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## Introduction to the Institute for Body, Mind and Spirituality

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# Introduction to Special Issue on the Institute for Body, Mind, and Spirituality (IBMS)

Susan Gere

The Institute for Body, Mind, and Spirituality (IBMS) at Lesley University was established for the purpose of promoting inquiry, training professionals, conducting research, developing new programs, and providing leadership in the area of body, mind, and spirituality health and education. IBMS serves as a nexus for body/mind activities at the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences at Lesley. It incorporates the university's mission of empowering students with the knowledge, skills, and experience to succeed as leaders and catalysts in their professions and communities. The goals of the Institute are humanistic, holistic, and transformational. The humanistic aspect focuses on the empowerment of the individual to change and grow using extensive collaborative learning and adult models of pedagogy. The interrelationship of body, mind, and spirituality emphasizes a holistic view, and tools for physical, mental, and spiritual growth supporting a transformational approach to individual development and social change.

For the purposes of the Institute, health is broadly defined as a dynamic process of wellbeing, which integrates mental, physical, social/relational, aesthetic, and spiritual elements. Prevention is emphasized as the best way to attain and maintain health and healthy behaviors. Within IBMS, spirituality is defined as intrinsic religiosity, a developmental process that involves character; social values; connection to other human beings and deeper aspects of oneself; and embracing the concept of something greater than oneself. That "greater something" has been defined by cultures around the world in many different ways throughout human history. Whether in the form of our relationship with nature, a philosophy of purpose and morals, or a deity, this core definition of spirituality emphasizes that all life is connected, interdependent, and meaningful. Spirituality is viewed as a holistic maturational process, not as the absorption of the tenets of any specific religion. The development of this sense of connection and purpose within the individual fosters healthy behavior; positive self-esteem; good cognitive learning; consideration for others; a sense of relationship to family, community, history and nature; and an understanding of how individual actions affect these underlying connections.

This issue of the *Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism, and Practice* (JPPP) focuses on contributions relating to body, mind and spirituality from members of the IBMS advisory board, Lesley University faculty and staff, academics and practitioners from the community of scholars in the arts, psychology, healthcare and religion. The articles are varied and show the breadth of interest in practice and scholarship related to body, mind and spirituality in higher education, in healthcare settings and in international conflict resolution work. They address pedagogy, practice and social justice issues.

The issue is organized into two groups of original work. The first group contains articles written for this issue of JPPP. The second is a group of edited talks given at recent conferences developed by IBMS. From 2005 to 2007, under the direction of Professor Susan Gere and the IBMS Board, with administrative support from Yishiuan Chin and Graduate Assistant, Buki Papillon, IBMS sponsored programming that connects Lesley University faculty and the wider professional and academic communities. Collaborations with WGBH, the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, the Fetzer Institute's Campaign for Love and Forgiveness, the Harvard Divinity School, Boston's Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries, and the Massachusetts School for Professional Psychology have supported training and research symposia for academics, professionals and community members.

From higher education, Jared Kass, Julia Byers, Robin Cruz, Louise Pascal, Cheryl Giles and Joan Klagsbrun seek to establish the relevance of teaching and learning cultures that take into consideration the well-being of the whole person and promote the transformation and spiritual maturation of global citizens. Mindfulness in the service of learning is the central theme woven through these contributions. Jared Kass' teaching and scholarship calls for an integrative educational model promoting spiritual maturation that transforms our behavioral patterns and relationship to ourselves and to others. He proposes that well-being and peaceful communities are possible when we reduce reactivity and the reenactment of negative experiences—thus interrupting what he calls the “chain of pain.”

Similarly, in training pastoral counselors, Cheryl Giles is committed to creating healthy, sustainable communities through facilitating spiritual grounding and growth and what Parker Palmer calls “hidden wholeness.” In their review of an on-line international discussion group for teachers, Julia Byers, Robin Cruz and Louise Pascale posit that beneficent classroom practices support the possibility of both recognizing and neutralizing difficult social and personal conditions in the service of learning. Likewise, Joan Klagsbrun offers clear rationale and instructions for using Eugene Gendlin's “Clearing a Space” to help students minimize the negative effects of personal stress in the classroom. Michael Franklin and Vivien Marcow Speiser also refer to “Clearing a Space” as a contemplative methodology with similarities to “Authentic Movement.” Their article makes the scholarly link between ancient meditative practices and this contemporary, movement based form.

Jana van der Veer's personal narrative reveals her own transformation in perspective on the mind-body connection through the experience of traditional Japanese medicine. Nathaniel Mays' reflection on Jackie Robinson provides an example of inspiring, spiritually mature behavior that has relevance for academic institutional settings.

Using the arts in healing, Karen Estrella, Dicki Johnson, Marion Nesbit, Susan DeCristofaro and Joan Drescher bring the reader into artistic spaces that are both autobiographical and creative. Karen Estrella writes about the importance of attending to the imagination in the creation of art, in healing and in social action. Marion Nesbit and Susan DeCristofaro demonstrate how the imagination and commitment of one

inspirational person led to an arts-based university/community partnership at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Joan Drescher's "Moon Balloon" project grew out of her own experience of being empowered by the arts and her recognition that children in crisis, in hospitals, schools and social service agencies need to be empowered to express their emotions.

Dicki Johnson's work found inspiration both in art and in nature. In her original and groundbreaking article, she demonstrates how her professional life as a teacher of the art and technique of Isadora Duncan and as a dance therapist led her into the development of an archetypal "Gesture Dance" that forms the foundation of healing circles she has used to train professionals who deal with traumatic events in communities around the world. Dicki proposes that the foundation of health and wholeness is the ability to enjoy and explore both solitude and affiliation. She observes on the sense of disconnection from self and others in our society noted by other contributors. Like Lily Fessenden, she observes on the need to integrate body, mind and spirit in an ecological context. Lily, and Dicki both propose our connection to and awareness of nature is foundational to our spiritual lives and to our sense of connection to the worldwide community.

Activists Lily Fessenden and Farid Esack inspire and challenge us to confront social and ecological injustice and the larger systemic issues that perpetuate environmental degradation and atrocities committed against our fellow human beings. Our sense of disconnection from ourselves and from our environment is echoed in John Woodall's call to expand our moral and aesthetic identification with others in order to end the effects of intergenerational social and political trauma. He and Farid Esack each suggest that our sense of identity—as individuals and as groups—defines our sense of social justice and that our ability to resolve conflicts depends on strengthening our sense of common humanity.

Like Jared Kass and John Woodall, Farid Esack's experience as a leader in the new South Africa directs him to endorse the possibility of achieving a just and peaceful society but cautions that moral and ethical injustice must be confronted. Indeed, a cultural critique of mechanistic, disconnected, oppressive social conditions in modern society that lead to objectification of the self, the other and the environment is threaded through the essays. As the antidote, concepts of wholeness, social justice and transformation of perspective resonate throughout the journal. The arts, spiritual practice, nourishing relationships and social activism are all seen as paths to wholeness and reconnection with self, others and the environment.

Buki Papillon provides a detailed overview of the IBMS symposium on "Body, Mind and Spirit: Innovations in Research, Practice and Pedagogy" which drew graduate students and faculty mentors from all over New England. Jared Kass' keynote address, "Spiritual Maturation: A Developmental Resource for Resilience, Well-Being and Peace" has been adapted for publication in this journal as have the papers of two of his respondents, Cheryl Giles "Developing Spiritual Maturation: Claiming Our Hidden Wholeness" and Karen Estrella "Awakening the Imaginal."

“Imagine: Expression in the Service of Humanity, Moving Towards Forgiveness” grew out of a conference in Tel Aviv, Israel in 2006 on creative approaches to working with conflict in groups in general and with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular and a partnership with the Fetzer Institute Campaign for Love and Forgiveness [www.loveandforgive.org](http://www.loveandforgive.org). Presenters and participants explored common elements in cultural and religious conflicts, the intergenerational repetition of trauma and creative approaches to healing and transformation.

Three segments of “The Power of Forgiveness” film sponsored by Fetzer Institute and produced by Martin Doblmeier provided the catalyst for a discussion of the power of forgiveness in alleviating anger and grief caused by the such horrific human transgressions as the tragedy of September 11, 2001, forgiveness in the Amish community and the context of the Holocaust. Edited keynote addresses by South African theologian Farid Esack and the closing address by Harvard Medical School psychiatrist John Woodall bookend the rich conversations developed during the conference about the importance of activism and hope.

This special issue of JPPP is an opportunity for IBMS to bring together scholarly and inspirational work by an interdisciplinary group of writers who address multiple levels of stress and disconnection inherent in contemporary culture. They also suggest many hopeful routes to healing and wholeness including transformational education, spiritual maturation, mindfulness practices, movement, art, ecological awareness and engaging in social justice work. They each offer their theories and methods to help us—as professionals and as human beings—to reconnect, to heal ourselves and to heal our world. We are grateful for their work and for their contributions.