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CHAPTER 5

Being Wise at Any Age

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Every year I ask my undergraduate students to think about a knowledgeable/intelligent individual and a wise individual and to describe their characteristics and the major differences between those two persons in a short two-page paper. Students are asked to submit this assignment *before* we discuss the differences between intellectual knowledge and wisdom in class. This year, after obtaining approval from our Institutional Review Board, I asked students in my “Society and the Individual” class for their permission to analyze their submissions and to use excerpts from their submissions in this book chapter to illustrate the characteristics of knowledgeable/intelligent and wise individuals. Of the 60 students in the class, 39 students (15 male and 24 female) granted the permission and submitted the assignment.

As always, my students’ answers were insightful and echoed contemporary theoretical and empirical research on the characteristics of wisdom and the differences between wisdom and intellectual knowledge. I coded all submissions for the gender and approximate age of the knowledgeable/intelligent and wisdom nominee, whether the nominee had a university degree or was in the process of earning a degree, whether the nominee had gained knowledge through experience and/or books, whether the knowledge described was deep and/or vast, whether the nominee was sought out for advice, and whether the nominee was described as a compassionate and empathetic person. The students’ descriptions of a knowledgeable/intelligent and wise person did not differ significantly by their gender. For example, both male and female students were more likely to nominate a man rather than a woman as a wise person (78%) and also as an intelligent/knowledgeable individual (67%). The purpose of this chapter is to

compare the characteristics of intellectual knowledge and wisdom in the domains of goals, acquisition, approach, range, relation to aging, and effects on the knower. The differences are summarized in Table 5.1.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INTELLECTUAL KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

Goals

Both intellectual knowledge and wisdom pursue knowledge, truth, and the answers to difficult problems (Assmann, 1994; Chandler & Holliday, 1990; Clayton & Birren, 1980; Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1990; Sternberg, 1990) or as one student wrote,

A common aspect [that] intelligence and wisdom share is that they both try to explain the otherwise unexplainable situations. This can be through intelligence explaining the scientific reasons why the earth revolves around the sun or the philosophical reasons why we are in existence.

This quote shows that the knowledge that wise and intelligent individuals seek is not the same. Whereas intellectual knowledge is about the discovery of new truths, wisdom is about the rediscovery of the *significance* and *meaning* of old truths (Kekes, 1983). In accordance with this distinction, students' descriptions of an intelligent/knowledgeable individual often emphasized the search for new knowledge.

When I think of a knowledgeable and intellectual person I think of my 24 year old friend in law school. He graduated from UF with a degree in history, and has read more books on this subject than anyone I have ever met. However his knowledge and intellect goes beyond just history. Most people who go to college specialize in certain areas and tend to gain a great deal of knowledge about their areas of interest. My friend on the other hand prides himself on being as educated in all the areas of study that he can.

[My uncle] is an ever so hungry man for knowledge. I think he feeds off of it.... He is a man to love the adventure of a new culture or way of thinking. He opens his arms to knowledge of the past, present, and future. He is a man of travel, and one who loves to hear indigenous knowledge right from the horse's mouth. He keeps every story of every man he has passed along the way in his life in a sacred place in his mind. My uncle has always been a man to inform me of something new and worthy of investigating.

By contrast, when describing a wise individual, students emphasized an understanding of life and the meaning and significance of knowledge to daily life.

Wisdom seems to address more than the knowledge of pure facts. Someone who is wise is able to make good decisions. They have common sense and can function well in the world because they have an understanding of it.

I believe wisdom represents an understanding of the world as it actually is, as well as an appreciation of it. It doesn't even necessarily mean that wise

Table 5.1
Differences Between Intellectual Knowledge and Wisdom

Domain	Intellectual Knowledge	Wisdom
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quantitative: Accumulation of knowledge and information ● Discovery of new truths ● Mastery of the outside world ● Striving for certainty, regularity, and predictability to plan for the future ● Knowing how to deal with the expected ● <i>How</i> to do certain things—giving advice about technical matters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Qualitative: A deeper understanding of salient phenomena and events ● Rediscovery of the <i>significance</i> and <i>meaning</i> of old truths ● Mastery of the inner world ● Acceptance of uncertainty, irregularity, unpredictability, and impermanence ● Knowing how to deal with the unexpected and the unknown ● <i>Should</i> I do certain things?—giving advice about life matters
Acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Detached experiences: learning from books, lectures, media, research, or observations ● Intelligence/cognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Personal experiences: learning from life's lessons ● Combination of cognition, self-reflection, and self-transformation
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scientific ● Theoretical ● Abstract, detached ● Impersonal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Spiritual ● Applied ● Concrete, involved ● Personal: intrapersonal and interpersonal
Range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Time-bound: Subject to political and historical fluctuations and scientific and technological advances ● Domain-specific ● Narrow, particularistic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Timeless: Independent of political and historical fluctuations and scientific and technological advances ● Universal ● Broad, holistic
Relation to aging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reversed u-shaped pattern ● Influenced by cognitive decline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Potentially positive ● Influenced by a willingness to learn from experiences and to engage in self-reflection and self-examination
Effects on the knower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased self-centeredness if one believes that one knows ● Pride and a feeling of superiority towards people with less intellectual knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Diminished self-centeredness because one knows that one does not know ● Sympathetic and compassionate love for others

Note: From Intellectual versus wisdom-related knowledge: The case for a different kind of learning in the later years of life, by M. Ardel, *Educational Gerontology: An International Journal of Research and Practice*, 26, 771-789. Adapted with permission

people know why events unfold the way that they do, what is important is that the wise person can derive the meaning from these events.

The fact that intellectual knowledge aims to discover new truths also implies that an intelligent/knowledgeable individual is likely to know a large amount of information. Indeed, all but one of the students mentioned that an intelligent/knowledgeable person possesses large quantities of knowledge. The following descriptions were typical.

My father ... is the most intelligent person I know. When I was a little girl there wasn't one day that passed by where I asked 100 questions and I didn't receive 100 answers.... In my later childhood years, when I was almost getting through the whole "question everything" phase, I even started just asking questions to see if he would not have an answer for me. Wrong. He always did ... and still does.

The knowledgeable person seems to know everything. He is the one you would call if you were on a game show and you had an opportunity to "phone a friend." It can be said that to be knowledgeable is to own facts. My mother owns more facts than anyone else I have ever met. She is highly educated and regularly refreshes her mind through teaching. She would definitely be my "phone a friend" for any question. Over the years I have been able to turn to her whenever curiosity has gotten the best of me. Whenever I don't know how something works or where something is located, she is able to appease my quandaries.

Wise people might not necessarily know as many facts as intelligent/knowledgeable individuals, but they have a deep understanding of salient phenomena and events and of life itself (Assmann, 1994; Holliday & Chandler, 1986; Moody, 1986; Sternberg, 1990). Only 20 of the 39 students (51%) mentioned a large amount of knowledge as a characteristic of a wise person. However, 35 students (90%) characterized the knowledge of a wise person as deep, whereas only 7 students (18%) characterized the knowledge of an intelligent/knowledgeable individual in this way. Many students agreed that a wise person can see the forest and not just the trees. As one student wrote,

When I think of someone who is wise, I think of my boyfriend's grandpa, Pop. He is in his mid-seventies.... Pop is a man that sees the big picture in life, and can look beyond the little things that don't matter. He knows a lot of things, but he is in no way boastful about it. His life has allowed him many experiences that he uses to interpret and live through new experiences.

Because intelligent/knowledgeable people are smart and know a lot of facts about the world, it tends to be relatively easy for them to master the outside world. The following two excerpts are examples of this kind of mastery.

My best friend and roommate, Leigh, is someone I would refer to as knowledgeable and intelligent. She is 21 years old, and she is finishing her last semester as an undergraduate at the University of Florida. I consider Leigh to

be an intelligent person because she displays competencies over many different aspects in life.... Leigh achieves academically among the top students in all of her classes. She performs well in all subject areas, and she does not have a hard time achieving it. She is well versed, both in conversation and in script. Her vocabulary is extensive, and she has the ability to clearly and effectively communicate what she needs to. She is usually a quick thinker, but when she doesn't know something right away or even at all, she isn't afraid to find out how to learn about it and persist until she gets it. These kinds of intelligences make it easy for Leigh to get where she wants to in life and get along with others.

I think a good example of a well-known knowledgeable person is Donald Trump. From what I can gather about Trump, he has a wealth of knowledge in the skill of "prospering" in a capitalist society. He is apparently a very intelligent man. Surely, it takes a smart guy to climb their way up to the top of the socio-economic ladder. With his great knowledge and skills in entrepreneurship and realty he is now one of the wealthiest people in the entire world.

Wise individuals, however, do not only know how to master the outside world, but also how to master the inner world of emotions. They have learned to regulate their emotions (Labouvie-Vief & Medler, 2002; Schwartz, 1987) and to develop equanimity, no matter what the circumstances (Assmann, 1994; Hanna & Ottens, 1995). They are unlikely to be exuberant, depressed, or angry for long periods of time, but they exhibit an inner contentment that cannot easily be disturbed (Hart, 1987; Kunzmann & Baltes, 2005). As one student wrote,

[One] reason I consider my grandfather to be wise is his composure. He is always very even keeled and I have never honestly seen him get worked up about anything. Even at times of absolute joy all one sees is a very satisfied smile. I believe that this is an important mark of wisdom as he understands that there is always going to be good and bad events in one's life and that fussing about it changes nothing. Furthermore, he is able to live by this in addition to understanding it. The balance he lives his life by is ultimately the reason I consider him to be wise.

Most researchers in the field of wisdom would agree that wise people are exceptionally mature and have the ability to cope with the vicissitudes of life (Ardelt, 1998, 2000a; Assmann, 1994; Baltes & Freund, 2003; Bianchi, 1994; Clayton, 1982; Kekes, 1983, 1995; Kramer, 2000; Kunzmann & Baltes, 2003; Sternberg, 1990, 1998; Vaillant, 2002). The equanimity that wise people have developed guides them through the most difficult crises and hardships in their lives. In a qualitative study on how wise people cope with crises and obstacles in their lives, I found that wise individuals first tended to take a step back to relax and calm down in order not to be overwhelmed by an unpleasant situation (Ardelt, 2005). This theme of calmness in dealing with difficult situations was echoed in a number of students' statements.

Wise people are able to handle any situation that comes their way. They know what to do and what not to do. These decisions are not hard for wise

people; they are just natural to these people. Wise people are able to prevent and predict bad things that are about to happen and avoid them. They act in ways that are effective and sensible. Wise people are also able to handle these situations much calmer than others are able to handle situations.

I also associate a certain degree of calmness with wisdom. The wise person can weather the storm without losing his head. My father has always exemplified this trait, amazing me with his ability to think rationally even under the most unnerving circumstances.

Because wise people have accepted that life is unpredictable and uncertain, they know how to deal with the unexpected and unknown (Assmann, 1994; Brugman, 2000). Intelligent/knowledgeable individuals, by contrast, are experts in solving problems where all the pieces of information are known (Strijbos, 1995). As one student wrote,

An intellectual and knowledgeable person knows all the various facts and statistics on different issues, and understands the different sides and consequences to taking a stance one way or the other. When I think of an individual as being knowledgeable and intellectual I think of someone who has taken the time to do all the research.

An intelligent/knowledgeable person who is familiar with all sides of an issue is usually a good source of advice about technical matters.

When I think of a knowledgeable and intelligent individual, my boyfriend Wesley is the first to come to my mind.... Whenever a problem or situation arises, he is the first one I go to. For example, over Christmas break, the electricity went out and ruined the connection to the Internet. My first instinct was to call my ISP (Internet Service Provider) and have them take a look at it. However, Wesley came over and took apart the cables and somehow came to the conclusion that the cable modem had been struck by electricity and that a new modem would be necessary. This is just one of the every day situations that come about that Wesley can easily solve.

I feel that [my mother] is the smartest person I have ever met.... I always go to her whenever I have some sort of financial situation because she always helps me out by showing me new methods to save money or how to rearrange my funds in order to maximize my current money.

Although intelligent/knowledgeable individuals are expert problem solvers and good at giving technical advice, wise people are more likely to be sought out for advice about life matters (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Holliday & Chandler, 1986; Kunzmann & Baltes, 2005). In fact, 28 students (72%) mentioned giving advice as one of the characteristics of a wise person, whereas only 10 students (26%) listed advice-giving as a characteristic of an intelligent/knowledgeable individual. Students listed many examples of wise advice. The following examples are representative of the reflective, multiperspective nature of wise advice.

My mother is someone I would describe as wise. I didn't really start discovering the benefits of having a wise parent until about my late teenage years,

when all that "real life stuff" finally started occurring in my life and I needed some guidance, some direction. That's what my mother always gives me ... my mother really goes beyond just looking at things as black and white, right or wrong ... for her, there are always many aspects to every lesson I ever grew up learning in my house.

My father is at the same time level headed and passionate. He can think things through from many different angles, but he still has his own beliefs. These qualities are part of why I consider him to be a wise individual. I believe a wise person can give advice to someone that doesn't perfectly match up with what he himself would do. A truly wise person never gives someone concrete advice, but rather offers up different alternatives and the possible outcomes of each.

A wise person typically does not give a definite answer to an advice-seeker, but lays out all the options and possibilities. Whereas an intelligent/knowledgeable individual tends to give a specific answer to a specific question, such as "How can I make the most of my current money?" or "How can I get reconnected to the Internet?," a wise person asks the advice-seeker to consider the consequences of each course of action. The question changes from "*How* should I do certain things?" to "*Should* I do certain things?" (Assmann, 1994; Clayton, 1982; Holliday & Chandler, 1986; Kekes, 1983, 1995).

I consider my mother to be very wise. I go to her when my life gets confusing because she always seems to have the right answer. Not only does she offer the right answer, but she can offer different solutions and the consequences of each of those solutions.... I consider my mother to be wise because she has had many various experiences throughout her lifetime. And, it is because of these experiences that she is able to offer me advice to get through my life's experiences. Sometimes the answers she provides are solutions that are relatively simple but I always find myself saying "I should have thought of that."

By offering different solutions to life problems and explaining their consequences, it is ultimately up to the advice-seeker to choose a certain kind of life. Wise people know that everyone has to decide on their own what kind of life they want to live and that they can be nothing more than a helpful guide, someone who has traveled the path before them and can guide them along on the way.

ACQUISITION

How do people gain intellectual knowledge and wisdom? Students generally agreed that intellectual knowledge is acquired primarily through learning, whereas wisdom is acquired through personal experiences. Of the 39 students, 28 (72%) described an intelligent/knowledgeable individual as "book smart," but none of the students characterized a wise person in this way. By contrast, 34 students (87%) mentioned that wisdom is gained through experiences, whereas only one student believed that experience is

an ingredient of intellectual knowledge. This is confirmed by studies on implicit (i.e., lay) theories of wisdom. When people are asked to rate or name characteristics of wise individuals, “being experienced” or “learning from experiences” is almost always mentioned (Bluck & Glück, 2005). The following quotes illustrate the difference between intellectual knowledge and wisdom.

Two terms easily contrast the meanings of intelligence and wisdom: an individual that is said to be “book smart” may be considered intelligent, whereas an individual that is said to [have] “knowledge from experience” may be considered wise.

[W]hen I think of someone who is wise I think of someone who has actually experienced what a knowledgeable or intellectual person has only researched. Take for example the two people I chose to describe, my [knowledgeable and intelligent] friend wrote his thesis paper on the Vietnam War and could draw a detailed timeline of every event that took place and the level of troops that were deployed at any certain time. However, my father lived through the Vietnam War and experienced how the citizens of the United States were feeling at that exact moment. He can literally describe the feeling of his friends and neighbors dying and the protests that went on. He may not know the exact number of troops in Vietnam at a certain date, but he certainly remembers how many of his friends died. That is the difference between knowledge and intellect and being wise, researching versus actually experiencing.

Thus, intellectual knowledge can be acquired through more detached experiences than wisdom, such as reading books or articles, listening to lectures, watching TV, engaging in research, and objective observations (Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1990; Kekes, 1983; Taranto, 1989). For example,

[T]o choose a knowledgeable and intelligent individual ... there is no better person that I could think about than my primary physician. He went through many years of school to understand the concept of medicine and diseases. ... Any doctor or specialist can be viewed as a knowledgeable and intelligent person because they acquire the knowledge while in school studying for their PhD.

I have a twenty-year-old friend named Karan. ... I believe that he is a very knowledgeable and intelligent young man. ... Karan just loves absorbing new information that he receives from school, books, and TV. He had one class in which attendance was not required, and everyone else that I knew that took the same class did not attend because they received good grades without doing so. However, Karan wanted to go to class so that he could learn the information instead of just memorizing the information for the test.

The acquisition of intellectual knowledge requires cognitive skills and a desire to learn. Yet, as one student wrote,

Knowledge is something which can be acquired much easier than wisdom. It is something which can be learned. I generally think of my peers who do

very well academically when I think of people who are knowledgeable. I truly marvel at how much time they must invest to obtain and maintain such an enormous base of facts.

Cognitive skills and an investment of time to learn a large amount of facts, by contrast, are not enough to develop wisdom. Wisdom is gained through experiences, but only if people are willing to learn and apply the lessons that life has to offer them (Achenbaum & Orwoll, 1991; Ardel, 2005; Assmann, 1994; Hanna & Ottens, 1995; Moody, 1986). The following quotes highlight this point.

Being wise means that one embodies the ability to look at certain things with insight, maybe its most distinct quality. When looking to identify one person in my life as being wise, this was the characteristic that paralleled my mother most perfectly. Through all her years, it seems that my mother has taken in every experience and learned a great deal from it. Gaining wisdom is not something that can be taught, it is evident that it must be something that is gained through life's practice.

My mother is wise because of her experience. I think I read a quote once that said something along the lines of, “Learn from others’ mistakes, for you can’t live long enough to make them all on your own.” Well, anything I have ever come to my mother about, she will always have some anecdote either involving herself or someone she knew. ... My mother has always told me she grew up making a lot of mistakes, but she always took something positive from each of her mistakes. I think she took something positive from everyone else’s mistakes too because she seriously always has input on any type of situation you come to her about. She will always have an anecdote or an adage that relates to any situation I am concerned about and as soon as I am done speaking with my mother, she always leaves me thinking about everything we discussed.

Perhaps the most important factor of all in choosing my father [as a wise person] though is that he has tons of “life experience.” He’s been around a long time, and has been in all sorts of situations, and has experienced many different life events that I won’t get around to until I’m older. ... My dad just knows a lot about life’s joys and sorrows and mysteries, and I admire and respect him greatly for it.

[My wise grandfather] was someone who had a great deal of experiences in life. ... Although my grandfather did complete junior college and seminary he knew a lot of things and had good advice just by simply learning from life itself. Wisdom is not something you can learn from a book or in a classroom; it is something that comes from within. It comes from personal experiences and tribulations in your life. You can not go to school and take classes to become wise but you can go to school and take classes to become knowledgeable.

I believe due to his life experience, my great-grandfather had the characteristics of a wise individual. Throughout his life he experienced a lot of oppression and difficulty. My great-grandfather viewed each life experience, no matter how challenging, as a lesson learned.

To be able to learn from one’s mistakes, failures, and obstacles in life is one of the hallmarks of wisdom (Achenbaum & Orwoll, 1991; Ardel,

2005). Wise people generally do not have a life free of hardships and disappointments. As one of the students wrote, "A knowledgeable and intelligent person can become wise when they have faced many hardships, grown older, or gain valuable experience." In fact, there is some empirical evidence that being able to cope successfully with crises and hardships in life is one of the pathways to wisdom (Ardelt, 1998, 2005; Bianchi, 1994).

However, crises and hardships in life do not automatically lead to wisdom. If people are unable to cope with a particular crisis or hardship, it might result in depression and despair rather than wisdom. For example, evidence from a longitudinal study shows that adults who experienced economic hardship during the Great Depression and who were rated as relatively wise in old age (in 1968/69) tended to become psychologically healthier after the Depression years. By contrast, the psychological health of men and women who encountered similar Depression hardship but were rated as relatively low on wisdom in old age tended to decline after the Depression years (Ardelt, 1998). Similarly, in a study on the effects of marital separation among women, Bursik (1991) found that marital separation was related to either growth or regression in ego development, depending on the women's overall adjustment one year after the separation or divorce. This suggests that the development of wisdom does not depend on *what* kind of events people encounter in life but on *how* they deal with those events (Holliday & Chandler, 1986). It appears that wisdom can only be obtained if people are willing to accept the lessons that life has to offer and to be transformed in the process (Achenbaum & Orwoll, 1991; Ardelt, 2004b; Assmann, 1994; Kekes, 1983; Kupperman, 2005; Moody, 1986). As Randall and Kenyon (2001, p. 99) explain, "wisdom is not a matter of putting a Band-Aid over a problem, or even of coping, in a sense of merely getting by on the basis of a clever coping strategy. It involves the possibility for real growth and transformation."

Hence, intelligence might help a person to gain intellectual knowledge, but it is not sufficient for wisdom to emerge. The following quote illustrates this point perfectly.

I believe that due to his young age, [my intelligent boyfriend] ... has a lot more to experience to make him a wise individual. In addition, I believe that [his] overall intelligence will assist him to one day become wise, as well as his ability to be a conscientious observer of the world around him. Intelligence does not equate to [being] wise, yet intelligence may in fact allow an individual to hone those skills.

A certain amount of intelligence or cognitive abilities are clearly necessary, albeit not sufficient, for the acquisition of wisdom. As one student commented, "I also feel that you cannot be a wise person in age if you don't share some type of intelligence. I think that you really cannot have one without the other, like you cannot have the yin without the yang." However, this does not mean that wise people need to earn a college degree or a Ph.D. Whereas 33 (85%) of the 39 students mentioned that their intelligent/knowledgeable nominee had earned or was in the process

of earning a college degree, only 10 students (26%) specified that their wisdom nominee had a college education. In fact, another 10 students emphasized that they considered a particular person as wise, even though that person had never obtained a college degree.

What distinguish wise people from intelligent/knowledgeable individuals are not their cognitive abilities but their capacity for self-reflection and self-transformation (Blanchard-Fields & Norris, 1995). Several students mentioned this fact. "Wisdom requires self-awareness, empathy, creativity and mental acuity, traits that are extremely hard to find, let alone in one person. I find them all in my father." "A wise individual is someone who has obtained knowledge through experience, reflection, and insight." The following examples illustrate the process of attaining wisdom.

My father is what I refer to as a "wise" individual. As he approaches his early sixties, he can reflect on his past which has transformed him into the person he is today. My father always has a story for everything because he has experienced so much throughout time... Wisdom is taking the facts or knowledge from past experiences, and using them as guidance.

My grandfather has been able to reflect on the decisions he has made in his life and looked at where and what he would change. This is the biggest difference I see in wisdom and knowledge. It is the difference of really being able to sit down and reflect on and look over what had happened and is happening. In doing so my grandfather has been able to realize what he could have done better and pass it down to my father, my siblings and myself. This gives us a better opportunity to succeed in life.

Although my [wise] uncle often talks about times he has failed or done the wrong thing, he has a hopeful spirit about him that he knows he isn't supposed to know how to do everything in this world correctly, but can provide insight into what he has learned from himself and those around him. He is somewhat quiet in that he notices little things about himself, he is self-observant, but also notices what others do as well.

By looking at phenomena and events from different perspectives, including their own thoughts, emotions, and behavior, wise people are gradually able to transcend their subjectivity and projections (Blanchard-Fields & Norris, 1995; Clayton, 1982). This allows them to see reality with greater clarity rather than from a self-centered point of view, and makes it less likely that they would become overwhelmed by negative thoughts and emotions, which in turn might lead to destructive actions (Hart, 1987; Kunzmann & Baltes, 2003; Levitt, 1999; Pascual-Leone, 2000). For example, having an argument with someone is likely to cause feelings of anger, thoughts of righteousness, and, if things get out of hand, negative behavior, such as shouting or fighting. However, if people are able to see all sides of an argument, they are less likely to get angry because they can acknowledge different viewpoints. This, in turn, might make it easier to find a compromise that satisfies all of the parties involved. Through self-reflection and self-observation, wise people might sense very early in the encounter when a situation becomes tense, which might enable them to steer the conversation in a more constructive direction.

APPROACH

Because people acquire intellectual knowledge and wisdom in different ways, their approach to knowledge also varies. An intelligent/knowledgeable person typically approaches knowledge from an abstract, detached, scientific, and theoretical point of view (Strijbos, 1995). Hence, it is not surprising that many of the students' intelligent/knowledgeable nominees have earned or are in the process of earning a college degree or even a Ph.D. As one student wrote,

I define a knowledgeable and intelligent individual as someone who has had an abundance of education. For example, I regard a person with a Ph.D. as someone who is highly intelligent in their chosen field. If you have a Ph.D. that means you thoroughly understand the knowledge of what you study. So when I think of a knowledgeable person, the first person I think of is a university professor.

However, intellectual knowledge can also be obtained outside the formal educational system. For example,

When I think of someone I know that is intellectual and knowledgeable, I think about my dad. He is in his mid fifties and is very knowledgeable about digital cameras. He looks at cameras from a very scientific way. For example, he will buy ten cameras at a time, research about them, open them up and take a look inside, and evaluate each and every one. Sometimes, it takes him months to decide which camera he wants.... I know that my dad feels like he is learning more every time he "plays" with a camera. He will manipulate them, read the owners manual cover to cover, and research about them online.

This kind of knowledge tends to be impersonal rather than personal and might not necessarily help an individual in social situations. For example, one student observed, "at times [my intelligent/knowledgeable friend] can be a bit socially awkward. It seems there are times when he can't apply his [vast] knowledge to a situation and he may, in turn, struggle with that situation."

The quest for wisdom, by contrast, is inherently personal (Clayton, 1982). It is about finding answers to spiritual questions, such as "What is the meaning and purpose of life?" and "How should I best live my life?" (Blanchard-Fields & Norris, 1995; Clayton & Birren, 1980; Kupperman, 2005). This kind of knowledge is applied, concrete, and involved and addresses intrapersonal and interpersonal issues, such as one's fears and desires and one's social relationships with others (Ardelt, 2000b; Clayton, 1982; Dittmann-Kohli & Baltes, 1990; Holliday & Chandler, 1986; Kramer, 1990; Strijbos, 1995; Taranto, 1989). Wisdom is knowledge that is realized through experiences, self-reflection, and self-examination by listening to the lessons that life offers (Blanchard-Fields & Norris, 1995). The following quote from one of the students illustrate this best.

Jimi Hendrix, who is in my eyes one of the greatest musicians and thinkers of our time, put it best when he said, "Knowledge speaks, but wisdom

listens." While this simple statement may not seem overly profound at first glance, it does indeed carry a world of meaning in highlighting the vast differences between wisdom and knowledge.

Whereas intellectual knowledge is "out there" (e.g., in books, the media, or the Internet), wisdom is "in here" and transforms the individual accordingly (Ardelt, 2004a; Moody, 1986). Yet, this is another reason why wisdom cannot be as easily taught as intellectual knowledge. Simply reading a book or listening to a lecture on wisdom will not make a person wise. As one student explained,

While [my intelligent/knowledgeable friend] may be able to memorize every fact from a textbook, she is not capable of processing these facts into everyday life. My father, on the other hand, may not be able to memorize every fact in a textbook, but his knowledge from his experiences will help guide him in the right direction for his future.

Although life experiences remain the key for the acquisition of wisdom, a wise mentor can serve as a guide through those experiences (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Kupperman, 2005; Pascual-Leone, 2000). For example,

It never fails that I learn something about myself when I am around [my wise grandmother] whether it is how not to be selfish or egotistical, how to show appreciation to my mother, to stand up for myself and my beliefs, and to always maintain my dignity no matter what.

My grandfather ... always had an answer for everything or at least a way to figure out the questions that I had. He always had some kind of inquisitive quote to explain a daily thought, or to explain how sometimes as a young child I wouldn't understand certain things. His favorite sentence was, "now listen to me, really listen to what I am saying, not just what I speak but the words too."

As the above Jimi Hendrix quote illustrates, being able to truly listen to other people and to one's own experiences in life is essential for the development of wisdom. However, this is not easy. Normally, we only hear what we want to hear, and we often use projection to blame other people and circumstances for our own situation (Bradley, 1978; Green & Gross, 1979; Riess, Rosenfeld, Melburg, & Tedeschi, 1981). To be still and listen, therefore, is an important prerequisite of becoming wise (Lozoff, 2000).

RANGE

Intellectual knowledge tends to be time-bound and subject to political and historical fluctuations (Clayton, 1982; Clayton & Birren, 1980; McCarthy, 1996). For example, for many centuries it was considered a "fact" that women are inferior to men. As Zerubavel (1991, p. 65) wrote,

In 1792, when Mary Wollstonecraft published her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, a distinguished Cambridge professor rebutted with a satirical

Vindication of the Rights of Brutes. Only two centuries ago, the mental gap between the sexes was so wide that women were perceived as 'closer' to animals than to men and granting them political rights seemed as ludicrous as extending such rights to beasts.

For most people in the Western world, those "facts" about women are no longer considered true. Furthermore, it is generally acknowledged in the scientific community that intellectual knowledge is superseded by superior intellectual knowledge in the future (Assmann, 1994; Weber, 1973), just as Newton's view of the universe was superseded by Einstein's theory of relativity. As one student rightly pointed out,

One interesting aspect of intelligent individuals is that in order to remain intelligent they must be current with their knowledge. For example, if you walk into an English class and the only critics or scholars they recognize are from the 1930s, the students' perspective of them may change. Especially with scholarly research, it is imperative for the professor to be up-to-date in order to continue to appear intelligent.

Changes in intellectual knowledge might be caused by changes in the political climate of a culture or by scientific and technological advances, such as ease of travel and exchange of information or the invention of supercomputers and scientific instruments to map the genes of individuals and view the stars of distant galaxies.

Although intelligent/knowledgeable individuals tend to know a large amount of information, their knowledge is likely to be domain-specific, narrow, and particularistic (Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1990; Labouvie-Vief, 1990). The available quantity of intellectual knowledge in the Internet age is just too vast to be known by one specific person, which means that most intelligent/knowledgeable individuals are experts in their field, but not necessarily beyond (Chandler & Holliday, 1990; Strijbos, 1995). The student responses echo this sentiment:

My professor in Real Estate Analysis is very knowledgeable about the laws and markets of real estate, but he might not be knowledgeable in the study of astronomy.

For example, one that is knowledgeable is someone that knows a lot about cars, history, and fishing but maybe not so much in plumbing, science and golf. Not saying that these people don't know anything about the other subjects, but it's just that they tend to know less or are limited to these areas. In a way it's like we're classifying these individuals as professionals in these areas of interests.

Wisdom, by contrast, is timeless and independent of political and historical fluctuations or scientific and technological advances because it gives universal answers to universal questions related to the basic predicament of the human existence (Assmann, 1994; Clayton, 1982; Clayton & Birren, 1980; Holliday & Chandler, 1986; Levenson & Crumpler, 1996). For example, answers related to the meaning and purpose of life and human conduct in

the face of injustice, impermanence, and uncertainty are relevant for every culture independent of its specific place in history. This kind of knowledge is not restricted to a specific domain but is relevant for all aspects of life, including one's private, professional, and public life (Assmann, 1994; Labouvie-Vief, 1990; Strijbos, 1995). Hence, wisdom tends to be universal, broad, and holistic rather than domain-specific, narrow, and particularistic (Chandler & Holliday, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1990; Labouvie-Vief, 1990; Strijbos, 1995). Many students wrote that being wise implies seeing the "bigger picture" rather than only the individual parts.

I think that including the relation of the bigger picture is a major and important characteristic of being wise. It combines all knowledge and intelligence into one big pool, rather than separating it into its individual categories.

Wisdom is a state of being.... My Uncle Bill symbolizes for me a ball of wisdom. I say a ball because it never ends with him, as if his wisdom was for infinity. He is wise, mentality, physically, and most important to me spiritually.... To me wisdom is something that comes from within. Within the soul you see your potential and your chance at wisdom. Wisdom contains more of a bigger picture than the title of being knowledgeable.

This also means that unlike intellectual knowledge, wisdom will not become outdated with time, which allows older people to become the bearers of wisdom.

RELATION TO AGING

The above descriptions of the differences between intellectual knowledge and wisdom make it clear that intellectual knowledge can be learned early in life through all kinds of media, whereas the acquisition of wisdom requires learning from life itself through personal experiences, which is likely to take more time (Brugman, 2006; Kekes, 1983). Several students expressed this sentiment.

A wise man can also be intelligent and knowledgeable but wisdom is usually seen in elder individuals, whereas knowledge and intelligence can be seen in the youth ages.

I believe that wisdom, like wine, is better with age, if not nonexistent at all if it weren't for age, solely based on the assumption that with age comes experience. I think to be wise you have to have lived a lot.

I associate wise people with more mature, older people that have been able to live more.

When I envision a wise person, I immediately see someone who is much older. I see someone who is no younger than 70.

In many traditional societies, older people were venerated for their wisdom (Assmann, 1994), and the students in my class also followed this pattern. In general, wisdom nominees were more likely to be older than intelligent/knowledgeable nominees. When students thought about a wise

person, a grandparent came most often to mind, whereas a friend or parent came to mind when they thought about an intelligent/knowledgeable individual. Consistent with theories and empirical research on the development of wisdom and intellectual knowledge (Ardelt, 2004b; Jordan, 2005), middle-aged people, such as parents and college professors, tended to be characterized as both wise and intelligent/knowledgeable individuals. As one student wrote,

[W]hen I picture [a knowledgeable and intelligent] person in my mind, this person is not very young. This could be because in our society being young is often associated with being foolish and being engaged in processes of learning, not knowing an abundance of knowledge yet. Therefore, I picture a university professor, male or female, no younger than the age of 35.... A knowledgeable person has the characteristic of being middle-aged. This is because they are old enough to be able to understand their chosen field, and are engulfed in the knowledge of their studies, and they are therefore labeled as intelligent. However, they are only middle-aged and have not entered into old age, so they are still lacking many life experiences that one must experience to be considered a wise individual.

The association between intellectual knowledge and age tends to follow a reversed u-shaped pattern. That is, intellectual knowledge first tends to increase with age but then is likely to diminish in old age due to memory loss, general cognitive decline, and/or outdated knowledge (Baltes, Staudinger, Maercker, & Smith, 1995; Clayton, 1982; Moody, 1986). By contrast, the relation between wisdom and age is *potentially* positive as long as the individual remains willing to learn from experiences and to engage in self-reflection and self-examination (Kekes, 1983; Kramer, 1990).

The potential decline in intellectual knowledge with age is described by this student.

Like wisdom, knowledge is presumed to be gained over time. However, many people admit that there are frequent exceptions to this. Anyone in possession of a deep well of information can be said to be knowledgeable, whether he be a child prodigy or a retired professor. Many think that it is easier to become knowledgeable than to develop wisdom. I do not agree with this at all. Once someone develops wisdom, it is very rare that he loses his ability to think wisely. On the other hand, knowledge must be constantly worked on and added to. This is especially difficult when considering my definition of knowledge that involves general information on many different topics.

However, not all students agreed that wisdom is related to age. One student stated,

Many people attribute wisdom to age, but I do not agree with this. I do believe that wisdom develops through life experiences. However, I have met wise individuals of all ages. Those with wisdom at a young age seem to have lived through many things in a short period of time. At the same time, there are many individuals well advanced in years that have gone through life, and

gained no wisdom. In fact, I do not personally know many older people whom I would deem wise.

Most wisdom researchers would concur that wisdom does not automatically increase with age and that it is relatively rare even among older adults (Ardelt, 1997; Assmann, 1994; Baltes & Freund, 2003; Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Dittmann-Kohli & Baltes, 1990; Jordan, 2005; Staudinger, 1999; Sternberg, 1990; Webster, 2003). It is also possible to find wisdom in younger people, particularly those who have become wise beyond their years by dealing with hardships in their life, such as serious health or family problems (Bluck & Glück, 2004; Pascual-Leone, 2000). In fact, three of the students named people in their early twenties as exemplars of a wise person. Still, as Kekes (1983, p. 286) declared, "One can be old and foolish, but a wise man is likely to be old, simply because such growth takes time" or at least requires a certain accumulation of life experiences.

The empirical evidence on the association between age and wisdom is mixed, however, and might also depend on the definition and measurement of wisdom (Sternberg, 2005). The Max Planck Institute group in Berlin defines wisdom as expert knowledge in the fundamental pragmatics of life and the conduct and meaning of life (e.g., Baltes & Smith, 1990; Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Baltes et al., 1995; Dittmann-Kohli & Baltes, 1990; Smith & Baltes, 1990; Smith, Staudinger, & Baltes, 1994). The group measures wisdom-related knowledge by rating people's answers to hypothetical life problems in the areas of life planning, life management, and life review in relation to five wisdom criteria: rich factual knowledge, rich procedural knowledge, life span contextualism, value relativism, and the recognition and management of uncertainty (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Smith & Baltes, 1990). Using the average of those five wisdom criteria, Baltes and colleagues found that in a cross-sectional study of participants between the ages of 14 and 37 years, wisdom-related knowledge tended to increase with age up to the age of about 24 and remained relatively stable thereafter (Pasupathi, Staudinger, & Baltes, 2001). In another cross-sectional sample of 533 participants between the ages of 20 and 89 years, wisdom-related knowledge was not statistically related to age, although a decrease in wisdom-related knowledge was observed after 80 years of age (Baltes et al., 1995; Staudinger, 1999). Similarly, younger people were equally represented among the top 20% of wisdom performers as older participants above the age of 60 (Baltes et al., 1995; Staudinger, Smith, & Baltes, 1992), and clinical psychologists between the ages of 25 and 37 years received similar scores on wisdom-related knowledge as older clinical psychologists between the ages of 65 and 82 years (Smith et al., 1994; Staudinger et al., 1992).

Yet, Takahashi and Overton (2002, 2005), who define and measure wisdom as a combination of analytic wisdom (knowledge and abstract reasoning) and synthetic wisdom (reflective understanding, emotional empathy, and emotional regulation), showed that older adults (mean age = 70 years) tended to score higher on wisdom than middle-aged adults (mean age = 45 years) in a sample of American and Japanese participants.

In my own research, I define wisdom as a combination of cognitive (a deep understanding of life and a desire to know the truth), reflective (self-awareness and a perception of phenomena and events from multiple perspectives), and affective (sympathetic and compassionate love for others) personality qualities, based on earlier studies on implicit wisdom theories by Clayton and Birren (Ardelt, 1997, 2004b; Clayton & Birren, 1980). Using a self-administered three-dimensional wisdom scale (3D-WS) to measure wisdom (Ardelt, 2003), I found that older adults between the ages of 52 and 87 years (mean age = 71 years) did not score significantly higher on wisdom than current college students. However, older adults with a college degree had significantly higher wisdom scores, on average, than current college students and were also overrepresented among the top 20% of wisdom scorers compared with current college students and older adults without a college degree (Ardelt, 2006). The results suggest that wisdom might increase with age for those people who have the motivation and the opportunity to pursue its acquisition.

Cross-sectional studies are, of course, ultimately unable to answer the question whether the wisdom of a person tends to increase with age. If some people gain wisdom with age, while others lose it, the net effect would be zero and give the impression that wisdom is unrelated to age. However, in a longitudinal study on the development of wisdom, Wink and Helson (1997) found that practical wisdom (measured by self-reported cognitive, reflective, and mature adjectives from the Adjective Check List) tended to increase between the ages of 27 and 52 years, which was even more pronounced for clinical psychologists than for nonpsychologists. Hence, it appears that wisdom *can* increase with age but that such personal growth also requires motivation, determination, self-examination, self-reflection, and an openness to all kinds of experiences to do the necessary inner work that the development of wisdom demands (Kekes, 1983, 1995; Kramer, 1990; Pascual-Leone, 2000; Staudinger & Kunzmann, 2005).

EFFECTS ON THE KNOWER

Through reflection, self-reflection, and openness to all kinds of experiences, a wise person is likely to arrive at Socrates' realization, "I know that I don't know." Because wise people have a deep understanding of the human condition, they are also aware of the inherent limits of human knowledge, the complexities of human nature, including its positive and negative aspects, and the uncertainty, unpredictability, and impermanence of life (Brugman, 2000; Kekes, 1983; Sternberg, 1990). As one student stated,

Now when I think of a wise individual I think of Yoda from the movie Star Wars. This type of character is usually an elder being.... They have knowledge and intelligence though not only by studying it, but they have experienced it as well.... They have the answer to every question you ask and possibly even put it in a way that makes total sense to you. When this person tells you something you say "aha". You feel and should feel that it's an honor that you can meet one of these types. They are very understanding of

the youth and ... they are very patient.... They just know what to do, when to do it, and how it should be done. What makes the wise great is that they don't ever think they know it all. The wise will continue to grow even more than you could imagine.

Wise individuals have "seen through illusion" (McKee & Barber, 1999) by transcending their subjectivity and projections, which includes the illusion of the permanence of their own self (Levitt, 1999; Metzinger, 2003; Takahashi, 2000). Through the practice of self-examination, self-reflection, and mindfulness (Brown & Ryan, 2003), wise people have diminished their self-centeredness and achieved humility and self-transcendence (Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1990; Hart, 1987; Kekes, 1995; Levenson, Aldwin, & Cupertino, 2001; Levitt, 1999; Taranto, 1989). Comparing a wise individual with an intelligent/knowledgeable person, one student noted,

If you compare the Dalai Lama with someone like Donald Trump you'll find that while Trump's life basically revolves around his ego, the Dalai Lama has a perfect grasp on his. Donald Trump studied hard and learned the ways of the business world to better his own life and in doing this, one becomes inherently competitive.... Knowledgeable people in general do a lot more speaking than they do listening, when listening is what in fact makes someone wise. To be a listener (or a wise person), you must be able to separate your self from your ego, which is in fact hard to do, and which is exactly what the Dalai Lama has done. Without having an excessive ego or overbearing pride, one can truly open oneself up to learning from others and every event they experience in their lives.

Intelligent/knowledgeable individuals are not necessarily humble, particularly if they are under the illusion that they know. They might be proud of their knowledge and develop a feeling of superiority toward people with less intellectual knowledge. In fact, several of the students mentioned this danger.

An example of a knowledgeable and intelligent person that I know is my roommate. [He has a] high confidence level, but sometimes too high for his own good.

There also seems to be this sense of elevation over others.... This elevated status can go from being "smart" to all the way to being a genius. This elevated status sometimes seems to separate the individual from those who are not seen as knowledgeable or intelligent. Some stay humble, but others may buy into this elevation and consider themselves superior.

[T]his person I hold as the most intelligent and knowledgeable individual I know ... is the most ambitious, most promising, smartest and most driven person I have ever known, but he lacked wisdom, compassion, and the big picture. He now attends Harvard and serves jail time in the summers.

Humility and self-transcendence, however, are not the same as having low self-confidence or low self-esteem (Helson & Srivastava, 2002; Maslow, 1970). On the contrary, the transcendence of self-centeredness tends to be accompanied by positive emotions, such as joy, serenity, and a general

sentiment of good-will and sympathetic and compassionate love for others (Achenbaum & Orwoll, 1991; Clayton & Birren, 1980; Csikszentmihalyi & Nakamura, 2005; Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1990; Hart, 1987; Holliday & Chandler, 1986; Kramer, 1990; Levitt, 1999; Pascual-Leone, 1990). Sixteen of the 39 students (41%) explicitly mentioned that their wisdom nominees were compassionate, empathetic, and understanding, whereas none of the intelligent/knowledgeable nominees were characterized in this way. The following examples highlight some of the positive qualities that students attributed to wise individuals.

The Dalai Lama is well known for being one of the most influential spiritual leaders of Tibetan Buddhism, and in many ways is the epitome of wisdom. In listening to many of the Dalai Lama's [talk's] you immediately feel an overwhelming sense of humbleness and kindness emanating from his teachings. At the core of his beliefs is always radiating compassion and love to each [and] every life form you come in contact with. It is abundantly clear that the Dalai Lama feels that in the grand scheme of life, money, status, and other material things should be on the back burner to qualities such as patience and empathy. Not surprisingly, you will find that the large majority of people immediately fall in love with the Dalai Lama upon either seeing him speak or simply exposing themselves to his valuable lessons in life.

Someone I view as a wise person would be a psychology teacher I had in high school.... This teacher was very understanding and accepting of everyone, which I found amazing as ... students in high school are usually obnoxious. He seemed to have a higher understanding I could not comprehend and thus the reason why he seemed never to get upset with students. While I knew he was very intelligent and wise, he did not seem to boast [about] these attributes or to even openly consider himself wise.

[My wise] grandfather shows a lot of sympathy and compassion for people. He never holds grudges and always knows what is best for everyone. He never seems concerned about his own welfare, but more concerned about the welfare of the people around him.

Amongst the many lessons my [wise] great grandfather taught me, the most valuable was the one that I learned watching him live his daily life. In every situation, my great grandfather looked for the good in people. He always put himself on the line for others and truly knew the value of charity. He was extremely self-less and caring.

Being concerned about other people's welfare rather than only one's own welfare was one of the characteristics of wise individuals that students described. In general, students seemed to agree that wise people know how to lead a life that is good for themselves, good for others, and good for the whole society (Baltes & Freund, 2003; Baltes, Glueck, & Kunzmann, 2002; Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Hart, 1987; Kekes, 1995; Kramer, 2000; Kunzmann & Baltes, 2003, 2005; Kupperman, 2005; Sternberg, 1998). The following quote illustrates the connection between a wise person, others, and society.

A wise person is one that is introspective, gains knowledge for the sake of understanding himself as well as his society and hoping that one day, by imparting that knowledge upon others, he might be able to positively

change society... [I believe] people like Mahatma Gandhi, Buddha, and Mother Teresa are wise. Gandhi was a lawyer but he did not care about the monetary gains of law and led the people of India through his actions of peace, unity and concern for the fellow man to independence. He was influenced by his religious beliefs as well as morals that everyone is created equally. Buddha was the son of a prince but he was shocked by the sight of poverty and death and was driven by his internal desire for knowledge and wisdom. Through pain and suffering, he learned about both the good and bad aspects of living and imparted them upon others in society... Buddha influenced society because even today people follow the teachings of Buddha. Mother Teresa was driven by her religious beliefs, however it was her ultimate faith in the goodness of people and her desire to help others that allowed her to see humans as equals. By helping people, she led by example and today many are inspired by her to help others.

Paradoxically, by caring about others rather than themselves, wise people might experience contentment and satisfaction with life even if objective circumstances are less than ideal (Ardelt, 2005). For example, in several studies of younger, middle-aged, and older adults, wisdom was positively related to life satisfaction and subjective well-being (Ardelt, 2003; Brugman, 2000; Takahashi & Overton, 2002), even after controlling for finances, physical health, socioeconomic status, physical environment, and social involvement (Ardelt, 1997, 2000a).

CONCLUSION

The students' responses, describing the characteristics of a wise person, were consistent with earlier studies on implicit (lay) theories of wisdom, which asked participants to rate or name characteristics of wise individuals. For example, Bluck and Glück (2005) listed cognitive ability, insight, reflective attitude, concern for others, and real-world skills as the most common qualities ascribed to wise people by participants in five different studies on implicit wisdom theories. Given those descriptions, wisdom is often considered to be the pinnacle of human development (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Brugman, 2006).

Yet, is it true, as most students in this study appear to believe, that unlike intellectual knowledge, wisdom cannot be learned in schools and universities but "is [only] gained through accumulation of experience over the years"? Some scholars have argued that schools and universities should not only teach intellectual knowledge but also promote the development of wisdom so that individuals at any age will have the chance to be wise and to benefit from their wisdom throughout the life course (Bassett, 2006; Brown, 2004; Ferrari, 2004; Reznitskaya & Sternberg, 2004; Sternberg, 2001). This, however, would require more than teaching the acquisition of intellectual skills and knowledge (Jax, 2005; Sternberg, 2001). Wisdom "... transcends the intellect" (Naranjo, 1972, p. 225) and, therefore, surpasses an intellectual understanding of phenomena and events (Ardelt, 2000b, 2004b; Chandler & Holliday, 1990; Clayton, 1982; Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1990; Kekes, 1983; Taranto, 1989). As Blanchard-Fields and

Norris (1995, p. 105) remarked, "wisdom is not simply one aspect of knowledge, but knowledge is only one aspect of wisdom." To become wise necessitates a profound personal transformation (Achenbaum & Orwoll, 1991; Ardel, 2004b; Assmann, 1994; Kekes, 1983; Kupperman, 2005; Moody, 1986). Hence, according to Jax (2005, p. 37), wisdom "is the use of knowledge in light of spiritual purpose."

Although it is not possible to teach wisdom as straightforward as intellectual knowledge, Sternberg (2001) argued that schools can at least provide the scaffolding for the acquisition of wisdom by teaching students not just *what* to think but also *how* to think. Sternberg (1998, p. 347) defines wisdom "as the application of tacit knowledge as mediated by values toward the achievement of a common good through a balance among multiple (a) intrapersonal, (b) interpersonal, and (c) extrapersonal interests in order to achieve a balance among (a) adaptation to existing environments, (b) shaping of existing environments, and (c) selection of new environments." Brown (2004) advocates the promotion of wisdom in colleges and universities by providing a learning environment that is based on reflection, integration, and application and, thus, enables students to learn from their experiences by engaging, for example, in service learning (Honnet & Poulsen, 1989).

Finally, spiritual practices have been designed to foster the development of wisdom in addition to learning from life experiences (e.g., Hart, 1987; Lozoff, 2000). The practice of meditation, in particular, tends to result in self-reflection and self-awareness, a decrease of self-centeredness, greater sympathy and compassion for others, and ultimately greater wisdom (Pascual-Leone, 2000). In fact, teaching meditation to students might be one way to promote the development of wisdom in schools and universities (Holland, 2006; Oman et al., 2007; Rockefeller, 2006; Wall, 2005)

In sum, although intellectual knowledge is important in life, it is not sufficient to lead a life that is good for oneself, good for others, and good for society as a whole (Baltes & Freund, 2003; Baltes et al., 2002; Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Hart, 1987; Kekes, 1995; Kramer, 2000; Kunzmann & Baltes, 2003, 2005; Kupperman, 2005; Sternberg, 1998). As one of the students wisely stated,

It seems that it is more beneficial to be wise and not knowledgeable than it is to be knowledgeable and unwise. Since there are many who have been blessed with a lot of knowledge, it is important they seek wisdom as well.

PERSONAL MINI-EXPERIMENTS

Becoming Wise

There are no easy shortcuts for the development of wisdom. However, the following exercises in mindfulness might help you to learn from your experiences and, therefore, promote the acquisition of wisdom.

Observe Everything: Look out your window or sit in your own backyard. Close your eyes and take a couple of conscious breaths. Open your eyes and

for approximately 15 minutes try to observe *everything!* Do not talk to anyone during that time. Observe *everything* in your surroundings. Repeat this exercise in different environments.

Be Mindful: Practice "mindful presence" and "mindful listening" when talking with someone. Try to listen completely to the other person. Don't interrupt the person who is talking, don't try to tell your own story, and don't think "ahead" while the other person is talking. Practice mindful listening and being fully present in the moment.

Move Toward Meditation: Practice spending some time *with* yourself (rather than just *by* yourself). Be mindfully aware of *everything* you do. For example, be aware that you are walking, that you stop walking, that you are sitting down. Close your eyes and feel yourself breathing and sitting. Observe the thoughts that come into your head. Don't follow or indulge in the thoughts, just realize the thoughts that are there. Try to feel your body. After about 15 minutes, open your eyes and realize how you feel. Don't judge yourself. Just realize whether you feel calm, nervous, agitated, peaceful, angry, loving, and so on.

To really make progress on the path to wisdom, participate in a meditation retreat. Information on many meditation courses and retreats can be found on the Internet. For information on an ancient mindfulness meditation technique that traces its roots to the teachings of the Buddha, see <http://www.dhamma.org>.

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