

Volume 91 Issue 2

Journal of

Family and Consumer Sciences

From Research to Practice



The Official Publication of the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences

A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF THE FUNDAMENTAL FOUNDATION OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

BRIAN HARRIS

Founder and President, Paradigm Promotions



ABSTRACT

This article examines a new methodology for understanding the complexities of human nature. It is unlike most other models for explaining behavior that fall into two broad categories of interpretation: one, which assumes behavior is fundamentally biologically determined, that is, the result of genetic disposition or DNA structures, and the other, which points to experience and environmental and cultural factors as the key determinants. This new methodology identifies an additional underlying predisposition for all human behavior that is based on an active yet involuntary physical response. Research suggests that the body's response indicates a natural proficiency in one of nine arenas of perception. It further suggests that community, in its broadest sense, springs from the matrix formed by all nine innate capacities, allowing for the sustainability and development of life.

The whole personality of man is indescribable. His consciousness can be described. His unconscious cannot be described because the unconscious is always unconscious. It is really unconscious, and, so, we don't know our unconscious personality. We have hints, we have certain ideas, but we don't know it really. Nobody can say where man ends. That is the beauty of it, you know. It's very interesting. The unconscious of man can reach God knows where. There we are going to make discoveries.—Carl Jung

Barbara Tovey and Alan Sheets, researchers in San Francisco, California, have brought to light a system of unconscious strengths and imperatives that drive our personalities. They have found a way, using a simple exercise and a consistent structure of interpretation, to make these strengths and imperatives apparent to practitioners, observers, and the subjects themselves.

Tovey and Sheets have spent more than 5 years researching the basic and essential nature of over 2,000 people. They developed a neutral, noncompetitive, physical exercise that challenged an individual to "hold ground." Soon a consistent pattern of response emerged that cuts across cultural, ethnic, and gender lines. Their conclusion was that people access and interpret experience through one of a limited set of innate paradigms of understanding.

We live with the assumption that differences between people come from genetic-specific information or different life experiences. Tovey and Sheets have found another source of variability. They cataloged nine different essential human abilities that drive nine different imperatives. Each is so distinctly different from the others that the effect on the unfolding of our lives is as comprehensive and profound as cultural or genetic differences.

NATURAL PHYSICAL RESPONSES

There are two principal ways in which a person's body exhibits its strength and imperative: through alignment and through facial expression. Every person asked to be strong and hold his or her ground when being physically challenged in a noncompetitive exercise accomplished it by allowing his or her

body to assume an effective stance. One would assume that there would be a mechanically efficient stance that everyone assumes. This does not turn out to be the case.

There are nine distinct stances, some of which look mechanically inefficient. Only by assuming one of these positions, termed *postures of strength* by Tovey and Sheets, is it possible for anyone to hold their ground effectively. The challenge of holding ground draws forth in a person a reservoir of strength that is not muscular in nature. People doing the exercise may be physically weak yet, when they settle into their posture of strength, they are remarkably stable.

Every person participating in the exercise has naturally assumed one of the postures in the Postures of Strength diagram and taken on the specific facial expression that invariably accompanies each posture. Figures 1 to 9 show the unique expression associated with each of the nine strengths. The match between an individual's facial expression, posture, and worldview was completely consistent in each case. The nine strengths identified by Tovey and Sheets are based on objective observation of each body posture extrapolated to define psychological imperatives according to a consistent system.

THE FACE COMMUNICATES ONE'S EXPERIENCE OF THE WORLD

The face is highly communicative. It can reveal a person's

thoughts, desires, and feelings. Facial expression can also convey one's fundamental strength. Tovey and Sheets discovered that when a person is in his or her posture of strength, the person's face also reveals his or her fundamental imperative. For example, a person with the first strength makes himself or herself vulnerable. The person would lift the chin, expose the throat, and take you in with highly receptive eyes. This is a universally understood human expression; it is the expression that you see on the faces of two lovers looking into each other's eyes.

Although most people might see their lover in this way, people with the first strength use it to see the essence of everyone (see Figure 1). All of the facial expressions of strength are equally compelling.

THE NINE STRENGTHS AND IMPERATIVES

What follows is a summary of the general conclusions and a short description of each strength with a quote by one or two people with each ability.

The significance of the first strength, sensing people with a deep respect for their humanity, is powerfully illuminated in a speech by Martin Luther King, Jr. He said:

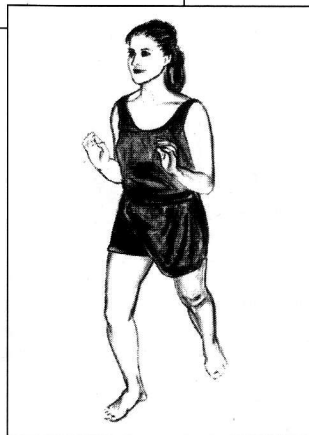
We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a moment

of destiny, and whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. The rich man can never be what he ought to be until the poor man is what he ought to be. John Donne ... years ago placed it in graphic terms: ... 'No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main;' ... and then he goes on toward the end to say,

Posture 1

Strength: essence

The chin is lifted and forward, the head is tilted back, exposing the throat. There is eye contact, the eyes are highly soft and receptive.



Posture 2

Strength: communication

The muscles at the solar plexus contract slightly. There is eye contact, the eyes are wide and bright.

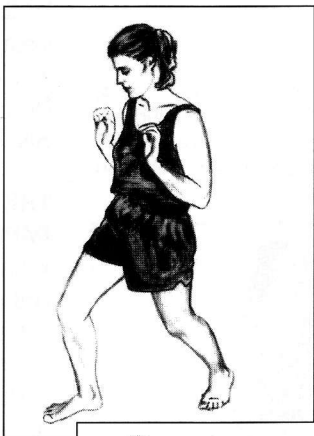
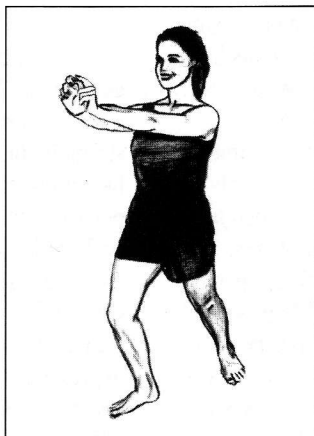
... 'Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.'

A 1997 research group participant with the second strength described her understanding of effective communication:

I think there is a collective consciousness. We all have a part of each other in ourselves. If I want to relate to someone who may seem different from me, I know that there has to be something that we have in common. Maybe it is just eating food. We have two eyes, two ears, and a lot of the time there is a lot more than that. I think this is the first step toward clearing a path to communication.

Communication is about understanding. It is about joining with another person in an understanding way. You communicate so that you both have the same definitions of things. There are blocks and flows. The block is usually tension or conflict, or whatever. If there is a block between two people, through communication it is broken up.

The third strength is well represented by Olgivana Lloyd Wright who provided the inspiration for and co-founded the Taliesin Fellowship, Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural school. The enthusiasm, focus, and energy that she brought to the school were key to its success. She said, "My philosophy of life is not an abstract philosophy ... I believe that whatever philosophy or whatever thought or whatever think-



Posture 5

Strength: understanding

The trunk is bent forward from the hips, bringing the face parallel with the floor. The eyes are open yet unfocused, or closed.

what happens when she is able to make a deep connection with another person, which is the fourth imperative:

It is that moment when I am sharing truth with people and the room gets brighter

ing processes we possess we should instantly transmit into life." She went on to say, "You get hold of the interior principle and then you can do anything else you wish to do, and it will be good. Many times even a deep kind of relationship can occur even in a very common ordinary event."

A research group participant in 1997 verbalized

Posture 3

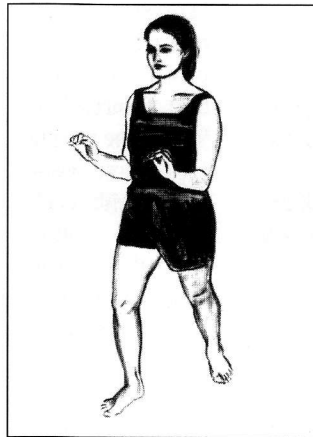
Strength: enthusiasm

The entire face lights up with a smile and eye contact, accentuating the cheek bones. The arms are straight, elbows locked with the wrists touching. The upper chest and clavicles lift, straightening the spine.

Posture 4

Strength: connection

The pelvis is forward of the chest. The head, neck, shoulders, and arms are relaxed, with the head down. The eyes are closed or slightly open; the attention is inward.



Posture 6

Strength: insight

The chest has the increased muscle tone and the alignment of a deep inhalation, matched by the tone of the arms. The elbows stay locked at the waist. The eyes are open, but there is no eye contact.

and I get bigger and I realize we are connected in a way that is beyond emotional connection. It is not an emotional connection. It is a bigger connection than that. It is not being separate. It is tapping into a consciousness that I can feel because I get bigger. I expand—literally.

Einstein asked, "What does a fish know about the water in which he swims?" For Einstein, and for others with this fifth perspective on reality, it is natural to ask the questions that bring understanding at the deepest level. Only from this place can people

achieve the mental peace we all long for. His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama said it this way: "Sometimes I feel I may contribute something for [a person's] at least temporary mental peace. This I consider [the] purpose of life."

Those with the sixth strength maintain a heightened vigilance at all times. A person from this group pays attention to the environment like a lone hiker in the woods who, on hearing an unfamiliar sound, stops, stands still, listens, and pays attention to interpret it. This way of being enables a person to quickly and easily sense deep insight about all things. A research group participant in 1998 described some of his experience of the world:

I feel I can go through a huge number of things quickly and check for resonance. I get quick "yes's" or "no's" (about the truth of whatever I'm looking at). I do not feel I have to spend a lot of time weighing or sorting through. It is just there or not there.

Like others with the seventh strength, physicist and Nobel Prize winner Richard

Feynman's life was framed by visioning how to move people, ideas, and things forward in new ways. He expressed the excitement about his visions in this way:

The same thrill, the same awe and mys-



Posture 7
Strength: vision
The body leans forward from the rear ankle, creating a straight line from the ankle to the top of the head. The forehead is the most forward part of the body. The eyes are open yet unfocused, or closed.



Posture 8
Strength: integrity
The pelvis is forward of the chest. The arms are held straight and parallel with the elbows locked. The muscle tone is high throughout the body. The eyes are watchful.



Posture 9
Strength: harmony
The chest and shoulder girdle are open and wide. The sternum is forward. The arms are behind or at the sides of the body. The head, neck, and body are relaxed. The eyes are open yet unfocused, or closed.

is from my new album and it's about not forgetting how to enjoy life. You know sometimes we get caught up in our troubles and our problems and we let life sort of slip away—life is precious—all of life—and one must try to take in as much of it as possible. The song is called "Until the Last Moment."

THE PROMISE OF THIS NEW TECHNOLOGY

Until now, it has not been clear that there are nine significantly distinct ways in which different people construct their worldview. This is hardly surprising because each individual's imperative has been with him or her since birth. People are not likely to be fully conscious of its dimensions or its influence in their own lives nor aware of it in the different realities of others.

During the exercises developed by Tovey and Sheets, it quickly becomes clear that peo-

tery, come again and again when we look at any question deeply enough. With more knowledge comes a deeper, more wonderful mystery, luring one on to penetrate deeper still. Never concerned that the answer may prove disappointing, with pleasure and confidence we turn over each new stone to find unimagined strangeness leading on to more wonderful questions and mysteries—certainly a grand adventure!

Carl Jung was a member of this group.

Winston Churchill's secretary, Marian Holmes, has this reminiscence of a conversation with the former prime minister of England at a time during WWII: "I remember on one occasion it was very lively around St. James Park ... heavy bombing ... and he said, 'Are you frightened Miss Holmes? Are you sure you're not frightened?' I said, 'No.' It was *impossible* to be frightened in his presence." Their interchange clearly conveys the trust and confidence associated with people like Winston Churchill who embody the eighth ability to protect people and the integrity of all living things.

The ninth group is represented by Joseph Shabalala, a South African singer, composer, and founder of the singing group Ladysmith Black Mambazo. He beautifully articulates not only his strength, that of being at one with

his environment, but also how opening himself up in this way contributes to his art. Speaking of his love for the countryside, he recollected:

... Because it's quiet, you can feel your blood circulating here. You can hear your heart beating. You can see the stars, the moon. It gives you the chance to work with your mind without noise, and to listen to those trees when there's air (wind), to listen to those birds, cows—there's a song there—and then you can listen to everything—those goats—and then you can begin a song with that.

The words of Yanni, a composer and musician, contribute more to our understanding of this group. He introduced a composition at a concert this way:

"The next song I'd like to do for you



Facial expression of strength 1

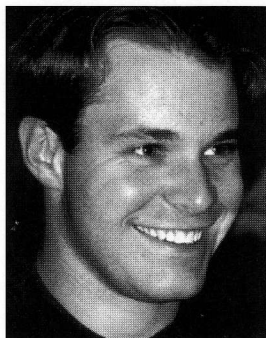
Essence
workshop participant
by Barbara Tovey

Facial expression of strength 2

Communication
workshop participant
by Barbara Tovey

ple with totally different worldviews can benefit from learning how others perceive, process, and act on their experiences. The imperative that is driving one person's life has the potential to make an enormous contribution to someone with a different strength.

The partnership between Frank and Olgivana Lloyd Wright portrays this kind of relationship. Frank Lloyd Wright used his insight (sixth strength) about the esthetics of architecture to attune his designs not only to the practical needs of



Facial expression of strength 3

Enthusiasm
workshop participant
by Barbara Tovey



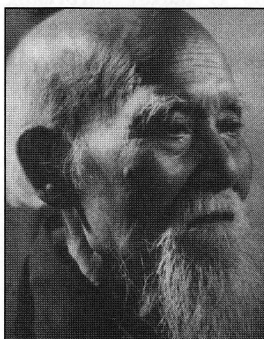
Facial expression of strength 4

Connection
Adoration of the Kings
(detail), by Cesare Magni



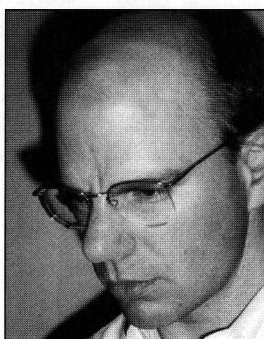
Facial expression of strength 5

Understanding
workshop participant
by Barbara Tovey



Facial expression of strength 6

Insight
Morihei Ueshiba
by unknown

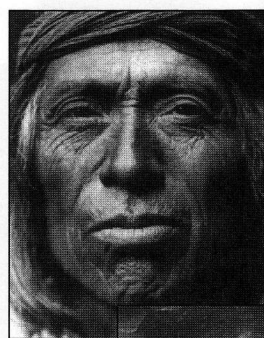


Facial expression of strength 7

Vision
workshop participant
by Barbara Tovey

necessary to inspire him to new levels of creativity, and she was the driving force behind the creation of the Taliesin Fellowship in which students would learn his architectural style. Her efforts were notably responsible for shaping his legacy.

This methodology has many other far-reaching implications for people's lives. At the basic level, it is a way for people to understand themselves and others better. Once a person realizes the fundamental and definitive strength through which they experience life and through which they understand, evaluate, and act, then fuller self-expression is possible. It can lead to an awareness of blind spots, to an enhanced ability to communicate, and to a deeper compas-



Facial expression of strength 8

Integrity
Shiwawatiwa-Zuni
by Edward Curtis



Facial expression of strength 9

Harmony
Madonna on the Rocks (detail), by Leonardo da Vinci

the people who were to inhabit them but also to the environment; he endeavored to make all his structures, whether for the wealthy or poor, esthetically beautiful works of art in which to live. However, his departure from traditional design approaches made it difficult for his inspirational and pioneering visions to be accepted, and his career had peaked by the mid-1920s.

In 1924, at the age of 56, he met Olgivana Ivanovna Lazovich (third strength). This fortuitous event had a lasting influence on both his accomplishments and how they would be perceived by the public. With her focus, energy, and enthusiasm, she was able to do what was

sion for oneself and for all others.

Through the practices developed by Tovey and Sheets, people experience the completely unfamiliar perceptions of others and new dimensions of understanding and insight that become open for, literally, the first time. This new understanding of strengths and imperatives offers the promise of a platform on which to build a network of communications that can lead to more positive and healthy community developments.

References

- A. Einstein: *How I see the world*. PBS Home Video.
- Carl Jung: *The wisdom of the dream*. Public Media Video.
- Complete Churchill: *To conquer or to die*. New York: A&E Home Video.
- Donne, J. (1624). Devotions upon emergent occasions (Meditation 17). In *Columbia dictionary of quotations*.
- Feynman, R. (1988). *What do you care what other people think?* (p. 243). New York: Bantam Books.
- Going places: South Africa*. MPI Home Video.
- Heart of Tibet: An Intimate Portrait of the 14th Dalai Lama*. Mystic Fire Video.
- Partner to genius: A biography of Olgivana Lloyd Wright*. PBS Home Video.
- The speeches collection, Martin Luther King, Jr.* MPI Home Video.
- Yanni live at the Acropolis*. Private Music Video.

Note:

Barbara Tovey and Alan Sheets are researchers and consultants in Marin County, California. They conduct workshops for organizations, businesses, consultants, and the public to allow others to benefit from the New Equations technology. They can be reached at (Nequations@aol.com), (www.NewEquations.com), or 415-459-6796. Brian Harris can be reached at (brian@brianharris.com) or 415-908-1661.

Copyright (c) 1999 by Barbara Tovey and Alan Sheets. ■