a word like sigfluence, it means we have not recognized sigfluence as a high priority within our society. Which comes first – the word or the value of the concept? We may never know. But there is no harm of adding “sigfluence” to Webster’s. This is language priority #1 for the Sigfluence Generation.

Adding a word like sigfluence to the English language certifies that the concept is worth our attention. It also gives us an efficient sequence (chunk), so we may think about sigfluence more frequently. Without a single, unified word, we have to rely on making five separate and independent associations: 1) significant; 2) long-term; 3) positive, 4) interpersonal; and 5) influence. No wonder we are so superficial in the way we think and act. Our language imprisons us. We are at the mercy of its oversights.

The opposite of the language relativity principle is the “language independence assumption.” This assumption dates back to 1690 when British philosopher John Locke stated that our language provides a way to express our thought, but does not shape our thinking. Most linguists believe in the language independence assumption. They grew up with it in their academic studies. It makes sense. We see water. Different cultures have different words for water, but they all mean water.

Several researchers do not believe in the language independence assumption. A study by Donald MacKay found that by using the pronoun “he” in a reading test, pro-feminist UCLA women scored lower than men. More women thought the author was male.²⁴ Our language may have many unintended consequences.

If the arbitrary use of “he” influences reading comprehension, consider the loss our currently inadequate language is fostering. We need new words to focus our societal attention on the long-term, so that in 50 or 60 years members of the current Sigfluence Generation will believe that they have come close to fulfilling their Potential for Sigfluence. We are conditioned by our language or by its neglect.

Years ago I discussed sigfluence as a new word with the late Dr. Viktoria Fromkin, a UCLA linguist, who was delivering a keynote lecture at Canada’s Learned Societies’ Conference. Dr. Fromkin’s eyes lit up and she said we need a word like sigfluence now. I believe that we needed the concept of sigfluence long ago to serve as a focus for our personal and professional lives. However, Dr. Fromkin believed in the language independence assumption. She thought now was the time to define sigfluence.

We needed a word like sigfluence centuries ago but were not ready for the paradigm shift that sigfluence invites. We live in silence and ignorance as to our sigfluence potential. Our language

shapes and mirrors our neglect. Will the Sigfluence Generation innovate new words for their influence revolution or slip into our comfortable malaise? Our language may reveal the answer. In a few years check for sigfluence in Webster's Dictionary or on Microsoft Word spell-checker.

Chunks

Sigfluence is a chunk of six words: significant, long-term, positive, interpersonal, influence. If you don't have the chunk in your vocabulary (not many do yet), you do not give sigfluence its due.

If you have a word like sigfluence, you have a focus. You can think about sigfluence as you reflect on your job, your personal life, your future goals.

For example, in the early part of my career, I taught at a disadvantaged school. Violence was high; morale was low. Many teachers were severely burned out. One put up a poster the first day of class which read: 182 DAYS TO SUMMER VACATION.

I didn't have the word inure in my vocabulary then. Inure means to accustom oneself to something unpleasant or undesirable. After I had the new word inure, I understood how burnout occurs in teaching. The idealistic teacher goes in with high expectations, but slowly but surely over time gets accustomed to the violence and great difficulties of teaching in disadvantaged schools. It doesn't happen in a day, week, or month, but very gradually. Like a lobster in a slowly boiling pot of water, the burnout is imperceptible until it is too late.

If we don't have a word like sigfluence, we need six separate words. By the time we put these six words together, we may have missed an opportunity to evaluate sigfluence. It is remarkable that one of the most important dimensions of our life lacks a word.

Pageantry

Could you guess who was the author of this criticism of lawyers?

"...(His) fellow lawyers were accustomed to saying everything so that nobody but we of the craft can untwist the diction, and find out what it means."

This criticism was made by Thomas Jefferson in 1817. Little has changed in two centuries. Lawyers have created a language that only lawyers understand.

The same is true of virtually every profession. Academic writing is often torturous, convoluted, and unnecessarily arduous to understand. Take my own writing as a college professor:

"Consider in addition Whorf's problem with circularity. World view is derived from linguistic categories which prove the existence of this same world view, which was derived from the linguistic categories initially. In order to obviate such circularity, we must develop experiments that feature evidence independent of language. This is virtually impossible."

This writing by me was from *Sigfluence* (Peter Lang and Sons, 1988). It was written for a university press and for university professors. Unfortunately, it wasn't read by many. In retrospect the entire book was pageantry – “a pretentious display that conceals a lack of real importance or meaning” (Random House Dictionary). The published book looks good, has fancy writing, leads to tenure and promotion at colleges, but does it influence? We have to get away from pageantry and need to effect sigfluence.

I completed the only joint doctorate in mathematics, statistics and psychological measurement ever awarded by Teachers College, Columbia University. My mentors, the late Dr. Richard Wolf (Psychological Measurement) and Dr. Bruce Vogeli (Mathematics, Statistics/Education) empowered me for my dissertation to explore the mathematics used on the job by high level practitioners, actuaries, and computer scientists and contrast this with the mathematics they took in college. I was shocked by the gap between what mathematics the typical applied mathematician took in college and what he/she used on a regular basis in the workplace. The gap was enormous. Most were overqualified for their jobs well before they had completed their bachelor's degrees. In some categories, I found that the more math the professional took, the less they used on the job. This was shocking and an eyeopener.

Computer scientists and actuaries use the language of mathematics. They need three semesters of mathematics in order to begin their formal study at most colleges or universities. The huge gap between what computer science majors and actuaries were required to learn in college and what they typically used on the job is covert bias. We are frequently bored at work, because we rarely use our academic training at work and we do not witness the sigfluence of our labor.

The Mayo Clinic with over 2500 physicians and scientists recognizes the link between job satisfaction and physical health.²⁵ In a report to CNN, the Mayo Clinic described three approaches to work, job, career, or calling. As a job, one focuses primarily on money. As a career, one is motivated by status and power. Calling or work that fulfills the individual is the Mayo Clinic's third category. No category or strategy advanced by the Mayo Clinic, one of the leading medical institutions in the world, alludes to the importance of helping others. The Mayo Clinic is imprisoned by our language's neglect of sigfluence. Sigfluence is animating. We become more engaged at work if we see that our efforts help others.

Instead of focusing on sigfluence at work, we create prestige dialects in law, computer science, college and professional writing. This distancing language is not designed to help people. This ponderous writing is not created to effect sigfluence. The purpose of professional language is to create elite fraternities, who are paid well to “untwist the diction.” If we try to simplify our language to communicate with the masses, we will be rewarded with a heightened feeling of sigfluence. It has happened with me. Each of my seven published books on sigfluence was written clearer and more simply. After a long delay, Nova Science published *Our Neglect, Denial and Fear* in 2000. The vice-president of Nova Science's publishing house, Kroszka Books, called me to express her admiration for my book. Several others have thanked me for helping them with such an important concept as sigfluence. Unfortunately, I am still waiting for an invitation to speak on Oprah. The Sigfluence Generation may find Oprah a better forum than the world of academe or publishing.

Clarity vs. Confusion

Let us examine several different styles and types of writing.

Imagine that you are a non-resident alien reading this section of the IRS 1040NR form:

“Alternatively, you are considered a U.S. resident if you meet the substantial presence test for the calendar year. Under this test, you must be physically present in the United States for at least:

- (1) 31 days during the current calendar year, and
- (2) 183 days during the period consisting of the current year and the 2 preceding years, counting all the days of physical presence in the current year but only 1/3 the number of days of presence in the first preceding year and only 1/6 the number of days in the second preceding year. . . .

There are two main exceptions to the substantial presence test. They are the exempt individual exception and the closer connection to a foreign country exception. . . .

For more information on resident and non-resident status, the tests for residence and the exceptions to them, see Publication 519.”²⁶

The person or persons responsible for the creation of this form should be compelled to view Kurosawa’s film classic, *Ikiru*. In the movie a model bureaucrat, nicknamed “the mummy” by his co-workers due to his unemotional manner and his meaningless paper pushing, attempts to change the government agency. He wants to make a difference. The reason for his change is that he finds out that he has only six months to live. Perhaps if we knew the day-to-day problems of the IRS, we could understand the motivations that led to such confusing language. At present, we can only assume that IRS personnel have severely frustrated sigfluence needs.

The Sigfluence Generation has to change our language. They have to add quality new words, promote new ideas, and rewrite distancing, esoteric documents. Language influences. We are prisoners of our linguistic limitations and our professional displays of verbal pageantry.

Sigfluence—A Missing Concept

Think of the person, outside of your family, who wielded the greatest sigfluence toward you. If your pattern is typical, the following probably holds:

- 1) You have not told this figure of his/her positive effects.
- 2) You believe in the genuineness of the experience.
- 3) After a few months, you would probably name the same person as the most influential.
- 4) It took a while, perhaps a few years, to appreciate the positive effect on your life.
- 5) You probably haven’t thought a great deal about this experience.
- 6) You likely haven’t discussed this effect with many.

Sigfluence captures this universal experience, that we have to more fully develop. The Sigfluence Generation can achieve higher levels of meaning as a result of this focus.

Several twentieth century intellectual leaders wrote in a sigfluence spirit. Martin Buber wrote about the need for I-Thou relationships. Professor Buber criticized the I-It objective and detached manner of twentieth century science. He calls for man to encounter God by encountering the divine Thou behind others.²⁷

Another leading humanist, Carl Rogers, calls us to become “fully functioning,” which involves movement away from facades and oughts to greater openness, acceptance of himself and others, and increased self-direction.²⁸

Both Martin Buber and Carl Rogers had considerable influence on twentieth century philosophy, theology, and psychology. Both were hindered by our language. Neither considered long-term positive influence as a dimension of I-Thou relationship or a “fully functioning” human. We are at a very early stage of sigfluence consciousness. The Sigfluence Generation needs to start with changing our language.

Linguists, who are trained with the language independence assumption, may resist the coining of new words. One linguist walked out of my sigfluence lecture at Harvard’s International Conference on Thinking. He joined me by chance for dinner that evening. He admitted later in our pleasant dinner conversation that he left my talk, outraged that a professor had coined a new word. In his opinion, new words were the province of the Oxford Editorial Board. He believed that we had all the components of sigfluence. Our language already had the words significant, long—term, positive, interpersonal, and influence. Why did I audaciously coin sigfluence?

I responded that we judge people and influence much worse than things we see or hear. We can judge colors and sizes more accurately than people’s motives or the influence that people are having upon us. We have plenty of words for colors and can break measurement down into microscopic lengths. However, we don’t have key words like sigfluence to describe special events in our life. Perhaps our elementary school insight into the extent of our personal influence is related to our limited vocabulary to describe personal influence. It appears to be common sense that if we have a single word (sigfluence), it is easier and more efficient to capture sigfluence and to evaluate certain experiences as potentially sigfluent. Otherwise we have to rely on our brain to link five memory compartments—1) significant, 2) long-term, 3) positive, 4) interpersonal, and 5) influence. Our language conditions us to marginalize sigfluence through its neglect.

Grandmasters in chess are superb players who, unlike bridge masters, nearly always will win against lower ranked players. What is the secret to their success? We know that grandmasters in chess possess a very large number of quality sequences of moves. They can look at a chess game in progress and immediately tap their memory for thousands of possible variations of moves, each yielding advantages and disadvantages for their game. There is a relation between chess sequences and words. A chess sequence consists of several individual moves. These moves together make up a continuation. A word is similarly defined in terms of several more fundamental words.

By adding labels to group important concepts, we have a single word for our evaluation of key events. Otherwise, we have to depend upon five separate memory compartments in order to

capture sigfluence. To illustrate the low probability of capturing sigfluence, imagine flipping a coin five consecutive times. The odds of five heads in a row are $\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{2} = 1/32$. In order to capture sigfluence, we need to link five independent language compartments in our brain. And we fear not living up to our Potential for Sigfluence. There are deep and complex reasons for our neglect of sigfluence.

The Inuit have several words for the concept of snow based upon varying conditions. Their survival was linked to an understanding of various snow conditions. The Sigfluence Generation needs to add new words for variations of sigfluence to begin their transformation of America.

This was the gist of my defense to the linguist for inventing a new word. By the end of dinner, he reluctantly conceded that my ideas were worth pursuing. We left on friendly terms. Unfortunately few in the academic world welcome sigfluence research. It was quipped that “A WHOLE GENERATION OF COLLEGE PROFESSORS MUST DIE BEFORE THE BIRTH OF A NEW IDEA.” I fully agree. Fortunately, we Loases are long-lived.

Memes

Several years ago my wife listened to a National Public Radio segment on memes. A light bulb went on. Memes are self-propagating ideas like “Toyota reliability,” “the lifelong influence of a teacher,” or “you can tell he’s a skateboarder by his long hair.” Whether they are true or not, memes spread.

Aaron Lynch, who wrote *Thought Contagion*, is an important author in understanding memes and how they influence our perceptions. Mr. Lynch illustrates the power of memes in studying the taboo by old Amish farmers against modern farm machines. As a result, Amish farmers raised many children who in turn become farmers inculcated by the taboo. This has caused the Amish population to increase faster than the American population. Consequently, these Amish ideas dominate a large percentage of current American farmers.²⁹

Consider sigfluence. We lack any self-propagating meme like sigfluence to evaluate the long-term effects of education, business decisions, the benefits of therapy, mundane or major decisions in our personal lives. Our language conditions us to be superficial. We may have to re-think common assumptions. Do teachers wield the long-term influence we believe they do? Are the poor poor because they are lazy or are we denying our responsibility for their plight? Do we choose to not effect sigfluence toward the poor? Without a meme for sigfluence, we rely on the brain linking five memory compartments. With a meme like sigfluence, we would be forced to change. Meaning in our lives could be defined by the ACTUAL SIGFLUENCE of our actions. Helping others is considered today an interest by psychology. Some people like to play tennis; others value helping. Tennis, stamp collecting, sigfluence. Whatever you like, do it. DO YOUR THING. That current meme is a consistent theme. Have drugs, sex, fun if it doesn’t hurt anyone else. But this meme neglects sigfluence.

Sigfluence nourishes our spirit. Sigfluence isn’t a value or an interest. It isn’t a hobby like tennis or photography. It is a vital dimension of our human experience.

We need to spread a sigfluence meme. America is in love with the stock market. Our ticker tape is more important than our sigfluence potential. We have a daily, hourly, minute by minute evaluation of our stock portfolio and net worth. What about our sigfluence worth? We first must change our language, then our direction. Real worth is the sigfluence you effect toward others. People can die in their cubicles without co-workers noticing. We have to break down the barriers that disconnect us.

America is sinking into a malaise. Materialism is in direct opposition to a sigfluence meme. Pageantry, external show, net worth are the symbols of materialism. But pageantry does not satisfy the herald. There is a little heraldry in all of us. We give too much importance to financial or professional status, power, and societal honors – external shows of accomplishment. We need sigfluence as a beacon, a focal point for education, business, a unifying principle that unites rather than divides.

Our Sigfluence Generation inherits a language which conditions us to make a lot of money to buy things we do not need. They have to change that. We have to become mindful of how to optimize our sigfluence potential. Let us now explore sigfluence in the world of work.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MYTHS OF WORK

Sigfluence is a better work motivator than money.
The world of work needs a makeover.

The Sigfluence Generation has to start with the basics and change our language. Next, they have to leave their mark on the world of work. We labor, literally and figuratively, by myths about work, each of which perpetuates the status quo and hinders sigfluence.

A Brief History of the World of Work

Our current system of categorizing people for slots at work dates to Neanderthal times. What might have been the appearance of the world of work then? Perhaps Jean Auel's *The Clan of the Cave Bear* may shed light on the role of the esteemed hunters:

“The land was unbelievably rich, and man only an insignificant fraction of the multifarious life that lived and died in that old, ancient Eden. ...The capable experienced hunters of the clan were as skilled in defense as they were in offense, and when the safety or security of the clan was threatened or if they wanted a warm winter coat decorated by nature, they stalked the unsuspecting stalker.”³⁰

The life and death of the clan depended upon the effectiveness of the hunter. This position (presumably one of high status) was likely awarded on the basis of pure competence. Otherwise the group would be vulnerable to attack, have problems obtaining food, languish, and die. There were no Harvard business schools, Stanford law degrees, or University of California – Berkeley engineering programs to ensure lives of privilege and comfort. The world of work has grown incredibly complex today, more problematic, and less fair now than in Neanderthal times. Could you imagine what prehistoric hunting school would have been like in today's terms?

The applicants for hunting school would naturally outnumber the positions, so that we would have to winnow the job seekers sensibly. Since hunter was of the same stature (in Neanderthal terms) as Congressional Representative, professor, doctor, or lawyer, we would have to establish screening procedures. Naturally, Stone Age arithmetic would be part of the program for the prospective hunter together with some language skill test. Some members of the clan would be particularly skilled in Stone Age arithmetic and Neanderthal language, so the parents of the prospective hunters would seek them out to hone the skills of their progeny. They might even give the teachers an extra share of smoked salmon or a bear fur in order to guarantee that their children obtained the coveted position of hunter. Naturally, competence in Stone Age arithmetic and the Neanderthal language do not ensure hunting proficiency. Consequently, the tribe would likely die. Let us examine a more recent situation in the world of work.

Our twentieth century witnessed profound changes in the labor force, including women's participation and activism, the civil rights movement, the expansion of unions, current challenges of globalization, international competition, a peripatetic and overworked labor force, and denial and neglect of sigfluence in its essential link to job satisfaction.

Many myths perpetuate the job status quo in America. The Sigfluence Generation should consider each myth, the opposite of each, and find truth somewhere in between.

The myths that the Sigfluence Generation need to demythologize involve professional training, consumer protection, an idealized view of teachers' influence, the importance of a high status job, and our American tendency to over-identify with our job.

Douglas Davis said it best in *The New Yorker*:

“Myths often thrive in inverse proportion to their accuracy. The bigger and grander the lie, as in the divine right of kings, or now, the overwhelming power and popularity of television, the more devoutly it is to be believed.”³¹

If the Sigfluence Generation does not challenge the current myths that perpetuate the status quo, they will fall into our comfortable malaise.

Let us explore ten myths for the Sigfluence Generation to scrutinize and demythologize.

MYTH 1 – *Globalization and fierce competition will reduce my chances to get and keep a good job.*

Globalization

In order to get elected in 2008, Democrats had to be critical of the “giant sucking sound” of lost jobs due to NAFTA and Republican policies. The real trend is not exporting American jobs overseas for cheap labor. According to Matthew J. Slaughter and Phillip Swagel of the International Money Fund (Sept, 1997), the American pattern is a steady shift from low skilled labor to high skilled labor. Skills could be defined in terms of education, experience, or job classification, but the Sigfluence Generation has to develop skills. These skills have to be in demand, and our young people have to be flexible for their five plus anticipated job changes.

Despite the doom and gloom surrounding NAFTA and lost jobs, 2008 college graduates entered a bright labor market. The key for entrance was having an internship and a major that was in demand, such as civil engineering, environmental sciences, nursing, accounting and mathematics.³² Joseph Campbell, widely influential for his books and PBS specials with Bill Moyers, advised his Sarah Lawrence students to “follow your bliss.” Sarah Lawrence is a wealthy college with affluent parents to offer a strong safety net. Our Sigfluence Generation has to be initially more careful, as they enter the labor force. But in a few years, they will replace the Baby Boomer retirees who are expected to leave the world of work by the mid 2010s. NAFTA will have little impact on job entrance for Generation Y. The major problem for the Sigfluence Generation will be in choosing from among thousands of different career paths. Our 2009 recession will eventually end; our young people will enjoy long careers, like us.

It is tough for a young person to choose a career. Most of us end up in our profession as a result of indifference or chance. The Sigfluence Generation should become more assertive in pursuing

satisfying and meaningful work. Most of us Baby Boomers settled for security, mortgage, family responsibilities, inertia, and the inherent difficulty of obtaining and changing good paying jobs.

Our young people should take a complete career/aptitude battery to help them sift through thousands of possible jobs. I took a complete career battery during my doctoral studies and subsequently benefited greatly by a Johnson O'Connor career service that complements the standard career counseling tests. Few people take complete career batteries. As a result, we usually settle on unsatisfying work. The Sigfluence Generation has to be active in changing the status quo.

After members of the Sigfluence Generation enter the world of work, they should actively advocate for some of our nation's losers as a consequence of globalization. According to Gary Hofbauer and Paul Grieco (Washington Post, June 7, 2005), \$1 trillion per year flows to the United States due to free trade and globalization of markets. However, 225,000 jobs are lost due to this liberalization. We have to do better for the 225,000 people who may never regain a good job without our continuous help. The economically disadvantaged are not the only group requiring the long-term, positive transformation of the Sigfluence Generation. Our young people have to assert themselves to find a suitable job for their aptitudes and interests. Then they have to become a political force to help the disenfranchised and dislocated.

In short, globalization increases your chances of getting a suitable job, but our country has to do a better job at helping the 225,000 workers who pay a severe price for the benefit of others.

MYTH 2 – A “good” job is waiting for me.

You probably think “good job” means a job with high status, a huge salary, and a lot of power. Please read *Death in Venice* by Thomas Mann. His alter ego, Von Aschenbach has all these but in commenting on the esteemed writer's status, Thomas Mann writes:

“...(The) real ground of their (status) applause is inexplicable – it is sympathy.”³³

Thomas Mann is a genius and is guiding us all to understand that societal status is empty. Society applauds high status workers out of gratitude that someone else made considerable sacrifices in attaining high education or workaholic commitment to job. Status is also the result of pooled ignorance. We give status to doctors or executives without understanding their day-to-day activities at work or the real nature of their training. The Sigfluence Generation has to redefine status. Sigfluence should be fundamental in giving professional status.

Food and shelter are at the bottom of Maslow's hierarchy of human needs. If you are constantly hungry and lacking clothes or shelter, you may not fulfill your Potential for Sigfluence. But a “good job” is a job where you are achieving sigfluence – not with everyone, not every day, but adequate to satisfy our Potential and Need for Sigfluence. If you are an executive for a tobacco company, it is best to resign. Success in these jobs means thousands of lung cancer deaths from smoking every year.

Success is another problem to define. Wall Street has an objective but narrow concept of earnings and earnings growth as measures of success. The Sigfluence Generation has to transform the definition of “good job” to that of a sigfluent profession. It was magic when, early in my teaching career, I developed the Responsibility Training program for the hundreds of students who failed and were left back. I witnessed the before (failure) and the after (early promotion to the next grade). It was like being the Pied Piper. But my promises were real. If the students attended regularly and completed their work satisfactorily for ten weeks, they returned to the proper grade and could graduate junior high school on time. Yonkers laid me off after two successful years of running Responsibility Training. The principal who supported my work was replaced. The new principal saw no value in Responsibility Training. I never returned to that school. Sigfluence is long-term, positive influence, and society erects barriers. The Sigfluence Generation has to break down the obstacles that hinder exemplary programs from continuously helping the economically disadvantaged. This calls for a new vision of supervisory relations.

In this utopian job community, the supervisor’s chief responsibility is as facilitator to help you achieve higher levels of sigfluence. Yes, your boss has as his/her chief responsibility the creation of a work environment which empowers you to fulfill your Potential and Need for Sigfluence. Your supervisor is not your evaluator, but should be your partner in transformation. To be fair, your supervisor has to weed out the five or so percent of incompetents on any job, but that leaves the lion’s share of administrative responsibilities as helping you to help others. Then both you and your supervisor share “good jobs.”

MYTH 3 – *The poor are poor because they are lazy and/or inferior.*

“Of all the vulgar modes of escaping from the consideration of social and normal influences on the human mind, the most vulgar is that of attributing the diversities of conduct and character to inherent natural differences.”

John Stuart Mill

Mill wrote these words several hundred years ago, but they apply today. The poor stay poor because they start the economic race with a fifty-pound weight around their necks – not because they are born lazy or inferior.

You might say the Irish, the Polish, and countless other immigrant groups started off poor and then bettered themselves. Perhaps you overlook the legislation in Georgia in 1845 prohibiting contracts with slaves and free Negro mechanics. In the North emancipation of the slaves was opposed by white workers, mostly immigrants who feared the blacks would compete for “white jobs” and cause wages to drop. The experience of the Afro-American in America is incomparable to any other ethnic group, who freely immigrated.

Today the poor, largely Black and Hispanic, struggle to get by; they are witnesses or victims of regular violence. Their children go to substandard schools, receive substandard medical care, live in substandard environments, and usually perpetuate their parents’ poverty. The glib critics

of poverty might consider visiting homes in disadvantaged inner city urban areas. They might quickly abandon this myth.

Even those strong and fortunate few, who conquer poverty, experience frequent bias in hiring and promotion. Many of them continue to live in their early environments, where crime, violence and drugs are common and open.

We could never dispute that the poor have environmental disadvantages that cause most to be unable to compete for the preferred jobs. But you may still claim that they are inferior as well. Unfortunately, accomplished scholars misinform the public.

The Bell Curve, a best selling book by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray (1994), created virtually unprecedented interest in racial differences in intelligence. Their timing was perfect. The message, that the poor stay poor due to inherent deficits in intelligence, was very consonant with the thinking of the new Republican majority that dominated the elections.

Every credible researcher has criticized their interpretation of racial differences in IQ in very harsh and uncertain terms. Consider a short sample:

“*The Bell Curve*... offers the always engaging spectacle of two practical-minded men firmly in the grip of irrational passion....*The Bell Curve* is not only sleazy; it is intellectually a mess.”

Alan Ryan, *The New York Review of Books*, Nov. 17, 1994.

“*The Bell Curve* is even more disingenuous in its argument than in its obfuscation about race. The book is a rhetorical masterpiece of scientism, and it benefits from the particular kind of fear that numbers impose on non-professional commentators.”

Stephen J. Gould, *The New Yorker*, Nov. 28, 1994.

The Bell Curve sold over 400,000 copies. Trained professionals have fiercely and justifiably attacked the poor science that has likely fooled the lay audience. However, many may perpetuate racist beliefs, supported by the superficial and erroneous claims advanced by *The Bell Curve*.

The more closely one studies intelligence, the more elusive the concept becomes. At Harvard's International Conference on Thinking (August 1984) researchers from all over the world met to discuss research on intelligence and thinking. The academics tended to agree on two things. First, they felt that intelligence testing was one of the most fruitful areas of psychology in the twentieth century. Second, they agreed that they did not agree on how to define intelligence. Some researchers feel that intelligence is a single factor that pervades our lives; others speculate that there are seven or sixteen or several hundred different aspects of intelligence. Before we decide that the poor are poor because of lower intelligence, we should acknowledge we don't have agreement on what constitutes intelligence.

One of the researchers at Harvard's conference, Arthur Jensen of University of California Berkeley, had the opinion that blacks have lower intelligence than other races. He feels that their consistently lower scores on standard tests cannot be adequately explained by their disadvantaged environments alone. Herrnstein and Murray's argument is not new. Arthur Jensen has been writing in this vein for decades.

The other academics at Harvard disassociated themselves with what they perceived as Jensen's extremist position. His view was neither popular nor attractive. We may fear to admit the link between our political and educational policies and their contribution to the perpetuation of privilege and poverty in our nation.

We should admit that we live in an imperfect world and our historical tendency to perpetuate poverty is an embarrassment. Our bias is covert; it is well below the surface. Sometimes the poor buy into theories of their own inferiority. After all, everyone takes the same tests and has the same opportunity, or do they? The Sigfluence Generation has to confront covert bias and change the status quo.

Now, if the tests truly measured the skills necessary to perform a good job, the critics like me would have to be quiet. But as previously observed, we seldom scrutinize the connection between test scores and eventual job performance. If we pursued this logic to its "revolutionary conclusion," we would have to prove the soundness of professional standards. No one, currently benefiting from professional salaries and comfort, is likely to blow the whistle on the system that contributed to his/her privilege.

Efforts to level the playing field, such as Affirmative Action, have benefited some. President Barack Obama admitted that he was helped by Affirmative Action to enter Harvard Law School and become the editor of Harvard Law Review. He reflected on the complexities of Affirmative Action and suggested that poor whites now might be given preference over privileged blacks, such as his daughters.³⁴

When the late Mother Teresa visited New York several years ago, she was saddened by its poverty. When her host commented that New York City was one of the wealthiest cities in the world, Mother Teresa responded that she was referring to spiritual poverty. The Sigfluence Generation has to overcome our spiritual poverty in perpetuating such glaring inequities in healthcare, education, and discrimination between rich and poor. Fairness is not a liberal or conservative position. It is an expressed hallmark of America and should be one of the top goals for our Sigfluence Generation.

If we challenge the assumption that tests and diplomas predict job success, we challenge the advantaged in our society. They have typically gotten their preferred jobs through credentials and tests. According to Christopher Jencks:

"Neither tests nor diplomas are likely to correlate very well with job performance, although there will certainly be some exceptions. We doubt that the present Court will pursue this logic to its revolutionary

conclusion. Nonetheless some (challenges to the system of tests and credentials) are likely to be successful.”³⁵

My own research in the appropriateness of job credentials completely supports Christopher Jencks’ statement. The Supreme Court of 2009 is unlikely to “pursue this logic to its revolutionary conclusion.”

Imagine if we understood the skills truly necessary to effective job functioning. Then we could rely less on credentials and vague pieces of paper and more on real measures of ability and personality. This is the spirit of the sadly dismissed Griggs decision.

Gerald Lynch, President of John Jay College of Criminal Justice, commented:

“The answers to our social problems are not just changes in the legal system. The answers are true equality of education, job opportunities, quality of family life, and family medical health. We must send signals on public policy. What makes the difference are changes in the social fabric of our society, not just changes in the system.”³⁶

Our current system with its reliance on unchallenged professional credentials exacts a price on both the winners and the losers. The winners work out of touch with their sigfluence in our highly compartmentalized jobs. The winners seldom utilize their lofty training and live in a familiar malaise. We are familiar with the malaise of our time. Sigfluence is the antidote.

Our Sigfluence Generation has to redefine credentialing. Scrutiny of the credentials truly necessary for effective professional practice may eventually knock down the walls of professional fiefdoms. Few believed the Berlin Wall would be shattered. Have we built a system of professional societies, whose unchallenged credentials prove intractable? No one wants to weaken professional practice. However, we can scrutinize the characteristics that lead to exemplary professional practice and rely on alternate routes to professional entrée. Otherwise we institutionalize boredom for the winners and economic disadvantage and prison for the losers.

MYTH 4 – *Professional training is essential for satisfactory professional practice*

Dr. Karl Humiston, a medical doctor and graduate of Harvard Medical School, lectured about the distressing state of modern medicine. He told us that how to stay healthy is not taught in medical school today. Physicians stay away from studying nutrition and exercise because they promote health. Health is not profitable to the medical establishment. Sickness is big business.

The situation is not a whole lot different in law. A Stanford law professor commented: “For most students, nothing that goes on in law school matters – it is simply a credential. They get a ritzy degree, and there is a legal requirement that you spend three years to get it.” At prestigious colleges like Stanford, one-third of the enrolled students show up for class without having even read the required materials. Dead silences often pervade the lecture hall.

Students blame their malaise on the system. They don’t feel they are given adequate incentives. After all, competition for jobs after graduation and positions on the law review are the only

“carrots” that motivate their performance. Prospective employers make their hiring decisions largely on the basis of first year performance. Also at Stanford, eligibility to serve on the law review is based upon a competitive writing exam. So most second and third year students are just “showing up,” waiting for the right form – their coveted law degree.

Professors and law students are both unhappy over the system. One law professor complained that law school had become “an adjunct to the hiring hall.” A third year law student protested, “They don’t teach you to be a lawyer very well and the theory is just incredibly shallow.” These illustrations came from Stanford, one of the most highly regarded law schools in the nation.³⁷

Harvard Past President Derek Bok feels that the best and the brightest tend to be drawn to the most expensive and least efficient legal system in the world. Law schools share the blame for the massive diversion of exceptional talent into pursuits that contribute little to society.³⁸ Also law school (like teaching and medical school) doesn’t prepare you for the main job of lawyers – negotiating settlements with other lawyers. Of course, law school certifies you, provides you with a distancing language, and joins you to a community of practicing lawyers. But that doesn’t mean it provides training that will make you a competent lawyer. Certainly few law students – who become high paid lawyers – will assail the system that led to their comfortable life.

As earlier mentioned, I studied the relation between the mathematics taken and the mathematics used by computer scientists and actuaries (the mathematical professionals of the insurance industry). I found that, despite the advanced mathematics both professionals required, fourth grade arithmetic was the only essential mathematics needed. Indeed, for a certain category of computer science professionals, I discovered the more mathematics taken, the less mathematics used on the job.

I lectured on these anomalies at the Association for Computer Machinery national convention and recommended that the computer fraternity examine the relationship between professional training and professional practice. At the end of my lecture, the chair of the program of four presenters commented, “Thank you for very well prepared and thoughtful lectures, *even if we don’t necessarily agree with your perspectives.*” Since the other three panelists were discussing straight mathematical and computer science material, the comment probably was directed toward me. When I offered to share similar findings with the actuarial society, they never responded.

I did not enter doctoral studies with a liberal or conservative bias. My bias was toward athletics and playing sports. My doctoral research into the validity of credentials and actuaries opened my eyes to “covert bias.” I found a huge gap between what people were required to master in order to get a job and what they used on a regular basis on the job. The gap was dramatic in both the professions of actuary (insurance industry mathematicians) and computer scientist. In time the Sigfluence Generation may find that there is a better way to distribute our preferred jobs. Or they may find that the present system, despite the discrepancies I found, cannot be fundamentally changed without profound negative consequences for American society.

In 2009, faced with widespread economic hardship from the housing crisis, rising unemployment, little or no job security, and the unsettling effects of globalization, there are few voices advocating scrutiny of professional credentials. Perhaps all the Sigfluence Generation can

do is work hard to level the playing field. The Dalai Lama closed a recent film with advice for us all to work hard (as he has for decades as a crusader for peace) but to lower our expectations³⁹ (of success). The Dalai Lama chuckled over this last element of wisdom. Don Quixote could be conceived as a fool or a prophet. The panel leader at my computer science talk found my perhaps quixotic lecture entertaining. I received waves of laughter, when I recommended a chess tournament as an alternative to the rigid computer science credentialing process. However, I was not intending to entertain. My audience was not ready to explore the mechanism by which they had entered a fraternity of privilege. Few incumbents are going to change a system, even if it has little validity, when their economic viability depends upon the system.

MYTH 5 – *Professional societies and their credentialing systems protect us.*

Both my mother and father taught me to avoid doctors unless I was near death. I found my parents' ignorant attitude appalling. Mark Twain at age eighteen also felt that his parents knew nothing, that is, until he was twenty-one and was amazed at how much they had learned in three years. It took me much longer than it took Mark Twain to appreciate my parents' wisdom.

Doctor Robert Mendelsohn, chairman of the Medical Licensing Committee for Illinois and recipient of numerous awards for his medical achievements, delivered a scathing attack against modern medicine. He cautioned the public against medical methods that were rarely effective and sometimes more dangerous than the treated diseases. People should stay away from physical exams if they feel healthy; the exams could hurt us.

Mendelsohn noted that fifty percent of "high standard laboratories" were found to be sub-standard. Medical research is fraught with danger to the public. Tests of drugs like diethylstilbestrol, used to prevent miscarriages, produced evidence of 300 cases of vaginal or cervical cancer in mothers treated with DES. A statistically significant number of treated women died from cancer. Robert Mendelsohn warns us that modern medicine is not a church you want to have faith in.⁴⁰

Dr. Mendelsohn's advice has wide support in the medical literature. Dr. Chunliu Zhan and Dr. Marlene Miller completed a study of hospital deaths in the United States. Their work supported the Institute of Medicine's earlier conclusion that medical errors caused as many as 98,000 per year and should be considered an epidemic.⁴¹

At least since 1910, when the Flexner Report led to the accreditation of medical schools, the standard explanation for accrediting professionals is to protect the public from incompetent physicians. The case for licensing physicians is probably the strongest that can be made for professional licensure. So why are we not that well protected (if you believe the previous statement of Mendelsohn)? Perhaps professional societies are not designed to protect us. So why do they exist? They certainly serve a purpose.

Consider the self-serving nature of most licensing associations. The American Medical Association restricts competition and protects the licensed professional. Kasper played the devil's advocate and asked whether the public needs protection. Is the normal range of consumer protection adequate?

Naturally licensing guarantees a minimum standard of professional competence in an area that most of us find too technical. However, patients would be protected by market forces, malpractice suits, and a greater role by insurance companies if we relied less on the AMA.⁴²

It would be foolish to allow just anyone to practice medicine. However, few could argue that sigfluence is at the heart of medical credentialing. Medicine is big business. And when the AMA establishes rigorous requirements for entrance to an American medical school, only students with top academic grades need apply. We rely on medical school training that, like actuarial and computer science preparation, looks sound. However, sigfluence does not appear to be optimized if highly credentialed doctors are responsible for nearly 100,000 preventable hospital deaths per year in the U.S. Credentialing appears to limit supply of suitable professionals and in a supply-demand economy creates high salaries for the highly credentialed. Appearance is paramount in professional credentialing, not sigfluence.

Part of the problem in figuring out what skills jobs need is that the people who have the most knowledge and from whom the information is coming may repress the deeper truths about the real demands of the job. The Federal government publishes an encyclopedic *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* that lists job duties, educational requirements and earnings for hundreds of occupations. Teachers are said to need the following: "...a secondary school teacher must want to work with young people, have an interest in a special subject, and have the ability to motivate students and to relate knowledge to them."⁴³

Could you imagine anyone benefiting from this elementary school analysis of one of our most popular and complex jobs? The job description should read: secondary school teachers serve students in very diverse schools ranging from disadvantaged inner city schools to elite private schools. Each situation has its own special challenges. The inner city teacher may find students who are way below standards in basic skills. Such schools give special rewards for the dedicated teacher, but discipline problems and violence are common. A certified teacher may not be ready for the demands of inner city teaching.

More advantaged schools have their own set of problems, particularly very concerned, occasionally intrusive, parents who frequently challenge the judgment of the teacher and school officials. The reading and mathematical scores of such students may be much higher than the disadvantaged youngsters, but the more affluent students may be sarcastic and uncooperative, presenting a quite different set of problems to the teacher.

Several decades ago I started teaching in an economically disadvantaged junior high school in Yonkers, New York. It was a violent, difficult school. On paper I was well trained with my strong mathematics major and extensive mathematics education background. But the reality was that my college training did not prepare me for the daily violence, constant issues of discipline, and typical skill levels of three or more years below grade norms of my one hundred fifty plus students. My first year was torture. I had one terrible class that ruined every day of teaching. Few would go on to earn high school diplomas. But at the eighth grade they still attended, seemingly to disrupt my efforts at teaching.

I survived this first year and learned how to better reach my students. I grew to enjoy my students and teaching and went on to innovate the Responsibility Training program that had such positive short-term effects. Many of my fellow first year teachers did not last until Christmas vacation. One quit on day one. To become a successful teacher in an economically disadvantaged school, it requires so much more than paper credentials. Our elaborate New York State Education Department teaching requirements appear to be valid. However, experience with a skilled and empathic mentor is a lot more important than Advanced Calculus or the latest book on exemplary teaching.

Many teachers burnout. They suffer greatly if they do not adjust to the stresses of the teaching environment. Many stay and feel trapped by the security, decent salary and summer vacations that are attractive perquisites.

You will never see admissions like mine in print. But they would convey more than the inane job descriptions that the Federal government publishes. Why is the government's version so naïve? Perhaps because they asked the National Education Association to write it. We truly live in a "shadow world" when it comes to knowing what we're in store for when we eventually embark on our career. This is one of the places where innocents get hurt. And to a large degree, we're all innocent before we enter the world of work.

We quickly lose our innocence. Hughes states that many occupations cannot be carried out without guilty knowledge.

"The lawyer, the politician...., all of them must have license to get – and in some degree, to keep secret – some order of guilty, or at least potentially embarrassing and dangerous information."⁴⁴

The lawyer may keep secret the deliberate confusion of legal language. After all, if the language was clear, we might not need high priced lawyers.

If professional societies don't really protect us, why do they continue? Part of the reason is that professionals are highly respected and usually highly paid. The cornerstone of the professional is that they evaluate the incumbents and set criteria for professional entrance. Wouldn't you want to screen people if by screening you perpetuate elitism and a certain level of comfort and privilege? After you are making your typically good salary, would you criticize the hen that is laying the golden egg? Few professionals speak out against the system that has led to their prosperity.

Christopher Jencks performed an exhaustive study of American education while at the Harvard Center for Educational Policy Research. He found that occupations often try to increase their status by raising the required schooling for entry. Occupations that require considerable schooling usually have higher prestige and pay. One of the reasons that Jencks offers for the connection between schooling and occupational status is something your teachers probably never told you:

“Everyone prefers the same occupations, and everyone is more or less equally qualified to work in most occupations, so high status occupations use arbitrary educational requirements to ration access to desirable jobs.”⁴⁵

Think of this. It is possible that there is little relation between schooling and professional practice. But poor people usually can't afford higher education and most kids hate school. As a result, the supply (of credentialed professionals) equals the demand. If things get out of balance, require more schooling or publicize the oversupply, so people train for other jobs.

Does this mean you should halt your education? No! The value of educational attainment is indisputable in all developing countries. Advanced degrees, such as a master's degree, will probably take the place of the “devalued” four year college degree in the 2000s. Employers will use college degrees as a requirement to reduce the pool of job applicants to more manageable numbers.

John Hafer and Carolee Hoth surveyed employers from 37 firms trying to determine what employers were looking for in prospective workers. Employers ranked oral communication as most important, closely followed by motivation, initiative, assertiveness, and loyalty. The only thing approaching an educational credential, written communication, does not even appear in the top ten.⁴⁶ These jobs were not controlled by professional societies. They were jobs like management trainee, accountant, etc. When dollars are at stake and professional societies don't serve as gatekeepers, you find that hiring officials are frequently looking for non-academic factors such as motivation and articulate speech. Please don't misread me. Your degrees will be as important as ever in the future – probably even more so than in the past. Surely an MBA from Harvard will open nearly every door. And professional societies will probably not question their screening procedures, so educational achievement will probably be as important as ever in entering medicine, law, engineering, and other highly credentialed jobs. But for many there is no guarantee that your advanced degree will help in anything other than the “initial cut” of resumes in your job search.

Am I suggesting that society couldn't tell the difference between a highly training professional and an imposter? Yes, usually! Consider the case of Paul Crafton, a professor of engineering (one of the hard sciences, very technical). Crafton assumed a false identity to get teaching jobs at Rutgers, University of Delaware, Wagner College, and others. He took the name of an Australian professor, not too much likelihood of getting found out. Wrong! Academia is a close-knit fraternity, where researchers from all parts of the world frequently know each other on a first name basis. Crafton was dismissed when an article by the real professor came out in a professional journal.⁴⁷ He was not fired due to faulty teaching.

MYTH 6 – *My Job Isn't Important*

Have you ever heard this before? Probably quite a few times. You may have thought it yourself recently. You may be surprised to find out that very famous and influential people feel their contributions were not important.

Dr. Sabin, an exemplary medical pioneer, doubted whether his life was worthwhile. How could a person of this magnitude feel that his accomplishments were not important?

Well, for one thing, we have to carefully consider what important means. I believe that being important means that you have made a contribution toward improving the lives of others. However, this is only my interpretation.

For starters, we don't have a word like sigfluence, so we don't think very much about the long-term positive influence that our actions produce. We talk about influence less than we discuss our sexuality and our financial situation. And we don't discuss these topics very often.

People rarely, if ever, tell their key influencers that they have made a contribution. So people rarely hear when they have made a lasting positive contribution to another's life.

In Dr. Sabin's case, his feedback about the influence that he had was more problematic, since his discovery wiped out a disease. No one contracted the disease. But how would you know, unless you had ESP, that you were going to be a victim of polio (if not for Dr. Sabin's vaccine)? Consequently, no one is going to thank Dr. Sabin for his cure. He hasn't cured anyone. He has eliminated the disease.

But let's return to the myth under consideration. Jimmy Stewart (in *It's a Wonderful Life*) was near suicide when he was given an opportunity to see how important his life was in helping others. It is no accident that at a recent Waldorf-Astoria reception honoring Stewart, this touching movie was cited as everybody's favorite. The theme of the film was that we do make a difference. Our lives, both at work and with our friends and family, make a profound difference on others. We have to improve our understanding of our sigfluence. Psychology has to compensate for its "generous improvidence" and lead the way.

Let's consider Ron Guidry, Cy Young award winning pitcher for the New York Yankees. Many of us would trade places with the intelligent, talented star pitcher for the New York Yankees. Surely his job was important.

In 1978 Ron Guidry had one of the best athletic performances in 20th century sports. His 25 wins – 3 losses and earned run average of 1.74 resulted in a unanimous Cy Young Award for best pitcher. His star power meant that he could make millions of dollars in the off season making commercials. Instead he became deeply involved in the Special Olympics, largely because his brother Travis is handicapped. Ron Guidry was motivated by sigfluence. He is widely admired for his off the playing field accomplishments as well as his extraordinary athletic achievements. Ron Guidry used the platform of baseball stardom to help handicapped youngsters. He is an exemplar of sigfluence.

Ron Guidry was a name known to millions. Most of us work in relative obscurity to those outside our circle. Most of us work for businesses, government, schools, or healthcare. Some might believe that powerful managers and executives feel more sigfluent than their workers. However, in one of my studies twelve secretaries and their eleven managers reported the same levels of positive influence that they believe they effected toward others.⁴⁸ Now it is possible

that the secretaries had more time than the managers away from the job to positively influence their family. Or it is possible that the secretaries knew that they kept the office running. After all, everyone knows that the secretaries run most businesses. Perhaps we give managers and professionals status to make up for the lack of concrete effects that they may achieve. Sigfluence study is bound to shatter a number of myths.

Stanley Hiller, a chief executive who led numerous corporations, was recently interviewed and asked about his managerial secret. He responded very simply: “To turn a company around, employees must see their footprints in the sand.”⁴⁹

If you believe Hiller’s statement – as my studies on sigfluence support – you have a deep need to see the contribution that you have toward others at work. Sigfluence, either seen or reported, is essential in order to charge your psychic batteries. Burnout may be related to working in an environment with little or no sigfluence. Life is a continuous search for realizing our Potential for Sigfluence. One person casts a long shadow.

MYTH 7 – One Person Can’t Make a Difference

Several years ago the Plattsburg (NY) *Press Republican* interviewed several operators who would be losing their jobs due to automation. Two of the victims of the computer age recounted touching anecdotes from work. One operator related how she had saved a woman’s life while at work. The woman had slit her wrist and phoned the operator for help. The operator traced the open line and sent a repairman to aid the distraught woman who was near death. The suicide was narrowly thwarted thanks to the timely assistance of the “low status” telephone operator and repairman.

Another operator spoke of a touching conversation that she had with a woman who was facing the troubling reality of placing her mother in a nursing home. The operator listened to the distraught woman and showed that she cared.⁵⁰ The gift of listening can be sigfluent. Carl Rogers advanced empathic listening as integral to his approach to counseling. However, you do not need a doctorate in counseling to show caring by listening. Both operators had humble jobs by society’s awarding of status. Each achieved sigfluence. Humble jobs have magic opportunities for sigfluence. People in high status jobs may not feel sigfluent. But one person can make a difference in another’s life.

Consider the impact of Reverend Leon Sullivan. Reverend Sullivan was not content to limit his ministry to his congregation. He decided that fairness at work was a Christ-centered mission that was to become a personal calling. He toured the world to enlist corporate support in increasing their sensitivity to hiring fairness. One hundred fifty companies pledged to employ Reverend Sullivan’s Principle of Hiring Fairness.⁵¹

Viktor Frankl developed logotherapy after he was rescued. The central theme of logotherapy is that people need to find “meaning” in their lives. Suffering is an integral part of logotherapy. Whether a patient is mourning the loss of a beloved or is enduring the ravages of cancer, meaning can be found in suffering. Frankl noted:

“The way in which a man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, the way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity - even under the most difficult circumstances – to add a deeper meaning to his life.”⁵²

Frankl suffered adversity that few of us could ever understand. He did not give up. He eventually overcame his suffering and has provided millions with an inspiring message in his books. Frankl developed a psychoanalytic school from which millions have benefited. Viktor Frankl was sigfluent and positively influenced millions.

A person of modest status, Donald Salvo, recently died of cancer at age 50. He had worked as a policeman, fireman, and cemetery manager. He felt that there was something missing in his life, and he decided to leave cemetery management and help the disabled. The only job that was available was working with the deaf. He learned sign language and helped the deaf for six years. He helped his clients well beyond the normal expectations of his job. He drove his deaf clients to hospitals and appointments and touched the lives of so many disabled. He made a real difference in the lives of others. Sister Bernadette, direction of Catholic Charities office for the disabled said: “...An ordinary person can have a profound effect on the lives of other people without that person ever realizing it.”⁵³

These exemplars had jobs that presented opportunities for sigfluence. What about those who do not work? You may be surprised to know that a college student was directly responsible for developing a network of homes for troubled youth, assisting thousands of youngsters nationwide. This concerned student simply asked his professor, a Roman Catholic priest at Manhattan College, why he was not actively involved in aiding the poor. The priest responded to the question by intense self-examination, which culminated in his resigning from his professional post and developing the homes.⁵⁴ The redirected priest made a significant difference in the lives of thousands. Of course, the Catholic priest was primarily responsible for the widespread sigfluence that aided thousands of at-risk youth. But the catalyst was the student whose challenge paid dramatic dividends. The student in turn had sigfluencers, who influenced his provocative challenge. We see the tip of the iceberg in the complex sequence of how we are sigfluenced and in turn sigfluence others. This example of innovating a network of houses for troubled youth may be rare. But we can all become more sigfluent.

Viktor Frankl and our exemplary priest are exceptional people. They devoted their lives to sigfluence. Most of us lack the ability and character of these exemplars. However, we have to sharpen our understanding of how frequently our choices at work and in leisure may have lasting impact on others. Several years ago I was one of our college leaders to improve the placement of students in class. Sadly, mathematics currently serves as a huge obstacle to college graduation. In 2005, the United States Department of Education described mathematics as an “insurmountable barrier” to college graduation for economically disadvantaged college students.⁵⁵ We believed that by improved placement more students would graduate. In order to improve placement we had to test a large portion of our current students with the placement test and later study whether it was a good predictor of student success or failure. The test had to be given to all students in order to develop useful statistics. The test was insultingly easy for top students, such as those in calculus.

I overheard the conversation between two students who were leaving class after we administered the short placement test. One walked out indignantly telling his classmate the test was idiotic and he had not taken it. The other student responded, “You don’t know who you can help by taking this test.” I should have taken his name and phone number and interviewed him for this book. Many apparently absurd practices are designed to help others. But we seldom understand the connections between these inconvenient activities and the eventual beneficiaries. We live in a shadow world in relation to our Potential for Sigfluence. The Sigfluence Generation has to heighten our sigfluence consciousness.

Mentors make a difference. In a dirty apartment in a housing project with graffiti everywhere, Eddie’s alcohol and drug abusing parents have left Eddie and his younger sister alone. A knock on the door is followed by: “Hi, Mr. Mark.” Eddie has greeted his mentor, the chairman of Colgate-Palmolive Company. Reuben Marks quickly gives Eddie a bear hug and inquires about school. Marks encourages and prods his mentee Eddie. He is trying to enable Eddie to realize his dreams. This is part of the I Have a Dream Foundation.

William Gray, director of the *International Journal of Mentoring*, has trained accountants, professors, lawyers, and college students to be mentors. He has even trained parents to mentor their own children.

One of the more inspirational examples of mentoring are the disadvantaged classes of elementary school children, who have been promised college tuition if they succeed in school. Thirty-five people around the country pledged \$250,000, and each maintains close personal contact with the class of students.⁵⁶

At the close of Dark Eyes, Marcello Matrianni expressed the film’s message:

“This boat will rot, the river will dry up, but our good and evil will live on forever.”

The Sigfluence Generation has to channel their idealism and inherent good into lasting, positive influence.

MYTH 8 – Helping Professionals Help

The only two times my mother went to a doctor were when she had me – doctors are clearly involved in deliveries – and for an operation for cataracts. Her average was one visit per thirty years. My father’s average was about the same; he went to a doctor after he fell down a flight of stairs thirty years ago and had two separate hospital stays within the decade before he passed away. Needless to say, I did not receive regular medical attention of any kind. I was brought up in a culture that supported the myth of medical magic, even though my parents did not believe the myth.

Let us return to discuss Karl Humiston, a highly trained psychiatrist, who currently practices holistic medicine. He graduated from Harvard Medical School and quickly became disenchanted with the limitations of his ability to contribute to the health of his patients. He studied psychiatry

at Cambridge in order to get the training to truly make a difference in his patients' lives. After completing his psychiatric training, he still felt that there was something missing in his background. He did not feel truly effective in helping his patients.

It wasn't until he met his current wife, who was a nutritionist, that he changed his attitude toward treating patients. He emphasized nutrition and the prevention of disease – not the frequently ineffective treatment of pathology. All he learned in medical school was about disease. He never learned anything about nutrition, exercise, or prevention. He claims that doctors shun nutrition because nutrition connects with good health. Good health doesn't make money for the medical profession.⁵⁷ His own practice emphasizes nutrition and prevention.

Let us stop picking on medical doctors. Enough is enough. Let us turn to the psychotherapist. Woody Allen was a regular in therapy. He believed that he had lived his life in “low-level depression.” Mr. Allen quipped that his therapist told him: “When you came here, I thought it was going to be extremely interesting, but it's like...listening to an accountant.”

Allen credits his affair and marriage to Soon Y for lifting his depression – not his years of therapy. In an interview he described himself as a maker of B films, incapable of Ingmar Bergman's masterworks, notably *The Seventh Seal*.⁵⁸

Ingmar Bergman, another ethereally sensitive celebrity film maker, had also been in regular psychotherapy. In an interview on the Dick Cavett Show (August 2, 1971), his friend and star Bibi Anderson chided Mr. Bergman for not responding honestly to Dick Cavett's inane question about Mr. Bergman's attitude toward psychoanalysis. Bergman declined to comment on psychoanalysis, denying he had any experience. Bibi Anderson good-naturedly corrected him and told the world that Mr. Bergman's analyst had reservations of curing the famously neurotic director.⁵⁹ The analyst felt that Bergman's neuroses were essential to his prodigious sequence of film masterpieces, *The Seventh Seal*, *Wild Strawberries*, *The Silence*, *Winter Light*, *Through a Glass Darkly*, *Persona* and so many more.

Leading psychologist Albert Ellis feels that there is substantial evidence that psychotherapists sometimes harm their clients. He feels that they overemphasize their clients' early or past experiences, often wasting hundreds of sessions. Ellis criticizes therapists for encouraging dependency and a dire need for love instead of teaching clients to accept themselves whether or not their therapists love them. Ellis practices rational emotive therapy that guides clients to rational solutions to their life problems. One of my college colleagues in psychology was a fierce critic of Albert Ellis. He did not believe the techniques of Ellis were effective. Some in the field of psychotherapy consider Ellis' approach to be unduly harsh, aggressive, and superficial. It is nearly impossible to prove that therapy works. Therapy eludes scientific scrutiny, but many hail its virtues, particularly at those times where life's difficulties bring us down. The best judge of sigfluence is you. Who can better reflect on the key influences that have positively shaped your life? Likewise, the patient is the best judge of the benefits of therapy to him/her.

One of the most vocal critics of psychotherapy, Thomas Szasz, feels that there is no way to distinguish the “therapeutic influence” of psychologists from the influence of advertisers,

friends, teachers, and spouses. People try to positively influence one another all the time. However, therapists command a lot of money for the privilege.⁶⁰

Several years ago I was seriously considering training as a Jungian therapist. As a 50 year old, I wanted something different as a career after I retired from college teaching. I visited a school that trained psychotherapists and sat in on a two hour seminar in which one of the future psychotherapists was presenting a contrast between Freud and Jung. It appeared to be the culmination of her training. Unfortunately, she could not keep the concepts of Jung and Freud distinct. The professor constantly corrected her, and I lost confidence in psychotherapy as a future career. One class and one poorly trained psychotherapist is not a sufficient sample to criticize a field, but I abandoned my plan to become a therapist after this debacle.

The Adirondack village of Saranac Lake provides an excellent example of an honest approach to “helping.” In the early 1900s people from all over the world traveled to Saranac Lake to combat tuberculosis. Cottages were built or adapted so that patients could sit out on the porches and breathe in the cold, pure winter air. The patients went to Saranac to “cure” – the responsibility was theirs. Doctors invariably aided in the treatment, but the patient was the active participant in a cure, not a passive recipient of treatment. The typical patient lounged in subzero temperatures on a cure porch with several warm blankets to stave off frostbite. There were no miracle drugs, simply a subzero resting cure that went on for months or years. The patient cured. There was no medical treatment for tuberculosis. Frank was one of the early patients, curing in Saranac Lake after World War II. He had contracted a likely death sentence of TB while serving in the South Pacific. To his surprise the cure worked and he has become one of the leading developers in the Adirondacks, vital 60 years later. Frank’s determination lives on today and was integral to his cure.

Let us return to education, a helping arena closer to home for most of us. In a major Harvard study, Christopher Jencks concluded that teachers effect relatively little influence over the lives of their students compared to other factors like socioeconomic, parent education, home income, etc.⁶¹ It is possible that he is right. Schools may simply serve as certification agencies that tell colleges that your Johnny or Jane or Juanita is smart. They may largely enable advantaged students to get into the better colleges and receive the piece of paper essential for the better jobs.

Jencks relied on statistics, and statistics does not capture sigfluence. We commonly reflect and remember a teacher, who was instrumental in our progress. The sigfluence of such a teacher cannot be measured empirically, but we know when we have been transformed. In time we may have tools to better capture the lifelong influence of a great teacher or a wonderful friend. But for the present, the world’s leading expert on the sigfluence given by helping professionals is you.

What about that much maligned helping professional called the guidance counselor? My guidance counselor suggested that I become a priest. No amount of protesting to the contrary dissuaded him from his recommending colleges that provided training for becoming a priest. I told him that I had given up this idea by the time I entered junior high school, but his good intentions were never in doubt. His helpfulness was.

The reasons for the frequent negative perception of counselors are complex and vary from person to person. Counselors are expected to guide three hundred to one thousand students every year. They are expected to help with choice of subjects and college. They routinely deal with heavy teen issues such as depression, suicide, and pregnancy. They are typically overworked, underpaid, and underappreciated. They are responsible for tons of paperwork that dramatically reduces their time for counseling. Despite the problems, dedicated counselors can inspire and guide many of their students. They have no adversarial relationship with their students. There are no grades or possibility of failure. The counselor is there to chart the future career and educational course as best he/she can for their students. I know of some who have given up counseling and devote themselves to their real estate business or other improper work. They may enter with idealism but, like bureaucrats behind their desks, they learn to do their job by rote. Some counselors never see children. The principal happily gives them all the programming of students for the school year. These are the exceptions. As a past national leader in counseling, I was impressed by the long hours and dedication of the typical guidance counselor. Few professions appear to have more Potential for Sigfluence. But to be fair, we are at square one of evaluating sigfluence in any profession.

If you believe that people need to help others, we had better start examining the true nature of the influence of the helping professionals. Otherwise we live in a naïve world of unchallenged myths.

Years ago, I was laid off on a Friday from my job directing the successful inner city program Responsibility Training. It was nothing personal – simply based upon my low seniority. Yonkers was and is in a perpetual state of budget crisis, a typical plight for economically disadvantaged school districts. On Monday, I was hired by Horace Mann to teach mathematics to some of the most economically advantaged in the nation. All my Horace Mann colleagues had impeccable academic qualifications. Our mission was to empower our students to enter Ivy League colleges. For some, Columbia University became a safety college, third choice after Harvard and Yale. The wealthy had highly qualified and inspiring teachers. Most of the mathematics teachers of the poor (from my experience) were not certified in mathematics. The poor do not remain poor due to inferiority in genetics. They need qualified helpers.

The Sigfluence Generation may discover that helpers wield the sigfluence that we currently believe. Or they may find that businessmen make a lot of money and lead in sigfluence as well.

And to get curious and curiouser, we may change our image of status to those who maximize their Potential for Sigfluence. Some jobs, like Supreme Court Justice, have enormous Potential for Sigfluence. Other jobs, illustrated by the anecdotes by the telephone operators, may not have the same Potential. However, modest jobs have magic opportunities to effect sigfluence. And holders of esteemed jobs may not act in ways that would optimize their Potential for Sigfluence. President Clinton lost a lot of Potential for Sigfluence by his tragic affair with Monica Lewinsky. John Edwards recently admitted his “narcissistic” affair with his campaign aide. At the heart of ethical behavior is a calling to fulfill one’s Potential for Sigfluence. As humans we may always fall short but there are exemplars such as Roberto Clemente and Viktor Frankl to serve as beacons for the Sigfluence Generation.

MYTH 9 – The Only Reason to Work is for Money

Tom Brokaw (NBC Evening News) highlighted the story of a man who had made his living capturing whales for marinas. The last whale he had captured was being towed to the marina. Meanwhile, his companion whales took turns coming to the surface to comfort their captured friend. Their lament was so touching and heart wrenching that the whaler quit his job and changed his life. He now cares for baby seals and other sea life, that he finds along the sands of Southern California.⁶²

Keela Dates, a 2006 graduate of Wells College, is an exemplar for the Sigfluence Generation. She decided to travel for a year before becoming an elementary school teacher. Then she met the children of Jambo Jipy School in Mtwapa, Kenya. In her words:

“These kids stole my heart.....when I left, they said...every volunteer.... has said that (I am coming back) and they haven't come back.”⁶³

Keela Dates is going back to Kenya. She is raising \$25,000 to bring educational materials for her newfound friends. Ram Das and Keela Dates found sigfluence. For Ram Das, it was a painstaking process that took years. For Keela, it was serendipitous sigfluence, just a few months to find an outlet for her Need and Potential for Sigfluence. The more we think about sigfluence, the greater the need for new words to distinguish between the sigfluence of Ram Das and Keela.

Keela has found a gold mine of Potential for Sigfluence. It will be a decade or more before she can judge whether her dedication has wielded sigfluence, but her Need and Potential for Sigfluence are praiseworthy.

We need meaning in our lives. Prestige and money are not enough. Since jobs occupy so much of our lives, it is sad if we go through the motions at work – like “the mummy” in *Ikiru*.

Remember the dramatic positive influence that the telephone operator had on the distraught person who had attempted suicide. *Humble jobs have moments of profound influence that belie society's superficial awarding of status.*

If dollars are all that is important from work, why did Ivan Boesky – earning more than two million dollars per year – have to engage in illegal trading. Perhaps he was unaware that the thing missing from his life was meaning derived from positive influence. He clearly didn't need more money or power.

More important than money, people need to be appreciated at work. Adrian Gostick and Chester Elton, both business consultants, studied 200,000 managers and employees over a ten year period. Their basic finding was that people work harder and companies are more profitable where workers are praised for excellent work.⁶⁴

In time we will move beyond praise to partnership in effecting sigfluence as key motivation for workers. Without sigfluence as a meme, excellent work could be defined in myriad ways. As we evolve in sigfluence consciousness, excellence will be grounded in positive, long-term

influence. Praise is a good start in improving employee morale, but money is not the only reason to perform well at work.

Television journalism is not simply a lucrative profession where the people go into it just for the money. A few years ago, the NBC news staff was trying to determine the content of their evening program. When the satellite feed from Ethiopia was viewed, the newsroom came to a standstill. The extent of the famine and suffering caused a lot of people to cry. Tom Brokaw decided the segment had to go on that night. He later commented:

“The relief organizations wrote to thank us for the flood of contributions. That’s a payoff for a journalist. We like to feel that we make a difference in people’s lives.”⁶⁵

It may surprise the reader that the dictionary definitions of work (Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary) nowhere mention economic return.⁶⁶ We have a lot to learn from pre and non-industrial societies, where the value of human work was measured by the contribution to the community. Schumacher observed that from a Buddhist point of view, our paycheck perspective on the importance of work is aberrant. We consider goods more important than people.⁶⁷ Goods and commodities don’t last; our positive actions endure.

Sigfluence is very harmonious with religion. Saint Paul in Romans (8) instructed that “if Christ be in you... the spirit is life.” Two of the definitions of spiritual (American Heritage Dictionary, 3rd Edition) are:

1. The animating force within living beings.
2. Vivacity, vigor or courage.

Sigfluence animates. It makes us more alive. We feel more vigorous, and it will take courage for the Sigfluence Generation to animate America with enhanced sigfluence consciousness.

The Dalai Lama has described himself as a simple Buddhist monk. As one of the world’s spiritual leaders, it is important for the Sigfluence Generation to benefit from his wisdom. The Dalai Lama was asked by Rick Fields, editor of the Yoga Journal, about the relationship between spirituality and politics. The Dalai Lama responded:

“The most important thing is another level of spirituality – that is spirituality without religious faith, which is simply to be a good human being – thoughtful, truthful, honest, warm-hearted...humanity cannot survive without this...It is very important that we develop what people call secular ethics.”⁶⁸

Sigfluence is at the heart of secular ethics. It is also the key to finding meaning in life.

The need for meaning in one’s life through positive influence is captured in Thomas Merton’s reflections. Merton was a successful career businessman who left it all for the contemplative life. Merton, an ascetic monk and the author of many acclaimed books, suddenly realized that he

wanted to be an active participant in bringing his Christianity to the world. Our world had real problems that needed direct action. He wanted to become directly involved with the problem of racism in America and the threat of nuclear war. He wrote about the latter concern:

“(The) button will be pressed by a sane person – probably thinking a limited war can be won.”⁶⁹

Although racism and the dangers of nuclear war are always present, Merton tried to make a difference. Money was obviously not a factor in his “mission.”

My own experience confirms the rewards of positive influence. As a guidance counselor, I wrote a college recommendation letter for Hae Kyun. Tears came to my eyes when I remembered the role that my Leadership Workshop had in transforming Hae Kyun from a shy, reserved young lady into senior class president. This experience of sigfluence was one of my most rewarding moments.

Let us listen to Tom, a Brooklyn fireman:

“The fuckin’ world’s so fucked up, the country’s fucked up. But the firemen, you actually see them produce. You see them put out a fire. You see them give mouth to mouth when a guy’s dying. You can’t get around that shit. That’s real. To me that’s what I want to be....I helped save somebody. It shows something I did on this earth.”⁷⁰

Tom is in touch with his basic need to positively influence others. Few are more in tune with their fundamental nature than he. Our lives are short; the commodities we buy with our money will eventually fade. Our positive influence, which provides our meaning, represents our legacy – not money. We have to conquer our current neglect, denial and fear of influence.

The Sigfluence Generation is ready but not prepared for societal transformation. Imagine the seismic shift in America as sigfluence supplants money as our *raison d’être* this century.

MYTH 10 – *Burnout Happens to Someone Else*

If you are reading this book, you may think you are an idealistic and energetic worker, unlikely to experience burnout. This is not the case.

If you are idealistic and expect to make a considerable contribution to others, you are a prime candidate for burnout. According to Lowell Flint, burnout is a state of exhaustion, despair, and futility which comes from the belief that achievement in a job is either impossible or not worth the effort.⁷¹

Burnout is a complex phenomenon where the job environment and one’s personality interact in ways that are poorly understood. Sigfluence is an antidote to burnout, but there is little sigfluence in chaotic work environments. Also sigfluence is not optimized when employee and manager are locked in adversarial relations. We are all part of the problem. Few thank key sigfluencers in their lives. Perhaps we are made aware of ten percent of our sigfluence, if the tip

of the iceberg metaphor is apt. If sigfluence is fundamental to achievement in the workplace and sigfluence is cloaked in silence, we all suffer. Burnout is merely a symptom. The Sigfluence Generation has to promote openness about sigfluence. We need to move from adversarial professional relationships to sigfluence partnerships.

Most of us have heard about burnout in teaching. However, burnout occurs in every occupation. Highly idealistic nurses in terminal care facilities report very high levels of burnout. Physicians frequently find themselves battling burnout. Whenever you find people working, you will find burnout.

Please take the following survey on burnout.

| How Often Do You Experience These Feelings in Relation to Your Job? | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|------|--------|-----------|-------|---------|--------|
| | Never | Once | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Usually | Always |
| 1. Being tired | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 2. Feeling depressed | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 3. Having a bad day | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 4. Being physically exhausted | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 5. Being wiped out | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 6. Feeling pushed around | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7. Being unhappy | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 8. Feeling trapped or locked in | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 9. Feeling cynical | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 10. Feeling worthless | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 11. Wanting to quit | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 12. Being cold, callous or hostile | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

| | Never | Once | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Usually | Always |
|--|-------|------|--------|-----------|-------|---------|--------|
| 13. Feeling disillusioned about people | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 14. Feeling bored | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 15. Feeling hopeless | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 16. Feeling resentful about people | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 17. Feeling pessimistic about outcomes | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 18. Feeling listless | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 19. Feeling anxious | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

Obtain your total score: _____

Now obtain your level of burnout. Alfred Alschuler gives the following rough guidelines for levels of burnout:

| | |
|---------|------------------------------|
| 0-60 | Ideal |
| 61-80 | Mild Burnout |
| 81-100 | Moderate Burnout |
| 101-120 | Severe Burnout ⁷² |

If your score indicates that you should be concerned about burnout, try some stress reduction techniques. High stress is common in cases of job burnout. Edward Ivanicki suggested the following activities to relieve stress:

- 1) Positive indulgence – treat yourself every day.
- 2) Relax and meditate [Transcendental meditation twice a day worked wonders for me. Try it.]
- 3) Regular physical exercise.
- 4) Healthful diet – some foods have stress causing agents.
- 5) Budget time effectively.
- 6) Develop reflective techniques to copy with job related stress.
- 7) Enjoy a hot bath or cold shower.
- 8) Develop a sense of proportion. Don't dwell on a bad day.⁷³
- 9) Practice sigfluence. This may be the most powerful.

Most books and articles on burnout emphasize stress as a factor contributing to burnout. None focus on a feeling of uselessness – a feeling that our actions don't make a difference. There are plenty of people who work in highly stressful environments, but they do not appear to be suffering from burnout. They are energized by the knowledge that they are making a difference in other people's lives. Sigfluence is the antidote to burnout.

Mother Teresa worked amidst the poorest of the world's poor. Her environment was highly stressful. However, she always appeared strong, energetic, and hopeful. She was buoyed by the certain knowledge that she was making a difference. Consider her touching words describing a man who had been deteriorating on the streets of Melbourne, Australia:

“An alcoholic, he had been for years in that condition. The sisters took him to the Home of Compassion [founded by Mother Teresa]. After a few weeks he was relieved and left...He never touched alcohol again. He went back to his family and to his children and to his job.”⁷⁴

Few of us, if any, will become a Mother Teresa. However, if we approach work with reasonable expectations and develop techniques to be in touch with our influence, we may reduce our risk for burnout.

Burnout may be caused by the lethal combination of high stress and low effectiveness. By effectiveness we mean making a positive difference in others' lives. Most of us make more of a difference in others' lives than we know. As previously discussed, people usually do not credit or thank their most important influencers like clergy, friends, or mentors at work. If people aren't told about their influence, they usually don't know about it – that is unless they are psychic.

If anything contributes to our society's malaise, it is our indifference to sigfluence. We usually don't tell people when they have been helpful; even teachers and nurses who devote their lives toward helping are rarely thanked. We don't even have a special word in our vocabulary to mean lasting, positive influence. An unconscious fear of our influence legacy may explain this neglect. Thank-you letters and ads in newspapers could brighten many lives. Visit your mentor or sigfluencer for coffee. Express your gratitude for their sigfluence. We are interconnected in ways that we have not yet begun to explore.

Let's change this. Tell the teacher or clergy, or friends of the positive difference they made in your life. By thanking more we would be a long way toward lowering burnout – especially among “helping professionals.” After all, nurses, teachers, social workers, etc. don't go into the field for the money. They are largely motivated by making a difference. And their clients rarely, if ever, tell them when they have made a difference. We are all vulnerable to burnout. Sadly, we are contributing to the problem. We are motivated by sigfluence but we rarely thank others for their sigfluence in our lives. We, the beneficiaries of sigfluence, fuel burnout. We are often the problem. The Sigfluence Generation has to change the paradigm of denial and silence toward sigfluence. Otherwise they will accustom themselves to our comfortable malaise and burnout.

CHAPTER FIVE

PSYCHOLOGY'S NEGLECT

Psychology does not honor sigfluence; it neglects the concept.

Personal Reflections

For twenty-five years I have written and lectured on sigfluence at conferences across the United States. Since I have extensive publications and a doctorate from Columbia, it is fairly easy for me to deliver lectures. However, it is painful to reflect on the modest sigfluence in the academic world I have effected by two decades of focus on sigfluence.

At Harvard's 1984 International Conference on Thinking, my linguist colleague walked out of my talk. Another professor asked me to deliver a two hour follow-up talk and then proceeded to attack my ideas. He believed that sigfluence was already in the writings of Erik Erikson. My work was simply a repetition of Erikson's. I reread Erikson's *Life Cycle Completed* after the conference and concluded that Erikson, as well as Carl Rogers, wrote in a spirit consonant with sigfluence. However, neither was integrating sigfluence into their writings, because we think through language. Our language had not yet found a place for sigfluence. And psychology has strict guidelines before new ideas are accepted. Every current college professor must die, before a new idea is accepted.

Ten years later I asked B. F. Skinner where significant, long-term influence that he so richly described in his autobiography, might be studied in psychology. Likewise, Dr. Skinner believed that sigfluence had been studied by Erikson. In ten years, sigfluence had not advanced one iota in academic psychology.

Erikson's brilliant work, exemplified by trust vs. mistrust developing in the first stage of infancy, is harmonious with sigfluence. But Dr. Erikson, Dr. Skinner, and the current assembly of college psychology professors do not recognize the concept of sigfluence. They have not yet begun to move beyond the naive belief that helping others is an interest, like tennis or golf. We all languish as a result of their neglect.

Nature of Bias in Psychology

In 1893 William James wrote to his fellow psychologist Theodore Flournoy:

“Everyone seems to be publishing a psychology in these days.”⁷⁵

This correspondence with Flournoy reflected James' belief that psychology was in the Neanderthal age of development. Flournoy, a friend and holder of the first chair of psychology in science, was the natural soul mate for James to express his misgivings about psychology as a science and its rampant competing theories.

Sonu Shamdasani writes eloquently about the central problem that has plagued psychology since its birth:

“Their (theorists) conceptions of the human subject have themselves partially transformed the subject that they set out to explain.”⁷⁶

Indeed Freud, Jung, Frankl, and Adler shape our beliefs about human nature. Their biases become our biases. With this in mind, let us consider how sigfluence integrates with the philosophies of Freud, Adler, Jung, and Frankl and begin with an admission of my disposition. It would be a better world if we admitted our biases. Just because they are our preconceptions does not mean they are wrong.

Sigfluence is an outgrowth of my strict Roman Catholic upbringing. Until college I was so religious that many believed I was headed to the priesthood. In seventh grade I was nearly left back due to excessive absence and failure. This near fatal event traumatized me and made me particularly sensitive to the needs of the economically disadvantaged. I had been one of them. This led to my innovating a program for economically disadvantaged students who were left back in grade.

My short-term success, Responsibility Training, and its long-term disappointing results profoundly influenced my sigfluence work. The serendipitous influence of Viktor Frankl’s *Man’s Search for Meaning* echoes in this, my eighth book on sigfluence. And finally, my training in mathematics (due to ninth grade teachers Louis Rotando and Mary O’Connor Reynolds), culminating in the mentorship at Columbia University of the late Dr. Richard Wolf (psychological measurement) and Dr. Bruce Vogeli (mathematics/statistics/education) along with dozens of teachers formed the foundation for sigfluence. Mathematical training was most helpful for me to recognize the ever present, often untested assumptions that are starting points for theories. My basic theory states that we humans have a fundamental motivation to effect sigfluence. My doctoral training in statistics and psychology enabled me to construct a sigfluence survey that measured Actual Sigfluence, Need for Sigfluence and Potential for Sigfluence. And Dr. Merrifield, my doctoral mentor at NYU, wisely counseled that it would take ten to fifteen years to see progress on sigfluence. I am up to twenty-five but who is counting?

Our last three years of data mining, statistics, and interviews with Generation Y confirm that sigfluence is an essential need of humans. However, this need is thwarted by education, language, work, and our individual neglect, denial and fear. Let us explore sigfluence in its relation to the thought of four great twentieth century figures in psychology – Freud, Adler, Jung, and Frankl.

Freud

In *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl distinguished his philosophy from Freud and Adler. In Freud’s philosophy, we are primarily motivated by pleasure. In Adler’s conception, we are driven by a need for power. According to Frankl, humans are fulfilled by meaning. For Jung, individuals are called to develop insight into both their personal and collective unconscious. As a result of our self-development, we are better equipped to help humankind.

We are enormously influenced by these giants. Despite competing theorists, Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* gave us a roadmap into the unconscious. It is difficult to imagine Carl Jung's extensive body of seminal work without Freud's masterpiece.

Freud, Frankl, Adler, and Jung shape the way we think about basic human needs. Their theories underlie different approaches to therapy and help shape our perception of what it means to be human. An Epicurean philosophy is devoted to the pursuit of pleasure. While philosophy appears to be a misnomer for such shallowness, sigfluence is ultimately the key to meaning and fulfillment. Pleasure is by its nature momentary and fleeting. Sigfluence nourishes the soul and ennobles humans.

Freud's orientation toward pleasure is directly opposed to sigfluence. Pleasure is agreeable but fleeting. A blind pursuit of sex, food, or material comforts without balance may lead to more harm than good.

Everyone benefits greatly if we shift focus toward the long-term. Sex, nutrition, and material comforts are empty if they are pursued for momentary pleasure. Sex without love and mutual concern neglects our spiritual nature. Short-term pleasure from rich or fatty foods frequently leads to obesity and health problems. If we are undisciplined with the use of our credit cards, we deprive ourselves of financial security and are imprisoned by our voracious appetite for spending.

Proper nutrition requires a long-term perspective. Dr. K. Humiston, a Cambridge and Harvard trained physician, was sigfluenced by his wife, a nutritionist. He learned to eat, not for short-term pleasure, but for how he would feel in an hour or two. Few of us, who attended his presentation, could believe that Dr. Humiston was 50. He looked like a thirty year old. The Sigfluence Generation have to reverse the short-term mentality that pervades our society, worsened by our widespread financial woes of 2009 and our continuing resistance to proper exercise and diet.

Carl Jung

As we enter the new millennium, heightened interest in the writings of Carl Jung or his disciples is prevalent. Best sellers like *Care of the Soul* and *The Soul's Code* by Thomas Moore, a Jungian therapist, cite Jung's writings and thought extensively and reach millions. America's young people are moving in a spiritual direction. College campuses are alive with students pursuing deep spiritual issues. The election of President Obama was a reflection of the transformational potential of our college students, who favored him by the widest margin ever recorded by any segment of American voters. There is a close connection between sigfluence and spirituality. In time our thought will embrace our fundamental need to achieve lasting, positive influence and acknowledge this commonality across spiritual and religious persuasions.

Jung is certainly the psychoanalytic leader whose writings are most consonant with spirituality. After all, Freud scorned religious views, believing that religion was an opiate to escape fear of death. In perusing his autobiographical work, *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*, several sigfluence related insights emerge. Consider Jung's analysis of his father's limitations as country parson:

“He did a great deal of good – far too much – and as a result was usually irritable. Both parents made great efforts to live devout lives, with the result that there were angry scenes between them only too frequently. These difficulties, understandably enough, later shattered my father’s faith.”⁷⁷

This paragraph gives an unusual insight into the seldom discussed abuses of helping. Some people try to help too much and too soon. Jung’s father tried to help too much, and according to his gifted son, lacked proper self-development in personal or religious matters.

As a very new teacher, I wanted to change the world. My Responsibility Training program was one of many initiatives I developed to help my economically disadvantaged students. Despite my best efforts, many failed to regularly attend class. In a few weeks or months I was trying to undo irresponsible behavior rooted in eight or nine years of bad school habits. William, one of my most academically successful students, regularly visited my apartment. We were buddies, or so I thought. Every time William visited I was short 20 or 40 dollars. Initially I was in denial. In time I discovered that William was regularly stealing from me. Helping is hard work.

Walter was another story. He was assigned to me when I became a guidance counselor at the local high school. His previous counselor told me about his tragic home life and his rare artistic ability. I drove Walter to an interview at a local art program. He was instantly admitted to the program in Commercial Art. The teacher was so impressed with Walter’s talent that he told Walter about specific job possibilities for Walter at an office in New York City that he directed. Unfortunately, Walter rarely attended class, regularly borrowed lunch money from me and conned me into believing that he would reform and improve his attendance. He never did. One of the students told me that Walter was selling drugs. It is hard to effect sigfluence.

This was the lesson raised by the genius film maker Luis Bunuel in his film *Viridiana*. The destruction of the house in which Viridiana housed the poor parallels the difficulties that Jung’s father experienced by too much attention to helping others and too little attention to self-development. Both Sister Viridiana and Jung’s father focused on helping others without adequate balance invested in themselves. This emphasis, which is highlighted in Buddhism, may seem egoistical. This is not so. We need to develop ourselves intellectually, spiritually, and professionally, so that we can effect enhanced sigfluence toward others. These two case histories suggest that one can more effectively help others if he/she is more in command of unconscious conflicts and personal demons.

In the middle of *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections*, Jung discusses his perception of Actual Sigfluence which resulted from his psychiatric practice:

“On a conservative estimate, a third of my cases were really cured, a third considerably improved, and a third not essentially influenced. But it is precisely the unimproved cases which are hardest to judge, because many things are not realized and understood by the patients until (ten) years afterward.”⁷⁸

Imagine what Jung's modest assessment of Actual Sigfluence means to most helping professionals. Only one third of his cases were cured by Jung's estimates. And remember that Jung was one of the leading psychiatrists of our century. Also, consider the difficulty of determining long-term influence. Many times, it takes several years, perhaps even decades, to recognize the effects of sigfluence. Jung cautioned that this is the reason that it is so difficult to draw conclusions about the success of treatment. We truly live in a shadow world in the helping professions, or, for that matter, in any occupation, when assessing the nature of our long-term influence. But this mysterious phenomenon of sigfluence is one of the most important and widely neglected aspects of our personal and professional lives.

Jung related an extraordinary case history in which he treated a man from a rich and respected family, who seemingly had it all. He had a "likeable" wife, lots of money, but he drank too much. His mother was (according to Jung's analysis) the root of the man's problem. He was chained to his mother, the owner of a large American company where the son worked as an oppressed subordinate.

After brief treatment, the man stopped drinking. Jung cautioned the man that when he went back to America, the drinking would likely resume, and it did.

Jung was called by the mother for a consultation, and he saw in her "a power devil." Jung decided to give his mother a medical certificate indicating that the son was incapable of properly doing his job. Jung recommended she fire her son. The mother followed Jung's advice, and the son was furious.

Jung's conduct was considered unethical for a "helping professional." However, when the son separated from his mother, he developed a brilliant career. The man's wife was grateful. No mention was made by Jung of the son's gratitude."⁷⁹

Jung was certain that his action was the only way to free his alcoholic client of his neurosis. Though Jung admitted a guilty conscience from his "seemingly unethical" intervention, Jung was motivated by sigfluence as a guiding principle. He was trying the only card that he could play to free the man from his mother's dominance.

Jung's perception of sigfluence was that of a genius. He used sigfluence as a guiding principle in helping his client escape the clutches of his "power devil" mother. Geniuses somehow rise above the shortcomings of language, society, and convention.

There are intellectuals whose thought closely parallels sigfluence. One example is the philosophy of utilitarianism. The philosopher Thomas Love Peacock Melincourt expresses the essence of utilitarianism as follows:

"Yet what is human society, but one great family? What is moral duty, but that precise line of conduct which tends to promote the greatest degree of general happiness?"⁸⁰

This philosophy could be extended to sigfluence and to Jung's actions. Jung was taking a considerable personal chance in behaving in a manner that led (over considerable time) to the improved life prospects for his client. If we each act in the way that leads to the greatest benefit of those within our influence path, we may be able to avert the widely predicted apocalypse. This is the charge to the Sigfluence Generation, and they need the "elders" as partners.

Adler

Alfred Adler is well known for defining power as a fundamental need of humans. Few know that Adler also developed a theory of social interest. He believed that in order for humans to lead fulfilling lives, they had to transcend the limits of the self. They had to show interest and concern for others. Adler believed that social interest was essential in solving human problems. By cooperation, humans maximize efficiency, conserve scarce resources, reduce danger, and enhance their meaning in life.⁸¹

Social interest is at the heart of sigfluence. However, we need more than interest in others. We need more than cooperation. In order to lead fulfilled lives, we need to see the positive impact resulting from our social interest. We should not brag about our sigfluence. It is simply enough to reflect on the positive impact of our actions and whenever possible extend our sigfluence.

In my thirty-ninth year of teaching, I finally published an article, describing how my students were able to achieve high levels of success in my college statistics class. I recommended my approach to all teachers of mathematics and offered my innovation as one step in overcoming the epidemic mathematics failure rate in college mathematics. If implemented, this could translate into thousands of success stories, particularly among those at highest risk – our economically disadvantaged college students. Nearly forty college professors asked for the book that I wrote to help my students succeed in statistics. Unfortunately, I do not yet know if any college is adopting my approach. Sigfluence is typically (and sadly) cloaked in silence. I now have to ask the forty professors if my recommended innovation helped students to succeed. This will animate me, if I discover that I have made a positive difference. Social interest is not enough.

Frankl

Viktor Frankl came very close to a philosophy of sigfluence when he developed his theories while imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp. According to Dr. Frankl we are fundamentally motivated by a need to find meaning in life. If Dr. Frankl developed sigfluence as a key to finding meaning in life, there would have been little need for my twenty-five year sigfluence odyssey. *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl is considered one of the most important works of the twentieth century. His book inspired me as it has millions of others. Some, like Dr. Frankl, experience adversity and create a new philosophy for living. Others are buried beneath the wheel of misfortune. Who is able to grow from suffering and why? Who is irreparably damaged and why? Psychology has not yet found the factors that distinguish between these groups.

It is not easy to criticize one's mentors, as it is clear that Dr. Frankl inspired my work on sigfluence. If Dr. Frankl defined meaning in terms of the sigfluence of our actions, our positions would be identical. Unfortunately, neither Dr. Frankl nor the psychology community has been willing to make this important leap for the past twenty-five years.

My marginalization by academic psychology is sadly common. Thomas Kuhn expressed my experience in the following:

“The road to a firm research consensus is extraordinarily arduous.”

Kuhn developed stages for the acceptance of new ideas. According to Thomas Kuhn, experts initially reject almost hostilely a new idea. There is marginalization and anger in the early stages. By the late stages, experts have dismissed the new idea as an old idea. Finally, they take credit for the new idea as being theirs all along.⁸²

Dr. Frankl and I corresponded during the last decade of his life. Since he was blind, his wife read him my manuscripts. He was generous in praising sigfluency as a new and interesting concept. Unfortunately, the editors of the leading journals in psychology did not share Dr. Frankl's support and up to now have kept sigfluency out of the mainstream of psychology.

Scholar's Reluctance

Howard Gardener has received international recognition for his theory of multiple intelligence. His broader view of intelligence, which includes the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and kinesthetic, contrasts with our current overemphasis on verbal IQ.

Howard Gardener has more than his share of critics. They dismiss his work as brilliant rhetoric without the statistics to back it up. My Columbia mentor in statistics and educational and psychological research, the late Dr. Richard Wolf, dismissed multiple intelligence as misplaced. He believed, as do many esteemed researchers, that intelligence is a single entity with many branches from this root. These branches could include all of Gardener's seven separate intelligences.

The jury is still out over Gardener's theories, but the critics nip, attack and marginalize his work. Gardener once said: “Scholars are not known for responding generously to new theories.”

Gardener's theories are not entirely new. Nearly three decades ago, I studied advanced measurement with Dr. Phillip Merrifield at NYU. Dr. Merrifield developed his theory with 16 separate intelligences and a far more comprehensive view of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence than Gardener. But Dr. Merrifield was at NYU; Dr. Gardener was at Harvard. The American public and the university can only attend to one or at most two superstars in each field. Dr. Merrifield did not receive the recognition of Dr. Gardener, though his work was very similar and preceded Gardener. The academic psychologists look first to your university affiliation before they open their guns to attack your new ideas. If you teach at a lower status college and have a new idea, you may not even have the privilege of having your theories attacked.

B.F. Skinner

B.F. Skinner, one of the pioneers of behaviorism and operant conditioning, spoke a decade ago at the American Psychological Association's National Convention. In Dr. Skinner's autobiography, he clearly identified the sigfluencers in his life. For example, he described an emotional deathbed experience with one of his high school teachers, Miss Graves:

“Fever had rouged her cheeks and her eyes shone brightly. In any case she could have read the truth in my eyes, for once in my life, for a brief moment, I thought she was beautiful.

Did she indeed infect me with more than a love of literature... with more than a sense of the Bible as literature? Somehow I rather hope she did. But where is the test that will show the other infections?”⁸³

She kindled a love of literature in young Skinner, a passion that led him to Hamilton College for undergraduate study, and then to Harvard for doctoral psychology. Few autobiographies are clearer in identifying sigfluence than B. F. Skinner’s. But Dr. Skinner asked where is the test that will show the other infections? This is a curious statement coming from one of the intellectual leaders of the twentieth century. Dr. Skinner is referring to a test of sigfluence. He might have been thinking of some objective measure to capture sigfluence like a SAT or IQ test. Also, he considers these sigfluent episodes as infections. The word infection has several negative connotations, but it has one positive meaning: “an influence or impulse passing from one to another and affecting feeling or action.” (The Random House Dictionary, 1990)

Skinner, Erikson, and psychology have yet to explore sigfluence. The test to measure sigfluence is in its infancy but is the Sigfluence Survey.

Midwifery

As midwife for sigfluence, I totally agree with Gardener in his comment about the lack of generosity of scholars for new ideas. Sigfluence has had a history very close to Kuhn’s stages for the acceptance of a new idea. Several years ago, sigfluence was in the hostile rejection phase of its development. I sent my latest article on sigfluence to the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* where Viktor Frankl and Carol Rogers had served as editors. Since sigfluence had been so profoundly influenced by Viktor Frankl, it seemed a natural place to publish. An anonymous referee sent me the following statement in a letter:

“Sigfluence is indeed just a need – syndrome.”

The referee cited Murray’s (1938) *Exploration in Personality* as the source of truth that I was obviously overlooking. According to the referee, sigfluence had already been covered by Murray sixty years ago.

It wasn’t easy to find Murray’s book. I finally tracked it down at Columbia University and read it from cover to cover. It did not appear from the circulation card that anyone had read this book in the past decade, but that was irrelevant. If Murray had developed sigfluence sixty years ago, I had obviously missed it and would acknowledge my oversight.

Let me share the only glimmer where Murray [with a big stretch] approached sigfluence. Achievement and nurturance were specifically mentioned by the referee as encompassing sigfluence.

To Murray, achievement was:

“to overcome obstacles, to exercise power, to strive to do something difficult as well and as quickly as possible.”

Murray defined nurturance as:

“to nourish, aid, or protect a helpless other. To express sympathy.
To “mother” a child.”

Murray’s book was an outgrowth of interviews with thirteen people who came to the Harvard clinic two or three hours a week for several months. For nearly a century, psychology has defined personality in terms of Murray’s framework.

Murray and this referee consider sigfluence as a need-syndrome. The first definition of syndrome (Random House) is symptoms characteristic of a disorder or disease. So Murray may list sigfluence as a feature of a disturbed person. Murray is partially correct. Sigfluence is a need but not a syndrome.

The referee was probably trained with Murray’s work. It is hard to unlearn your training and to accept a new idea. Sigfluence doesn’t fit into the existing framework of personality, so it gets marginalized or incorrectly identified with a need – syndrome. Murray is the authority, and it is easier to bow to authority than rewrite textbooks.

Imagine if this was the way things were done in mathematics. Murray was trained in the 20s as a psychologist. To be generous, the serious psychologist had only a few decades of work by Freud, Jung and modern psychologists. If we stopped mathematics two or three decades into its progress, we would all be able to master mathematics. The only knowledge to master might be a grunt signifying “one.” We probably would not have had the time to invent “two.” One plus one equals two is too sophisticated for a science that stops in its infancy. Sigfluence is neglected today by psychology because few dare to challenge the shaky foundation of psychology.

Kurt Godel shook the foundation of mathematics, and the full effects of his far reaching genius are still being felt. We are profoundly aware of the limitations of logic and mathematics because of Godel’s work. We have not yet challenged the foundations of psychology where sigfluence is considered an interest (like stamp collecting), a disorder, or a value (like independence at work). As midwife to sigfluence, my concept is in protracted labor. My mentor at NYU, Dr. Philip Merrifield, wisely counseled that sigfluence would take ten to fifteen years to catch on. He was right. Sigfluence is finally beginning to catch on. Even Barron’s, a conservative bastion, published my letter discussing the problems with sigfluencing through philanthropy (December 25, 2000). Within a century, sigfluence may make Webster’s.

One of the meanings of academic in Webster’s *New Collegiate Dictionary* is “having no practical or useful significance.” If universities continue to marginalize sigfluence, they deserve this definition of academic. It is hoped that college disciplines will initiate efforts to better understand our interdependence and the nature of sigfluence. This requires bold leadership from the editors of the leading psychology journals, who control the dissemination of new ideas.

Problems With Statistics

The measurement of sigfluence is very complex. Indeed, the Sigfluence Survey only measures a person's perception of sigfluence - light years away from measuring or predicting sigfluence. The Sigfluence Survey is a sound and reliable test. However, there are deep and difficult problems in measuring our long-term, positive influence.

Statistics, which dates from the mid 1700s in a gambling manual called DeMoivre's *Doctrine of Chance*, analyzed gambling results based on a very large number of trials, for example dice throws. From these results we developed the Central Limit Theorem. One of the centerpieces of all statistics, this theorem, requires that all the outcomes of an experiment are independent – namely one outcome doesn't influence the next. The assumptions that underlie modern statistics are well suited to dice and card outcomes but are very poorly suited to people.

It may be decades before researchers can make the adjustments necessary to correct for problems in educational or psychological data. Several of my articles have dealt with these problems, but their knowledge is not widely known within the academic community. Little chance for addressing these highly practical but complex issues over the short-term is in the cards, since psychologists generally avoid mathematics like the plague.

Qualitative View

Several years ago, I was invited to deliver a lecture on sigfluence at Clark University's International Conference on Theoretical Psychology. When I confessed that I believed that I was at an impasse in measuring sigfluence, two psychologists suggested that I shift to qualitative research. I didn't know what they were talking about, but both researchers independently suggested that I read the work of the pioneer Amedeo Giorgi.

I have now read much of Dr. Giorgi's work, and spent a few hours conversing with him about his visionary ideas at University of California, Berkeley. Almost at the same time, I collaborated with a marketing specialist in running two qualitative sigfluence sessions with college colleagues, doctoral students, and undergraduates. The results, while preliminary, are exciting and I have become a believer in the richness of qualitative research. Since I had already unlearned my graduate training pertaining to positive influence, it wasn't too hard to shift focus from the quantitative to the qualitative.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, academic psychologists relied on mathematics, especially statistics, to confirm or disprove theories. Perhaps William James' quip to Theodore Flournoy in 1893 about everyone publishing a new psychology contributed to a reliance on mathematics – an unequivocal, solid foundation for truth. My solution was to explore sigfluence through both the quantitative (statistical) and also rely upon focus groups and individual interviews to confirm or reject the mathematical results. The place where the statistical and qualitative meet is our best hope of establishing truth. We have to honor both the mathematical analysis and the qualitative as partners. Let me share the results of several interviews and focus groups that I conducted pertaining to sigfluence.

Life Saving – A Dramatic Sigfluence Report

On July 8, 1994, I interviewed Jerry Junath, an exemplary ten year old, who had recently saved the life of a drowning girl. I wanted to elicit his exact contribution to the lifesaving and how it felt weeks later, having saved a life.

Jerry described the event – the girl had had a seizure and was unconscious in shallow water. He stepped on her and went to get his dad. His friends didn't help. His father initially hesitated, but Jerry convinced his father to aid the girl. Finally, both dragged her to safety.

Jerry recently visited the girl in a local hospital. He said, "It was good meeting her." Jerry credited the school and his parents for telling him what to do. If he had not received this instruction, the girl would be dead.

Jerry said that the experience "really changed me. ...The good feeling will last a long time." Jerry said that he thought everybody would feel better if they did what he did.

Though saving a life is an exceptional event, it may be necessary to study such dramatic episodes to get a handle on sigfluence. Jerry received temporary fame and no money, but he was very proud of his achievement. Psychology might explain that Jerry had a high "altruism" value and needed this kind of helping. Jerry is fortunately unencumbered with psychology's canon law and instructs us all that this kind of event would make anybody feel good for a long time. Also many co-stars in school and home offered Jerry the advice on how to react in an emergency situation. Until I probed, the other players in this sigfluence drama had been neglected by the news reports and were probably unaware of their impact. This fortunate girl was saved by a long and complex sequence of sigfluence. We are more dependent upon one another than psychology or we wish to recognize. We pervasively deny and neglect sigfluence out of a deep rooted unconscious fear. We have no word (yet) in Webster's to define sigfluence. This is because we do not want to face the discomfiting realization that we have not lived up to our sigfluence potential. The Sigfluence Generation has to launch a revolution to bring sigfluence from our unconscious into our daily consciousness. Twentieth century psychology was deeply influenced by insights into our unconscious by giants like Freud and Jung. The twenty-first century has a golden opportunity to identify our unconscious conflicts that hinder us from living up to our Need and Potential for Sigfluence.

Sigfluence in Children

By the time we have entered adulthood, we have heard numerous perspectives on influencing others. Helping others might be thought of as an interest like badminton. Or it may be considered a value for humanistically oriented people. Or it may be a religious calling. Or, according to the gospel of St. James, positive influence is a natural expression of faith. Or for the Dalai Lama, helping others is the purpose of his life. Perhaps Freud would view helping as sublimation of one's pursuit of pleasure. Carl Jung would emphasize self-development before one tries to help anyone else. The Sigfluence Generation inherits a muddle with regard to a philosophy of helping. Let us look to children and explore their views on positive influence, before society imposes its biases.

Joyce Goldstein (from SUNY – Westchester) organized two group sessions with four nine-ten year olds and four twelve-thirteen year olds. The four nine and ten year olds could not remember people in their lives who helped them. Perhaps very young people are not developmentally ready to recognize sigfluence.

All the young children agreed that “helping people is important.” Again, these youngsters haven’t had their helping instincts buried by psychology and education yet.

Joyce concluded that the children were largely not aware of when others influenced them. This is, of course, a rich vein of research for the next generation of scholars, if the university begins to encourage this line of inquiry.

The session with the twelve and thirteen year olds gave deeper insight into influence. The children cited friends, a teacher, a nurse, and a relative as sigfluencers.

The group split on whether everybody felt a need to sigfluence. One said, “You’d want someone to help you so you have to help people.” Another commented, “I think it’s just certain people (who need to help).” I believe that the Sigfluence Generation has the capacity for all to become “helpers.”

The older children were more in tune with sigfluence, but had not reached a higher level of concern for others as evidenced by their silence or mystical (I’ll help to get helped) approach to sigfluence.

Lawrence Kohlberg has dedicated decades to analyzing moral development. He has developed a hierarchical model to capture common features of how our sense of morality progresses. As children we initially respond to fear of punishment. As we mature, we may make decisions based upon satisfying one’s needs and occasionally the needs of others. If we reach Dr. Kohlberg’s highest stage, universal-ethical, we are motivated by justice, equality of human rights, and the dignity of fellow humans.⁸⁴

Sigfluence is not part of Dr. Kohlberg’s theory. Since it is not in our vocabulary and not dignified by colleges as a worthwhile avenue for research, one cannot fault Dr. Kohlberg for this oversight. Several years ago, I volunteered to develop a course at Harvard University to study sigfluence from multiple perspectives including statistics, psychology and education. I was advised that while sigfluence was a worthwhile concept, I would be fiercely attacked by the Harvard professors, whose terrain might be threatened. Thomas Kuhn was so accurate when he wrote that the road to a consensus on research is arduous. For me the road to begin the journey has been arduous

College Students’ Perspective on Sigfluence

I conducted a one-hour group sigfluence session with seven volunteers from my undergraduate classes. Let me quote their perceptions and attitudes related to sigfluence.

Chris: “I’d probably resist sigfluence. Eventually I will feel I need it (sigfluence) and accept it.”

I suggested that a lot of people might be wasting their time attempting to influence people like Chris, who don't want to be influenced.

Craig disagreed. He said: "(It is) not a waste of time. Keep trying."

Anthony continued, "So many people are trying to influence you. Too much to handle."

By college age, students have a heightened awareness of influence, but (as typical late adolescents) reject the advice of authority figures like teachers or professors.

Chris continued, "(Sigfluence is a) cultural thing. Americans feel this is my life. Let me do what I want to do."

Anthony commented, "A small percent of teachers will influence the way you think."

Craig said, "A lot of students are open to new ideas. ...Students here are open. Influence is a two way street."

This comment led me to ask whether we should give more two tiered college courses, the basics and optional enrichment.

Kathy deflected my comment and said that, "Parents are big ones. Teachers have little (sigfluence)."

It is a wonder to me how many sigfluence beliefs (often diametrically opposed) people own. We truly don't know if the typical teacher wields the sigfluence we commonly believe. To counter Kathy's view, Gary, Eddie, John and Chris described sigfluent teachers who positively shaped their lives.

Craig, Anthony, and Chris described their poetry. Craig felt that it felt better to share poetry with others. Anthony disagreed and said that there was no need to show your painting (or poetry) to others, if you feel good about yourself.

"If you don't feel good about yourself, you may compensate by trying to help others," appeared to be the implication of Anthony's comment. Indeed Freud, who attempted to mold twentieth century thinking, may have been compensating for his father's "generous improvidence." These were Freud's harsh words, describing his father's neglect of his gifted son.⁸⁵

When I asked the group whether sigfluence was a fundamental need, Anthony appeared to contradict himself (consider his earlier statement). He said, "(Sigfluence) It's a fundamental need."

Gary responded, "If you're fulfilled, influence can be fun (like an interest)."

Chris continued, "Influence is like love. Sex is no good without genuine love. If you are a phony, (there is) little chance for sigfluence."

Anthony closed the discussion with the following comment: “Those people who get no positive influence commit suicide. Everyone needs positive influence.”

Well, if we wait for psychology, counseling and education to change our current thinking on sigfluence, many people may suffer in the interim. We perpetuate the neglect and denial of one of our most mysterious (and perhaps unconscious) motivations, until the Sigfluence Generation leads a long-term influence focus.

Doctoral Students’ Perspective on Sigfluence

Rusty, the father of one of my students, volunteered to run a focus group with six of my doctoral students, two of my colleagues, and me. Rusty regularly ran focus groups for a living.

John (my distinguished teaching colleague) started by saying, “I haven’t been influenced much...I can’t think of anyone who influenced me positively.”

Then John discussed his Need for Sigfluence. “I have a drive that consumes me to be an influencer.” John wanted to compensate for what he perceived as neglect.

Freud, John and I have strong influence needs and perceptions of neglect within our early environments. Again, do strong influencers develop a strong sigfluence need as compensation for their neglect?

Jean, a college professor of nursing, described her sigfluence experience and perception: “(I) saved someone’s life with resuscitation. I felt very good about that.”

She continued, “Prerequisite for sigfluence is a personal relationship. (There were two immediate agreements from panelists.)

Jean followed by noting that there may be gender differences connected with sigfluence. (Women may cite friends or personal relations more than career influencers as compared to men.) She then stated that, “If I influence, I do what I am here to do. I don’t feel a need. I just am. If it happens, I enjoy positive feedback.”

Mary, another participant, then stated, “(her) sigfluencer was mentally ill. She validated the way I look at people in psychiatric mental health.” This person had saved Billy Jean and her child who had fallen through the ice on the way to a picnic.

Rose later related a touching story of how she nursed a badly injured young man back to normal health. “I knew I had positive influence. Doctors told me. Nurses told me. What upsets me very much is that he couldn’t.” (Then Rose started to cry.)

This beautiful episode captures the shadow world that we live in when it comes to not thanking our positive influencers. This young man never knew how deeply he had wounded Rose by leaving the hospital without expressing gratitude for her sigfluence, which had transcended the

reasonable expectations of a nurse's job. She had dedicated a portion of her life to the recovery of her patient. Our silence about sigfluence wounds many.

Jimmy Carter correctly and unpopularity diagnosed America as in a malaise. This malaise is related to our unsatisfied sigfluence needs. We all are part of the problem and all suffer.

Jean countered my observation. Jean went on to say, "Planned influence doesn't work. If you force it, it won't happen." Jean commented that sigfluence was not a basic need. However, this contradicted her earlier comment that "Influence is what I am here to do."

Jean is one of the most brilliant students I have ever taught. I am puzzled by her contradiction. I believe Jean had been brainwashed by her extensive academic readings, which marginalize sigfluence.

Elaine commented that she achieved more sigfluence with her elderly patients. "I give them comfort for a day. In teaching (she is a professor) students have their own life. Maybe I don't need to be influential; I just need to make somebody comfortable."

Jean immediately responded, "You'll get feedback from students. It takes longer."

By the time we became seasoned professionals like twenty plus year veteran professors or nurses, our sigfluence myths become beliefs. Both Johns believed that sigfluence was a fundamental (and nearly consuming) human need. Jean vehemently disagreed, but appeared to contradict herself. Sigfluence may simply be a natural expression of our humanity.

Elaine raised the question of different influence categories, such as comfort. Perhaps entertainers believe that they are comforters as Elaine was. Of course, these sessions were simply a modest step toward raising our sensitivity to personal influence. And if psychology continues to disregard sigfluence, we will have to compensate for its "generous improvidence."

Godel and the Limits of Logic

Kurt Godel proved that arithmetic (yes, elementary school operations with numbers) could never be complete (finished in an axiomatic sense). His insight was profound and its influence on other areas of knowledge are not yet fully understood.

If we cannot formalize and complete arithmetic, then it is obviously impossible to formalize and complete psychology. Mathematics is much more intellectually rigorous than psychology, which is based on perception, social norms and the inherent ambiguity of language. We operate in uncertainty with a shaky foundation in psychology. Yet many great leaders in psychology develop theories that they wish accepted as undeniable truth. Perhaps Freud exemplifies this abuse of intellectual power. Yet each theorist biases our perception of human nature to conform with theirs. And if we attempt to evaluate the validity of their theories, it is within their framework with tests related to their ideas.

Heisenberg (in physics) showed us that the measuring instrument confounds precise measurement. Similarly, our knowledge of human nature is often confounded, not enlightened, by the theorist.

Viktor Frankl is one of the few psychologists who (in *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*) admits that he is biased toward the position that we all share a fundamental need to achieving meaning in life. Similarly, my theories are biased to the degree that I believe that sigfluence is a fundamental motivation of everyone. But to be fair, this insight evolved over two decades of study and research. Sigfluence provides a consistent and helpful vehicle to diagnose and address our pervasive malaise, escalating substance abuse, divorce, and ever present difficulties in relating to ourselves and others.

Memes and Psychology

Memes are a type of mind control. If psychology considers “helping others” as an interest, counselors, therapists, teachers, and countless others learn this as truth. No “helping professional” would promote helping as a universal need. Their training in psychology conditions them to treat helping in the same category as fly fishing.

The tragedy is that these memes matter. There is a huge waste of human potential if a fundamental need is labeled as a hobby. Our mass malaise may be related to our ignoring sigfluence needs. We are enslaved by pageantry, not sigfluence. But pageantry, in the form of financial or professional status, does not satisfy the herald. A LIFETIME OF PAGEANTRY DOES NOT SATISFY THE HERALD. This sentence, a glimpse of what Carl Jung defined as archetypes, revealed itself to me years ago. The sentence came to me in the twilight between sleep and awakening. It inspired me to write a book of the same title that will shortly be available. But for now let us give real-world examples of how fame can be squandered or utilized to enhance one’s Potential for Sigfluence.

Let us start with the late Bobby Fischer, a widely regarded genius, who squandered his Potential to Effect Sigfluence. Bobby Fischer beat Boris Spassky for the Chess World Championship several decades ago. Many remember Fischer complaining about the noise in the auditorium. Then Fischer complained about the camera’s movement when the match was moved to a soundproof booth. But the last straw in Spassky’s defeat was when Bobby Fischer moved his knight to rook 4, an amateur move that Spassky was totally unprepared for. This new, unexpected chunk discombobulated Spassky and ensured victory for Fischer.

Bobby Fischer was not an exemplar for sigfluence. After he defeated Boris Spassky to become World Chess Champion in the 1970s, he could have become a role model to promote chess across the world. Instead he displayed little concern for translating his fame into sigfluence. Perhaps his personal nadir was in 1992, when he violated American law to play a rematch in Yugoslavia with Boris Spassky. After the September 11th attacks, Fischer hit rock bottom when he said, “This is all wonderful news....what comes around, goes around.”⁸⁶

In contrast, former chess champion Garry Kasparov is an exemplar for sigfluence. Mr. Kasparov translated his great status in Russia into becoming one of the most vocal critics of Vladimir Putin’s regime. Kasparov has been imprisoned and has sacrificed a life of material comfort to

stand up for a more democratic Russia.⁸⁷ The August 2008 invasion of Georgia by Russian troops is vivid evidence of the stakes in attacking Vladimir Putin. Some courageous individuals, like Kasparov and Frankl, make great personal sacrifices in living lives in accord with their Potential for Sigfluence.

Sigfluence is an unexpected chunk. It enrages, confuses, discombobulates, and challenges. It causes great inconvenience. It is a key to finding meaning in life but has not yet been dignified by a universally accepted chunk or meme. A meme like sigfluence could transform. Our net worth would not be our financial assets. Our net worth would become our ACTUAL SIGFLUENCE. Our level of enlightenment would be related to our awareness of NEED FOR SIGFLUENCE. Our meaning in life would be defined in terms of our ACTUAL SIGFLUENCE, and our social responsibility defined in terms of how close our ACTUAL SIGFLUENCE is to our POTENTIAL FOR SIGFLUENCE. Status could be defined as the ACTUAL SIGFLUENCE we achieve toward others. These are all memes for the Sigfluence Generation to advance.

Sigfluence Generation is a meme. Sigfluence as an essential ingredient of a fulfilled life is a meme. We have to compensate for the universities' reluctance, unwillingness, or inertia in studying sigfluence. The Sigfluence Generation has to rewrite the psychology texts to elevate sigfluence study to the pedestal of 20th century intelligence testing. The Sigfluence Generation needs our help. The Potential for Sigfluence and Need for Sigfluence are great. Are we ready, willing and able to help and guide them?

CHAPTER SIX

PROMISE, PERIL AND OPTIMISM

Our young people have high potential and Need for Sigfluence.
We “elders” may advance or neglect a golden opportunity.

Men

Herman Hesse wrote poetically about the lack of intimacy of twentieth century life:

“Sit in a railroad car and observe two young gentlemen who speak to each other because chance has thrown them together for an hour. This conversation is extremely odd; it is almost tragic. These inoffensive folk seem to be hailing each other from enormous, icy distances of alienation, as though poles apart.”⁸⁸

Hesse brilliantly captures the alienation of the twentieth century. The twenty-first century could break down these icy poles of alienation. Our young people may be on the verge of launching a sigfluence era.

Hesse’s poetic description of two men hailing each other across icy poles of alienation captures the difficulty men have in relating to others and to themselves. Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* drew as much praise in China as in New York. Willy Lowman represents our lost connections as males. He stands for twentieth century fathers. The Sigfluence Generation has to remedy that.

Our sample of 542 college students showed remarkable gender differences. Women reported significantly higher need and potential to effect sigfluence than men. If my study reflects a national trend, women have a considerable advantage in leading fulfilling lives, since sigfluence is a key to achieving meaning in life. It will not be easy for young men to shed the archetype of Willy Lowman.

Men today have difficulty with maintaining friendships. At several Jungian seminars that I attended on men’s issues, the men admitted that they had few, sometimes no, male friends. To many of the elder men in attendance, male friendship was difficult if not impossible. They viewed men as competitors, not potential friends. *There Will Be Blood*, a recent award winning movie, exemplified the sad state of non-friendship among alpha males. Perhaps women outlive men partly because they connect more naturally with others. Sigfluence is about connection. Women can mentor men in this neglected dimension of the male psyche.

Bob Seidenstein wrote about reuniting with his best friend from high school. For inexplicable reasons they had drifted apart. After a twenty-five year gap, Bob picked up the phone and had lunch with his old friend. They had a great time. And then twenty years later they met again passing each other on the street like ships in the night. Bob told his friend, “We’ll say goodbye, wander off and maybe see each other again at the other’s calling hours.”⁸⁹

“Connections” was the title of Bob’s column. Connection is the key for men to live more fulfilled lives. Money, status, and power do not satisfy our need to achieve sigfluence. In one of my studies, there was no relation between the status of one’s job and the sigfluence one believes one has effected toward others – Actual Sigfluence.

In Viktor Frankl’s later work, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, Dr. Frankl counsels us that our addictions to alcohol, marathon running, drugs, and so many more diversions stem from our failure to achieve meaning in our lives. Sigfluence is the key to achieving meaning in life. The traditional measure of male success in money and status are consolation prizes for sacrificing one’s interior life. Women have overcome many of the biases that limited their entrance to high status jobs. However, in improving their job prospects, they face the problems their alpha male counterparts have denied. A physician, who worked exclusively with the terminally ill, confided that his patients rarely feared the physical pain of their final weeks or days. They feared that they had not lived up to their influence potential. Willy Lowman represents the twentieth century alienated male. The Sigfluence Generation can and must do better.

Language

Several years ago my former college president, Dr. Joseph Hankin (SUNY-Westchester Community College), wisely suggested that I try to get sigfluence into Webster’s and the Oxford Dictionaries. I thanked him for his support and excellent suggestion. But I did little to follow through. In reflecting, I feared the possible (if not likely) rejection of my new word. My linguist colleague had been so upset by my coining a new word that he walked out of my lecture at Harvard’s International Conference on Thinking.

I could rationalize and quip “how much rejection can one man take?” but the truth is that for better or worse, I am a part of the problem. Perhaps my twenty-five years of sigfluence research were indulgent. I might have been more influential by traveling to Africa to help with disease interventions or (closer to my specialty) devised improved remedial approaches for teaching mathematics to economically disadvantaged students. I actually did this but could have gone much further.

But my homework after I complete this book is to petition Webster’s to get sigfluence into the dictionary. If we lack the language, we miss the concept – time and time again.

After we get sigfluence into the dictionary, we have to spread a sigfluence meme. Memes are thought contagions. Sigfluence is a positive contagion that has currency in politics, work, education, the university (especially in psychology), and in our personal lives.

The Sigfluence Generation inherits a language that separates people into winners and losers. The SAT or ACT test becomes a barrier to Ivy League admission for economically disadvantaged students. Of course, the staggering cost of college has historically prevented a great number of poor students from considering the elite colleges and universities. Harvard and the Ivy League recently have become very generous in granting free tuition, room, and board for accepted students, who are economically disadvantaged. This is a commendable start in leveling a playing field for college entrance that has historically favored the wealthy.

The professions rely upon colleges to create hierarchies of winners and losers in the competition for preferred jobs. Increasingly specialized esoteric language in professions perpetuates an elite fraternity. The Johnson O'Connor Foundation researched vocabulary for several decades. They discovered that the most reliable predictor of one's level at work was the size of his/her vocabulary. Do we use language and college training for competent practice, obfuscation, the creation of fiefdoms of professional privilege, or a little of all of the above?

And if you can't beat them, join them. Members of the Sigfluence Generation have to build their vocabulary in order to gain positions of influence. I did. Johnson O'Connor told me that my vocabulary was slightly below average based on their sample of high achievers. I decided to improve my vocabulary and read the New York Times diligently, wrote down each word I did not fully understand (with multiple definitions and pronunciation) and added several thousand words to my vocabulary over three years. Yes, vocabulary building, societal changes, and sigfluence are long-term initiatives. My vocabulary building paid off. This is my eighth book on sigfluence. Google sigfluence and you glimpse the twenty-five year harvest of my improved word power. I would gladly trade all these publications, that to date have not been widely read, for the meme of sigfluence to spread through our political, personal, and educational landscape. This is the charge of the Sigfluence Generation.

After the Sigfluence Generation innovates the meme sigfluence, the next step is to develop myriad synonyms. If new initiatives do not achieve the sigfluence they were supposed to, they were not sigfluential. They only appeared to be sigfluential. Sometimes sigfluence results from serendipity or chance. In ninth grade I did not believe I was good in math. Miss O'Conner and Mr. Rotando, my ninth grade algebra teachers, gave me the confidence to go on to earn a bachelors degree in mathematics, a masters degree in mathematics, and the first and last joint doctorate in mathematics, statistics and educational and psychological measurement awarded by Columbia University Teachers College. This book is the direct result of their caring and sigfluence. Only chance put me in their class – serendipitous sigfluence.

Sometimes sigfluence follows great suffering. Mothers Against Drunk Driving is a sigfluential organization, born from the agony of losing one's child to drunken driving. Viktor Frankl's great legacy is founded in his ordeal in a Nazi concentration camp. We need a new word for sigfluence that emerges from such tragedy.

Sometimes, we praise innovations that appear to help people in the short-term. I received more than my share of kudos for my Responsibility Training program that appeared to help hundreds of economically disadvantaged students return to their appropriate grade. Sadly, the vast majority did not go on to earn a high school diploma. We choose to withdraw sigfluence when employment is near. As a result, the prison industry is booming. We need a new word to describe the fading of short-term gains and the lost sigfluence.

I have created three words related to sigfluence – Actual, Potential, and Need. As I write these words, I am animated by my potential to make a difference that is if this book is read and followed. I need sigfluence, partly due to my own early environment, where my parents did not understand education. My mother had a secretarial diploma; my father had only an elementary school education. They simply did not know how to guide a child towards college.

Carl Jung quipped that the wound becomes a womb. My silent terror about a bleak future without the serendipity of my ninth grade algebra teachers motivated me to develop Responsibility Training. We need a word to describe the animating power of neglect and tragedy. Most focus on the trauma.

I was startled that Potential for Sigfluence was the strongest factor connected with living a satisfying life. In twenty-twenty hindsight we are animated by our Potential for Sigfluence. The glow is fleeting from our magic moments of sigfluence. We need to move to new vistas with fresh opportunities for sigfluence to maintain our animation. There is no word in the English language to describe the vitality we feel when we are engaging in potentially sigfluent activities.

America has not been a reflective, patient, long-term focused nation. Our vocabulary reflects this shortcoming. Too many Americans are mired in poverty. Too many have inadequate or no healthcare. Several years ago at a Harvard conference, I informally debated Governor Dukakis as to why America was the only industrialized nation without universal health care. I explained that Americans want to believe they are a good people, and politicians feed their denial of our collective responsibility to care for the poor and economically disadvantaged. Further, any politician who tries to shatter our denial of the suffering and premature deaths, resulting from our inadequate healthcare system, will not get elected. Governor Dukakis went on to the next panelist without responding. Our Sigfluence Generation has to shatter American denial of a collective responsibility for one another's welfare. We need to enhance connections. The Sigfluence Generation has to transform our "ultra-individualized existences" in pursuit of a more caring nation.

Psychology has to adjust to the meme of sigfluence. The anonymous referee, who thought that "sigfluence is a need – syndrome," may someday regret his/her frankness. Usually professors ignore and marginalize new ideas that require them to rethink their academic training. Again, it requires the death of a generation of college professors before the acceptance of a new idea. The Sigfluence Generation is young. By the time they reach middle age, sigfluence could be studied at elite universities like Harvard and Yale.

Sigfluence has to be recognized for its motivational power. Homes for the elderly could be transformed if we created avenues for the capable elderly to counsel or tutor the young. The elderly could be interviewed to confirm or reject my theory of sigfluence. We underutilize our brains. We underutilize our Potential for Sigfluence, particularly the sigfluence of the elderly.

Our rate of incarcerating people is a national disgrace. Many nations, whose policies we criticize, such as Russia and China, imprison a lower proportion than the United States. Morale in prison would improve (for both prisoners and guards) if the Sigfluence Generation could find ways for inmates to fulfill their Potential for Sigfluence during and after prison. We are wasting extraordinary levels of sigfluence potential by perpetuating the status quo.

Work

The Sigfluence Generation has the potential to transform the workplace. We have to maintain high professional standards. Unfortunately, we do not know what standards to uphold for most professions. Plumbers serve as apprentice plumbers. Chefs attend culinary school. Lawyers call themselves practicing attorneys. After all, their law school experience taught them little. They practice their profession at our expense. Students at Stanford Law School frequently complained that they were not learning how to practice law.⁹⁰ It appears that professional school today does not train. It rewards the elite with dubious training and bogus degrees.

The Wards Cove decision makes it nearly impossible to redress job discrimination. We need a new spirit of fairness in matching potential employee with job, based upon true, not imagined, job requisites. We are denying capable young people an opportunity to enter or change professions, due to the length and expense of acquiring credentials. Alternative routes to entering certain jobs would increase opportunity without lowering standards. The “elders” would also benefit from more flexible and realistic job prerequisites.

Our society pays for our maze of professional credentialing with a malaise. Yes, Jimmy Carter was right. But like an old shoe, we accustom ourselves to the fit. Perhaps we are inured by the present system. But the Sigfluence Generation is hopeful and energized. They want our system to work better and serve more people.

The single best way to motivate our future workers is by harnessing sigfluence. If workers are shown their influence in a positive end product, sigfluence will energize their work. Sigfluence is to the human spirit what exercise is to the physical body. The Sigfluence Generation has confidence that they can make a difference. We have to show them how to make a difference and when they have made a difference. It is time to break down the often insurmountable barriers of professional societies that keep us from recharging our batteries by more flexible movement between jobs. We would all be better off if more compact training enabled us to move to jobs with more Potential for Sigfluence.

Our Baby Boomer Generation was greedy. Our net worth became our personal worth. The new generation can redirect status and image toward a norm of sigfluence. We speak more openly about sex than our lasting positive influence. This has to change. We, the elders, have to be candid about our sigfluence legacy, or the lack of such. If we believe that we have not had the sigfluence we had the potential to achieve, we should admit this to the Sigfluence Generation. Otherwise they will drift into our comfortable malaise.

There are signs that we are moving toward sigfluence in the workplace. The late Sir John Templeton donated millions of dollars to spiritual research. Bill and Melinda Gates are philanthropic leaders, donating billions to worthy causes. Young Microsoft millionaires are turning their brilliant technological minds toward helping. The Microsoft millionaires are not going to give away money without a sigfluence return. We have to get smart about philanthropy. “It is easier to make a million than give a million dollars away effectively,” stated a fellow church member, who was a noted fund raiser. He detailed horror stories of how successful fund raising weakened churches and organizations. Individuals felt no need to continue to contribute, and the organization fell apart. Effective helping is both an art and a science.

Sigfluence is not a liberal issue or a conservative issue. Bill Clinton corrected the abuses of welfare in a conservative yet effective manner. Few would call President Clinton conservative.

President Obama won a decisive victory, largely as a result of the thirty-four percent advantage he enjoyed from 18-25 year olds – the Sigfluence Generation. He has a mandate for change that is virtually unprecedented with support from young people, that is the highest ever recorded by polling statistics. Have we evolved sufficiently to embrace sigfluence as a political, economic, educational, and societal focus? This is a spiritual matter.

Spirituality

Several years ago, I organized the National Science Foundation Seminar at the International Conference on Mathematical Modeling (University of California-Berkeley). I invited a prestigious interdisciplinary panel, that included Ben Fusaro (Founder of the International Contest on Mathematical Modeling), Courtney Coleman (Differential Equations award winning author), and Richard Paul (Founder of the International Institute of Critical Thinking). I presented an interdisciplinary lecture on Sigfluence. After my talk a professor whispered to me, “You are wasting your timewith these people (researchers).” He invited me to deliver a two hour seminar on sigfluence at another conference, where sigfluence would be better received. (I followed his advice, and he was correct.)

A few minutes after our panel concluded, presenters and audience members gathered at the Chancellor’s wine and cheese reception. A tall, fox-like, impeccably groomed professor appeared to be stalking me near the wine bar. He slowly approached and said, “Nice weather in San Francisco.” I agreed. He continued, “This sigfluence. I don’t agree with anything you said. Did God come down and grant you a special visitation?”

I responded, “Do you teach?”

He replied, “Yes, I am a FULL PROFESSOR AT UNIVERSITY OF PARIS.”

I asked, “Are you a clear teacher or a sloppy teacher?”

He replied, “Very clear!”

I asked, “Why?” He vanished into thin air. Perhaps I was wasting my time with those people – mathematicians. I believe that he was clear, so that he could be a sigfluent teacher.

The Sigfluence Generation thirst for a spiritual direction in their lives. I use the word spiritual in accord with definitions one and seven from the *American Heritage Dictionary* (3rd edition):

1. The animating force within living beings.
7. Vivacity, vigor, or courage.

Animate comes from the Indo-European root *ane*, which means “to breathe.”⁹⁰ Sigfluence animates. We become alive when making a positive difference in another’s life. Sigfluence breathes life into us.

James Hollis explained that the *anima* represents a man’s relationship to himself and capacity for relationship with others. Hollis, a disciple of Carl Jung, quoted Jung in the following:

People are engaged in meaningful relationships “when (they) feel that they are living the symbolic life, that they are actors in the divine drama.”⁹¹

Sigfluence breathes vitality into us. We are part of the divine drama. Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity feature love of God and love of neighbor. Sigfluence is foundational to all religious and spiritual persuasions.

Sigfluence leads to animation. Ram Das was animated by founding clinics to eliminate blindness in Indian villages. Viktor Frankl survived a Nazi concentration camp, animated by his potential to achieve sigfluence through his masterpiece *Man’s Search for Meaning*. Men need to become more connected, more focused on finding sigfluent activities. They do not have to become effeminate. Bill Gates and Warren Buffett are leading the way. They are innovating philanthropic programs with sigfluence as their mission. Warren Buffett has shunned the creation of “dynastic wealth” as he has quipped. He is trusting his friend Bill Gates to invest their billions wisely in optimizing sigfluence. At the same time, we are in the most preliminary juncture of studying sigfluence. We do not even have a word, until sigfluence is accepted in the Oxford and Webster’s Dictionaries, for the desired outcome of philanthropy.

My colleague from the University of Paris has had years to reflect on why his teaching is clear. Ten years later he may now be ready for a spiritual partnership with his students. Our college students are looking for sigfluence. Significant, long-term, positive influence animates and is the key to help our college students fulfill their spiritual potential. They admitted in a focus group a need for education (from their professors) on how to effectively help others. It will be a tragedy if college squanders this opportunity. Helping is hard work; the viewing of Bunuel’s classic film *Viridiana* should be included in our students’ education on helping others. Sister Viridiana wanted to do good, serve Christ, and made heroic but premature efforts to help the downtrodden in a local village. Unfortunately, neither she nor they were ready for helping. She should have more adequately developed herself, before she tried to reform others.

Sigfluence is an interdisciplinary concept. I have spent twenty-five years studying sigfluence from the perspectives of psychology, education, linguistics, statistics, and mathematical modeling. It has been much easier for me to get entire books published by university and commercial publishers than to get an article published in a leading journal. And the leading journals determine what is appropriate for scholarly study. In a generation, our current college students and recent graduates will become the editors and contributors to the major scholarly journals and university presses. In a generation the time will be right for college to accept a new idea. The specific concept we need to adopt is:

Sigfluence is a fundamental motivation of everyone and a key to living a fulfilled life. Potential for Sigfluence is one of our most important dimensions and harnesses our vitality and energy. (Loase, 2009)

The academic world is uncomfortable dealing with sigfluence or issues of values and human relationships. The Unabomber was an esteemed member of the mathematics faculty at University of California – Berkeley. His cutting edge research in his specialty of complex variables (very complex, indeed) ensured that he had a job for life. Despite his inability to relate to students or fellow faculty, he could have remained a professor forever. He quit and retired to his squalid cabin to launch a psychotic rage against modernism.

Colleges may not want to look very closely at sigfluence. The College Board reported several years ago in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that only forty percent of elite undergraduates (upper fifth of their high school class) graduate within five years. The graduation rate of economically disadvantaged college students is so low that we have trouble facing the grim reality of how badly colleges serve the poor.

Things are as bad in secondary education. According to recent studies, 1.2 million American students drop out without a high school diploma – a thirty percent dropout rate.

As a statistical consultant, I have found that economically disadvantaged students do even worse. School systems comply with No Child Left Behind by creating phantom programs with phantom teachers for phantom students who never attend. Fortunately, we now have a new and true way of measuring graduation rates. On-time graduation rates mean the percentage of students who enter high school and graduated (on-time) four years later. As no surprise, graduation rates fell dramatically when school systems were forced to reveal the “true rate.” Our young people have to develop measures of substance – not appearance. Our evaluations should shift focus from looking good to doing good.

We are turning away from the proper exercise of our intellect, which can be thought to be a spiritual dimension. One of my Yale friends commented about the three Hs being the only acceptable topics for discussion at parties – house, horses, and hounds (for the fox hunt). Sigfluence has never been more relevant to our culture that builds larger McMansions to sequester us from our societal problems and the embarrassing divide between rich and poor.

My Canadian friend, McGill Vice President Dr. Eigil Pedersen, believes we Americans are barbarians for allowing millions to die prematurely due to no health coverage. Free breakfast and lunch were the nutrition of the vast majority of students from the economically disadvantaged junior high school where I started my career. Sadly, we were supposed to teach them the abstract New Math. But that was quixotic; most students lacked facility with the times table in eighth grade. By the end of my first year, I questioned whether our role was to educate the poor or simply certify that they were uneducable.

Our economically disadvantaged share inadequate healthcare, inadequately trained teachers, inadequate food, and languish. We are a better nation. Our potential for societal transformation is palpable. However, it is entirely possible that we are not ready.

I think that we have the unique perspective of knowing that our actions effect eternity. This insight scares us to death, and until death we neglect, deny, and fear our sigfluence legacy. We do not want to face the unsettling realization than that we have not lived up to our potential for sigfluencing others. It is an open question as to whether we will overcome our inertia and denial to embrace a Sigfluence Generation. Biological and moral evolution are glacially slow processes.

Promise and Peril

Steven Pinker asks us to choose the most admirable among Mother Teresa, Bill Gates, or Norman Borlaug. For most of us the response is easy – Mother Teresa, beatified by the Vatican, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and voted in an American poll as the most admired person of the twentieth century. From a sigfluence perspective, Norman Borlaug, father of the “Green Revolution” that reduced world hunger, has been credited with saving a billion lives, the most in history. Yet few know his name.⁹² We are at a very preliminary stage of sigfluence consciousness.

There are hopeful signs. An entire issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education was devoted to spirituality and college. Courses and seminars on spirituality are packed. Our college students currently thirst for the academic world to help them wrestle with the big questions, issues of meaning and how to live a fulfilled life. They are not simply preparing for a career but establishing the foundation for a vocation.

The promise is that the Sigfluence Generation establishes sigfluence as a meme that drives politics, education, academic psychology, the world of work, and their personal lives. The peril is that they drift into our comfortable malaise, or worse, exploit sigfluence for impulsive or dangerous directions.

Listen to the words of our students from our sigfluence focus group:

“I feel more positive energy exists today.”

“Generation Y has more desire for a positive influence, but they don’t participate fully.... a lack of education is holding them back.”

“We want to redirect our energy of the self to help others. Maybe we could try and change.”

“There is lots of good in people. In adverse situations, you see the best come out.”

“(I) would like more education on how to help others.”

“I agree the 90s were greedy. But since 9/11, it’s not about ourselves, but everyone else in the country. Yes, this is a (sigfluence) Positive Influence Generation.”

These students express the promise of Generation Y.

The support for a Sigfluence (spiritual) Generation was not unanimous. Consider these student opinions from the same focus group:

“More people (from Generation Y) are selfish. A lot of students are like the greedy 90s.”

“Success is focused on US. If we could get away from this, maybe we could change more.”

“The need (for sigfluence) is there, but laziness and a lack of education is holding us back.”

This last quote speaks to the elders, who have to lead the way for Generation Y to make the world a better place. The focus group, composed of ten members of the Sigfluence Generation, repeatedly voiced a lack of understanding on how best to proceed. We should admit that we do not have a clue as to paths of optimum societal influence or even an adequate vocabulary to begin study. Our young people might rejoice if we (for once) admitted ignorance. We might join them in trying to better understand our influence legacy. We may have avoided or feared this topic for decades, since it is at the boundary of spirituality, religion, and academe. Sigfluence animates, and our society needs animation.

No Child Left Behind was intended to increase the high school graduation rate and to overcome the tragic consequences of dropping out of high school - the increased likelihood of serving prison time and decreased chances of leading a fulfilling life. Seven years after President Bush's major initiative was launched, the United States is languishing in nineteenth place in terms of our high school graduation rate. We are slightly ahead of Mexico in terms of high school graduation rate.⁹³ Sadly, we have one of the highest incarceration rates in the world. The Sigfluence Generation has a lot of work to do in order to lower our incarceration rate and increase our high school and college completion rate.

Our economically disadvantaged students need programs of continuous concern in order to gain the education necessary for a meaningful life. This requires continuous programs that support them throughout high school and college. We rationalize, as did one of the chief administrators who quipped about my Responsibility Training program, “You can't spoon-feeding them all their lives.” I would prefer spoon feeding to building more prisons. We live in perpetual and deep denial in terms of our roles in perpetuating power, privilege, and poverty in the U.S. The Sigfluence Generation has to overcome our inertia, denial, and inadequate strategies to overcome the consequences of economic disadvantage.

We need the Sigfluence Generation to launch programs of continuous concern to increase the rate of secondary and college graduation for the economically disadvantaged. The United States Department of Education in 2005 described mathematics in college as an “insurmountable

barrier” to college graduation. I call the esoteric topics of mathematics that I love as a mathematician, covertly biased against the poor. Thousands of economically disadvantaged students find college graduation nearly impossible because they are not facile with the quadratic formula and algebraic fractions. The fact that everyone has to surmount the same absurd obstacles does not make college credentialing fair. The affluent benefit from superbly credentialed master teachers. They hire master tutors in order to gain the Ivy League advantage. It is time for us to break down our walls of denial and examine how our seemingly fair credentialing system may be covertly biased against the poor. Perhaps the Sigfluence Generation can redefine the skills necessary to perform a job satisfactorily and revolutionize our credentials driven society. We rely on appearance and credentials in distributing the preferred jobs in our society. Many pay with a comfortable malaise in knowing that our extensive credentials have little to do with successful professional practice.

Our Sigfluence Generation has to transform education, credentials, and the workplace. Christopher Jencks wrote eloquently about the covert bias of our system and our reluctance to validate professional credentials over thirty years ago.⁹⁴ Sadly little has changed in over thirty years. The present Supreme Court, dominantly conservative, is even less likely to pursue the removal of covert bias in hiring. The Sigfluence Generation has to transform society one person at a time.

Our future lies somewhere between Ingmar Bergman’s apocalyptic vision and the optimism of the Sigfluence Generation. Since we can prove neither, it makes sense to empower and educate the Sigfluence Generation, so that we usher in an era with sigfluence as the cornerstone.

No Child Left Behind is a poster child for good intention subverted by vested interests. As a statistical consultant, I am keenly aware of the tricks of the evaluators’ trade. The key ruse was to assign phantom students to phantom programs with phantom teachers. Nobody dropped out. Of course, these students never attended. Our school systems have been forced to redefine success in the simplified percentage of students who earn a high school diploma within four years of study. Naturally the graduation rate in most school systems plummeted when they were forced to tell the truth. The Sigfluence Generation has to foster partnerships to effect good, not look good.

Optimism

We can make a difference. There are many positive signs that an era of sigfluence is unfolding. Volunteering is up dramatically, both among college students and baby boomers. Between 2002 and 2005 the number of college students volunteering rose more than twenty percent. The chairman of the Corporation for National and Community Service, Steven Goldsmith, commented:

“We have observed a historically significant surge in service interest by college students, probably the most remarkable increase since the ‘Greatest Generation’ of World War II.”⁹⁵

Our baby boomers are also showing an inspiring involvement in volunteering. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 25.8 million boomers volunteered in 2006, the highest rate of volunteering of any age group.

David Eisner, CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service, called America's baby boomers "the largest, healthiest, best educated generation in history – and they can leave an incredible legacy through service to others."⁹⁶

It is hoped that we are in the midst of a paradigm shift from the Me Generation to a Thee Generation from a generation focused upon material gain to a Sigfluence Generation. Unfortunately, desire and good intentions are not sufficient to sigfluence. We need a technology of sigfluence to optimize our effects in volunteering and our workplaces.

We might look to exemplary people in order to better understand how to put our talents to good use in effecting sigfluence. Perhaps you have a talent for writing. Consider Jennifer Donnelly as an exemplar for the Sigfluence Generation. She is a young writer, slightly out of the age range of today's college students. She wrote the acclaimed novel, *A Northern Light*, which juxtaposes the upstate murder that inspired Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* with an Adirondack girl's journey out of the woods to Columbia University. Ms. Donnelly has won the Carnegie Medal and Los Angeles Times Book Prize for her fine work.

She revealed the motivation to write the story in the following statement:

"When I read these letters (Grace Brown, who was murdered by her boyfriend)... I was deeply upset – grief stricken, actually – that such a kind, funny, perceptive, decent girl had been trapped by her circumstances. ...Mattie was born, in part, because I wanted to change the past. I wanted Grace's death to have meaning."⁹⁷

Ms. Donnelly was motivated by sigfluence. She wants Grace Brown to be sigfluential.

These wordsmiths surmount obstacles that few of us could overcome. Many are driven by a fierce desire to fulfill their Potential for Sigfluence. The status and money that result from an acclaimed novel were not sufficient motivation for Jennifer Donnelly to write *A Northern Light*. Sigfluence is a better motivator than fame or finance.

Perhaps one of the factors hindering the study of sigfluence is that sigfluence can emerge from good or evil. Mother Teresa's sigfluence emerged from her remarkable service of Christ. Viktor Frankl's heroic work was an outgrowth of Hitler's evil. We need the Sigfluence Generation to help us better understand who will be crushed by adversity and protect them, if we can.

I have vacationed for the past thirty plus years in the Adirondacks, where I write books like this in between hiking, kayaking, and cycling. We have to preserve the beauty of the mountains, waterways, and forests for future generations. Our environmental issues are a classic case of long-term (preservation of wilderness and species) versus short-term (financial profit). As I write this, I reflect on the acid rain that has wiped out much of the trout fishing in the

Adirondacks and the mill foil that is destroying the previously pristine lake surrounding my cabin. I wonder what my children's experience of the wilderness will be in a generation. I wonder if the Sigfluence Generation can save us from ourselves.

Al Gore's documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* warns us of the exigencies that we are creating with the world's climate. Mr. Gore details the promise and peril for the Sigfluence Generation of our environmental crises – global warming, CO2 emissions, and disregard for international cooperation.

Mr. Gore calls upon us all:

“..in (President) Reagan's phrase, to unite in recognition of our common good.”⁹⁸

Our Sigfluence Generation has internalized Al Gore's message. They understand that our air, oceans, and land are linked to quality of life and legacy for future generations.

Perhaps Al Gore invoking Republican President Ronald Reagan's message symbolizes that our environment is neither a Republican, conservative, Democratic, or liberal issue. It is a universal mission and a top priority for the Sigfluence Generation, who will focus on long-term issues, such as the environment.

Our young people are special. Tom Friedman called Generation Y “The Quiet Americans.” Naomi Schaefer Riley, author of *God on the Quad*, interviewed college students at Bob Jones University, Yeshiva, and Brigham Young University. She was impressed by their spirituality and desire to spread their religious beliefs. Ms. Riley called Generation Y “The Missionary Generation.”

Both Mr. Friedman and Ms. Riley are right, based on their experiences. But Generation Y cannot be captured with the designation missionary. Perhaps at Bob Jones, Brigham Young and Yeshiva, Ms. Riley experienced members of the Sigfluence Generation, who were pure and intense in their religious beliefs. Mr. Friedman raised a daughter who was likely profoundly influenced by his remarkable work in international journalism. Her friends would share Mr. Friedman's values.

The common denominator of exemplary journalism and missionary activities is a desire to achieve sigfluence. We have to think more about how to optimize our sigfluence legacy. We need new language to describe concepts related to sigfluence. We have to recognize and thank our sigfluencers. Visit and thank your sigfluencers. Be prepared with handkerchiefs to cry during a gratitude visit. We are uncomfortable and unschooled in showing our appreciation.

Biological and moral evolution is painstakingly slow. We need a curious combination of reflection and impatience in order for our young people to become the Sigfluence Generation. It is my sincerest hope that my twenty-five years of writing about sigfluence provide some reflection.

Sigfluence is in the air. Thomas Friedman wrote about possible names for the “elders.” They include: “The Greediest Generation,” “The Complacent Generation,” and “The Subprime Generation.” Mr. Friedman called on President Obama to do more than espouse the right goals. He calls upon President Obama to match his noble goals with means that are equally bold, creative, and tough.⁹⁹

Mr. Friedman is right. We need a technology of helping. Sigfluence is hard work, and good intentions are not sufficient. President Obama has a virtually unprecedented mandate for change. As earlier noted, his majority of the vote among the Sigfluence Generation was the highest ever recorded. Our Sigfluence Generation has remarkably high Potential and Need to effect Sigfluence.

Our baby boomers must lead in providing wisdom to the young and candor in terms of our successes, failures, obstacles, and guidance. In turn we need the impatience, energy, idealism, and animation of our young people so that the Gen Y – Baby Boomer partnership ushers in a Sigfluence Generation.

APPENDIX A

The first section contains several questions related to the pattern of sigfluence that was effected toward you. The second part includes a refined sigfluence survey from which you can derive three scores: your Need for Sigfluence, Potential for Sigfluence, and Actual Sigfluence.

A preliminary sigfluence survey was published in my first book, *Sigfluence: Enduring Positive Influence*. Since then, I have refined the original survey as a result of a statistical analysis together with the advice of Dr. Philip Merrifield, a former professor on the faculty of New York University. Sincere thanks are extended for his considerable assistance in developing the refined survey which immediately follows these brief questions. My sixth book, *Theory and Measurement of Sigfluence* (University Press of America, 2002), details the statistical underpinnings and analyses connected with the Sigfluence Survey.

SIGFLUENCE SURVEY

PART I

1. Check: Male____, Female____
2. How old are you today? _____
3. How many brothers and sisters did you grow up with? _____
4. What order are you in with respect to your brothers and sisters? _____
5. Check your educational background. No high school diploma _____, High school diploma _____, Two years college _____, Bachelor's degree _____, Master's degree _____, Doctorate _____.
6. What is your present occupation? _____
7. Check your present annual salary. Below \$10,000 _____, \$10,000-19,999 _____, \$20,000-29,999 _____, \$30,000-39,999 _____, \$40,000-49,999 _____, \$50,000+ _____.
8. Check your father's educational background. (See #5) _____
9. What is/was your father's occupation? _____
10. Check your mother's educational background. (See #5) _____
11. What is/was your mother's occupation? _____
12. What was your family's economic status when you first entered high school?

Poverty _____, Lower middle class _____, Middle class _____, Upper middle class _____, Wealthy _____.

13. Who, outside of your family, had the most significant, long-term positive influence upon your life? (Can be left blank; if left blank, go to question #19).

14. What is/was the occupation of the influencer? _____

15. To what extent did the influencer impact your life? (Write a sentence or two)

16. Under what circumstance(s) did the influencer impact your life? (Write a sentence or two)

17. Why do you feel that this person's influence was significant upon your life? (Write a sentence or two)

18. How long was it after the close contact before you knew that it was significant?

19. a) In regard to your personal influence, write a sentence or two highlighting your major achievements.

- b) In regard to your personal influence, write a sentence or two highlighting your major disappointments.

PART II For each of the following sentences, circle the response that would be most

nearly true for you. The responses always extend from one extreme to its opposite. Please use the neutral rating as little as possible, since it means no judgment in either direction.

1. I usually have:

X X X X X X X X X X X

Negative impact on
the people I meet

Neutral

Positive impact on
the people I meet

2. Life is filled with a lot of possibilities for positive influence toward people.

X X X X X X X X X X X

Strongly agree

Neutral

Strongly disagree

3. My present or recent job has:

X X X X X X X X X X X

Little opportunity for
positive influence
towards people

Neutral

Has a lot of
opportunity for
positive influence
towards people

4. My friends would say, if asked, that I have a positive influence on their lives.

X X X X X X X X X X X

Strongly agree

Neutral

Strongly disagree

5. Having positive personal influence is important to me.

X X X X X X X X X X X

Strongly disagree

Neutral

Strongly agree

6. My life has been satisfying.
- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---------|---|---|---|----------------|---|---|
| | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Strongly disagree | | | | Neutral | | | | Strongly agree | | |
7. In my life I have:
- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|---|---|---|-------------|---|---|---|---------------|---|---|
| | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Helped a great many people | | | | Helped some | | | | Helped no one | | |
8. In my present or recent job I have achieved:
- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|---|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|---|-----------------------|---|---|
| | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Considerable positive influence | | | | Some positive influence | | | | No positive influence | | |
9. In my present or recent job I have achieved:
- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|---|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|---|---------------------------------|---|---|
| | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | No negative influence | | | | Some negative influence | | | | Considerable negative influence | | |
10. My children are:
- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|---|---|---|-----------------------|---|---|---|---------------------|---|---|
| | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | A source of considerable pain | | | | A source of some pain | | | | A source of no pain | | |
11. My children are:
- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---------------------------|---|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|
| | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | A source of considerable pleasure | | | | A source of some pleasure | | | | A source of no pleasure | | |

12. In terms of helping others, I am capable of:
- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|---|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|-----------------------|---|---|--|
| | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| | Considerable positive influence | | | | Some positive influence | | | No positive influence | | | |
13. In terms of helping others, I am capable of:
- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|---|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|-----------------------|---|---|--|
| | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| | Considerable negative influence | | | | Some negative influence | | | No negative influence | | | |
14. My intimate relationships have been characterized by:
- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|---|---|---|----------------------|---|---|--------------------|---|---|--|
| | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| | Considerable reciprocal harm | | | | Some reciprocal harm | | | No reciprocal harm | | | |
15. My intimate relationships have been characterized by:
- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|---|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|-----------------------|---|---|--|
| | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| | Considerable reciprocal benefit | | | | Some reciprocal benefit | | | No reciprocal benefit | | | |
16. I have been told frequently by people that I have helped them:
- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---------|---|---|----------------|---|---|--|
| | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| | Strongly disagree | | | | Neutral | | | Strongly agree | | | |
17. The people who come into contact with me feel that they benefit from our interaction.
- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|---|---|---|---------|---|---|-------------------|---|---|--|
| | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| | Strongly agree | | | | Neutral | | | Strongly disagree | | | |

SIGFLUENCE SURVEY REVISED SCORING KEY

(January 1992)

Please compute your scores for these three sigfluence related constructs. The scale ranges from 1 to 11. R indicates to reverse the score, i.e. (1=11), (2=10), (3=9), (4=8), (5=7), (6=6).

- A. Actual Sigfluence - To arrive at your total score, add your responses to items 4(R), 7(R), 8(R), 9(R), 10, 11(R), 14, 15(R), 16, 17(R).
- B. Potential for Sigfluence - To determine your score, add your responses to items 1, 2(R), 3, 12(R), 13 and 18.
- C. Awareness of Personal Need for Sigfluence - To compute this score, add your responses to items 5, 19(R), 20(R), 21, and 22(R).

If you have no children, use the neutral rating of 6 for items 10 and 11.

Now obtain your percentile score from the table of norms that immediately follows:

ACTUAL SIGFLUENCE NORMS

(n = 282)

| <u>Your Score</u> | <u>Cumulative Proportion</u> |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 33-39 | 0.004 |
| 40-46 | 0.011 |
| 47-53 | 0.021 |
| 54-60 | 0.057 |
| 61-67 | 0.191 |
| 68-74 | 0.323 |
| 75-81 | 0.482 |
| 82-88 | 0.660 |
| 89-95 | 0.833 |
| 96-102 | 0.929 |
| 103-109 | 0.972 |
| 110-116 | 0.996 |
| 117-123 | 1.000 |

To use this table locate your score on the left. Use the cumulative proportion on the right corresponding to your score. For example, if you scored 82 in Actual, the

cumulative proportion is 66%. Your percentile score is approximately 66 percentile, a little less since a score of 88 (the end point of the interval) corresponds to the 66th percentile. A score of 66 percentile means that 34% of the sample scored higher than you and 66% scored at your level or below.

POTENTIAL FOR SIGFLUENCE NORMS
(n = 282)

| <u>Your Score</u> | <u>Cumulative Proportion</u> |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 23-31 | 0.011 |
| 32-34 | 0.014 |
| 35-37 | 0.032 |
| 38-40 | 0.082 |
| 41-43 | 0.167 |
| 44-46 | 0.294 |
| 47-49 | 0.394 |
| 50-52 | 0.564 |
| 53-55 | 0.691 |
| 56-58 | 0.830 |
| 59-61 | 0.954 |
| 62-64 | 0.996 |
| 65-67 | 1.000 |

NEED FOR SIGFLUENCE NORMS
(n = 282)

| <u>Your Score</u> | <u>Cumulative Proportion</u> |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 10-13 | 0.004 |
| 14-17 | 0.014 |
| 18-21 | 0.021 |
| 22-25 | 0.039 |
| 26-29 | 0.117 |
| 30-33 | 0.277 |
| 34-37 | 0.475 |
| 38-41 | 0.663 |
| 42-45 | 0.805 |
| 46-49 | 0.926 |
| 50-52 | 0.986 |
| 53-57 | 1.000 |

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