



# THE FIELDING



# SCHOLAR



# PRACTITIONER

*Voices from 45 years of  
Fielding Graduate University*

Edited by  
Katrina S. Rogers, PhD and Monique L. Snowden, PhD



Fielding Graduate University  
Office of the President

July 2019

Dear Joette,

Many thanks for your  
contribution to the work  
celebrating Fielding's 45<sup>th</sup>  
anniversary. Your chapter is a good  
example of the scholarship found  
at Fielding.

With warm wishes,

Katrina

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Fielding University Press

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## CHAPTER 8

### SPRINGBOARD TO GROWTH AS A SCHOLAR-PRACTITIONER

**Josette Luvmour, PhD**

At fifty-four years young, compassion, presence, gratitude, and service emerged in the process of earning my doctorate at Fielding Graduate University, and other aspects of wisdom have continued to emerge in my practice ever since. Already known in my field of experiential programs for families and youth, I felt compelled to expand my knowledge and standing in the academic community, regardless of the publication of *Natural Learning Rhythms* (Luvmour & Luvmour 1993).

The dissolution of many assumptions about the nature of reality triggered new openings. The affirming encounters at Fielding helped to create a new internal architecture that challenged my thinking, stimulated dialectical confrontations, and led to my transformation into a scholar-practitioner. Specifically, I learned how to stop the past from defining the future by stepping into the fray, engaging the dialectic, and emerging with new perspectives, new meaning-making, and an expanded sense of self. Motivated by my personal values of empowering families and seeing children as a part of social justice, I gained respected membership in the learning community, developed increased knowledge about the influence of social and cultural contexts, and expanded my responsibility as a change-maker.

There are many commonalities between my post-doctorate growth and those of the participants in my initial doctoral study. Entering the graduate process to address my own disorienting dilemmas led to new



learning, transforming the past by making new meaning; this changed both my cognitive and emotional development. I now access greater aspects of well-being (including self-acceptance, courage, becoming more open-minded, connection with others, and feeling more competent and confident as a scholar-practitioner), as well as many qualities of wisdom, not least of which is using my knowledge, skills, and expertise for the benefit of others. Through collaboration with colleagues and relationships of open engagement, I continue to make satisfying contributions in my field (e.g., as a teacher of other teachers, in publications, creating training programs for youth mentors and service providers, and mentoring several master's thesis projects).

#### **Postdoctoral Contributions in my Field of Human Development**

My doctoral study demonstrated that positive adult development can occur when the adult is in a conscientious relationship with the child. What's more, wisdom often emerges when adults take action to nurture the child's developmental needs. Parenting can be a transformational experience that changes the adult in positive ways. Parents who have knowledge of *Natural Learning Relationships* child development have more realistic expectations and are more likely to behave in developmentally appropriate ways with their children. This research project demonstrated how adult and child grow together.

Based on the adults' lived experiences, the question "what's in it for me?" is answered. In fact, five dimensions of adult development occur when intentional effort is made to nurture children's development: cognitive development of perspective changes; differentiation from former ways of knowing, and new meaning-making of the self and the world; emotional development of trust, empathy, and affective complexity; exercise of personal agency to make intentional effort; the emergence of well-being; and the emergence of wisdom.

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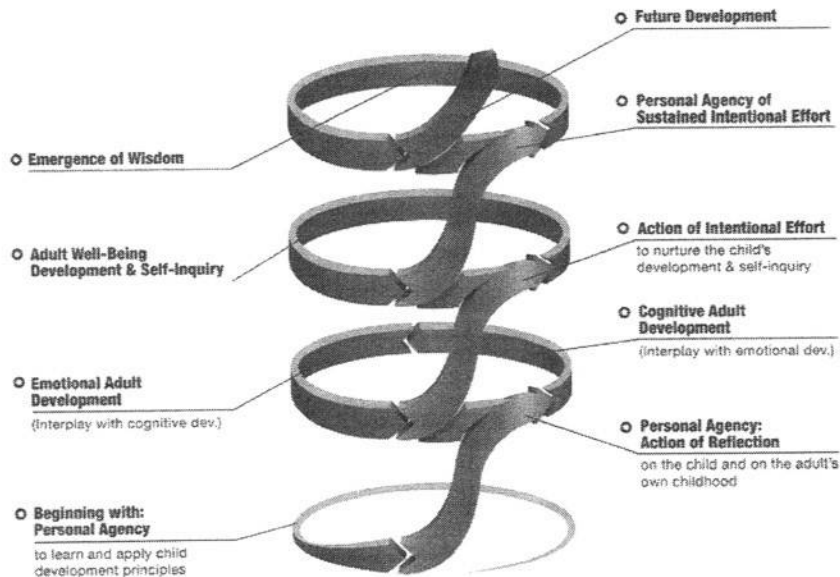
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**Figure 1.** The spiral effect of adult development as an adult nurtures a child's developmental imperatives (excerpt, 2017, p. 43).  
(Note: the spiral is not intended to imply a hierarchy.)

As an agent of change in my field, my postdoctoral work continues to transform relationships with children in all the communities I collaborate with: parents; teachers; school communities; educational organizations; counselors; and therapists. In addition, I have collaborated on the founding of two nonprofit organizations that are dedicated to awakening the greatness in humanity. I have published eBooks (2018), transformed my dissertation into a trade book (2017), and published journal articles (2011). Maintaining a national and international presence through public speaking engagements, and conference presentations (several as the keynote speaker) has also been rewarding.

Before Fielding, I worked with my husband and partner to develop a map of the evolution of consciousness throughout childhood called *Natural Learning Relationships*. The way we know our existence (epistemology) is through our whole being (ontological). It is how we come to know who

we are as whole beings—knowing at each stage of childhood and at each stage of life. In this view, *knowledge is emergent*, needing context and relationship to come into being. Thus, natural learning relationships are an ontological epistemology that elucidates the awareness that the subject (who lives in time) and the object (timeless origin) are always one whole (i.e., not separable). Much like adult development, the direction is toward expressions of wisdom in an integrated whole person.

Along with my growth as a scholar-practitioner, the developmental understanding of natural learning relationships has also evolved and matured while in use by teachers, in classroom curriculum creation, teacher training, social and human services, adult education, nonprofit and school partnerships, youth at-risk prevention, Rites of Passage youth programs, college course materials, graduate student curricula, professional training programs for teachers and staff, and parenting support groups.

#### **Research on Natural Learning Relationships**

It has become clear to me through my research that there is a nexus between holistic human development and education. I have continued my research post-graduation.

One particular research project was on parents who attended evening classes once a month from September through June—a total of 10 classes. My research findings revealed that parents benefited with increased (1) knowledge and understanding of Natural Learning Relationships and its use in the family; (2) confidence in communication with their children; (3) confidence in parenting skills; and (4) an increased sense of connection. One mother said,

The approach of Natural Learning Relationships child development gives me something more concrete to work with as a parent. I can go back to the basics: What stage is my child in? What nourishment does he need? What are his developmental limitations? (Karen-Jo A.)

Another important postdoctoral research project I designed involved

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teacher training. Teachers voluntarily enrolled in my training program, attending classes three times each month for four months, approximately 50 hours of class time followed by a practicum project. The research findings from this project revealed that the participants who completed the program benefited with: (1) increased understanding and classroom use of Natural Learning Relationships; (2) greater confidence in communication with colleagues; (3) competence in self-reflection and professional growth; (4) greater ability to meet students' developmental needs; and (5) an increased sense of connection with the school community. Teachers also benefited from having a clear and common language to utilize when describing their learning, and when they interacted with students and parents in the school community.

With confidence, I identify as a scholar-practitioner who works in the area of relationships with children. Who is the child? What are the social implications of creating developmentally appropriate environments? What are the benefits to adults who nurture children's developmental imperatives? My academic background offered the grounding to span boundaries as an empathetic and effective practitioner. I continue to make contributions in my field by providing programs that elevate the awareness of children's developmental needs and the benefits to the adults that provide them. Over the years, my career has grown and transformed from that of a frontline school administrator to service provider and consultant who supports professionals, schools, and families. In my position as consultant I also support adults who are facing conflicts in their professional careers and/or parenting practices that often impede their success.

My life as a scholar-practitioner has confirmed that knowledge of the Natural Learning Relationships of children gives professionals and parents the ability to understand the child's worldview and, consequently, to understand the child's needs. The usefulness of knowledge about child development is undeniably important and can be found in education, counseling, and therapy practices; family law; teacher training; in building positive relationships in classroom cultures; and for parents and

families. The developmental growth between adult and child is a state of consciousness involving full engagement and awareness, as we attend to the inside of our being as well as the child's being. When we do this dance, well-being flourishes in both child and professional.

My transformation came about in many ways through the years; foremost is the multiple ways that relating to children has precipitated change in how I see myself and the world. Our wholeness emerges in relationship.

Through my doctoral work, professional applications, and program creation, along with my spiritual practice and relationships with family and colleagues, I discover again and again that we are not the *contents* of our consciousness, but pure awareness. Awareness is not thought. We perceive the manifestations of our consciousness but we are not those manifestations. One way I know this is that I can make change with intentional effort. Sometimes just taking a moment or two to let the dust settle and tune in to how I am feeling physically, emotionally, and mentally after a particularly challenging meeting, a difficult consultation, or a hard day is essential to being fully present. Making a conscious choice to remain aware and present with what is happening both inside and around me in the moment (simultaneously) allows me to respond in a way that promotes well-being in any child, parent, family, or professional that I engage.

All in all, we grow together. I feel all the feelings, including the emotions of suffering, love, and compassion that give meaning and purpose to life. Every day is a new opportunity.

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**About the Author**

As an educator, writer, developmental consultant, and public speaker, **Josette Luvmour** specializes in the fields of human development, the natural learning relationships of children, the consciousness of the developing child, transformational learning, nurturing well-being in family relationships, how adult and child grow together, relationship-based and holistic education, and teacher professional development. Josette and her husband started several relationship-based education schools, a holistic learning center for families and children, and many whole-family immersion programs in both California and Oregon. She is also a teacher of other teachers (undergrad and graduate master's students), many of whom have gone on to start their own schools in the U.S. and Canada using natural learning relationships child development and holistic approaches in their teaching practice. She is co-founder of two nonprofit organizations dedicated to awakening the greatness in humanity, and principal producer of the popular podcast series, *Meetings with Remarkable Educators*. Josette has authored five eBooks and six print books, including *Grow Together, Parenting as a path to well-being, wisdom, and joy*, as well as articles that focus on relationships with children. *Grow Together* has earned the Mom's Choice Award.

# THE FIELDING SCHOLAR PRACTITIONER

*Voices from 45 years of Fielding Graduate University*



This is a collection of essays, memoirs and research articles that capture the unique role of Fielding Graduate University as one of the nation's oldest graduate institutions for mid-career learners. Long before there was an Internet, Fielding pioneered the concept of a distributed university—a place where adult learners could leverage their professional and academic experience to aspire to doctoral and other graduate degrees, without having to leave their home or place of work.

This monograph illustrates adult transformational learning, from alumni describing how evolving into “scholar-practitioners” inspired their life’s work, to faculty members recounting how Fielding took shape amid a culture of scholarship and social justice. You will also find discussions about:

- the transformative power of adult education
- the creation of new scholarly disciplines
- the role of mentoring in learning

Together, these tales provide a sampling of the rich, complex tapestry that is Fielding.



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