

## FINDING OURSELVES IN EACH OTHER: BARNEY AND THE OTHER-DIRECTED CHILD

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### ABSTRACT

The currently popular children's television program, *Barney and Friends*, is utilized as a vehicle for illustrating what Riesman saw as a shift toward other-direction in American society. Barney programs and merchandise demonstrate that the emphasis on peer group socialization is occurring in the preschool market. Changes in parenting practices, education, and politics, demonstrate that *Barney and Friends* illustrates a larger social shift toward other-direction. It is argued that this shift leads to a packaging of friendships and emotions, and ultimately a loss of individuality and self awareness.

### INTRODUCTION

The idea that men are created free and equal is both true and misleading; men are created different: They lose their social freedom and their individual autonomy in seeking to become like each other. (Riesman 1962)

David Riesman's book, *The Lonely Crowd* (1962), documents a shift in American society to what he terms, other-direction. Children in an other-directed society find their relationships with others and with the self increasingly mediated by the mass media. According to Riesman, other-directed children receive signals from many people, as the family becomes only one element of the social environment. Conformity is ensured through attention paid to the expectations of peers, picked up through a "radar system" developed in childhood. Riesman argued, in challenge to theorists such as Erikson and Kohlberg, that children do have social tendencies that are not necessarily based on high cognitive skills. These social tendencies, therefore, allow patterns of other-directedness to develop. Goleman (1995) also asserts that children are empathetic and emotionally aware of others in infancy. Despite the fact that a major portion of *The Lonely Crowd* focused on changing patterns of childhood socialization, Riesman's work has been virtually ignored in studies of children's literature and studies of childhood socialization in general.

This paper examines a currently popular television program, *Barney and Friends*, as it relates to specific characteristics of Riesman's other-directedness. Barney has been chosen because he illustrates so well the shift from inner-directed to other-directed story-telling as discussed by Riesman. Specifically, the program illustrates the segmentation of a childhood market, which reinforces the concept of children as groups of peers, rather than members of a family. The shift toward other-

directedness can also be examined in terms of changes in parenting practices, education, politics, and the packaging of friends and emotions. *Barney and Friends* is used here as a vehicle for discussing concerns raised by Riesman.

### BARNEY: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Barney has been described as,

an overweight, intellectually challenged stuffed animal who expresses himself by jumping up and down, clapping his hands, and chortling 'Oh Boy, Oh Boy!' (Overbeck 1994)

Barney, the purple and green dinosaur with a smile that never quits, a voice that has been likened to Bullwinkle on Quaaludes (Weiss 1993) and a "philosophy of indiscriminate friendships..." (Swartz 1993) meets on weekly basis with an estimated 12 million two through five year olds.

Barney was "born" in the suburbs of Dallas, Texas. His creator, Sheryl Leach, describes the event: "I had a two year old and needed the chance to take a shower and cook dinner or just talk on the phone" (Griffith-Roberts, Ford 1993). The then current children's television programming and videos were not successful in holding her child's attention, so Leach, with a background in education and marketing, together with Kathy Parker, a friend with a similar background, and Paul DeShazer, an educational video producer, worked to create something that would. It was indeed helpful that Leach's father-in-law owned the educational publishing company where DeShazer worked and backed the effort with one million dollars (Swartz 1993).

The method was a simple one. Leach turned her kitchen into a test center and had neighborhood children watch different videos. Notes were made of activities that held the children's interest and a formula was created.

Barney was not originally developed to be a teaching tool, but rather, to be a baby-sitter for preschoolers. The emphasis toward teaching seemed to shift once the program was picked up by PBS. In addition, Barney was not created to model any adult behavior, because Leach and her associates found that when adults were present in videos, children lost interest. Leach describes Barney as, "a friend to kids. He's an adult, but a playful, childlike, nurturing adult. He celebrates the child" (cited in *Barney Press Packet* 1993). Riesman (1962) saw this trend occurring in the other-directed character type when he noted that "children are more heavily cultivated in their own terms than ever before."

Barney was originally conceived of as a bear by Leach, but when her child demonstrated an interest in dinosaurs, she altered her plans. According to Swartz (1993), Barney originally sounded more like Perry Como, and Sandy Duncan appeared on the videos as a singing mom. It was noted that children lost interest when Duncan sang, so she was dumped. Child actors were introduced instead, and have become a key component of Barney's (now "*Barney and Friends*") success. Later, in an effort to mirror the characteristics of two year olds, Baby Bop, (a small, female dinosaur who is never without a blanket) was introduced. An older brother, B.J., was later added to reflect a rough-and-tumble older boy. These additions could have been intended to expand the age range of the viewing audience. Children who appear as regulars on the show seem to be an attempt to represent some multiculturalism; however, critics have noted that the racial diversity presented is not believable (Swartz 1993).

While the producers of Barney will not reveal their formula for success, after viewing the *Barney and Friends* program, it is not difficult to determine some of the major ingredients. Each show usually begins with a school room/yard or backyard setting. Children are present, as well as the small stuffed version of Barney (available of course at many local retail stores). Adults, especially parents, are noticeably absent. Barney appears magically and the children welcome him excitedly. The shows are thematic: manners, numbers, shapes, colors, the seasons, a visit to the dentist, etc. As each program progresses, activities are broken by songs and choreographed movements which appear to be spontaneous, but obviously are well-rehearsed. Music forms a

very essential part of the program, as does the accompanying choreography performed by the children actors.

Often, Baby Bop appears during the middle of the program, and represents how a two year old should be responding to the activities presented. The children cater to her needs and she usually exits prior to the end of the show. Each show has a "lesson" and the activities presented usually tie in to the lesson. Each segment within a program is very short (less than two minutes), catering to the perceived attention span of preschoolers.

#### THE ROLE OF NOSTALGIA — TEACHING FOR A NON REAL WORLD

If Big Bird reflects the hip urban lives of Americans in the 70s, Barney epitomizes a retreat from that, an embracing of life that is predictable and bland. (Swartz 1993)

The three producers of *Barney and Friends*, Leach, Parker, and DeShazer, all report happy, stable middle class childhoods. Leach feels that even though Barney is a product of the 90s, he could have been a product of the 40s or the 50s (*Barney Press Packet* 1993). The show is an effort to combine current shows such as *Sesame Street* and *Mr. Rogers* with nostalgic remnants of *Romper Room* and *Captain Kangaroo* (Swartz 1993). Old children's songs are utilized, especially those with repetitious verses. *Yankee Doodle Dandy* becomes *Barney's Theme Song*, and *This Old Man* is turned into *I Love You*. Several advantages can be noted in utilizing such music. Parents can readily relearn these songs with new words. Much of the music is in the public domain; therefore, no permission for its use is required. Recycled music also takes little creative effort to develop. Moreover, familiar songs from childhood allow adults to take a trip through nostalgia land. Even though she is highly critical of many aspects of *Barney and Friends*, Swartz admits that

... he also makes me wishful of my own past; what is portrayed as fantasy for today's kid is simply my childhood — when I could talk to strangers and roam my neighborhood at will ... (1993)

Nostalgia, recycled songs and overwhelming sweetness present a world that is not real and lessons that are shallow and bland. For instance, as the producers met to

discuss a show on playground safety, the major concerns noted were going down the slide, running behind swings, and rock throwing. In the real world, playgrounds across the country are being fenced and locked, as children are victimized by shooting, drugs and gang activity. In some areas, inner-city children are too scared to even venture to their local playgrounds. A recent article in the *New York Times* describes the fear in which residents of the Cooper Housing projects in New Orleans, Louisiana, live. Children often sleep under their beds at night in order to avoid stray bullets (Bragg 1994). On November 7, 1994, another *New York Times* article reported the conviction of Eric Smith, a fourteen year old, accused of bludgeoning a four year old to death. The young boy was lured into the woods by Smith while walking to a park play program two blocks from his home (Nordheimer 1994). *Barney and Friends* attempts to reflect the values and reality of a middle class, suburban America that is as non-existent and unrealistic as the *Happy Days* and *Leave It To Beaver* reflections of the past.

Dorothy Singer (cited in Rudolph 1993) argues that children need sweetness and light when they are young so that they will eventually be able to cope with adversity when they are older. But Barney's world (which includes such sweetness and light) is not real. Barney is not a dinosaur. He is an eighty pound costume with a man inside and a voice that comes from yet another man, both of whom remain unnamed. He can't help but smile, because his mouth does not move, nor do his eyes see. The children who appear with him are actors, with long lists of credentials, who do not use their real names. They are characters filling roles.

While nostalgia is comforting and therefore comfortable, it allows us to rewrite and glorify the past, while neglecting present reality; a reality that even for toddlers may include sorrow, abuse and neglect. Reality and Barney hit each other head on when Leach learned of a bogus Barney who entertained at children's birthday parties. He was a convicted child molester (Lefton 1993). Rarely does Barney admit that learning can also come through conflict or sadness, which is amazing given the rampant moods of toddlers (Swartz 1993).

#### **WAIT UNTIL YOUR PEERS GET HOME, OR THE CHANGING ROLE OF PARENTS**

In order to understand why a program such as *Barney and Friends* can become so

popular among the young and yet so hated by many adults, it is important to consider how the role of parents has changed with the shift toward other-direction. The way in which children are brought up by their parents is deeply affected by the social and economic system in which the parents live (Wilkinson 1992). Riesman (1962) notes that along with other-direction comes an increasing need for socialized behavior. Permissive child care increases with a relaxation of older patterns of discipline. The peer group relationship becomes a primary mode of socialization, since children form these relations at far younger ages (Riesman 1962). Parents become increasingly doubtful and anxious about raising their children and seek out others for advice. These "others" often include the mass media. Parental anxiety has its effect on children as well, since parents

... cannot help but show their children, by their own anxiety, how little they depend on themselves and how much on others. (Riesman 1962)

A study on changing toilet training practices will help to illustrate both the growing change toward other-directedness and the increasing dependency of parents on "others" advice and counsel. Lieberman (1972) has analyzed this shift through advice given on the subject of toilet training in *Parents Magazine*, which has been in print since 1926. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, there was an emphasis on strict regularity in infant and child care. Infants were fed on a schedule which helped to establish patterns of regularity. Mothers were to chart feeding and bowel movement patterns, and infants were held over a pan to promote early toilet training. The mother was presented as efficient, in charge, and fully capable of promoting self control in her young child. By the late 1930s a shift was occurring. Articles emphasized more patience and delay in training. In 1938, an article entitled, "Rules Can Be Broken," appeared which questioned a rigid conformity to routine and emphasized guides rather than rules (Lieberman 1972). This change may seem hard to understand unless we also consider that washing machines were becoming increasingly commonplace in more households, and there was, of course, that wonderful invention — the disposable diaper.

Delaying toilet training not only became

more convenient, but it increased consumerism as well. By 1940, articles were discussing the possible emotional effects forced training might have on young children. One article asserted that "the most a parent could do was guide them [children] a little" (Lieberman 1972). Emphasis shifted even further, encouraging parents to wait until the child was willing to cooperate. The ability of middle class families to purchase washing machines, the production of disposable diapers and a mass media that catered to consumerism, created a powerful force in helping to change the direction of child rearing practices. Lieberman's study also indicates a shift from self controlled, parent enforced behavior to flexible practices that required as much or more parental adaptation as children's.

The trend toward developing parental dependency on "expert" opinion continues to run strong in current issues of *Parents Magazine*. In the November 1994 issue, Patricia McCormick (1994) offers advice for parents trying to teach their children manners. She proposes teaching manners by appealing to a child's self interest: telling them that other people will like them better. In addition, she notes that "today's parents are not confident teachers." The magazine also offers a "problem of the month" section in which parents write of their concerns. These concerns usually deal with issues of behavior and normalcy. And while the editors "solve" these worrisome issues for the parents, other articles seem aimed at instilling even more anxiety. For example, the November and December 1994 issues both had sections on child development, which discussed how and when teeth appeared, what children were able to do at specific stages of development, growth patterns, etc. In other words, parents were invited to compare their child with the "norm" and, of course, become anxious if he or she was not better than or equal to the standard.

Parents, encouraged to be permissive, and to socialize their children earlier and earlier, find parenting an ambiguous task. No longer is one to model adult behavior for children, but instead, to engage in the child's world of play. And the child, who once sought to be like mommy or daddy, now must learn to be like other children. *Barney and Friends* provides a way for little children to find themselves in each other. Barney is presented, in essence, as a teacher and leader of the 90s. Not only have parents learned to feel anxious

and inadequate, but now they are faced with a televised surrogate parent in the form of a dinosaur who pleases their children more than they do. Barney becomes an all encompassing "everything" to little children, as adults become secondary. And while Barney can teach little boys and girls to sing happy songs and hug each other, he cannot teach them how to be adults. He can only teach them how to be a childlike dinosaur.

### EDUCATION FOR THE SOCIAL: BARNEY AS A TEACHER

As parental authority becomes increasingly relegated to the peer group of a child, the role of a teacher also makes a shift. The teacher's position in the inner-directed tradition is characterized by an emphasis on intellectual ability and social distance. "It affirms to the child that what matters is what he can accomplish, not how nice is his smile or how cooperative his attitude" (Riesman 1962). As other-direction predominates, however, teachers must concern themselves more with the social aspects of education.

This pattern is highly evident in the *Barney and Friends* videos. Barney has been called the "Pied Piper of children's television" (Lefton 1993). But where is the purple Pied Piper leading little children, and what are they learning along the way? Swartz (1993) comments that Barney is more than a kids show, it is a cause, and that children are consistently reminded to use their imaginations, rely on friends and give everyone a hug. While the videos do promote such cognitive skills as counting, learning colors, and learning shapes, it is evident that the social aspects of children's lives are of utmost importance. Spitzman notes that "Barney is synonymous with the simple values of life. He teaches kids to care about one another" (cited in *Barney Press Packet* 1993). These "social skills" are taught through songs, through the modeling of the characters, and through a strong focus on positive group relations.

Parents and teachers are responsible for getting children to *want* to do what they must do (Riesman 1962), and Barney's approach is to make everything a silly, happy game. "Please" and "Thank you" become magic words that provide even more friends as well as instant gratification. Baby Bop, for instance, wanted a certain color on the program, *Shapes and Numbers*. By saying, "please" and "thank you," she received what



she wanted. All lessons are taught by positive reinforcement. The answer is never "no," and negotiations are never required, since no one ever disagrees. So strong is this focus on the positive that Barney cannot tolerate any unhappiness. During the *Barney, Live From New York* video, the children are sad because it is raining. Barney leads them in song after song, ending with one that asks them to think of raindrops as candy, until the children brighten up. Once the children become "adjusted" to thinking positively, the rain disappears. There is no room in Barney's world for sadness or depression.

Overbeck (1994) comments that "if our kids learn loving ways as toddlers, imagine how they'll transform our mean streets as they grow up." It is this type of naiveté that characterizes *Barney and Friends*. It presupposes that children, by learning love and tolerance, will be able to transform the world. It is important to note that children on the streets today were raised with *Sesame Street* and *Mr. Rogers*, programs that also focus on self esteem and positive relationships (Coates, Pusser, Goodman 1976). To assign toddlers the task of transforming violence to love neglects the need for any formal societal change, and places that burden on the next generation of adults rather than on the present one. It also reinforces what Slater refers to as the toilet assumption—

the notion that all unwanted matter, unwanted difficulties, unwanted complexities and obstacles will disappear if they are removed from our immediate field of vision... (1993)

Children are taught to imagine away all sadness and sorrow.

Thus the other-directed child is taught at school (and on *Barney and Friends*) to take his place in a society where the concern of the group is less with what it produces than with its internal group relations, its morale. (Riesman 1962)

That morale is based on a shallow, feel-good always ideology which must, in turn, be totally intolerant of any negativity, individual thought, initiative or creativity which might oppose that order. Children following Barney are taking in more than cognitive lessons because those lessons are packaged in the *Barney and Friend's* ideology.

## THE FOLLOWING LEADER: BARNEY AND POLITICS

Barney is more, much more than just a fun creature of kid's imaginations. He is a proliberal, politically correct, teacher of current social values being promoted by a generation of one worlders. (Chambers 1994)

It is hard to imagine how a simple, purple and green dinosaur could in any way be involved with politics. Yet Barney is considered to be the most politically correct star on television (Chambers 1994; Swartz 1993). He was even invited to play a part in Bill Clinton's inaugural parade. Two year old Elizabeth Weiss and her father were given the opportunity to ride on the "Barney Float." Elizabeth was overwhelmed by the dinosaur, who stands well over six feet tall. Though she spoke to him, Barney could only dance a response back to her, since of course he had left his voice at home. As the float made its way down the street, "the youngest spectators shouted Barney's theme song or stared at him in awe — as if he were the purple embodiment of Bill Clinton" (Weiss 1993). Even Peter Jennings commented on Barney's popularity: "Boy is he popular! Big Bird is an institution, but Barney is a rage" (cited in *Barney Press Packet* 1993).

The Barney float was a 24 foot red wagon with high walls to protect the famous dinosaur. There were about a dozen kids on the float, each provided with Barney tee shirts, cowboy hats, neckerchiefs, and American flags to "create the impression that we just happened along on a patriotic hay ride" (Weiss 1993).

While Clinton did not appear to notice the float, Weiss (1993) did not feel slighted. He comments that "when you're an 'FOB' — Friend of Barney — life is too sweet to care." And perhaps this is the political platform Barney could utilize, should he care to run — life is too sweet to care.

Barney emulates the perfect other-directed leader; one who is more concerned with popularity than issues, sincerity rather than truth. The following leader checks the polls and determines how to lead by following the ups and downs of public opinion. He is not a believer in *laissez faire* politics; he has no trust in his followers or coworkers. Rather, he manipulates through popularity and sincerity. Decisions are made far in advance; proper marketing strategies and media representations create the image that people are really

making choices. In one of the *Barney and Friends* shows, Baby Bop wants to play a game. It is decided to have a vote, and, of course, the children "vote" unanimously to play a game. What if someone had voted no? But of course that could not occur in Barney's world, for all answers and actions are scripted far in advance. Adorno notes that

the majority of television shows today aim at producing or at least reproducing the very totalitarian creeds even if the surface message of the show may be antitotalitarian. (1991)

Even as toddlers, Barney's followers are learning not only how to find themselves in each other but to accept the style, authority, and sincerity of the following leader.

Thus the children are supposed to learn democracy by underplaying the skills of intellect and overplaying the skills of gregariousness and amiability. (Riesman 1962)

### LESSONS IN CONSUMERISM

Barney products have become highly marketable commodities. J. C. Penney's reported more than \$50 million in Barney business in 1992. Executives at Macy's are planning to open Barney shops filled with ready to wear, accessories, toys, and novelties (Reda 1993), and Barry Slotnick, a lawyer for the Lyons Group (consisting of Leach, Parker, and DeShazer), has sued over one hundred imitators of Barney goods in a six month period (Lefton 1993). Barney is big business, so big that public appearances are limited because too many people show up. In addition, coordinating a voice and costume in public probably creates some unique problems, and the "myth" of Barney must remain intact. The high demand for Barney paraphernalia and the willingness of adults to purchase such items, aid in the establishment of consumership patterns among preschoolers. *Barney and Friends* targets an audience who is highly dependent on parental willingness to purchase their products. If we consider, however, that the other-directed type of parent is anxious and concerned that his or her child fit in with peers, then one can also understand why people such as Peggy Charren (former director of Action for Children's Television) who, although finding the program somewhat deceptive, still purchased a Barney doll for her three year old grandchild (Jordon 1993). Some parents were

even willing to pay scalpers' \$200 for tickets to the *Barney Live Concert* at Radio City Music Hall (Overbeck 1994).

Commercials are seldom used and don't appear to be necessary. Perhaps a key reason is that the products target a group of children, rather than individuals. This collective has many separate parent billfolds and credit cards. To little children, these products represent what other children have. Parents, who worry that their children must have what others have to be successful, follow suit. In addition, Barney presents an image of cooperation, love and sharing, which many parents would love to see expressed by their child.

While little formal advertising is utilized, each Barney video does begin with a stuffed version of Barney, waiting for the children to imagine him to life. The Barney doll is not just any doll — Barney's ability to appear and to be your friend depends on this doll. No commercials are needed here. During the Christmas video, Barney provides the children with clothes in which to travel. Every shirt had a very visible insignia of Barney. While children's wear such as Osh Kosh B'Gosh symbolize a quality of fabric and style, Barney wear and products symbolize a set of values. Children wearing these products "belong" and so do their parents.

### PACKAGED FRIENDSHIPS AND EMOTIONS

*I love you, you love me, we're a happy family  
With a great big hug and a Kiss from me to you  
Won't you say you love me too.  
I love you, you love me  
We're best friends like friends should be  
With a great big hug and a kiss from me to you  
Won't you say you love me too.  
(Words by Paul DeShazer)*

In addition to Barney products such as clothing toys and novelties, the program itself also offers prepackaged friends and prepackaged emotions to children. These "friends" have been chosen for the viewers and represent a fairly even distribution of gender and ethnicity. Seven days a week, and often more than once a day, "Barney's Backyard Gang" is prepared to laugh, sing, dance, and play with the viewing audience. They always get along, and always remember to say, "please" and "thank you." If Barney represents a surrogate parent, his child friends can be considered

surrogate friends to the child audience. This becomes a matter of critical concern if we consider just how essential friends are for other-directed types:

But his need for approval and direction from others—and contemporary others rather than ancestors—goes beyond the reasons that lead most people in any era to care very much what people think of them. While all people want and need to be liked by some of the people some of the time, it is only the modern other-directed types who make this their chief source of direction and chief area of sensitivity. (Riesman 1962)

Other-directed children are not just making friends; they are busy finding themselves in each other. If their relations with other children are mediated by mass media, then, perhaps, they are left with finding themselves in surface images and emotions. These emotions as well, are conveniently packaged for consumption. They are, however, only the emotions necessary for the morale of the Barney group. Lasch warns us not to overestimate the degree to which impulse can be socialized:

the American cult of friendliness conceals but does not eradicate a murderous competition for goods and position; indeed this competition has grown more savage in an age of diminishing expectations. (1992)

Other-directed children are told to be good sports, good friends, good students, eat good foods, and even to get a good night's sleep. The littlest of children are reminded that Santa won't bring them presents if they have not been good. Being good becomes the all encompassing moral duty.

As legitimate outlets for aggression become increasingly limited within society, voyeurism may increase. Our society feasts daily on a vicarious diet of violence and aggression. Studies indicate that viewing violence on television desensitizes children to actual violence (Cashmore 1994). If this is true, then perhaps *Barney and Friends*, which allows children to become voyeurs of friendship, love, and emotion, also limits their ability to respond to and express themselves genuinely. As the Pied Piper leads his followers down the path of tolerance and mindless conformity, they begin to look, think, act and feel a bit more like each

other. Slowly, and perhaps imperceptibly, the mass child is being formed.

#### DETERMINISTIC IMAGINING: THE LOSS OF CREATIVITY

There is an air of excited anticipation. Radio City Music Hall is filled to capacity. The camera pans an audience filled with anxious youngsters and their parents. They are waiting. The lights dim, and the *Barney Theme Song* begins. Children from the "Backyard Gang" appear on stage. The excitement mounts as Barney's name is announced. And announced again. The spotlight searches for the hard to miss dinosaur. Children are asking mommy and daddy, "Where is he?" Parents are probably wondering how one explains a missing dinosaur, or whether they can get a refund. But then, the answer! Barney is a dinosaur from our imagination! The children are instructed to close their eyes and imagine Barney into existence. The camera once again pans the audience full of children and parents with tightly closed eyes. Barney enters, to the happy cheers of young children and relieved parents.

The use of imagination is an essential part of every Barney video. Children imagine him into existence, participate in pretend activities and are at times led on pretend journeys. This type of pretend, however has changed with the increase in other-directedness. Children viewing *Barney and Friends* are asked to participate in group imagining and pretending, and participation is not optional. In addition, what is to be imagined is predetermined and pre-created. Barney, of course, already "exists," as do all of the pretend environments and other creations that children are asked to imagine into existence. The imagination, which was once internal and personal, now becomes a group property involving no creativity on the part of the individual.

French and Pena (1991) have also noted another significant change in the use of imagination and pretend play. They conducted a study of pre and post television viewers to determine if hero and play themes differed. While other age groups remained relatively stable, they found that post television viewers had significantly more heroic play themes in early childhood. While they found that historically, preschool age children tended to pretend the roles of people who were close to them and which they desired to model, there has been a growing trend toward fantasy heroes with

limited qualities and limited emotional ranges. French and Pena expressed concern for this shift away from the preschoolers preferring to model family members and other real people:

Today's young child may not be exploring and rehearsing to the fullest extent the subtleties of daily life. They may be missing the playing out of commonplace events and personal relationships which make up the life experience of most people. They may not be working on the full range of emotions—nurturing, guidance, negotiating, bossing, disciplining. (1991)

Deterministic imagining robs children of their creativity. Without creativity, they cannot pretend play the role of the adults they will someday be, and as the imagination becomes an external rather than internal force, it becomes oppressive rather than freeing.

#### WHEN HEART AND MIND NO LONGER COMMUNICATE: THE LOSS OF INDIVIDUALITY

Once the ability to be creative is diminished and children are led to use their imaginations as a group and to benefit the group, they are left with little reason or ability to find and to utilize their own creative processes, and to access their own unique emotions. Children who find themselves in each other cannot afford to find any uniqueness within themselves.

All emotional identifications are limited by the code of the peer group (Riesman 1962). The adjusted other-directed child,

has learned to look like those others with whom he has been brought up, with whom he has learned cooperation, tolerance, and restraint of temper. In this process he has learned to forget aspects of his character that are not 'social,' not other-directed. (Riesman 1962)

When the heart and mind no longer communicate because what was once internal is now introduced externally, one may only find the shallowest of emotions, the perfect breeding ground for narcissism.

Narcissus, if one remembers, was a handsome youth who spurned the love of beautiful maidens. The nymph, Echo, was madly in love with him but was also rejected. As a punishment, Nemesis caused Narcissus to fall hopelessly in love with his image as he saw it reflected in a pool of water. Narcissus

gradually died, still gazing at his reflection. He fell in love with an image of himself; a shallow representation of self. Other-directed children find only shallow images of themselves in others. And, as with a pool of water, those images are fragile and changing, requiring that children utilize their radar to pick up and respond to those changes. "Thus true individuality goes together with pride, while want of individualism frequently appears in our culture as selfishness" (Riesman 1954). When the heart is disengaged from the mind the ability to act spontaneously and therefore out of "genuine human goodness" (Mestrovic 1993) is restrained.

Some may argue that *Barney and Friends* places great emphasis on what is termed self-esteem. Swartz (1993) finds the most commonly used word in the Barney programs is the word, "special." In addition, it is constantly reinforced in the *You Are Special* song:

*You are special, you're the only one  
You're the only one like you  
There isn't another in the whole wide world  
Who can do the things you do.  
Oh you're special, special, everyone is special  
Everyone in his or her own way  
You're important, oh you really are  
You're the only one of you  
The world is better, just because you're here  
You should know that we love you.  
(Words and music by Paul DeShazer)*

Once again, one can detect a shallowness that is characteristic of *Barney and Friends*. Special does not mean autonomous. In one particular instance where the idea of being special was introduced, the children held their arms together to show the differing shades of their skin. Special applies to externals, and is reminiscent of the politically correct term, multicultural. "Special" becomes the politically correct preschool term. This type of "special" does not lead to autonomy, it leads to adjustment. This is defined by Riesman (1962) as an individual who is "...able to respond through their character structure to the demands of society." It is reminiscent of Marcuse's (1964), "happy consciousness," in that,

... the child's nice childhood, described by Riesman, prepared him or her for the happy

adulthood found in Marcuse's writings. The nice and happy consciousness ensures that one will obey without thinking, join without hesitation, and be part of a society without opposition. (Mestrovic forthcoming)

## A FINAL LOOK AT BARNEY AND HIS FRIENDS

*Barney is a dinosaur from our imagination*

*and when he's tall he's what we call*

*a dinosaur sensation*

*Barney's friends are big and small; They come from lots of places*

*After school they meet to play and sing with happy faces.*

*Barney shows us lots of things like how to play pretend*

*ABC's and one two threes and how to be a friend.*

*Barney comes to play with us*

*Barney can be your friend too if you just make believe him.*

(Words by Paul DeShazer)

If the only way autonomy can be achieved is through self awareness (Riesman 1962), we must seriously consider what is lost when we allow Barney to baby-sit our children. Yet, Barney is merely indicative of a society that is shifting further and further towards the hegemony of other-directedness. While perhaps this has led us to become more responsive to others, that responsiveness appears to be shallow and based on our own selfish needs.

In order to be autonomous, we must have what Riesman terms,

the nerve of failure [which is] the courage to face aloneness and the possibility of defeat in one's personal life or one's work without being morally destroyed: It is in a large sense the nerve to be oneself when society may disapprove. (1954)

*Barney and Friends* is a reflection of a society in which individual's are rapidly losing their social freedom and ability to act autonomously, in exchange for being more like each other (Riesman 1962). As little children innocently follow the Pied Piper, one must wonder if individuality is being locked away; repressed by the overwhelming necessity to find oneself in each other. Not only are our children losing themselves; perhaps we are also losing a generation of creativity, imagination, and compassion.

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