TAKING THE ARCHETYPES TO SCHOOL

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine the use of the archetypes in the education of children with learning disabilities as a means of improving self-efficacy, encouraging self-determination, and fostering positive engagement with "deep educational processes." This paper will include sections on Background and Identifying Characteristics, Methodology, Analysis of Problems and Solutions, and Conclusions.

Background and Identifying Characteristics

The number of children who suffer from Learning Disabilities (LD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) continues to increase at an alarming rate. According to Boyle et al. (2011) nearly 8% of all school children in the United States are currently diagnosed with a LD, and another nearly 7% with ADHD.[1] The United States Congress reauthorized the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 2004. This federal law secures special education services for children with learning disabilities. It defines a Learning Disability as the condition when a child's academic achievement is substantially below what one might expect for that child. Learning disabilities do not include problems that are primarily the result of visual or hearing impairment or emotional and intellectual disability. Attention Deficit

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011, www.cdc.gov/features/dsdev_disabilities/

Hyperactivity Disorder is defined as a "persistent pattern of inattention and/ or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development."[2]

Children who are diagnosed with a learning disability are often exposed to a number of risk factors including reduced self-esteem, academic difficulty, loneliness, depression, and the desire for social acceptance. The confluence of these factors may predispose the children to leave school prematurely and later suffer from severe substance misuse disorders.[3] The Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA), established in 1963, is a leading resource for information on Learning Disabilities. The LDA notes that 15% of the population experiences a learning disability and that the profound effects can be lifelong and observed in poorly developed social skills, low self-esteem, and impulsivity. These effects take a toll on the individual but also have a profound effect on family members. Kathleen Ross-Kidder noted that LD students are significantly less likely to graduate from high school and more likely to be placed in juvenile detention facilities. It is estimated that 50% of incarcerated youth have identified special education needs. Ross-Kidder addressed the concern that when teachers implore LD students to "do better," their self-esteem and positive peer relationships decrease and a pattern of academic and social withdrawal follows. It is suggested that these factors increase the likelihood of delinquency, drug use, and emotional problems. The LDA strongly encourages uncovering children's hidden aptitudes and gifts as one means of overcoming the obstacles learning disabled students face.[4]

As an elementary special education teacher, I was aware that students within my classroom had average or above average intelligence and had been identified learning disabled due to deficits in processing and attention. They received special education services in my classroom, both one-on-one and in small groups, for one to three years. When not receiving remediation and compensatory services in the areas of their identified deficit, they participated in their general education classroom. Many of the students struggled to adapt to a system that often placed them in a marginalized, "less-than" position due to their LD diagnosis.

Through a confluence of seemingly unrelated events I came upon the work of C. G. Jung and a program of study dedicated to exploring his work at the Assisi Institute, which suggested an approach for working with my students. As a result of my involvement in these areas, I was able to adapt a

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2 *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition* (Arlington, Virginia: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 61.

3 The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2000, www.casacolumbia.org/addiction-research/reports/substance-abuse-learning-disabilities

4 Kathleen Ross-Kidder, "Learning Disabilities, ADHD and Delinquency: Is There a Link? An Introduction," LD online, http://www.ldonline.org/article/5729/

number of Jungian concepts and introduce them as teaching strategies and learning activities with the children. Within the teacher-student relationship, the children were given an opportunity to work with and apply the concepts of the Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious,[5] Archetypal Patterning,[6] and the Hero's Journey.[7] The introduction of these concepts became useful in modifying and reducing some of the burdens many of these children experience on a daily basis. The following offers a brief summary of these key concepts.

Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious

Archetypes (from the Greek word, archetypos, archai, meaning ground principle, or old, and typos, meaning to strike) are the deepest patterns of psychic functioning, the primordial elements from which patterns emerge. They are thought to exist within the human unconscious, and through repeated actions, take on characteristic patterns of human behavior. C. G. Jung, who reintroduced the ancient idea of archetype into modern psychology (Augustine wrote of them as "ideas in the mind of God"), describes them as metaphors.[8] As metaphors (but also living potential energies) rather than things, archetypes are best described and understood as the source of images. We are thus able to see their manifestation through images and symbols that lead us from the conscious image to the unknown archetypal energy.

Each archetype exemplifies a way of being on the journey of life. They reside as energy, the life drive of the unconscious, and are subsequently full of potential. Their energy is always available. For an archetype to have an impact, some external experience of the pattern must take place. It could be an actual event or introduced through stories or myths. The resulting interplay between the inner and outer awakens the energy of an archetype and its expression.

Archetypal Patterning

Incorporating some of the concepts of dynamical systems theory, quantum physics, and Jungian psychology, Michael Conforti has examined

5 Carl Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Vol. 9, Pt. 1 in *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Bollingen Foundation, Inc., 1959).

6 Michael Conforti, *Field, Form, and Fate: Patterns in Mind, Nature, and Psyche* (New Orleans, Spring Journal Books, 1999).

7 Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 122-163.

8 Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 4.

the role of the archetypes and their capacity to organize and shape living systems, including human behavior, at both the individual and collective level. Identifying and understanding the alignment a person or group has to a particular archetype can inform how behavior will continue to unfold according to the mandates or "rules" of that aspect of the archetype, and how changes in thinking, self-awareness, and action can create new relationships and possibilities. This change is the result of forming a different alignment to an archetype's energy, which then allows it to be expressed within the person's or group's life. Patterns of behavior are thought to emerge from the archetypal field and carry the potential for the expression of form.[9]

The relationship between archetypes and the specific patterns they generate becomes recognizable. Each of us, as a unique manifestation of this creative hologram (where the whole is reflected in the tiniest part), is thus connected to the origin. Patterns give us a vocabulary by which images can be understood, and provide a road map that assists in becoming aware of meaningful coincidences, the symbolic structure of events, and resonance.

Hero's Journey

The hero's journey represents a fundamental motif or theme in the human experience, and stories of heroic journeys abound across time among all peoples and in all places. The hero responds to a call that needs to be answered, and the journey represents a process of finding one's identity, a path that is true to the individual. Heroes embark on a journey of transformation, leaving one condition, often a weakness or wound, in order to bring forth a sense of balance and wholeness. Mythologist Joseph Campbell found that all myths deal with the transformation of consciousness because they require individuals to change the way they have been thinking. Campbell laid out three elements of the hero's journey:

1. Separation: the initiate experiences a call to face the unknown.
2. Initiation: the initiate is required to face challenges, experiencing test, trials and ordeals.
3. Return: the initiate returns with a boon, a new awareness or insight that can be passed on to others.[10]

9 Conforti, *Field, Form, and Fate.*

10 Joseph Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces.* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2008), 23.

Methodology

In order to translate these complex ideas into practical classroom applications, I entered the two-year program of intensive study at the Assisi Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont. The program was organized around an in-depth exploration of Jung's key concepts of the Archetypes, and Conforti's further elaboration of these concepts in application to a variety of settings including psychotherapy and education. Through ongoing mentorship with senior faculty and participation at conferences, I began to slowly and carefully modify established assessment and teaching strategies used in the special education classroom setting. Modifications included the introduction of the hero and the following related archetypal roles: Seeker, Creator, Innocent, Sage, Warrior, and Orphan. This placed the learning disabled students' struggles within a larger context. The modifications included creating a field for self-expression and the development of supplemental learning activities. The implementation began as I combined my teaching experience with the complex ideas, adapting them in a way that would be useful to the students. I introduced these ideas with a cohort of 12 children. Since these teaching strategies appeared to be understood, I added another group of children, and eventually a total of 30 students were introduced to these ideas.

In order to be open to the children's responses to the introduction of these concepts, a grounded theory approach was utilized. Patton notes that "grounded theory focuses on the process of generating theory rather than a particular theoretical content."[11] This approach would permit openness to the data that allowed the children to suggest how these modified teaching activities were of use to them.

Analysis of the Problem: The Plight of the Children

Elementary age children who have been identified as having deficits in learning and who have been introduced to the theory of Archetypal Pattern Analysis have demonstrated the ability to reformulate their lives. They have redefined the stigma of their experience by identifying and aligning with archetypal patterns that awakened their potential and which lessened the negative effects of feeling marginalized and inferior, thus moving them out of the field of "disability." Prior to the introduction of this method, students often mentioned feeling left out, belittled, and shamed. By the time a child has qualified for special education services, the education system (the collective) has labeled and segregated them due to a significant discrepancy between

11 Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 125.

academic achievement and intellectual ability. They are not viewed as whole but as diminished, partial, or incomplete.

Often teachers believe they are encouraging students when they suggest that the students "should try harder or do your best"; however the students are already trying hard to keep up and are working to the best of their ability. To compound the stigma, some teachers resort to shaming (calling them lazy, unmotivated, or disorganized), while classmates call them stupid. As a result, they internalize many of the labels, and these "You are" statements become "I am" statements. McAdams has noted that insecure attachments create less hopeful attitudes.[12] It appears that having repeated negative attitudes directed toward students by teachers and classmates is a factor in their withdrawal and the decrease in school engagement. Academic effort begins to seem futile and these students develop self-defeating strategies. The resulting learned helplessness response operates to stop thinking processes. Their sense of self becomes limited and they are living by other's definitions of them in a field of inferiority and disability. These feelings negatively impact their school experience at the time when it is anticipated they will be building competency.

Erik Erikson's childhood developmental stage of Industry vs. Inferiority informs us that grade school children's tasks revolve around imagination, competence, work, and fun.[13] Learning disabled students' difficulty feeling competent in academics and/or social skills promotes feeling inferior and wounded. The sense of inferiority and shame may lay a foundation and be the trajectory for later issues regarding dropping out, addiction, and incarceration. Shame brings feelings of unworthiness and the students' daily desire "to hide" implies a sense of feeling inferior and a lack of self-esteem. Erikson believed that self-esteem resulted from having a sense of self-control. Learning disabled students experience minimal control over their learning or social relationships. Consequently, these are likely factors in the risks listed above and motivation for relying on learned helplessness as a coping mechanism.

More recent research on childhood development by Allen[14] and Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist, and Target[15] regarding the concept of "mentalizing" (the process of making sense of mental states in oneself and others) indicates that trauma promotes a defensive withdrawal from the mental world. Again, learning disabled students' persistent desire to hide themselves, their work, and their grades suggests that they experience some degree of trauma from

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12 Dan P. McAdams, *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of Self* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993), 47.

13 Erik Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: Norton, 1959), 70-71.

14 Jon G. Allen, "Mentalizing," *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic*, Vol.67, No. 2 (Spring 2003): 91-112.

15 Peter Fonagy, Gyorgy Gergely, Elliot Jurist, and Mary Target, *Affect Regulation, Mentalization, and the Development of Self* (New York: Other Press, 2002), 3.

their school experience. Allen notes that if a child avoids mentalizing (the students would describe it as "shutting down") the child's capacity to cope with frightening relationships is undermined.[16] Mentalizing is a core way of regulating stress as one makes sense of their experience. The children's desire to make sense of their experience was always obvious but had not been attainable. As they aligned with the energy of the archetypes and reframed their disability as a challenge, which could be lived heroically, they began to experience a greater sense of control. Defining their experience within a larger context would promote understanding and perhaps free them to reengage mentally in the school experience.

Students entering my classroom frequently had a history of behavior problems, excessive visits to the nurse's office for stomach aches and headaches, and absenteeism that reached the level of truancy. Since research has shown the increased likelihood of learning disabled students to actively engage in the development of maladaptive behaviors, finding an intervention to change this trajectory seemed crucial. It seemed imperative to shift their behavior out of pathology into adaptive forms of expression. As students became aware of the potential inherent in reading archetypal patterns, including the hero's journey, their ability to organize, envision, and reorient their understanding of their experience became evident. In addition, their personal transformation was observable to their parents and school personnel.

The Frame

The development of this project occurred during class time with students aged eight to eleven years, and evolved out of classroom discussions, story analysis, and individual student projects. Their desire to understand their experience, their capacity to be reflective and their openness to seeing their lives in a broader perspective was obvious. It seemed clear they were Seekers, searching for a way to be seen as more than their label. Their search for self-knowledge and knowledge of a wider self seemed to have similarity to the analytical process. Within this process they could experience the interplay between the individual, the psyche, and the collective. Thus, individual patterns are revealed within the larger, collective patterns.

This process opens one to the integration of the personality and to individuation, the ability to see oneself separate from others while finding a new sense of identity. Self-knowledge is essential to finding the truth within, which yearns for expression. Touching the truth of our true nature leads to the awareness/action requirement of the individuation process. Setting a frame to increase self-knowledge opened the children to learning more about themselves and placed their experience within universal patterns.

16 Allen, "Mentalizing," 100.

Introducing the students to archetypal patterns and archetypes within the hero's journey gave them a way to address the challenges they faced and provided a frame for understanding their dilemma. Reading archetypal patterns was a way of bringing the eternal into the temporal, and allowed the recognition that patterns inform our lives. This allowed students to recognize that their experiences were "their own" and part of the eternal. The elements within this frame permitted the children to actively engage with the archetypal hero's journey. Consequently the children's capacity for increased self-awareness aided them in the integration of the elements within the constellating field (the initial condition of being labeled/marginalized) into their consciousness. As a result, they learned that when faced with a challenge there are internal resources available for meeting and overcoming it.

Solution: The Self-Awareness Profile and the Discovery of the Self

The purpose of this section is to describe how bringing the archetypes and the hero's journey into the special education classroom facilitated the shift from disability to ability and encouraged children to recast their experience generatively. The Self, the central organizing principle of the collective unconscious, is constantly striving for expression. Consequently, it was important to set a frame that allowed for secure attachments and self-expression. In a system of support, one based on difference rather than deviance, the children could freely explore, tap into their potential, and discover new ways to approach experiences. The research of Allen[17] and Fonagy et al.[18] indicates that when being observed nonjudgmentally, distressing states change for the better and that secure attachments facilitate mentalizing. Within a safe environment it seemed possible to begin moving them out of their limited frame of reference, thus allowing them to express their intrinsic nature and travel their individual path. Examining the archetypal pattern within the hero's journey provided the potential for students to see themselves on a hero's path. It would introduce them to the journey of discovery where they would find experiences that encouraged the expression of their uniqueness, thus touching their own depth. There, they could discover a sense of self, that their potential lies within these undiscovered depths, and that their destiny is waiting to be revealed. This was important because being labeled had diminished the uniqueness of their personal story. Within their own story they recognized archetypal patterns, began to see themselves as separate from others, and learned to stand on their own. They began to display their individuality, which allowed them to recognize and reveal their true self and opened them to the process of individuation.

17 Allen, "Mentalizing," 104.

18 Fonagy et al., *Affect Regulation*, 16.

The project began with the development of an assessment tool, the Self-Awareness Profile, which set a frame for them to begin to explore a relationship with the Self. They had no difficulty identifying their strengths, challenges, concerns, learning styles and preferences, goals, personal style, accomplishments, and motivation style. One section of the profile asked students to identify what they valued. They quickly named what was "true" for them and eliminated what was "untrue." When given the opportunity to act from their identified values, they responded comfortably and with confidence. By recognizing and allowing the "leader within to lead," rather than just being led, a child's life is enhanced by their own values. It makes a vital difference for the "teacher within the child to teach" rather than just be taught. The potential for this expression arose while sorting the Values Cards within the frame of the Self-Awareness Profile. It seemed that naming what they valued presented a self-organizing system from which they could make decisions and set priorities. Perhaps the assuredness with which the students could identify what they valued was reflective of a continued closeness to the Self, and its availability to them.[19] In naming what they valued, part of their individual pattern was being revealed and they had accessed a place of inner knowing. Additionally it allowed them to glimpse the hidden order, invited a reverence for what inside "knows," placed emphasis on their abilities, tapped the potential for a new alignment (what was waiting to be expressed), articulated their gifts, and placed the process of education within their control. Through this process they could begin to "know" themselves rather than "knowing about" themselves and what they "are" instead of what they do. Perhaps through the children's ability to recognize their values, their daimon (carrier of unique destiny) was observable.

All of this information reflects how capable children are of self-definition. Unfortunately, their definitions are often over-imposed by adults (parents and educators) who "know." This prevents children from generating self-stories, as is true of the restitution story identified by Frank.[20] Within a restitution story the learning disabled child is not telling their story; it is told by the system. Beyond children's ability to give self-definition they desire to grow in self-knowledge and discover the presence of their true self. Perhaps the children "sensed" Jung's understanding that the Self is an archetype that provides order and meaning and urges one to become what one is.

When asked how they felt about having something inside to guide them, they answered:

19 Marie-Louise von Franz, *Archetypal Patterns in Fairy Tales* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1997), 149.

20 Arthur Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 92.

"It gives you something to follow"
"Glad something inside tells you"
"Makes you feel special"
"It's your true identity"
"Potential will help you"
"Keep listening to your heart"

Allowing children to follow this inner guidance encourages the individuation process, which June Singer[21] has stated is a path of self-knowledge.

Introducing the archetypes

The intention of introducing archetypes and their patterns was to offer students a different way to relate to their experience and open them to the potential they have within to cope with current and future challenges. It was necessary to meet them where they were, and to gain an understanding of their ability to grasp archetypal language and patterns. The students appeared to have access to ideas and feelings about archetypes within the psyche. This may suggest that children are already equipped to tap these "invisible" patterns, and are open to gaining the wisdom that can be gleaned from recognizing and naming archetypal expressions within a pattern.

Using an Archetype Awareness Assessment developed by this author, the students were asked about the archetypes to determine the level of their understanding and their ability to interpret patterns. Prior to introducing and working with an archetype, they were asked to:

Define the following: Orphan, Innocent, Seeker, Warrior
Consider if their expression is positive, negative, or both
Name how each might be experienced
List skills required to negotiate the experience
Name character traits that could be evoked
Reflect on what they learned
(Prompts were given during the assessment if they were unsure of an archetype's definition)

Once they were aware of the meaning of the archetype, they had little difficulty completing the other parts of the assessment. Within the four archetypes initially discussed (Orphan, Innocent, Seeker, and Warrior), students could name positive and negative attributes for most, but not all.

21 June Singer, *Boundaries of the Soul: The Practice of Jung's Psychology* (New York: Random House, 1994), 92.

They were able to sort their own ideas to answer specific questions on each archetype and could give examples for the answers they stated.

Third, fourth and fifth grade students were able to answer specific questions on each achetype and defined them as:

Orphan
not sure how to get things you want
feel left out
don't know where to turn
feel different; will not get to do some things
disappointed
no one taking care of you
uncertain why things happen

Innocent
wants somebody to help
confused
don't notice things
no one to trust
get in trouble being led
do what supposed to do
will help no matter what

Seeker
never know what's next
stays true to self
follows their own path
doesn't go with the flow
solving something
feels that something is lost
realize need something new

Warrior
savior (saves things)
challenged
protects
stands up for self
going forward (charging)
knows success in fighting with all their strength

Third, fourth and fifth grade students identified skills to negotiate archetypal experiences:

Orphan
get to know others
make friends
tell someone your feelings
do something fun
think happy thoughts
wait to see what happens
meet people

Innocent
ask for meaning
listen
pay attention; notice
get tools
copy others
tell someone you need help
ask questions

Seeker
learn skills needed
ask questions
listen
look carefully
keep looking (not give up)

Warrior
fight through hard times
be careful
believe in yourself
even if scared, you do it
learn skills that are needed

Archetypal Patterning

Archetypal patterns, both conscious and unconscious, shape our character and behavior. In learning to be aware of these patterns, we can adjust and act from our authentic self. Archetypes, being pure potential, contain endless possibilities within the psyche. Because of the depth of the student's inner awareness, we began observing archetypal patterns in stories. Students were able to recognize patterns within the content of the story, the associated growth of the characters, and relate the details of the story to their own lives. In discussing these patterns, they began to see how archetypal energy is present and active in their lives. One fifth grade girl stated that she was a mixture of the archetypes and was able to name and illustrate the specific way she saw herself as an Innocent (unsure), Orphan (feeling left out), and Sage (thinking and studying hard to become smarter). Once they saw that an experience shares a common theme, they became aware that there are strategies available for dealing with problems. A fifth grade boy noted that the development of strategies was a quality of the Sage and illustrated it as being similar to using strategies in chess. Reading stories and myths became a model for noticing that a larger story can be broken down into subplots that are more approachable. In addition, stories provide neutral ground for confronting problems, making choices, and finding solutions. When asked to draw about the archetypes, a third grade student drew our classroom. He stated "we talk about characters in our stories and how they can be like a Sage or an Orphan. We study characters to find out the true meaning of their self. By studying we understand what they are feeling."

Identifying archetypal patterns was a means for children to tap into and enhance self-knowledge. As students read literature and stories, and came to understand the experiences of the characters, they began to interpret patterns and to notice which archetypes were being expressed. The ability to recognize archetypal patterns within stories allowed the students to note that an Orphan's "feeling left out" is one of many expressions within the pattern. Thus they began to see that archetypes shape experience, and that within a pattern there is an array of possibilities for expression.

Recognition of the vast range of possibilities opened them to choice. Knowing there could be "another way" allowed new forms of expression and self-awareness. Since observation and reflection are key factors in self-awareness, reading archetypal patterns plays a role in personal growth. Integration requires awareness and action, so reading patterns and identifying choices increases the likelihood of taking more informed action. As the children learned to recognize archetypal patterns in their own lives and take action derived from a variety of available choices they began to engage in the process of individuation.

The Hero's Journey

Individuation requires us to enter into uncertainty and affords the opportunity to discover what is operating within us. Utilizing the hero's journey was a means for that exploration. The students' ability to touch their inner knowing and their desire to understand their challenge led to the introduction of archetypes within the hero's journey. Heroes are faced with what seems like an impossible task and embark on the journey against their will. They are asked to face challenges that are beyond what feels safe and comfortable. Students who have been identified as learning disabled share that experience. The task of learning did seem impossible to many of the students, and they had not chosen the challenges they would face due to their disability. Choice comes from being able to recognize a pattern rather than having behavior confined to a complex. Learning to read archetypal patterns opened them to becoming empowered as they learned that there are skills and strategies that could help them negotiate their experiences. Within a field there are many alignments; becoming aware that there are multiple ways to approach decisions opened them to a wide range of possibilities. As a result, they felt more comfortable about making decisions and negotiating their unique path. They discovered that by making the journey and living the stages, heroes develop the skills and self-confidence to confront their challenges and take appropriate action. In the process they recognized that one can only be the hero of one's own story.

Joseph Campbell discovered that hero myths, no matter what their origin, told basically the same story. These stories dealt with the pattern of experiencing life and facing its challenges. The hero's journey provides a "map" for finding our way when we are lost or confused. The call to begin the journey may be a response to feeling something has been taken, that there is something lacking in their life, or that something is not permitted to a group. Learning disabled students may be called to respond to any or all of these. Thus their call may be about reclaiming what is taken, finding what is missing, or achieving rights for their group. Campbell described three stages within the journey: Separation, Trials and Return.[22]

Campbell's first stage, Separation, deals with leaving what is known, which can contain the hopefulness and openness of innocence, for what is unknown. The students described their innocence about starting school in some of the following ways: belief that school would be fun, that they would have friends, and that they would learn like other kids. However, they found their school experience to be challenging, and understanding why they learned and were treated differently was a Mystery. It did not take long before their deviations were seen as deviant. So it was in naming experiences within the pattern of the Orphan, feeling left out, lonely, or not feeling cared for, that initiated their

22 Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 23.

journey further into the unknown. For most of them crossing the threshold into the unknown was about asking "what is wrong with me?" A fourth grade girl described her Orphan experience and drew a picture of what it feels like to be left out, and stated that it made her feel invisible. This relates to the hero's responding to the call that there is something lacking.

Such experiences begin the trajectory of living with life-long academic and emotional challenges. The emotional challenges of learning disabled students are rarely addressed by the school system and this compounds the pattern of inferiority, helplessness, depression, and despair. Deegan has suggested that despair and anguish are significant factors in giving up, as giving up numbs the pain of despair and anguish paralyzes the will because it seems there is no hope.[23] Within the pattern of learned helplessness children begin building a highly practiced response system and are quick to say "it's too hard, I can't do it." Seligman's explanatory style is the process by which you habitually explain to yourself why events happen. It suggests that an unremediated negative style leads to depression.[24] Seligman's work suggests that whether or not a child learns in school is a direct consequence of their explanatory style. Students who give up easily believe the causes of their failure are permanent. As noted earlier, believing that one has control is essential to learning. To begin overcoming negative beliefs requires believing that one can change their distorted thinking. Feeling separate and entering the unknown is the beginning of the individuation process, where one's self-knowledge reaches new understanding. This increased self-knowledge can potentially alter distortions in thinking.

It was easy for students to describe experiences within the second stage of Campbell's model. They had no difficulty listing the tests, trials, and ordeals they faced daily. They easily named: their mind being distracted, hiding their work, being teased, fear of being called on or going to the board to do work, frustration, embarrassment, and hearing they are lazy and dumb. Clearly these experiences create a sense of feeling inferior, marginalized, and wounded. Consequently, the students could enter the hero's journey by responding to the call that something, their self-esteem, had been taken away. Thus making the journey for these disenfranchised students could be about reclaiming what had been taken.

Interestingly, adventure and disability share a curious relationship, both taking the individual in a new direction. After embarking on the journey, they needed to find a way through their ordeals. From reading stories and myths they had already begun to recognize archetypal patterns and that energy for growth is available within the archetypes. By using a number of classroom activities,

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23 Patricia E. Deegan, "Recovery: The Lived Experience of Rehabilitation," *Psychosocial Rehabilitation Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (April 1988): 11-19.

24 Martin E. P. Seligman, *Learned Optimism* (New York: Pocket Books, 1990), 15, 137.

the children began to recognize there is an interplay between inner and outer, and saw how outer events awaken archetypal energy within. In an activity called "The Inner/Outer Wheel," they demonstrated the correspondence of inner and outer in their own lives, noting that outer events precipitated inner development and growth. Completing homework was especially challenging for students identified with learning disabilities. Two fifth grade boys noted how this outer experience awakened different archetypal energies (Seeker, Sage), each finding solutions that were unique to them. Their different responses are a reminder that archetypal patterns contain the capacity for unique expression and provide stability within a form. Thus the children began to recognize that potential is available and waiting for expression in individual and unique ways, and that developing their potential aids in self-formation and taking action (a mandate of the hero).

Within the journey there is a movement toward transformation with shifts occurring between the journey's stages. In an activity titled "Awakening to Our Dignity," they approached the journey through six stages: preparation, risk, intention, ordeal, bringing forth, and insight. Students looked at the significant events in stories, myths, and their own lives and noted what had been learned from the experiences. They used the stages of the journey to find the implicit meaning of the story. We then added two more elements, allies and enemies, in an activity titled "Movement Toward Transformation." Recognizing where help came from and in what form it arrives suggested the possibility of guides and mentors appearing: the wise advisors who could help them find their way. The transformation activity allowed them to begin to see their own experiences more objectively, thus introducing them to a larger, more generative world. Learning that heroes inherently face mystery, and that trials and tests have been experienced universally throughout time, allowed the students to attend to a broader perspective. Completing this activity with their subjective experience and then comparing it with descriptors of collective moved them further into the process of integration. A fourth grader noted that a Cinderella-type character finds her true self and that the wicked stepmother could be seen as an ally in that search. As students addressed these areas, they participated in the movement within the individuation process, one in which there is a coming into oneself. Additionally, examining the dynamics of choice points within the journey, including the wide range of available archetypes, led to informed decision-making. After completing the "Fork in the Road" worksheet, they recognized that by traveling a new path their life would be different and that they would have experienced a transformation.

Tapping into the reservoir of archetypal energy provided a way through the challenges they faced. Students began looking at the patterns of four archetypes: Seeker, Creator, Warrior, and Sage. Interestingly, the children had no difficulty naming how they could tap into the pattern's potential. Below are examples of how they believed they could tap archetypal energy:

Seeker: find a way to learn; seek ways to help people understand; find ways to know about what I can do; find a way to show I am capable; try to make new friends

Warrior: stand up for yourself; express your feelings; fight for respect; try as hard as I can; fight through the difficult times

Creator: know that some ideas work and some don't; use your imagination; wait for inspiration; try different ways

Sage: let others know they have company; don't count me out; know you can learn but that its harder; tell others you have potential; ask questions; help others understand; do the best you can

Clearly the archetypes had given them a language for looking at life, and they had become aware that an awakened archetype is needed for an appropriate response. They had seen the value of recognizing archetypal patterns, come to understand that archetypal energy helped them negotiate their experiences, and that hope was possible by being more creative about their choices. By being creative and exploring options within a pattern, they could increase the number of choices available. The fifth grader who talked about feeling invisible as an Orphan, went on to say "when you stand up for yourself, like a Warrior, people know you're not going to take it. And that by standing up for yourself you feel more determined to believe in yourself." She added "when you are true to yourself you will have more friends and people will like being around you; if someone treats you badly again you can let it pass by." This illustrates Deegan's belief that hope is the turning point after which one has the willingness and courage to act.[25]

Now having experienced trials, tests, and transformation, the students could begin the third stage of Campbell's hero's journey, the Return. The imbalance that initiated their journey was becoming balanced and they had new skills and awareness. Consequently, they did return with a boon, a gift that can be placed in service to others. Some believe initiates return with an informed innocence, and a fourth grader noted that returning to innocence shows people "who I am." This insight reflects this student's ability to observe that by responding to the call he was not the same as when he departed. Students began displaying an increased sense of confidence and self-knowledge, thus their ability to be self-reflective had increased. They recognized that through their experiences they had become uniquely qualified to share with their community (others who have been disenfranchised) and the community at large, thus answering the hero's call to take action for their group. They believed that it was important to help others recognize that they are not the only ones, that they understand how other people feel, and that they are becoming role models. By being role models they can offer the gift of hope, strength, and experience. They also wanted to encourage

25 Deegan, "Recovery," 14.

others to know that their allies are there for them. Students who at one time had built a negative response system were now willing to educate others by reading to them, writing a book about their heroic journey, and speaking at conferences and community groups.

Joseph Campbell's work with the hero's journey is an invitation to grasp an unfolding life with integrity. He reminded us that to make the journey takes us past all categories of definition, going from the known to the unknown. For him, the life quest was the work of each individual to bring into existence what has never been seen.

Undertaking such a quest allows the individual to tell his or her own story. Frank identified three stories that can be told around illness/wounding.[26] Two of these stories, the restitution and chaos stories, produce anxiety. In the restitution story, the teller's voice is in the background and the chaos story lacks a coherent narrative with the teller having no sense of control. Once there is a sense of purpose, the story cannot remain a chaos story. The quest story and the hero's journey have common characteristics that address wounding and becoming the teller of your own story. They include: meeting suffering head on; accepting challenges and seeking to use them; seeing difficulty as a journey that becomes a quest; searching for alternative ways; believing that something is gained by the experience; gradually realizing a sense of purpose; becoming one who rises to the occasion.

Self is born in story. Recognizing that only in the quest does the individual develop a coherent story and knowing that meaningful stories contribute in generative ways invites the examination of archetypal patterns within the story. Archetypes, understood and applied, deepen story. An appreciation, understanding, and respect for the transformative power of archetypes and our alignment to them deepens understanding of our story and the potential contained within it. By examining timeless patterns in stories and myths, we can learn to honor our individual experiences within the collective. Having one's own message heard has a healing effect and gifts the listener. Through autobiography a series of present moments is joined, the relationship of "when and then" is clarified and a unified view can be seen.

It is in gathering memories that stories take on meaning and reveal their uniqueness. Two activities completed by the children reflect Robert Langs' belief that we can take advantage of the mind's capacity to tell a story.[27] The students created timelines for an activity called "My Life Will Be A Story." In addition to naming events in chronological order, they identified and reflected on significant events or marker events. These events were seen as turning points or choice points. Such recurring events and the decision about

26 Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller*, 75, 136.

27 Robert Langs, "Spirituality in Clinical Practice: Explorations of Unconscious Dynamics," Assisi Conference and Seminars, Brattleboro, Vermont, Sept. 16-18, 2005.

which direction to choose are symbolic of the eternal story of free will. By second grade, children could name events that had impacted their lives and/or changed its course. They began to see that circumstances and decisions shaped them and enriched their story. Noting the events and significance of their perception allowed new meaning to emerge. This was possible through an activity titled "The Present of Things Present" which was based on this author's Temporality Triad.

The Temporality Triad reflects a dynamic system that is closed with interactive components, and aids the recognition that only the present exists. Students were able to see that the present holds the past and the future as different manifestations of the same reality. The interactive parts of a dynamic system allow for many possibilities and can bring a new order as the parts directly and indirectly affect each other. The students could name events that had led to some of their choices and decisions and how they had impacted their future; this laid the groundwork for envisioning new possibilities, informed decision-making, and a new self-definition. Mark Griffin, former LDA Board member, has stated that the way children define themselves greatly impacts their motivation, attitude, and behavior.[28] Recognizing the effect of dynamic systems was a pivotal moment because re-definition occurred; what they had believed about themselves and their challenges were framed in a completely new way. Additionally, the children started to recognize that events in their story were within a larger dimension, part of the Great Story, and that the invisible stands behind the visible. Thus being labeled learning disabled was seen in a broader perspective. Memory, which gives form and informs, became a reservoir from which they could continue to learn. By being observant and learning to review events in their life, they were becoming increasingly more self-aware, thus becoming familiar with the uniqueness of their own identity. The interplay between the individual and the collective aids the search for self-knowledge. Becoming reflective holds the possibility that as we define our self, aspects of our Self are revealed.

Archetypal pattern recognition, making the hero's journey, and noticing how a story unfolds enabled a broader understanding and was preparation for living a life of meaning. For the students there was a reconfiguring of the initial condition (being labeled learning disabled) to a more complete sense of themselves and an increased awareness that they were living a personal story as well as one of great universal narratives within the collective. The value of seeing life as a story is limitless. Bolen has called what we do with our life our magnum opus, or a great work of personal creativity.[29] Believing they were creating a "great work" was empowering, and contributed to the

28 Mark Griffin, "Self-Esteem," presentation at the Learning Disabilities Association Conference, Reno, Nevada, 2005.

29 Jean Shinoda Bolen, *Crones Don't Whine: Concentrated Wisdom for Juicy Women* (New York: Conari Press, 2003), 7.

movement away from the field of helplessness and inferiority. Living life as a quest opened them to seeing that they had a voice and that they were in charge of what was being created. Knowing one's story requires that you see yourself in your story, trust yourself, and take responsibility for the events of your life. Developing time lines chronologically, including the meaning of significant events, enabled them to see "themselves" within a developing story.

Hillman has suggested that in order to grasp the biography of the daimon from the chronology of a life, we must read life backward, by means of intuition.[30] The children were capable of life review, and a sense of identity and wholeness began to emerge as they reflected on their experiences and took meaning from them. Experiences teach and reveal how the past is related to the present and lays a foundation for the future. They saw that events were connected and the spaces "between" held key information for organizing their life. Since the student's lives had often seemed fragmented and chaotic, it was valuable for them to see an emerging pattern and that the events of their life had a place in their story and contributed to a sense of wholeness. As noted earlier, the chaos story cannot be told because there is no sense of control; additionally, one is too close to the problem and needs time and reflection. Thus the developing story can hold the overwhelming events until the person can integrate their meaning. By observing the emerging patterns in their life and by making the quest, they became the tellers of their own story, which answered the hero's call to find what was missing, their voice.

For lasting change to occur, individuals need to be engaged in deep educational processes, the movement from knowledge to knowing, and later, from the known to the unknown. This holds the process of discovery and growth. This movement into knowing arises out of direct, lived, personal, but archetypally derived, experience. As a result of the students' ability to grasp archetypal language and recognize archetypal patterns operating in their lives, they were introduced and encouraged to enter this deeper process of discovery and growth. Because their experiences had set them apart, they sought understanding. Their capacity for self-reflection led them to increased self-awareness. Interestingly, these children may have been asked to face one of life's ultimate questions: how do I live within the tension of the opposites? Too often people choose one side of the polarity over another.

In Bohm's work on relevance and non-relevance he noted that there is not a hard and fast division between opposing categories, but rather an expression of ever-changing perception.[31] Working to resolve the tension of the opposites involves perception, assimilation, and integration. A former student stated how he felt while trying to resolve this tension. The student stated "it was not

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30 James Hillman, *The Soul's Code* (New York: Warner Books, 1997), 225.

31 David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 43.

about being smart or dumb; it's about who I am." As Seekers, they will learn to respond to such questions over time. In the process of responding to the tension they will learn to trust their archetypal potential, their call, and their wisdom. Their wisdom may be reflective of spiritual intelligence which Zohar has described as the ability to address and solve problems of meaning and value, the intelligence with which we can place our action and lives in a wider meaning-giving context.[32] The children's work with archetypal patterning and the hero's journey has provided the opportunity to enter that domain.

Conclusion

Children as young as eight years old have demonstrated the ability to grasp archetypal language and to begin applying the concepts to their own lives. In Seligman's work on helplessness he pointed out that changing beliefs is not just about learning to say positive things about oneself; it is about changing the destructive things we say when we experience setbacks.[33] Learning disabled students' ability to view their disability archetypally allowed for the normalization of what had been considered deviant. Tapping into archetypal powers that have not been wounded can restore what has been negatively affected. By responding to the call and making the hero's journey, the children were introduced to archetypal energies and patterns which support transformation. Living their quest allowed them to make sense of their experience which Allen[34] and Seligman[35] suggested effects learning. Making the quest also gave them a sense of control which Erikson[36] believed positively affected identity. Reframing their experience, which previously had eluded them, became attainable.

In this study, the sample size was limited, but I believe we can draw from this work that by introducing the archetypes, archetypal pattern recognition, and the hero's journey there was a reconfiguring of the children's identity. We can conclude from the children's work that a transformation from seeing themselves "disabled" to becoming "able" occurred. This project can be viewed as a first step in measuring the impact of these procedures not only with learning disabled students but with any "at risk" children. Additional research could determine further applications including teacher training, parent education, social policy, character education, or depth psychology.

32 Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall, *SQ: Connecting with our Spiritual Intelligence* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000), 4.

33 Seligman, *Learned Optimism*, 15, 143.

34 Allen, "Mentalizing," 91.

35 Seligman, *Learned Optimism*, 138.

36 Erikson, *Identity*, 70.

Resilient children demonstrate the ability to make decisions, think creatively, and solve problems. Deegan[37] reminded us that recovery is a process, an attitude, a way of approaching challenge and rising to a new life. The children's ability to move from "what's wrong with me" to actively and courageously making a quest to become heroic allows resilience to emerge.[38]

37 Deegan, "Recovery," 15.

38 I would like to express appreciation to John Finneran, Ph.D., who was the mentor for this project during the two-year program with Assisi Institute in Archetypal Pattern Analysis, and acknowledge his contribution of ideas and assistance in the revision of this article.