Appreciating the Best of What Is: Envisioning What Could Be

The Proceedings of
The Sixth International Conference
On Transformative Learning

October 6-9, 2005

Michigan State University
&
Grand Rapids Community College

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Welcome Participants in the Sixth International Transformative Learning Conference!

On behalf of Michigan State University and Grand Rapids Community College, we want to welcome you to East Lansing, Michigan to the sixth international conference that focuses on transformative learning! We are pleased to be co-hosting this conference and delighted that you are able to join us for this wonderful and provocative experience. We hope your stay here will be enjoyable and your time with the conference soulful and transformative! October is a wonderful time to be visiting the MSU campus and so we hope you are able to stroll the grounds and enjoy the arboretum-like environment of the wonderful campus.

Our theme for this year’s conference is: “Appreciating the best of what is: Envisioning what could be.” In the spirit of this theme, we want to both honor what has already been accomplished and imagine that which is yet to be done. Our conference agenda is filled with an exciting four days of presentations and sessions that represent our broadening and deepening understanding of transformative learning and education for transformation. Throughout the conference, we will make use of the framework of appreciative inquiry to help guide our individual and collective efforts in addressing our conference theme.

Such a conference is not possible without the efforts and time of many people. Certainly, the heart of the conference is represented by our presenters and our participants. Thank you for being a part of the conference. You are the ones that make it all happen. Many people were instrumental in the planning of this conference. We want to especially acknowledge Colleen Wiesnner who provided us with much helpful information and data throughout the course of our planning. Although we are not able to take the space here to name all who have contributed to the planning of this conference, several individuals warrant special recognition and we list them here. We apologize for any inadvertent omissions.

Steering Committee for the Sixth International Transformative Learning Conference

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We wish everyone a great conference.

John M. Dirkx               Frank Conner
Co-Chair                    Co-Chair
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Educational Approaches That Transform Learning:
Appreciating the Best of What Is: Envisioning What Could Be

Anne Adams

Abstract: This session weaves together multiple threads of learning: 1) A creative, interactive PowerPoint, introducing participants to “the best of what is” in transformative epistemologies and practices from nine integral, educational programs, 2) theoretical backgrounds from transformative learning, systems thinking and integral educational approaches, 3) a café dialogue among participants sharing together their reflections and insights from the presentation and 4) “envisioning what could be” - an introduction to a systemic, integral model for education.

Contextual Framework for the Session

Transformative learning is the kind of learning that gives rise to a shift in the definition or locus of the self, from content; a position, a fixed point of view, to context; not having to have a position, an ability to hold multiple points of view, a systemic or integral worldview, from Elias’ research (as cited in Taylor, 1998). Education that is transformative creates an opening for people to shift who they consider themselves to ‘be,’ from identifying one's self as a point of view, a story, a personality, an ego, or a body, to recognizing one's self as context, as a ‘clearing’, in which a different order of thought, feeling, conversation or action, etc. can take place. The individual’s capacities ‘reach beyond’ any narrowly personal and individual perspective from Wilber (as cited in Taylor, 1998). One is able to create new meaning structures and shift worldviews (Mezirow, 2000). Transformative learning challenges what we know and frees us from distorted notions of the world and who we think we are, from Merriam & Caffarella’s study (as cited in Taylor, 1998).

Transformative learning generates an environment in which our consciousness can dramatically shift, from Boyd’s work (as cited in Taylor, 1998); one in which our minds, bodies, feelings, spirits and subsequent actions can permanently alter (O’Sullivan, n.d.). Consciousness is defined here employing Velman’s (1996) definition; awareness or conscious awareness, encompassing all that we are conscious of, aware of, or experience. These include thoughts, feelings, images, dreams, body experiences and the experienced three-dimensional world. Searle (1999), who embraces the qualitativeness, subjectivity and unity aspects of consciousness and Wilbur (2000), who distinguishes stages and states of consciousness, are also acknowledged contributors.

A systemic, integral approach to education contains the elements to transform learning and consciousness. A system is an integrated whole whose essential properties arise from the relationship between its parts which are interconnected and interdependent (Capra, 1996). An integral approach to education incorporates the development and integration of the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual intelligences throughout an individual’s learning process (Aurobindo, 1990). To think systemically means putting things into a context and establishing the nature of the relationships (Capra, 1996). To think integrally means to nurture the development of the whole person (Miller, 1991), and be comprehensive, inclusive and balanced in the process (Wilber, 2003). The systemic, integral worldview is emerging as a response to the evolutionary and at times revolutionary advances in a multitude of disciplines. Held together they contribute a transdisciplinary quality to our epistemology and a new understanding of the nature of reality.

In this session, the educational process is viewed as a dynamic, integral system. The interconnectedness and interdependency of the stages of human development from conception to graduation are viewed through the lens of the physical, emotional, spiritual and mental intelligences and their integration. Systems philosophy brings forth a reorientation of thought and worldview (Banathy, 1996), and paired with an integral worldview provides educational approaches that transform.

Description of the Session

Nine educational programs that offer an integral approach to education will be highlighted for their contributions to transformative learning through their ideologies, epistemologies, environments and practices. The following programs will be presented: 1) Sri Atmananda Memorial School, (Sri Atmananda); 2) Oakgrove School, (Krishnamurti); 3) School of the Woods, (Montessori); 4) Moorestown Quaker School, (Fox); 5) Living Wisdom Schools, (Yogananda); 6) Auroville Schools, (Sri Aurobindo); 7) International Centre of Education, (Sri
Appreciating the Best of What Is

These nine featured approaches to integral education have the ability to transform worldviews. A worldview or paradigm is a particular perspective of reality that acts like a lens through which we see and experience our world around us. Reason and Bradbury (2001) define it as ‘an overarching framework, which organizes our whole approach to being in the world.’ With regard to worldviews and the influence they exert on education, i.e., if they ‘organize our whole approach to being in the world,’ it is imperative that we take a perspective that allows us to see clearly how a particular paradigm impacts our educational framework. Our education creates the relationship we have with people, reality and our lives; what and how we know, what kind of reality we experience, how we ‘be’ in the world, our values ... literally everything. What follows is a glimpse at what transformational distinctions from these approaches to education in their own programs, teaching, research, etc.

The relationship/connection that humans have with the natural world; consciousness of the environment. 2) World citizenship; peace, equality, conscious world citizens, interconnectedness, interdependency, narratives of inclusion, 3) Integral curriculum; integral development – from the personal to the planetary, contextual-holistic vs. content-informational, 4) an experience of belonging: community, a place, roots, 5) and a sense of the sacred: integrative dimension of experience, awe, respect for life, connections to the spirit.

Mezirow (1981) has also specified a number of elements that provide a powerful foundation for transformative learning. 1) A sense of safety, openness, trust; egalitarian, non judgmental and non-competitive environment, 2) a learner centered approach, 3) critical reflection and explorations of alternative personal perspectives, 4) affective learning, emotions and feelings discussed, 5) solitude, self dialogue, 6) handling disagreement, confronting rather than avoiding, 7) experiential learning, 8) acknowledging many ways of knowing and learning; multiple intelligences, 8) questioning our assumptions, beliefs, 9) and the use of rational discourse, dialogue.

Boyd and Meyers (as cited in Taylor 1998), in promoting transformative learning, include supporting students to recognize their “spirit” – a knowing or a truth that resides in them. Although not all of these areas will be discussed during the presentation, it will be clear that most of these themes are incorporated in these integral educational programs.

Participants will have an opportunity to dialogue about the programs with others during the session in a ‘café dialogue’ environment. Everyone will be invited to reflect on the value of utilizing transformational distinctions from these approaches to education in their own programs, teaching, research, etc.

Appreciating the Best of What Is

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In the schools which follow the philosophical and educational guidance of **Sri Aurobindo**, **The Awareness through the Body** program transforms the students’ relationship with their physical self, and at the same time, their emotional, spiritual, and mental self through engagement with their body’s awareness. Also, the practice of **Integral Yoga**, which develops and integrates the physical, emotional/vital, mental and spiritual/psychic as ways of knowing and being in the world is found in both the philosophical fiber of the course work and the practices within the schools. The **Sri Atmananda** schools express transformative learning through their approach in which the **Living Teacher enters the child’s world with unconditional support**. The results are an unprecedented **Love of Learning, Spirit of Play, Self Discovery and Creative Energy** exhibited by the students. The **Quaker Schools** of George Fox, contribute a unique way of creating **Relationship with the Spirit, The Value of Silence and Reflection, The Power of Listening and The Examined Life**. These ways of educating transform the relationship students have with themselves and their spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental life. **Krishnamurti’s** schools provide a deep respect for the **contemplative practices**, and specific classes and practices that inspire interconnectedness with self and others, e.g., **Relationship Classes, Human Development Courses, Community Meetings, and Intergenerational Partnerships** and invite transformative experiences for students, parents and teachers.

**Maria Montessori’s** curriculum offers extensive **Interdisciplinary Modules** which focus the student’s awareness on an interrelated world. The **Vision Quest** and **Hero’s Journey** which links the inner and outer
qualities, **Responsible Parenting**, and **Cosmic Education**, which connects science and the sacred, trusting the knowing of the child, and accentuating the interconnectivity of and reverence for all life can transform the students’ relationship with life and themselves. **Rudolf Steiner’s Waldorf** schools offer transformative learning experiences in the way the entire curriculum is coordinated with human development. **Subject content mirrors personal experience, developmental stages mirror the evolution of human consciousness, learning themes honor and reflect the learner’s inner development.** Embodied knowledge, student generated lessons and Eurythmy all contain ingredients for the transformation of the identity of the student. **Yogananda’s Living Wisdom** schools utilize an **Education for Life for Parents, Teachers and Students** that can transform the way in which everyone relates to education. The curriculum is named **Adventure, Service and Self-Discovery** which contains many opportunities for **Travel, Exploration, Service and Identity Building.** The **All School Production** includes everyone in the school and presents transformative learning experiences in self expression and intergenerational connections and relatedness. CMS, inspired by **Gandhi and Baha’i** hosts 17 conferences each year which introduce their **World Parliament for World Peace** to local and international groups. CMS acknowledges and honors **The World’s Religions** at these conferences and throughout the school’s curriculum. **World Peace** is a major thrust of the school’s purpose and vision and the founders, teachers, parents and students invite everyone to transform the way they relate to people of all religions.

**Envisioning What Could Be: A Systemic, Integral Educational Model**

Mezirow’s goal (as cited in Taylor, 1998) for adult education is ‘to help the individual become a more autonomous thinker by learning to negotiate his or her own values, meanings, and purpose rather than uncritically acting on those of others.’ One aspect of envisioning what could be is extending his goal for adult education to include all of education.

What is being offered here is a transformation in the way we define education. Illustrated below is a systemic, integral model for education, which includes parents, teachers, children of all ages, community members, etc. It is structured and organized in a way that the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual intelligences are developed and integrated throughout the learning cycles.

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Figure 1

*A Systemic, Integral Educational Model*
Is it possible to educate for transformation? If someone is educated so their spiritual, mental, physical and emotional intelligences are developed and integrated, and their experience of self, or their identity (what they are identified with) is more associated with creating context than proving a position, would that not be a coveted result for transformative learning? Transformative learning can shift our ontology, epistemology and axiology.

Our world today requires a different kind of human being: one who can think, create, imagine and act, with flexibility, adaptability and resiliency, in an extremely complex world; one whose spirit is vital and engaged and whose body is vibrant and healthy; one who can feel deeply and ‘be present,’ to life, i.e., be aware in the moment and know how to move with and coordinate action in a highly diverse and accelerated world. Leonard and Murphy (1995) gave us a future to envision in *The Life We Are Given*.

Through transformative practices...we can share the most fundamental tendencies of the world’s unfoldment – to expand, create, and give rise to more conscious forms of life. Like evolution itself, we can bring forth new possibilities for growth, new worlds for further explorations.

“...knowledge is not a matter for the head alone, but for the heart and spirit, the body and mind – an adventure for the whole of our human being. The integration of all aspects of an individual prepares one for collective knowledge, a new knowledge...” (Tulku, 1987).

References
Cooperative Inquiry as a Tool for Transformative Learning:
Stories From Community Organizers Who Transformed Their Practice

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Abstract: This paper presents the experiences of community leaders who have transformed their practices through a cooperative inquiry. Cooperative inquiry is an Action Research methodology consisting of repeated episodes of action and reflection through which a group of peers strives to answer a question of compelling interest. This diverse group of leaders along with two facilitators from academia explored the question “how can we teach people to be more strategic, conceptual and creative in their thinking?”

This paper examines the process and subsequent implications for adult learning and research through exploration of the critical success factors and application of cooperative inquiry as a tool for transformation. In the summer of 2003 a diverse group of community organizers along with two facilitators from academia engaged in a systematic process of cooperative inquiry, exploring the question of “how we can teach people to be more strategic, conceptual, and creative in their thinking?” Cooperative inquiry is a process of repeated episodes of action and reflection through which a group of peers strives to answer a question of compelling interest to them (Bray, Lee, Smith, & Yorks, 2000). This group of social change agents used their learning from this process to transform their practices. The cooperative inquiry (CI) group consisted of five leaders from across the United States who was selected by an international foundation to participate in a two-year leadership development program. The inquiry group was to meet five times over a nine-month period in different cities throughout the United States. The process and outcomes motivated the co-inquirers to request an additional meeting to complete work on their findings.

The co-inquirers came together around the above question, which served as the focal point to the inquiry process. Their motivation for coming together was the shared belief that while they were effective on some level, their organizations had the same number of primary leaders as seven years ago. They realized that actions alone are not enough to sustain their organizations. They had become stale and not as effective as they needed and wanted to be in certain critical areas. When leaders and organizers get to a certain level they have experienced a lot of actions and taking on responsibility, but often they don’t take the time to think and reflect on their actions.

Cooperative inquiry is a well documented and highly effective Action Research methodology whose application extends well beyond data collection and analysis. Cooperative Inquiry has been used to effectuate and sustain change in social action (Reason, 1994; Sherman and Torbert, 2000) and community development arenas (Torbert, 2004). Reason defines cooperative inquiry as “…research that was with and for people, rather than on people” (1988, p.1). He goes on to elaborate “Co-operative inquiry is therefore also a form of education, personal development, and social action”, Reason (1988, p.1). The CI process moves the discussion into a realm where the implied is made explicit and assumptions can be tested. The discourse engenders in-depth exploration of conditions and beliefs. This philosophical foundation makes CI both socially relevant and theoretically applicable in the community development and social action arenas.

Organizing the Cooperative Inquiry

Larry Ferlazzo was the originator of this collaborative inquiry group. In recruiting participants he extended invitations to a select group of people in the leadership development program. During the course of the year-long program, he accepted another job as a middle school teacher. He was committed to the group and continued in the CI. Larry’s transition to a different type of organization implies that transformation is a subjective experience. His meaning making is distinctive because of the application and how he contextualizes his learning.

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1 Our cooperative inquiry (CI) group was organized as part of the Leadership for A Changing World (LCW) Program funded by the Ford Foundation and organized by The Center for Leadership Development, Dialogue and Inquiry at the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University.
I mean the whole issue of the question was that we were good at teaching technique in organizing. I didn’t think that we were particularly good about teaching these other three concepts. And it just pushed me to be intentional about thinking about those same questions for teaching. You know because it’s very easy to get stuck into thinking about technique. And whether it was, you know like I mentioned at the meeting that was I found that playing meditation music with the lights off for five minutes at the beginning of my last period of the day is very helpful in calming students down. But it’s a technique unless it’s used to help people think strategically about how they can do this. You know challenging students to think why this could work? What can they learn from this to help them in other times when music isn’t around but they’re upset and wound up.

The group engaged in six cycles of reflection and action. The first meeting was held in August 2003 in St. Paul, the second took place in San Francisco in November, the third meeting was held at Teachers College in New York City in January 2004, the fourth in Boulder, in connection with a program wide meeting and the fifth meeting in Sacramento. A sixth and final meeting was again held at Teachers College in mid-August, 2004.

Critical reflection lies at the core of cooperative inquiry as an effective means for both adult learning and research (Bray, Lee, Smith and Yorks, 2000). The co-inquirers reported the importance of making space for reflection; space which was notably absent in prior manifestations of their practices. The inquiry space allowed for an unearthing of deeply held assumptions about their practices and organizations. In between meetings the co-inquirers used to help people think strategically about how they can do this. You know challenging, “an awareness” and “becoming more intentional” for immediate change, opposed to learning from their actions. The former, anchors the inquirer in the present and elucidates opportunities of the experiences drawn from the process.

The process of exploration and validation of assumptions was seeded with presentations of adult and organizational learning concepts which promoted objective and subjective reflection. The ensuing dialogue promoted the development of concrete actions that the co-inquirers undertook at the local level. The outcomes of these actions were funneled back into the action reflection cycle and served as content for ensuing reflection-on-action. In addition to action and reflection the co-inquirers were able to collectively and subjectively make meaning of the experiences drawn from the process.

During ensuing meetings several of the co-inquirers began to report incidents of reflection-in-action. The full extent of this transformation is evident in the realization that the original inquiry question had to be rephrased to how we can become more strategic, conceptual or creative in our thinking? This focus was seen as fundamental to helping others become more strategic, conceptual, and creative in their thinking. We had originally asked how we could teach people to be more strategic, creative, and conceptual. What we began to understand was the importance of engaging others in the experience of strategic thinking. Our own actions and relationships with them would be part of the equation. To help people learn to be more strategic, creative, and conceptual, we would have to be intentional about being more strategic, creative, and conceptual in relationship with them.

Cooperative inquiry’s multiple consecutive cycles of action and reflection provide a means for data collection and meaning making. Within the rubric of Action Research Coghlan and Brannick (2001, p.28) refer to the inquiry-reflection process as a critical component of experiential learning. Their four-partite experiential learning cycle is composed of experiencing, reflecting, interpreting and taking action. The co-inquirers were learning in action as opposed to learning from their actions. The former, anchors the inquirer in the present and elucidates opportunities for immediate change while the latter is retrospective because the action has already occurred.

All five co-inquirers reported having learned a great deal. The new learning was used to transform their practice. They used the following words in reference to their learning, “an awareness” and “becoming more purposeful (in their thinking)”. While there were some similarities amongst their reflections on the process and the outcomes, each inquirer experienced a unique transformation based on their needs and subjective reframing. When asked “.were you able to draw any relevant or insightful information from the CI meetings?”, Vicky Kovari replied,
Four main things: the importance of reflection to being a strategic, and conceptual thinker, and ways to reflect in a structured way. 2) Learning window tool. We used it on the transportation campaign. 3) Being able to get a look at other networks primarily IAF. 4) Power of the story – always knew that. This experience confirmed and cemented me. Power of personal (stories) and metaphor really hit home with me.

This response indicates not only what she learned but that she also put her new knowledge to work on an existing project in her organization. The new approach transformed the standardized meeting format into a more engaging and thought provoking experience. The outcome produced a change in the focus of MOSES’s social action agenda.

Transformation theory postulates that learning is an emancipatory experience that leads to individual transformation (Freire, 2000, Mezirow, 2000). Mezirow asserts that change in the individual ultimately leads to change in her/his social environment. It then follows, that participation in cooperative inquiry can lead to personal and social (community) transformation. Subjective reframing is the critical reflection on our assumptions about experiences, feelings, systems, organizations or narrative of someone else’s experiences leads to transformation (Mezirow, 2000, p.23).

Lessons Learned

There is evidence that all of the co-inquirers readily transformed their practices by putting their new knowledge to work in training models, lesson plans, organizing meetings and even sermons. Transcripts and documented semi-structured interviews reflect perspective transformation. This change made a significant impression on the co-inquirers’ respective practices and how they engage in local social change initiatives.

In cooperative inquiry the participants are both researchers and subjects of the inquiry. The cooperative inquiry process of action and reflection provided an opportunity to engage in first-person and second-person research (Reason and Torbert, 2001). First-person research addresses the individual’s development of a practice of inquiry into one’s subjective experiences for the purpose of achieving greater awareness and ability to make conscious cogent choices. In first- person research we focus attention to our subjective perspective and bring it to the forefront of consciousness. Second-person research is the practice of engaging “with others in a face-to-face group to enhance our respective first-person inquiries.” (Reason and Torbert, 2001, p.15). The practice of engaging in first-, and second-person research positions the inquirer to achieve a deeper understanding of the underpinning factors which influence their thinking, choices and practices. Making meaning from the events in one’s own life offer opportunity for enhanced validity and application of learning.

Story telling became centric to our experiences during our meetings as well as in the co-inquirer’s respective practices. The process of sharing an experience and holding it in abeyance for examination and inquiry by the group provided a means by which we could objectively and subjectively communicate thoughts, insights, provide feedback and probe each other’s thinking in a supportive mode. Wenger (1998, p.52) asserts the delicate balance of participation and reification as fundamental for negotiating meaning in communities of practice. The stories which were shared served not only as a method for transferring data but also as a catalyst for making meaning from shared experiences.

The transformative process undertaken by the co-inquirers does not require subjective terminology to describe the experience. The process and evolution of this cooperative inquiry can be termed to have been successful because the co-inquirers deemed it as such. This cooperative inquiry group was formed by the invitation extended by Larry. His strategic selection of co-inquirers and topic was an essential element in establishing a solid foundation from which to explore their respective practices.

The co-inquirers willingness to engage in cycles of action and reflection led to critical subjective reflection. The responsive interweaving of new themes and concepts provided fuel for thought. Through first-person and second-person research they were able to collect data and validate their assumptions and beliefs. Trust, mutual respect and curious interest facilitated sharing of experiences many of which were vibrantly expressed through the co-inquirer’s stories.

Transformation can be motivated by multiple factors. In this case their actions culminated in collective and subjective meaning making. The courage to look inward and reflect upon their findings proved to be both enriching and rewarding. The co-inquirers entered with no expectations of the inquiry process. They came out having transformed their frames of reference and habits of mind (Mezirow, 2000) by engaging with their experiences and adult learning concepts in the cycles of action/reflection and critical subjectivity (Reason and Torbert, 2001, p.12) found in cooperative inquiry. The findings of the co-inquirers have been compiled into a booklet which is scheduled for print and web-based publication in late 2005.
References
Fostering Transformative Learning Through Faculty Development

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Abstract: This paper focuses on transformative learning in the context of faculty development efforts of a small, Catholic University. A federal grant provided faculty with development opportunities in the areas of scholarship, teaching and technology training. In evaluating the effectiveness of these experiences, the authors applied Mezirow’s ten phases of transformative learning to the reflective interviews of ten participants.

Introduction

Patricia Cranton (1994) states in her book on transformative learning, “Individuals choose to become involved in either informal or formal learning activities as a result of a desire to grow, change, or develop, or as a response to a professional or practical need” (Cranton, 1994, p. 5). This paper will focus on transformative learning in the context of professional development for faculty of a small, private Catholic University. The authors will show how opportunities allowed faculty to grow and transform themselves in their roles as teachers and scholars. The impact has meant a change in the culture of the entire institution.

The University of the Incarnate Word (UIW), located in San Antonio, Texas has an enrollment of 4,800 students and 140 fulltime faculty. The primary mission of the institution is that of teaching; however, in 1996 the institution changed from a college to a university. As a result, the university leadership identified three institutional goals: globalization of the curriculum, integration of technology into classroom teaching, and improved scholarship. The challenge was to find ways to move faculty beyond their comfort zone into the 21st century in terms of these three areas.

Fortunately, in 1999, the UIW received a $1.6 million Title V Hispanic Serving Institution grant that provided faculty with development opportunities in the form of international study and research grants, faculty development funds to start research projects and attend workshops, and intensive technology training. The Title V Grant’s goals and objectives were based on a vision of the institutional needs. As of the October 2004, 45 faculty have participated in the summer faculty development grants; 30 have traveled abroad for research and study. In addition, 119 have participated in technology institutes. In evaluating the effectiveness of the grant, the Title V Co-Directors (the authors) propose that changes in faculty practices in scholarship and teaching can be attributed to the theory of adult learning known as transformative learning.

Transformative Learning

Mezirow defines transformative learning as “the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frame of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflexive so that they may generate beliefs and options that will prove more true or justified to guide action” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 7 – 8). One’s frame of reference is formed by the early learning experiences one gains with parents or caretakers and by living in a culture. The concept of transformational learning is one that explains the student experience with learning that changes or alters a fundamental perspective, or frame of reference (Mezirow, 2003). This theory of learning has been developed, both as a theoretical base and as an application to specific kinds of learning for 30 years.

Mezirow (2000) suggests that there are phases that people go through when transformative learning occurs. These phases, which are not necessarily step-by-step, are as follows: (a) A disorienting dilemma; (b) Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame; (c) A critical assessment of assumptions; (d) Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared; (e) Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions; (f) Planning a course of action; (g) Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans; (h) Provisional trying of new roles; (i) Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and (j) A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective. (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22).
UIW Title V Development Opportunities

With Title V grant funds, UIW faculty have traveled, conducted research and attended special courses during the summer. Some faculty members have participated in more than one opportunity. Examples of the kinds of activities that were funded include research on life experiences of African American women with breast cancer, attendance at Chautauqua courses, an excavation of a Mayan community and the investigation of trade practices in Peruvian craft markets. In addition, the Technology Institutes provided hands-on, intensive training with a variety of technology and software, encouraging faculty to use it in their teaching.

While conducting an initial qualitative and quantitative study of Title V grant recipients, Anderson and Kimmel (2004), found patterns that emerged from data gathered from 112 surveys collected as follow-up reports from faculty participants. In analyzing faculty reflections, the authors discovered a number of references to personal growth and transformation. For those who participated in the Faculty Development and International Research opportunities, these patterns emerged: (a) Personal Growth, (b) Enhanced self concept, (c) Integration of research into teaching, (d) Increased scholarly production, (e) Effect on students and (f) Faculty renewal. The patterns that were found among the responses from the participants in the Technology Institute were as follows: (a) Comfort and confidence with technology, (b) Integration of technology into teaching, (c) Moving onto other technologies, (d) Teaching students to use technology, (e) Changes in patterns of technology use (Anderson and Kimmel, 2004). This analysis of the faculty reflections on the first follow-up surveys led the authors to the theory of transformative learning and Mezirow’s framework.

Faculty Development and Transformative Learning

Other researchers have commented on the work of Mezirow and applied his theory to various faculty development situations. Cranton (1994, 2002) has focused on the teaching of teachers—how each of us can learn to set up the learning experience so that we aim for transformation in our students. Every institution has its own “culture of teaching” and many faculty become a part of it without ever questioning or reflecting on their role (Cranton and King, 2003). Cranton and King state, “Effective professional development brings our habits of mind about teaching into consciousness and allows us to examine critically what we believe and value in our work as educators. The goal is to open up alternatives, introduce new ways of thinking about teaching – a goal that is potentially transformative” (Cranton and King, 2003, p. 34).

The authors think that institutions of higher education also have a culture of scholarship. Professional faculty development experiences supporting professional growth in the area of scholarship can lead faculty to transform. In essence, the Title V grant allowed the University of the Incarnate Word to move from a culture where teaching was the primary focus to a revised culture with the added dimension of scholarship.

In the fall of 2004, the researchers conducted a qualitative follow-up study, which consisted of 10 in-depth interviews with faculty who participated in the Title V development activities. All but one had participated in multiple Title V experiences. Five had received money to travel to study abroad; 2 received funds to support research at home; one had received funds to attend Chautauquas, and all had attended the Technology Institutes. The authors prepared a list of interview questions designed to follow Mezirow’s (2000) phases of transformation, which he observed and from which his model emerged. The Title V subjects were asked to reflect back on their experiences using these questions. What follows are summaries of three of the subjects’ experiences in the professional development context, which the authors think support the theory of transformative learning.

Professor D (Brenda Starr)

Professor D is a Hispanic female marketing professor who had a professional career as a marketing manager for a department store for 10 years prior to completing doctorate before coming to the university as a fulltime faculty member. She has written on Mexican American women as leaders.

Dr. D chose a research project in Mexico because it related to her previous profession as a buyer. She was interested in finding out how artists in Mexico were getting their pottery to market. “I just had to know how this village with no roads, no banks, no hotels, one teeny tiny gas station, no Internet, no Xerox, no landforms to speak of, and no cell phones --- how in the world trade was being conducted when you don’t have a business infrastructure?” She wanted to apply what she learned to her international and marketing courses. In Peru, she was interested in the same research question. There, her focus was on quadros, the pastoral scenes and country scenes that the Peruvian women embroider onto fabric.

For her project in Mexico, Dr. D spent three weeks with a local family in the small community of Juan Mata Oriz in Chihuahua. She interviewed the artisans about their work and studied their methods of marketing. In Peru, she traveled with a group to sites supported by the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word to study the cooperatives as a production unit and distribution channel. Both trips opened her eyes to poverty. “What we think is poor here is
really not poor. People at least have access to food and clothing if you just put out a little bit of effort, but in Lima there is no food, there are no trash cans to overturn and find food, and the only ways that these people find food are through the food kitchens.”

Visiting Mexico had a personal impact on Dr. D, who is a fifth generation Mexican American. She says she felt like she was returning to her family roots. When she observed the Mexicans in their homes, at work and at play, she said she was reminded of her grandparents, and the time that she spent with them in South San Antonio. Her grandparents had the same values, generosity, graciousness, respect for others, and respect for the Earth that the families in Mexico had. Dr. D says, “It brought me back closer to my roots, and I was really sorry that I had lost part of my roots, but I am glad I have rediscovered it, and I have recognized it for what it was.”

The experience of traveling was something that she had always wanted to do since she was a small child. Dr. D says that she always wanted to be just like Brenda Starr, the adventurous comic strip reporter who traveled the world. This experience fulfilled a dream and helped build her confidence to continue to travel. “Here I am in my early 50’s and I am doing exactly what I wanted to do. I am out there by myself; I am figuring it all out by myself. I am meeting all these wonderful people; every house has a surprise; and it’s just wonderful.”

Dr. D, a seasoned scholar, has been successful at publishing and presenting her findings. In addition, her research experience in these two countries has had a big impact on her teaching. She is able to bring what she saw in Mexico and in Peru into the classroom.

When you start talking about importing and exporting, it becomes very alive, it is not just a number on a chart, this is a woman trying to make ends meet for her family. This is a family in Mexico trying to upgrade their standard of living. And you see how dependent, both of them, especially Mexicans, have become on the American dollar to raise their standard of living. So it is not just, a figure that you can get from some chart, it is an actually human reality that these people face and then the whole term of exporting and importing is not a simple process; these are people trying to use other people, like co-sellers from the United States to help them get a ahead in life. It becomes much more real, and it is not just words in text book; it becomes alive.

Her Hispanic students have been able to make a connection to Dr. D’s experiences, particularly those she had in Mexico. “The Latino students now feel it’s okay for them to relate their Latino experiences in the classroom.” Her research has enlivened her lectures. Dr. D states, “It’s given me a different perspective on other global attitudes. It’s helping me to see my ethnocentric views. Even though I am a Latina, I have very ethnocentric views in some respect, because I am such a product of this (American) culture.”

Professor #2 (Something to Say)  
Professor T is an Anglo female nursing professor who has taught at UIW for 30 years, and one whose focus has been unabashedly on teaching. She primarily teaches first-year nursing students.

Dr. T participated in a great number of Title V sponsored activities. She attended Chautauquas on a variety of topics: ancient Chinese medicine, herbal medicine use in the Southwest, and a technology-based teaching technique called “Just in Time” teaching. She also attended the Technology Institutes. Improving her teaching and her love of learning were her main reasons for availing herself to these development experiences.

When UIW became a laptop university, she worried about not knowing technology well enough to use it in the classroom. “Hello, we need to be able to know how we could adapt the technology and make it worth while for the students.” Dr. T states, “I am a life long learner, and I know I was going to learn something, someway, somehow… my assumption was that it was a great adventure.” The prospect of doing faculty development was very exciting to her. “I have been here for 30 years and I hadn’t had the chance to do as much development as I have done in the past five years.”

Dr. T was able to combine what she learned from the Technology Institutes and the “Just in Time” teaching techniques in her nursing courses, using Blackboard, a course management system. As a result, she changed the way she teaches. According to Dr. T., the instructional strategy is not for novice teachers. “Just in Time teaching makes you definitely have to be a facilitator, and you have to throw away your notes…. You have to go with the flow, go from where the students are and the responses to the situations posed and then teach around that.” Taking risks on trying new strategies can be scary says Dr. T. “Sometimes you have to take a deep breath and you hope it works…. It’s so much more comfortable to lecture, but that’s not participatory education, the students aren’t involved.”

Due to her expertise with technology, Dr. T’s role in her department has changed. “I have become a resource person to others in the nursing department as well as on campus.” She made PowerPoints to support her lectures.
Professor #3 (Shared Discovery)

Professor P is a Hispanic male English professor, a traditional Americanist scholar, focusing on rhetorical analysis and 20th century American fiction. He also teaches Chicano/a literature and is interested in investigating early Texas/Mexican history. He was born in South Texas and is proficient in reading and writing Spanish.

Dr. P was working on something that he had never done before as a researcher. He was interested in doing a rhetorical analysis of sermons from a 19th century Texas Mexican preacher. In the process of locating the sermons, Dr. P located a retired Methodist minister and his wife who had collected “a treasure trove of documents” related to Mexican American Protestants. Title V funds paid for the supplies and technology that Dr. P needed to use to start archiving the material.

Doing this type of archival work was new to Dr. P. He had done library research into rare documents and books; but, he had never collected and catalogued items. When starting the project, Dr. P says that he felt so “overwhelmed” that he had to work at maintaining focus on his research objectives. During his research, Dr. P found himself working closely with the Reverend and his wife on the collection. He had not anticipated that the Reverend would be interested in working on the materials too. Dr. P had to tutor the Reverend on how to use the computer and this shared experience enhanced their relationship. Dr. P reveals that during the moments spent tutoring, “… the Reverend was able to share with me something that it wouldn’t have occurred to me to ask him. So this close working experience with him led me to further insight regarding all of the collection.” Teaching others to use technology was a new experience for Dr. P; but by doing so, Dr. P was able to build a rapport with the Reverend. This shared research experience was a great learning experience for the both of them. In the beginning of the project, Dr. P admits to being fearful that he might destroy the documents. He read a manual on how to handle historic documents. He shared this with the Reverend and his wife. They all reviewed the procedures and made a plan. Dr. P states, “I was learning how to get into this, and maybe the Reverend and his wife thought that I was teaching them, but I was learning along with them how to proceed.”

Dr. P also prepared himself for this project by reading texts on writing autobiographies and memoirs. He found that himself reviewing the history of Texas in an informal way, through discussions with the Reverend. The shared experience with the Reverend and wife may have been time consuming, but it was well worth it to Dr. P. If he had just gone about his business cataloguing the materials without the interaction, the experience would not have been as rich. “As I got to know them (the Reverend and his wife) better, the design of the interview expanded. I wanted to know more about them and their view and the issues that I felt these materials were going to inform.”

Dr. P made another discovery about research, “I thought my approach was to be mostly objective when evaluating these documents. It turned out to be a little more subjective, which is okay. That’s because I have some background with Protestantism that I kind of have forgotten and through the conversations and the documents a lot of that was coming back to me.” Dr. P was making connections to prior experiences that he had with the Protestant church. A colleague, who is a Texas historian, told Dr. P that there was little information out there on the Protestant church in Texas. So Dr. P has discovered that his research efforts are adding to a new body of knowledge. “There is a gap that I see in the scholarship in Texas Mexican communities that overlooks not just the contributions of Protestants but the contributions of churches and any kind of religious organizations.” He states “I think that it is going to take me somewhere that is broader than the Texas Mexican population, because it seems that communities do not, or have not acknowledged the contributions of religion and church organizations to intellectual development.”

When asked about how this experience has changed him, Dr. P says, “If anything, I think I am a little more sensitive to the possibility of finding useful information or insight where I had not expected it before… I know there are things out there that have not been addressed or touched by anyone and that’s exciting.” While working with the Reverend, Dr. P states, “There were moments that were like epiphanies at the house when things sort of came together.” Bringing a fresh pair of eyes and order to the Reverend’s documents was helpful because “If it has no
order, you can’t give meaning to it. It is just there in isolation, and what you’ve been able to do is to connect these things together, and that is where the need is.”

Analysis
In applying Mezirow’s framework, the authors found these examples in the three interviews:

1. Disorienting dilemma
   • UIW’s laptop initiative pushed Dr. T into learning about technology;
   • Finding documents he knew were of value, prompted Dr. P to try archiving, something that he had never done before as a researcher.
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame
   • Dr. P felt overwhelmed by the number of documents, size of the collection and the context of the research;
   • Dr. D’s visit to Mexico had a personal impact on feeling of family, origins, and connection with her roots. She examined her own family history.
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
   • Dr. P had only thought in terms of research in relation to texts and libraries;
   • Dr. T felt that she had nothing to share or say with anyone professionally;
   • Dr. D questioned her understanding of poverty in comparison to her experiences at home.
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared
   • Dr. P was surprised at how teaching the Reverend about the computer and its abilities became a time for sharing the information about the documents and the history of early Texas.
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
   • Dr. P’s acknowledgement of the subjectivity of the researcher’s role in the project;
   • Dr. D’s traveling down to Mexico for three weeks on all by herself.
6. Planning a course of action
   • All three subjects planned their course of action. One example is when Dr. P reviewed texts on writing autobiographies and memoirs; formulated a schedule of work; shared the information about handling the documents with the couple and made a plan with them to follow the procedures.
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
   • All three subjects acquired new knowledge either by reading, researching and/or participating as learners.
8. Provisional trying of new roles
   • Dr. P teaches technology skills to the Reverend and tries new role as archivist;
   • Dr. T begins to integrate newly acquired knowledge of “Just in Time” teaching, using Blackboard in classes;
   • Dr. D becomes Brenda Starr, world interviewer and reporter.
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
   • Dr. P becomes sensitive to the possibility of finding breakthrough information in unlikely places;
   • Dr. T becomes a resource for her department for technology and raises the bar for department faculty;
   • Dr. D learns to travel and do research alone.
10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective
    • Dr. P discovers his efforts are adding to a new body of knowledge in a field of scholarship that is new to him.
    • Dr. T loses her fear of trying new teaching strategies. She sees herself as a scholar and presents her scholarship of teaching at conferences.
    • Dr. D integrates her findings into teaching and finds a new perspective on other global attitudes, which helps her to see her own ethnocentric views.

Conclusions
In the analysis of the 10 interviews, the authors found evidence of transformative learning; however, it was difficult to apply the framework of Mezirow’s 10 phases to each interview. This may be due to the methodology.
According to Taylor (2000), most transformative learning studies have used naturalistic and qualitative research design in which data was gathered in retrospect. “This has serious limitations, especially in the area of recall by the participant in remembering particular events, kinds of learning, and reflection” (Taylor, 2000, p. 319). Whitelaw, Sears, and Campbell (2004) in their study of faculty development and transformative learning found collecting self-reported data to be unsatisfactory. They suggest strengthening data collection by using pre and post assessments and collecting reflective data throughout the cycle of the project. The authors found that when subjects were asked to look back on their experiences, it was difficult to get any sense of a developmental timeline. Instead, the subjects spoke holistically. Their recounts became iterative or recursive.

King (2002, 2003, 2004) has successfully connected transformational learning to the learning of technology. King (2002, 2004) has proposed a model with four stages, which educators follow in their journey of transformation: (a) Fear and Uncertainty, (b) Testing and Exploring, (c) Affirming and Connecting, and (d) New Perspectives (King, 2002, p. 6). She has aligned these stages with Mezirow’s Perspective Transformation Stages. She states “While the model accounts for the stages outlined by Mezirow, there is a dynamic of iterative, loosely coupled cycling that is embedded within the four stages and not seen elsewhere” (King, 2004, p. 20).

In her research design, King has gathered data from interviews with and reflective journals from faculty as they are participating in educational technology development. King is better able to piece together the transformative process because her approach is to follow faculty over a period of time. As a result of their research experience, the authors feel that King’s Journey of Transformation Stages model and her methodology might be a more useful framework for us to use in future studies of the transformative learning with in the context of faculty development.

References
Menogogy: The Art and Science of Becoming a Crone: A New Perspective on Transformative Learning

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Abstract: Transformative learning theory advances the concept that life-changing events—“disorienting dilemmas”—spark adults’ search for a process that can enable them to create personal meaning from the event/dilemma. (Mezirow 1991) For many women, the transition through midlife, typically marked by the biological phenomenon of menopause, can result in profound changes in her personal identity and sense of place in the world. Menopause can be viewed as a built-in disorienting dilemma. The assertion that these dramatic physical and psychological changes harbor the possibility for personal transformation has not been addressed by Adult Educators.

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

For more than a century, conventional thinking regarding women and menopause has been imbedded with the notion that it represents a dangerous time for a woman’s health. The perception that menopause and inevitable aging are inherently negative has become implanted in our social/cultural consciousness. According to Robert Wilson, menopause is the equivalent of castration, with devastating effects on a woman’s sexuality. (Wilson 1966, p. 42) All women who live long enough will experience “the change of life,” despite the misguided efforts of medical science. “Change” can be difficult, scary, and unwanted.

Currently, the cultural narratives about women of menopausal age, Crones, describe this unique and important phase as a time of physical decline and social rejection. Menopause, a normal biological phenomenon for female human beings, has been redefined as a treatable disease. (George 2000, p. 5) Instead of women apprehending menopause as an opportunity for the awakening of a new self, the prevailing social hegemony has created an atmosphere of regret and denial for women. This paper is excerpted from a larger study on menopause, and focuses on the transformational possibilities of this unique phase of a woman’s life.

The research questions guiding the study: (1) How do women perceive their own changes and transitions during menopause? (2) Do women see themselves as transformed because of their menopause experiences? (3) What kinds of experts, if any, do women rely on to navigate the experience of menopause?

Supporting Literature

There is a paucity of development theories about midlife women. Reviewing the research on midlife transition in women, Lippert (1997) concludes that the research is inconclusive and contradictory. She notes that while some researchers report that menopause causes increasing vulnerability to psychological breakdown, others, conclude that menopause is not the culprit; but rather, midlife stress is to blame for increased incidences of depression and cognitive changes. Developmental psychology’s omission of theories for women stems from the view that women are not interesting because their lives are so predictable. However, as Lippert points out, women in their 40s and 50s are redefining stereotypical attitudes about this age.

This study also draws on the work of Jack Mezirow in order to fully inform the analysis of the changes that these women discuss in their individual narratives. While from the late 1970s through the 1990s, Mezirow discussed life transitions in terms of perspective transformation (Mezirow 1991) he has now broadened his own perspective to discuss transformational learning which he defines as: “the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference” (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 7-8).

Methodology

Nine women who ranged in age from 45 to 66 were interviewed for this study. Three of the women (Angela, Maggie, Kate) described themselves as perimenopausal, experiencing disruptions to their menstrual cycle, foggy thinking, and fatigue. Five women were menopausal (Barbara, Dawn, Susan, Diana, Debbie), experiencing absence of menstruation for a year, and one woman (Laura) had had surgical menopause (hysterectomy). The interviews explored how the menopause experience affected them personally, socially, and physically. The interviews lasted approximately three hours. The data were then analyzed using narrative analysis.

**Study Findings**

The women interviewed for this study attached different meanings to their life histories and what it means to be a woman. They approached the changes associated with perimenopause and menopause in large part, as an extension of their individual sense of their own pasts. Although the stories of who they are becoming are still unfolding, they each have a sense of how they want to be in the future.

**Views of Aging and Menopause**

The biological changes normally associated with menopause--hot flashes, weight gain, loss of muscle tone, for example--are just the tip of the physiological iceberg; menopause changes a woman’s brain structure. According to Northrup, “female hormones are not involved solely with reproduction. They are connected with our moods and with the way our brains work.” (2001, p. 48) Increased hormonal activity during the menopausal phase provides women with an organic mechanism for “seeing” themselves and the world around them differently. Many women are not aware of how the biological changes can affect their perceptions and behavior. The women I interviewed could readily describe how the menopause phase had affected them physically, and most believed their emotions had been intensified as well. In many cases, the behavioral changes they experienced coincided with other intense life situations, such as death of a parent or dealing with a troubled teenager; consequently, they associated the behavioral changes and perceptions with external rather than internal forces. At 66, Barbara had experienced her menopausal phase 14 years ago. When reflecting on that time, she remembered her hot flashes coincided with a difficult time in her life; “It was also at the same time we were having trouble with our daughter, so I wasn’t sure what was what.”

The physical changes women experience during menopause are well documented but have not been specifically associated with adult development. The changes in brain chemistry of menopausal women and the subsequent alteration in behavior and perception are not incorporated within traditional developmental theories. Accompanying the changes in perception are intense changes in women’s emotions as the brain is literally being rewired. This results in enhanced memory retrieval, and women can find themselves suddenly confronted with past memories of personal injustices. (Northrup 2001) Some of the women in this study discussed this phenomenon in graphic ways. Susan was 52 years old and had begun having perimenopausal symptoms in her early 40s. Her physician offered no explanations for her physical and mental complaints. Susan had no idea what was happening to her. Previously concealed, painful memories forced their way into Susan’s consciousness, and she believed her life was falling apart.

When I look back now, and I look at the literature now, I realize that a lot of things coincided at the same time, and probably there was a reason that they coincided at the same time, but the incest thing that I hadn’t recognized in my life came up at about that time. And that wasn’t, you know, accidental, that [incest] came up at that same time. . . . Right around that time, I realized after that a lot of things came up. . . . My life turned crazy. All of a sudden, my life, which I had put back together so painstakingly, you know, turned crazy. . . . I didn’t know it was menopause. . . . It sucked.

In a manner of speaking, the results of menopause’s physical effects can be likened to awakening from a deep sleep. Female reproductive hormones, especially estrogen, have an anesthetizing effect on a menstruating woman’s mind and body. Estrogen boosts the levels of serotonin and norepinephrine, and both help regulate body temperature and sleep and create feelings of well-being. Progesterone reduces high anxiety by binding with brain receptors and “acts very much like . . . antianxiety medications.” (Vliet 1995, p. 778) Midlife women, no longer under the influence of the “hormonal veil” that can keep a menstruating woman subdued and acquiescent, begin to awaken and can suddenly display anger in situations that had not bothered them in the past. Northrup (2001) explained that women’s changing brains during menopause actually create the ability to experience and express anger in ways not possible in younger years. Kate was 51 and described herself as possessing high energy and a positive attitude. She was experiencing extreme mood swings and believed she was undergoing significant emotional changes due to perimenopause:

There definitely is a traumatic impact between 40 and 50. Just between 45 and 50, I think there’s a big, big difference. . . . I think menopause is definitely a change in your life. . . . Emotionally, you look at things differently. . . . I have too many emotional things, emotional roller coaster, to say the least. . . . I’m also finding horrible mood swings, just horrible mood swings. . . . I’m called “psycho woman” before I get my period. So the mood swings have been tremendous.
Barbara gave her perspective on how hormones can change a woman’s demeanor:

The older you get and the estrogen goes down . . . and then you change. Suddenly you’re speaking up and saying things; pretty soon it’s “Look at that old biddy telling people off,” and “Where did this come from? She was never like that?” It’s probably hormones and aging . . . What do you care about what people think, that’s my attitude, oh yeah. My kids are stunned sometimes.

Because the majority of women experience menopause at midlife, their emotional and perceptual reactions are often explained as being situational or externally motivated. It is notable that all of these women did not immediately recognize that menopause was at the source of their problems, instead they felt that they were on the verge of breakdown.

Younger women who have hysterectomies are also affected in a similar way. Krull (1999) describes the experiences of 10 women who had hysterectomies during their reproductive years. Although the women were relieved of their presurgical pain, their early on-set menopause brought on a host of other problems some of which resulted in a new kind of psychological pain. The one woman in this study who underwent an early hysterectomy had a similar experience.

Laura had a hysterectomy when she was 43. Although she had been experiencing physical pain for some time, she indicated that she finally decided to have surgery when she realized that she no longer had any interest in having more children. As she put it, “I could no longer bear to bear children.” Although she experienced hot flashes, it was the mood swings and not feeling like herself that ultimately led her to return to the doctor for help; “The mood swings . . . I remember going in to the doctor and saying, “I do not feel like me. There’s something wrong, and I don’t know what it is. It has to be the hysterectomy.” “The energy level . . . ‘Is the glass half full or half empty?’ You know, who cares. They’re all glasses, they’re all dirty, and they all have to be washed. It was like this real cloud that came over me.”

But these women themselves also viewed aging as different from becoming old. For example, Dawn, 53, observed that present-day menopausal women were more like the 30 somethings of yesterday; “my friends aren’t like older women. . . . I think people in their 50s maybe were like people in their 30s used to be.” Dawn said she was much better looking at 50 than she was at 20: “Who would have ever thought I’d look better than Linda Ronstadt?”

Dawn’s upbeat attitude does not remove the social barriers that menopausal women confront, however. Although she was actively seeking employment, Debbie, 54, balked at coloring her gray hair until she realized, with resentment, that an older woman would not be a serious candidate: “I felt it was a detriment to look like I was my age. . . . And that’s really sort of a frustrating situation because the reality is you can’t go around with gray hair and be taken all that seriously unless you’re a man.” The workplace continues to be dominated by male energy. Maggie, 45, found her chosen field—academia—to be typical: “I’m an academic. There’s something that privileges the notion of thinking, and it’s been fairly male dominated. . . . And what constitutes academia has been traditionally male. What constitutes knowledge has been what constitutes masculinity.”

Our cultural images of what women ought to look like remains oppressive to aging women. For example, Laura talked about a man who looks as though he needs to be saved by a marine biologist making cruel remarks about older women. She wondered if he had ever seen himself in a full-length mirror. When asked about her looks at this time in her life, Laura said, “Well, obviously looking at pictures I think, ‘Gee, here I was 113 pounds thinking my thighs were too big.’ Now I sit here at 150 pounds, thinking, ‘What the hell was I complaining about?’” The cultural narrative demands that women conform to an unattainable physical ideal that we should all look like Victoria’s Secret models.

With the exception of Dawn, the study participants expressed disappointment with how they look at this age compared to when they were 20. Kate thought she looked “horrible”; Susan was learning “how to be in my body” and yet lamented that she had gained weight. Although they had physically aged, most of the women said they still felt “young.” Barbara felt 30 until she looked in the mirror and wondered, “Gosh, what happened?” Diana said, “You tend to disappear” as an older woman. Although they might not look as good as they thought they “should,” the women hadn’t lost their sexuality. Maggie felt extremely sexy at 45, and Angela dreamed of working for Heidi Fleiss. Dawn lived with a man who was 15 years her junior, and Laura was delighted at the whistles from construction workers as she drove by. Oppressive cultural ideals of how women should look need to be eliminated. The problem is that menopausal women alone do not have the power to suppress the imagery that perpetuates unnatural ideals.
Changing Sense of Self

Some of the women saw menopause as a time of change and a chance to reflect on these changes. They indicated that rather than serving as an ending, this time of life was a new beginning. Barbara, age 66 summed it up by stating that “I think this is the best time;” Debbie, age 54, concurred that this time of life gave her a chance to assess her life and that she had a new sense of time in which to think. She added, “I enjoy being introspective.” Laura, age 49, states that her aim as she ages is that she hopes, “to evolve into a less complex person;” Kate, age 51 believes women have more insight, “A woman is someone who knows what’s going on.”

These women also discussed the kinds of deep changes they had made to their lives, changes that they ascribed specifically to the menopausal experience. They looked forward to their post-menopause years with a sense of freedom. Dawn talked about returning to school or writing a book and was grateful for the wisdom that comes with age: “When I was young, I was too screwed up to enjoy it. It was a lot of fun, but it wasn’t much happiness.” Laura thought about “getting back to what is real as opposed to the things that don’t matter to me as much anymore.” Preserving physical strength and health was important. Kate hoped to maintain her energy level and workout pace. Barbara’s and Diana’s wish to remain healthy was rooted in the traditional female concern for others; they did not want to become a burden to their loved ones. The study participants apprehended the last third of their lives as a time for self-exploration. Debbie looked forward to getting to know herself better and was pleasantly surprised by how much she enjoyed being introspective.

Some of the women expressed change in spiritual terms. They shared, strong spiritual views stemming from their personal experiences with violence and violation. Maggie and Susan had embraced the spiritual path. Their hope was that the search for enlightenment would increase their sense of well-being and relieve them of the shame and pain that victims of incest abuse endure. Angela, age 50, was a victim of gunshot wounds that left her paralyzed saw menopause in relation to the earlier catastrophic events that had shaped her life. She put these changes into perspective, “I’ve seen the other side and this isn’t it;” Angela’s transcendent (out of body) experience during life-saving surgery, gave her a renewed sense of purpose in life and the wisdom to understand what is really important in life. Maggie, age 45, was a victim of child sexual abuse, “This isn’t about life . . . It’s about soul and having to learn,” As an adult, Susan who is now 52. “I’m more aware of my place . . . that I’m moving though this world on a journey.”

Conclusion

As the women discuss their views of their changes and the ways that they learned, it became apparent that they were experiencing a discrete phase of life that perhaps demanded a new approach to learning. I have termed this new approach, “menogy” and I define “menogy” as “the art and science of becoming a Crone.” According to cultural myths, becoming a Crone was a significant passage in a woman’s life that was honored and celebrated. The Crone persona symbolized the accumulated wisdom of lived experiences. Although some may refer to menopause as “the change of life,” we do not acknowledge this important transition. Menopause is a journey that begins with the perimenopause stage, which is followed by the menopause, and concludes with the emergence of the Crone. All women who live long enough or have surgical menopause will make the journey. Menopausal women are in the midst of a developmental phase that prepares them for new aptitudes and learning. The biological changes women experience at this phase of life create the opportunity for intense inward focus to understand the changes they are experiencing. Many women are not aware that they have entered the first stage until they begin to experience changes in their periods, emotions, and sleep patterns. The stage surrounding the cessation of menstruation can thrust a woman into a dark desperate space where she questions her goals, lifestyle, relationships, and self. If she embraces a new sense of self and purpose, a woman can emerge with the requisite wisdom to be considered a Crone. Menogogy is more than an approach to adult learning. Menogogy also represents a specific transformational process that begins with the apprehension of internal changes that propel the menopausal woman’s inward journey of self-discovery. When she emerges from her passage, it is with a new sense of identity and purpose.

The women in this study can be characterized as New Crones. They are not succumbing to society’s views about menopause and aging. Rather the New Crones are quietly redefining the cultural role of menopausal women and apprehend the last third of their lives as a time for self-exploration. The New Crones’ attitudes are reminiscent of the early days of the modern feminist movement and the quest to redefine cultural roles for women. When Gloria Steinem gave her most quoted line--“This is what 40 looks like!”--she was responding to a reporter’s observation during her 40th birthday party. (Dominus 1998) Currently, a New Crone might quip, “This is what menopause looks like.”

The New Crones are quietly redefining the cultural role of menopausal women. Women of menopausal age are becoming increasingly visible on college campuses. Their thirst for knowledge may be motivated by a desire for empowerment. According to the most recently published data from the U.S. Census Bureau at the time of this study,
there are 583,000 women ages 45 to 54 enrolled in college. Over 156,000 women 55 years of age and older are also college students. (U.S. Census Bureau 2002) Beder concluded that the reasons for conducting adult education fall into four categories: “(1) to facilitate change in a dynamic society, (2) to support and maintain the good social order, (3) to promote productivity, and (4) to enhance personal growth.” According to Beder, “These categories of purpose are interrelated. Success or failure in achieving one affects all others.” (Beder 1989, 39) I believe these categories highlight the essential dilemma within Adult Education today: can social change be facilitated, good social order maintained, and productivity promoted without first enhancing individual personal growth? My position throughout this study is that the possibility for personal transformation is imbedded within the menopause phase and that adult educators need to be cognizant of this opportunity.

The adolescent phase provides educators, developmental theorists, and healthcare professionals with a laboratory for studying the effects of burgeoning hormonal activity on the social behavior, development, and learning approach of adolescents. Menopause harbors similar possibilities for study. Menopause is a predictable phase—all women who live long enough and haven’t undergone a hysterectomy will become menopausal. The effects of biological changes menopausal women experience within a cultural context that devalues aging women’s needs to be examined by adult educators.

Eisler believed that by recapturing the feminine values of the Goddess, we can transform gender relationships and begin to heal ourselves and the earth, what she termed Gylany. (Eisler 1987, 105) For example, would our relationships with each other be less volatile if we considered, as ancient societies did, that black was the color of life and fertility and white was the color of death? How different would our lives be presently if we were able to adhere to Mother Maat’s (Mother of Truth’s) commands (do not cause pain or sorrow to others, harm animals, damage fertile land, or befoul the waters)? (Walker 1983, 51) What if we thought of the earth as a living, breathing, abundant Mother? The Crone was thought to have established and honored the cycles of life “whereby every temporary living form in the universe blends eventually into every other form, nothing is unrelated, and there can be no hierarchy of better or worse, We and They.” (Walker 1983, 51) Although the Crone archetype has been suppressed for many centuries, “it has been said before that archetypes suppressed by any culture will tend to arise again and again.” (Ibid.) Gylany cannot be conceived by removing or diminishing the social and cultural capital of half the population. Gylany happens by women asserting their true female power. . . . When women begin to feel confident and to express the values of their own way of being, then they will enable the healing of the masculine. The answer does not lie in blaming men. It lies in taking powerful action. The patriarchal society only survives because women have complacently agreed to become its infrastructure and support its ways and values. . . . The crone has the freedom. . . . She has the keys to all doors. In order to open them, however, she has to know her power.” (McCain 1991, 135-136) It is time for the Crone to arise again.

References
Perceptions of Transformative Learning During Workplace Transition

B. Nicole Balan

Abstract: This study sought to obtain a deeper understanding of the perceived learning of female professionals during workplace transition, in part, due to the fact that it has been found that women tend to stay in outplacement services longer than men do (Phelps & Mason, 1991). Additionally, while previous studies have focused on women’s learning in the workplace (Howell, Carter & Schied, 2002) this study focused on women’s learning during workplace transition. This study sought to examine women’s learning within this particular context, using an adult learning (Clark, 2001; Dirkx, 2001) framework and a feminist interpretative lens (Bloom, 1998) which acknowledged the women's multiple subjectivities (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg & Bertsch, 2003; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). The five participants tended towards two distinct paths to learning during transition. Those participants who tended towards a growth orientation to learning experienced their learning as transformative in terms of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1978, 1981) or in terms of Dirkx's (1998) developmental (third lens) or spiritual (forth lens) approach. In contrast, the participants who experienced a goal orientation to learning, rather than a growth orientation, did not describe any transformative learning experiences. Other factors which may affect the experience of transformative learning include experiencing more than one "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow, 1978, 1981) or an integrating circumstance (Clark, 1993) during the transition, losing or gaining a primary relationship, age and developmental stage factors, and the type of self-knowledge attained. Additionally perceptions of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) and personal agency during the transition period may also influence a transformative learning experience.

Background to Workplace Transition and Career Development

Careers and lives are in a constant state of change due to pressures from globalization, increased competition, and cost-conscious corporate policies (Mallon & Cohen, 2001). These forces make organizational downsizing a common reality (Nelson & Burke, 1998). A person's initial choice for career rarely continues with her through her entire working life (Foord Kirk, 2003; Mergenhagen, 1991). Cetron and Davies (2003) suggest that people, on average, change careers every 10 years and that lifelong learning will be an important part of everyone's work life, with people taking sabbaticals to upgrade their knowledge for new careers.

Research on career development traditionally paid little attention to women's careers, used male subjects exclusively, and assumed the male path as the ideal (Gutek & Larwood, 1987; Mallon & Cohen, 2001). In practice, women executives still find that established career ladders follow a linear, male trajectory (Linehan & Walsh, 2001) and that their organizational cultures operate under a male construct (Auster, 2001; Bierema, 1999).

Contribution to the Literature on Women's Learning During Workplace Transition

Phelps and Mason (1991) have found that women's and men's experiences in outplacement are different, and that women tend to stay in outplacement services longer than men do. While previous studies have focused on women transitioning into entrepreneurship from the corporate environment (Korn/Ferry, 2001; Mallon & Cohen, 2001), they have not concentrated on women's learning per se. Additionally, women's learning and training experiences within the workplace has been studied (Howell, Carter & Schied, 2002) but not during workplace transition. Finally, transformative learning experiences have been studied in educational contexts (Mindorff, 2000) but this study makes a contribution to the adult education literature, and the transformative learning arena specifically, by exploring women's learning within the context of workplace transition.

Theoretical Framework

The research was set within an adult learning (Clark, 2001; Dirkx, 2001) framework. Additionally, a feminist interpretive lens (Bloom, 1998) was used, which acknowledges the post-modern concept of nonunitary subjectivity, which views the self as having many voices, or subjectivities, in contrast and conflict with one another (Gilligan et al., 2003; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). The orientation to learning was a social constructivist approach and the adult learning principles most associated with this approach (e.g., experiential learning, self-directed learning.)
perspective transformation, and reflective practice) were complemented with the adult learning principles manifested in social learning theory (e.g., social roles, mentoring; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

Research Design

Five women who had experienced workplace transition participated in an individual interview and a focus group activity. The research design set out to ensure that each participants' voice (Gilligan, 1982) was heard, while acknowledging common themes. The Listening Guide method (Gilligan et al., 2003) was used to analyze the individual transcripts. This method involved "listening" to the multiple voices within the transcripts and composing an analysis. The focus group questions emerged from the analysis of the individual interviews and were shaped by the work of Krueger and Casey (2000). Thematic, cross-sectional analysis of all data sources was then conducted, following Spencer, Ritchie & O'Connor's (2003) analytic hierarchy method. As a feminist research project, the researcher also engaged in the study as a participant, taking the pseudonym Maya.

The criteria for participation involved adult female participants who had at least 2 years of professional work experience prior to the beginning of their workplace transition experience. This criteria was intended to allow participants to provide their professional perspective to the transition experience instead of being in the midst of adjusting to the initial phase of becoming a professional (e.g., coming directly from university graduation). Participants were women who had experienced workplace transition with the last 6 years (i.e. were laid off, or their jobs eliminated, or they chose to leave that employment position no earlier than September 1st, 1996). This criterion was intended to allow for an experience that was still fresh enough for them to provide more description, meaning, and feeling to the research. Additionally, participants had been in the transition process for at least 6 months prior to conducting their personal interview. This may have provided participants with sufficient time for an appropriate depth of learning and experience towards transition, as well as allowing some time for reflection, and a larger view of the overall process. The participants interviewed varied in their transition time (as described by the participants) from 1.5 years to 4 years.

A hybrid of both convenience sample (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003) and snowball sampling (Creswell, 2002) was used to select participants. The participants fell into three age range categories. Dara and Maya fell within the 30-34 year old category, Ciara and Samantha fell within the 35-39 year old category and Alexandra fell within the 50-54 old category. All the participants experienced restructuring due to a company takeover or industry factors such as the competitive state of the industry or the technology "bust". All the participants, except Samantha, left their corporation due to the restructuring efforts. In Samantha's case, she remained with the same corporation but experienced transition in terms of continual modification to her work groups, objectives, reporting structures and departmental affiliations over 3.5 years. She had no input into these changing assignments and felt she was in continual transition.

Transformative Learning and the Path to Learning

Two paths to learning emerged from the focus group discussions, the goal orientation and the growth orientation to learning. Those participants who tended towards the goal orientation to learning did not describe experiences of transformative learning while those participants who tended towards the growth orientation to learning did.

The two paths emerged when participants were asked to draw their learning prior to transition and their learning at present. The participants who tended towards the goal orientation to learning drew their previous learning as cognitive-based and going in many different directions. Their learning at present was focused and goal oriented. These participants reexamined their learning priorities during transition, did not return to formal education, took an immediate orientation to reflection (Wellington & Austin, 1996) and took no action during the transition. They did not leave their potentially toxic work environments or making any radical changes in their career paths. Additionally, these participants either maintained their spouse or got married during the transition. Again, those participants who tended towards the goal orientation to learning did not describe transformative learning experiences. Alexandra, for example, had no changing assumptions about herself or her work. Samantha, while experiencing changing assumptions about work, nonetheless felt she could not take action to change her situation.

In contrast, the participants who tended towards a growth orientation to learning experienced various forms of transformative learning (Daloz, 1999; Dirckx, 1998; Healey, 2000; Mezirow, 1978, 1981). Their drawings of learning before transition emphasized a focus on the cognitive aspects of learning by depicting, for example, a textbook. Their drawings of their learning at present depicted a more holistic approach to learning by depicting hearts and writing words such as "intuitive" and "self aware" beside their stick figure selves. The participants who

1 All pseudonyms chosen by the participants themselves.
took a goal orientation to learning had other similarities. They returned to formal education on a full-time or part-time basis, they reexamined themselves, they took a transpersonal orientation to reflection (Wellington & Austin, 1996), and they all lost their primary relationship. They all commented on the nonsupportive nature of their spouse or life partner at the beginning of their workplace transition but they all felt that the loss of the relationship actually promoted learning. These participants, in contrast to those who exhibited a goal orientation to learning, took action (Scott, 1998) by changing their career paths (Dara and Maya) or becoming interested in a continued exploration of themselves and their learning (Ciara).

Each path to learning can be further divided into two distinct sections, creating four distinct quadrants. A participant's experiences are based in a particular quadrant by such factors as the participant's assumptions about self and work, their thoughts of the future, their feelings of empowerment or silence (Gilligan, 1982) and their relation to their community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Since the context of the community is during workplace transition, a "displaced" community of practice, or a "transitional" community of practice may be a more appropriate description.

For Dara and Maya, their assumptions changed about both work and self (Pulley, 1995). Their transformative learning experiences would be in terms of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1978, 1981) as well as Dirkx's (1998) developmental (third lens) and spiritual (forth lens) approach. Dara also described insight gained through meditation, which seems consistent with Healey's (2000) approach to transformation. Dara explains it in this way:

I'm very happy with where I am, where I'm going and where I am today. If I reflect back on where I was 7 years ago may I have had a good job and good pay but I wasn't happy, and I wasn't truly (emphasis) following my goals and dreams, they were other people's...it's taking control of, my destiny. So, it's really changed my life completely in all areas...One of the things that has greatly assisted in that would be learning to quiet my mind and just inner reflection, meditation, physical fitness...I've learned to work on myself, on all aspects, my body and soul to get to a higher place, a better place....

Both Dara and Maya appear to have experienced transformative learning in terms of perspective transformation as well (Mezirow, 1978, 1981). In Dara's case it is in terms of her relationship to her father and sister. She explains, "...as a sister, I used to give a lot...as a daughter...I used to feel that I had to prove something...so it's really shifted...." Maya explains her learning within the context of her return to formal graduate education following her job loss in this way: "...my whole perspective and paradigms have changed...."

Ciara, experienced a change in assumptions about self but not work (Pulley, 1995), and described her transformative learning more in terms consistent with Daloz's (1999) developmental approach. For Ciara, she approached her learning during transition as a way to make meaning for her life. Ciara also spoke about a spiritual dimension to her learning, which seems consistent with Dirkx's 4th lens approach (1998). She describes her thoughts like this:

And I have also learned that it is important to continue to grow both professionally and personally. So now, I actually have a commitment or an objective for myself to further expand my self in the professional arena...as well making sure that there is a balance of continuing to explore myself as a person and exploring the spiritual part of, you know, myself, of Ciara, so to speak.

Relationship Loss Following Job Loss

All three participants who tended towards a growth orientation to learning experienced the primary "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow, 1978, 1981) of job loss. All three also experienced the loss of a marriage or significant partnership early in this workplace transition period. In many ways, this loss of relationship could also be thought of as yet another "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow, 1978, 1981). This loss of a significant relationship and its subsequent growth and change appears to match what Josselson (1987) found in her study of women's development; that those women whose relationship ended badly had the most dramatic growth and change. In contrast, the participants who tended towards the goal orientation to learning maintained a long-term spouse, or gained one, during their workplace transition. Samantha, who felt she had no community during her workplace transition, explained that her new husband was essential in helping her to survive the turmoil of that period.

There are many differences between the growth and goal oriented learners, many of which may help to explain why one group experienced transformative learning and the other group did not. It appears that having a supportive, long-term partner may be a factor in mediating the effects of a "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow, 1978, 1981), thus reducing the potential for transformative learning.
Perception of Loss

Both Dara and Maya experienced loss in their careers and relationships, as well as changes in their roles. Their perception of the loss tended to be described in terms of having "lost everything" or "having nothing to lose" because everything was in flux at the time of transition. Dara explains it this way:

…at that point in my life, when, I lost my job and pretty much almost everything 'cause I had to start at square one back at ground zero to really (emphasis) internalize, to look inside and say 'Is this really what I want to do?' and 'Is this the person I want to be?' 'Cause I wasn't really (emphasis) happy…

This attitude towards having "nothing to lose" may facilitate the ability to accept risk, to challenge long-held beliefs and to explore other ways of understanding the world. In this way, it may facilitate one's ability to experience transformative learning in some learners.

Age and Developmental Stage

Beyond experiencing two "disorienting dilemmas" (Mezirow, 1978, 1981) within a close time span of the transition period, the participants who tended towards the growth oriented approach to learning may have been more predisposed to experiencing transformative learning due to their age and developmental stage. All of the participants who experienced transformative learning were within the age range of 30-36. Levinson and Levinson's (1996) theory of women's development describes two distinct phases for women between the ages of 28 and 40. The first stage, the "age 30-transition" from age 28-33 is a time of major life changes such as new careers, starting families, new life partners, or partnerships ending. This appears to be consistent with the paths of Dara and Maya. Both have seen major changes in terms of life partnerships and careers. Both chose to take career paths considerably different from their past work experience, in stark contrast to all other participants, who became re-employed in similar industries.

While Ciara chose to be re-employed in a similar industry, she did return to formal education on a part-time basis, both to gain skills and to become more confident in her workplace abilities. Ciara appears to follow the next stage, in which a woman is concerned with becoming more independent and speaking more fully with her own voice. (Levinson & Levinson, 1996). Ciara mentioned how she had become more assertive within her new work environment and more confident of her learning abilities through the transition process. At the beginning of the transition she seemed to accept her company's layoff as a received, authoritative assessment of her performance, as she says, "Being told that you weren't needed anymore was very difficult and self-esteem suffered. I didn't know if I could work anywhere else, didn't know if I was actually qualified." During her transition, she spoke about regaining her agency by returning to formal education, which bolstered her confidence in her ability to learn: "…taking courses and acquiring knowledge…gave me self-esteem." Her "coming to voice" (Gilligan, 1982) comes through when she notes that she was, " …finally in a place …to stand up and say that it wasn't the right thing for me." Ciara also noted that after becoming re-employed in a similar industry, she voiced her opinions and took stands within her workplace, something she had not done in her previous workplace environments.

Community

It appears that the manner in which participants approached their communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) during transition also affected whether they experienced some form of transformative learning or not. In Dara and Maya's case, they became integrated into their new learning communities at the new workplace (Dara) or the learning institution (Maya). For Maya, she found mentors who enhanced her growth and learning. In Dara's case, she had co-workers who helped her achieve in her new workplace environment: "The guys I work with are great and a lot of the guys have been extremely helpful and supportive in my endeavours and just giving that extra help and assistance…"

Ciara described her community in terms of "unexpected helpers". For Ciara, she gleaned nuggets of learning from the temporary connections she found during the networking phases of her transition. She embraced whatever transitory learning she could from each encounter, as she comments:

I found in the period of transition mentors, or helpers, or whatever you want to call them, came from the most unexpected places. And the people you thought might help you or give you that tip, didn't, yet, you found someone you hardly knew or a stranger, you know, had empathy for you and helped you along the way.
In quite the reverse situation, Samantha's professional relationships seemed to be void of community, and void of learning and mentorship. When asked were there any positive things that helped her learning in transition, she stated, "Not from that environment...."

Alexandra's community was created from a group of co-workers from her previous place of employment. They had all worked for many years together and had become friends. They had all experienced transition from the same employer, and in this manner had a "shared experience". This community of "old friends" provided comfort and counseling to members. In many ways, the comfort provided within the group may have actually led to a reduction in the movement of learning goals for the group and for Alexandra herself. She felt the learning experience would not have been the same had she been involved in a group of nonrelated transition people. In fact, she discussed her discomfort with networking because in the outplacement terminology this involved people who did not have a common history and shared experience:

I don't know if it would be same if...I went to the EI and tried to jump into a support group there, I don't know if it would have the same impact. I can't compare, I've never done it, but I wonder about that because these people were my friends so you have a history with them...it's not like you're networking....

Wenger (1998) appears to confirm that communities of practice (or "old friends" in Alexandra's case) can create lots of energy and excitement because of "shared practice" but cautions that this same energy can "prevent us from responding to new situations or from moving on" (p. 85). This seems to point to a potential plateau in learning goals for Alexandra, and perhaps, other members of her learning community.

When reviewing the approach to communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) during transition which Dara, Maya and Ciara took, it appears that their relationship with their learning community may have enhanced their ability to experience transformative learning. In contrast, it appears that Alexandra's community of "old friends" may have actually reinforced her worldviews and ways of learning, rather than challenging her in a manner that may have enhanced her ability to experience transformative learning. In Samantha's case, her lack of community did not provide her with an opportunity to experience transformative learning within her workplace environment.

**Increased Self Knowledge**

All the participants felt that an increase in self-knowledge was their most relevant learning during transition. As well, during the focus group activity, participants said that all learning led to self-knowledge. This is consistent with Chope (2001) who found that clients learn more about themselves in a job search process. While all participants felt a perceived increase in knowledge about themselves, this did not always translate into a change in assumption about self. Additionally, this increase in self-knowledge did not lead to action (Scott, 1998) for all participants. It appears that for those participants, who experienced some form of transformative learning, their increased self-knowledge led to a change in assumption about self and some subsequent action around this.

**Other Triggers**

Integrating circumstances (Clark, 1993) may also promote transformative learning experiences. It appears that the three participants who experienced some form of transformative learning may have experienced more than one "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow, 1978, 1981) as well as some form of an integrating circumstance (Clark, 1993). In so far as an integrating circumstance invites the person into greater personal exploration (Clark, 1993), Ciara's returning to formal education, and understanding that she had the ability to learn, gave her the initiative to continue exploring her professional, personal and spiritual self, on her own terms. She moved from feeling she was being acted upon when she was laid off, to being in control of her own learning (Clark, 1993). She explains:

Prior to my transition, I actually had, very low self-esteem in terms of the ability to learn. One of the reasons I went back to university was to challenge that. Now I understand going through the transition also having found another position that I can learn, I can continue to learn, I am a smart person, which is something that I did not realize before. And I know it's, it's a very simple thing, but, I did not have that knowledge before my period of transition.

Clark (1993) also speaks of an integrating circumstance as a longing to find that missing piece in one's life. In many ways, it appears that for Dara and Maya, both were searching for that missing "something" through their transition. For Maya, she was seeking a career path where she could best express herself in more complete ways. For Dara, her change in career path meant she was finally following her dreams and her goals, and managing her destiny, not what others thought was best for her.
Agency
Finally when applying the feminist lens to the participants' experiences of learning, the participants who experienced transformative learning described their overall learning in transition as self-actualizing (Dara and Maya), or a "coming to voice" (Gilligan, 1982) experience (Ciara). This is contrasted sharply by the participants who did not describe transformative learning during transition. The experiences of these participants were either more cautious in terms of not wanting to let go of the past (Alexandra) or of a more destructive nature, where the participant (Samantha) described her overall experience as a loss of agency and of being silenced (Gilligan, 1982).

Implications for Transformative Learning and Adult Education Theory
This study presents the experiences of women's learning within the context of workplace transition. It may provide further contextual information with respect to Patricia Cross' Chain of Response (COR) model (1981) of life transitions by further exploring some of the potential aspects of why job loss and relationship loss may trigger adult education activities for some and not others. As well, it may provide some additional factors that may affect whether participants in similar contexts (i.e. workplace transition) experience transformative learning while others do not. Some of these aspects may include the participant's learning path, whether they experienced more than one "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow, 1978, 1981) or an integrating circumstance (Clark, 1993) during the transition, whether they lost or gained a primary relationship, their age and developmental stage, and the type of self-knowledge they attained. As well, their perceptions their community of practice (Wenger, 1998) and their personal agency during the transition period may also affect their ability to experience transformative learning.

References


Wisdom in Three Acts: Using Transformative Learning to Teach for Wisdom

Caroline Bassett

Abstract: This paper explores transformative learning as a means for learning to become wise(r). Three major approaches to understanding wisdom are discussed. I locate my work in the third, exceptional self-development, and, based on my research, I present the Emergent Wisdom model. It includes both a developmental trajectory and strategies for teaching wisdom.

Introduction

A billboard advertising a local college reads:

“Come for knowledge. Leave with wisdom.”

I doubt it. I doubt it for several reasons. First, wisdom is complex and elusive and is thereby difficult to teach. Thus, doing so must be done intentionally. Second, except for a few rare exceptions, no one teaches people how to become wise(r), or perhaps more accurately, deliberately and purposively guides them in that direction. It is simply not done in education today. Third, wisdom usually comes with life experience and maturity—it includes knowledge but is more than being knowledgeable on a number of topics. Thus, it is a lot, and rather bold as well, for a college to claim that its students will graduate with wisdom.

Wisdom is considered “the pinnacle or hallmark of adult thinking...something we all speak about and sometimes yearn for as we face the many challenges of adult life” (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999, p. 161), “the pinnacle of successful human development (Ardelt, 2000, p. 360), or “the pinnacle of insight into the human condition and...the means and ends of a good life” (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000, p. 122). At the same time, researchers into the subject recognize its elusive and multidimensional qualities (for example, Ardelt, 1997; Baltes and Staudinger, 2000; Bassett, 2005; Sternberg, 1998, 2001). How can something as complex and abstract as wisdom be taught, much less learned?

This paper will explore briefly how and if wisdom can be taught within the context of three major approaches to wisdom. They are: wisdom as cognitive functioning, wisdom associated with various personal attributes, and wisdom understood as exceptional self-development (Bassett, in press). My own work is located within this last approach. I will present a model of emergent wisdom that I have developed from my research; it provides some strategies for transformative learning that may lead towards wisdom.

Three Approaches to Wisdom

There are three general schools of thought or approaches to the study of wisdom (Bassett, in press). In one, where wisdom is conceived of as intellectual functioning and expertise, the principal proponents include the Berlin School and their associated Berlin Wisdom Paradigm (Baltes and Staudinger, 2000) and Sternberg’s (1998, 2001) balance theory of wisdom. The former view wisdom as “an expert knowledge system in the fundamental pragmatics of life permitting exceptional insight, judgment, and advice involving complex and uncertain matters of the human condition” (1993, p. 76). More recently, they have identified five criteria associated with this kind of knowledge. The first two are characteristic of any kind of expertise (for example, what a student could learn at the college whose billboard I cited); the last three are meta-criteria specific to wisdom. They are: rich factual knowledge, rich procedural (strategic knowledge), knowledge regarding the context of life, knowledge which considers relativism of values and life goals, and knowledge which considers the uncertainties of life. The researchers posit that if the wisdom heuristic is acquired systematically and repeatedly over time, more people might reach wisdom-related knowledge and judgment than exist to date. For learning, I take it to mean that schools should do what they already do—teach factual and procedural or strategic knowledge. In addition, they could include approaches that would look at a larger picture (the context of life); they could emphasize ways in which values and life goals are relative (sometimes even acknowledging that values exist at all would be a major change in education); and they could

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1 Note: This paper accompanies the experiential workshop entitled, “Wisdom in Three Acts,” but that dramatic presentation is not discussed here.
reflect on the uncertainties of life. Providing a context for students to make a shift away from certainty and towards the toleration of ambiguity and uncertainty is a ripe area for transformative learning.

Also included in this approach to wisdom we can find the work of Sternberg and his balance theory of wisdom (1998, 2001). He indicates that “wisdom can be defined as the application of tacit as well as explicit knowledge mediated by values towards the achievement of a common good through a balance among (a) intrapersonal, (b) interpersonal, and (c) extrapersonal interests, over the (a) short and (b) long terms, to achieve a balance among (a) adaptation to existing environments (b) shaping of existing environments and (c) selection of new environments” (2001, p. 231). Sternberg emphasizes, as other wisdom commentators do, that serving one’s own interests along with those of the common good is what makes wisdom wisdom and not just personal gain. At present, he is engaged in a project teaching wisdom-related thinking in New Haven middle schools. He believes that education should help people understand values, develop the skills of metacognition, and learn to balance different types of interests for the common good.

In contrast to this approach with its emphasis on wisdom as a metacognitive skill concerning the pragmatics of life, other researchers have studied different personal attributes of wisdom. For example, they have examined the role of age, experience, gender, educational attainment, and occupation. For a summary, see my chapter on wisdom in the *Oxford Handbook of Adult Development and Learning* (Bassett, in press). Or, more specifically, see Ardelt (1997, 2000, 2003), Denney, Dew, and Kroupa (1995), Webster (2003), and Wink and Helson (1997). Little can be generalized about these personal characteristics, and this approach does not seem as conducive to learning as the others.

A third approach understands wisdom as more than performance and cognitive functioning or personal attributes. Instead, it views wisdom as an aspect of post-formal development. Wisdom is framed as exceptional self-development, including ego maturity and post-formal operational thinking (Cook-Greuter, 2000). While the two are not identical, both focus on stages of thought beyond Piagetian formal operations. Post-formal development is often associated with a decentering of the ego and the ability to think dialectically, wherein an individual is able to integrate various aspects of the psyche and accept inherent contradictions and alternate truths (Becvar, 2005; Kramer, 2000; Labouvie-Vief, 2000). Because my own work is located within this school of thought and because it presents a comprehensive model of wisdom that includes both a developmental trajectory and strategies for teaching wisdom through transformative learning, I will discuss it next.

**Emergent Wisdom**

My own work extends the discussion on the exceptional personality development necessary for wisdom and presents a perspective on the integration of processes needed for its manifestation (Bassett, 2001, 2003, 2005, in press). The model of emergent wisdom presents ways to conceptualize wisdom and some learning prompts that may lead towards it. The term “emergent” refers to a phenomenon where the whole is smarter than the sum of its parts, where simple (or relatively simpler) component parts interact, and from this interaction some higher level structure or intelligence appears (Johnson, 2001). This higher level structure in the case of wisdom manifests as a special kind of thinking applied to produce positive results in human life and human relationships and all that supports them. This kind of thinking reflects a shift from simple to complex, from “I am a good person” to “I am complicit,” from independence and individualism to interdependence (Parks, personal communication, April 2005). This means that a person recognizes him- or herself as part of the larger whole, participating in it, willingly or not. For example, some people are against the current war in Iraq and have protested against it. At the same time, they are also complicit in it in that they are part of the fabric of American life, eating lettuce in January that has been trucked from California using imported oil or driving their own cars. This is a difficult perspective for some to grasp. In fact, they become angry because they see themselves as separate from the larger system instead being a contributing part of it, in various ways, consciously or not.

Thus, emergent wisdom understands the biosphere from a systems point of view where people strive to contribute to the common good, which is the continuation of the larger whole in a way that respects all life forms and what sustains and supports them. In this perspective, emergent problem-solving requires a more sophisticated understanding of the world, that includes paradox and dialectical thinking, in comparison to linear cause-and-effect thinking or the outcomes models frequently used, for example, in educational assessment and organizational management. Thinking like this necessitates transformative learning, among other means, for bringing about a complexity of mind that encompasses a sense of interdependence and contributions to the common good, rather than standing outside of it for personal gain.

This emergent wisdom model derives from grounded theory research. I selected 24 thoughtful insightful figures of public distinction, such as university presidents and professors, clergy, public servants, business people, and social activists. Using open and axial coding and the constant-comparative method, I developed this model of
wisdom. See Figures 1 and 2, where Figure 1 shows the dynamism of wisdom and Figure 2 as a chart makes the sections easier to read. The major components of wisdom are discerning, which is a cognitive function; respecting which is affective; engaging which is active; and finally transforming, which is reflective.

Reading down the chart, it can be seen that each component has a chief characteristic associated with it, that is, another descriptor for it. For each, there are three proficiencies which manifest as certain behaviors or ways of being, knowing, and understanding. For example, in the first column, Discerning manifests as a deep understanding of fundamental patterns and relationships. A wise person has insight into the human condition, or, to put it in terms of the Berlin School, knowledge regarding the context of life, knowledge which considers relativism of values and life goals, and knowledge which considers the uncertainties of life.

Respecting has to do with dealing with others with consideration or thoughtfulness. When this quality is developed in a person, what shows up is often a sense of gratitude for life itself, even negative events, and an expanded sphere of consideration. This means that who you count as valuable and worth taking into account keeps expanding from self to family/tribe to nation to world to globe to universe, including all sentient and non-sentient beings.

Engaging means action. It is what a person does and manifests as committed ethical action for the common good. On the other hand, Transforming, instead of turning outward, looks inward. It is a reflective function whose manifestation appears as a person who not only tolerates but also embraces paradox, ambiguity, and uncertainty, who understands that he or she is part of systems rather than being the center, and who seeks to fathom what supports the system as a whole, that is, the common good. This component, in particular, shows the developmental trajectory of this model. If you picture it as a spiral, development in this dimension leads individuals through an ever-deepening and widening cycle of Discerning, Respecting, and Engaging and then back to Transforming, where their way of thinking may take on the awareness of Kegan’s upper 4th and 5th orders (Kegan, 1994).

Teaching for Wisdom

Given this complexity, how can wisdom be taught? Is it possible? As an educator, I must needs think so, at least to some extent. Otherwise, there is no fostering of wisdom—only the haphazard achievement of it by certain lucky or gifted individuals. The last row in Figure 2 shows learning prompts—questions that must become part of one’s psyche, that are always present and being asked, as a person probes and stretches to comprehend the human condition more fully, adequately, and compassionately. At this point, these learning prompts are tentative and only suggested. In a fellowship for 2005-2006 I will be exploring which ones work and are useful and what techniques and strategies can help move people towards wisdom.

Because wisdom can be understood as a developmental process, transformative learning, whose major purpose is to create “a deep structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions...a shift in consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world” (Morrell and O’Connor, 2002, p. xvii), becomes a major tool for fostering the growth of wisdom. Or, as Cranton put it, transformative learning, is a “process of examining, questioning, validating, and revising...perceptions” (1994, p. 26). Mezirow’s (2000) disorienting dilemma might appear for some as puzzlement about why people seem to accept superficial ideas (or live superficial lives when there is so much more to be understood and done in the world). Or, they might wonder why some people seem unable to get outside of their own frame of reference or make decisions based only on their own narrow self-interest without any sense of a commons or seem unaware of the interdependence of all the parts of the biosphere. When this kind of cognitive dissonance appears, they may proceed through the steps that Mezirow elaborates. With support, with wisdom-related thinking in mind, this process may lead to growth in wisdom.

Further, this important learning cannot be left to the discursive mind alone. As Kramer (2000) suggests and Dirkx (2001) concurs, the imagination must be fostered as well, through art, metaphor, and non-linear “logic.”

Such indeed are the tasks for nurturing wisdom—to discern what is important; to take with compassion the perspective of people (or creatures) different from ourselves; to know clearly towards what ends our actions are directed, for what reason, and whose interests they serve; and to realize that we are simply parts of a larger whole while asking how we can make new and better ways of being emerge. Transformative learning can provide a means to strive towards wisdom.
## Table 1
Emergent Wisdom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WISDOM</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Discerning (Cognitive)</th>
<th>Respecting (Affective)</th>
<th>Engaging (Active)</th>
<th>Transforming (Reflective)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief Characteristic</td>
<td>Objectivity</td>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>Insight</td>
<td>Multiple perspective-taking</td>
<td>Sound judgment &amp; adept decision-making</td>
<td>Self-knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Holistic thinking, systemic seeing into complexity</td>
<td>Compassion &amp; caring/ empathy/love</td>
<td>Actions based on determinations of fairness &amp; justice</td>
<td>Self-acceptance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Balanced interests</td>
<td>Generosity of spirit/ non-judgmental</td>
<td>Moral courage</td>
<td>Perspective on self as part of systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manifestation</td>
<td>Deep understanding of fundamental patterns and relationships</td>
<td>Sense of gratitude/ Expanded sphere of consideration</td>
<td>Committed action for the common good</td>
<td>Embracing of paradox &amp; uncertainty/ Ability to see beyond the self/ Growing recognition of interdependence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Stimulus/ Sample Learning Prompt</td>
<td>What’s really going on?</td>
<td>Whose point of view am I taking?</td>
<td>What guides my actions?</td>
<td>What are my values?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What’s true?</td>
<td>How does someone else understand reality?</td>
<td>To what ends are my actions directed?</td>
<td>How do I live them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What’s important?</td>
<td>How can I relate to others with magnanimity?</td>
<td>What means do I use?</td>
<td>Who or what is the “I” that I think I am?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What’s right?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What am I part of?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**References**


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1 Please see my web site www.wisdominst.org for a color depiction of this figure


Critical Human Resource Development Education:
A Review of the Literature and Recommendations for Teaching

Laura L. Bierema
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Abstract: This article proposes a definition of critical human resource development education (CHRDE) relying on the principles of critical management studies (CMS). It highlights relevant literature and makes recommendations for integrating a critical perspective into HRD education. Building on Alvesson & Deetz's (2000) assertion that CMS seeks to foster insight, provide critique, and create a “transformative redefinition,” the article discusses educational methods accordingly. Adopting a critical HRD perspective may require transformational pedagogy and learning. The strategies provided may help HRD educators encourage critical treatment of HRD as well as help other educators create conditions conducive to transformational learning.

Critical Management Studies (CMS)

Critical management studies is grounded in Critical Theory and seeks to foster insight, provide critique, and create a “transformative redefinition” of organization practices, cultures and structures (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). Wilmot describes CMS as “to envision and advance the development of discourses and practices that can facilitate the development of ‘management’ from a divisive technology of control into a collective means of emancipation” (1997, p. 175). CMS essentially challenges dominant, taken-for-granted assumptions of management that view its practice as objective, neutral, and scientific. It questions the performative lean of management theory and practice that seeks to enhance individual and organizational performance as a means of improving profitability. Finally, CMS examines power relations to understand which values and positions are privileged in the organization and how they give rise to culture, practices, and products. The vision of CMS is to emancipate workers and create more accountability for managers whose acts impact the lives of employees and other stakeholders (Alvesson & Willmott, 1996). Critical management thinking helps managers be responsible organization citizens and achieve socially and personally rewarding lives and careers (Porter, Muller, & Rehder, 1989).

Critical Human Resource Development

HRD has been defined as “a process for developing and unleashing human expertise through organization development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance” (Swanson & Holton., 2001, p. 4). Sambrook (2003) notes, “much [American] HRD literature tends to be dominated by [a] performance orientation and situated within a unitary organisation perspective, avoiding any hint of the tensions inherent in work organisations” (p. 4). Consequently, HRD is not problematized or critically analyzed in the US where its performative bend is accepted as reality. Sambrook further emphasizes, “The focus is generally on identifying means of improving production efficiency, with little regard to organizational issues viewed from a pluralistic perspective, such as the political dimension manifest through the contradictory needs of employers and employees, and implicit power imbalances” (p. 4). Fenwick (2000) charges that HRD’s conceptual frameworks are limited due to an overemphasis on profit and an under emphasis on power. Elliot and Turnbull are concerned “that the methodological traditions that guide the majority of HRD research do not allow researchers to engage in studies that challenge the predominately performative and learning-outcome focus of the HRD field” (p. 971). They make a

Laura L. Bierema. University of Georgia. Presented at the Sixth International Transformative Learning Conference, Michigan State University, Oct. 6-9, 2005.
plea to open HRD theory to broader perspectives. The purpose of this paper is to propose a definition of CHRD, highlight relevant literature, and make recommendations for integrating a critical perspective into HRD education and practice.

CHRD is scantily discussed in the North American literature and an encompassing definition is lacking. Based on a review of the literature and a synthesis of the issues that confound HRD, I offer the following definition for the purposes of this paper and its proposals:

Critical human resource development challenges the concept of a performative HRD practice arguing for a critical and socially conscious HRD that problematizes its precepts by challenging the commodification of employees, involving multiple stakeholders, contesting the nature of power relations, pursuing wide-ranging goals (not just profit), and providing alternative, non-oppressive, holistic models for cultivating development in work context.

For a full discussion of socially conscious HRD, refer to Bierema and D’Abundo (2003). Sambrook (2003) predicts that as the critical study of HRD matures, we will hear more about the public relations role of HRD in promoting corporate social responsibility and its more humanistic and emancipatory role in both helping individuals and transforming socio-political structures. It has been argued that a theory is only critical if it describes what is wrong with current social reality, identifies actors to change it, and provides clear norms for criticism and practical goals for the future (Bohman, 1996). My proposition is that critical HRD follow this protocol, particularly since HRD is an applied field.

CHRD Education (CHRDE)
I contend that HRD educators have a responsibility to expose learners to critical perspectives to help them be more reflective practitioners; understand the paradox of working in organizations and attempting to satisfy multiple, conflicting needs; and facilitate change that advances stakeholders’ interests. This section identifies issues and strategies related to teaching about CHRD and integrating its principles into practice.

CHRDE demands a new pedagogy for teaching about HRD since it would be a contradiction to follow traditional pedagogy. Learners are a key source of knowledge and their experiences must be foregrounded, their challenges acknowledged, and their emotions respected. A critical HRD curricula should incorporate: problematizing taken for granted HRD notions and beliefs; identifying how dominant ideology plays out in practice; challenging organization practices that are presented as “rational,” examining HRD’s collusion with performative, oppressive practices; seeking a fair and democratic organization process; and developing learners’ ability to distinguish HRD activities that are emancipatory and transformational from those that are oppressive and reproductive of the status quo. Monaghan (2003) views effective critical pedagogy as one that “lead[s] to a radically transforming experience creating enough disequilibrium to generate learner resistance” (p. 5). Becoming a CHRD educator demands self reflection and critique, and the creation of learning experiences that can be challenging and threatening to one’s beliefs about the field.

Teaching Critical HRD Through Insight, Critique, and Transformation
Building on Alvesson & Deetz’s (2000) assertion that CMS seeks to foster insight, provide critique, and create a “transformative redefinition,” methods for teaching about CHRD will be discussed accordingly. There are more methods than is realistic to mention here, and these strategies may cross-over the categories. They are presented here as a means of simplifying approaches to CHRDE and helping us think about the different layers of learning associated with CHRD. These strategies can be easily infused into existing HRD curriculum, or built into complete courses focusing on CHRD.

Fostering Insight
Fostering insight involves building awareness of the many dimensions and contradictions inherent in HRD. Critical pedagogy is based on the belief that emancipation through education is a possible and desirable outcome. Many HRD practitioners have not been exposed to critical thinking about the field in either their preparatory education or career development. Management education tends to gloss over issues related to power, domination, conflict, and uncertainty in organization life. Valentin (2003) suggests that taking a more critical approach to management education involves delving into the complexity, social and political dimensions of managerial practice. This approach “...involves appreciation of management as a social, political and moral practice, rather than a set of techniques or skills to be learned and subsequently applied (Grey & French, 1996; Willmott, 1997)” (Valentin, 2003, p. 4). Helping learners foster a broader appreciation for management is a starting point. Fostering insight
Providing critical content. Insight cannot be fostered without an introduction to critical analysis or exposure to critiques of organizations. Students should read theoretical pieces on CMS such as Alvesson’s and Willmott’s Critical Management Studies or Making Sense of Management: A Critical Introduction. They should also read critical pieces with practical applications such as Barbara Ehrenreich’s Nickel and Dimed, David Korten’s When Corporations Rule the World or The Post Corporate World, Eric Scholsser’s Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal, Joel Bakan’s The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power, or Marjorie Kelly’s The Divine Right of Capital: Dethroning the Corporate Aristocracy. Exposure to critical content can also be facilitated through film, magazines, journal articles, and current events. Two recent documentaries, The Corporation, and Supersize Me are poignant at raising awareness of corporate power.

Developing dialogical communication skills. Another tool for fostering insight is dialogue. Dialogical communication is inquiry-based, meaning-seeking conversation where participants attempt to suspend judgment and entertain contrary ideas simultaneously (Elinor and Gerard, 1998). It is the opposite of advocacy-based discussion which has been described as the heaving back and forth of opinions in a win/lose confrontation until the opponent is beaten into submission (Senge, 1990). Unfortunately, many people are inept at engaging in inquiry-based conversation because mainstream discourse in the U.S., particularly in business, relies on discussion and advocacy. Our culture is designed to reward people for advocating their views and having answers. There are fewer rewards for asking questions, admitting another idea has merit, or that you do not know the answer—common revelations in dialogue. CHRD conversations should rely on dialogical communication as a framework for structuring conversations that are controversial and threatening to participants (Author, 2001). I have found that teaching learners about dialogue at the beginning of a semester heightens respect, risk taking, and engagement levels in challenging conversations.

Reflecting on research and practice. Exposure to critical content and the introduction of dialogical communication provides a foundation for reflecting on HRD research and practice. Brookfield’s (1987) Critical Incident Technique is useful in accomplishing this process with its steps of identifying and challenging assumptions, naming personal frameworks, exploring and imagining alternatives, and alternating phases of analysis and action. For instance, when learners name and understand an HRD practice or belief as “performative” they develop a frame of reference for understanding their practice and for comparing it to alternative frameworks. This activity can also be done using Morgan’s (1996) Images of Organization to identify metaphors that resonate with their HRD values or reflect their organization’s realities. Reflection can also be cultivated through writing a personal HRD philosophy and deconstructing it using differing HRD or critical frameworks. Another approach would be to dialogue about the following questions: “Is HRD or should it be emancipatory?” “Should there be CHRD?” “How is tension reconciled between individual and organization needs?” “Is emancipation possible in organizations?” “Should HRD seek to free humans from the capitalist clutches of organizations?” “What is HRD about anyway?” “Why isn’t the field talking about CHRD?” Once the assumptions and frameworks are revealed, this information can be used to construct alternative HRD models.

Exploring identity. Insight into CHRD is also cultivated by self study. Cavanaugh and Prasad (1996) note that in critical management education, “…we are asking business students, no less, to remake efficiency into a problematic, the problematic!” (p. 84). This is a direct contradiction to business education that takes performative values as a matter of course, not an ideological framework with consequences. Facing contradictions is unsettling for learners who may experience what Fenwick (2003) calls “torn identities” (p. 3). These learners tend to enjoy privileged access to social and cultural capital making higher education and management careers accessible. They probably have little motivation to emancipate the workplace from themselves, and robust critique of management fundamentally means critiquing themselves. Fenwick notes, “to engage such students in modes of critique that attach their dominant positions without enabling them to construct alternate subject positions is to risk their cultural displacement, alienation, and disillusionment” (p. 3). Care must be exercised to acknowledge the contested work of an HRD professional and provide alternative models of how management might be conceived and practiced. Otherwise backlash and resistance may dominate the learning process.

Providing Critique

After fostering insight, providing critique is a second strategy for CHRDE. Students may not realize that being critical does not mean being negative or cynical. It means, “recognising the messiness, complexities, and irrationality—rather than the sanitised reason and rationality—of organization practices” (Sambrook, 2003, p. 6). Fostering critical assessment of HRD involves helping learners become skilled at providing criticism (toward self
and others), analyzing whether the field practices what it preaches, examining the use and abuse of power and authority in HRD practices, and evaluating how democratic our approaches to creating HRD knowledge are.

Analyzing lived HRD reality. Fenwick (2003) notes that contradictions between management practice and critical teachings are problematic. Often critique is too simplistic, missing the complexities of organization life and portraying the world dualistically: worker/manager, learning/performance, or individual/organization. Beyond the dualism of much critique, CMS’s radical, change oriented philosophy is a dire contrast to the conservative, status quo oriented philosophy of management. Within this context, “critical disciplines may appear pathetically unsuccessful to our students” (Fenwick, 2003, p. 4). CHRD educators must recognize that their content grates against the constraints of daily HRD practice. The educators’ role in this paradox is to help learners understand the contradictory nature of their work in organizations by appreciating this complexity, questioning prevailing assumptions, and addressing value conflict. It is important to both honor and analyze learners’ experiences as they wrestle with CHRD. One exercise might be to collect data in learners’ organizations about how philosophy and power impact organization life.

Critiquing readings and demystifying authorship. Fostering insight is promoted by introducing students to critical content. The next step is learning how to critically evaluate this content. Cavanaugh and Prasad (1996) argue that developing a critical management viewpoint depends on developing the ability to de-mystify authorship. In other words, they argue that students must learn how to deconstruct management discourse (e.g., “efficiency”, “value chain”), and critique power relations given the significant power corporations wield over our lives. They recommend devoting class sessions to the history of critique where students compose an institutional memoir that traces philosophical traditions and how they have shaped organization life. Another assignment is the composition of an individual memoir that asks students to examine their own politics to uncover links between intellectual autobiographies and current social context. They use Clifford’s (Clifford & Marcus, 1986) checklist to accomplish this self introspection. The examination of macro authorship delves beneath the name on the book jacket to explore theoretical authorship (theoretical framework of the work), paradigmatic authorship (the knowledge frame within which theory is articulated), and the structural author (the social and historical conditions influencing a knowledge frame). The final step to Cavanagh and Prasad’s approach is to interrogate the management literature. This involves analyzing context, identifying power relations, and evaluating the efficacy of management theories in practice. Another approach is to debunk Management Gurus. Hundreds of management books are published each year with promises of swift self-help for the hurried manager. This exercise engages learners in uncovering the frameworks, analyzing discourse and debunking the advice of such texts from a critical viewpoint.

Discourse analysis. Management language is filled with terms that are loaded with ideological, often performative, connotations including “rightsize,” “smartsizing,” “associates,” “continuous improvement,” “reengineering,” “empowerment,” “employees are our greatest asset,” and “core competencies” just to name a few. CHRD involves analyzing language to understand the implied meaning behind the word. Sambrook (1998) views HRD as a social and discursive construction and observes that when we talk about HRD we can examine how HRD “has been talked into being” (how it was invented or socially constructed); how HRD “is talked about (how we draw upon particular discursive resources, or how we frame how we think and talk about it); and how HRD is “achieved through talk” (how delivering training, persuading, counseling, consulting, etc. achieves HRD). This might involve having learners generate a list of HRD terms and analyze them.

Creating Transformative Redefinition

Once awareness is raised and critique is underway, focus turns to transforming HRD into a more critical endeavor, both in thought and in action. This can be facilitated through a more critical application of action inquiry technologies, embracing learner resistance, and creating alternative HRD models.

Critical action inquiry technologies. Action inquiry technologies (Action Learning, Action Research, and Action Science) are the backbone of much HRD practice. These are indispensable tools for unearthing assumptions, reflecting on thoughts and behavior, examining group dynamics, and creating real action. In theory, action inquiry technologies are supposed to be critically reflexive, yet this aspect has been diluted in HRD literature and practice and compounded by pressure for HRD to cater exclusively to management interests. Teaching these inquiry technologies by emphasizing the critical reflection aspect is one strategy for transforming HRD, particularly since these tools are practice driven and widely used.

Embracing resistance to CHRD. CHRD educators should not expect all students to welcome critical principles, particularly targeted toward fields to which they have invested and committed themselves. Rather than view resistance as negative, Monaghan (2003) argues that resistance to critical management education is an important voice that can help educators engage with learners on a deeper, more transformative plane. She also observes that very little has been written about this common response to CME.
Monaghan defines resistance as “any overt or covert behavior on the part of the learner hindering or shutting down open dialogue in a CMS educational setting” (p. 8). She describes learner resistance as manifesting itself as “an expression of voice, verbal or written, silence, action, or inaction” (p. 8). Students may find CHRD deeply disturbing, foreign, or irrelevant which may cause them to resist learning. Monaghan notes that it is important for educators to acknowledge and address resistance so that critical reflection is not compromised. CHRD educators should prepare for resistance and use it as a constructive, perhaps transformative force for engaging with critical content.

Creating alternative models for HRD. A criticism of CMS is that it lacks practical application. Enlisting students to create, implement, and study alternative models would help move CMS in generating practical knowledge about its application. Carr (2000) describes how applying critical theory might look in organizations:

The manager/administrator should not simply become aware of dialectical relationships between structures and actors but become more critical in the appraisal of the options in carrying through their tasks. Instead of being preoccupied with control (and largely preserving the status quo), a dialectically aware manager/administrator would recognise, and work through, the tensions and strains that inevitably arise from contradictions, oppositions and negations. Dialectical sensitivity leads the manager/administrator to recognise that they are not only part of the transforming “process” but themselves are also being acted upon. Similarly, dialectical thinking reveals that “people are by nature active rather than passive, and social rather than atomistic. This means that people have a measure of autonomy in determining their actions, which are at the same time bound up in a social context” (Harmon, 1981, p. 4) (p. 217).

A major assignment in this vein might involve a group project in creating a theoretically sound alternative HRD model with strategies for implementation and tools for practice. Another approach would be for learners to analyze a previous situation and use it as a unit of analysis for creating alternative practices and frameworks.

Protest unethical corporate behavior. Recent years have provided an embarrassing and lengthy list of corporate offenders who have lied, stolen, cooked the books, engaged in insider trading, and received exorbitant salaries. This approach involves getting students involved in researching bad organization behavior and taking action through letter writing campaigns—letters to the editor, letters to lawmakers, letters to corporations; product boycotts; investing; and community activism.

Transforming HRD Research, Education, and Practice

Much work is needed to infuse a critical perspective into HRD. Research is needed to explore where and how CHRD is being applied in both educational institutions. Research is needed on practitioners who are engaged in critical HRD work to understand their strategies and challenges. Organizations that operate from a more critical place need to be studied as well. Finally, the practices and philosophies of critical HRD educators should be explored and publicized.

CHRDE also puts new demands on educators who will be most effective when they are actively engaged in an ongoing process of reflection on personal epistemology, philosophy, values and actions. Practitioners or former practitioners are especially effective CHRD educators, because they have lived the conflicts and contradictions that arise in HRD practice such as preserving employee dignity during a downsizing. Educators must meet the challenge of interrogating unquestioned assumptions of HRD theory and practice in their teaching.

CHRDE must be undertaken with this caveat: We must be critical about being critical. There is a risk that Critical Theorists believe they have the best answer and establish themselves as experts. In so doing, they silence a dialogue that they sought to foster. The best intentions for opening up understanding or facilitating reflection can end up by locking people into fixed, unreflective thinking (Willmott, 1993). “Critique and liberation from old dogma is then followed by new dogma: somewhere in the process, a theory guided by critical, emancipatory intent turns into an anti emancipatory force” (Alvesson & Willmott, 1996, p. 175). Sambrook (2003) notes that being critical can function as a brand or unique selling point, but the key thing is to “be careful that as we sell ourselves as critiquing Others, we must ensure we also adopt a critical eye on our own work” (p. 13).

Finally, CHRD must move beyond theorizing to action. These concepts must be operationalized in our practice and modeled in our teaching. Fenwick aptly captures this sentiment: “Without productive engagement in action, analysis is hollow and circular; without reflective critical analysis, action is empty activism” (Fenwick, 2003, p. 3). The ultimate aim of a critical HRD perspective must be to act to make organizations better places to work and learn.

References


On Transformative Learning and End-of-Life Discussions

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Abstract: When physicians discover a terminal illness, they are morally obligated to help patients make meaning of a severely disorienting dilemma. However, common assumptions surrounding death and dying may manifest in deficient end-of-life discussions and consequently, destructive coping strategies among patients. This article proposes a model wherein physicians facilitate critical reflection with patients, and research methodologies to test the impact of critical reflection on patients' coping strategies and ability to develop meaning around death and dying.

That we will sooner or later die is a certainty familiar to most adults. Developing personal meaning around this fate is far more complex. When adults are handed a grave prognosis, they are forced to confront one of life’s most challenging yet widely avoided dilemmas. In the language of physicians, a patient’s physical, cognitive and emotional extinction is explicitly wound into the mercy of time. While science chiefly informs a physician’s perspective on death and dying, experts suggest that the human dimensions of care have “recently become deemphasized or lost altogether” (Branch et al., 2001). The obligation to aid patients in making meaning of this experience rests primarily with physicians, not palliative care units, psychotherapists or chaplains, per se, because patients “rely on their physicians to initiate the discussion” (Quill, 2000). In fact, primary care physicians are recognized as being capable of providing “much of the palliative care their patients need” (Von Gunten, 2002). Nevertheless, end-of-life discussions, the central forum for constructing meaning, are frequently initiated late, poorly, or not at all (Finucane, 1999; Larson & Tobin, 2000; Daaleman & Vandecreek, 2000; Quill, 2000). The obligation to aid patients in making meaning of this experience rests primarily with physicians, not palliative care units, psychotherapists or chaplains, per se, because patients “rely on their physicians to initiate the discussion” (Quill, 2000). In fact, primary care physicians are recognized as being capable of providing “much of the palliative care their patients need” (Von Gunten, 2002). Nevertheless, end-of-life discussions, the central forum for constructing meaning, are frequently initiated late, poorly, or not at all (Finucane, 1999; Larson & Tobin, 2000; Daaleman & Vandecreek, 2000; Quill, 2000). Research indicates that the consequences of deficient discussions, including a number of physically destructive coping activities, are too great to be ignored (Slevin, 1990; Merriam, 1999; Finucane, 1999; Von Gunten et al., 2000). Further, poorly conducted end-of-life discussions are likely to impact the reader or someone the reader knows, as three quarters of adults who live past sixty-five will face cancer, stroke, heart disease, obstructive lung disease, or dementia during their last year of life (Lynn, 2000). While professional education attempts to target humanistic competence in serving patients with chronic illness, experts suggest that the human dimensions of care have “recently become deemphasized or lost altogether” (Branch et al., 2001).

Transformative Learning Theory introduced by Mezirow (1978) provides a framework in which disorienting dilemmas may trigger adults to critically reflect on tacit assumptions, alter perspectives and in some cases adjust behaviors (Mezirow, 2000). Grave prognoses are so disorienting in nature, that patients often become paralyzed by denial, even when they have suspected such information for some time (Kubler-Ross, 1969). Transformative Learning Theory suggests that when disorienting dilemmas are followed by critical reflection, a person may experience perspective transformations that drive meaningful, emancipatory changes in thought and behavior (Mezirow, 2000). In this regard, every grave prognosis presents a prospective Transformative Learning opportunity.

Research is needed to determine whether this framework can be tailored to facilitate constructive end-of-life discussions in a setting where pronounced deficiencies may originate from unchallenged assumptions framing our view of death and dying (Kubler-Ross, 1969; Henderson, 2000; Ray, 2004). Physicians and patients, who largely avoid critical reflection in this setting, deserve a model capable of tackling uncritical assumptions, facilitating meaning, and informing optimal coping strategies. Further, as physicians accommodate increasingly diverse patient populations, Transformative Learning Theory invites cultural values to permeate the meaning of every unique narrative around dying. This model may also be customized to meet the demands of a fundamentally pragmatic medical environment by incorporating existing best practices in approaching dying patients. It is within these theoretical and practical contexts that this article integrates the humanistic tenets of Transformative Learning, and supports its potential to improve the art of meaningful end-of-life discussions between physicians and patients.

In order to demonstrate why and how the Transformative Learning framework should be integrated to facilitate end-of-life discussions, this article is split into four areas. Firstly, it demonstrates how widely avoided and poorly conducted end-of-life discussions often result in destructive coping patterns among patients. Secondly, it introduces regularly unchallenged assumptions regarding death and dying, which may interrupt the prospect and benefits of
constructive dialogue. Thirdly, it proposes a seven-step model, which merges the Transformative Learning framework described earlier with best practices in delivering grave prognoses, in order to help patients tackle uncritical assumptions and make more informed decisions around their remaining hours. Finally, it proposes basic research methodologies aimed at determining the impact of a critically reflective approach to end-of-life discussions on patients’ coping strategies and ability to develop personal meaning around death and dying.

The Need for a Critically Reflective Approach

If physicians’ assumptions around death and dying interrupt their ability to initiate end-of-life discussions, it may in turn compromise the welfare of patients. When these discussions are avoided, “the quality of remaining life for patients can be seriously jeopardized” (Larson & Tobin, 2000). Patients left to cope with grief on their own are often reported to develop a number of destructive strategies such as increased smoking, alcohol or medication intake, overwork, and suicidal ideation (Von Gunten et al., 2000). A poignant example is provided by Courtenay, Merriam, and Reeves (1998) who found that patients diagnosed with HIV endured between six months and five years of dysfunctional reaction including “excessive drinking to cope with the diagnosis” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Evidence also suggests that patients will accept severely painful treatment in return for the unrealistic chance of postponing death (Finucane, 1999). In a study by Slevin et al., most patients were found to “accept intensive chemotherapy for a very small chance of benefit” (Slevin, 1990). In response, leaders of the medical community have called for research on “the science of prognosis and the art of its disclosure” (Lamont, 2003). Central to the art of disclosure is further research on Transformative Learning, which may be facilitated following the delivery of grave prognoses.

Grave prognoses are inherently disorienting in nature, even when the patient has suspected such information for some time. Upon receiving this knowledge for the first time, a patient’s guarded belief that death is for “anyone but me” is challenged (Kubler-Ross, 1969). As catalysts for Transformative Learning, disorienting dilemmas include any “experience that causes a person to question what he or she has previously believed to be unquestionable” (Mezirow, 2000). As such, every life-threatening prognosis presents a potential Transformative Learning event. The next decisive step according to Transformative Learning Theory is critical reflection. Although several contested meanings of critical reflection exist, this article adheres to the tradition of pragmatist constructivism, in which critical reflection refers to helping people examine assumptions in order to construct and deconstruct personal experiences and meanings (Wilson & Hayes, 2000). In order to foster critical reflection in this setting, we must first understand where unchallenged assumptions about death and dying originate, because research indicates that a common reflex to the topic of death by physicians is avoidance (Larson & Tobin, 2000); while for patients the predominant reaction is denial (Kubler-Ross, 1969). In the worst cases, avoidance and denial are sustained by a team effort. “Patients, their families, and clinicians frequently collude to avoid mentioning death or dying, even when the patient’s suffering is severe and prognosis is poor” (Quill, 2000). The following passage extracts the historical, cultural, and medical assumptions behind these reactions, thereby contextualizing the striking extent to which critical reflection is required in this setting.

Historical, Cultural and Medical Assumptions

Historical assumptions have shaped the popular view of death and dying as a form of punishment, dismissed the belief systems of patients in the medical setting, and characterized the physician as sole determiner of treatment and healing (Ray, 2004). In writing about historical origins influencing our attitudes toward death and dying, Kubler-Ross recounts how “death has always been distasteful to man, and will probably always be” (Kubler-Ross, 1969). In The Unnatural Nature of Pain, Schuyler Henderson traces negative views as far back as the biblical account of Genesis, which depicts pain and suffering as “divine punishment for transgression” (Henderson, 2000). Further, in the 17th century the Catholic Church accepted Rene Decartes’ argument that “the soul (mind) and body were separate entities” (Ray, 2004). For much of the Western World, this logic continues to divide the influence of patient belief systems from physical healing, and may discourage the use of critical reflection among physicians and patients. Although these positions can be traced back in time, the concept of patient-centered care has a much longer history, for it was Hippocrates (ca. 460 – ca. 377 BCE) who stated “it is better to know the patient who has the disease than it is to know the disease which the patient has” (Ray, 2004). Transformative Learning Theory invites physicians to consider the power of patient belief systems through critical reflection and cultivate a spirit of co-inquiry into guarded assumptions regarding death.

Cultural assumptions also guide important decisions about physical, psychological, and spiritual interventions following prognosis, which indicates the need for a model that is flexible enough to bridge cultural requirements with treatment options. “Failure to take culture seriously means we elevate our own values and fail to understand the value systems held by those of different backgrounds” (Kagawa-Singer & Blackhall, 2001). By subscribing to a
Transformative Learning framework, physicians may be better equipped to keep their own cultural values in check, while allowing the values of diverse patients to permeate and enrich the personal meaning of each prognosis. As Magid (2000) suggests, “The physician will never be able to empathize with his or her patient without trying to understand how that person is experiencing pain” (Magid, 2000). For instance, while it may be a physician’s primary frame of reference to utilize medicine to comfort a dying patient, certain cultures value physical suffering as a process whereby the soul cleanses itself. “Some traditional Christian religious views regarding death among many African Americans depict pain and suffering as not to be avoided but rather to be endured as part of a spiritual commitment” (Crawley et al., 2000). A Transformative Learning framework invites an exploration of cultural differences and allows deeply engrained values, such as spiritual commitment, to inform personal meaning.

Lastly, we must consider the adverse impact of medical assumptions. Physicians often fear causing pain and bearing bad news because they assume they lack appropriate knowledge in delivering bad news, view death as an enemy to be defeated, or anticipate disagreements with the patient or family (Larson, 2000). To compensate for these fears, physicians often share overly optimistic prognoses (Quill, 2001), and have been shown to overestimate patient survival by a factor of 3 to 5 (Lamont & Christakis., 2003). In addition, physicians often assume that death itself is an end that must be avoided at all costs with the help of modern medicine. This *allopathic assumption* is rooted in a medical philosophy that is “focused almost exclusively on curing illness and prolonging life, rather than on improving the quality of life and relieving suffering” (Morrison & Meier, 2004). The impact can be observed in the omission of social and emotional behaviors by physicians. In a study on physician communication with incurable cancer patients in an outpatient chemotherapy unit, only 13% of utterances between patient and physician “conveyed emotional affect and social talk” (Detmar et al., 2001). Over-reliance on medicine has created a serious predicament, best captured in the words of the late Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, “The more we are making advancements in science, the more we seem to fear and deny the reality of death” (Kubler-Ross, 1969). Physicians guided by allopathic assumptions often find additional ways to avoid end-of-life discussions, such as handing off all emotional aspects accompanying poor prognoses to psychotherapists. This not only inhibits a physician’s personal growth, but it may also create additional discomfort for patients. The use of psychotherapy has proven to be too invasive for many dying patients (Pellegrino, 1998). Ultimately, it is a physician’s obligation to guide patients through this “critical transition” (Finucane, 1999), as discussions following grave prognoses are said to serve as critical “nodal points” in patients’ lives (Lamont & Christakis, 2003).

**Integrating Critical Reflection**

Practicing critical reflection before and during end-of-life discussions may afford physicians and patients enough perceived control to forgo the destructive consequences mentioned earlier. In addition to helping patients “feel better, function better, and experience fewer psychological symptoms” (Ray, 2004), critically reflective end-of-life discussions may also transform the physician. Research has highlighted how physicians who cared for AIDS patients approaching end of life have been moved to “write about the personally transforming experience of caring for patients with AIDS” (Selwyn & Forstein, 2003). In *Teaching the Human Dimensions of Care in Clinical Settings*, Branch et al. (2001) position critical reflection as a central process for raising self-awareness among physicians. Similarly, the lifework of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross positions critical reflection as a top priority for physicians, including the exploration of “attitudes toward malignancy and death, so that he is able to talk about such grave matters without undue anxiety” (Kubler-Ross, 1969). While Kubler-Ross prescribes self-reflection for the physician, patients themselves may more effectively find the meaning they seek by reflecting on personal assumptions regarding death and dying with the guidance of their physician. Reflective discourse is described as a “specialized use of dialogue devoted to searching for a common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief” (Mezirow, 2000). Below, this article proposes a new, seven-step process for introducing and facilitating reflective discourse, which merges the Transformative Learning Framework with best practices in delivering grave prognoses.

(1) **Elicit the patient’s capacity and willingness for critical reflection.** A patient must first demonstrate a reliable degree of physical, cognitive, and emotional capacity for reflective discourse. The physician can start to interpret this capacity by studying the physical functioning trajectory of representative populations. Here, physicians determine whether patients are likely to be interrupted by physical dysfunction or dementia as to render themselves ineffective participants of reflective discourse. For instance, cancer patients tend to have more extended “well-being” trajectories in contrast to organ system failure or dementia (Lynn, 2001). Effective participation also requires emotional maturity, characterized by “awareness, empathy, and control” (Mezirow, 2000), which relies on a physicians ability to recognize subtle cues indicating emotional preparedness. Open-mindedness is also essential for transformative learning. “Bruner defines open-mindedness as ‘a willingness to construe knowledge and values from multiple perspectives without loss of commitment to one’s own values”’ (Mezirow, 2000). In order to determine
willingness for critical reflection, a physician may ask their patient the following question recommended by Weissmann (2004), “What do you need or want to do in the time you have left?”

(2) **Determine cultural parameters and make accommodations.** If the patient demonstrates both the capacity and willingness for critical reflection, a physician should next determine appropriate cultural parameters. Cultural parameters reflect boundaries for discussion as informed by specific values shaped by a patient’s culture. According to Mezirow, “Culture, history, and biography determine the manner and degree to which these human faculties for intersubjectivity, reflective discourse and mindful learning become realized in time and place” (Mezirow, 2000). The epistemology of pain and dignity, two central notions of meaning surrounding death, varies considerably between individuals. Every dying experience is unique and must be qualified by patients themselves (Chochinov, 2002).

(3) **Frame the discussion as a collaborative event.** The profound suffering that accompanies end-of-life discussions is said to be “framed in the clinical encounter by the interplay between the physician’s gaze into the patient and the patient’s gaze into himself or herself” (Magid, 2000). Physicians should avoid complex medical jargon and introduce transformative learning as a collaborative event, honoring the subject matter expertise of both physician and patient, because “solidarity, empathy, and trust are requisite to the learners’ commitment to a transformative learning group” (Mezirow, 2000). While the physician is trained in sophisticated knowledge regarding the science surrounding a patient’s prognosis, the patient experiences with utmost accuracy, a subjective understanding of death and suffering. In this context, the physician should initiate end-of-life discussion in the spirit of co-inquiry and mutual transformation.

(4) **Facilitate critical reflection.** As reviewed earlier, common assumptions often shape the stories that patients live-out when presented with grave prognoses. To help patients break free from these uncritical narratives, physicians must create a space for the patient to reconstruct deeper meaning around the experience. By guiding patients in externalizing their story, critical reflection may become more manageable. A method known as self narrative is said to create enough psychological space for people to essentially “re-author themselves” (Wilson & Hayes, 2000). By asking patients to explore how they might reframe the conclusion of their life story, including behavioral decisions, physicians may help patients enrich the personal meaning of transition and avoid destructive coping strategies. Informing this improved storyline are perspective transformations, which may result from critical reflection. To help challenge personal assumptions around dying, physicians may encourage patients to pull from broader life experiences to re-author their remaining hours, instead of the immediate, preoccupying narrative on dying. Next, the physician may actively infuse medical knowledge as well as wisdom gained from experiences with other dying patients into the patient’s overarching narrative. The ideal end result of this reflective method is co-narrative, which markedly different from the patient’s original account, should indicate more informed judgments around treatment options and coping strategies.

(5) **Guide reflection toward tentative best judgments.** During reflective discourse, physicians may help patients extract a series of decisions regarding medical and spiritual care supporting their story. Here, the physician guides newly formed conclusions into active decision making around physical, psychological and spiritual interventions. According to Mezirow, rationality occurs when the learner has adequately reflected on his situation and is inclined to form tentative best judgments, and includes “assessing reasons supporting one’s options as objectively as possible and choosing the most effective means available to achieve one’s objectives” (Mezirow, 2000).

(6) **Maintain a learning journal.** With each grave prognosis, physicians themselves should gain a deeper understanding of how specific interactions influence the reconstruction of meaning and beneficial coping strategies among dying patients. Maintaining a learning journal will not only inform the physician’s subsequent encounters with dying patients, but may also be shared effectively in communities of practice within hospitals and similar institutions.

(7) **Transfer learning into subsequent end-of-life discussions.** As end-of-life discussions are a continuously emerging practice, it is essential that key takeaways from this critically reflective approach be transferred from both learning journals and communities of practice into improved methods of facilitating meaning around grave prognosis.

**Research Methodologies**

The crossover between medical and adult education literature presented in this article begs an important question. What effects does a critically reflective approach to facilitating end-of-life discussions have on patients? In particular, we know that two patient-centered outcomes are of utmost importance to the medical community: (1) decreasing the likelihood of physically destructive coping behaviors; and (2) increasing the ability to make meaning around the dying experience. This section describes basic constructs for two research methodologies, which may uncover important correlations in these areas and inform future research. To test the hypotheses posited below, the
use of a homogeneous patient population, cancer patients, is suggested to control for specific variables. As described earlier, extended functioning trajectories experienced by cancer patients (Lynn, 2001) may enable an improved physical capacity for critical reflection in contrast to other dying patient populations.

Hypothesis 1: Physicians who facilitate critical reflection during end-of-life discussions will increase the likelihood of beneficial coping strategies among dying patients more than physicians who do not facilitate such methods. To test this hypothesis we must uncover the impact of both critically reflective and uncritically reflective approaches on coping strategies. We may do so by correlating: (a) the degree to which physicians facilitate critical reflection in end-of-life discussions as captured in descriptive journals kept by physicians, with; (b) likert-scale survey data indicating the degree to which a corresponding patient population is more or less likely to engage in constructive coping behaviors. This subjective report of likelihood is powerful because it is within this dimension that meaning perspectives, the very benchmarks of Transformative Learning, may be identified. It is also imperative that this methodology examine current phenomena and not engage dying patients in an experimental design per se, because it would be unethical to introduce differential treatment variables to any patient population. Here, the independent variable (critical reflection) is operationalized as the introduction of a critically reflective element within twenty-four hours following the delivery of a grave prognosis. Critically reflective elements include any recorded instance in which physicians guide patients in exploring prescriptive or paradigmatic assumptions surrounding death and dying. The dependent variable (impact of critically reflective elements) may be operationalized through subjective reports of the perceived likelihood that patients will engage in constructive versus destructive coping behaviors. This may be identified by a likert-scale survey administered to a patient population within twenty-four hours following end-of-life discussions.

Hypothesis 2: Physicians who facilitate critical reflection during end-of-life discussions will increase perceived levels of meaningfulness among dying patients more than physicians who do not facilitate such methods. To test this hypothesis we must begin to examine descriptive differences between the impact of critically reflective and uncritically reflective approaches on perceived levels of meaning among patients. The extent to which patients develop meaning may be captured through existing instruments, including the Meaning of Life Scale (Warner & Williams, 1987) and the Spiritual Well Being Scale (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982). These measurements may be utilized to correlate how critically reflective elements, identified in physician journals, impact patients’ perceived levels of meaning.

While current training solutions to improve end-of-life discussions place emphasis on communication skills (Larson & Tobin, 2000; Von Gunten et al., 2000), they fall short in developing constructive coping strategies and personal meaning. If the physical and psychological benefits correlated with a critically reflective approach are confirmed to be significant, integration requires active experimentation on the part of medical students and active role modeling by educators. Branch et al. (2001), suggest three teaching methods: (1) Taking advantage of seminal events; (2) Effective role modeling by faculty members; (3) Using active learning methods (Branch et al., 2001). This methodology may be an especially powerful means for introducing and testing the efficacy of the seven-step approach to end-of-life discussions proposed in this article.

References
Turning Poison Into Medicine:  
Transformative Learning in the Nichiren Buddhist Experience

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Abstract: This paper depicts transformative learning within the Nichiren Buddhist community, an international network of more than 12 million members in 190 countries and territories promoting world peace through the inner transformation of each individual. Self-reported written narratives were analyzed using both Mezirow’s transformative learning model along with four additional factors. This analysis yielded three characteristic beliefs and actions of Nichiren Buddhists which appear to accelerate the transformative learning process: (1) holding and acting on a shared vision or vow; (2) exchanging stories of transformation; and (3) actively expressing gratitude for everything they experience. The last is a potential extension of Mezirow’s model.

Background

“Turn poison into medicine” and “share your experience” are two challenges members of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), the lay organization of the Nichiren Buddhist community, often make to one another. This form of Buddhism is based on the writings and principles of Nichiren Daishonin, a thirteenth century reformist monk. The more than 12 million members in 190 countries and territories are a highly diverse group—ranging in background according to race, gender, and economic status to language, nationality, and sexual orientation. Yet two things help these Buddhists transcend these differences: a belief in every person’s highest level of humanity (or Buddhahood) and a commitment to world peace through inner transformation.

Transformative learning and sharing what they learn with others are embedded in the philosophy and culture of Nichiren Buddhists. While it is not mandated, it is encouraged and positively acknowledged. There are two distinct, yet intrinsically compatible purposes for goal directed transformative learning: (1) for individuals to exceed their personal expectations (“make the impossible possible”) and (2) that doing so will directly and indirectly advance positive changes in society (due to the belief of the oneness of the individual and his/her environment). Nichiren Buddhists achieve their goals, while concretely and measurably making the world a better place, by changing disconnected desires and challenges into a unified mission.

Each member’s transformative learning process is not for personal advancement alone, but also to serve as a catalyst for others to engage in transformative learning. This occurs in the writing and sharing of their experiences at monthly gatherings and in the SGI’s weekly and monthly publications. The ultimate purpose of transformative learning in the Nichiren Buddhist community is world peace through “human revolution” or the inner transformation of each individual and the simultaneous rippling effect of that inner change.

Human revolution is a term used to describe the process by which an individual gradually expands his/her life, conquers negative and destructive tendencies, and ultimately makes the state of Buddhahood, or absolute happiness, the dominant life condition. The idea of revolution as most people understand it usually refers to a political or economic revolution. Such revolutions often involve bloodshed and in the end, usually impose new ideas upon the general population. Change occurs, but often while exacting a huge price. The idea and the goal of human revolution are very different. Rather than changing society directly, through improving or reforming social or political systems, the object of change lies deep within the life of each individual. It is a change in the way they view life, society and the world. It is a process of growth rather than destruction that parallels most major religions as well as the American transcendentalists.

Methodology

This paper focuses on goal-directed transformative learning in the Nichiren Buddhist community, of which I have been a member for over seventeen years. It is the outcome of my investigation and application of a coding schema to more than 800 self-reported, written experiences by Nichiren Buddhists, as published between 1997 and 2003 in the weekly newspaper, The World Tribune, and the monthly magazine, Living Buddhism.

My coding schema includes the phases of Mezirow’s transformative learning model (Taylor, 1998, p.8) and also indexes whether or not the individual’s personal goal achievement is connected to his/her higher calling to
positively impact society. My investigation then looks at the links between individual and societal change. After an initial examination of the narratives, I added two other factors: (1) “Meta-Resiliency”, the phrase I use to denote one’s ability to observe one’s patterns of resiliency and that of others to achieve higher and higher levels of hardiness in the process and (2) Demonstrations of Gratitude, actively showing appreciation in each area of one’s life.

This analysis yielded three characteristic beliefs and actions of Nichiren Buddhists which appear to accelerate the transformative learning process: (1) holding and acting on a shared vision or vow; (2) exchanging stories of transformation; and (3) actively expressing gratitude for everything they experience.

The Interconnectedness of Theory and Practice

“Each of us possesses the potential for a winning life . . . Crucial to living a winning life is to undergo an inner transformation that will enable us to bring out our highest human qualities and change our circumstances” (SGI-USA, 2000, pp. 5-6). A prime driver for goal achievement in the SGI is a revolution of each person’s character. The implications reach far beyond any one individual. First SGI President, Daisaku Ikeda, illustrates this point in the foreword to his novel, The Human Revolution: ”A great revolution of character in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation and, further, will cause a change in the destiny of all humankind” (Ikeda, 1986, p. iv).

Each person initiates his/her own “human revolution” by having a goal or dream and chanting “Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo” a simple, yet profound mantra, which according to the Nichiren Buddhists is the law of the universe (Hochswender, 2001, p. 41). This chanting instigates a critical reflective process Moon (1999) calls “a means of upgrading learning” (p. 153). For Nichiren Buddhists, this learning emanates from both (1) an acute desire for advancement (of self and society) through self-awareness and (2) a consistent effort to study both the writings of Nichiren and contemporary commentaries on his writings.

Intrinsically linked to this learning is consistent action, based on wisdom gained from the critical reflection process which becomes the fuel and driver for the Nichiren Buddhist experience. Transformational learning is the process of reinterpreting prior experiences from a new set of expectations and assumptions, giving new meaning and alternative perspectives to an old experience. However, recognizing a perspective transformation is incomplete. As Mezirow (2000) aptly declares, “A mindful transformative learning experience requires that the learner make an informed and reflective decision to act on his/her reflective insight” (pp. 23-24). For Nichiren Buddhists, this begins with a shared vision or vow.

A Shared Vow

At the center of all transformative learning for Nichiren Buddhists is faith in a shared vow, first articulated by Shakyamuni (Gautama Siddhartha), known as the Buddha, or “awakened one,” about 2,500 years ago in India in his last writing, the Lotus Sutra: “At all times I think to myself: How can I cause living beings to gain entry into the unsurpassed way and quickly acquire the body of a Buddha?” (Watson, 1993, p. 232). This vow translates into active, rigorous, and consistent action that is the impetus for each person to thrive, become happy, and help others do the same by challenging the circumstances of daily life. While in the midst of a personal and professional crisis, jazz guitarist, Lerner (1997) asserts:

I knew I could not forsake my vow. So I dedicated myself to the Chicago culture festival in 1995. I became co-producer of the festival. In August, I traveled to gigs all over the Midwest, so I worked all week in Indiana or Iowa or somewhere else, traveled back on Saturday, worked in Chicago Saturday night, got up early to attend the culture festival rehearsals Sunday morning and drove hundreds of miles to a new destination Sunday night. I gave every ounce of myself, physically, mentally and emotionally. Immediately following the culture festival, I became Chicago Joint Territory Soka Group chief. Because of these efforts, I totally revolutionized my life (p. 12).

By 1996, he was a different person. He had readied his life by conducting deep critical reflection, testing long held assumptions, and taking massive amounts of action. By autumn that year, he was on his way. He even performed the new theme music for The Oprah Winfrey Show with Patti Labelle.

Lerner and others use their shared vow to broaden their vision and expand their expectations of themselves, society, and their relationship to the world. They jump out of the ordinary to the extraordinary. Lerner went from gigs in local bars to having his guitar performance heard by more than twenty million people five times a week. As Jones (1998) aptly states, “This change has come about because I relentlessly challenge myself. I’m constantly renewing my determination through faith.”
Faith is expressed through the shared belief that everyone is a Buddha with unlimited capacity, even if this facility is hidden or disguised by negative thoughts, words, and actions. Buddhas of all ages, backgrounds, and stages of enlightenment strive to: show compassion to help others become happy; treat everyone with dignity and respect; exchange ideas and encouragement; and make contributions to advance world peace. “In a highly interconnected world, social pursuits related to the protection of human rights and the promotion of communal well-being required shared commitments and concerted efforts” (Aspinwall, L. & Staudinger, 2003, p.70). Yet this is not a selfless act. Embedded in the vow to help others is an equally strong resolve for each Nichiren Buddhist to win personally and professionally again and again. They do this by challenging their limiting assumptions about themselves, others, and the world. In this community, there is a common belief that there is only one way to achieve world peace: through the inner transformation of each person. In this way, Nichiren Buddhists connect individual goal-directed transformative learning directly to group and societal change.

Exchanging Stories of Transformation

As Moon (1999) states, “In its most sophisticated forms, self-development is aimed towards emancipation of the self from the constraints of social and personal histories” (p. 157). For Nichiren Buddhists, life is win or lose and so breaking through one’s limitations is central to the transformative learning process. Yet undergoing an inner transformation is only the beginning. Communicating one’s story of transformation completes the picture.

The transformative narrative coalesces in an incremental process until someone asks the Nichiren Buddhist to share his/her experience in a group setting. At that moment, a clear, vivid, and concrete story must be told - not for the glorification of that person, but for the purpose of advancing others’ happiness and ultimately world peace. This is consistent with Freire’s concept that transformational learning’s ultimate goal is that of social change (1970).

The sharing of experiences has multiple purposes. First, others hearing the narrative are in effect, given a template. It is a roadmap on how to transform negativity and recognize that each setback is merely a single event, not the endgame for one’s life. Second, these stories reinforce the idea that anyone can be victorious over whatever circumstances s/he might face. Third, challenges are clearly opportunities to bring forth more unrealized potential, expand self-expectations, and prove the power of Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo. The infrastructure for communicated experiences results in expanded courage, confidence, and compassion by both those who present these narratives and those who absorb their meaning, in person or in print.

Writing these stories is no easy task. Doing so requires a person to dig deep and do a great deal of what Dirkx (2004) would call “inner work” (p. 5). Despite engaging in a process of critical reflection, are these written experiences objective when they are complete? In this author’s opinion, it is highly doubtful. Yet objectivity appears to be neither the claim nor purpose of these narratives. Nichiren Buddhists use them to thrive and encourage others to do the same by example. These individuals seem to understand the reality of their lives, yet choose to deliberately accentuate their victories. This approach can actually facilitate the transformative learning process and is consistent with Mezirow’s own words (1995), “Intentional construal is required to transform our meaning schemes and perspectives” (p. 44). Pearsall (2003) supports this strategy as well:

The act of construing is the process of mentally interpreting and framing life events in our own way. One of the most distinguishing and powerful human traits is our innate ability to interpret and assign meaning to what happens to us, to focus our attention where, when, as deeply as we decide, and to be the masters of the content of our consciousness (p. 10).

Rossiter (1999) stated, “[Narrative] is an approach that attempts to describe development from the inside as it is lived rather than from the outside as it is observed” (p. 78). Creating a story from the inside out can look very different than from observing the story from outside in, which is why some transformative narratives can miss the mark. Each person starts his/her transformative learning process in a different place and so each individual will accomplish different things at different times. However, it is naïve and arrogant to look at a person’s life and judge how successful s/he has been in the transformative learning process. A former wife of a top insurance executive became homeless after a series of unfortunate events. She became a Nichiren Buddhist in the 1980’s and by the time I met her she was a starving artist living in a run down loft in a semi-industrialized area of Chicago. Without the history and context of her life, one could question the efficacy of her transformative learning and who (if anyone) would be encouraged by her story. Yet her inner growth and learning were significant. She was economically self-sufficient, created artwork that made her happy, and generously shared both her time and modest income with organizations that advance social change.

An effective transformative narrative can convey the story of anyone, regardless of his/her circumstances. Nichiren Buddhist stories represent all walks of life – from musicians to business people and healthcare workers to...
former gang members. The purpose of each is to provide knowledge, examples of success, and encouragement. Successful narratives provide the right balance of personal history and results, and are supported by a structure that highlights the transformative learning aspects of the experience. From my analysis, the underlying structure of the Nichiren Buddhist experience is one found in powerful stories since Greek and Roman times. It adheres to a consistent pattern of four phases: (1) the background and history; (2) the opportunities and obstacles faced by the individual; (3) the strategy used and action taken; and (4) the outcome or results. Following these phases yields a concise, vivid, and solidly constructed transformative narrative that inspires and instigates self-reflection and action for both personal victory and social change. There is a strong sense within the Nichiren Buddhist community that sharing a transformative experience creates a positive chain reaction: if I win, you win and if we win, the world wins.

**Actively Expressing Gratitude**

Virtually all Nichiren Buddhists hear and read each other’s experiences through one-on-one dialogues, group meetings, and in the monthly magazine and weekly newspaper. After reading several experiences Mortan (2005) states, “At the heart of each experience was appreciation” (p. 1). Nichiren Buddhists have created a network of thankfulness. This active expression of the deep gratitude they have for their own lives, the pioneer members who came before them, and the beneficial experiences they have day after day and year after year, reaches back all the way to Nichiren Daishonin himself. As Saperstein (2005) declares:

> In Buddhism, the spirit to repay a debt of gratitude is not an obligation imposed on us from without. It originates from a view of our lives existing within the larger context of the lives of others. Rather than an obligation, it is a recognition of the interrelatedness of all life (p. B).

Within the Nichiren Buddhist community, the realization of the interconnectedness of life results in a self-motivated desire to make voluntary offerings of three types. First, individuals offer goods, which refers to material gifts of money to support activities and the presentation of water, incense, and candles each member provides in his/her personal meditation space. Second, is the offering of the Law: to share Buddhist teachings and writings with others. Third, is the offering of fearlessness: to relieve others’ fear and give them courage, by sharing stories of victory.

In practice, members of the Nichiren Buddhist community contribute time, their homes, photocopying, and abundant amounts of encouragement. Yet it is not the nature of the gift or amount of an offering that is important, but the spirit in which it is given. Attitude generates the power to transform a person’s inner life. As Frederickson (2004) states, “Gratitude, like other positive emotions, appears to have the capacity to transform individuals, organizations, and communities for the better” (pp. 159-160). Members of the Buddhist community repay a debt of gratitude to Nichiren Daishonin, and all of those who followed in his footsteps, through their sincere actions to help others. In doing so, their life expands. This is consistent with Buck (2004) who states that, “Benefits are accrued from the giving of benefits” (p. 117).

The act of expressing gratitude expands a person’s perception of the internal and external resources available to him/her, the utilization of these resources, and an increase in the opportunity to access additional resources. Bob Kauffman, Senior Partner of The American Institute of Learning & Cognitive Development has seen this phenomenon in both children and adults:

> Gratitude increases individuals’ capacity and ability to accomplish their goals in two ways: (1) by increasing the level of feel-good endorphins from within and (2) by shifting each person’s meta-cognition and positively altering the way s/he sees the world. The net result is a greater level of confidence and increased commitment to their goals and plans (B. Kauffman, personal communication, June 23, 2005).

In this way, actively expressing gratitude expands both the commitment and resources for transformative learning.

**Transformative Lessons in Daily Life**

The more a person commits to the shared vow and helps individuals reveal their unlimited potential, the more s/he reveals his/her own greatness – and to many, these people achieve what others think is highly unlikely. Nichiren Buddhists often cheer each other on to create huge lives that “make the impossible possible” and use that expanded capacity to impact others. I never thought I would have one of these comeback stories, yet they fascinated me long before I became a Nichiren Buddhist. After being crushed by an elevator, I made the commitment to turn poison into
medicine. Given the physical and emotional state of my life, I had two choices – give up or fight to win. I made the determination to create personal victory within the setback and utilize that win to encourage thousands of others (through written and verbal dialogue) not to be defeated by even seemingly impossible odds (Brick, 2003, p. 12).

When I finally submitted my experience to The World Tribune and had it accepted for publication, I didn’t expect all that unfolded. My story resulted in individuals contacting me, either directly or through my editor, to engage in dialogue. One person, in lower Manhattan, used my experience on September 11, 2003 to encourage her colleagues who were facing anniversary anxiety from the World Trade Center bombings. She read my article with them and they then discussed how what I had learned from my experience could help them as they processed their own trauma. Some local Buddhist community groups used my written experience as the theme for their monthly discussion meeting to encourage others who were facing significant personal and/or professional challenges. The rippling impact of my story is highly representative. Each story has the potential to create a multitude of dialogues and serve as a catalyst for action all around the globe.

“It is the transformation within a group context that gives individuals more courage to initiate social change within new communities” (Taylor, 1998). Awakening this spark of strength is how the organization Victory Over Violence was established (http://www.vov.com). In 2000, after the horrific shootings at Columbine, several Nichiren Buddhist high school students demonstrated how a group of “powerless” teenagers could advance social change. They pledged to stand up against active or passive forms of violence and to show respect for all human beings. Within six months, they had over 500,000 high school and college students sign the pledge, created programming and literature used in schools across the United States, and gained the support of individuals like Colin Powell. Not only did these teenagers create a wave of action within the Nichiren Buddhist community but far beyond.

Conclusion

“Turning Poison into Medicine” is clearly much more than making the best of a negative situation, which is often a highly passive approach to life. Nichiren Buddhists actively seek opportunities for transformative learning by instigating human revolution. They pursue big goals and gradually expand their lives, conquer negative and destructive tendencies, and ultimately make the state of Buddhahood, or absolute happiness, the dominant life condition. Personal transformation only truly occurs when it is connected to social change and ultimately world peace.

This exploration of the Nichiren Buddhist community yielded three characteristic beliefs and actions which appear to accelerate the transformative learning process: (1) holding and acting on a shared vision or vow; (2) exchanging stories of transformation; and (3) actively expressing gratitude for everything they experience. The last is a potential extension of Mezirow’s model. This community applies these three beliefs to personal goals and aspirations and connects individual advancement to the global objective for world peace.

Yet the impact and potential for these findings transcends the 12 million practicing Nichiren Buddhists. This investigation has important implications for transformative learning scholars and practitioners. If such a highly diverse population, as represented by Nichiren Buddhists throughout the world, can have goal-directed transformative learning at the core of its infrastructure and culture, this suggests there are potential practices that translate and be utilized by the broader transformative learning community.

In a recent meeting with faculty and staff at the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business (GSB), we discussed how the three aforementioned characteristic beliefs and actions of Nichiren Buddhists could apply to MBA students and alumni in job search, career change, and overall professional development. A faculty member and I are exploring avenues of research to extend this paper’s initial coding and analysis to the GSB community with particular attention given to how the active expression of gratitude in career change could impact the success rate of such a process. Active expression of gratitude in a variety of communities is also an area ripe for future research as it has potential to extend Mezirow’s model.

References


Waldorf Teacher Education as Transformative Learning

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Abstract: Specific capacities of soul, as they can be understood through an in-depth encounter with Anthroposophy, the Spiritual Scientific worldview of Rudolf Steiner, become the tools of the teacher’s trade. The awakening and strengthening of these capacities is the mission of transformative learning experiences as they can occur in Waldorf teacher education programs. Three particular areas in these programs serve as the particular fulcrums for the transformation of the essential soul forces: anthroposophical studies; the arts, crafts, and movement; and development of a specific set of meditative practices. Teachers, empowered by having consciously awakened these capacities in a deliberate way, are able to create the honest, responsible, loving psycho-social learning environments that this education strives to achieve. In such environments, the spiritually insightful curriculum created by Rudolf Steiner can work its magic. In Waldorf classrooms, the creation of genuine learning becomes the responsibility of the teacher. The capacities of soul that this requires can be initiated and nourished through a conscientious program of transformative learning.

This review of the intersection of transformative learning theory and Waldorf teacher education makes full use of Mezirow’s explicit definition of communicative learning. His understanding of the dynamics of shifting meaning perspectives aligns deeply and congruently with the ideals and principles that inform Waldorf teacher education. Taylor (1998) summarizes Mezirow’s articulation of the factors and processes involved in perspective transformation in the following way:

Perspective transformation explains the process of how adults revise their meaning structures. Meaning structures act as culturally defined frames of reference. … Meaning perspective is a general frame of reference, world view, or personal paradigm involving a collection of meaning schemes made up of higher-order schemata, theories, propositions, beliefs, prototypes, goal orientations, and evaluations. They provide us criteria for judging or evaluating right and wrong, bad and good, beautiful and ugly, true and false, appropriate and inappropriate. Our frame of reference is composed of two dimensions, habits of mind and point of view. … Meaning perspectives are often acquired uncritically in the course of childhood through socialization and acculturation, most frequently during significant experiences with teachers, parents, and mentors. … Over time, in conjunction with numerous congruent experiences, these perspectives become more ingrained into our psyche and changing them is less frequent. … These meaning perspectives support us by providing an explanation of the happenings in our daily lives, but at the same time they are reflections of our cultural and psychological assumptions. These assumptions constrain us, making our world subjective, often distorting our thoughts and perceptions.

… Meaning perspectives operate as perceptual filters that organize the meaning of our experiences. When we come upon a new experience, our meaning perspectives act as a sieve through which each new experience is interpreted and given meaning. As the new experience is assimilated into these structures, it either reinforces the perspective or gradually stretches its boundaries, depending on the degree of congruency. However, when a radically different and incongruent experience cannot be assimilated into the meaning perspective, it is either rejected or the meaning perspective is transformed to accommodate the new experience. (p. 6)

A central assertion that I want to establish here in this consideration of the development of soul capacities is that Waldorf teacher education constitutes a clear and decisive example of the dynamics of transformative learning. The open-minded and open-hearted encounter with the three-fold image of the human as a being of body, soul, and spirit given by Rudolf Steiner as a radically divergent truth and a present reality induces the very type of disorienting dilemma that Mezirow describes.

For those adult students who don’t dismiss this view as untenable, their “meaning perspectives are transformed to accommodate the new experience” (Mezirow in Taylor, 1998, p.6). This transformation of meaning perspective

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is the very foundation of the education of the capacities of soul that are the subject of the research study presented in my doctoral dissertation (Cameron, 2005). By comparing contemporary transformative learning theory to the sequence of learning experiences in Waldorf teacher education, the effectiveness of these experiences to actually educate the needed soul capacities can be demonstrated.

**Classical Transformation**

Mezirow (1991) proposed that the process of perspective transformation could be described in ten steps:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and process transformation are shared and that others have negotiated similar change
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of actions
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
8. Provisionally trying out new roles
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective. (Taylor, 1998, p. 6)

Three main themes emerge from Mezirow’s (1991) theory: the centrality of experience, critical reflection and rational discourse. This theory has been developed in considerable depth and has become a dominant influence in the field of transformative learning. Mezirow’s conclusion was that as adult learners examined their own assumptions they became more autonomous thinkers by learning to negotiate their own values, meanings, and purposes rather than acting uncritically on those of others. It set an underlying assumption or expectation that the process of transformation involved a set of rational, critical processes.

**Modifications of Transformative Theory**

Other contributors to the discussion on transformative learning have offered alternative views on the place of rational cognition in the transformative process. Basing their perspective on the analytical psychology of Jung, Boyd & Meyers (1988) have proposed that the processes of transformation are based less on the development of cognitive autonomy than on individuation in psychosocial settings. Boyd & Meyers seek to understand transformative learning in a broader context which includes deeper emotional and spiritual dimensions. Cranton (1994) develops a perspective that encompasses both Mezirow and Boyd & Meyers in a context that considers the influence of Jung’s perspective which includes psychological types. Dirkx (2000) develops these concepts in a way he calls mytho-poetic which proposes the inclusion of image, symbol, ritual, fantasy, and imagination as playing a role in transformation.

Aspects of these alternative perspectives raise issues right at the center of the shift in consciousness that Anthroposophy addresses. It is of appreciable interest that the thinking on transformative theory following Mezirow seeks to expand its conceptual foundation to include a broader engagement of the forces of the soul than focusing narrowly on the activity of rational cognition. While these later theorists are not willing to follow the linear progression that Mezirow outlines in his ten phases, there are key experiences that do define transformative learning even though they unfold in a more recursive, evolving, spiraling way.

**Transformation in Waldorf Teacher Education**

In Waldorf teacher education, there is a built-in re- or dis-orienting dilemma. Without examining all the reasons why people come to engage in this educational process in the first place, which would be a study in itself, the initial disequilibrium occurs through the encounter with Steiner’s radically expanded spiritual world view, Anthroposophy. This usually happens in a setting which is called the Foundation Studies Year (Arcturus Program Overview, 2005) and develops throughout the professional training. Among the leadership of the world-wide Waldorf education movement, the Foundation Studies in Anthroposophy has been considered an essential prerequisite for entering into the program of professional teacher certification. In the Foundation Year, adult students work through the fundamentals of Steiner’s Anthroposophy in a set of courses that deliberately balances the conceptual content with arts classes that carry the spiritual/philosophical content into a more broadly experiential deepening. For most adult students in Waldorf Teacher Education programs, this encounter constitutes a paradigmatic shift of profound

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proportions. An essential aspect of this process is that the individual is left completely free to accept the world conception or not. The powerful nature of the anthroposophical perspective has led some to misunderstand it as cult-like. Those who characterize it in this way do not understand that one of its sacrosanct foundational principles is the total and unassailable freedom of the individuals whose destiny it is to encounter it.

The initial experience of this world conception, involving an awakening awareness of the practice of spiritual self-development, becomes a lifelong commitment in those who engage it fully. It is understood that the initial encounter is just that. The path of Anthroposophy becomes a life-long journey of unprecedented depth and richness. The following verse from Steiner (1985) gives a flavor of this:

The wishes of the soul are springing,
The deeds of the will are thriving,
The fruits of life are maturing.

I feel my destiny,
My destiny finds me.
I feel my star,
My star finds me.
I feel my goals in life,
My goals in life are finding me.
My soul and the great world are one

Life becomes brighter around me,
Life becomes more difficult for me,
Life becomes richer within me. (p. 113)

It is interesting to note that with the specific exception of the mood of guilt or shame aspect of Step 2 of Mezirow’s ten phase transformation process, the experience of Foundation Year students encompasses all of the characteristics of his description. A comparative survey of this transformation in Waldorf teacher education can be framed against Mezirow’s phases listed above with the understanding from Boyd & Meyers (1998) and others that it is not a strictly logical, linear progression.

1. The “disorienting dilemma” is the encounter with the anthroposophical world conception.
2. Self-examination inevitably follows: What should I make of this radically divergent body of knowledge that my teachers and more advanced students treat as if it were an actual reality?
3. Classroom dialogue raises the full range of social constructivist considerations.
4. There is a world-wide movement, an institution, and a community of students who have been working with this material for some time.
5. There is a group of students who are experiencing the same disorientation, and there are faculty mentors who are there for support and to enter into an open, supportive dialogue about the thoughts and feelings that arise in the encounter.
6. In the arts classes, there is a way to explore some of the conceptual material in non-cognitive ways, although there is always an imagination out of Anthroposophy that guides the artistic activity.
7. Successive years of the part-time training program develop and deepen the practical applications of the foundational knowledge.
8. New knowledge and skills include a conception of developmental child psychology that engages the anthroposophical image of the human being.
9. Methodology and curriculum studies lead to practice teaching under the supervision of capable Waldorf teachers at the various levels of the pedagogical practice.
10. Upon achieving certification, students enter the world of professional Waldorf teachers, integrated into communities of parents, children, and colleagues working in varying degrees out of this anthroposophical world conception. The worldwide community now encompasses over 900 schools in 54 countries.

The whole of the learning experience of Waldorf teacher education ultimately works in a transformative way toward the education of the soul capacities that are the subject of this inquiry and dissertation. If the individual adult students rise to the challenge of this soul-shifting dilemma, it serves as a force for a radical reordering of the
conception of what is possible to experience and accomplish as a human being. The particular meaning perspective shift involved in this conceptual reordering becomes the source of both the light of knowledge and the heat of enthusiasm that are needed to effect the education of the necessary soul capacities. When an individual begins to actually experience him or herself as an incarnate spirit being in the way that Steiner describes, every relationship to the individual self and to the world of all others changes. When thoughts are experienced as formative realities, they, and the words and deeds that spring from them, must be considered in a very different way than our modern education has taught. When an individual seriously considers the path and consequences of incarnation and re-incarnation and the workings of karma as presented by Steiner, the orientation of his or her soul - the activities of thinking, feeling, and willing - shifts in a way that draws out, educates, a whole transformed set of capacities of the soul. Adult students can become more honest, responsible, and loving. They can develop more equanimity, enthusiasm, flexibility, and clarity. And, many actually do. As in most things, the more one puts in, the more one gets out; the more one engages, the more one is transformed. And, on this path each individual must be free to choose the pace and focus of his or her development.

**Toward Educating Soul Capacities**

With reference to generating the shifts in consciousness that transform soul capacities, key learning experiences are found in three areas of study in Waldorf teacher education that serve this transformative processes in particularly focused ways:

1. Anthroposophical Studies
2. The Arts, Crafts, and Movement
3. Training in Meditative Practice

**Anthroposophical Studies**

In reflecting on the findings in my doctoral research (Cameron, 2005), the consistent comment of the master teachers was that a deepened grounding in the fundamental principles of Anthroposophy was the primary source of soul strength that empowered individuals to meet the rigorous demands of Waldorf teaching. And uniformly, they emphasized that an on-going meditative practice was the essential activity that kept the anthroposophical understandings fresh and alive.

The encounter with Anthroposophical Studies for individuals who are drawn to explore them for their own self-development or as a step toward working in Waldorf education has been described as a fundamental experience of transformative learning in the preceding section. The overall impact of this encounter is recognized in the transformative learning theory that developed Mezirow’s (1991) original observations and from subsequent research. The subsequent modifications of the theory of transformation are seen in the conceptual framework of Waldorf teacher education with respect to sequencing and the inclusion of feeling and willing aspects of the process.

The learning experience that students are invited to enter into encompasses the spiritual world view as it has been articulated by Rudolf Steiner in his five basic books (Steiner, 1994a, 1994b, 1995, 1997a, 1997b) and his many subsequent lectures. This invitation is made with a full consciousness of the nature of adult education as self-education and a deep respect for each individual’s free will.

**Arts, Crafts, and Movement**

In Foundation Studies programs and on into Teacher Development, there is an intrinsic understanding that a balancing activity of artistic work is essential to allow students to digest and cognitively metabolize the radically divergent, transformative quality of this knowledge. Most students’ prior experience in a culture that categorically denies the possibility of spirit as a reality has not prepared them for the encounter with such a detailed and explicit description of such a way of knowing and being in the world. In addition to the out-breathing and reflective quality of the arts and the crafts, they are also a medium for gaining insight into the expanded comprehensive image of the human being. A key path toward experiencing this more complete picture of the human being involves the developing of a heightened set of sensibilities. The arts, by their nature foster an awakening of feelings for form, dynamics, space, color, music and language. In the regular practice of the arts and handwork, feeling and will capacities are exercised and educated. This is especially important for those whose prior education has been isolated in the intellect. In the activation of these less conscious aspects of the soul and bringing them into a more balanced relationship with thinking, a vital sensibility is stirred into life, that of creative imagination. The engagement with both the inner aspects and the physical activities of the range of the arts: Sculpture/Modeling, Painting/Drawing, Music/Singing, Poetry/Speech, Movement/Eurythmy/Spacial Dynamics (McMillan, 2005) as well as the synthesis of
many of these in Theater and Drama is an integral part of the curriculum of Waldorf teacher education and of Waldorf pedagogical practice. (Steiner, 1996a, 1996b, 2000)

We can get a glimpse of the creative impulses that work through the Arts in two lectures Steiner (1996) gave in December of 1914 in Dornach, Switzerland where the first of his two Goetheanums was being built. He spoke of the impulses of transformation through the evolution of the arts. The manifestation of artistic creations in the world are related to the dynamic forces that form the human being. In architecture, the laws of the physical body are expressed, in sculpture, the laws of formative life forces, and in painting the laws of the forces of consciousness. These artistic forces were seen as coming to us from sources in our evolutionary past. In music, poetry and the new art of speech formation, and in eurythmy, a new expressive movement art, he saw the creative sources coming out of the future. As with all aspects of Steiner’s Spiritual Science, everything is inter-related and connected. The development of one’s higher capacities can be experienced through all human activities if they are properly oriented.

For we all know that human experiences with the super-sensible world must be brought into these arts through true creativity that is not involved with everyday life…. Life, science, religion and art can receive impulses of transformation from spiritual science when it is truly understood. The art of the future will be most significantly stimulated when human beings begin to engage in getting to know the inner nature of the path of initiation. (Steiner, 1996, p. 61, 69)

Training in Meditative Practice

With adults the mirror/lens of self awareness can be deliberately uncovered and polished in a way that is never appropriate with children or even adolescents under the age of 21. The process of this awakening to self consciousness is placed before adult student as an invitation to enter into a specific set of meditative practices that flow out of Steiner’s Anthroposophy. This invitation is an interesting one because it has to be understood as an absolutely essential activity that can only be valid and effective if it is treated in a completely free will deed. The potential of the Waldorf School movement as a spiritual/cultural impulse can only fulfill its potential if it is carried by individuals empowered by an active meditative practice drawing on the same spiritual sources as those engaged at the founding of the education itself. It is at this crux that the entire intention of the current inquiry is brought sharply into focus. The education of soul capacities can be placed in the most nurturing, supportive context and sets of aspirations for these qualities can be articulated, and yet, the ultimate motivation for and guidance of this learning must come from the inner soul of each student.

At the very beginning of Steiner’s basic book of the path, How to Know Higher Worlds (Steiner, 1994a) he makes the following statement: “The capacities by which we can gain insights into higher world lie dormant within each one of us.” (p. 13)

It is the a direct experience that this is so that sets up the conditions for their awakening. How to Know Higher Worlds is a text that forms the essential starting point for the meditative practice of Waldorf teachers who choose to engage the path of self development that teaching provides. As such, it is part of the curriculum of most Waldorf teacher education programs.

Between 1904 and 1914 and again in 1924, Steiner established and taught in his own esoteric school, at first associated with the Theosophists and later completely independently within his own Anthroposophical Society. The practices and meditative contents of this school have been gathered and published in Guidance in Esoteric Training (Steiner & Barfield, 2001), The History and Contents of the First Section of the Esoteric School (1998), First Steps in Inner Development (1999b), and A Way of Self-Knowledge including The Threshold of the Spiritual World (1999c). A recent compilation edited by Christopher Bamford (2004) called Start Now brings together a very satisfying juxtaposition of the various strands of meditative exercises and practices that Steiner developed.

With the guidance of a mentor who has worked with one or another or several of these paths, the adult student is invited to also take up the work of inner self-development. Some of the practices are incorporated into the rhythms of the natural year. One set frequently used is The Calendar of the Soul (Steiner, 1999a), fifty-two weekly contemplative verses written by Steiner as reflections on the qualities of the changing seasons of the earth in relation with the surrounding cosmos and how they effect us as human beings.

Putting all these learning activities together in a program of anthroposophical adult education creates a viable context for the genuine development of the soul capacities needed to serve the ideals that live in Steiner’s world conception. This constellation of concepts and activities engages transformative learning processes that empower Waldorf teachers with the soul capacities they need to do their work.
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Enhancing Youth Leadership Through Transformative Diversity Education

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Abstract: The following paper describes how transformative learning can occur through the promotion of diversity education and youth leadership. While transformative learning has primarily been linked to adult and lifelong learning, this is an examination of how one program uses guided activities and discourse to prepare secondary school students to become effective leaders and learners. It is through these guided practices that young learners, on the verge of entering adulthood, work with caring and supportive faculty to foster transformative learning opportunities and to develop leadership capacities.

Introduction

In the United States, our society has developed into one of many cultures from around the world, representing a wide variety of global distinctions and traditions. While society itself has become a more multicultural population, ongoing social and economic changes have kept many schools and neighborhoods racially and socio-economically divided in this country (Clark, 1993). This division within educational contexts often results in students holding conflicting perspectives about the world, stereotypical views placed on other racial or socioeconomic groups, and little desire to interact with diverse peers (Orfield et al., 1997). As a result, the next generation of global leaders within many of our schools may hold irreconcilable points of view about the world and may not be receiving the proper preparation to effectively mediate intergroup conflict or segregation (Olguin & Schmitz, 1997). Therefore, a growing need has arisen for schools’ curricula to introduce students to diversity, global awareness, and social responsibility.

Outside of the schooling system, a substantial amount of learning can take place for students (and adults) that also help prepare them to participate within a democratic multicultural society. These out-of-classroom learning experiences sometimes offer students an opportunity to socially interact with someone from another group, address their intergroup perceived conflicts, acknowledge commonalities, and work together towards positive change. As Hovland (2005) recently pointed out, “These opportunities challenge students to gain deep knowledge about the world’s people and problems…global learning at its best emphasizes the relational nature of students’ identities—identities shaped power and privilege, both within the U.S. and within an interconnected and unequal world.” (p.1). These types of learning experiences have sometimes been referred to as “transformative learning”, a process that emphasizes high achievement through active learning, self-discovery (Boyd & Myers, 1988) and meaningful reflection (Mezirow, 2003). The creation of a transformative learning environment allows students to challenge themselves by thinking more critically and working more innovatively, while practically applying what they learn to real world issues. As a result, they enhance their roles as future agents of change, both locally and globally.

Diversity Education as Transformative Learning

In this paper, I present a model of transformative learning which begins to identify the factors relevant to producing transformative learning opportunities for students on the verge of becoming young adult learners who prepare to enter into the larger, more diverse worlds of college and/or the U.S. workforce. The premise of this paper is to uncover what occurs when transformative learning opportunities are presented to young learners interacting with other diverse peers in non-traditional educational settings. Nieto (1992) spoke of the importance of extracurricular learning activities beyond academics and noted its distinct benefits for students, such as keeping them engaged in the activity, offering shields against negative peer pressure, developing their critical thinking and leadership skills, and creating sense of belonging to a group or a project. She also emphasized the important role of caring teachers and other school staff for students to be able to turn to both inside and outside the school structure. Moreover, Banks (1997) acknowledged that a transformation approach to diversity or multicultural education changes the structure of the curriculum for students to broaden their views of concepts, issues, and events from the perspectives of ethnic and cultural groups other than their own. The integration of personal experiences and cultural expressions between diverse peers helps a learner to further acknowledge and understand different systems of values, beliefs, and other socially constructed ideas (García, 1999). A way that diversity education serves as a

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transformative learning tool is that it bridges the existence of the individual learner to other distinct cross-cultural realities and understandings of the world not yet acknowledged or understood.

Research on transformative and experiential learning indicates that a transformation of consciousness and perspective occurs when the learner actively seeks alternative expressions of meaning and comprehension (Boyd & Myers, 1988). In a theory study of transformative learning, Jack Mezirow (2003) suggested that individuals can be transformed through a process of critical reflection, whereby learning becomes more personal and meaningful. Transformative learning occurs when individuals change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and as a result cause a shift in their definitions of the world around them (Imel, 1998). This process allows learners to have a greater appreciation of knowledge and experience when they are able to actively construct their own learning through meaningful social interactions (Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997). Other studies and critiques (Taylor 1998; Grabov, 1997; Dirks, 1997, Boyd & Myers, 1988; Cooper, 2001) of transformative learning have expanded Mezirow’s understanding of transformative learning to include a focus on expanded consciousness through symbolic discernment (Imel, 1998) and to consider different types of learning that occurs as a result of distinct individual and environmental contexts (Cranton, 1994).

While numerous authors have collectively identified factors which help to structure transformational learning specifically for adult students, very little has been written regarding how younger students can benefit from this process. Children and adolescents also collect specific knowledge, skills, and values that are linked to specific experiences growing up, which they in turn will use as capacities which will help them organize and provide meaning to their overall world view and life decisions (Cooper, 2001). Although formal schooling prepares students to use their growing capacities as a way to learn socialized norms and behaviors, other facets of their lives develop through education that they may receive outside of classroom walls. Moreover, a closer examination of how transformative learning occurs in a diverse context is timely and necessary, considering the changes in school demographics and intergroup relations.

Program Model and Mission

The specific scope of this paper is to apply the tenets of transformative learning theory to the diversity education curriculum of the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS) Youth Leadership Institute. The mission of the Youth Leadership Institute (YLI) is “to nurture leadership for global communities and to assist schools to educate socially responsible young people.” This mission is guided by a three-year learning curriculum that aims to cultivate individual skill and knowledge development and to facilitate sustained working relationships between student leaders and their school faculty and staff. Through a combination of intensive summer educational residencies, on-going support of student learning during the academic year, and professional development of faculty sponsors, the YLI program offers continuous transformative learning – for both students and sponsoring adults – on diversity education in order to develop their leadership capacity and to nurture an internal sense of change agency capacity at both the individual and school levels (see YLI model below).

![Isacs YLI Conceptual Model](image_url)

An important YLI program goal is to facilitate the development of meaningful friendships and working relationships across race, culture, faith traditions, sexual orientation and geographic regions. It is through these relationships that YLI participants gain a better understanding of other social contexts and experiences that they may have not been exposed to previously, while also learning how to articulate their own live to others. YLI participants

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1 As stated in the ISACS YLI web page, http://www.isacs.org/resources/calendar/yli.asp.
also learn to develop communication skills, such as active listening and group facilitation, through carefully planned activities and discussions that inform them on how they can utilize these skills effectively as school leaders. It is the hope that with these skills, YLI participants will serve to address global issues that directly affect their schools and communities, such as racism, interfaith awareness and conflict, and a call for more student engagement in school or community service efforts.

Beginning in the summer of 2003, YLI launched the Year I summer institute on the historic tall ship Ernestina from the Boston Harbor with students and their faculty sponsors representing six independent schools associated with ISACS. In collaboration with the Harvard Pluralism Project, the Year I summer institute utilized instructional resources from specialists in the areas of race relations, conflict management, and youth leadership to provide student participants a grounded understanding of the concepts of racial/ethnic diversity and pluralism. All YLI Year I summer participants worked as part of the ship’s crew to assist in guiding the Ernestina on its course by working in a racially diverse, team-oriented manner. Students applied theories about leadership during the challenges of an ocean-going voyage as well as participated in sessions on world faith traditions, communications, and conflict management.

The second YLI summer institute was held in July 2004, with eighteen of the original Year 1 program participants (entering into their junior year) converging at the Lama Foundation Spiritual Center, located in northern New Mexico. Two themes steered the direction of Year II summer institute. The first was to build upon the Year I experience by expanding out-of-classroom learning opportunities for leadership, school reform and intergroup collaboration. The second theme for the summer 2004 institute was to further develop personal leadership styles based on an awareness of how one’s personal spirituality and faith traditions contribute to their development as a leader.

The Year III summer institute will take place in late July, 2005 and will be held at EARTH University, located in the province of Limón, Costa Rica. The Year III curriculum is intended to build upon the Year I and Year II goals of providing unique transformative learning opportunities. In Year III, the curriculum introduces the themes of global sustainability and cross-cultural understandings through facilitated discussions and directed group activities. Both student and faculty participants will be given the opportunity to work with local farmers in carefully planned community development projects that promote sustainable technology and environmental preservation. In addition to the YLI “cohort” of students and faculty who are completing their three-year experience together, other new cohorts are simultaneously formed as they embark on their own YLI three-year plight.

Engaging Youth and Faculty in Transformative Learning: YLI Practices

A comprehensive review of the literature and research has yielded that transformative learning can occur through a variety of educational practices and thus produce various types of learning outcomes (Imel, 1998). Mezirow (1997) identified several practices that help stimulate transformational learning, including interactive discourse, group projects, life history explorations and journal writing. In addition, Cooper (2001) associated relaxation techniques, meditation, spiritual customs, and other physical discipline experiences with transformative learning. Through a combination of reflection and discourse, students are able to make shifts in his/her world view, provide them with a greater sense of autonomy (Cooper, 2001), a deeper exploration of self (Dirx, 1997) and a better understanding of life purpose (Kroth & Boverie, 2000), which in turn lead to a transformation of self-beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and interactions (Imel, 1998).

What follows are examples of YLI activities and events that exemplify how the program incorporates transformative learning opportunities for both their students and faculty sponsors. The YLI program provides experiential teaching and learning activities that are content specific to their three-year curriculum. The intention of these learning activities is for participants to expand their understandings of diversity, apply new leadership skills, and nurture meaningful relationships that help them to broaden their knowledge and skills:

**Group Discussions and Gatherings**

Through facilitated group discussions that begin at YLI summer institutes and continue on throughout the academic year, student and faculty participants learn to integrate specific diversity concepts (e.g. pluralism, cross-cultural understanding, transnationalism) with the personal experiences and values of the participants. In planned group dialogues guided by facilitators from the Harvard Pluralism Project, Native American elders, and other educational leaders, YLI participants are given opportunities to express the meanings of their culture, spirituality and perspective that contribute to their development as a leader and learner. They are provided different forums to communicate their values and internal beliefs that make them individually unique while also enhancing their group strengths as a cohesive yet diverse whole. “Gatherings” or group “talking circles” provide a structure for listening and speaking in ways that communicate respect, understanding, and empathy within the group. Taking time to share
personal narratives, raising and responding to facilitated questions, and showing appreciation for each other in the group provide deeper and more intimate discussions in which participants build trust.

YLI participants also learn the various avenues of communication that help them to voice themselves and to acknowledge the different voices around them. The program activities involve participants to learn how to use multiple “languages” of communication spoken, such as large group discussions; daily morning meditations (a method of internal dialogue); integrated musical discussions (use of instruments and voice to demonstrate interdependency); visual and symbolic communication through artistic expression (e.g. creating “prayer flags” and visual “life maps”). As a way to promote the communication skills they develop through the program to a wider audience, YLI students present at their schools and at conferences about their experiences with the program. YLI trains it students to facilitate dialogue groups during the summer institutes so that they could return to their schools competent in the art of facilitating dialogues while their peers about issues that they view as relevant and important. Using a “train the trainer” model, YLI students collaborate with other student leaders at school, thereby creating a “ripple effect” of these YLI practices at school.

**Goal Driven Activities**

During the YLI summer institutes as well as the student and faculty reunions planned throughout the academic year, goal-driven activities take place that allow participants to apply their growing capacities of various knowledge, skills, and relationships. For instance, each year at the summer institutes, YLI participants are given specific group projects and undertakings which require them to utilize both their individual capacities as well to build a sense of interdependency with one another. The Year I institute invites both student and faculty participants to apply leadership skills and knowledge as part of the Freedom Schooner Amistad ship’s crew during the challenges of their ocean-going voyage. In Year II, participants learn to create a community based on Pueblo Indian world views through the creation of a Native American “lodge” from the ground up, a physical and symbolic area of group assembly during the institute. In Year III, the capstone experience of the program, participants travel outside of the country to Earth University in Costa Rica to work in local environmental sustainability efforts as well as to interact with the Bri Bri Indians in a truly cross-cultural exchange.

In addition to becoming involved with unique experiential activities, YLI students and their faculty sponsors work collaboratively on organizing and implementing what the program coordinators have designated as Leader Learning Plans. The development of the Leader Learning Plans (LLPs) grew from the ISACS Leaders and Learners Institute, a residential seminar for teachers, administrators, and school heads from the association. LLPs provide YLI participants with concrete tools to continue what was learned and experienced during the summer institutes back to in their schools and communities. The LLPs serve both student and faculty sponsors with a “navigation tool” for the transformative knowledge gained from their experiences at the institute that would be passed on to other collaborators at their school. The creation and implementation of LLPs involve a reflective process of both self and institutional assessment, where students work with their faculty sponsors to identify the supporting structures, people and resources within their schools in order to further their leadership capacities within their school’s context. The LLP process is one which addresses three domains of learning: cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal. In other words, an LLP is intended to guide students and faculty to understand what they need to know (i.e. cognitive), what he or she can accomplish with a group (i.e. interpersonal), and what he or she needs to understand about their own personal values, prejudices, and attitudes (i.e. intrapersonal), all in order to carry out diversity initiatives at their schools.

**Reflection**

The majority of YLI’s exercises and activities include time for internal process and reflection to take place afterwards. This provides program participants to critically think and make connections between the activity content personal experience. Program participants engage in reflective thinking about how to use what is learned and applying it to school-related issues or problems that both students and faculty find important to address. For instance, during the Year II summer institute, they are allotted ample opportunity to journal write, engage in quiet meditation, and to reflect during what is designated as “solo-time”, a unique five-hour period of time spent in complete solitude throughout the natural landscape of the New Mexico highlands that surround the Lama Foundation Center.

**Roles of Faculty and Students**

The role of teacher in transformative learning has been described as one who serves as a role model as well as one who shares a willingness to participate in the learning process in order to deepen their understanding of the construction of both knowledge and personal meaning (Cranton, 1994). This requires teachers to have a willingness
to learn and change with their students. As Taylor (1998) points out, “teachers need to consider how they can help students connect the rational and the affective by using feelings and emotions both in critical reflection and as a means of reflection.” Boyd (1988) suggested that a desired outcome of transformation is greater interdependent and compassionate relationships with other people. This meant for teachers to use their own reflections of their experiences as a way to demonstrate the process of transformational learning while continuing to help facilitate the transformational learning to their students. Baumgartner (2001) discussed the power dynamics in the classroom, suggesting that a balance of power between teachers and students can be fostered through the existence of trusting and caring relationships. In a school setting with rich diversity, it is even more beneficial for faculty and administrators to work more collaboratively with students who not only understand but are part of a community that reflects many distinct resources and needs. As García (1999) pointed out,

Educators start with many cultures of students. Educators should not look at them, certainly not initially, as organisms to be molded and regulated. Instead they should observe their students to determine what they know, what they need to know, and which of their experiences can be used to fuel the process of enlarging their interest, knowledge and skills (p. 163).

YLI allows faculty sponsors to shift from their traditional role of “teacher” to one as a “co-learner” with their students, letting them engage in their own active learning processes at the same time they are helping to facilitate student learning. The program proposes that when students and faculty know each other well, they are more likely to trust that their school will be a safe and supportive place for them to work together and learn from one another, being both supported and challenged by each other to help develop their change capacity. As co-learners, students and faculty apply this trust to sharing responsibility for addressing their school’s problems and needs as well as in creating an environment that promotes transformational learning for everyone at their school.

Conclusion
Societal change does not happen quickly or easily, but a more just and equitable society is not possible without determined and collaborative efforts between those who share a vision that peaceful solutions are possible. Educational institutions that want promote this hopeful vision of the future must find ways to impart the skills and knowledge necessary for their students to positively interact with peers and adults of diverse backgrounds as a way to promote transformational learning. When young people face authentic challenges together with peers of diverse backgrounds and with supportive adults, their experience with interdependence and self-discovery can be a powerful form of learning. The YLI curriculum focuses on preparing learners of different ages and who are at different stages in life to forge a sense of unity in becoming agents of positive change, capable of leading efforts toward stronger school communities. Through thoughtful, collaborative efforts over a three-year growth phase, YLI is attempting to develop a significant educational model that demonstrates how young people can, in collaboration with supportive faculty sponsors, develop school cultures that are caring and innovative, and that sustain lasting friendships within an alliance that will continue to work towards serving and improving society.

References


Spiritual Growth and the Western Paradigm, Are They Mutually Exclusive? 
Transforming the Spirit of Our Workers Through Holistic Education 

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Abstract: This paper is based on the notion that a paradigm for our life and work needs to be created which reconnects people to the spirituality which is inherent in our interconnected existence. This spirituality should be allowed to transcend all aspects of our lives in order to enrich the universe. This spiritually-rich paradigm will facilitate the creation of sustainable communities; sustainable communities which will in-turn create a sustainable society and thence a sustainable world.

Introduction 
It is in the nature of societies that they create structures and institutions that perpetuate that particular society with only relatively incremental change from one generation to the next (O'Sullivan 1999). Unfortunately, western society is based on a fragmented approach. The western, fragmented approach is responsible for the economic, social and ecological problems now facing the world. Sloan (pp. 34-35) says “What [a] fragmenting way of thinking does to nature, it does also to human culture. It dissolves that sense of Wholeness essential to the growth of persons in community” (Sloan 1983). It is the nature of the human condition that each person is, at the same time, an individual and yet, part of a greater Whole, a family, a community, a society etc (Smuts 1926 [1999]; Koestler 1967; Laszlo 1996). The Whole and the part one cannot exist without the other. This Whole/part relationship ensures we both, naturally exist in, and seek community; and our cultures naturally evolve in community. In fact the word community (Bopp and Bopp 2001) is made of the words common and unity or oneness (p. 12) and the word muni is Latin for gift, so one might say community is the gift of ‘common oneness’. This unconscious yearning for interconnectedness is a deeply spiritual experience thus the dominance of the western paradigm is not only destroying the physical bonds of connectedness by continually forcing a wedge through the ‘common oneness’ we have with each other and our environment but by also continually degrading the spiritual bonds as well.

Spirituality, Community, Nature and Place 
The spiritual nature of community is both implicitly and explicitly connected to our relationship with nature and to the place where we experience ‘community’; indeed our place is part of our community. Sam Crowell highlights this interconnectedness by simply saying (p. 19) “Living our lives in harmony with Nature also means to live life in harmony with our true nature” (Crowell 2002). Vasily Sukhomlinsky also drew together the interconnected and interdependent nature of life when he said (Cockerill 1999):

... just as a tree is dependent on the soil, so is society dependent on the natural environment in which it exists. An individual’s dependence on society and on nature is analogous to the fruit’s dependence on the tree and the soil (p. 145).

The fragmented western paradigm has eroded this interconnected relationship between humankind, and between humankind and the earth, indeed the universe. Both human and natural resources are treated as commodities to trade and exploit for monetary gain. Colonisation and globalisation are partners in the relentless homogenisation of cultures and societies. Communities are constantly attacked and broken down until they cease to exist as unique entities or ‘wholes’ which exemplify the holistic universe (Koestler 1967; Laszlo 1996). The industrial complex may move into an area to feed off the natural environment slowly killing it, either overtly such as in logging, mining or even intensive farming; or covertly by poisoning the air, the land, or the water or disrupting migration patterns or habitats of the indigenous wildlife (Oliver, Canniff et al. 2002). It may force the indigenous population away from their traditional industries and practices into the industrial workplace or even simply onto welfare. Unfortunately this destruction of our communities can occur wherever this industrial complex is situated. Like a river running downhill, the industrial machine rolls on, gaining speed, sucking in people, communities and the environment until

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the entire world can be brought to its knees by a bad day on the stock market in New York, London or Tokyo; by an industrial accident in Russia or by a terrorist attack anywhere in the world (Sloan 1983).

So the reality of 21st Century existence isn’t the utopia envisaged by so many writers and thinkers in the 19th and 20th Century. Unfortunately (Bopp and Bopp 2001):

…the powerful river of everyday life-as-we-know-it is rushing forward in directions that tend to pull us apart from each other. Most of us are too busy, or too poor, or too anxious, to intimidated, too hurt, too burned out, to mistrustful, too distracted, too apathetic, or just too tired to give ourselves to the often painful, sometimes boring, and always time consuming process of getting human communities to work. Indeed, many of us have a hard enough time getting our marriages and families to flourish and managing the complex and challenging relations in our workplaces (p. 3).

This existence is spiritually deficit. It makes us become insular, shapes our habits of thought and judgement, the way we make choices and set goals and the way we interact with others and the environment (Bopp and Bopp 2001), it reshapes the ‘software of our lives’ (Hofstede, 1991) and transforming our existence requires a transformation of this software (Bopp and Bopp 2001).

Spirituality has been described as (O'Sullivan, 1999):

…the deeper resource of the human spirit and involves the non-physical, immaterial dimensions of our beings: the energies, essences and part of us that existed before and will exist after the disintegration of our body (pp. 259-260).

Or simply as (Gallegos Nava 2001) “…the individual is part of the Whole, it is inherent beauty, truth and all things unconditional. This experience brings out love, compassion, joy, humility and interconnectedness” (p. 39).

Transformation of our ‘software’, indeed of our very existence, requires the acknowledgement and appreciation of the spiritual or interconnected nature of our existence.

**Work and Learning**

The problems the world faces currently, and perhaps perennially, in some part at least, are the product of perception, the way we comprehend reality. The dominant perception that human kind is ‘superior’ to all other life; the perception that people in ‘developed’ countries are ‘superior’ to those in less developed countries; within western countries those with a ‘real job’ are ‘better’ than those without; those with higher paying positions are more intelligent than those with lower paid work; anything can be legitimately used and potentially abused in order the achieve the aims of those with power, including the environment, other people and information.

This perception forces us to operate in the “framework of an impatient sense of present-to-future linear time” which encourages and emphasises short-term gain (Oliver, Canniff et al. 2002) and contravenes the range of ways humans can naturally imagine time; for example “a sense of linear time, cyclical time, seasonal time, time as eternity and the sense of timelessness” (Oliver, Canniff et al. 2002). This ‘present-to-future’ linear time disregards the shared ‘knowledge’ tied up in our culture and instead assumes that there are ‘clever, unknown professionals’ somewhere working to answer the big questions and solve the problems we face (O'Sullivan 1999). This is just one, of what Oliver, Canniff et al. call, the errors of modernity. The assumption that (p. 237):

…the “progressive” or “modern” characteristics of humans lead (metaphorically) “forward” to a “higher” civilisation and should be pursued even at the expense of the primal ones, which are generally considered “primitive”, “backward” and of secondary importance (Oliver, Canniff et al. 2002).

This emphasis on ‘progressiveness’ has been driven by science and technology for more than 300 years, however, simply blaming science and technology alone is superficial (Sloan 1983). It is the paradigm within which the technology is devised and used which is flawed. Three centuries of inexorably removing the opportunity to live in, or close by to; to ‘work’ in, or close by to; ones ‘place’, ones community, to allow each person to embody, to experience and contribute to, the well-being of their community as they see fit. The western paradigm ultimately encourages, and provide little alternative to, increasing numbers of people travelling increasing distances, to engage in atomistic work practices, for increasing amounts of time/day, in isolated situations from mines, to heavy industry, to factories, to the cubicle in the office working on the individual personal computer on a virtual network (Oliver, Canniff et al. 2002). The western paradigm essentially forces people into work to support the dominant vision of what society is rather than what the individual feels is their true calling. Burns notes (p. 28-29) “...a vibrant and
productive society requires informed active participation in each of these domains, [family and community life, leisure and recreation, further study and productive work] not just in the workplace” (Burns 1995).

Learning and work are closely intertwined. For example (Burns 1995):

... For many people work is the only form of education that has a relevance to what they do, developing and finding aptitudes and interests that other types of education have failed to discover or promote. Work is the main situation that supplies everyday learning and new knowledge to people (p.27).

Work, as it always has been, is used to provide us with the things we need to survive, but in the industrial society we are no longer undertaking activities which immediately provide us with sustenance. Work is now the sustenance of the industrial complex, the same industrial complex which is devouring our communities and environment. If Burns is correct then the only form of education undertaken by many is also supporting the structures and institutions of a society which is driven by that same industrial complex. Suddenly governments and industry together promote the idea that “…all workers in all countries would be integrated into global networks of production and consumption, which produce untold profits for investors” (Hall 2002). Though Hall describes this as a utopian dream in 2002 he wrote that “about 1.5 trillion disconnected dollars change hands for financial transactions totally apart from funds needed for global trade purposes”; that is currency speculation (p. 36). One must ask whether a world that can permit such activity is a world which encourages spiritual growth or support sustainability, one must also ask where is true learning in such a world?

Learning is (p. 92) “the process of acquiring new information, knowledge, wisdom, skills or capacities that enable us to meet new challenges and further develop our potential” (Bopp and Bopp 2001). If that learning occurs in an environment that is spiritually bankrupt then the activities that are derived from the learning will be equally bereft. However the environment is created by the governments, institutions and structures of a society, this is the ultimate paradox of the western paradigm, that we are all contributing to our own impending demise and our ability to learn merely facilitates that demise (Oliver, Canniff et al. 2002):

History suggests that humans tend to construct increasingly complex technological and social organisational systems which finally get "out of control"...So as humans we have the capacity to organise vast numbers of people and develop technologies to extend our powers almost beyond our imaginations, yet when we transcend the boundaries of simple face-to-face societies in very substantial ways, we seem unable to limit the excesses and abuses of this technical power (p. 25).

Clearly humankind needs to break out of this pattern. Ironically if our ability to learn is perpetuating our demise it is our ability to learn which will ultimately allow us to transform our situation to one which is sustainable.

Transformation and Sustainability

According to Bopp and Bopp (p. 37) transformation is the “dissolution and reorganisation of the constituent elements of any system around a new organising principle, a new pattern of life” (Bopp and Bopp 2001). In order for transformation to occur there needs to be:

- Termination of existing patterns, structures and institutions
- Access to, deep understanding and acceptance of, new information that is generated from without of the current paradigm to create a new organising principle
- A critical mass of engagement to ensure the system (community, organisation etc) does not revert to established norms and mores
- The creation of new structures and webs of interconnectedness around the new organising principle.

Clearly transformation, as described above, is impossible without vision (the ability to see ourselves in different conditions); imagination (it is practically impossible to experience a condition we cannot imagine); learning (transformation requires changes to our habits, attitudes and beliefs); and participation (transformation cannot be done to someone. One needs the determination and involvement to be affected positively by the process of transformation) (Bopp and Bopp 2001).

A new paradigm is needed. One that acknowledges that neither people nor communities exist in isolation nor are they free from the impact of outside world upon them and ultimately this paradigm needs to be sustainable. In this work I am using the definition of sustainability provided by Capra. That is; an approach that (p. 4) “satisfies the
needs of [a community] without diminishing the prospects for future generations” (Capra 1996). This paradigm needs to:

- Emphasise the validity of experience through living in the moment
- Facilitate the acknowledgement and appreciation on the interconnected nature of our existence
- Allow space in our daily existence in order for us to undertake activities which nourish the soul
- Both allow, and validate, the experiencing of Awe in all that surrounds and connects with us.

I believe a paradigm of Wholeness facilitated by ‘holistic education’ could bridge the chasm between the current paradigm and one that is sustainable by being the catalyst for the transformation. Ultimately holistic education could provide ‘access to, deep understanding and acceptance of, new information that is generated from without of the current paradigm to create a new organising principle (Wholeness)’. Holistic educators working not just with children in schools, or students in universities or graduate schools, but with adults in the workplaces, that form both the structures and institutions of society, and the community at large could create ‘a critical mass of engagement to ensure the system (community, organisation etc) does not revert to established norms and mores’. This awareness and critical mass together could lead to the ‘termination of existing patterns, structures and institutions’ and it could lead to ‘the creation of new structures and webs of interconnectedness around the new organising principle’ (Wholeness).

Conclusion

In recent years ‘Transformation’, as a word and concept, much like the term ‘Holistic’ has become, at least to some degree, appropriated by the institutions and structures which support the dominant western paradigm to infer a change to more inclusive and integrative approaches to business and society in the face of criticism of imperialistic, misogynistic and elitist attitudes and practices. This appropriation has been assisted by the diverse, and sometimes difficult to define natures of both the transformative and holistic learning fields as well as often semantic debate within both fields (Clark Jr 1991; Schugurensky 2002). However, though there are differences in emphasis or focus these are generally viewed within the community as being positive. What is far more dangerous is the misuse of these concepts by the structures and institutions of the dominant western society and the possible perception that the transformative and holistic learning communities engage in nothing but self-serving and self-perpetuating high level philosophical discourse.

I have noted elsewhere that learning may be considered to be inherently transformative however it is the paradigm or context within which the learning takes place which determines whether actual and permanent change i.e. transformation occurs. This means that the learning needs to be grounded in the expansive context of the learner and their relationship with the world. It is the critical reflection on this relationship, and the new epistemology it devolves which facilitates the transformation for only in reflection of this expansive context are all aspects considered with equal emphasis. Neither transformative nor holistic learning propose one ‘curriculum’ which if followed will guarantee a particular given result. However, although transformative learning isn’t necessarily holistic I believe that holistic learning is, and can only be, transformative. Gallegos Nava notes that the holistic vision within which holistic learning is situated is based on the following principles of comprehending reality (p. 13-14):

- Unity. Facts cannot be separated from values. The observer is not separate from what is observed. Human beings are not separate from the universe we inhabit. True knowledge is an integrated function in which emotions, cognition, intuition, and discernment act as one.
- Wholeness. The whole is more than the sum of its parts and cannot be explained through its parts. The parts are harmonically related and can only be properly understood through the dynamic of the whole. There are no parts that have an independent existence.
- Qualitative development. Qualitative development occurs as the result of dynamic processes and non-linear interrelations, as the result of unbalance. It is transformative, integrative, and makes sense. Novelty, diversity, unpredictability, and order-chaos are some of its features.
- Transdisciplinarity. The framework of isolated scientific disciplines is surpassed. This integration not only takes place within science, but also among the various fields of human knowledge. Science, art, traditions and spirituality, rather than being contradictory, are complimentary.
• Spirituality. Spirituality is understood as the direct experience of the whole, through which human beings recognise the fundamental order of the universe and their identity with that order. Spirituality encompasses universal love, compassion, and unconditional freedom. It is not related to churches or religious beliefs.

• Learning. Learning is a personal-social discernment, with meaning for human beings. It occurs at intuitive, emotional, rational, spiritual, physical, artistic, cognitive, and spatial levels, and is incorporated through a personal sense of meaning (Gallegos Nava 2001).

My original question when drafting this paper was to ask “Spiritual growth and the western paradigm, are they mutually exclusive? Transforming the spirit of our workers through holistic education”. I feel compelled to say a qualified 'yes'. However, it is my belief that we can transform the current dominant paradigm, to one which is spiritually supportive. It is also my belief that we can accomplish this feat through education, but education at all levels from kindergarten to workplace learning. Society is perpetuated through its’ structures and institutions. Those structures and institutions are facilitated by people and the education system. Holistic leaders can be created by introducing them to the interconnected nature of our existence at all levels of their educative experience. Holistic leaders cultivate inner balance. They bring their whole self to all situations and contexts they encounter. They view the situations and contexts they encounter through a lens of wholeness. Finally they transform the lives and contexts of those they encounter acting as a catalyst for paradigm shift (Molinaro 1999). Holistic leaders will build holistic workplaces and through them begin to create the ‘critical mass of engagement’ which is required for transformation to occur.

Vasily Sukhomlinsky said (p. 147):

I am firmly convinced that the human personality is inexhaustible; each may become a creator, leaving behind a trace upon the Earth. …There should not be any nobodies-speck of dust cast upon the wind. Each one must shine, just as billions upon billions of galaxies shine in the heavens (Cockerill 1999).

Our society, its’ structures, its’ institutions and its’ leaders should all help us all become creators.

References


Transformation as a Sociocultural Phenomenon: 
A Study of Adult Learning in Leadership Development

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Abstract: This paper presents a theoretical and research based model of transformation as a sociocultural phenomenon. In contrast to other perspectives in transformation, the sociocultural lens suggests that knowing and being are situated not within an individual, but is a shared experience between the individual and his or her context. In researching the experience of individuals participating in a year long leadership development experience, this paper will try to answer the question, “Where does change occur, or what changes in personal transformation?”

Introduction
At a breakfast meeting previous to the conceptualization of this research, the executive director of a program aimed at developing community leaders said she knew her program was having an impact when she would run into the spouse of a participant and the person would say, “You know, he or she is different at home.” What the executive director was sharing is that many of the participants in this yearlong program have reported a deep, fundamental transformation in their understanding and behavior in the community. To the program’s benefit, this is its intent; to provide people with the tools and commitment to be leaders in the community. The goal of the program, as described in the literature, “... is to develop community trustees - people who accept responsibility on behalf of the whole community to ensure the common good.”

If this transformation of one's being is happening as described, what is the relationship between the person and his or her experience in the program? What changes occur, in or around this person, that are made apparent in a different way of thinking, feeling, and acting in the world? How does the participant understand this change? What is the role of the additional 30+ program participants in this person’s individual change? These and a host of other questions speak to the concept of personal or individual transformation. Addressing these questions requires a deeper understanding of the process of transformation and the focus of this research.

We know that transformation occurs in adults because of their learning experiences. This has been well documented within the domain of adult education as exemplified by the work of Mezirow (1981; 1991; 2000) and Kegan (2000). However, what seems less certain is what actually changes, or transforms, in or around the person. The previously mentioned studies focused on personal transformation being within the person’s thought process. Others have argued that transformation occurs through the unconscious (Boyd & Myers, 1988; Dirkx 1997, Summer). While there is significant research to support both of these theories of transformation, independently or together, they do not fully explain the phenomena, the literature seems to suggest more – the social (Clark, 1991; Clark & Wilson, 1991; Winter; Collard & Law, 1989; Sveinunggaard, 1993; Taylor, 1997 Fall).

Generally referred as a sociocultural perspective on knowing, this tradition can trace much of its origins to the philosophy of Heidegger and Wittgenstein along with Dewey and George Herbert Mead. Current research in sociocultural learning is supported by a host of scholars (Beach, 1999; Bruner, 1990; Clark & Wilson, 1991, Winter; Cole, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Luria, 1976; Wenger, 1998; Wertsch, 1985). As with Mezirow, this is a constructivist theory of learning that posits the individual is an active agent in constructing his or her own understanding of the world. However, within this model, the individual is coupled with his or her historical and cultural context in an inter-woven model of knowing. In sociocultural learning, individuals construct new knowledge through their situated and contextual interaction with the tools and socially constructed symbols of society. Thus, in part, knowledge resides neither in the individual or society, but in both.

The Research Problem
Given the tension between these differing perspectives, the fundamental question for this study was, Where does change occur, or what changes in personal transformation? The population studied in this research were the individuals introduced in the opening paragraph; adults who had participated in a leadership development program, and who identified themselves as having experienced significant change in thought and action because of the
learning experience. A particular emphasis was placed on understanding the role of society and culture in this personal transformation.

**Methodological Approach**

Given that this study was about meaning making and based upon a constructivist framework for adult learning, the theoretical and conceptual framework I brought to this study was interpretive in nature. This study was seeking to understand what “transforms” within the spectrum of human existence when an individual changes his or her understanding and behavior in the world through participation in an adult learning experience. The methodology for the research was semi-structured interviews. The participants where adults who had participated in a learning experience designed to develop community leaders. The specific interviewees were individuals who had been identified by another, and confirmed by the participants, as having been qualitatively changed based on this learning experience. This was a retroactive study where individuals reflected on their past and present relationship with the world, in thought and practice, in addition to the influences that facilitated these changes.

**Research Context**

Six subjects were interviewed for this study. Each of these persons had previously participated in a nine-month leadership development institute to be referred to as Leadership Great Falls (LGF.) This program is part of a national model designed to develop community leaders. As described in their brochure and website, “Leadership Great Falls is a custom-designed community leadership development program. Our goal is to develop community trustees - people who accept responsibility on behalf of the whole community to ensure the common good.” In the program, approximately 36 adults spend two weekends in retreats and seven days (one each month) in a learning environment directed toward their stated goal.

This adult learning program is founded in a constructivist, collaborative, and experiential approach to learning. Again quoting their brochure, “Participants will be actively involved in the research and study of community issues to better understand how systems in the community must work together for the common good. You'll learn by doing.” This is further exemplified in one of their guiding principles: “Learning is active--learning by doing and by experiencing with emphasis on skill building and processing.”

There are multiple reasons why I chose to study participants in LGF. First is the pedagogy which is founded on the following: “Four platforms support the curriculum: community connections, diversity, leadership skills, systems thinking.” Having reviewed their curriculum, assisted in a few sessions, worked directly with the designers of their curriculum, and spoken with participants, it was obvious that this learning experience is founded upon the best practices for adult learning.

LGF’s foundation of community leadership, collaboration, and teamwork are a second reason I chose this context to study. Given that this study looked at personal transformation as a phenomenon with a particular lens on the role of others, community, and cultural context, this learning experience allowed for the investigation of the individual, the social interaction between participants, and the cultural context.

The final reason for selecting this context was the participants. Through my own community involvement I have had many conversations over the last few years with LGF graduates who speak very clearly about how this experience changed their understanding about leadership, community, and themselves. While they didn’t use the same terminology, these people described Leadership Great Falls as a transformative learning experience.

**Research Participants**

I interviewed six adults who had completed the adult learning experience of Leadership Great Falls between 1996 and 2001. Each subject participated in two interviews. To identify the participants, I first worked with the past executive director of the program. The nature of this program is such that the director is always present at the sessions and co-facilitates with one or more outside faculty. In addition, many graduates continue to work with LGF as facilitators, in community projects, or in supporting the program in various ways. Because of this, the executive director develops a very intimate relationship with many of the participants. To provide me with a pool of possible subjects, I asked the executive director to provide me with names of past LGF using the following criteria:

- Individuals who have directly communicated to her that the program had a significant effect on their lives.
- Individuals who have taken some direct action in their lives that they attribute to LGF.
- Individuals who have publicly shared the impact LGF had on their lives with others.
I called 19 of the suggested participants, making contact with 12. During this interview, I identified myself and asked participants to share with me their experience in LGF. Three of the participants spoke highly of LGF, but did not speak of it as a transformative experience. Three spoke of it as a transformative experience, but were not enthusiastic about spending the time needed to do the interviews. Six spoke of significant change because of the experience and were willing to be in the study. I interviewed the 6 willing participants more in-depth over the phone and then asked them to participate in two face-to-face interviews.

The six subjects who participated in the study ranged in age from approximately their early 40’s to mid 50’s. All were working professionals in leadership positions. Three had advanced degrees, two had bachelors, and one had an associate degree. The earliest participant was in the class of 1995 – 1996 and the most recent was 2000 – 2001. There were four women and two men. One woman was African-American and five appeared to be Caucasian. Three worked for not-for-profit organizations, one for a family foundation, and two in the business sector.

Because of the personal nature of the study, I limited participation to six subjects. Transformation and meaning making are at the core of how individuals engage in the world. By interviewing six participants I was able to spend more time seeking depth of understanding on how this change occurred in each person. In addition, given that this is a study asking individuals to reflect upon historical events, six participants assisted in eliminating some of the memory lapses that may occur within a single individual. Lastly, I chose multiple participants to contrast and compare their experience during the analysis process as a means of developing a better overall understanding of personal transformation.

The Learning Experience

Each of the participants in this study entered Leadership Great Falls with varying reasons. Most indicated a desire to connect with other leaders, learn more about the community, and improve their leadership skills. One had no desire to participate but did so out of professional obligation. The opening retreat began with tension as there were no traditional introductions around titles, work roles, or any other professional affiliation. During these two days, the participants were introduced to the skill of dialogue. This skill became integral to the experience as it created the guiding principles for this and future sessions. They also engaged in a variety of team building exercises concluding in a ropes course. All of the retreat was planned and facilitated by previous LGF graduates.

Leaving this retreat there was a strong sense of connection and trust between the participants. They had learned something about themselves as persons and leaders. They had formed as a community and believed that they knew the people in their group at a deep level, as people, not as professionals. This was supported by the surprise that they experienced after receiving the LGF membership directory and seeing the positions many of their classmates held in the community.

The foundation that was established in this opening retreat was continued in seven monthly sessions. During that time the participants had their full day meetings at different locations around the city, again planned and facilitated by previous LGF participants. Here they were introduced to content around systems thinking, housing, policing, and other community and leadership issues. The content and place as a source of learning was continually connected to the personal, professional, and community based lives of the participants. Each session was bounded by the framework of dialogue and allowed significant time for personal reflection and participant interaction.

This context, combined with the monthly content of the sessions, and the diversity of the participants often caused cognitive disequilibrium in the participants. What they were being exposed to in real data, or the lived experience of their fellow students, at times conflicted with their understanding of themselves or the world. Trying to make sense out of this tension became a time for continued public meaning making through the interaction with others and personal meaning making through individual reflection.

Outside of the monthly sessions, participants worked in smaller teams to understand selected topics around community leadership issues. The overall experience culminated in a retreat planned by the participants. Part of this final retreat included a community service project, presentations on what they had learned in their group project, and final dialogue and reflection about the entire experience. Participants left this nine month experience believing they had a deeper understanding of themselves and how they interact with others, a recognition of some of the hidden biases that had been shaping their beliefs and behaviors, and a new understanding of the value and power of diversity and collaboration.

In the stories of these six individuals who participated in the Leadership Great Falls experience, transformational learning was felt at a personal level, processed within a community of others, and shaped by the larger cultural context. Transformation was experienced as a disruption of the person’s current sense of self in relation to a community’s shared assumptions about the world. A new understanding of self was facilitated through personal and social meaning making of this disruption within the cultural context of a community of others.
These learnings do not simply add to what the participants already knew, many of them represent a fundamental shift in their sense of who they are. As an example, for these participants, their relationship to diversity wasn’t enhanced, but experienced as a new form. The same can be said for collaboration. It was more than getting a few people involved, it represents a new understanding of how to make decisions, solve problems and lead.

A Sociocultural Model

Unlike the cognitive or depth psychology perspective, there is currently no comprehensive model that draws upon the sociocultural perspective. Thus to do this investigation, I had to first create a sociocultural framework by which to evaluate this learning experience. In reviewing the literature, I chose a sociocultural perspective based on the work of Lev Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1978), and Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (Lave, 1997; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998.) This model considers the interaction of people as well as the impact of shared assumptions, beliefs, values, traditions and behavior patterns within a group, community, or society on how individuals make sense of their world.

The key element in the sociocultural tradition is that learning is a collaboration between the person and cultural context. The cultural context includes the norms, behaviors, expectations, beliefs and all that is that defines being human within a given community. These artifacts are present in the tools and activity of mediation as described by Vygotsky or the reification of objects and behaviors as described in communities of practice. In the Leadership Grand Falls experience, this is manifest in the four platforms of systems thinking, diversity, community connections and leadership skills. Each of these words has a very specific meaning. As an example, leadership for LGF is described by the executive director as, “Someone who knows themselves and where they fit and is comfortable with it … who learns how to develop the support systems for some of the weaknesses they may have … of creating opportunities and being successful at what they’re driven at.” Had these words (symbols) had different mediated values, the learning for the participants would have been different.

There is a recognition of the ever-evolving relationships among objects. For Vygotsky this is present in the framework of the dialectic. For communities of practice, this is present in the continuing renegotiation at each level of learning. The dialogical nature of LGF made this obvious. Causing people to be uncomfortable through the ropes course, the interaction with others not like them, visiting places in the community outside their domain, the interactions between individuals and the group, required the creation of a new way of understanding their world.

Action defining meaning is present in the sociocultural tradition. In the Vygotskian perspective, tools are defined through their usage. Activity causes meaning. The same is true for communities of practice where doing and experience are cornerstones in the way people make sense of the world. In LGF, this was present in having people engage in real projects, in real time application of their learning outside of this experience, in the active nature of the sessions themselves.

Interaction with others within a larger cultural context is the central theme of both theories. For Vygotsky this is present in the zone of proximal development. In communities of practice, this is manifest in belonging. Individuals can only learn when they are appropriately connected with others. Learning first happens at the social level and then at the individual level. This is described in Vygotskian terms as moving from the interpersonal to the intrapersonal. For communities of practice, this public meaning making happens as a precursor to personal internalization. The team building, group process, and dialogue circles in LGF was directed toward the creation of community. The time for reflection created the space for personal meaning making.

The final theme across the two traditions is the forming of the person through everything identified in the previous section. Within a Vygotskian framework, learning proceeds development. Doing, experience and belonging contributes to becoming in communities of practice. In both Vygotsky’s development, and learning as belonging from communities of practice, there is a qualitative shift in the person. He or she now sees him or herself differently and understands the world in a uniquely different manner. The individual learning reported in the previous chapter is evidence of this phenomenon.

Transformation is Shaped by the Culture

The Leadership Great Falls experience was constructed through a set of shared assumptions, beliefs, values, traditions and behavior expectations. The original curriculum designers had shared beliefs about leadership and learning. The Chamber of Commerce (as the primary stakeholder and fiduciary agent), LGF board, and financial sponsors all shape the experience. The session planner and facilitators, all past LGF graduates are part of the context. The executive director and the participants themselves combine with all of these elements to experience the culture of Leadership Great Falls.

This cultural context is inherent in the tools, rituals and artifacts of LGF. It is exemplified in the four platforms, the definition of leadership, LGF’s particular approach to diversity, the site visits, the use of dialogue, the opening
circle, and all the other activities that create this experience. These are choices that represent or mediate the shared assumptions, beliefs, values, traditions and behavior expectations of Leadership Great Falls. Combined, these are its culture.

Knowing comes through doing. Through activity the participants make sense or come to understand or make meaning of these experiences. It is this meaning making that shapes the individual transformation. If Leadership Great Falls had a different culture, if their definition of leadership had been different, if dialogue had not been provided as a tool, if it had not been active, if any number of other significant choices been different, the individual transformation would have been different. Transformation as a form is thus shaped by the culture in which the new meaning making occurs.

Within a sociocultural perspective, the form is the co-construction of meaning making that resides between the person and the cultural context. The context is what brings meaning to the experience. An individual’s knowing cannot be separated from cultural mediation (Wertsch, 1990). This meaning making that first occurs on the outside, over time becomes internalized into an existing knowledge of the world. The internalization process takes time and is what creates stability in an individual’s meaning making. In the Leadership Great Falls experience, there was nine months of active engagement with the context, allowing for the social meaning making and eventual internalization of the tools representing the culture of LGF.

**Transformation Involves Expanding a Person’s Belonging in Community**

The majority of learning in Leadership Great Falls was facilitated through group activity. Group process as a form of pedagogy has been well researched as a valuable form of learning (Bruffee, 1995 Jan/Feb). In relationship to being transformational however, the group process constitutes more than shared learning. Transformational learning involves becoming part of a new community while developing a more permeable membership between other communities.

From the very beginning, the Leadership Great Falls experience worked toward creating a community. The structure of the opening retreat, the team building exercises, the participation of past members were designed to create a psychological connection between the new participants in LGF and the established members of this community. This community building was an intentional and represented the culture of LGF.

A component in the LGF creation of community included disrupting old connections and creating new ones within the community of participants. The disruption was exemplified through not using titles in the opening retreat, through challenging the participants’ definition of tolerance, through providing them with experiences in the community that conflicted with their existing knowledge. After the disruption, meaning making was established within community. Individual knowing then became dependent on those present in the group making sense within a cultural context.

While entering into the community of Leadership Great Falls, there was no requirement that participants abandon their existing communities. There were cultural values, beliefs and expected behaviors that were part of LGF. To be part of this community, participants did need to adopt these cultural standards. In doing this it was acceptable for participants to hold membership in other communities. This was made clear in Leadership Great Falls approach to leadership. As conceptualized by the designers of this curriculum, the intention wasn’t to create a new definition of leader but an expanded definition (Olivarez, 2003).

The transformational impact of Leadership Great Falls was in the development of individuals who understood and fully participated in LGF as well as making more permeable the boundaries among additional communities in which they had membership. This was inherent in the learning outcomes defined in the findings chapter. Trust, ego and confidence exemplified the understanding of self in relation to others. For Laura it was in trusting others. For John it was the recognition that his ego was keeping him from participating as a team. For Sherri it was confidence in the value that she provided to a group as an African-American woman. Each of these examples is about expanding their relationship with others, and about expanding their connection to others in community.

The two other findings of recognition of personal biases and the value of collaboration performed the same function. In the first learning, the removal of biases expands the authentic involvement a person has with another. Embracing the value of collaboration demands the inclusion of many diverse individuals in meaningful activities. Each of these learnings moved the LGF graduates toward participation in a larger range of community. Transformation for these participants thus became a process of participating in a new community as well as more easily residing and holding the values of other communities.

This transformational process not only changed the person’s relationship with others in community; it also changed the person’s sense of self. From a sociocultural perspective, a person’s sense of self is defined by the communities in which he or she participates. It is an ever negotiated relationship between the person, others and the social context (Wenger, 1998). As a person joins or expands the communities in which he or she is a member, so
does his or her sense of self. Transformation thus becomes not only a process of meaning making in the world, but it also constructs a new way in which the person understands his or her self. For Laura, it was not only that she could trust, but that she now perceived herself as a trusting person. For Sherri, it wasn’t just that she could add the perspective of an African-American woman to the conversation, it was that she saw herself as having value as an African-American woman.

Implications

The results of this study suggest that others, society and culture play a significant role in transformation. Context, the use of mediated tools is an important learning. Everything done in a learning environment matters. The content, pedagogy, assessment, even the way the facilitator engages with the participants, communicates the values, norms, expectations of a larger culture. Nothing is incidental. The understanding of the cultural tools came through activity. People need to use something to make meaning. Since transformative learning is framed in meaning making, individual transformation requires activity.

The power of community emerged as equally important to context. The personal meaning making around the tools of culture is first created within a community of others and is then internalized at the personal level. Time is required to develop inclusion in a new community. A psychological connection is also required. The knowledge held in the new community may result in a disruption within the person and his or her previous communities. The reestablishment of order through social meaning making and individual internalization results in personal transformation.

References


Transformational Learning and Third Wave Feminism as Potential Outcomes of Participation in Women’s Enclaves

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Abstract: The focus of this study is on transformative learning in women’s enclaves. Women’s enclaves have been shown to be sites of sustaining deep relationships that initiate change in meaning perspective similar to Mezirow’s (1991) transformational learning theory. A feminist consciousness, specifically Third Wave, can be a characteristic. The purpose of this study is to consider women’s participation in enclaves as sites for transformational learning such that a potential outcome is a “Third Wave” feminist consciousness.

Introduction

One of the primary ways women learn is through connection (Belenky, et al, 1997). The relationships women form provide networks within which they connect spiritually, emotionally, and cognitively. Women’s enclaves have been shown to be sites and sources of sustaining deep relationships and networks. An enclave is a group of people who are culturally, intellectually, or socially distinct from those surrounding them (Hawkins & Allen, 1991). For the purposes of this study, the term enclave signifies a group of women who have a distinct alliance based on an informal or formal association. Research on informal and formal groups indicates there are thick layers of support that go beyond the initial reason for the group, such as connection with others, gender identification, support in times of crises, and female friendship ties (Davidson & Packard, 1981; Candy, Troll, & Levy, 1981; Brasher, 1997; Andrew & Montague, 1998). Friendship ties can be instrumental in providing the support for women in developing a feminist consciousness. It was through friendship ties that women became acquainted with consciousness raising groups of the 1970’s (Kravetz, 1978; Kravetz, Marcek, & Finn, 1983). In participating in these groups women began to identify as feminists, to take political action as a collective group, and to see themselves as part of a social movement (Kravetz, Marcek, & Finn, 1983; Rosenthal, 1984; Siegel, 1997; Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). This type of change in consciousness can be described as transformational. There was a profound difference in the way women made meaning of their lives after participating in a consciousness raising session, similar to that described by Mezirow’s (1991) transformational learning theory. While a feminist consciousness often results from listening to other women and learning about shared feelings and experiences, participation in a group frequently does not result in collective political action or identifying as a social movement. The experience is more characteristic of Third Wave feminists. Heywood and Drake (1997) define Third Wave Feminism “as a movement that contains elements of second wave critique of beauty culture, sexual abuse, and power structures while it also acknowledges and makes use of the pleasure, danger, and defining power of those structures” (p. 3). Third Wave feminists embrace individual experience and politicize personal stories. A feminist consciousness is more likely to be individually defined and activism to be about personal interests (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). The purpose of this study is to consider women’s participation in informal and formal associations as sites for transformational learning such that a potential outcome is a “Third Wave” feminist consciousness.

Research Questions

Women’s personal stories capture their lived experience within a shared environment. Stories also expose the meanings and messages women extract from those spaces, the learning strategies and methods employed as they connect with others during activities, and identify changes that occur as a result of their interaction with others. This study explores the notions of status, power, and solidarity; gender identity formation and confirmation; personal growth; friendships and female connection through women’s personal stories as they participate in female-only environments. Findings will contribute to an understanding of how women construct knowledge about the world and themselves within a female-only setting. Research questions guiding this study are:

1. How do female enclaves serve as potential sites of transformational learning?  
2. What effect does participation in female enclaves have on women’s identity?  
3. How does participation in female enclaves encourage or support a Third Wave feminist awareness?

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Theoretical Perspective

The core of transformational learning theory is the way we make meaning (Mezirow, 1991). As we become adults, we often face moments of doubt or crisis that challenge our childhood assumptions. Transformational learning theory proposes that as we meet these challenges, we are faced with changing our deeply held assumptions, or meaning perspectives. We recognize that our formative knowledge is not adequate for solving the problem or dilemma. As we examine our assumptions, we negotiate a new meaning. This examination requires naming the situation and reflecting on it. The act of naming is powerful. We are no longer passive consumers of culturally imposed ideas, values, and beliefs, but directors, negotiators, interpreters, and creators. On the other side of this experience, we have a fundamental shift in our meaning perspective and understand the world in a new way (Mezirow & Associates, 2000). This may be evident through our actions or only evident to us as we realize we are now guided by an internal authority heretofore unknown (Kegan, 2000). Kolb (1984) proposes that learning occurs when an event is followed by reflection, then critical discourse after which we modify our actions or choose a new experience. From this we form abstract concepts and generalizations that we then test by starting the process over again and again. Knowledge, then, “is created through transformation of experience” (p. 38). The recursive nature makes it “a transformational process” (p. 38). In regards to personal change, we are faced with an event which forces us to make a choice. Our choices determine future events which result in future choices. Through this process of choice-event-choice, we create our lives.

Literature Review

First and Second Wave Feminism

“At first glance, the metaphor of the wave seems to offer an alternative model for describing feminist generations” (Henry, 2003, p. 213). Baumgardner and Richards (2000) argue that each wave has, in essence, moved women closer to equality. The First Wave spans the period 1848 through the mid-1920s and is characterized by the fight for abolition, voting rights, and temperance (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). Second Wave feminism began in the 1960’s and focused on the Equal Rights Amendment, wage equity, gender analysis, sexism, and critiquing beauty culture (Heywood & Drake, 1997). It arose from two sources: political women working in the civil-rights and anti-war movements and white, middle-class women disenchanted with their lot in life (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). From these beginnings, the agenda broadened to “issues addressing the interconnections between oppressions based on gender, race, and class” (Pozner, 2003, p. 36). Shoemaker (1997) states the Second Wave “taught us that women could be strong and that they could use their strength to challenge patriarchal power and to fight to overcome oppression” (p. 116).

Third Wave Feminism

Often, Third Wave feminism is juxtaposed against the Second Wave. Third Wave feminists claim a distinct historical place. They came of age during the feminist “backlash” of the Reagan-Bush years (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). Their identity was shaped by “technology, global capitalism, multiple models of sexuality, changing national demographics, and declining economic vitality” (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003, p. 14). Their feminist identity is more a result of academic exposure than personal experience. They critique Second Wave feminism as being repressive and restrictive (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003). They build on the diversity of the latter part of the Second Wave, but emphasize the “paradox, conflict, multiplicity, and messiness” (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003, p. 16) of their identities. Their experience is as “multiracial, multi-ethnic, and multi-issued” (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003, p. 17). Reed (1997) argues that Third Wave feminists embrace contradiction, “there is no one right way to be; no role, no model…no utopic vision of the perfectly egalitarian society or the fully realized individual” (p. 124). Although Third Wave “rejects traditional – or stereotypical – understandings of feminism and as such is antithetical or oppositional to its supposed predecessor, the Second Wave,…[it] aligns itself with Second Wave strategies for recognizing and addressing structural inequality” (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003, p. 5). Third Wave feminists embrace individual experience and politicize personal stories. Third Wave activism is a response to the feeling of homogeneity (Wong, 2003).

Feminists Between the Waves

Missing from the analogy of Second and Third Waves are the women coming of age between the two. Henry (2003) argues “the emergence of feminism’s ‘third wave’ seems to profoundly alter our use of the metaphor of the wave” (p. 213). Whereas First and Second Waves denote a period of feminism that has passed, young feminists use the term Third Wave “in order to herald the future” (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000, p. 69). These waves are based on a thirty-year model indicating when a particular generation came of age: Second Wave in the 1960’s; Third Wave
in the 1990’s (Henry, 2003). This model ignores those women who came of age between the Second and Third waves. Too old to be considered in the Third Wave, they are “subsumed under the category Second Wave” (Henry, 2003, p. 214). Because they do not historically identify with either generation, their voices are virtually silenced.

Consciousness Raising Groups

“Early second wave feminists carried the weight of establishing a discourse, a burden that shaped their focus on reclaiming women’s identities, re-searching histories, validating perceptions, and creating forums for emerging voices” (Reed, 1997, p. 122). One such forum was consciousness-raising groups, which developed in the 1960s and 1970s. Consciousness-raising (CR) groups gave women a space in which to discuss their experiences and feelings. They discovered that in many cases individual problems were shared by others in the group and “were, in fact, part of a larger system of sexist practices” (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003, p. 5). Baumgardner and Richards (2000) state that as women listened to each other’s stories in CR groups, they began to understand they had more in common than not. Siegel (1997) argues that the CR groups provided “a space in which the isolated ‘I’ could, by means of instantaneous and unqualified identification, collapse into a collective, rescuing, rebellious ‘we’” (p. 57). Bierema (2003) argues that a feminist consciousness can result from a variety of environments, “including formal learning, informal and experiential, critical reflection and connected knowing” (p. 5-6). She states that “connected learning – where women come together and compare experiences – is pivotal” (p. 6). When women share stories, they may come to recognize their assumptions regarding equality may be “faulty.” Awareness facilitates the understanding of how different groups are privileged and rewarded in society, generally along gender lines.

Method

Reissman (1993) argues that “because [narrative analysis] gives prominence to human agency and imagination, it is well suited to studies of subjectivity and identity” (p. 5). It allows researchers to hear, record, and interpret the “voice” of people who may not find an audience otherwise. This approach makes explicit the relationship between the teller and the listener. This relationship is important in that it includes the aspects of context: time, race, class, gender, social class, etc. Therefore, I used narrative analysis to examine the data and engaged in critical self-reflection throughout in an attempt to keep the process transparent. Potential participants in enclaves for this study came from non-random (targeted) search methodologies including snowball techniques. I used personal contacts for recommendations of women who belong to one or more women’s groups. I narrowed the list to seven participants, who agreed to be interviewed. I developed a semi-structured questionnaire and conducted face to face interviews with participants that lasted approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours each. Interviews took place in participant’s homes or meeting rooms with public access. I first read transcribed interviews for an overview of the response. I then re-transcribed the interviews for words and other “striking features” (Reissman, 1993, p. 56), re-read these and constructed life narratives for each participant (Polkinghorne, 1995). I then examined the details of each narrative for the overall structure of the narrative and its organization, development, and meaning. Next, I looked for “underlying propositions” of things “taken for granted between listener and speaker” (Reissman, 1993, p. 61). I re-read the narratives and used the constant comparative method to analyze transcripts and observations recorded in field notes. I then assigned first-level codes and looked for emerging themes. Within these themes, I categorized the data. This consisted of comparing data from each interview with other segments in the same or different interviews. Similarities and differences across the data emerged. Codes and categories were then compared with each other. Polkinghorne (1995) states the subject matter of narratives is human action, expressed as “individual protagonists engaged in an ordered transformation from an initial situation to a terminal situation” (p. 7). The themes that emerged from the data were transformational learning as a process, identity changes, and an emerging feminist consciousness.

Findings

Findings in this study suggest that enclaves provide a safe context for women in which they are able to communicate in an open, often challenging way. The combination of context and communication style facilitates the formation of deep friendship bonds characterized by trust, accountability, and validation. It is through these friendship bonds that women come to a group identity, a more “authentic” personal identity, and a feminist consciousness. Participants in this study were females ranging in age from their early 30’s to late 60’s. Six were white and two were African American. All self-identified as middle class. Most had at least some college education. Two had earned doctorates. Their occupations included homemaker, teacher, college instructor, government worker, student, and business owner. They participated in a wide variety of enclaves: online children’s writers, romance writers, informal Christian friendships, Christian Sunday School class, formal business organization, formal mentoring, and a therapy group. Membership in the enclaves was between five to eight.
women. The members of each enclave also ranged in age between 30 and 70 years old, with the majority being between 40 and 50. Members typically reflected the race of the participants of this study, but not necessarily the educational level, socioeconomic class, marital status, sexual identity or occupation.

**Transformational Learning as a Process**

These women’s stories suggest they underwent a process of transformational learning. While each story is unique and indicative of that woman’s personal experience, as a collective the stories provide evidence that context and communication are significant factors in transformational learning. The establishment of a safe context allows an open communication style. Participants described the environment of the enclave as “safe,” “secure,” “non-threatening,” “open,” “accepting,” and “sacred.” In some enclaves, this type of environment was consciously created. In others, the context emerged. This type of environment appears to be the foundation for allowing women the freedom to share openly. The communication style of the participants appears to evolve from one that initially balances positive and negative comments to one that critiques and challenges the members. As controversial topics are introduced into the group they may, as a group, decide something is too polarizing and agree not to discuss them. On the other hand, they may decide there is a greater need to discuss something and over-ride objections. In time, members communicate in a “no-holes-barred” way that encourages self-reflection and forges strong friendship ties. Lindsey says the women in her writers group who have been together for five years often take each other to task, “We’re tired of people saying how they are going to write a book some day or are going to do this or do that. We don’t have those conversations.” So they argue, have “very controversial conversations”, disagree and “challenge” each other in ways that make them better writers. The combination of a safe context and open communication appears to be the foundation for establishing trust and facilitate the formation of deep friendship ties characterized by accountability and validation. The deepening levels of trust appear to result from periodic “tests” of being held accountable and having their experiences and feelings validated. Tests of accountability can also be an explicit part of an enclave. Each member in Ellen’s mentoring group sign a covenant indicating they are committing to being held accountable to each other in all areas of their lives. When one member made a chastity vow, Ellen says, “I was not going to stand by and watch her lose.” When the woman began having problems keeping her vow, Ellen told her, “Over my dead body will I allow you to compromise.” Subsequently, Ellen “found out that [the woman cried]…because she never knew anyone loved her enough,…to come and stand that firmly.” Validation may take the form of feeling accepted for who you are, having your voice heard or of confirming feelings about experiences. Dianna’s group validates each one as a person, “You can’t go into the room without getting hugged, you know just confirmation of ‘you are a good person’ and ‘I’m glad to know you.” Andrea says it is through listening to each other and “speaking her truth” she is feels validated, “We are given permission, as if permission is needed, to be who we are as women and to recognize our needs and…just to be.” These friendship ties encourage a group identity, which in the case of these women’s experiences surfaced a more authentic self-identity. The friendship ties are also instrumental in encouraging a feminist consciousness.

**Group Identity**

Each woman initially became involved with an enclave for practical purposes and they continued for personal reasons. Participants spoke of being “a sorority of sisters,” of being a “community,” of having “connectedness,” and being part of a group of women. Ellen says the women in her enclave give her the support of a family and a community, “They’ve been that constant support for me….They’re…this community, powerful community.” Lindsey says, “No matter what else falls away in our lives, we could be divorced, jobless, homeless, they would still be there.” Andrea feels a “connectedness…through care and concern for each other.” This connectedness allows them to “get a huge amount of insight into ourselves.” She is developing an awareness and appreciation for them as individuals and as a group, “It’s like a proud parent or something. I am watching the progress they are each making and then realizing at the same time we are all making progress.”

**Self-Identity**

For these participants, the identity of being part of a group surfaced a more authentic self-identity. This self-identity appears to result from the perception of being able to more fully express who they are. The practical reasons for joining the group indicate the women held this activity as valuable; however, many of them did not fully identify the activity as part of their personality until they had been held accountable for their actions and had their experiences validated. The group appears to allow the women a space in which she develops a better understanding of her desires through self-expression. This, in turn, translates into a more authentic expression of her identity. This identity is also more explicitly woman-identified. Janey says she has become a better writer because the group has given her the support to critically examine her work and she no longer hides this part of her life. She has taken
writing into her identity. Lindsey says being part of the group has confirmed her value as a writer, “I’m not just a writer. I’m a writer. I’m not just another one out there that nobody wants…[I] understand the value of what I have to say [by] having other people say, ‘Yes, that is of value and it will help people.’” Andrea believes she is “a better person because of [the women in her enclave]…Every part of who I am is the sum total of all these women.” The feeling of being part of a group and being able to more fully express oneself appears to raise the feminist consciousness of the participants in this study.

Feminist Consciousness

While findings do not indicate these women developed a characteristically Third Wave feminist identity, they do not indicate these women exhibit a Second Wave identity either. Based on the literature, the participants in this study are women coming of age between the generational waves. Their chronological age may assign them to being part of Second Wave feminism or Third Wave feminism, but for reasons not examined in this study, these women do not identify with either. Findings do suggest, however, the women have experienced a change in meaning perspective based on their participation in an enclave. Lana, who is in her late 40’s, thought women were “catty” and “backstabbing.” Her prior experiences reinforced this view. In creating a networking group in which women supported each other she says she has “gone from just kind of believing this could be done [although] it hadn’t been put to the test, to seeing it put to the test and knowing…it wouldn’t take any time for it to grow.” Andrea, who is in her early 30’s, says, “I was never one to have a bunch of girlfriends growing up because I didn’t like cheerleaders and I didn’t like sleepovers and I didn’t like wearing makeup. I associated more to athletics and boys.” She believed “boys were more…loyal. I felt like they had my back.” Girls, on the other hand, “we have a tendency to kind of run our mouths. We forget what to share and what not to share.” Now she says the women in her enclave “have that foundation of trust. I don’t have to explain [things to them]. You can just say it and not have to go through the whole thing.”

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that transformational learning does occur as women participate in enclaves. This learning is a process based on having a safe context in which women are able to communicate in an open way. The combination of context and communication facilitates the formation of friendship ties characterized by trust, accountability and validation. Friendship ties assist in the formation of a group identity, which for these participants surfaced a more authentic self-identity. Group and self-identity appear to be connected to participants becoming woman-identified, which encourages a feminist consciousness.

The primary areas of change in meaning perspective for these women were in identity development and feminist consciousness. These changes were more the result of a process over time than a “disorienting dilemma” (Mezirow, 1991). Kolb (1984) argues that a cycle of choice-event-choice is how we create our lives. Through context and communication, these women established the bounds of their relationships. While they began participating due to practical reasons, they continued for personal reasons. They established increasing levels of trust as they tested personal accountability and experienced feelings of validation. Throughout this process, they chose to continue participating in the group and to share their stories with the other women in the group. They also chose to adopt a group identity. This group identity allowed a more authentic self-identity to emerge as they felt more confident in fully expressing themselves. A safe context, open communication, and strong friendship ties appear to encourage transformational learning. More research is needed to determine how these may be connected.

Although not a strictly Third Wave feminism, the participants in this study described women using feminist terminology. Their feminism is situated between the waves. It is “a sorority of sisters” that wants to be like a man only in terms of success. It insists there must be a “me” before there can be an “us.” It is aware that women can be “catty,” but celebrates that women can be a “community.” These women did not come to feminism from identifying with the successes of Second Wave feminism or having their identities accepted by the Third Wave. Their feminist consciousness arose from identifying with women in an enclave who individually and collectively supported each one’s authentic self-expression. The seemingly arbitrary juxtaposition of Second and Third Wave feminism renders invisible not only these women, but others caught between the waves. Therefore, the definitional boundary of feminism needs to expand until all women feel supported by, cared for, and concerned about women. As Ellen says, “This is not just about me. Lives are affected…The first step is having the humility to understand that and how powerful, how dangerous, how sacred, and how precious it is.”
References


Developing Criticality and Authenticity as a Transformative Process

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**Abstract:** In this study, we explored how educators develop authenticity in their teaching over time and with experience and to relate this developmental process to critical reflection and transformative learning. Twenty-two faculty from a variety of disciplines participated in a three-year study in which they participated in interviews, had their teaching observed and discussed, and joined with others in focus groups. We found five facets of authenticity: self-awareness, awareness of others, relationships, awareness of context, and critical reflection. Each facet of authenticity showed a developmental progression based on educators’ experience.

In this study, we explored how educators develop authenticity in their teaching over time and with experience. We were interested in if and how becoming authentic occurred through critical reflection on practice and the extent to which it could be described as a transformative process. Elsewhere I have linked individuation, authenticity, and transformation conceptually (Cranton & Roy, 2003); the research I report on here seems to validate those connections.

Two separate but complementary ways of thinking about transformative learning form the foundation for the research. First, Mezirow’s (2000) description of transformation as a process of becoming critically reflective of those beliefs that have become problematic, reframing the problem, and justifying a new perspective through discourse gives us insight into how educators develop their practice. Mezirow adds that “imagination is central to understanding the unknown” and “the more reflective and open we are to the perspectives of others, the richer our imagination of alternative contexts for understanding will be” (p. 20). Second, Jung’s concept of individuation—the process of differentiation and integration in order to become conscious of one’s unique psychological make-up (Sharp, 2001)—helps us to see how educators distinguish themselves from the social norms of their profession, find their own style and philosophy of practice, and bring their sense of self into their practice.

Teachers in adult and higher education most often have not engaged in any formal or systematic teacher education such that their counterparts in schools receive. They tend to come to the educator role with a good knowledge of a content and skill area and an understanding of teaching based on their own experiences as learners. New adult and higher education educators initially find their place in the teaching world by modeling themselves after favorite teachers and assimilating the social norms of their workplace and peers. There is a period of socialization and professionalization. Professional development that focuses on teaching techniques is welcomed.

As educators continue to develop, a variety of things can happen: they may find the strategies they use to be repetitive and boring; they may realize that they are not entirely comfortable with the style they borrowed from a colleague; they may want to bring more of their own experiences and values into their teaching; they may object to some of the policies and procedures advocated by their colleagues or by the institution; they may feel a desire to create a different kind of relationship with their students. It is here, I think, that we see the potential for professional development as transformative learning (Cranton, 1996) and the role of individuation in educators creating a unique self separate from but integrated with the collective. As Maxine Greene writes, “It is actually through the process of effecting transformations that the human self is created and re-created” (1988, p. 21).

This is where I see developing criticality and authenticity as a transformative process. As educators question the standards of practice they formerly adopted from their own teachers or their peers, they engage in critical self-reflection on what and how they teach, and they question the premises of their practice. In doing so, they become more authentic—truer to their own values and beliefs—while coming to understand where and how they fit within the collective of educators.

**Methodology**

As we were working in an area where little theory has been developed, we chose a grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory research uses inductive fieldwork rather than deductive approaches and the primary outcome is a set of categories along with a description of the properties of those
categories. Tentative hypotheses are then formulated regarding the relationships among categories and properties.

Twenty-three faculty from three university campuses in the Maritime provinces of Canada participated in the study over the course of three years. One individual dropped out of the study early on due to illness. The remaining 22 faculty were fully involved in the project for three years. Participants were selected primarily through nominations from colleagues and administrators. We described the research project and asked people to suggest names of authentic teachers they knew. We specifically asked for new faculty and experienced faculty. Authenticity was not defined at this point, since we wanted to work out the meaning of the concept from the participants’ perspectives. Most participants saw themselves as authentic teachers, but many also had questions about the meaning of authenticity and were unsure of the extent to which they acted authentically.

Participants came from the following disciplines: administration (business), philosophy, computer science, education, forestry, kinesiology, nursing, English, biology, psychology, botany, classics, and economics. There were 13 women and 9 men. We had hoped to have about one-half of the participants be new faculty, but it proved difficult to find new faculty who felt they had the time to devote to the project. Seven participants were new faculty in their first or second year of teaching, though some of these individuals had prior part-time experience, and 15 were experienced teachers. Of the 15 experienced faculty members, three could be considered senior scholars, and five were award winning teachers. Our inquiry team was comprised of three adult educators and three graduate students. The graduate assistants were working toward M.Ed. degrees in adult education.

Our goal was to interview each participant once per academic term for the first two years (a total of four interviews) and to conduct at least one observation of teaching per year. For the most part other than a few participants who took a sabbatical leave during the project, we were able to follow this schedule. In the third year, we brought tentative results back to faculty and held focus group discussions with four to six faculty members being involved in each focus group.

All interviews were conducted by at least two members of the research team, most often one researcher and one graduate assistant. The interviews were held in faculty member’s offices, were tape recorded, and tended to last between 1 and 1½ hours. The initial interview with each faculty member focused on the individual’s story of how he or she came to be a teacher, what he or she liked and disliked about teaching, and some specific questions which we thought might be related to authenticity at that time (for example, how people bring themselves into the classroom, how they relate to students, how they perceive institutional constraints to teaching). The interviews varied greatly in content; we strived to maintain an informal conversational style, and therefore, the faculty members’ interests led the dialogue in different directions. In subsequent interviews with each individual, we worked with very general guidelines.

We observed each person’s teaching at least twice. We took extensive notes on the happenings in the class. This included such things as a description of the physical facilities, how the teacher placed himself or herself in the room, details as to the teaching methods used, the degree of interaction with students, the nature of student questions and discussion, and any other observations that seemed relevant to us. The majority of the classes we observed were at the undergraduate level and in traditional face-to-face settings; however, we saw one graduate level seminar and two classes which used audioconferencing. Class sizes ranged from about 8 students to over 100, with a typical class size being around 35 or 40 students.

Focus groups were arranged in the first term of the third year of the project. There were five groups, each with four or five participants. Although some participants knew who some other people in the project were, there had been no organized interaction among individuals up until this time. The conversations were tape recorded and transcribed, and each meeting lasted between 1 and 1½ hours.

Results

We found five themes that comprehensively described authenticity as seen by the research participants:

- self-awareness
- awareness of the characteristics of learners
- relationships with learners
- awareness of the influence of context
- critical reflection related to self, learners, relationships, and context

Using a combination of a longitudinal interpretation (over the three years) and a comparison of inexperienced and experienced educators, we were able to construct a four-stage developmental model for each of the five facets of authenticity. These results are reported elsewhere (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004).
Here, I describe the development of criticality and authenticity as a transformative learning process. Critical self-reflection and critical reflection formed a general framework for the development of authenticity. Participants moved from a concrete black-and-white style of reflection on the details of their practice through to a complex, ambiguous critical analysis of the social expectations of their institutions and the larger community regarding the meaning of teaching and learning.

We were able to develop a four stage developmental continuum of criticality in relation to becoming more authentic in teaching. At the first stage, which we called beginning authenticity, faculty engaged in critical reflection on specific teaching skills. They asked, for example, “Am I talking too fast?” “How can I get students to write better essays?” and “How can I improve attendance in my lectures?” When we observed their classrooms, the educators would ask us for feedback on the techniques of their teaching—their use of Powerpoint or their skill at responding to questions. A quote from a participant illustrates this:

I still find more disappointing term papers than I would like, and that may be unavoidable, you know, you do your best. What I’ve recently started doing is have them write outlines for me, that’s the only way I could think of.

Another participant reflects on his own teachers and then goes on to question his ability to ask good questions in class.

If I look back on my own professors and see, well, which ones were interesting. I like to tell stories… Sometimes I think my questions are obvious, but then I find out they really are not because my expectations are higher.

At the second stage of development, we saw a subtle shift to critical reflection and critical self-reflection on teaching in a more general way (as opposed to examining specific skills and techniques as in the first stage). They were asking themselves, “How did my class go?” “How can I make my teaching better?” and “How am I growing as a teacher?” Here too, there was the beginning of a tendency to question departmental or institutional norms related to teaching. People wondered about the grading policies, grading on a curve, the use of student ratings to judge the quality of teaching, and the integration of field work and lectures. One participant says:

I would like to think that I’m always evolving and creating something new. So I think I want to constantly evolve and re-evaluate, and be flexible, but I’m not saying that I always am.

Another person questions how students see his teaching role:

… actually on the evaluations they have some one piece of paper where you could write comments. I always read them, and sometimes I say, well, they write that you act like a robot, and you have to think. Do you really act like a robot? You have to think about that.

At the third stage, critical reflection became more general again, focusing on broader issues than the classroom or departmental policies. Participants engaged in questioning of this research project, their perceptions of themselves as authentic, and the higher education system in general. They asked, “What does authenticity mean?” “How did I come to see teaching in this way?” “Am I authentic?” and “What can I do to change the system?” Here is one educator struggling with authenticity:

It [authenticity], what I want to say is that it is me as a teacher. Me as a teacher, and not somebody else as a teacher. But then I guess the follow up question to that would be, ‘well then who else would it be if it wasn’t you?’ … I love working with students. And it is trying to bring all that to them. And that’s pretty vague

Another participant engages in speculation about her reflection on her teaching:

Some of these things you don’t even think about until somebody asks you. Some of these questions. Yeah, I never even thought about that. I do a lot of thinking about my teaching… You know, sometimes it takes that outside observer or outside individual. That spark. You’re like, ‘oh I never even thought about that.’
At the fourth stage, which we called *mature authenticity*, faculty members were questioning the premises of their underlying conceptualization of self, other, relationships, and context. Mezirow (1991) sees premise reflection as being the most likely type of reflection to lead to transformative learning. We felt, and our research participants similarly felt that they were engaging in transformative learning about teaching. They asked “Why is it important to be authentic?” “What difference does what I do make?” “Why should I care what students think of me as a person?” In this illustrative quote, an experienced science faculty member reflects on the meaning of good teaching:

And now, I just sort of find this whole thing bizarre because I’m not sure what people think a good teacher is, but I’m constantly being treated, in this setting, as if I know something about teaching, and I really don’t. I mean, my definition is, if I’m a good teacher, my students go away feeling inspired and wanting to learn more without me. I mean, that would be my definition.

And a senior English speculates on the nature of departmental norms:

…those kind of norms [departmental] are very contagious because they are never focal in a conversation, they are assumptions.

It makes sense that new teachers concern themselves with the techniques of teaching. The first thing they need do is to become a member of the collective of university teachers and acquire the skills that go with that position. It is only over time and with experience that they are then able to decide how they are different from and also the same as that collective. At this point, they consider who they are as a person, how their values and beliefs are a part of the social world of academia or not a part, and define themselves in relation to that social world. Rather than adopting the persona of professor, they find an authentic way of living within that role. They live a critical life as a teacher. They question rather than run with the herd. In transformative learning language, faculty members who come to this stage of development have developed habits of mind that are more open, permeable, and better justified. In the language of individuation, they have differentiated their sense of self from the collective. And in terms of authenticity, they have come to be able to express their genuine self in their community of practice.

Discussion

Critical reflection is the central process in transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000, 2003), and it is likely that much of our important learning about teaching is transformative in nature (Cranton, 1996). Transformative learning is a process by which previously uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs, values, and perspectives are questioned and thereby become more open, permeable, and better validated (Mezirow, 2000). In instrumental learning, Mezirow suggests, “we can transform our points of view by becoming critically reflective of assumptions supporting the content and/or process of problem solving” (p. 20). The educator who worries about the quality of student essays and the nature of his questioning skill is working in this area. We may also transform our habits of mind by questioning our premises in defining the problem. As participants struggle to understand the norms of their department or institution and how they do or do not fit into those norms, or as they question the nature of authentic teaching itself, they are engaging in premise reflection.

Jarvis (1992) proposes that authenticity is linked with reflective learning. People need to develop as autonomous and rational individuals within their social context. When people’s actions are “controlled by others and their performance is repetitive and ritualistic” (pp. 115-116), they are inauthentic. It may be the case that educators initially feel controlled by others as they learn about their setting and their role. We asked our participants if tenure was an influence on their ability to become authentic, but this did not seem to be an issue in most people’s minds. Nevertheless, the newer and younger faculty members were more hesitant about deviating from perceived social norms in their context.

We question how we are different from the community and live accordingly; we do not do something just because it is the way others behave or believe what others believe without considering whether it is true for us. Heidegger (1962) sees authenticity as involving critical participation in life. This is a good way of understanding authenticity—we need to know who we are and what we believe and then act on that. However, this does not mean that we make such decisions in isolation. Authenticity involves knowing and understanding the collective and
carefully, critically determining how we are different from and the same as that collective. Sharp (1995) suggests the first fruit of consciously developing as an authentic person is the “segregation of the individual from the undifferentiated and unconscious herd” (p. 48). Thinking along parallel lines, Freire (1972) argues that authenticity comes through having a critical knowledge of the context within which we work and seeing the principal contradictions of that society. To be authentic, the educator is bold, dares to take risks, and recognizes that he or she will not always win over the people.

When faculty are focused on concrete rules about teaching, or when they are acting from a teaching persona and have socially constructed views about the roles of teacher and student, reflection will be, naturally enough, on those perspectives. As the foundations for practice become more complex and as the sense of Self becomes better integrated into teaching, reflection becomes more complex as well. When people start critically questioning why they are living and teaching by rules, they have moved into premise reflection, transformative learning is possible, openness and complexity of perspectives increases, and there is room for authenticity.

With each step of the journey, an individual becomes more aware of who he or she is as apart from the collective, uncritically assimilated whole of humanity. According to transformative learning theory, we become more open to alternatives as we root out the habits of mind we have acquired in our past, and our views of the world become more open and better justified. In the process of individuation, we separate ourselves from the herd—we come to know how we are different from and simultaneously the same as others.

References
Integrating Theoretical Perspectives Through Online Dialogue

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Abstract: In this project, we sought to explore the use of online dialogue within a graduate-level course as a medium for facilitating the understanding and integration of different theoretical perspectives in transformative learning. We use our experiences to demonstrate how writers and theorists in the area of transformative learning can work toward a more holistic theoretical perspective.

Over 30 years ago, Mezirow suggested to the adult learning community the idea of perspective transformation. With this idea, he drew critical attention to the ways in which adult learners come to frame, understand, and possibly change their fundamental ways of understanding themselves and their relationship to the world. This perspective is grounded largely in a cognitive, rational worldview, in which people reflectively build a way of seeing the world and develop values, beliefs, and assumptions that determine their behaviour. When people critically examine their habitual expectations, revise them, and act on the revised point of view, transformative learning occurs. Transformative learning leads to perspectives that are more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative of experience (Mezirow, 2000).

Mezirow’s perspective on transformative learning has spurred a flurry of additional research, theory, and critique. Baumgartner (2001) uses Dirkx’s (1998) four-lens approach to understand transformative learning: a) Freire’s (1970) perspective, in which transformative learning aims for liberation from oppression and social justice; b) Mezirow’s (2000) concentration on rational thought and reflection; c) a developmental approach (Daloz, 1999), in which the process is conceptualized as more intuitive, holistic, and contextually based; and d) a form of deep learning that is linked to transpersonal and spiritual dynamics and processes (Dirkx, 2001, 2003; Tisdell & Tolliver, 2001).

While some of this writing casts these different perspectives as potentially competing, we believe they are actually uncovering the fundamental nature of adult learning and deep change. Mezirow (2000) himself suggests that transformative learning is a theory in progress, and this is nowhere more evident than in the proceedings of the International Transformative Learning Conferences. Consistent with the theme of the sixth conference, we focused on how two scholars and teachers with different views of transformative learning might engage each other and their students in a meaningful exploration, appreciation, and possible integration of these diverse views. The purpose of this study was to explore the use of this online dialogue as a means of fostering a more integrated understanding of transformative learning among two practitioners with initially quite different perspectives on both the meaning of this term and its intended outcomes.

Method

The context for this study was two graduate courses on transformative learning at two different institutions, for which of us at our respective institutions are responsible. One of us (Patricia) holds a more cognitive rational point of view, and the other (John) a more intuitive, imaginative perspective. In her earlier work, Patricia followed Mezirow’s approach to transformative learning with an emphasis on how adult educators can set up conditions in which learners engage in activities that encourage critical self-reflection and are potentially transformative (Cranton, 1994). In her more recent work, she integrates Jungian concepts such as individuation and attempts to be more inclusive of alternative perspectives (Cranton, 2000; Cranton & Roy, 2003).

John’s interests have focused on psychosocial and emotional dimensions of adult learning, with particular emphasis on unconscious dynamics in transformative learning. Working from Jungian (Boyd & Myer, 1989; Boyd, 1991) and post-Jungian perspectives (Dirkx, 2001), this work focuses on the role of imagination and emotion-laden images in transformative learning, and fostering a working relationship between unconscious content within one’s psyche and consciousness. For Dirkx, transformative learning is fundamentally soul work (Dirkx, 2003), an imaginative process in which ego consciousness and rational reflection play only a partial but not primary role.

In the Spring 2005 semester, through online technologies, we were guest facilitators in each other’s courses. For a period of approximately three days for each course, we engaged each other and our students in an online dialogue using the discussion board features of our respective institution’s course management systems. In addition to

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ourselves, students from both of our classes participated in both discussion forums. Verbatim transcriptions of the discussions were archived and subjected to categorical content analysis. Several themes were identified that suggest the ways in the dialogue process contributed to a deepening and further integration of our individual and collective understandings of transformative learning.

Findings
The content of the archived discussions suggests that, despite quite different initial perspectives on transformative learning, our dialogues revealed several themes around which our understanding of this process was deepened and enlarged. Through this process we saw more clearly how our understanding of this complex process is shaped by (1) our own inner journeys into and through the world, (2) the different ways we understanding ourselves, others, and our being-in-the-world, (3) the meaning we attribute to emotion-laden images, spirituality, and soul, and (4) our own deep desire to seek common ground in what often seems like a cacophony of meanings and understandings. All four of these features are filtered through a sense of self and other that, while profoundly personal and not necessarily grounded in a vision of radical social change, is none-the-less deeply embedded in concrete social and cultural contexts.

Here, we illustrate these themes and show how they demonstrate the process of interrogating and exploring our perspectives on transformative learning.

Inner Journeys
The dialogue process encouraged biographical reflection that tracked the development of our thinking within the context of our own careers. Questions from each other led us to think about how we came to where we are in our understanding of transformative learning and to connect our own stories to the theory itself. For example, John suggested:

I can trace my interest and ideas in this notion of transformative learning to a powerful interest I developed in the last few years of college in what I referred to at the time as "peace of mind." One of my favorite quotes from that era that I have kept to this day on a placard is from Gertrude Stein, "Build a quiet room in your mind," or something like that. This interest led to a study of existential psychology and to Zen Buddhism…. At this time I also began transcendental meditation and was reading in this area as well.

And in another dialogue, John mused about his inner journey:

While in grad school, I flirted with the work of Freud and Erikson (actually it was a little more than flirting). I think I found in Jungian psychology similar kinds of intellectual and emotional threads that I came to see in Zen Buddhism. In particular, I saw in this work a form of self-knowledge in which we ultimately transcend the self for engagement of a more powerful and engaging sense of our reality and being. This also belies my interest in the spiritual dimension of our journeys of self-knowledge and transformation.

In a different forum, Patricia responds to a question from John on the compatibility of the rational and depth psychology approaches to transformative learning, by telling something about her life:

They are quite different ways of understanding learning of course, but I think they can exist side by side. We need not try to determine “which is right.” I came to transformative learning theory through Mezirow’s writings. My 1994 book is a cognitive, rational approach. This is also my basic nature. In psychological type terminology, I have a preference for introverted thinking. I like to make order of the world and analyze it, and apply logic to understanding things around me. So I fell easily and naturally into this way of viewing transformative learning. However, I began to find it limiting. I became intrigued with John’s writing. I have long been interested in Jung, and I began to see connections between his concept of individuation and transformative learning. John’s work helped me to see this in a meaningful way…. I am now preparing the second edition of my 1994 book, and I am including this perspective on transformation alongside the rational. I’m not sure if I’ve answered “how compatible” I see these views to be. Instead, I seem to have told you the story of how my understanding of transformation has changed. But maybe the story responds to the question.
When John asks Patricia to comment on her ideas about individual differences and transformative learning, she responds by using her and John’s journeys as an illustration:

You come to self-knowledge through examining and integrating unconscious selves. I come to self-knowledge through a kind of reflection that is more analytical and more like what Mezirow describes. For some people, silence, meditation, prayer and stillness are conducive to this process. For others, it may need to be through discussion, dialogue, discourse… Your way is primarily through intuition—images, symbols, imagination. My way is primarily through logic. Both take us to a similar place, but the process is different.

People who write about theory tend to generalize from themselves or at least to see the process they are describing through their own perspective, which is based on how they think, feel, experience, and imagine. It is through dialogue such as this—where we make our personal journeys explicit—that we can come to integrate seemingly incompatible theoretical perspectives.

**Individual Differences**

The theme of “inner journeys” overlaps with the theme of “individual differences” in that our reflections on our own journeys demonstrated individual differences, but we also spoke of this in a more general way. We probed the assumptions reflected in each other’s thinking, such as when Patricia challenged John.

There is a question I have long meant to ask you. You write…that you find the rational approach to transformative learning limiting. If I understand your writing as you intend it, I think you are now saying that transformative learning is not rational. I know you know Jung’s work well, and I’m wondering how this fits with Jung’s model of psychological type? Isn’t it possible that for some people, transformative learning is entirely rational, a very logical thinking process, and for other people an intuitive, imaginative process, and for still other people a relational, affective process?

John considers the idea:

I have found your attention to psychological type theory in transformative learning to be evocative and stimulating… For some reason, I have been reluctant to fully embrace the idea of type, even though I firmly believe that individual differences are quite important in adult learning. Your work on this subject has nudged me closer to rethinking my own work in light of type theory.

And in another place in the dialogue, he deeply questions it:

I don’t disagree with anything you say here. I find myself in total agreement with the way you are thinking about transformative learning and individual differences…. Yet, I can’t help feeling that there is more to it than this. I am not at all sure I can fully articulate my thinking here, but let me try… If I am understanding you correctly, you seem to suggest that these differing ways of thinking about the ends of transformation and the means by which to realize these ends reflects, in part, our differing psychological types. But here is where I start to be troubled by this way of thinking. Let’s take, for example, a Jungian or post-Jungian perspective to transformation. The assumption here is that we go through much of our lives blindly and unconsciously, that much of thinking, feeling, and acting arises from an unconscious context of which many of us are dimly aware, if at all. Things like our shadow, various complexes like the mother complex, authority complex, and inferiority complex (something I know more than a little about, by the way), continue to exert their influence on our conscious lives, causing us to do things which may not be entirely helpful to realization of our true or authentic selves…. To me, this is not an introvert/extravert problem, or an intuitive/sensing problem, or a thinking/feeling problem. That is, I have trouble seeing these issues as arising from our particular psychological types. It seems we all have difficulties with unconscious forces, in various ways.

Patricia responds with:

John, thank you for your wonderfully insightful response to my message… I came into understanding Jung through psychological type and have only recently gone beyond that in my reading and thinking. I rely on
your writing to develop my thinking here, which you continue to do. I’m not sure that I am saying that the “ends” of transformative learning are different for people with different psychological type preferences, but rather I am arguing that the process is different. Jung himself was intuitive, and his writing represents that. Yes, we all have issues with unconscious forces, and I agree that it is not an extravert/introvert, thinking/feeling or sensing/intuition “problem.” The issues don’t “arise from” our psychological preferences, but the way we deal with them varies dependent on our preferences. I simply cannot respond in the way you do. And you cannot respond in the way I do.

The discussion of individual differences was extensive, particularly when Patricia participated in John’s course as a guest. In addition to the exchanges between us, which are represented in part here, students provided examples from their experiences and challenged us as to how our ideas could be made relevant to practice.

Images, Spirituality, and Soul

There was as much discussion of images, imagination, spirituality, soul, and emotions as there was of individual differences. These themes, of course, reflect our individual approaches to transformative learning theory. What is interesting is how we worked to understand each other and integrate each other’s ideas into our thinking (a process we highlight in the next theme). John clearly expressed this here:

I am interested in that aspect of transformative or deep learning that reflects the role of the imagination and emotions. I believe that these two, inter-related dimensions of our being play a key role in our search for meaning in the world… It is hard to step into the shoes of persons whose type might predispose them more to rational, reflective activity. Yet… they too must deal with the irrational, imaginative and emotional dimensions of the journey of the Self… [W]hat is captain of the ship is not the conscious rational ego, but the soul. Transformation is not a heroic journey but more like muddling through Dante’s inferno.

In response to a question from a student, John writes:

This is the core of the imaginal method. In the mythopoetic perspective to transformative learning that I write about, the psyche manifests itself in the form of fantasy-images. Jung considered these images to be the primary data of the psyche… Our dreams are explicit manifestations of these fantasy images. For example, one night I dreamed about being in an elevator which had, at its center, a deep dark hole. As the elevator came to a stop and I proceeded to get off at my stop, I almost inadvertently fell into this hole. It was a brief but frightening episode in my dream. I might think about this dark hole as a fantasy image. As such, it is a messenger of the soul, a way in which the psyche seeks to give expression to aspects of itself… In my writing, I suggest that a similar process can be used to engage images that arise within the formal learning setting, such as a smothering group, a teacher who is perceived to be depriving students of structure or information, or peers who seem to take on the image of one or more of our siblings. These kinds of images always have powerful emotions associated with them, and they are generally regarded as, in part, manifestations of archetypal content of the psyche.

This conversation evolved into a discussion of silence and “stillness” in transformative learning and from there to spirit and soul, where John and Patricia worked to understand each other’s perspectives. In one example, John writes:

Approaches that use stillness or quiet, such as eastern meditation practices, or centering prayer here in the West, seem to be aiming at something a little different than Jungian and post-Jungian practices of transformative learning. Hillman and others have made the distinction between soul and spirit. These former practices, they would argue seem to be animated by spirit, by a lifting up, a kind of ascension or rising above the toils and troubles of everyday life… Soul work, as opposed to spirit work, is about the immediate, the earthy, the concrete, the messiness of everyday life… I think it would be really interesting to explore the role of silence in soul work.

And Patricia responds:
John, I understand the distinction between spirit and soul, and I see that stillness is associated with spiritual practices such as prayer and meditation which are intended to “lift us above the toils and troubles of everyday life,” as you put it. But why could this not also be potentially transformative?

John elaborates:

I didn’t mean to imply that more spirit-oriented practices were not or could not foster transformative learning. Rather I was suggesting that the focus of the work seems different. Silence is a significant part of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, and I think that this work can be potentially transformative. But the work or practice seems different than having conversations with the little people that populate my psyche…

Throughout this dialogue, from which we have chosen limited but hopefully representative quotes, John explains his point of view and Patricia tries to understand and incorporate John’s perspective into her understanding of transformative learning theory.

Creating a Common Ground

Our original intent in inviting each other to participate in our courses was to give our students an alternative point of view and an opportunity to talk to the author of some of their readings. We did not set out to create a common ground in our own views, but our dialogue led to this. As quoted earlier, Patricia asks John to elaborate on his view that rationality is limiting in transformative learning, and she connects that to psychological type theory.

John responds by acknowledging psychological type theory, while also pointing out how he finds it limiting. John tries to create common ground:

Now it may very well be that Jack [Mezirow] and I have profoundly different perspectives on transformation because of our types. I don’t know this for a fact, but I suspect we are different on a couple of important dimensions (I suspect we are both introverted). It is here, because of my lack of depth in type theory, that I find myself struggling a bit with your question. From a Jungian perspective, however, transformation involves establishing a dialogue between our conscious selves (the ego) and the unconscious aspects of the psyche…. So being the introverted intuitive feeling perceiver that I am, it is hard to step into the shoes of persons whose type might predispose themselves more to rationale, reflective activity. Yet, I have to believe that the processes of individuation are as real for them as they are for me, and thus they too must deal with the irrational, imaginative, and emotional dimensions of the journey of the Self.

And Patricia continues to find common ground:

This is a reassuring (and comprehensive) reply. Thank you. I think in people’s needs to dichotomize and categorize, they have placed you and Jack [Mezirow] as opposing forces, imagination and intuition versus rational thought, and this is unfortunate. As you know from my work with Merv [Roy] and the article we published in the Journal of Transformative Education, I also believe that imagination, emotion, and reason all play a role in transformative learning and exist side by side in us.

We bring in our personal experience to make connections. In response to one of John’s comments, Patricia writes:

John, would this explain why in my photography, I cannot let my ‘mind’ be involved? I’m not sure how to express this, but when I am making photographs, I have to let go of logic and reason (which is hard for me to do) and let something else take over to find the images.

And John answers:

Let me think on this some. I know exactly, however, what you are talking about, or at least it resonates with me quite strongly. I have a similar experience when I am trying to write. The harder I try to think about what I am writing, the more difficult it becomes for me to actually say what I want to say. When I back off from trying so hard, let myself play and free up myself from my own self-censor, then usually I am more creative, productive, and the work and writing is more satisfying.
We asked many questions of each other and sincerely listened to each other’s responses. There was a genuine interest in each other’s views and a respectful consideration of the other. Patricia asked:

I struggle to understand all of the ‘post’ movements, I must admit. I enjoy Thomas Moore and James Hillman, and I wonder why they are considered ‘post-Jungian.’

To which John responded:

This question actually came up in class last night as well. I frequently refer to neo-Freudians and neo-Jungians and post-Jungians. I am not sure I fully understand this either. Hillman, Moore, and Andrew Samuels represent theoretical traditions that, while holding on to some of the basic tenets of Jungian psychology, significantly depart from Jung’s original ideas. For example, many post-Jungians seem to make use of and incorporate into their Jungian ideas neo-Freudian ideas, like object relations theory or pre-oedipal theory…

And Patricia comments:

Thanks, John. That’s very helpful. I wonder if we do a disservice by classifying? But no, I can see the usefulness of the distinctions on the individual and the cultural psyche. And the emphasis on wholeness versus plurality.

Global and Cultural Perspectives

As we reflected on these various points of view, it was evident that our evolving understanding of transformative learning was deeply embedded in global and cultural perspectives. In part, this topic arose as a result of student comments and questions, as it did in the following quote from Patricia’s participation in John’s course:

… The interest in self-knowledge and growth and freedom from oppression is Habermas's emancipatory knowledge. I do think this is a Western ideal. You raise a very good point about the confrontational and fearful representation of transformative learning in a lot of the literature. It probably feels confrontational when the learning is stimulated by encountering a perspective that is opposite to our own…

And, in the same discussion, but in response to another student:

I’m not sure about the generalization of Jung’s work to different cultures. John, what would you say? I doubt that it is possible to say that either psychological predispositions or national culture “come first” in influencing transformative learning. That would be like trying to take apart the threads of a rope to see which ones really make up the rope.

John comes in to clarify:

In developing his ideas, Jung visited several different cultures, although I am not sure he researched Asian cultures. I will have to check on this. But I am fairly certain he felt the ideas he was discussing were applicable across cultures and across time. In large part, the evidence for this claim is revealed in the mythologies of various cultures. Although the specific stories vary (e.g. Greek versus Roman myths), according to Jung, the archetypal core of the stories and myths remain the same.

In a different conversation, this time in Patricia’s course, John comments:

Jungian perspectives on transformation are, of course, all about culture. If Jung’s work is anything it is a kind of social and cultural psychology. It posits a deep and intimate relationship between the inner life of the individual and the outer world of the collective. So culture both mediates and reflects the work of individuation and transformation.

Neither of us focus explicitly on social or culture issues in our work, though John makes good connections to social and cultural issues through the Jungian perspective. Our dialogue would have benefited from the voice of someone who could have challenged us in this area.
Conclusion

Online dialogue provided the space and means for us to discover ways in which our theoretical perspectives were intertwined and supportive of each other. Characteristics of the dialogue that supported its integrative goal included: openness, respect for others’ points of view, genuine curiosity, playfulness, willingness to “listen,” and bringing in alternative ways of understanding the same concept. We, as well as our students, developed a more holistic understanding transformative learning. This dialogue underscored the need for developing theoretical perspectives that honor and give voice to multiplicity.

Our experiences suggest the power of dialogue as a means of supporting critical analysis, as well as playful, imaginative engagement, in a collaborative and appreciative manner, resulting in a deepening and integration of our individual and collective understandings. Conducted within a sense of community, inquiry, and wonder, these dialogical processes allow us to deeply engage ourselves in the theory, to at once connect deeply with who we are as persons and our own subjectivities, yet frame these understandings within a theoretical context that clearly extends beyond our own subjective realities to one that seeks to develop a more intersubjective understanding of our being-in-the-world. Our dialogue is at once serious and playful, analytical and imaginative, reflective and creative, light and dark. Through this process we can derive deeper understandings of transformative learning and the deep change implied, as well as our role as educators in this process.

Dialogical processes, such as face-to-face conversations, correspondence, or listservs and other electronic formats, among theorists and practitioners who hold seemingly different points of view provide contexts for listening carefully to each other and searching for common ground.

References


Transformative Learning About Teaching: The Role of Technology

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Abstract: It is our intent in this paper to explore how our habits of mind about teaching are challenged by technology and how these challenges lead us to transform our perspectives on teaching.

With the ever-increasing sophistication of technology and its use in teaching and learning, educators must continually adapt their way of being with learners, question their perspectives on teaching, and determine how they can best work in this new environment. In just a few years, we have seen various new technologies such as video conferencing, course management systems, blogs, wikis, and live web conferencing integrated in face-to-face and online course settings. Sometimes we do not realize that we are creating communities in a society that is largely driven by technology.

Purpose
It is our intent in this paper to explore how our habits of mind about teaching are challenged by technology and how these challenges lead us to transform our perspectives on teaching.

Our approach to transformative learning theory is based on an integration of Mezirow’s (2000, 2003) cognitive, rational perspective, Dirkx’s (2000, 2001) intuitive, imaginative conceptualization, and Belenky and Stanton’s (2000) understanding of relational and connected learning. One of us works in the area of instructional technology and the other in transformative learning. We both teach adult learners in an online environment in higher education. In this paper, we use our experience to illustrate our thesis that the use of technology can lead to transformed perspectives on teaching.

Background
In the cognitive, rational perspective, transformative learning is a process by which previously uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs, values, and perspectives are questioned and thereby become more open, permeable, and better validated (Mezirow, 2000). When our habits of mind are challenged by an event or information which is discrepant with what we believe, we are led to critical self-reflection and potentially to a revised way of seeing ourselves and the world around us. Discourse plays a central role in Mezirow’s understanding of transformative learning theory. Ideas and evidence from others help us to consider our own views in a new light. Transformative learning takes place when this process leads us to open up our frame of reference, discard a habit of mind, see alternatives, and thereby act differently in the world (Mezirow, 2000).

Mezirow defines at least six kinds of habits of mind, three of which are especially important to us here. Epistemic habits of mind relate to the way we come to know things and the way we use that knowledge. Sociolinguistic perspectives are the way we view social norms, culture, and how we use language. Psychological perspectives include our self-concept, personality, emotional responses, and our personal images and dreams.

In his extrarational perspective, Dirkx (2000) draws on the Jungian concept of individuation and integrates imagination, soul work, and spirituality to describe transformative learning. Jung ([1921]1971, p. 448) defines individuation as “the process by which individual beings are formed and differentiated; in particular, it is the development of the psychological individual as a being distinct from the general, collective psychology. Individuation, therefore, is a process of differentiation, having for its goal the development of the individual personality.” The individual learns to “stand on his own feet,” and “collective identities such as membership in an organization, support of ‘isms,’ and so on, interfere with the fulfillment of this task.

The journey is a complex one. According to Jung ([1921]1971), we develop a dialogue with our unconscious, come to better understand our shadow, become aware of our animus or anima (masculine or feminine soul), realize the influence of archetypes on the self, and start to see how we engage in projection. In working to understand the role of imagination in transformative learning, Dirkx (2000) argues that transformation is the stuff of ordinary, everyday occurrences much more than it is a “burning bush” phenomenon in which we use reason to “wrest knowledge from the throes of ignorance” (p. 247). Individuation, Dirkx suggests, is an ongoing psychic process that

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occurs in everyone whether we are conscious of it or not. When we participate in it consciously and imaginatively, we develop a deepened sense of self, an expansion of consciousness, and an engendering of soul.

The third perspective which we call upon here is that which focuses on relational learning. It is especially those theorists who are interested in gender differences in learning who emphasize relational or connected learning (Hayes & Flannery, 2000). Relational learning involves learning through nurturing and caring and by connecting with each other (Belenky & Stanton, 2000). Belenky and Stanton critique traditional transformative learning theory on this and related bases. They suggest that although Mezirow presumes relations of equality among participants in discourse, most human relationships are asymmetric. Dualistic thinking (male-female, thinking-feeling, public-private) serves to create hierarchies in which one pole of the dichotomy is prized and the other devalued. We must, the authors argue, replace dualistic categories with integrative thinking. Connected knowing is a process of suspending judgment and struggling to understand others’ points of view from their perspective.

Each of these three perspectives informs our discussion of how transformative learning about teaching can occur through working with technology.

Our Experience

The first narrative is Patricia’s. She describes how, as an adult educator with 25 years of experience in face-to-face settings, she entered into the online environment. She was skeptical but open to trying something new. She had no experience or training with the use of the software. But most importantly, she had to change the way she saw herself as a teacher. As an intuitive “reader” of the physical presence of people, she suddenly had only text on a screen to work with. As a person for whom relationships with learners was paramount in her practice, she needed to learn how to establish relationships through written dialogue. And as a teacher who valued the group process and the development of a learning community, she had to translate that into a new context. At the same time, she is a person who communicates well through the written word and a person who needs time to reflect and ponder, so in many ways, the new environment suited her nature.

The second narrative is Lin’s. She describes how a relatively new adult educator who has new media and technology background met her shadow in an experience with a new technology that placed her “front and center” with learners. In a live web conferencing environment, she found she was privileged in a way that was uncomfortable (only she could speak without indicating a desire to speak by the raising of hands) and she felt “shy and clumsy” in relying on her voice. For her, the format seemed to “combine the worst of both online and face-to-face teaching.” The experience highlights and helps her reflect on the power dynamics, and the favored teaching, learning and presentation styles that we take for granted in traditional classroom settings and in society in general.

Patricia’s Experience and Reflection

In 2000, when I first entered the online world, I had been teaching for 25 years in adult and higher education. Although I had somewhat of a rocky start, suffering from anxiety and a serious case of “imposter syndrome,” over the years I had developed my own teaching style and had become thoroughly comfortable and happy in my practice. My student ratings were always very high, and on two occasions my students nominated me for teaching awards, which I won. I was pleased with myself. I worked with small groups in intimate settings. My classes were collaborative, participatory, and student-centered. Participants made most of the decisions about the courses, including the topics to be explored, and they evaluated their own learning. I saw myself as a true facilitator. My face-to-face classes still run in this way, and I still experience the great joy of seeing people grow, develop, and take on responsibility for their own learning.

Prior to my first online teaching experience, I had taught one course using audio conferencing. This was an unmitigated disaster. A course manual “had to” be prepared in advance of my meeting the students (in retrospect, I imagine I could have objected to that), so participatory planning was out. But I never did manage to distinguish students’ voices; I didn’t feel that I could relate to the disembodied voices, and I had the uneasy feeling that students at the distant sites were “doing something else” while they had the mute button pressed. I resolved never to teach using this medium again.

Shortly after that, I went to a workshop on how to use WebCT. I sat through the almost meaningless demonstrations on how to set up “modules” of information and construct multiple choice examinations. The language was foreign to me and the strategies were of the kind I never used in my teaching. I was convinced that online teaching was for “others,” those others who presented information and then tested recall of that same information.

But then I was offered an opportunity and a challenge I could not resist. The folks at Teachers College, where I had been leading a face-to-face workshop on transformative learning, asked if I would give a course on transformative learning online. I was nervous and skeptical, but I thought there must be a way to do this that would
not be in conflict with my philosophy of practice. I also realized I could not simply reject something without trying it. Unfortunately, Teachers College was not my home base, so I did not have good access to technical support. While I was there for another purpose, I experienced an hour-long demonstration of another person’s course, but after that, home again, I was mostly on my own. Teachers College used Blackboard, and there was no one around to whom I could go for help. I’ll never forget the hours I spent staring at the mysterious screens that came up when I clicked on “Control Panel.” I did not even know how to “get things into” Blackboard. I wish I had known Lin then.

There was a day (it seems like it was an actual moment) when it suddenly fell into place. Even now, five years later, I can bring back that moment. It was like looking at one of those figure-ground drawings, where you cannot see the alternative figure, then you can see it, and you can no longer imagine how you couldn’t have seen it before. There were, and still are, many technical aspects of Blackboard I do not know, but I could set up my course.

With that giant boulder of an obstacle diminished, I set out to replicate my face-to-face style online. Students would choose the topics after an initial overview of transformative learning; there would be collaborative group work; I would facilitate discussions; people could do any learning project they liked; grading would be by self-evaluation. On the surface, this mostly worked, but there were deep differences between online teaching and face-to-face teaching, differences that led me to critically reflect on my practice in general and revise many of my assumptions about teaching.

First of all, I must say that I loved online teaching from the first moment the students appeared and the discussions started. Every day I went with great anticipation to the course site, and I still do. I now teach online using both WebCT and Blackboard, at least one and often two courses each semester. Although there were many aspects of my teaching I questioned as a result of my online experiences, I have chosen to focus on five of them here: relationships, how I see myself as a teacher, knowledge construction, social norms and expectations, and reflective practice.

My teaching has long been centered on relationships—both my relationship with learners and fostering relationships among learners. In the online environment, I had no physical contact with people, only the written words on the screen. At first, it seemed to be impossible to establish connections this way. I was used to relying on physical cues: facial expressions, bodily presence and expression, tone of voice, looking into the face and eyes of others. I came to realize that although it takes longer to get to know people, online relationships are just as deep and meaningful as face-to-face relationships. Somehow online relationships seem more “pure,” as we are not distracted by physical appearance, age, style of dress, or any of the other superficial cues by which we judge people we meet. A cognitive, emotional, and intuitive connection with the essence of the other is possible. I realize that for those individuals who rely on their senses, this is harder, but for me and many of my learners, it works very well. I was led to critically question the way I form relationships in face-to-face classes, especially my tendency to be influenced by physical appearance.

In a face-to-face class, I am fairly quiet. I tend to stay in the background. I never stand up or put myself at the center of the group in any physical way. I listen, I ask questions, I sometimes elaborate, and I provide resources and expertise as it is needed. Online, no one can see me listening. In order for people to even know I am there, I need to “speak.” Just this term, a student who had previously taken a face-to-face course with me and was now online with me told me how very different I was. I asked her how I was different, and she replied, “for one thing, you’re way more talkative, and another thing, you challenge us a lot more.” I was aware of being more “talkative,” as a way of being present, but I had to think about the comment on being challenging. I am usually described as being very supportive, and I have strived to become more (gently) challenging. I realized that in order to “speak” and be present, I would often ask questions on students’ postings. I tired of the clichéd “can you tell me more about that” and found myself asking critical questions of the content of the postings. Without quite realizing it, I was being more challenging and thereby encouraging students’ critical reflection. Again, this led me to question my way of being in the face-to-face classroom. Perhaps I should talk more, be more critical, and have a stronger presence.

In adult education, we all advocate the collaborative construction of knowledge, but I never really thought about this in any meaningful way until I started online teaching. In my face-to-face classes, I routinely used “activities” such as role playing, critical debates, simulations and games, and collages and just assumed that such activities led to the construction of knowledge. I am very inventive in coming up with such activities, and people have a lot of fun, but now I wonder what really happens. In the online environment, these things are hard, if not impossible, to do (at least for me with my still limited technical knowledge). Without being able to pull an activity out of my hat, I needed to think about how to encourage students to work together through dialogue to construct knowledge. Now this occurs in my online courses primarily through students sharing experiences related to the topic, questioning each other’s experiences, and bringing their stories together to create a new understanding. I often contribute experiences as well and facilitate the dialogue that leads to their collective insights.
I was startled to realize just how influenced I am by unquestioned sociolinguistic perspectives. As difficult as it is to admit this in a public forum, I came to see that I have expectations of people based on stereotypes related to age, gender, appearance, background, and culture. Online, with no physical cues (sometimes people post a photo, but not everyone does, and I don’t require it), I often have no idea about, for example, age and appearance or even race or culture. There have even been some occasions when I have wrongly thought a person was male or female for a few weeks. I became conscious of such things as expecting young people to be less serious in their studies than older people and liking people based on my idea of attractiveness. This has led me to important and long overdue critical reflection on assumptions I have made about the students I work with.

Finally, I am, in all facets of my life, a reflective and introspective person. I think that one of the reasons I am quiet in face-to-face classes is simply that I find it difficult to “keep up” with quick dialogue. I am often still thinking about what someone said a few minutes before when the conversation is well on its way into another topic. I need to force myself into an extraverted way of being, and it exhausts me after awhile. I didn’t fully understand this until I saw the ease with which I could interact with others online. Online, it doesn’t matter if I take five or ten minutes to think something through (unless we are engaged in a synchronous discussion, of course). I can go and make a cup of tea, I can walk around the room, or I can just sit quietly and make a few notes on something. I am much more able to be myself and still be “heard” and still be present. The online experience has led me to a better understanding of myself in all social situations, not just face-to-face teaching.

Lin’s Experience and Reflection

I taught in face-to-face college classrooms for six years, but I never felt at ease with my teaching. Each time before I walked into the classroom, I was nervous and anxious, and each time after the class was over, I regretted having forgotten to say this or do that. I did not enjoy, nor was I satisfied with my teaching.

However, I was immediately attracted to teaching online four years ago. I’ve especially enjoyed using asynchronous technologies such as discussion boards, email, blogs, and wikis to communicate with students. I enjoy being able to share ideas and to dialogue while not having to worry about my appearance, voice, or everyone looking at me when I speak. I love dialogic writing because I feel that the written word captures my thoughts more accurately. The asynchronous nature of such dialogue also allows me to think, reflect, and communicate better with others in a thoughtful, equal and co-created manner.

One of the goals of the “computer-mediated communication” course I teach is to experiment with various new technologies. Recently I was invited to connect my students with those from two other universities through a live web conference. I agreed to do it, thinking that it would be a good learning experience for everyone. Personally, however, I was worried. I was not sure what role I should play as an instructor in this environment. There didn’t seem to be anything that I could prepare beforehand because it was difficult to find a topic with groups of people who were from different schools, who did not know each other, and most of whom were using this learning environment to communicate online for the first time.

As I had feared, the live web conference turned out to be overwhelming and intimidating for me. It reminded me of my worst nightmare of having to make a public speech in front of a large group of people without being able to think of anything to say, nor hearing what other people have to say. Several things made this teaching and learning environment particularly challenging to me.

First of all, I was uncomfortable with the intensified hierarchical structures and user privileges. The technology was designed to imitate a traditional classroom structure with three main channels for communication: one could speak, instant message/chat, or draw on a white board. No one could see the others because the video capacity was disabled to allow easy download. Everyone could speak to the whole group as long as one had a microphone connected to one’s computer. There was an immediate gap between those who had microphones and those who did not. Throughout the session, I felt bad for those participants who had been deprived of their voice because they did not have microphones. The participants were assigned different levels of privileges: as a moderator, I could speak anytime by clicking on the “talk” button, could give others permission to speak, and had control of what to present at the whiteboard. The other participants could “raise their hands” to obtain permissions to speak (by clicking on the “hand” icon). I understood the need to offer the moderators or instructors more air-time to direct the conversations in a more meaningful manner; yet, this put much pressure on me to orchestrate something (intelligently) without preparation or more knowledge. As someone who was always a quiet student and who never felt at ease with my classroom teaching, I simply did not know what to do.

In spite of the hierarchical structure and my sense of responsibility to lead (this self-imposed pressure obviously only served to exacerbate my situation), I was not able to coordinate the dynamics of conversations once they started. The participants seemed to be heading in different directions, some speaking (when permitted to speak), some sending text messages which had nothing to do with the speaker, and some drawing things on the whiteboard.
which were seemingly nonsense (for example, when a moderator put up his website with a picture of his on the whiteboard, several participants immediately started drawing a moustache on his face). The environment felt chaotic, which made it impossible to discuss anything serious. I had an overwhelming sense that this was especially intimidating and saturating for those participants who were shy or needed time to think about issues.

In addition, the web-conference technology used a headphone speaker system designed to cut out feedback so that no noise was re-amplified in the process. I could not hear my voice the way I normally do. As a result I was self-conscious about its quality, clarity, and volume. I felt clumsy because I had to solely depend on the projection of my voice. I could not recognize it as my own, talking to a group of people who I could not see or hear.

In retrospect, this environment with its current designs seemed to combine drawbacks of both face-to-face and online teaching settings: the participants were constrained by time and various conditions, and could not enjoy the rich cues of face-to-face interactions. Compared to the traditional classroom settings, this environment seemed to have offered more democratic learning opportunities: the learners could communicate with each other by typing away text messages on a small chat window or draw on the whiteboard at the same time when the instructor was speaking. However, such collaborative or dialogical opportunities seemed to have distracted rather than complemented any learning goals at least in this situation. And the voice simply superseded and overwhelmed the written chat messages and immediacy subjugated reflective thought in the chaos of multiple synchronous activities. With appropriate control, the setting might be suited for lectures and presentations because those who could control the speaking, the moderators, obviously had the advantage of being able to broadcast messages and present a PowerPoint or website through the whiteboard.

This experience made me think of several issues: the issue of control between teaching and learning, what is involved in teaching, and the preferred teaching and learning styles that are unquestioningly accepted in our educational practices and in our society in general.

The setting highlighted the power dynamics between teaching and learning, and how the power or control is passed back and forth between the teacher and the students, and between the students. I start to wonder to what extent I have tried to hold on to the teacher control as much as I resent having it. I do not want to, and do not know how to be the one solely responsible for another person or a group of students’ learning. Yet, I have unquestioningly accepted the sole responsibility as a teacher to bring about a desired learning outcome, to push the students to achieve high standards, and to strive for one kind of excellence while minimizing any wasted time or effort. When a learning environment did not seem to go in the direction I expected, I felt guilty for not fulfilling the role of a teacher.

The issue also relates to the concept of fun in learning. It is clear that this learning experience transpired as it did because the learners were experiencing a new environment with other new participants for the first time. Students drew funny things on the whiteboard, spoke for the sake of having a voice when recognized, wrote text messages about yesterday’s dinner and so forth, and generally enjoyed discovering the capacities of the new environment (as they indicated afterwards). It is possible that if they had a second or third engagement with this technology, rules and conventions would start to emerge and naturally the participants would focus on issues at hand. Shouldn’t I allow the learners as well as myself to enjoy the process rather than trying to engender the kinds of learning that I, as a teacher, expect to happen?

Further, this experience made me think of the purpose of multiple activities and the issue of participation. I wonder if many people are just like me, preferring to participate without having to speak immediately, especially in an unfamiliar environment. Yet, then how can we connect, share, know, or get to be known by other people in order to continue the collaboration effort? The more I think of all this, the more I believe that there needs to be different ways and technologies for people with different styles and backgrounds to present, share, and collaborate effectively. The online asynchronous written dialogue, for instance, is a good method for accommodating varying styles of presentation, reflection or collaboration.

In a society where face-to-face classroom teaching is prevalent, and often, where new technologies are invented and designed to imitate the face-to-face classroom teaching, it is important for educators to reflect on who are advantaged and disadvantaged with the perpetuated assumptions. Personal experiments with different technologies help us to reflect on our teaching experiences and challenge our assumptions.

Conclusion

When educators face a new environment or a new teaching context, they may be challenged to engage in critical reflection on their practice. Using Mezirow’s classification of kinds of habits of mind, they may question their psychological perspective—who am I as a teacher? One of us felt shy and clumsy and the other initially felt helpless in bringing her authentic self into the teaching. Educators working in a new context are also challenged to consider their sociolinguistic habits of mind about teaching. We end up questioning the social norms about what a
teacher does, the institutional expectations of good teaching, and even our social expectations of others based on physical cues. And, clearly, our epistemic habits of mind about teaching are disputed. If we have always seen teaching as involving direct, face-to-face communication, this web of assumptions must be sorted through.

Individuation as transformative learning adds a great deal to our understanding of what happens when technology moves into our teaching. We belong to a collective of educators. We define ourselves through our identification with others we respect, admire, and use as models. We think about teaching along with a group who also think about teaching. In a new context, our shadow may appear, our unconscious may struggle to surface, and we may work toward separating ourselves from the collective that has defined us.

The relational aspect of transformative learning surfaced clearly in both of our experiences. It also played a major role in our dialogue with each other. Although we live in geographical locations that are more than a thousand miles apart, and although we differ greatly in our backgrounds, we correspond almost daily through email, and sometimes talk by telephone, about our teaching experiences. Through this connected learning, we make meaning of our teaching and support each other in what we see as our transformative development as educators.

References
Transformative Learning and First Year Teachers: Getting Beyond Survival

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Abstract: This qualitative inquiry explored first-year teacher learning experiences through the lens of Mezirow’s transformative learning theory. Tenets of the theory as well as common themes found in new teacher literature framed the methodology and analysis. Eight of 10 participants experienced transformative learning, although alignment of their experiences to the phases of the theory varied. Trigger events, supports and hindrances to transformative learning, and emerged themes influencing future practices are discussed.

Overview of the Research

The first year of teaching is important because it is when teachers’ notions about teaching are meshed with initial teaching experiences. Many new teachers are shocked when their expectations meet the realities of today’s classroom. As a result, large numbers of new teachers abandon their career choice during or just after their first year of teaching. This begs for deeper inquiry into their learning.

Teacher learning is often described in terms of professional practice and student behavior, and learning theories for teachers are related to what is known about pedagogy. Because they are adult learners, teachers and their learning experiences might be better aligned with analyses through more comprehensive adult learning theoretical frames. In particular, Mezirow’s (2000) theory of transformative learning supports a more holistic view of adults, and it positions first-year teachers and how they learn in a unique way. In this case study inquiry, Mezirow’s transformative learning theory was used to explore what and how teachers learned during their first year of teaching.

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore retrospectively the first-year learning experiences of 10 teachers who had participated in a professional development support program, the New Teacher Program (NTP), through the lens of Mezirow’s transformative learning theory. Data collected through semi-structured interviews, demographic surveys, overview timelines, concept maps, critical incidents, and developmental dilemmas were analyzed for individual participants and across the sample to note the extent to which experiences were connected to transformative learning theory.

Related Literature

“Survival and discovery” (Huberman, 1989; Feiman-Nemser, 1983) mark the experiences of many new teachers. The “discovery” component denotes the learning possibilities inherent in how theory and expectation meet practice for first-year teachers. The possibility growing out of the “survival” component is bleaker. New teachers hear about “sinking or swimming” or “surviving” the experience long before their first day of school, and many new teachers feel compelled to leave the profession. The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (1997) reports that up to one-third of new teachers leave the education profession within 3 years, and others (Darling-Hammond, 1984; Tikunoff & Ward, 1987) have documented attrition rates as high as 60% within 5 years of entering teaching. This is the context into which new teachers enter teaching, and this survival and discovery context frames their first-year learning experiences.

Much of the literature on new teachers distinguishes three intersecting chunks of learning experiences that impact the first year of teaching: preservice, induction, and inservice (Wang & Odell, 2002). The various formal and informal learning experiences within each of these chunks leave the field peppered with many options about what and how new teachers learn. Yet, despite the lack of consensus about what and how new teachers learn, the overwhelming majority of literature involving new teacher learning conveys the recurring themes of reflection (Schön, 1983; Zeichner & Liston, 1996) and changes in beliefs (Hollingsworth, 1988; Richardson, 1996) that undergird how formal new teacher learning experiences are conceptualized and implemented. Moreover, the tendency in the literature is to position new teachers as caught in a developmental stage. Using a career-cycle image (Fuller, 1969; Steffy & Wolfe, 2001) to explain the first-year teaching experience perpetuates the survival metaphor that has come to define the initial year of teaching.

Interesting possibilities are raised for conceptualizing new teacher learning differently when adult learning literature is consulted. Specifically, Mezirow’s (2000) transformative learning theory offers a different way for
looking at the first year of teaching experience outside of the confines of developmental stages and devaluing survival metaphors. “Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action” (pp. 7-8).

The three overarching phases of transformational learning are: critical reflection, discourse, and action (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). The phases break down into nine steps that follow after a trigger event or disorienting dilemma, which can be a singular instance (e.g., being arrested) or a combination of events (e.g., on-going abuse). What constitutes a trigger event can vary from person to person, and some typical life events (e.g., marriage, having children, death) can be “triggers” for transformative learning for some. There are also other, more unique triggers (e.g., a course on equality, HIV positive diagnosis, travel). After the trigger event, the learner may face one or more of the other nine steps of transformative learning: 1) self-examination; 2) critical assessment of assumptions; 3) recognition that others have experienced something similar; 4) exploration of new options; 5) plan a course of action; 6) acquire knowledge and skills; 7) trying out new roles; 8) building competence and confidence; and 9) reintegration into life based on the new perspective. Because transformative learning theory is broad-ranging, it uniquely informs the literature on new teachers, professional development, and learning to teach.

Methodology

The methods employed to access first-year learning experiences in retrospect were demographic questionnaires, overview timelines, concept maps, critical incidents, and developmental dilemmas, and these were collected during a three-interview series over the course of six months. The major task of the three-interview series was to have participants reconstruct their personal experiences about learning during their first year of teaching (Seidman, 1998). The greatest challenge in this inquiry was accessing deeply embedded assumptions about teaching from the first year, determining when, if, and/or how these were critically reflected upon, and analyzing if the critical examination resulted in perspective transformation. Assumptions are tacit notions that drive and confirm thoughts and actions, and making them explicit is difficult to do (Brookfield, 1990). The interview series, utilizing methods other researchers of transformative learning have used, aimed to address this challenge.

To foster conversation rooted in experience, participants were asked to chart an overview of their first year. Participants were prompted to graph their first year of teaching noting events, people, places, and feelings. The information on the overview timeline revealed possible sites for what, where, and when trigger events to learning for the teachers might have occurred. Also introduced during the first interview and then revisited during the second was the concept map instrument, which provides “a summary of what we say we believe, think, feel, or value at a particular point in time” (Deshler, 1990, p. 336). The spatial, holistic, and hierarchical dimensions of concept maps are important in understanding and interpreting the relationships between and among the represented elements.

As a means of probing learners’ assumptive worlds, the critical incident is a descriptive account of a significant event in a learner’s life (Brookfield, 1990). An effective critical incident depiction reveals a vivid image and account of the event. Participants in this study were asked to share a high point, low point, and surprising point critical incident from their first year of teaching. Emerged commonalities across participants’ experiences led to construction of a developmental interviewing dilemma Perry (1970). This same dilemma about a first year of teaching was accessing deeply embedded assumptions about teaching from the first year and how that might be different from how they would address the situation in their current year. Then key aspects of the dilemma were changed and participants were asked if they would do anything differently given the changes. Questioning in this way provided a window on the participant’s thinking and to which assumptions they held most steadfastly.

Data Analysis

The methods yielded multiple information-rich data that were analyzed in light of transformative learning theory. All interviews were transcribed and read multiple times. Open-coding procedures were used to broadly sweep each interview transcript, noting what was there that may or may not be important to the later steps of analysis. Open-coding allowed a deep immersion into the data to maximize familiarity. Codes came from unique instances as well as from reappearances in the data (Stake, 1995). Repetitions were purposefully scrutinized and noted for each level of coding. Open coding was done across all participants prior to delving into individual analyses.

The next stage in data analysis involved looking at each participant as an individual. The first formal pass of the teachers’ transcripts was done to try to understand each person’s experience. Data were cut and pasted from transcripts and reorganized by interview prompts in order to begin the process of looking across individuals.
Overview timeline, high point, low point, and surprising point critical incidents as well as developmental interview responses were compiled into charts for analysis. Demographic information was entered into an overview grid. Reflection practices were bulleted for each participant, and concept map terms were combined. Possible patterns were continually noted, and a thematic overview grid was created to pull out data from participants’ interviews that supported particular patterns. Lastly, transformative learning theoretical codes were used during the final passes through the transcripts to locate specific data connected to Mezirow’s theory. A chart with the three phases of the theory and the steps of transformative learning was used to organize data. Quotes and notes from each person’s experience were entered into the chart to determine where alignment with the theory was.

Demographic Findings

Demographic data were collected to dimensionalize the various kinds of learning experiences shared by participants by providing a context within which to analyze them. Of the 10 participants, nine are women, and one is a man. Three of the participants, including the one male, identified themselves as Caucasian. Three of the women said they were Latina. Of the two who reported a Jamaican heritage, one considered herself of African descent, and the other indicated that she was of mixed-race heritage. One participant identified herself as African American, and another said she was “mixed race.” In terms of current age ranges, the majority of participants (60%) reported they were between 40 and 49 years old. One participant was older, two were younger, and one declined to share her age.

In terms of grade levels and subjects taught during their first year, 8 of the participants, including the one male, were elementary teachers their first year of teaching, and the other two were middle school science teachers. With respect to preparation for teaching prior to entering the classroom, 60% of participants had some form of formal teacher training. Two participants prepared initially to become teachers, one having majored in education as an undergraduate, and the other having followed the traditional teacher training route in Jamaica. Two other participants prepared for their first years by substitute teaching and taking education courses when they realized they wanted to change careers. One participant joined an urban alternative certification program, which afforded her several weeks of coursework and summer school student teaching experience in the few months prior to beginning her first year. One teacher took some education courses as her electives, and these sparked her interest in becoming a para-professional assistant for the year prior to becoming a classroom teacher. Although not typically considered formal training, substitute teaching was an experience four participants had prior to securing a long-term assignment. Two participants had neither coursework nor substituting experience prior to their first year of teaching.

All but one participant entered teaching as a career changer. Even the teacher who had majored in education as an undergraduate pursued a paralegal career before entering the classroom as teacher. The only participant who prepared for teaching and has remained connected to education throughout her career is the one who relocated from Jamaica. The careers from which participants switched are varied.

Transformative Learning Findings

Of the 10 participants in this study, eight of them experienced some form of transformative learning as Mezirow’s theory describes. There were 18 total identified transformations between these eight participants that resulted in their changing thinking about themselves, their students, their teaching practice, their administrators, and/or the parents of their students. Eleven of the 18 experiences involved transformation of points of view, and the other seven involved transformation of the undergirding habits of mind. A chart on the next page details the learning experiences by topic and categorizes them as either a point of view or a habit of mind transformation.

The overarching phases of transformative learning are discourse, critical reflection, and action. In terms of discourse and critical reflection, the findings from this study about these practices mirror the age-old unanswerable question, “Which came first—the chicken or the egg?” Because Mezirow (2000) contends that transformative learning is not a linear process, it was not surprising to find that in some cases, discourse sparked critical reflection whereas in others, critical reflection led to discourse. Participants shared memories of their learning events, and the content and nature of the conversations they had with others about them were not clear enough to justify distinguishing them as “that specialized use of dialogue devoted to searching for a common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief” (pp. 10-11). Questions were asked about whether participants spoke about each experience with others, what kinds of things they remembered talking about, and if they sought perspectives from people who may or may not have thought differently about the situation. Participants’ responses to these questions qualified whether or not they engaged in discourse around their learning experiences. One example is a teacher who remembered “having a conversation with someone about bursting into tears at work. And I don’t remember if it was because that person expressed their interest in my first year or if they had had a similar experience, but I remember sitting and talking to that person and trying to figure out what exactly happened, or why it happened at that particular—what set me off, you know, that kind of thing.” Another was searching for
understanding about her predicament with her principal and mentioned, “I think I talked about it nonstop. I had a couple of mentors floating around that year and I just—a few other teacher friends that I had made while I was there and I was constantly like what did I do? How did I get myself into this? So I really—they had an ear full about it.” She had two different mentors that year who helped her see her experiences from different perspectives. “The second one that I had that really let me see, I guess, another side of it. Like, ‘You may be doing this, and that’s not wrong, but we could also try it this way.’”

From the memories participants shared about the dialogues they engaged in around their learning experiences, it was noted that participants tended to talk with their colleagues, mentors or other support persons, their families, and friends. Sometimes they sought conversation with people who would agree with them. At times, they would receive affirmation like the teacher who shared, “Sometimes you speak to teachers to see if they had the—they encountered similar problems, you know, you sit in the lunch room, I mean the teacher’s lounge.” Other times, they would be exposed to another point of view that would help them think about other perspectives. For instance, another teacher sought support and affirmation about student behavior from her peers in her alternative certification program, sharing how “we talked about it there [at our meetings], and some of them had even worse experiences than I did. So, misery loves company, I guess. But—and actually one of them did tell me that, you know, that I’d made a mistake not owning the class sooner.” Other teachers were able to offer different perspectives for participants that they could process critically because they understood other teachers to have formulated their opinions from first-hand experience. Participants did not tend to seek out alternative perspectives from their principals or families.

Mezirow (2000) writes, “we transform frames of reference—our own and those of others—by becoming critically reflective of their assumptions and aware of their context—the source, nature, and consequences of taken-for-granted beliefs” (p. 11). Whether or not participants critically reflected on their assumptions was ascertained through their responses to various questions about their critical incidents as well as their general reflection practices. Participants indicated various means of reflection, and some were formal, and others were informal. Formal opportunities for reflection marked the majority of critical reflection instances they recalled. Having structured times and sometimes required assignments in their graduate programs, through professional development experiences, with their mentors, and also through the process of being interviewed for this research provided participants with the catalyst for reflection. Built-in opportunities for reflection were necessary for many participants who felt overwhelmed and too over-extended to afford themselves time to stop in the midst of their first years to reflect deeply on their assumptions. One participant shared how she had all the formal opportunities for reflection and how these were the only times she reflected during her first year. “I had graduate classes; I had professional development; I had a mentor….I didn’t have a choice. I had to go every other Tuesday; then I had school on a regular basis…I didn’t have the time or the energy to do anything on my own.”

Table 1
Transformative Learning Experiences Categorized by Topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic of learning:</th>
<th>Transformative Learning</th>
<th>Point of View</th>
<th>Habit of Mind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seeing behavior management differently:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. How to manage the class—when to control—so she could teach the kids who wanted to learn</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Discipline is central to teaching</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Student misbehavior is often indicative of something else; not a personal response to her</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Behavior can trump education</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Experience counts when it comes to behavior management</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing teaching differently:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. More to teaching than anticipated</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teaching isn’t the ideal she pictured</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Planning for different learners</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Use any and all resources to teach children</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Teaching should be hands-on and discovery-based</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Seeing students differently:

1. Respect for students to not rush to judgment about them prematurely ●
2. Not to be so judgmental in the beginning—students may have surprising hidden talents and interests ○
3. Students have lives outside of school ○
4. View children differently ●

### Seeing self differently

1. To be more assertive, which entailed learning her rights as an educator ●
2. She really did want to be a teacher ○

### Seeing administration differently

1. Feeling intimidated by higher-ups ●

### Seeing parents differently

1. Parents can be confrontational ●

● = “Big T” transformation, ○ = “little t” transformation

---

**Big T and little t Transformations**

When individual participants’ learnings were analyzed with respect to the steps of transformation Mezirow’s theory outlines, it was noted that some participants’ data were aligned with the steps much more so than others'. The overarching phases of transformation—reflection, discourse, and action—qualified the experiences as transformative. The other steps of transformative learning were not as clear-cut for the participants in this study. Through more detailed analysis of each transformative learning event, various aspects of the theory surfaced as more or less pertinent to each person’s learning. In the participants’ transcripts, some of the steps of transformation were not evident, while others were clearly indicated. When all but three or fewer aspects of the theory were present in the data, it was categorized as a “Big T” transformation. If four or five steps of the theory were not evident in the data, it was categorized as a “little t” transformation. Eleven of the 18 experiences were categorized “Big T” transformations, and seven of the 18 were categorized “little t.” Therefore, more often than not, participants who indicated transformative learning went through about 70% or more of the steps in Mezirow’s theory.

### Trigger Events

What kinds of new information or disorienting dilemmas did these new teachers face that made them question their beliefs and assumptions and lead them through some or all of the steps of transformative learning theory? Mezirow’s theory posits that the trigger event or disorienting dilemma, that may or may not lead the learner through transformation, can be a cluster of experiences or a singular instance. In looking at the various triggers to transformative learning for the eight participants who experienced it, it is apparent that what triggers learning for the first year teacher is unique. Where similarities in disorienting dilemmas were noted was whether they were clusters of events or a singular instance and who or what was most centrally connected to the trigger. In this study, students were those who were most centrally connected to trigger events, accounting for half of the 18 indicated transformations. Teaching was the second most common influence to the trigger events, meaning that the teachers themselves, through their practice, were central to five of the disorienting dilemmas resulting in transformative learning. Two teachers’ triggers centered on interactions with their principals.

The number of triggers that occurred as a cluster of events was 11 out of the 18 transformative learning experiences, and there were seven singular trigger events. Although it can be argued that trigger events for first-year teachers will most likely involve students or teaching, the event itself or cluster of events themselves are as unique as the individuals involved. The point in the year in which a trigger towards transformative learning occurs is also not predictable. Some teachers indicated transformative learning experiences happening within the first few months of school. Others were triggered towards transformation midway in their first year. One teacher continually experienced triggers to her learning in her contentious relationship with her principal. The unique nature of the trigger event as well as the unpredictability of when in the first year a disorienting dilemma will lead a learner through the steps of transformation suggest that there may not be a way to forecast what might trigger transformation for any one teacher.
Supports and Hindrances to Transformation

Participants revealed several different supports that either aided or hindered their first-year learning experiences. Teachers in this study indicated their strongest support during their first-year learning experiences were their colleagues. For the most part, these colleagues were other teachers and staff members located in their schools. Administrators were also named by many participants as being particularly supportive. New teachers’ families provided a critical support structure for their first-year learning experiences, and for one teacher, her own fifth grader son was her greatest influence. Since colleagues and other new teachers comprised the major core of support for participants in this study, this pattern suggests that being supported in and through a community of peers is central to transformative learning in the first year of teaching.

What participants revealed as hindrances was idiosyncratic. For example, one teacher identified her lack of knowledge about the culture as obstructing her during her first year, and this might be expected since she had just moved from another country. The way she talked about culture shock was similar to what another teacher revealed in her interviews, but yet, that teacher did not identify lack of knowledge about the culture as a hindrance. Interestingly, the most frequently mentioned hindrance was “none,” indicating how many participants did not feel obstructed in their learning processes. For two participants, their principals were the people identified as the most significant first-year hindrances. In terms of emotions, findings indicate that words depicting emotion permeated new teachers’ experiences but were not necessarily characterized by participants as either supportive or hindering.

Conclusions and Implications for Practice

Four themes about learning are interpreted from the findings, and these themes are directly linked to implications for practice. First, learning happens for new teachers in particular contexts, and it is very important to take these into consideration not only when supporting new teachers but also when considering their learning experiences in retrospect. Second, new teachers learn in community with others, and it is imperative that camaraderie among new teacher communities is purposefully cultivated. Third, new teachers learn from experience and gather knowledge about themselves, students, administrators, parents/caregivers, and their profession through the actual practice of teaching. Literal and figurative spaces need to be provided for new teachers to have a time and place to process their learning while experiences are happening for them. Fourth, new teachers are sparked by different experiences at varying points in their first year that may or may not lead to transformative learning. Being mindful of the moment when a potential trigger occurs or recognizing when clusters of events might lead to transformation can be helpful in providing new teachers with the kinds of beneficial support they need at the key juncture in their learning.

One intention of this research was to transform new teacher learning experiences as being more than just markers along the route to surviving the first year of teaching. Using the language of “survival and discovery” to frame first-year learning experiences, relegates them as “rites of passage” that all new teachers must experience. Exploring them through Mezirow’s transformative theory lens highlights that these learning experiences are much more than rites of passage. They are stepping stones on the journey to becoming, and they happen within multiple embedded communities of practice. Using Mezirow’s theory to focus the study and analyze findings offers another perspective on the first year of teaching for those interested in the fields of transformative learning and new teachers.

References


Transformative Learning in Adult Online Collaborative Groups:
The Dialectic of Will and Willingness

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Abstract: Fostering highly effective collaborative environments involves working through difficult paradoxes associated with the relationship of the individual to the group, and transformation of both individual and group identity. Transformative learning involves a dialectic of will and willingness, of agency and communion. In this study, we examine how this dialectic is played out in collaborative online adult learning groups. The findings reflect the difficulties learners face in addressing this issue and in engaging in the deep transformation necessary for collaboration.

Collaborative small group work represents the sine qua non of adult education. Yet, as Brookfield (1986) astutely observed many years ago, small group discussions often reflect the quality of a psychodynamic battleground, manifest in powerful emotional dynamics bubbling away just below the surface and capable of erupting in disruptive and dysfunctional ways. Group process is characterized by difficult emotional dynamics and paradoxes (Smith & Berg, 1987). For groups to reach levels of effective performance and for individuals to be able to contribute to this work, both individuals and groups must confront and work through these difficult emotional issues. For individuals, this process requires a re-working of one’s sense of identity as a group member and often sets in motion psychosocial processes that can be quite transformative (Boyd, 1991).

The literature in transformative learning reflects the important role that the group and social context play in fostering potential transformation among adult learners (Boyd, 1991; Hart, 2001; Kasl & York, 2000; Mezirow, 2000; O’Sullivan, Morrell, & Connors, 2002). Perceptions of one’s self are bound up with these contexts and reflects a complex interaction of the nature of the self with the socio-cultural context in which it finds itself (Boyd, 1991). Group development and change involves individuals in a reworking of these self-perceptions (Smith & Berg, 1987), but change in individual identity also nurtures transformation of the group (Boyd, 1991). Working with the tension reflected in the individual – group relationship is, from the perspective of depth psychology, the hallmark of transformative processes of the self and transformation of the group (Boyd, 1991; Smith and Berg, 1987).

These dynamics are also relevant to online learning groups. Yet, the virtual nature of the experience suggest additional complexities associated with the lack of nonverbal communication, the inability to fully express and perceive emotional reactions of one another, and the limited ability to perceive the group as a real entity. We sought to better understand the emotional issues and dynamics that characterize participants’ experience of the individual – group tension and issues associated with working through this tension.

Rationale for the Research Focus

From the classroom to the workplace to community development and social action programs, adult learning involves individuals working collaboratively with others. To develop these powerful, collaborative environments, however, requires persons within these settings to authentically experience themselves as both individuals and as members of a group. Fostering this level of learning and development involves fundamental transformation of group structures and the self-identity of individuals in the group (Boyd, 1991; Bruffee, 1999; Smith & Berg, 1987; Wenger, 1998). Characteristic of this process is the “deauthorization” of the teacher and the increasing recognition by participants of themselves as important sources of authority and action within the learning environment (Baxter Magolda, 1999). As this occurs, their sense of identity gradually transforms from dependent to self-authoring learners (Baxter Magolda, 1999; Kegan, 1994). While self-authorship is critical for the development of effective groups, individual members must also learn to deauthorize themselves and authorize other members of their group. In other words, they have to be willing, at times, to let go of the power and authority they seem to have won after hard-fought battles with the instructor so that the voices of other members of their group may be heard. They must allow other members of their group to develop their own sense of authority. But all members of a group cannot simultaneously assert their evolving sense of agency.

How individuals and groups effectively negotiate this process of alternating agency and receptivity to foster both a sense of group voice and individual voice remains unclear. Scholarship on collaboration (Bruffee, 1999) and

communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), as well as some of the literature on transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000), focuses on re-working one’s sense of self-identify as a group member through a social and cognitive reconstruction of one’s assumptions. These studies, however, minimize or ignore altogether emotional issues and dynamics that are evoked by this process (Boyd, 1991; Durkin, 1964; McLeod & Kettner-Polley, 2004; Slater, 1966; Smith & Berg, 1987). Among the emotional dynamics of concern here are dependency on authority figures or reactions against such dependency, fear of intimacy, and tendencies to imagine and either fight with or run from perceived enemies within or to the group (Bion, 1961). Scapegoating reflects a common tendency within groups to blame one or more members of a group for the group’s perceived difficulties (Coleman, 1995). In addition, group process is dominated by conflicting and paradoxical emotions surrounding issues of belonging, engaging, and speaking (Smith & Berg, 1987). Recognizing, accepting, and working through these emotional dynamics are key aspects of group (Boyd, 1991; Smith & Berg, 1987) and individual transformation (Hart, 2001).

At the core of many of these emotional issues is the relationship of the individual to the group-as-a-whole. In evolving and individuating one’s self within the group matrix (Smith & Berg, 1987), group participants must exercise a sense of agency when appropriate but also actively listen to others, to be open and receptive to the voices of fellow group members (May, 1982). Often, group members perceive this process from either of these perspectives, such as overemphasizing one’s own authority within the group or, for fear of standing out, not asserting one’s self sufficiently to be of help to the group-as-a-whole. The nature of participation and involvement in the group is often marked by a kind of self-consciousness, in which one wonders if she or he dominating discussion or holding back too much. For individuation and group development to occur, however, this process must derive from members’ implicit sense of what is best for the group at the time, rather than solely the ego needs of individual members. Individuals must determine what aspects of their own being contribute to the work of the group and the group-as-a-whole must provide a sense of voice for its individual members. Individuation within the group context involves the ability to see one’s self as an individual member separate from yet deeply interconnected with the broader group community (Smith & Berg, 1987). To freely move back and forth within this seeming paradox, from asserting one’s will to willingly being open to the voices of others, represents a mature level of consciousness development and transformation (Hart, 2001; May, 1982), both within the group and in the individual.

One of the most important paradoxes manifest in transformative learning within the group context involves one’s ability to both assert one’s will and be willing to accept and receive the voice of the other (Hart, 2000; May, 1982). Often, groups define this issue as providing voice and authority for individual members. This sense of will is important for the battle to which Brookfield (1986) refers. As a group member, it is important to “center ourselves in the ‘I’…to see more clearly and dis-identify with reactions, drives and desires” (Hart, 2001, p. 156), to claim thoughts, feelings, and emotions as ours but to recognize they are not who we are. But will alone cannot sustain transformation. We also have to know how and when to give up the struggle, to open ourselves more fully to the presence of the “other” within ourselves and the group. While will helps to define us as individual members in the group, willingness contributes to our sense of unity and belonging. Both are essential for transformation of the group (Boyd, 1991) and the re-working or transformation of one’s identity as a group member (Smith & Berg, 1987).

Working through these issues and processes is difficult enough in face-to-face groups but the problems online groups face in addressing these issues are made even more difficult by the virtual nature of their interaction. In addition to the problems presented by the absence of nonverbal communication, online learning is often characterized as individualized and self-directed. Through their promotional and recruitment materials, online programs stress this attribute as a powerful value of their programs – learn anywhere, anytime at your own pace. This promise remains a powerful incentive for busy, working adults to participate in online programs. Many adults enroll in online courses with the mindset of being able to work alone, at their own pace, and be accountable only to themselves for both the pace and products of their learning. Many scholars, however, now recognize the limitations of such an approach to online learning and are advocating for the use of methods and strategies for fostering collaborative, learner-centered environments in online programs.

Thus, collaborative online learning groups present a rich context for the study of how individuals and groups work through the problem of the relationship of the individual to the group, and the transformative processes and dynamics associated with this learning and development. The purpose of this research is to more fully understand how this potentially transformative tension manifests itself within online collaborative learning groups and how individuals and groups perceive and work through this tension.

**Research Design**

Using a phenomenological approach to inquiry, we studied the process of developing collaborative learning groups among students enrolled in two graduate-level, online learning courses in adult learning. The format for the courses was a problem-based learning (PBL) strategy (Barrows, 1994; Boud & Feletti, 1991). The instructor created
three ill-structured problems that are representative of situations the learners may encounter in professional practice. The instructor assigned three to four people to create eight heterogeneous groups that reflected the class demographics. The groups stayed intact for the duration of the semester. The instructor was present online throughout the course, but served primarily as a resource for the learning groups. He provided limited guidance and direction to the groups, primarily through general sets of instructions or guidelines available in text format online. Each group was expected to select its own facilitator for each problem unit. Members of the groups interacted with each other primarily through discussion forums defined for them by the instructor. Several groups also used online chat rooms extensively, as well as e-mail that was not part of the course management system. In addition, one of the groups met several times face-to-face. Although participation, as reflected in numbers of posts and time spent online, varied across groups and individuals within groups, virtually all members participated in all groups on a regular basis.

Forty-seven of the forty-eight students agreed to participate, representing a wide diversity of culture, race, gender, professional experience, and backgrounds. The data sources included background questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with the learners, informal and ongoing interviews with the instructor, participant’s reflective journals, individual debriefing papers, and the course transcripts. Thirty-seven of the forty-eight participants were interviewed. The interviews were semi-structured and in-depth, lasting approximately 45 minutes to two hours.

The data analysis proceeded through a constant comparative approach. Participant interviews served as the primary data source and were edited to produce a narrative of each participant by removing the researcher voice. Appropriate information from the questionnaires (demographics, computer experience), debriefing papers (information regarding group processes and content), and the all information from the reflective journals were added to the interview narratives. The archived records were used to better understand early learner reactions to the course and information from the other data sources. The narratives were then subjected to an iterative analysis process, until no additional themes were uncovered.

Findings

The members’ perceptions of their experiences of working through the tensions associated with the individual and the group reflected six broad themes: 1) Perceptions of the self as a group member; 2) Changes in perceptions of the self as a group member; 3) Group issues which characterized the process; and 4) The influence of the online technology on working through the tensions identified.

Perceptions of Self as a Group Member Learner

How members see themselves as a group member seems grounded in fundamental assumptions about themselves as a learner. Participants tended to characterize themselves as learners in terms of how the work of learning got done, the focus of the learning, and who is ultimately responsible for the quality of their learning. In terms of how the work of learning got done, participants reflected a desire to both work alone and with others in a group. For example, Donald observed, “I see the benefits of collaborative learning, but many times just want to be able to regurgitate information.” Issues of self-identity were evident in these descriptions, as Donald suggests, “Collaborative learning when done correctly, forces each individual to look at a topic and see where they stand on an issue.” Most participants prefer the interactions and relationships with a small group. They find the discussions and collaborations interesting, helpful to their own learning. They are able to learn from the knowledge and experiences of others. They like talking and interacting with others and talking about the content with others. Participants characterized the focus of their learning as theory or ideas, problems or practice issues, or their own life experiences as they relate to the subject matter being studied.

Almost without exception, however, the participants want to hold themselves accountable for the quality of their own learning and many resent being held accountable as part of a group or collective effort. They clearly wanted the opportunity to produce their own evidence of the quality of their learning, although with the help and assistance of members of their group, the class, and the instructor, and to be held individually accountable for that learning. Autumn says, “I wasn’t expecting the problem based group process and I think I might have touched on that. I think it would be fun to take a class on-line where I was responsible and had to worry only about myself.” Several saw others in their group as holding them back, pulling them down, or otherwise compromising their ability to demonstrate what they really know. There is relatively little evidence that the participants valued being held collectively responsible for the quality of their work together. This position was characteristically justified on the basis of individual differences, preferences, or learning styles.

The context limited their ability to use the small groups in the ways they would have preferred. They attribute this to the limitations of the online environment and, to a lesser extent, to the problem-based focus of their assignments. Nard remarked, “In this class I am a part of a group assigned to learn and produce results together. On
the one hand, working as part of a team effort has been the hallmark of my professional life in college development – fundraising definitely is a team effort. I have a reputation for working with groups in strategic planning. On the other hand, I have my daily lists and I only have so much of me to assign to each item on the list. If I stumble anywhere on the list the whole shoot goes down – my days and evenings are that tight.” For some, this resulted in feeling “lost,” “clueless,” withdrawn or not fully connected with others in their group or the class as a whole.

Changes in Perception of Self as a Group Member

While the evidence that participating in these collaborative experiences had an effect on their perceptions of themselves as learners is quite modest, the data do suggest that the process evoked a re-working of some aspects of self-identity. About eight group participants explicitly described some sense of the ways they have changed as a result of the experience or the effect it is has had on them. These changes or effects revolved development of awareness of themselves they did not have before; changed relationships and interactions with others in their lives, adult learners as well as colleagues and friends; and how their work or practice is changing as a result of these experiences. In addition, some learners described more theoretical or philosophical effects, such as questioning the meaning of adult learning, and their understanding of truth and what it means to come to know. India says, “the team process while frustrating has challenged my assumptions about how knowledge is constructed and is a transformative process.” Cynthia observed, I have learned that there really are-there’s really not a big “T”, there is not a big truth, that there are many truths. I have always I think through education tried to search for the answers. And it’s kind of toppled over and now I understand there really aren’t any answers per say, but that-and that the answers aren’t really as important as the questions.”

About a dozen participants made explicit reference to some sense of developed awareness or change in themselves as a group member. These effects include an awareness of the value of the group in contributing to the their individual learning; an increased openness and responsiveness to others in the group; and increased awareness of one’s self as a group member. The latter included both a deeper appreciation of relationships and interactions within the group but also a deeper awareness of their own preference for being by themselves and working alone. For example, Sophia explained,

There was a chat actually with Jack where he said I was kind of voicing some of this a little bit and he said do you spend most of your time convincing each other or trying to understand each other? [This was] my biggest learning experience in this process. I was deeply intrigued by this question. Quite honestly, I think I often expect others to do convincing and I do that myself as a good listener, but now I’m not so sure. I think I listen well in the one on one, but in groups, I feel a pressure to assert myself and state a valuable opinion. This assumption of mine has been challenged, and I feel myself changing in group settings…. I thought you know we're trying to convince each other. We all come in with our research and we feel like we have this chat time to say look what I found, we need to use this in our paper. Whereas we weren't really saying what did you find? How could we incorporate that or tell me about that, help me understand what it is that you found…. [in] this time crunch we felt we had to convince. We were just impatient.

Group Issues

Participants’ perceptions suggest a growing awareness of group process in learning; the ways in which these processes relate to the broader literature on adult learning and group dynamics; and how these processes relate to group productivity as well as their own sense of individual productivity. Awareness of group process issues reflected concern for the ways they communicated with and related to one another. Communication and interaction among their fellow group members were generally valued but frustrated by lack of clear expectations and role definitions, the use of online technologies, and various expressions of power and influence, such as perceived differences in experience, knowledge, and background in the problem. Power and influence were also expressed in the hesitation of some members to appear stupid or ignorant among their peers, or in the ways in which some members felt they might have pushed their ideas too hard and perhaps alienated others in their group. For example, Sophia suggested, “I think some of the tension went back to the two against one kind of feel. I think that I felt that I was part of the two and I would kind of be like oh, I don't want to alienate this person…. I have no idea what you just meant and without that sounding defensive or challenging or accusing. And I kind of felt like we were backing the person in a little bit... I don't want to make people feel that way, so I just felt bad about it.”

Some group members perceived shifts in the power and influence within their groups, from members having relatively little influence at first to developing a greater sense of influence as the group developed. Some group members perceived changes, such as re-evaluating their opinions of others in the group to seeing the issues more as a matter of difference and less as a problem, of developing a shared vision of the problem, and of helping all
members of the team learn and develop understanding. Yet, many of the groups struggled with using their time wise and effectively in the service of creating a high quality product. Several participants expressed frustration with the time and energy needed to create a group product and questioned, in the end, whether such an investment of time was really worth the effort. India remarked, “I came to the conclusion that it’s not collaborative that is my problem. It's group.” Autumn suggested, “I’ve always considered myself a people person and a team player. But I started to realize that I’m not sure in some projects I want to invest the time in the team process to get to the product.”

Influence of Online Technology on Group Process

Participants’ ambivalence with the group process and learning are most evident within their perceptions of the technology. They recognized the value of the online technology in creating a self-directed learning environment, one in which learners could enter and leave at their choosing, and could engage whenever and wherever they were located. But they shared the perception that the online technology created difficulties in developing and sustaining meaningful connections, interactions, relationships, and dialogue. Sophia remarked, “I really don't understand where they are coming from. And so it was hard for me to articulate that over the computer, like explain yourself or please fill me in more.” In this regard, the social dimension of the online learning was consistently compared with traditional, face-to-face settings and almost always came up short in the comparison. The online experience was described as a distraction to the focus of the learning task, a medium in which it was often difficult to fully express one’s self or to be effectively understood, and as “cold”, “impersonal,” and “lonely.” Even though they worked in groups online, many participants felt being in a face-to-face group experience would have helped them more with learning and understanding the course content. One participant described the “richness” of the face-to-face context that was absent in the online discussions. Several participants also pointed to the difficulty in getting to know and interact with other members of the class outside of their own small group, and relative absence of spontaneous interactions and relationships that they associated with face-to-face settings.

Discussion

The findings suggest an implicit awareness among the participants of the centrality of individual-group tension in the process of developing online groups and learning to be a member of such groups. Participants demonstrated a clear preference for interacting with others in the process of studying and learning their subject matter. While some members indicated a desire to be able to work alone some of the time, even their perspectives yielded to the perceived value and benefits of small group work. Clearly, they were holding back from entering more fully into group membership. They pointed to the online technology as a distinct barrier in preventing them from developing closer, more effective social relationships with others in their group and the class. Many participants contrasted this online context with the more traditional face-to-face environments, where they perceived the development of social interactions with their peers to be more easily accomplished and relationships more readily sustained. In addition, they pointed to the relative ease with which misunderstandings and incorrect assumptions could be corrected in the face-to-face settings. In online contexts, because of time lapses, absence of nonverbal cues, and the seeming sterility of text, such events in the group process were more likely to result in breakdowns in communications, interactions, and relationships, and were perceived to be more difficult to redress. Interestingly, however, the consensus decision-making process represents the one characteristic of the group process that insured they would work together, and spend time together, albeit electronically, constructing a group product. Yet it was this aspect of the group process that was almost universally held in contempt by the participants. Such apparent contradictions within the data suggest that participants are using a “face-to-face fantasy” of group life to rationalize their unwillingness to fully embrace the difficult paradoxes with which they were confronted in the online context.

So how might we understand these findings and what do they suggest about the process of reworking and reconstructing self-identity within the context of small online learning groups? One of the issues that emerged within this study is the problem of voice or group member identity. Participants perceive collaborative learning as a location for having voice and giving voice to others. They express a strong desire to belong and to be a part of a group but also to maintain their own individuality. Because these learning groups are intended to be consensus groups (Bruffee, 1999), participants struggled with the process of developing and nurturing a group voice, a sense of the group that includes but also transcends the needs and interests of any one individual member. Our findings suggest that the development of a group voice challenges the identities that individuals bring into the group. Most participants backed away from the need to visit and rework their identity as a group member, and relied primarily on learner identities they brought into the group. As a result, there was little development of a group voice and participants felt dissatisfied with the overall group process. For some participants, we have evidence that embracing and entering fully into this paradox fostered transformation in their sense of self-identity as a group member and,
possibly, as an individual outside of the group as well. Others, however, seemed less willing to let go a sense of individual identity that they brought into the group.

As we suggested earlier, some scholars have argued that the process of individual and group transformation engages individuals in a paradoxical tension of asserting a sense of will, on the one hand and, on the other, fostering a sense of willingness to be receptive to the voice of the other, be it another group member or the group as a whole. Our data suggests an implicit awareness of this developmental task among group members and the powerful and sometimes painful emotional dynamics that are associated with addressing this task. There is among many of the participants a powerful presence of will, a sense that “if ‘I’ only will enough, strengthen myself enough, work hard enough, learn enough, I will take complete charge, mastering my destiny and controlling my situation” (Hart, 2001 p. 157). In various ways, this perspective is clearly articulated by many of the group members. Yet, willingness, the desire to “say ‘yes’ to belonging” (Hart, 2001 p. 157) and to communion and unity seems much less evident in the participants’ descriptions of their experiences. It is as if they come face to face with its nature and turn back and both the group’s ability to be effective, as well as their membership in and satisfaction with the group suffer.

**Conclusion**

Transformative learning engages learners in a complex, inter-related but seemingly contradictory dynamics of will and willingness (May, 1982), a sense of “autonomy or agency on the one hand and a sense communion on the other” (Hart, 2001, p. 154). Learning to work together involves simultaneously holding on and letting go of one’s sense of agency and authority. This process involves deep change, development and transformation in collaborative learning groups and the members that embrace and task seriously this important task (Hart, 2001; Smith & Berg, 1987). The perceptions reported by participants in this study underscore the difficulty of engaging in transformative learning that involves a reworking of one’s sense of self. The findings also point to the importance of attending to process issues in collaborative and transformative learning, especially in online environments where they are often rendered invisible by the medium. Facilitating process issues is an area of online learning that needs more development.

**References**


Critical Humility in Transformative Learning When Self-Identity Is at Stake

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Abstract: Critical humility can help to facilitate transformative learning when deeply held beliefs about self-identity are at stake. Author formulates questions that assist learners in reflecting critically about issues that affect the practice of critical humility. These questions focus on self-identity, privilege, purpose of actions, and quality of self-reflection.

Ignorance is not so much what you don’t know as what you do know that isn’t so. (Irwin Miller, 1987)

Attempting to transform “our taken-for-granted frames of reference” into frames that are “more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 8) is especially challenging when the transformation involves deeply held beliefs about one’s basic self-concept or identity. Sometimes that identity is so embedded in sociocultural influences that the person is completely unaware that his or her perceptions about the world are limited and partial. Often, in fact, forces in the dominating culture reinforce a person’s belief system about what is normative and true. Sometimes, a person becomes aware of alternative perspectives and feels threatened by them. In reaction to perceived threat, people often respond defensively, as adult learning theorist Jack Mezirow explains: “When inadequate meaning schemes involve self-concept, we fill this void by compensation, projection, rationalization, or other forms of self-deception” (1991, p. 44). In both instances — either lack of awareness about alternative perspectives or defensive forms of self-deception in the face of new awareness — people embody the ignorance that Miller (1987) characterized, that is, they espouse and act upon what they think they know “that isn’t so.”

Our group has pondered the challenge of discovering “what we know that isn't so” in the context of our inquiry about a topic that involves deeply held attachment to self-concepts and identity. We are a group of six white European Americans who, as individuals, are adult education practitioners in a variety of institutional and community settings. We have been together as an inquiry group since 1998, seeking to change our relationship to white hegemony and institutionalized racism. Not only are we trying to learn how to expand our daily awareness of hegemony and racism, we also hold ourselves accountable for acting in ways that challenge our own and others’ participation in these systems.

Critical Humility: The Paradox of Knowing and Not Knowing

In the context of our inquiry, we have identified a quality of being that we call critical humility. The purpose of this paper is to share our ideas about this quality of being. First, we discuss critical humility as an aid in learning new attitudes and behaviors when self-identity is at stake. Second, we share our ideas about how critical humility can be fostered by reflecting on a number of questions that we offer as guidelines for practice.

We define critical humility as the practice of remaining open to discovering that our knowledge is partial and evolving while at the same time being committed and confident about our knowledge and action in the world. The two parts of this definition capture the paradox with which we struggle. If we are to hold ourselves accountable for acting, we must have confidence that our knowledge is valid enough to shape actions that are appropriate. At the same time, knowing that our knowledge is distorted by hegemony and possible self-deception, we need to be on constant alert about limits to the validity of our knowing.

European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness, collaborative@eccw.org. Presented at the Sixth International Transformative Learning Conference, Michigan State University, Oct. 6-9, 2005.

1 The European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness fosters research and learning about White Supremacist Consciousness. Collective authorship under one name reflects our understanding of the way knowledge is constructed. Members came together originally through a cultural consciousness project at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco; members are Carole Barlas, Elizabeth Kasl, Alec MacLeod, Doug Paxton, Penny Rosenwasser and Linda Sartor. Inquiries are welcome via email: collaborative@eccw.org
Critical Humility in the Context of Our Inquiry About White Hegemony and Racism

Although we have an intuitive hunch that the concept of critical humility may be relevant in multiple contexts, we acknowledge that our ideas about the phenomenon are grounded in the context of our own inquiry. We therefore offer a brief description of our work as an inquiry group.

We came together as a cooperative inquiry group in order to inquire into the impact of white supremacist consciousness on our personal beliefs and actions. Cooperative inquiry is an action research strategy that small groups of people use to guide themselves in learning from their personal experience about a topic of mutual interest. The method is based on multiple cycles of action and reflection and employs systematic validity procedures (European American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness, 2002; Heron, 1996).

Our evolving ideas about critical humility are based on our seven-year engagement examining white supremacist consciousness, a term we adopt from scholars of color (Delgado, 1995). Though the term “white supremacist consciousness” implies a focus on race, we see it as a system of thought that permeates all realms of behavior by people who view the world through its frame (Ani, 1994). Aspects of this consciousness — such as dualistic thinking, the privileging of the individual, and the presumption that white values are universal — manifest in all aspects of US society, from the treatment of the environment to efforts to transplant U.S. style democracy to other cultures (Paxton, 2003).

In the context of our group’s inquiry, critical humility means that we hold ourselves accountable for providing leadership in dismantling the hegemonic oppressiveness of whiteness while at the same time being actively aware that our ability to lead transformative change is limited by the same meaning perspective that we seek to change. Once in awhile we glimpse that meaning perspective with enough detachment that we are able to see our struggle to stay in an inquiry mode — when we are tempted toward unwarranted self-assurance that we have mastered “correct” perceptions about whiteness, race, and dominating systems of power, or, conversely, when we are tempted toward hopelessness about our ability to transform white supremacist consciousness. We adopted the phrase “critical humility” (European American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness, 2005a, 2005b) to conceptualize the capacity we are striving to develop. Learning to live with paradox and ambiguity is an important part of critical humility. One of our group’s opportunities to practice living in paradox is our effort to follow the guidance of African-American poet Pat Parker. She explains to “the white person who wants to know how to be my friend” that the first task is to forget she is black and the second task is to never forget she is black (Parker, 1990).

Critical Humility and Transformative Learning

We believe that the cultivation of critical humility helps a transformative educator or co-learner talk to others in a way that invites openness and allows transformative learning to occur. Because transformation related to core identity typically creates great discomfort and disorientation, learners are particularly vulnerable to self-delusion, avoidance or denial. Comfortable illusions provided by hegemony obscure avoidance and denial. At the same time, the negative impact of denial and self-delusion is increased when the learner’s identity is rooted in a dominant perspective, as in the case of white or male privilege. When employed by learners, critical humility supports opening to transformation and emotional discomfort in ways that enable learners to engage in critical reflection about self-identity.

With a hunch that critical humility may be relevant to other inquiries that put self-concept at risk, we tentatively suggest the importance of intentionally cultivating this quality of being. We understand that we have not discovered anything new with our conceptualization of critical humility. Though the concept of critical humility has not been clearly articulated in transformative learning theory, we believe many others have experienced what we seek to describe. In writing about critical humility in relationship to transformative learning theory, we recognize a number of theories with resonant qualities.

For example, the Buddhist concept of “beginner’s mind” provides insight into how humility is brought into critical humility. As adult education practitioners, we can and should be tenacious and emotionally attached to the promotion of what we know and believe; at the same time, to facilitate transformative learning and research that challenges our deepest meaning perspectives, we find that it is also important to bring a spirit of openness and non-attachment to our work. Our expectations and our egocentric attachment to outcomes can block creativity and experiences that lead to transformation. As the late Buddhist scholar and meditation master Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche explains, “the point is to open up so that instead of trying to define and control, to...make what's going on around you fit to the filters of your ego, your defense...let the events of the world flow through you and to watch them, thoughtfully so that they are not occluded by the anxious effort to react with opinion. This is the path of a child's beginner's mind” (p. 10, 1973). The ego “filters” described by Trungpa correspond to the habits of mind and habits of being described in transformative learning. About beginner’s mind, Zen Master Shunryu Suzuki adds that, “All self-centered thoughts limit our vast mind. When we have no thought of achievement, no thought of self, we
are true beginners. Then we can really learn something. The beginner's mind is the mind of compassion. When our mind is compassionate, it is boundless” (p. 21, 1970). Compassion for self and others has been a repeated learning and constant guide as we have engaged in our inquiry into white supremacist consciousness.

Because critical humility requires capacity for paradoxical thinking, theories describing the development of cognitive complexity are useful in thinking about how to develop critical humility. Although we recognize that they are culture-bound, there are many developmental models describing various dimensions of intellectual functioning, all of which move along a continuum from relative simplicity to greater complexity. One of the first of these (Perry, 1970) became the stimulus for many particular applications (Kohlberg, 1981; Gilligan, 1982; Belenky et.al., 1986; Kegan, 1994). In William Perry's model, which describes three developmental stages of intellectual development, the person moves from dualism through multiplicity to relativism. The underlying assumption in the epistemological position of dualism is that there is one “true” reality and that in order to know what is true, one depends on authority or expert knowledge. The epistemology of multiplicity honors subjectivity and is often characterized with the statement, “Everyone is entitled to her own opinion.” The epistemology of relativism requires the person to recognize that knowledge has multiple valid constructions. In the most developed stage in Perry's theory, called “relativism with commitment,” the person acknowledges that although there are multiple constructions of reality, he or she is ready to make a commitment to one particular construction, which he or she will defend as being more valuable than others. This developmental stage, relativism with commitment, is an epistemological stage that would be most conducive to the exercise of critical humility.

**Guiding Questions to Promote Critical Humility**

We have devised sets of questions designed to assist learners with reflection about the issues that seem most salient to us when a learner seeks to exercise critical humility while communicating about an issue that challenges self-identity. The questions in our guidelines are intended to help teachers and learners first to identify and then to explore factors that are most likely to confound their efforts to be both committed to insights gained from transformative learning and at the same time open to learning more when self-identity is at stake. As a whole, the questions seek to focus attention in three related realms: behavioral, cognitive and affective. The specific questions guide reflection about self-identity and values, the role of privilege, the purpose of the inquiry, and the self-reflective process. When using these guiding questions for our own inquiries, we have found that critically self-reflective answers can be remarkably difficult without the support of others. As Mezirow has suggested in his discussion of critical reflection, these questions can be most helpfully approached and resolved in interaction with co-learners and others willing to provide feedback. After presenting the guiding questions, we describe in further detail the advantages of working in groups when confronting issues related to transformation of self-identity.

These guidelines are useful both for examining one's own beliefs and practices as well as for engaging others in examining theirs. We believe that applications of critical humility can range from the institutional/systemic level, when one seeks to influence the leadership of an organization or community, to the individual level, when one wants to increase personal capacity in a particular area (e.g., anti-racism advocacy, teaching, or team leadership).

To assist the reader with imagining how to apply the questions in our guidelines, we set the stage with an example from our own experience that we then use in illustrating the guiding questions. At our first cooperative inquiry meeting we talked about why each of us was interested in an inquiry about white supremacist consciousness. As we discussed our commitment to social justice efforts, it struck us that our efforts to be “good” and do “good work” seemed real, but they also led to a desire to distance ourselves from white people who either did not share our commitments or who did not know as much about race as we perceived ourselves to know. We began playfully to talk about “good white people” and “bad white people.” This inadvertent conversation about self-identity caught our imagination. We had spent much of our professional lives thinking of ourselves as “good white people.” We quickly realized the potent irony: in trying to minimize our own supremacist consciousness, we felt compelled to cast ourselves as superior (to other white people). We built our first cooperative inquiry action around this conversation: before our next meeting, we would each notice times when we felt like the “good white person” (European American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness, 2005b).

Our collective experience with seeking and wanting to be the “good white person” helps us identify the questions we have put in place as guidelines for practicing critical humility. We often notice that despite our growing sense of confidence that we are becoming knowledgeable about how to act in relation to white supremacist consciousness, we still catch ourselves unconsciously falling back into the same pattern of being with which we began our inquiry nearly eight years ago. When we notice ourselves lapsing into a “good white person” identity, we feel foolish because we thought that we had learned not to do that. Practice of critical humility helps us pause to notice the lapse, but then to move forward with our commitments to think and behave differently.
Self-Identity and Values

The first questions can be the most difficult, but the most crucial for one’s success.

- What are all of the self-identities that might be in operation and at risk in this situation? (e.g., competent teacher, understanding parent, “good” person, non-racist white person, loyal feminist, etc.) It can be surprising to see the variety of identities operating in a given situation. One way to help uncover the specific self-identity at risk is to ask questions like: Where do I feel threatened? What am I scared about? What attracts me in a situation, or how do I see myself as different from others in this situation? What is the identity label I seek to avoid?
- Spend time unpacking a particular self-identity. For example, in our group we explore concrete details about a good white person. What do they do? How would we know one when we see one?
- What is my role in this situation? Here it is helpful to step back and see yourself from the perspective of other identity groups. For example, if a white man is part of a group where everyone else is a woman or person of color, his role in that interaction includes being a representative of his group; this is not the case in a group of all white men in which he could then be an individual.
- What are the costs and benefits of changing self-identity? The costs of transforming self-identity can be high when we realize we don’t know all that we thought we knew. How are these costs related to feelings of self-worth?
- How does the situation relate to my core values and beliefs about myself? How much stake do I have in the values being questioned? Are there competing or contradicting values or identities involved? How do I see the “moral high ground” in this situation?

Role of Privilege

Added to the complexity of understanding identity is a need to examine privilege in relationship to the particular situation. Although social location is important (for example, a white, male, heterosexual, Christian dominant location or a person of color, female, gay/lesbian, non-Christian subordinated location), the context of the situation must also be considered. It can either reinforce beliefs or bring them up for scrutiny, depending on the level of investment in particular identities present in the larger context. For example, the lone white man in a group of women and people of color (to which we refer in the preceding section) might feel like a minority in the context of that group, but the group’s presence within a predominantly white organization would reinforce the white and male privilege, even when the man is the only white male in the group.

- What is the privilege operating in the situation? Is privilege based on race, class, religion, gender ethnicity, age, physical ability or sexual orientation operating?
- Acknowledging that we all have multiple identities, which ones become salient and operate at any given time? What privilege do I have in this situation? In what ways am I resisting perceiving myself in a dominant position? What is the possible role of privilege in my research or learning?
- Is the context indifferent to my identity? Does the context reinforce my identity or reject my identity? Which salient identities come into play given the context?

Purpose

After engaging the questions on self-identity, we invite the practitioner to reflect on the nature of the inquiry or purpose of the communication. We often find ourselves defaulting to a win/lose frame of reference in heated or conflictive situations. This dualistic default then overrides our best intentions or purposes.

- What is the phenomenon I wish to change?
- Is my purpose and strategy for participating in this inquiry or communication in alignment with my self-identity?
- To what extent is my purpose threatening the self-identity(ies) at stake?
- How might I be perpetuating the phenomenon I wish to change in this situation?

Self-Reflective Process

The entire set of guidelines engages the learner in a self-reflective practice. The questions in this last section can be helpful if a learner is stuck or confused about the first three sets of questions. In our experience, feeling lost or confused as one addresses these questions is to be expected as a part of the process. If transformative learning
about one’s self-identity were easy, none of these questions would be necessary. Educator and writer Judi Marshall (2004) explains,

[E]spousing self-reflection is a bold claim. If, as Bateson argues, the conscious self sees an unconsciously edited version of the world… “the whole of the mind could not be reported in a part of the mind” (1973, p. 408), we cannot know everything through rational intelligence and must accept incompleteness. (p. 305)

The following questions are designed to help inquirers get an expanded perspective on their communication skills with regard to their purpose, while also acknowledging the impossibility of the task of seeing the whole:

- To what extent have I disclosed (am I disclosing) myself and thus, letting myself be vulnerable to new learning?
- To what extent have I perpetuated (am I perpetuating) the very phenomena I seek to change?
- How am I similar to that which I am criticizing?
- How am I similar to that which I am criticizing?
- Can I catch a glimpse of what I didn't know that I didn't know?
- Do I truly believe that I don't hold all of the answers? How is my information incomplete? What do I not know?
- In what dichotomies am I caught?
- How patient am I with myself about being wrong?

Strategies for Implementation

Transformation of self-identity is an ongoing process, not an end to be achieved. The ability to stay with an inquiry is vital. We have found that one of the best strategies for “staying in the inquiry” is to do transformative work as part of a learning community. In the context of our inquiry into emotionally provocative identity issues, we have identified five behaviors, described below, that are supported by participation in cooperative inquiry. Deepening capacity to engage in these behaviors enhances the integrity of insights achieved when working alone and thus may enhance the self-reflective process suggested above.

Living in the inquiry is difficult when the inquiry challenges one's core sense of identity. Being accountable to a group not only heightens day-to-day awareness of the inquiry topic but also counteracts natural inclination to avoid or repress it. Practicing new behaviors, recognizing when one fails to practice desired behavior, and unlearning habituated behaviors is a high-stakes enterprise. Group members help one another detect gaps between values and actions that may be invisible to the individual participant. The group also provides a safe place to practice new behaviors. Reflecting-in-action (Schön, 1987) is a necessary skill when confronting situations that continually challenge identity and is enhanced with regular conscious engagement in the practice within a group. Conceptualizing new learning about one's identity is enhanced by access to multiple perspectives. Inquiry groups that stay together over time also develop new language and metaphors that encode the complexity of their conversations and make meaning more accessible to members. Staying present to a range of emotional responses, including disorientation, vulnerability, anger and grief is difficult, particularly when self-concept is at stake. Inquiry groups provide support for facing emotional challenges and for legitimating emotional knowledge. These five interrelated behaviors together contribute to the inquirer’s ability to pursue with greater integrity topics that challenge self-concept (European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness, 2005b, pp. 249-250).

In [Tentative] Conclusion

We see critical humility as being more than a practice. We see it as being a “habit of mind” (Mezirow, 2000) or “habit of being” (Yorks & Kasl, 2002) that helps adult learners cope with increasing complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty as they undertake personal and organizational transformation. Processes that can precipitate transformative learning such as rational discourse and critical reflection (Mezirow, 1991, 2000) are more likely to come to transformative fruition if engaged within an internalized habit of critical humility. We believe that developing capacity to embody critical humility helps us discover the chasms between our espoused values and our actions in the world, explore and learn from them, and move toward more congruent action.

Our guidelines are a work in progress that we are developing out of our own experiences as European Americans inquiring into the impact of white supremacist consciousness on our personal beliefs and actions. We are presenting a set of questions and expect that there are many more that could be asked. Meaning perspectives or habits of being as fundamental as a person's cultural and racial identities are not easily identified, examined, or transformed. Conscious attention to critical humility can assist learners in challenging invisible assumptions,
distorted meaning perspectives and outdated habits of being. As adult educators, our ability to foster critical humility in the lives of our students can provide much-needed support for engaging in learning that is transformational. Perhaps even more significant is questioning how we bring critical humility to our own inquiries and lives, where we are expected to be experts with answers. As Suzuki (1970) reminds us, “In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few” (p. 21).

References
Transformative Learning in a Changing World: Guidelines and Strategies for Practice

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Abstract: This paper argues for a (re)conceptualization of transformative learning (TL) in school settings that is cognizant of an increasingly changing world. In the context of a fluid postmodern world, transformative learning should also expand learners’ knowledge and understanding of the world. At the level of practice, several prerequisite conditions sustain transformative learning including an emphasis on the following non-negotiable knowledge areas: critical thinking, global awareness, intercultural education and critical language awareness. Methodologically, critical pedagogy - applied critical theory, should guide the practice of transformative learning. Besides students, educators should, as practitioners continuously engaged in the twin and cyclical processes of teaching and learning, also be beneficiaries of transformative learning through regular autobiographical analysis.

The paper also argues that transformative learning has implications for policy-making and leadership practices. The most obvious connection to educational policy deals with the nature and kinds of learning outcomes that society expects from learners in various educational contexts. With regards to leadership practices, educators have much to do vis à vis providing the environment that nurtures and promotes transformative learning. While transformative learning theory as an emergent paradigm continues to generate debate in educational discourse particularly those related to adult education, it provides a starting point for emancipatory learning and social transformation that is cognizant of a changing world.

Introduction

In this paper, I make a case for the (re)conceptualization of transformative learning (TL) in school settings that is cognizant of an increasingly changing world. I also argue that these changes which include dramatic demographic shifts, globalization, the proliferation of information and communications technology (ICT), and global dissonance, have (re)positioned academic knowledge (what is learned in school) as a mediating variable in intra- and international social relations. Such a reassessment would also see transformative learning as a conduit to social justice, individual and group empowerment with two important caveats: the nature and type of knowledge learners receive, and an understanding of the fact that transformative learning is individual and context dependent: what counts as TL in one context may not be conceived as such in another.

Definitional Issues

Although there are different conceptions of transformative learning depending on disciplinary focus and areas of interest, one coalescing theme links its various approaches - the idea of a profound change in consciousness or perspective in the learner through critical reflection (see Mezirow et al., 1990; Mezirow et al., 2000; Cranton, 1994; McLaren 1998; Taylor, 1998). While as Taylor argues, the nature and extent of perspective transformation, is debatable, such a metamorphosis would of necessity, involve a re-alignment of the learner’s worldviews as well as a deeper understanding of the structures that impinge on his or her social and material world. Similar to Freire’s idea of conscientization, transformative learning awakens the interrogator in learners thus allowing them to challenge entrenched assumptions. In the context of a fluid postmodern world, transformative learning should also expand learners’ knowledge and understanding (beyond a superficial level) of the wider world.

Theoretical Framework

Conceptually, the paper is grounded in critical theory which recognizing how power and privilege operate to sustain domination in society, advocates the transformation of oppressive social structures including dominant ideologies, values, policies and institutional practices (see Peters, Lankshear & Olssen 2003). Also, critical theory offers a framework that is germane to the discussion here because it simultaneously critiques undesirable practices, addressing the nature of, and possibility of change through the dissection and challenge of taken-for-granted dominant knowledge which privileges certain ways of knowing while devaluing other forms.

In educational practice, critical theory manifests as critical pedagogy (often used synonymously with transformative pedagogy) With its focus on two dialectical views of education - how power mediates academic

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success and how challenge and interrogation can interrupt the control dominant society has over educational knowledge, the overarching goal of critical pedagogy is transformative practice. Rather than the sanitized and politically expedient knowledge that is disseminated in schools, critical pedagogists propose an alternative view of education that offers emancipatory possibilities (Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 1998; Shor, 1992). In practice, critical pedagogy offers educators a “compass” for simultaneously becoming facilitators and beneficiaries of transformative learning.

Guidelines for Practice

Several prerequisite conditions sustain transformative learning at the level of practice. First, there must be a democratic, warm and dialogical environment in which both the students and teachers see themselves as members of a community of learners. In such an environment, learners are encouraged to critically question and engage dominant narratives as well as analyse their own assumptions about and condition in society. Second, pedagogical approaches must be simultaneously constructivist and eclectic to allow the integration of different learning styles and perspectives. Third, policy makers and educators must recognize the fluid and unpredictable nature of contemporary social world which means that to survive in it as I argue elsewhere (Egbo: 2003), the following knowledge areas ought to be non-negotiable components of the curriculum:

Critical Thinking

In general, critical thinking enables learners to move from a restricted to a more abstract level of thinking. According to Paul and Elder (2004:1) “[c]ritical thinking is a process by which a thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them”. Used here in a Freirian sense that has liberating possibilities, critical thinking allows learners to see the “big picture” through a deliberate process of critical reasoning or dialectical thinking (Freire, 1997) that involves critical reflection, probing, questioning and finally reconfiguring the knowledge they receive in a way that appeals to their own experiences and meaning systems. When learners become conscientized through this process, they are able to engage and better understand the world around them and beyond.

Global Awareness

Engaging the world around them would facilitate learners’ understanding of how virtually all parts of the world intersect with everyone having a stake in its survival. It is indeed an illusion to assume that one is immune to what happens outside their immediate environment whether we speak in terms of diseases, environmental degradation or natural disasters. Authentic transformative learning within the context of a changing world should enable learners to gain in-depth understanding of the interface between their immediate community and the world community as well as how contemporarily, what they learn cannot be separated from global occurrences and societal factors both within and outside their immediate environment.

Intercultural Education

Two seemingly intractable trends dominate intra- and inter-national social relations: globalization and xenophobic attitudes. At no other time therefore has it been more critical to include intercultural education in any curriculum (both in formal and non-formal settings), that has transformative agenda. Central to the concept of intercultural education are eclectic knowledge and intercultural communication which involve learning and understanding other cultures as well as communicating effectively across cultures.

Critical Language Awareness

As a powerful technology of communication, language can be an arbiter of oppression or empowerment. It follows therefore that transformative learning strategies should include critical language awareness (Fairclough, 1992) which helps learners to understand how language, ideology and power intersect. The development of critical language awareness within educational settings is however dependent on the nature of learner/teacher communication. As Freire (1970) points out, democratic or dialogical discourse is essential in transformative education. Student-centred and teacher directed, dialogical communication aims to facilitate the development of critical thought which will in turn, facilitate conscientization. In dialogue-centred educational settings for instance, students are encouraged to ask critical questions about difficult social issues.

Educators as Facilitators and Beneficiaries of TL

While transformative learning is most often associated with learners, educators also benefit from it through a reflective process that allows them to engage in critical reflection and self-analysis. This seems logical if we accept
the premise that as co-participants in a community of learners, educators are constantly engaged in the simultaneous and cyclical processes of teaching and learning. For perspective transformation to occur however, certain self-directed processes (triggers) must be initiated. Cranton (1994) outlines the precursors of educator self-development and transformation:

The educator, in order to develop the meaning perspective of being an educator would: increase self-awareness through consciousness-raising activities, make his or her assumptions and beliefs about practice explicit, engage in critical reflection on those assumptions and beliefs, engage in dialogue with others and develop an informed theory of practice (p. 214).

Practical questions to facilitate the process of self-analysis and understanding may include the following:

- What are my basic assumptions about learning?
- What is my understanding of transformative learning?
- What global processes should inform my practice of transformative learning?
- What are the ethical implications of encouraging transformative learning?
- In what ways do I facilitate or discourage transformative learning among my students?
- What kinds of supporting resources do I use in my everyday practice?
- How do I promote critical thinking among learners?
- To what extent do I engage and deconstruct curricular materials?
- How current am I with research on transformative learning?
- How do transformative learning and global events intersect?

By problematizing their own practices on an on-going basis, practitioners develop critical consciousness which according to Freire (1970) is a necessary condition for emancipatory learning.

**Implications for Educational Policy and Leadership**

Besides its impact on learners and educators per se, TL also has significant implications for educational leadership and policy-making. The most obvious connection to educational policy relates to the nature and kinds of learning outcomes that society expects from learners in various educational settings particularly within the context of global relations that are constantly in a state of flux. With regards to the role of educational leaders, transformational leadership (Leithwood et al. 1996) which aims to empower subordinates through collaborative and participatory decision-making, and transformative leadership (Brown, 2004) which advocates praxis-oriented leadership practices, are most likely to yield positive results in TL oriented environment. Fostering TL in their own settings should however begin with a critical self-scrutiny to uncover the assumptions that undergird what they do as administrators. As Brown puts it:

If future educational leaders have engaged in self-directed learning, critical reflection, and rational discourse concerning their underlying assumptions about practice, the next logical step is to integrate these assumptions into an informed theory of practice (i.e., social action) (P. 97).

Pertinent questions to guide reflection and praxis include the following:

- What policy initiatives (e.g. changes in the curriculum) are necessary to foster transformative learning at the level of practice?
- What would a curriculum that is geared towards facilitating TL look like?
- Does society want future citizens who are curious and creative critical thinkers and are able to adapt to a changing world or is the reverse more desirable?
- How can educational leaders support TL at the micro-level?
- In what ways can TL contribute to inclusive teaching and learning?
- What are the guidelines for integrating TL across all levels of the education- that is, besides adult education?
- How can educational leaders foster TL in their respective institutions?
Answers to questions such as these will provide valuable insights for future directions in educational reforms and policy-making that are cognizant of a changing world order.

Conclusion

Although there are significant tensions and contradictions in transformative learning theory as an emergent learning theory (see Taylor 1998 for a précis of the salient arguments), it provides an important framework for educational practice that is geared towards awakening critical thought in the individual learner and subsequently as a catalyst for social change. Facilitating TL is by no means an easy proposition since the construction of meaning (including the interpretation of received knowledge) is individual and context-bound. However, because societal and global processes suggest the need for perspective-changing educational experiences, promoting TL among learners is a worthwhile educational goal.

References


Transformational Learning and the Theoretical Perspectives of Developmental and Social Constructivism

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Abstract: This paper begins to examine the relationship of transformational learning and adult development through the theoretical perspectives of developmental and social constructivism. Three areas present rich possibilities for exploring the relationship between transformational learning and adult development within the constructivist frameworks: the phases of meaning; membership and opportunity to participate in discourse communities; and, the potentially mixed developmental capacities of learners and adult educators in the learning context.

In 1978, Mezirow noted that “perspective transformation is a generic process of adult development; it is a kind of learning—perhaps the most important kind—that enables us to move through the critical periods of adulthood” (p. 12). Inherent to Mezirow’s ongoing elaborations of transformational learning has been what Tennant (1993) called a pervasive tension between adult development and transformational learning. Mezirow has claimed that “perspective transformation is the engine of adult development (1994, p. 228)”, yet the increasingly reified relationship between development and transformational learning has remained largely unexplored. Mezirow does little to illuminate the connection and process when he defines “development in adulthood as learning—movement through phases of meaning becoming clarified” (2004, p. 69).

Merriam (2004) recently reviewed the adult cognitive development literature and arrived at a theoretically feasible conclusion reached earlier by Harris (2000): critical reflection upon assumptions and conscious responsibility to construct meanings as demanded by current elaborations of transformational learning theory may require a cognitive developmental capacity that may or may not have been attained by the individual. Merriam asserts that “mature cognitive development is foundational to engaging in critical reflection and rational discourse necessary for transformational learning” (p.65) and urges further examination of her proposal that higher order cognitive development is a prerequisite to transformational learning.

However, Merriam’s claim echoes similar theoretical claims for prerequisite developmental capacity made by researchers exploring another cornerstone of adult education: self-directed learning (SDL). Theory building efforts by Long (1992), Garrison (1992, 1997) and Brockett and Heimstra (1991) emphasize psychological control and autonomy. Their work can be traced to Mezirow’s (1981) early assertion that an important element of self-directed learning is the learner’s conscious examination of the cultural and psychological assumptions that influence one’s learning. Mezirow claimed that “becoming critically aware of what has been taken for granted about one’s own learning is the key to self direction” (p. 1985, p. 17). Long (1989) asserted the importance of the cognitive or psychological dimension of adult learning by defining self-directed learning as encompassing cognitive processes controlled by the learner “with no external supervision by a powerful other” (Long, 1992, p. 12).

Mezirow has previously written that perspective transformation “is a constructivist theory of adult learning” (1991, p. 31). It is proposed that an examination of the relationship of transformational learning and development within and against the theoretical perspectives of both developmental and social constructivism may yield a robust research agenda. The examination of transformative learning from either a developmental or social constructivist perspective provides a starting point based on current abilities and future potential of adult learners. It also provides the basis for closer examination of the membership of discourse groups and the context of transformational learning. In contrast, a research agenda focusing on individual attainment (or not) of mature cognitive development as a prerequisite to transformational learning is a deficits approach to learning that brings us full circle back to Tennant’s (1993) observation that “the whole project of perspective transformation is based on the notion of an underdeveloped or distorted self…” (p. 36).

Constructivism

Constructivists assume knowing to be an active process of constructing meaning, making sense or making meaning of experience. This knowing or knowledge construction, requiring interaction with experience, is an adaptive activity (von Glaserfield, 1995). Developmental constructivists link development to meaning construction
Exploring the Possibilities

Three areas present rich possibilities for exploring the relationship between transformational learning and adult development within the constructivist frameworks: the phases of meaning; membership and opportunity to participate in discourse communities; and, the potentially mixed developmental capacities of learners and adult educators in the learning context.

Taylor (2000) reviewing studies of transformative learning found that few studies report the existence of each of the 10 phases of meaning originally identified by Mezirow. Is this because all phases are not required for transformation or is it because individuals constructing meaning from developmentally different meaning making systems construct the phases differently? How would individuals construct transformational learning and the 10 phases of meaning that are clarified (Mezirow, 2000) within the bounds of the available developmental capacity of their underlying meaning making systems? Using Kegan’s theory of evolving epistemologies and his subject-object interview methodology, Erickson’s study (2002) of peer instructors suggests that the phases of meaning are constructed and the process of transformational learning is engaged within the bounds of the individual’s underlying meaning making system. Individuals in her study were found to be constructing meaning predominately from either the socialized self or the self-authorized self meaning making systems. Erickson suggests 2 differing phases of meaning leading to transformational learning based upon developmental capacity or the ‘rules’ of the underlying meaning making system of the individual. For example, the phase of “self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22) is consistent with the socialized self meaning making system. But, for individuals constructing meaning from the self-authorized self system, the phase was identified as self-affirmation.

It is argued that an event deemed disorientating for one individual and leading to transformational learning may not be disorientating for another. Furthermore, the disorientating dilemma suggests a reactive learner versus an individual intentionally choosing and creating a transformational learning experience for themselves. Is it possible that there are different types of dilemmas that are implicated in the process of transformational learning dependent upon the event and the individual’s underlying meaning making capacity? This theoretically echoes Arlin’s (1975) seminal work that identified the problem solving capability of formal operations in contrast to the problem finding capability of post-formal operations. Erickson (2002) identifies the disorienting dilemma, the opportunity dilemma and the touchstone dilemma. The later, a recurring, lingering dilemma, may be similar to Taylor’s suggestion (2000) that a possible catalyst to transformational learning are integrating circumstances “which do not appear as a sudden, life-threatening event; instead they are more subtle and less profound, providing an opportunity for exploration and clarification of past experiences” (p. 299). The opportunity dilemma acknowledges the proactive possibilities of a learner choosing to engage or embark upon a process of transformational learning.

Mezirow has proposed that either objective or subjective reframing of a frame of reference results in transformational learning. Objective reframing involves critical reflection of assumptions in the instrumental domain of learning (Mezirow, 1998) versus the more complex critical examination of the assumptions of the self required for subjective reframing. Conceptualizing transformational learning within the bounds of differing meaning making systems presents a developmental theoretical explanation for these two types of reframing leading to perspective transformation.

Rational discourse with others is presented as essential to transformational learning (Mezirow, 2000), but little research has been carried out regarding discourse members. Mezirow notes the importance of validating one’s new knowledge by “…relying on as broad a consensus as possible of those more informed, rational, and objective”
(Mezirow, 1991, p. 76). Some social constructivists theorize that cognitive development is pulled “through interactions with other members of the society who are more conversant with the society’s intellectual practices and tools (especially language) for mediating intellectual activity” (Rogoff, 1995, p. 141). Who and how are members chosen and how is the setting to engage in discourse chosen? Work by Kilgore and Bloom (2002) demonstrates that the decision to join a discourse group “more conversant” with society’s tools is not always voluntary, but results from mandatory attendance requirements to qualify for or retain particular benefits. Furthermore, Kilgore and Bloom make an important assertion: students may be “using the master discourses of transformation that they learn in their adult education classes, but without really experiencing the transformation” (p. 129).

Vygotsky’s zones of proximal development (ZPD) refer to processes of development that involve instruction, guidance, or scaffolding (van Geert, 1994). van Geert (1994) speculates that developing individuals use environmental resources to actively create a ZPD. Potential for development (and transformational learning?) may be dependent upon the ZPDs to which a person has access or which they have the ability to create. To what extent do individuals constructing or making meaning of a dilemma (disorientating, opportunity, or touchstone) actively create or seek a ZPD to respond to the dilemma? Are individuals joining an environmental studies class or support group, traveling to a foreign country, or enrolling in a women’s college re-entry program intentionally creating a developmental ZPD? To what extent do economic and social factors constrain individual options and the resources available to create a ZPD? To what extent do cultural factors influence environmental resources perceived as available for creating a ZPD?

Finally, Merriam’s premise that mature cognitive development is a prerequisite for the critical thinking required as part of the process of transformational learning raises an uncomfortable question. Given the unequal or mixed attainment of higher cognitive development levels (Kitchener & King, 1994; Kegan, 1998), can we assume that adult educators will have more complex meaning making systems than their learners? It seems that if advanced cognitive development is a prerequisite to transformational learning, then advanced cognitive development would be required to foster transformational learning! The possibilities of experiencing or fostering transformative learning would be limited to a very few indeed.

Mezirow (1991) identifies Perry’s work as contributing “directly to understanding the importance of perspective transformation in development” (p. 155). Perry proposed that a learner’s underlying, evolving meaning making system or “changing frames of reference for interpreting reality” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. x) influences construal of learning experiences and the learning environment. Using Perry’s model of intellectual development for her study of community college instructors and their students, Wilson (1996) found developmentally mixed classrooms, students higher than instructors and instructors higher than students. Wilson (1996) found that instructors at less advanced Perry levels described learning as a set of hierarchical skills and favored teacher directed classrooms. Instructors at more advanced levels described learning as a process of inductive reasoning, creativity, problem and meta cognition and actively encouraged self-directed learning.

What do we miss in examining the learning context for transformational learning if our underlying, uncritical assumption is that the ‘cognitively mature’ educator creates transformative learning experiences and the learner does their part by transforming? In addition to noting the plethora of articles and the general confusion around constructivism, Phillips (2000) describes two polarities in the literature: social constructivism and psychological constructivism (developmental). The former addresses the construction of formal knowledge. The latter includes how meaning is constructed by individuals and how meaning is developed collaboratively in a group.

The intent participation learning model described by Rogoff (2003) is a “collaborative, horizontal participation structure with flexible, complementary roles” (p. 184) that offers greater possibility for exploring mutual and collaborative transformational learning in groups for

…in intent participation, learners engage collaboratively with others in the social world. Hence, there is no boundary dividing them into sides. There is also no separation of learning into an isolated assembly phase, with exercises for the immature, out of context of the intended idea (p. 182).

Summary

This paper begins to raise questions about the relationship of adult development and transformational learning within and against the theoretical perspectives of developmental and social constructivism. It must be noted, however, that it remains to be seen if the constructivist frameworks open sufficient space to include the affective and intuitive dimensions of transformational learning or for a critically and culturally responsive exploration of transformational learning.

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A Contemplative Approach to Understanding
Transformative Learning as Experienced at l’Arche

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Abstract: Using autoethnography and narrative analysis, this paper (a work in progress) focuses on transformative learning in a specific context, namely the l’Arche context. l’Arche can be described as a unique residential community for persons with developmental disabilities, and those who choose to live and work with them. Founded by Jean Vanier and Fr. Thomas Philippe in 1964, l’Arche has, nearly 42 years later, evolved into an International Federation of communities where adults with developmental disabilities and those who support them live and work together. The goal of international l’Arche is three fold: first, to recognize the unique value and vocation of each person whether they have a disability or not, second, to create an atmosphere of family and friendship, and third, to be a sign of hope in the world. To the outsider, l’Arche may appear to be some what isolated or marginalized in its mission and way of life. To the insider, l’Arche is often experienced as a school of the heart, as an arena for the process of self-transformation to occur. Related to being a school of the heart, l’Arche is considered by some to belong to the tradition of contemplative rather than active communities. Santra (1997) writes that amid the hum drum or rising, going to work and winding down for the day, presence take precedence over project; people learn to wait forming habits of attention; there is value to being intuitively awakened and responsive to the movement of the heart. This paper takes a contemplative approach towards understanding transformative learning as experienced at l’Arche, in a specific context.

Introduction
Almost any one who has encountered l’Arche would agree that it can be called ‘a school of the heart.’ Founded in 1964, by Jean Vanier, the goal of international l’Arche is presently to create a sense of home and family within small communities where persons with developmental disabilities and those without may live and work together assisting one another to grow in various aspects of life. More importantly, it is about living and working with those who’s ‘handicap’ is different from ours. At l’Arche, because language is so important, persons with developmental disabilities are called core members, as they form the core of the community. Therefore, at the centre, it is those who are most vulnerable who hold the community together. Those who support them are called assistants. This is the terminology that will be adopted throughout this paper.

Inclusion as experienced at l’Arche means recognizing the gifts of persons who have developmental disabilities, listening to them and learning from them. Those once labeld ‘mentally retarded’ are the teachers and mentors of the normal, the robust and the strong (Downey, 1986). How is this so? What is it that is so unique about the pedagogy experienced at l’Arche? The short answer is that encountering l’Arche can bring about a powerful transformation of the heart, in which core members are the often ‘masters’ in their own non-directive way. To respond to these questions, in a more systematic way, I have adopted the following strategy: First, the use of narrative analysis as the methodology is clarified. Second, using authoethnography, I provide some personal background information as it relates to coming to the research work. Third, I make brief mention about Vanier and the story of how l’Arche was born. Fourth, three instances of transformation will be provided in narrative form, showing how learning takes place in the present moment, just as it is. Fifth, some of the characteristics of transformative learning are discussed, as they seem to be emerging from a preliminary analysis of data collected. Sixth, transformative learning as experienced at l’Arche is framed within three governing principles. Said another way, a three fold philosophy is applied to understanding transformative learning: the gift that one is (whether one has disabilities or not), our ignorance of the gift that one is, and our sense of ‘homecoming’ to the gift that is present within self and other. Finally, a response to the question, “whom is l’Arche for?” is offered to make transformative learning as experienced at l’Arche more meaningful and accessible to both insider and outsider.

Methodology: Narrative Analysis
According to Polkinghorne (1988) human science investigations related to narrative can be distinguished according to whether the purpose of research is 1) to describe the narrative already held by the individual and group,
or what has happened, and 2) to explain through narrative why something happened, or what might be the meaning of what has happened. The first kind of narrative research is descriptive and the second kind of investigation is explanatory or interpretive. My research work uses narrative analysis, the purpose of which is to consider the interconnectedness between the descriptive form and the explanatory form. The narratives analyzed are my own (autoethnography), Amanda’s narrative (one of the participants of the study) and Claudia’s narrative as told by Vanier (1998).

Autoethnography: Coming to the Present Research Work

My research work with l’Arche has its origin in the period of time I spent as an assistant at a l’Arche community in South Western Ontario, Canada. While the two and a half years I first spent as a full time live-in assistant, was a short span of time compared to the decades that others have lived there, it has nevertheless, had a profound and lasting impression on me. When I hear, and contemplate the word “transformation” my thoughts surprisingly rest with l’Arche. Then I ask myself, “Why l’Arche?” I find that the answer lies in the person I am becoming. No other learning environment has transformed me and challenged me to be more thoughtful, considerate, and inclusive: in short more human.

Without even trying, the core members (persons with developmental disabilities), once labeled “mentally retarded,” have helped me learn so much. Therefore, my personal experience forms the basic premise for my research interest, along with the growing recognition of a non-negotiable need to better live inclusion in the many arenas of our lives, particularly that of education. As I reflect on my own experience, I recall my time at l’Arche as being one of radical learning. There are at least two significant shifts that occurred for me 1) having started out to “serve” others through Christian principle, I realized that I was being served in a mysterious way, and 2) the core members played a part in this: they were my mentors and teachers in their own way non-directive way. I left with the question, “How can I continue to live, where ever I may be, the inclusive way of life that I experienced at l’Arche?”

Finley (2000), author of contemplative spirituality asked a similar question when he left a Trappist monastery, The Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky where Thomas Merton was his novice master. In his book The Contemplative Heart, Finely writes that he left the monastery with this question firmly established within himself: ‘How can I live, out here “in the world,” the contemplative way of life I lived in the monastery?’ In seeking advice, Finely narrates that Dan Walsh, Merton’s philosophy professor at Columbia, offered valuable perspective. Dan Walsh responded that it is not so much a matter of Finely finding a way to communicate what he learned at the monastery, but rather allowing what he learned to communicate itself though him. Similar to this, I am inspired to remain intuitively awakened and responsive to how the inclusive way of life I experienced at l’Arche is communicating itself through me.

The question of contemplative living has continued to endure says Finley, undergoing its own transformation as it has continued to transform him in his ongoing response to it. I feel similarly about l’Arche: the spirit of l’Arche continues to endure, undergoing its own transformation as it continues to transform me in my response to it. During my masters program, my supervisor asked me what I’d like to do for my thesis, and told her that I wanted to study the pedagogy of l’Arche. She strongly encouraged me to do so. I successfully defended my master’s thesis, called The Pedagogy of l’Arche: A School of the Heart. Presently, for my doctoral dissertation I am continuing my research with l’Arche, which is a more in depth investigation of the pedagogy of l’Arche, using hermeneutic phenomenology as my methodology. The working title of my doctoral dissertation is this: A Marginal Pedagogy: l’Arche and the Education of the Heart. It is the ongoing response to living l’Arche that brings me to my research work. The next section provides a brier overview of Vanier and the story of how l’Arche began.

Vanier and the Story of l’Arche in Brief

L’Arche was founded by Jean Vanier, son of the nineteenth, Canadian born Governor General of Canada, Georges P. Vanier and his wife Pauline Archer Vanier. Jean Vanier was born on September 10, 1928, and is one of five children. At the age of 13, Vanier joined the Royal Navy, where he served for nine years. He resigned his commission in 1950. Following this, he spent more than a decade studying and teaching philosophy and theology, and exploring his Roman Catholic faith. Vanier was educated in England, Canada and France. In a recent interview, Vanier says that he was never ordained to the priesthood, as he found that it was not for him. However, he is seen as a pastor who gently and patiently points to the presence of God where one may least expect to find it.

In 1962, Vanier successfully completed his doctoral dissertation in philosophy at l’Institut Catholique de Paris. Upon completion of his dissertation, Happiness: Beginning and End of Aristotelian Ethic, Vanier began teaching philosophy at St. Michael’s college in Toronto. Restless, Vanier soon left the university and moved to France, where he joined his spiritual mentor, a Dominican priest, Fr. Thomas Philippe, the chaplain at Val Fleuri, an institute for
men with developmental disabilities. Inspired by his friend and mentor, Thomas Philippe, Vanier bought a small house in the village of Trosly-Breuil, and welcomed three men, Raphael Simi, Philippe Seux and Dany to leave the institution where they were living and share their lives with him in a real home. Vanier writes that he wanted to create a community of which they would be the centre, and he wanted to give them a family, a place of belonging where they could grow in all dimensions of their being (Vanier, 1995).

L’Arche was born on August 4, 1964. Vanier christened their little home in Trosly-Breuil “l’Arche” after Noah’s Ark in the Bible. There were challenges to be faced from the very beginning. Dany was deeply and emotionally disturbed. In a state of total insecurity, he began to hallucinate. Vanier admits to being completely lost with Dany (Spink, 1991). Vanier recognized that it was impossible for Dany to stay, and Dany left l’Arche.

“Simplicity and poverty characterized l’Arche,” writes Vanier (1995). The house was poor and had no toilets (they had set up a pail in the garden!) They managed with one tap and one wood-burning stove. It is from these humble beginnings that l’Arche has grown. On March 22, 1965, Vanier was asked to take on the directorship of Val Fleuri (the institution). It was a big house with thirty-two men. With help from the neighbours and Vanier’s influence, Val Fleuri was transformed into a place where a sense of peace and joy was possible. During this time a number of other houses were purchased in Trosly-Breuil, and new community homes were opened. L’Arche flourished and its reputation spread: within six years, l’Arche communities had opened in Canada and India. Downey (1994) writes that from the seeds sown in Trosly-Breuil in August 1964, l’Arche has grown to include over a hundred communities in about thirty countries, representing family like homes. There is a charter that all communities adhere to.

The aim of telling this story of l’Arche was to catch a glimpse of Vanier’s own journey of transformation. To try and describe the various influences that might have shaped Vanier’s thinking is beyond the scope of this paper, however, Downey (1994) provides a comprehensive description of several persons and events that have influenced Vanier and his understanding of the heart: Fr. Thomas Philippe, the study of Aristotle, his parents, Georges Philias Vanier and Pauline Archer Vanier, persons with disabilities, Vanier’s encounter with the third world (India), and the gospel. The next section tells of instances of transformative learning as witnessed by core members and assistants today. It is almost as if l’Arche is being knitted with the thread of transformative learning.

**Instances of Transformative Learning as Witnessed by Assistants and Core Members Today**

This section describes two narratives, Claudia’s and Amanda’s, showing transformative learning as it happens in the present moment, becoming apparent over time. Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning suggests that when people experience changes in their lived, find themselves in a dilemma or encounter new information that contradicts what they have always believe, they may review their beliefs and perspectives (Cranton 1998). Mezirow’s (1991) theory of transformative learning was developed, to explain the process individuals go through when transformation takes place (Cranton, 1998). Applied to the l’Arche context then, we can catch a glimpse of how transformative learning takes place in the lives of core members and assistants, amid the ordinary occurrences of daily life.

**Claudia**

In his well acclaimed book *Becoming Human*, Vanier (1998) tells the story of Claudia who was welcomed to the l’Arche community in Suyapa, a slum area of Tegucigalpa, Honduras in 1975. It is a moving story of ‘love transforming chaos.’ Claudia, a blind, deeply troubled, seven year old who had spent practically all her life in a dismal, overcrowded asylum experienced transformation over the twenty years she lived at l’Arche. When Vanier visited the community and met Claudia years later, he writes that he found her quite well. She was by then a twenty-eight-year-old woman, still blind, and autistic, but at peace and able to do many things in the community. From Claudia’s story, Vanier illuminates seven aspects of love that seem to be necessary for transformation in the heart of those who are profoundly lonely. They are: to reveal, to understand, to communicate, to celebrate, to empower, to be in communion with another, and finally to forgive.

**Amanda**

In an extract from one of my interviews, Amanda explains one instance of transformation. She narrates a powerful story of how on a Good Friday afternoon, through a crisis with one of the core members, she was brought to a place of compassion, forgiveness and understanding. Amanda had helped organize the ceremony for the Stations of the Cross for Good Friday, which was to take place in a forest nearby (in one of the communities in France). It so happened, that one of the core members, Peter was very upset, and Amanda had to leave the ceremony to take him home. At first, she remembers being angry, because she wanted very much to be a part of the
celebration. Peter was upset to, and escalating in anxiety. They returned home, upset and needing space from each other. This is the narrative in Amanda’s words:

I think in the beginning, I was angry and so was he. And we could not really communicate. We needed space from each other. And then at one point, I don’t know if it was prayer or the grace, of the moment…but I remembered shifting inside. I decided to really be there with Peter…to let go of the ceremony. I realized that it was probably not a very good week for Jesus in those days anyhow. Jesus, crying…I am thirsty was probably in Peter at that time. It was Peter, who at the moment, was close to the cross, because of his anguish and because of different feelings that he had…and to choose to be there with him. That shift within myself changed everything for the afternoon after that. I was not resentful anymore about not being in the forest. I could be there, so he could finish his explosion, and then we could sit down, and I could help him to get changed, and at the end of the day, he said “I’m sorry, Amanda” and I could forgive him too. So I think that was one day when…that shift happened within me. And it was not very different, you know, than being with Jesus who was on the cross. And it was a powerful, powerful moment.

Vanier’s narrative of Claudia and Amanda’s narrative both provide insights into how personal transformation may be manifested: In the case of Amanda, she witnesses in Peter, the suffering Christ – something that caused her to shift her perspective. In the case of Claudia, she matures into peaceful woman a woman of twenty eight, who does many things in her community in Honduras. The next section derives some characteristics as they seem to be emerging from a preliminary analysis of the data collected so far.

Characteristics of Transformative Learning as Experienced at l’Arche

A working definition has been developed to identify some of the characteristics of transformative learning as experienced at l’Arche: it seems to be fundamentally relational in its origin; often mutual and reciprocal in encounter; unitive in its process and outcome; grounded in the concrete immediacy of the present moment; apparent over time; often experienced through spontaneous intuitive knowing. Specific to the l’Arche environment, it is fostered by the mission, philosophy and way of life at l’Arche. Broadly speaking, an open heart enhances the pedagogical experience, and a closed heart hinders it. A key notion is that as the transformative pedagogy of the heart shapes one, whether at l’Arche or else where, one in turn shapes the transformative pedagogy.

[A note about the definition: It is acknowledged that the precise meaning of these terms, along with the very issue of how language is used to articulate the same, needs to be carefully addressed.]

All of these characteristics serve to render l’Arche as a “unique” residential community, fostering a transformative learning of the heart, not only for core members, assistants, and other community members, but for those who wish to encounter, engage and re-create aspects of transformative learning in their own unique situation.

Conclusion: A Three Fold Philosophy

Downey (1986) writes that the pedagogy of l’Arche is clearly not educational methodology or curriculum. We find neither a manual of teaching objectives/methods, not a series of lesson plans. Rather, the distinctive way of learning emerges from an underlying belief and recognition in the uniqueness, giftedness and human potential of one’s self and another while living in an environment that fosters the same. It is not theoretical knowledge alone that is of interest here, but contemplation, reflective practice, personal knowledge, personal questions, and answers to the basic questions of human existence. Transformative learning of this kind is offered not instead of, but in addition to dominant understandings of learning.

Finley (2000) draws attention to a three fold contemplative philosophy, suggesting that perhaps this is particularly important for us today because we live in a culture which is not contemplative in its fundamental ethos. However, it is most appropriate to examine transformative learning against this contemplative philosophy, because l’Arche as been described as belonging to the tradition of contemplative rather than active communities (Santer, 1997). The philosophy of contemplative living that Finley proposes has three interconnected principles: the divinity of what just is, our ignorance of the divinity of what just is, and the path of homecoming to the divinity inherently present, or the path of our contemplative self-transformation. All of these principles are related to transformation as experienced at l’Arche, as initiated by Vanier: the gift that one is (whether one has disabilities or not), our ignorance of the gift that one is, and our sense of “homecoming” to the gift that is present within self and other.

Finally, it must be pointed out that, learning and being transformed are not synonymous. One of the main differences between learning and transformative learning may be a subtle deepening of the quality of presence and appreciation for all that one is faced with at any given point in time – an ability to allow for the coming, enduring and passing of life situations just as they are. To the question, “Whom is l’Arche for?” one may answer that it can be
for anyone who wishes to access l’Arche, not just by reading, listening to or watching a program on TV, but by spending time visiting a community, and witnessing first hand the transformative learning experience.

References
Investigating the Role of Persons With Developmental Disabilities in Transforming the Ethical Imagination of Citizenship: A Research Proposal

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Abstract: Using a methodology of appreciative inquiry and dialogue, the proposed research is an investigation into the role that persons with disabilities have in transforming and configuring meanings of the ideology, culture, political and social components of ‘citizenship.’ Specific to the social component, and drawing from the l’Arche context, links are made between ‘persons with disabilities’ and ‘notions of citizenship’. Some of the links to be made are through the following themes: meaning of citizenship, justice, reciprocity in the world of gift, belonging, personhood, diversity and inclusion, forgiveness, compassion and strengthening democracy. L’Arche is unique for the way in which it recognizes the ‘gift of person’. Founded by Jean Vanier in 1964, l’Arche can be described as an International Federation of communities, the goal of which is to create a sense of family and friendship by living and working together with persons who have disabilities; those whose disabilities are different from ours. Through l’Arche, we see that Vanier has challenged and reframed the negative overtones of difference and disability, providing a vision of inclusion that has at its centre ‘the person’ and ‘a sense of belonging’. It is precisely this vision of Vanier’s that will be explored and offered, as a complement to existing understandings of citizenship. This presentation focuses on transformative learning in a specific context.

Linking Terms: Citizenship and Disability

Citizenship is a complex and multidimensional concept, primarily signifying membership to a political community. It consists of legal, cultural, social and political elements, providing citizens with defined rights and obligations, a sense of identity and social bonds. Ichilov (1998) writes that the classical definition of citizenship rests on the assertion that citizenship involves a balance or fusion between rights and obligations, with more recent definitions of citizenship stressing the affinity and identity dimensions of citizenship.

Related to this ‘identity’ dimension of citizenship, is that of ‘inclusion’. In this context we can consider the Vision statement for the External Advisory Committee, New Deals for Canadian Cities and Communities which states that Canadian cities and communities are sustainable places of exceptional beauty, neighbourliness and prosperity, rich in ideas, confidence, diversity and innovation, where all citizens are included economically, socially and politically. Ichilov describes the literature as a ‘school of the heart’ l’Arche is seen to be one such sustainable place of exceptional beauty. Inclusion as experienced at l’Arche means recognizing the gifts of persons with disabilities, listening to them and learning from them (Escrader, 2001). From a l’Arche perspective, this research proposes that persons with disabilities have role in helping us to get there to these places of exceptional beauty, neighbourliness, prosperity; places where all citizens are included economically, socially and politically.

Historically, persons with disabilities have been viewed as a corporate liability, pushed to the margins of the social symbolic order. Why has this been so? Downey (1994) writes that the physical handicaps and affective wounds of persons with disabilities place them in a position of weakness. They need help and assistance in the most ordinary activities of daily living. With the cultural emphasis on productivity and efficiency, their position of weakness is exacerbated. Their obvious weakness and suffering is perceived as a personal as well as a corporate liability. Biological and cognitive differences limit the capacity of people with intellectual or developmental disabilities to participate in society. Such limits however, are in effect exacerbated by the social rejection and stigma attached to the particular way in which they are different (Cushing, 2004). In this way, people with disabilities are on the margins, the edge of society.

Given this historical background, a closer look reveals that it is not only persons with disabilities who lead severely circumscribed lives, but the so called ‘normal’ as well, for they remain ignorant of the gift that persons with disabilities have to offer, perpetuating patters of violence against the vulnerable. What Vanier has done through l’Arche is that he has single-handedly, challenged and reframed the negative overtones of disability and difference, offering a powerful corrective for our ‘productivity’ driven culture, pointing to the values of justice and friendship.

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the value of heart, the value of person as heart. By heart is meant that which includes the affective domain, through which we influence and are influenced by another.

From this perspective of heart, years of experience of working with people who have developmental disabilities and others who have been labeled marginalized have shown us that a profound transformation takes place, when genuine encounters occur between individuals who have been marginalized and others. By ‘transformation’ in this context, is meant that specific kind of transformation that incorporates a qualitative shift in values, in world view, in one’s sense of self and in appreciation of the gifts and worth of the ‘other’. And the change is reciprocal – that is both parties are transformed by the experience. It is this notion of mutuality and reciprocity that is finding its way into transforming notions of citizenship. Governments and educational institutions are also awakening to the value of inclusion and full participation of individuals with disabilities in society – recognizing a non-negotiable need to enable full citizenship for everyone. In this context the proposed research focuses on the role that persons with disabilities have in transforming notions of citizenship, as witnessed through l’Arche. The next section, take a closer look at what l’Arche is.

What Is l’Arche?

L’Arche is French for The Ark, derived from the biblical sense of the word, to mean a place of diversity, refuge and hope. L’Arche was founded by the Swiss born Canadian philosopher and educator, Jean Vanier, in 1964, in Trosly-Breuil, France. Started as a simple experiment, the goal of that first home was to provide an atmosphere of home and family for persons with intellectual disabilities. Forty years later, l’Arche has emerged as an International Federation of Communities with considerable impact on and recognition in the field of human services (Sumarah, 1988). To date there are 131 communities in 29 countries, where adults with disabilities and those who support them live and share life together in a spirit of mutual and reciprocal respect. Vanier is recognized as a teacher of the heart, and l’Arche as a school of the heart. The genius of Vanier’s vision has to do with the centrality he gives to the vulnerable, the marginalized in our society.

L’Arche is somewhat unique: from a sociological point of view, at a glance, l’Arche communities may resemble group homes, although l’Arche is not in essence based on the principle of ‘normalization’ (Moore, 1989). L’Arche communities are family-like units, small in number, loose in structure, organized under the Charter of l’Arche, and founded on the belief in the uniqueness and sacredness of each person, with or without disabilities (Downey, 1986). Those with developmental disabilities are called ‘core members’ and those who come to support them are called ‘assistants,’ for the language of ‘client’ and ‘staff’ is not part of the l’Arche milieu.

Paradoxically, L’Arche claims to be built on weakness: at the centre, it is those who are most vulnerable who hold the community together. For Moore (1989), unlike most rehabilitation services, including many experiential education programs, l’Arche is less formalized, and starts from the basis of friendship, not service. Part of the uniqueness of l’Arche is the ideal it offers as well as the place of challenge, where human differences and limitations, more often than not, make life difficult. Mosteller (1996) explains this challenge:

But I must confess, that l’Arche is anything but an ideal place for my little heart and spirit! Living together in community with men, women, Anglican, Jewish, Roman Catholic, Muslim, non-believers, hippies, yuppies, Irish, Italian Brazilian, Dutch, French, English, Tonganese, Australian, gay, straight, married, single, young, old those with intellectual disabilities and those with emotional and psychological disabilities, is, needless to say, a real challenge for me (Page 14).

For Mosteller besides being a home, l’Arche has been a place where core members and assistants have matured beyond all expectations, though a sense of belonging, a sense of claiming their place. l’Arche thrives because of its commitment to develop and sustain a family-like atmosphere (Downey, 1994). There is also a strong spiritual dimension to life at l’Arche. Although founded on Christian principal, l’Arche is ecumenical in its vision, encompassing all of the major religions, as well as non-believers (Mosteller, 1996). The thread that continues throughout all aspects of life in every l’Arche community is the spirit of hope, friendship, celebration and forgiveness (Moore, 1989). This is why l’Arche may be referred to as a ‘school of the heart’.

To summarize, the goal of international l’Arche is three fold: first, to recognize the unique value and vocation of each person whether they have a disability or not, second, to create an atmosphere of family and friendship, and third, to be a sign of hope in the world. To the outsider, l’Arche may appear to be some what apart, isolated or marginalized in its mission and way of life. To the insider, l’Arche is often experienced as a school of the heart, as a place of belonging. In an attempt to illustrate the concepts of community, belonging and marginality, the following experiential session is presented.
Format and Style of the Experiential Session

1. A slide show (using PowerPoint) that provides an introduction to l’Arche and the goals of the proposed research initiative called “Imagining Citizenship.” (10 minutes)
2. A video of the movie “Belonging” which will serve to provide a more specific context for the project. Vanier writes that one of the most important issues facing humanity today is ‘belonging’. The film titled ‘Belonging’ develops the theme from many angles, drawing upon the social vision of Vanier, including comments from various other respected thinkers. The film probes the relationship between personal identity, role and knowing oneself, and it examines experiences of belonging and alienation in school and work environments, in community in family and marriage, among refugees and in the broader global society in which we live. The message of the film is powerful and provokes reflection on one’s personal and spiritual growth, as well as that of the other. (10 minutes)
3. An art activity modeled on the theme of belonging (10 minutes), using magazine cutouts, and craft material.
4. A guided discussion with participant involvement, looking at the theme of belonging as it relates to themes such as the ‘meaning of citizenship’, justice, reciprocity and the world of gift. (30 minutes)

Theoretical Framework: Interplay Between Person and Environment

Vanier’s concept of person has been thoroughly investigated by Downey (1982). For Vanier, the person is the heart. Vanier’s understanding of the heart is influenced by several significant persons and event. Paradoxically, his encounter with persons who have disabilities is one of great importance. Vanier explains that it took time for him to discover his own poverty and his own wounds. He observes that people may come to l’Arche because they want to serve the poor, but they will only stay once they have discovered that they themselves are poor. Of Vanier’s understanding of the heart, Downey (1994) writes:

What Vanier could not find in the sophisticated theory of Aristotle, he stumbled upon somewhat unexpectedly in the struggles and half-audible sounds of these two handicapped men [Raphael and Philippe]. In their woundedness and affliction, while not exhibiting the capacities of the head or hands, handicapped persons do demonstrate tremendous qualities of the heart: celebration, forgiveness, tenderness and compassion. Situations of vulnerability, which cause one to live at the most basic level of existence, which Vanier calls the heart, can strengthen and evoke the qualities of the heart and provide the occasion for a deepening of communion. Often it is only when we are stripped of all the strengths and arguments of the intelligence, and deprived of the ability to create and produce through the work of our hands, that we are able to see the essentials of human existence, that which lies deepest (pp. 8-13).

Here Vanier’s insight into the nature of the heart as witnessed through the core members is relevant. It is the ‘vulnerable’ that is powerful. The heart is region of both, wound and wisdom (Downey, 1994). Vanier discovered ‘their woundedness’ – the developmental disability that is visible at first sight – the crutch, the wheelchair, the drooling, the inability to partake of meal time in the usual way of coordinating movement from plate to mouth. Because of this wound and the behaviour and activity, the person with disabilities is afflicted with another wound, far more painful than the first. Downey (1994) writes that this deeper wound is an enormous affective frustration that results from the rejection, ostracization and alienation precisely because of the mental and physical wound.

Vanier soon discovers that the weak, given a warm and loving environment of friendship and acceptance, could make great progress and could quickly advance in the domain of the heart (Downey 1994). Further more, he made discoveries of his own heart – the woundedness that was not visible, the handicap that was hidden, perhaps the crutch his own heart needed. Here, in speaking of heart as region of wound and wisdom, paradox is at work – paradox is achieving its work within the heart, through the ongoing interplay between person and environment – mutuality and reciprocity.

Here, Vygotsky’s (1896-1934) work as a cultural psychologist is valuable. When applied to the l’Arche scenario, his theory provides plausible explanation, where transformative learning as experienced at l’Arche is viewed as a ‘mediated’ process. The concept of mediation opens the way for the development of a non-deterministic account in which mediators serve as the means by which the person acts upon and is acted upon by social, cultural and historical facts (Daniels, 2001). This is consistent with Downey’s (1994) writing for he shows that Vanier understands the person as open to attraction, to be acted upon and influenced by another, and to be drawn into relationship. This encountering brings about transformation. The next section looks at assessing transformative learning as experienced at l’Arche.
Assessing Transformative Learning as Experienced at l’Arche

A key notion is that as the person passes through l’Arche, l’Arche passes through them, transforming them in unforeseeable ways. The research initiative will draw from and build on Mezirow’s writing, as he has developed his transformative learning theory to explain the process individuals go through when transformation takes place. Related to transformative learning, from an educational psychology perspective, equilibration is the process of balancing what we already know and what we may be asked to learn that doesn’t quite fit. Said another way, there is an alteration in our knowledge structure, also referred to as knowledge disturbance. Similarly, drawing from Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning, Cranton (1998) writes that when people experience changes in their lived, find themselves in a dilemma or encounter new information that contradicts what they have always believe, they may review their beliefs and perspectives. Mezirow’s (1991) theory of transformative learning was developed, to explain the process individuals go through when transformation takes place (Cranton, 1998). Applied to the l’Arche context, we can see how transformation takes place in the lives of core members and assistants.

Regarding the criteria for assessing transformation Scott (1998) develops a framework that can be used to determine to what extent change is transformative. These include the following:

1. Structural change, either social structural transformation, or personal structural transformation or both.
2. A catalysis that manifests as a fundamental shift in people’s beliefs, values, including a social vision about the future, based on the value system that includes the struggle for freedom, democracy or equity, and authenticity.
3. A shift in what counts as knowledge (For example, what can be learned from persons who have developmental disabilities – how do they contribute to dominant understandings of citizenship?)
4. Transformation is based on conflict theory, not consensus or accommodation / adaptation theory. There is a necessity for something that unsettles us, and shakes us up. (For example, to opt out of the experience of listening to, learning from and being influenced by the person who have developmental disabilities can leave one trapped on the outer circumference of an inner richness.)

Methodologically, the role of persons who have disabilities as witnessed through l’Arche is rendered meaningful through adopting a ‘hermeneutics of marginality’, linking the ‘local’ to the ‘global’ in which a ‘dialectic tacking’ or ‘weaving’ is set in motion.

A Hermeneutics of Marginality

To describe the term “hermeneutics of marginality” Downey (1994) writes:

The term “hermeneutics of marginality” describes a way of looking, understanding, judging, deciding, and acting from the margins, in solidarity with those who live and speak from the periphery: from the fissures, the cracks, the edges of the centre. Adopting such a hermeneutical stance, deciding that one will perceive and be in the world from the margins, is to risk being at odds with what is judged to be “normal,” “established,” “reliable,” and “traditional.” (p.75)

Those at the margin do not fit, or are not instep with, prevalent modes of being and perceiving. And yet, by standing at the margin, we see that l’Arche presents a powerful critique of the centre. Through a shifting hermeneutics of marginality (Downey, 1994), Vanier makes some important links for us: he highlights the movement (transformation) to be one from exclusion to inclusion, he relates transformative learning to the process of becoming human, and acknowledges as his teachers those on the margins, those who have been excluded from society, men and women who have intellectual and developmental disabilities (Vanier, 1998).

Conclusion

How exactly can the link be made then, between persons with disabilities and evolving notions of citizenship? The answer found in giving importance to ‘the heart’. More and more, we appreciate the unique values that bind us together; the values of creating places of belonging, places of justice, places where all may grow well. We seldom slow down, and pay attention of the values of waiting, and the values of presence. By learning from those at the margins, then, we take the opportunity to imagine citizenship as caring, and inclusive, we propose to examine the following topics: the meaning of citizenship, justice, moral courage, civility, hospitality, forgiveness, reciprocity and world of gift, trust, resilience, compassion, belonging, personhood, diversity and inclusion, strengthening democracy and neighbourliness, in an attempt to bring about transformation.
When Vanier first started l’Arche, he knew that there was no turning back (Vanier, 1995). He is remembered to have said that if l’Arche did not expand from its conception of a single home in 1964, then it would remain the size of a car. That would have been alright too. However, l’Arche has grown, into an International Federation of communities with significant impact on various fields such as education and health care services. Small as its mission is of changing one heart at a time, l’Arche is seen as a sign of hope. L’Arche too is evolving in its own mission and identity, as it contributes toward evolving notions of citizenship.

References
Rethinking Meaning and Implications of the Strong Black Woman Ethic: A Goal-Directed Transformative Learning Paper

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Abstract: Designing culturally specific learning experiences that could catalyze Transformative Learning in the context of Collaborative Inquiry research is a potentially powerful design for personal learning and change. The purpose of this paper is to present a design to achieve this particular goal within a CI study currently being conducted with twelve self-identified Strong Black Women. The design could provide a valuable framework for attending to specific cultural learning needs that are critical to successful outcomes.

The overall goal of this paper is to present an adult goal-directed learning design that could catalyze transformative learning (TL) by embedding culturally specific learning experiences into the framework of collaborative inquiry (CI) research. This learning design will be built-into on-going CI dissertation research being conducted with a group of self-identified, strong Black women who are deeply exploring the question: how do African American women understand and experience the relationship between the Strong Black Woman ethic and their health and wellness.

This paper offers a brief overview of CI and TL framework, a discussion of current research of Black women’s health that highlights the need for culturally specific learning designs, presentation of the goal-directed learning design, and a discussion of the data collection and analysis methods. The paper concludes with a discussion of the design implications.

Overview of the CI Framework

The qualitative research methodology of Collaborative Inquiry (CI) helps to set the right conditions for group learning and for individual TL to occur. Learning conditions are initially set when a group of peer inquirers organize themselves in small groups to address a compelling question. In order to construct new meaning related to their question, collaborative inquirers engage in cycles of reflection and action, evoke multiple ways of knowing, e.g., storytelling, dialogue, poetry, and practice validity procedures (Bray, Lee, Smith, Yorks, 2000).

CI is one among many inquiry methodologies that are experienced-based and action-oriented and provides a systematic structure for group learning from lived experience. Collaborative inquiry is defined by Bray et al (2000) as “a process consisting of repeated episodes of reflection and action through which a group of peers strives to answer a question of importance to them” (p.6). CI is one among many inquiry methodologies that are experienced-based and action oriented. Other strategies commonly included in this group are action research, action inquiry, action learning, action science, and participatory action research (Yorks, Kasl, 2002).

The cycles of action and reflection that are at the heart of collaborative inquiry reveal this strategy to be a powerful approach to learning from experience and simultaneously, a valid method of conducting inquiry into the nature of human experience. Action can occur outside the group or between meetings and could involve specific agreed-upon behaviors. It can also occur inside the group as it works together; for some inquiry groups this form of action is the primary type of action taken. In whatever form it takes, it is action that triggers the learning, providing grist for the reflective process (Bray et al 2000). According to Bray et al (2000) “in the absence of taking action, collaborative inquiry cannot lead to the mark of true collaborative inquiry-change in the participants, the situation or both” (p.3).

Overview of the TL Framework

Mezirow proposed his theory of Transformative Learning in 1978 and since the 1990’s a number of theorists have expanded components of the theory focused on the processes or application in various contexts.

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1 Collaborative inquiry (CI) is one among many inquiry methodologies that are experienced-based and action-oriented and provides a systematic structure for group learning from lived experience
2 An African American cultural value that promotes toughness and self-sacrifice.
Transformative Learning as described by Mezirow (2000) refers “to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted habits of mind or frames of reference, to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action” (p.7-8).

According to Mezirow (2000) “a habit of mind becomes expressed as a point of view or clusters of meaning schemes that suggest a line of action that we tend to follow automatically unless brought into critical reflection” (p.18). Our values and sense of self are anchored in our frames of reference which provide us with a sense of stability, coherence, community and identity. Consequently, they are often emotionally charged and strongly defended. Viewpoints that call our frames of reference into question may be dismissed as distorting, deceptive, ill intentioned, or crazy (Mezirow, 2000).

It is important to note that critical reflection is defined in the context of this paper and learning design according to Brookfield’s (2000) definition of critical reflection; “a process where individuals engage in some sort of power analysis of the situation or context and try to identify assumptions they hold dear that are actually destroying their sense of well-being and serving the interests of others” (p.126).

Applying a constructive-developmental perspective to Mezirow’s frame of reference concept, Kegan (2000), suggests “a frame of reference is a way of knowing” (p.48). In the transformational learning process, attending to the way we know involves two central processes; meaning-forming and reforming meaning-forming. Meaning-forming involves activities by which we shape a coherent meaning of the raw material of our outer and inner experiences. Reforming our meaning-forming is a metaprocess that affects the very terms of our meaning-constructing. We do not only form meaning, and we do not only change our meanings; we change the very form by which we are making our meaning (Kegan, 2000).

This change in our form consists of a gradual process whereby we critically reflect on what Kegan (2000) describes as “the subject and the object of our knowing, and what was “subject” becomes “object” (p.53). That which is “subject” are our thoughts and feelings that have us; we are run by, identified with, fused with, at the effect of. That which is “object” are our thoughts and feelings that we say we have; we can look at, take responsibility for, reflect upon, exercise control over, integrate with some other way of knowing (Kegan, 2000).

When a way of knowing moves from a place where we are “had by it” – captive of it, to a place where we “have it” and can be in relationship to it, the form of our knowing has become more complex, more expansive (Kegan, 2000). Kegan (2000) suggests that “a more explicit rendering of transformational learning attends to the deliberate efforts and designs that support changes in the learner’s form of knowing” (p. 53).

**Background on the Need for Culturally Specific Learning Designs**

In her book, *Soothe Your Nerves, The Black Woman’s Guide to Understanding and Overcoming Anxiety, Panic and Fear*, Angela Neal-Barnett (2003) discussed a study that she conducted on *Strong Black Women and Stress*. She found Black women’s stress responses to be more of, befriend, mend and keep it in. In the study, self-identified “Strong Black Women” – women who told her that being strong was an important part of who they were, made entries in a diary detailing their activities and emotions while at the same time their blood pressure and heart rate were being monitored for an entire day. In their diaries, the women did not admit to being stressed, even in stressful situations. One woman wrote, “Had to fire S. today. She did not take it very well.” Firing someone is a very stressful situation, yet the only emotion this woman indicated that she experienced was calm, however her blood pressure readings had increased by fifteen points and a 20-point increase was seen in her heart rate.

Dr. Neal-Barnett found that almost every woman in the study exhibited the same pattern. She concluded that either the women could not admit to being stressed, or they were unaware they were stressed. Post study interviews indicated that the women were aware of their stress levels however, they were unwilling to admit it was problematic. Several of the women commented to Dr. Neal-Barnett, “Baby, I don’t have time to think about that mess (stress). If I did, I’d be stressed out a lot.”

In another study of more than 1,300 Black women conducted by the California Black Women’s Health Project on behalf of its parent organization, the Black Women’s Health Imperative, revealed that more than sixty percent of African American women suffer depression and tend to repress feelings, let frustration build and release tension through tears or conflict.

Other conclusions from the study revealed that Black women are overwhelmed by the pursuit of perfectionism, meeting goals, mediating family conflicts and challenging the criticisms and doubts of others. Also found was the added pressure from the ethic of the strong Black woman. Based on the findings of these and other studies on the health and wellness of African American women, it is vital that learning experiences with goals specifically designed to foster paradigmatic shifts in strong Black women’s ways of knowing be made available.
The Goal-Directed Design

In order for the gradual process of TL to occur in strong Black women, culturally specific learning experiences supporting this process must be established. These are learning experiences that give particular attention to cultural factors that may impact this gradual learning process. One of these factors for many strong Black women, is time and space. The CI process is the container which supports TL to occur by setting the right conditions (time and space) for individual and group learning to occur during a gradual process of reflection. This gradual depth of reflection is especially important for strong Black women because it allows them to transition from busy lives focused on the needs of others to time focused on self reflection. This goal-specific design outlines the specific learning conditions or experiences that are necessary for TL to possibly occur in the context of a culturally specific CI container.

Goal 1: Create Culturally Specific Learning Environments

Providing learning environments that help strong Black women take a break from their “pursuit of perfectionism, meeting goals, mediating family conflicts and challenging the criticisms and doubts of others” is key to their learning. These environments should be of the type Bray et al (2000) describe as, “ones where there would be a minimum of disruption in order to guarantee that the participants could be attentive to the group and not be easily distracted, and ones that are relatively secure and relaxed” (p.59).

This can be accomplished by holding the CI sessions in a retreat or away location. When these types of learning environments are established it allows Black women to stop, relax, reflect, reflect deeply, and make changes. Dr. Neal-Barnett’s study participants very clearly demonstrated that many Black women see themselves as “not having time to think about that mess (stress) or they would be stressed out about everything.”

In the pilot study debriefing session, the participants cited comfortable, relaxed and secure learning environments as their number one need, and stressed the importance of conducting the upcoming full study in an away location to be away from work, family, and other responsibilities so that the women can relax and focus on the question.

Goal 2: Encourage Culturally Sensitive Inclusive Learning Experiences

CI usually takes places during a fluid four phase process with a variety of activities occurring during each phase. Phase one activities center around group formation, where all group members are encouraged to help frame the question, orient the group by establishing culturally relevant guiding principles, and to collectively lead the group. Phase two activities help create group learning conditions, phase three acting on the question, and phase four constructing group meaning and knowledge. This full involvement by all group members supports goal one and helps to facilitate the gradual depth of reflection and TL process.

The creation of African centered guiding principles among the pilot study participants clearly helped the women to move from individual learners to a learning community. An added benefit of the four phase CI process is that it supports African and African American learning where learning is optimized through interaction with the “village.” This sense of community learning among sisters is essential to the TL process of strong Black women.

Goal 3: Create Opportunities for Critical Reflection and Learning Through Critical Questioning on Culturally Shared Meaning

As the group further explores and reflects on the question, goal three learning experiences are designed to create opportunities for critical reflection and learning through critical questioning on strong Black woman ways of knowing. This type of critical questioning can facilitate movement to deeper levels of reflection where as Brookfield (2000) suggests, participants “engage in some sort of power analysis of the situation or context and try to identify assumptions they hold dear that are actually destroying their sense of well-being and serving the interests of others” (p.126).

I might add that it is also important to encourage participants to share meanings of these assumptions in culturally-based language which often expresses the essence of the lived experience. Many African Americans, even those well educated often express lived experiences in code language that only other African Americans can fully understand. Having the choice to express thoughts, feelings, and experiences in culturally-based language, allows individuals to have uncensored freedom of expression.

Design questions should explore both power dynamics and long held assumptions of the ethic and the relationship to health and wellness. Critical questions can explore how the ethic originated, how it is learned, if it is unconsciously passed down from mother to daughter, and if the ethic is used as a strategy to survive the impacts of racism. Creating opportunities for critical reflection on identifying, analyzing, and understanding power dynamics,
long held assumptions, and the relationship to lived experiences could very well provide the key component to catalyzed transformative learning in strong Black women.

During the CI phases of acting on the question and constructing group meaning, the participants in the pilot study began to deeply question the origins of the ethic and the relationship to health and wellness. The origins discussion led the group to consider how we learned to be strong, and at some point the discussion focused on experiences of being strong Black women impacted by racism.

But I say it still stems back to health and slavery. When you even look at the whole thing, we was fix’n it, we was having the babies, we was doing it all. Continuously, continuously, continuously” (Marsha, pilot study participant).

When I think about my mother, my grandmother and even my great grandmother, when I watched the pattern of those three they did what they did as quote, strong Black women out of need of what they thought they had to do to maintain the family. And then with my generation, when I came along, I picked right up on that and I just carried on (Peggy, pilot study participant).

Black people and people of color worked their natural behinds off to fit into a model that they may not necessarily agree with because they see the racism, they see the sexism they see all of this but yet, we gonna be strong and we gonna overcome, we gonna overcome it and we gonna make sure we get that promotion (Charlyn, pilot study participant).

But it evidences itself for me, I get depressed and I sleep a lot; I have no energy (Carol, pilot study participant).

This rich discussion was stimulated by group members critically questioning the ways women understand and experience the relationship between the Strong Black Woman ethic and their health and wellness.

Goal 4: Assess Personal Learning and Change Using Evaluation Methods that Allow Freedom of Expression

The specific learning experiences of goal four provides a space for the participants to make explicit the changes in their forms or ways of knowing. This can be done by conducting a post study learning debriefing session where the women assess levels of awareness, insights or changes in perspectives of being a strong Black woman and the relationship to their health and wellness. The four authenticity criteria of Lincoln & Guba (2000) provide a useful guide to help participants evaluate their learning using an assessment that encourages freedom of expression. The criteria were slightly reworded to ensure ease of reading and clarity for the pilot study participants (p.110).

- **Fairness** – do the findings demonstrate that the viewpoints of the participants have been given evenhanded representation?
- **Ontological authenticity** – to what extent does the record show a growth in the perception of the members?
- **Educative authenticity** - the existence of evidence that members have gained increased appreciation for the sources of alternative positions around the question
- **Catalytic authenticity** - accounts of the actions and decisions promoted by the inquiry process

Central to achieving the design goals is the role of the participant-observer researcher. In the context of CI and probably for most types of participatory research, this complex role can be challenging because it requires attention to “in and out” skills. These are specific participant, observer, and/or researcher skills that the participant-observer researcher will use at various times to help stimulate reflection on the question, but are barely noticeably to the other group members. These skills involve presenting thought provoking questions, encouraging different viewpoints, and documenting differences and conflicts on meanings of being a strong Black woman that emerge from the group

Data Collection

Data collection is the basis for the meaning-making process in CI research and involves carefully documenting the strong Black woman thematic phrases that emerge from the study. Data can be in the form of audio taped transcriptions, journal writings or other means that capture individual and group understanding and experiences of being a strong Black woman.
Hermeneutic Phenomenology as described by Van Manen (1990) “is making something of a text or of a lived experience by interpreting its meaning, which is more accurately a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure; grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process, but a free act of “seeing” meaning” (p.79). Theme gives control and order to research and writing. It is the experience of focus, of meaning, of point; it describes an aspect of the structure of lived experience; it gives shape to the shapeless A thematic phrase only serves to point at, to allude to, or to hint at, an aspect of the phenomenon. A fuller description of the structure of a lived experience can be accomplished through the creation of a phenomenological text of the themes that emerged (Van Manen 1990).

According to Van Manen (1990) “to “see” meaning means that the researcher works to mine meaning from the themes that emerge and in the process, asks reflective questions such as, what is going on here? What is this example an example of? What is the essence of the notion and how can I capture this essence by way of thematic reflection on the notion?” (p.86).

Hermeneutic Phenomenology is used as the data analysis method in this study and design because it is consistent with both the study goals and design goals. It serves as a way of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure, and understanding of how African American women understand and experience the relationship between the Strong Black Women ethic and their health and wellness. The added benefit of the method is that it also serves to locate changes in the learner’s form of knowing; to “see” when and if TL occurred.

Isolating Thematic Statements

Van Manen (1990) cites three approaches toward uncovering or isolating thematic aspects of a phenomenon in text:

1. *The Wholistic Approach:* What sententious phrase may capture the fundamental meaning or main significance of the text as a whole? A phrase is then developed that attempts to express that meaning.

2. *Selective Reading Approach:* Read a text several times and ask; what statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described? These statements are then circled, underlined, or highlighted.

3. *Detailed Reading Approach:* Look at every single sentence or sentence cluster and ask; what does this sentence or sentence cluster reveal about the phenomenon or experience being described?

The selective reading approach was used in the pilot study to analyze the strong Black women thematic phrases because it compliments the natural way many African American women express themselves; usually in statements or phrases. This approach also strengthens the design goal to catalyze transformative learning since it requires focused attention on particular revealing statements or phrases; ones that could reveal a form that is changing. The following are examples of selected thematic phrases indicating a form that was changing in one of the pilot study participants.

- **Session I:** “you know it’s like skeleton’s in a closet, and that type thing and then you’re here and you want me to trust, you want me to do all the secrets. That’s kind of powerful to do all that” (Marsha, pilot study participant).

- **Session II:** “I’m a SBW and then everything pops in your mind, what is really a SBW? Then those other questions came about, then I thought...no, that’s a little bit too stressful” (Marsha, pilot study participant).

Clearly, this participant was experiencing movement from a place where she is “had by” the ethic, to a place where she “has it” and is in relationship to it. The development of a full phenomenological text will offer greater understanding of the formation this woman’s lived experience. Hermeneutic phenomenology provides balance to the goal-directed design and adds a sense of wholeness to the transformative learning process of individuals.

Conclusion: Implications of the Learning Design

The design presented in this paper outlines specific learning goals for a specific cultural group and a specific group of women within this cultural group; women who identify themselves as strong Black women. Therefore the implications of the design may not apply to Black women or other women of color who describe themselves as being strong according to definitions outside of African American culture.
This goal-specific design provides a valuable framework to assist strong Black women transform their ways of knowing through learning experiences that are culturally specific. The research studies on the health and wellness of African American women presented in this paper, further underscore the importance of designing learning environments that support culturally specific learning experiences in self-identified strong Black women; the pilot study somewhat left these culturally specific learning experiences to chance.

Findings from the CI pilot study revealed that if a goal-specific TL learning component is included in the upcoming full study, the likelihood of TL may be increased.

Implications of goal one and two learning experiences suggest that in order for strong Black women to become fully immersed in the learning process, they need to be in secure, relaxed environments that are free from distractions. In addition, they need to feel they are full members and participants of the learning community. All of these factors-personal safety, comfort and full inclusion are often missing in the everyday lives of African Americans and in particular strong Black women, therefore it is critical that these goals are achieved.

The learning experiences from goal three as previously stated may provide the greatest opportunity for strong Black women to change their forms. It is the place as Kegan so powerfully describes where “a way of knowing moves from a place where we are “had by it”–captive of it, to a place where we “have it” and can be in relationship to it.” The implications of the learning experiences from this goal will probably not be fully achieved if goal number one and two are not met. This type of deep, critically reflective sharing among strong Black women requires relaxed, safe, inclusive learning environments.

Goal four experiences provide opportunities to critically assess personal levels of learning and change. It is the reality check process for individual participants and suggests that to neglect it may mean that the women could be victims of collective self-deception around meaning of the ethic. This assessment of learning proved to be very useful to the pilot study participants who discovered that although some meaning-forming had occurred, only one woman experienced reforming of her meaning-forming and her form had changed.

Careful selection of the data collection and analysis method rounds-out the leaning design. Hermeneutic phenomenology supports the overall goals by leaving room for culturally specific interpretations and meanings of lived experience. Strong Black women participants need data collection and analysis methods that reinforce and honor their lived experiences as valid and worthy of examination

This goal-specific design should not be viewed as a lock-step process, but a fluid design. One goal may precede another or move faster or slower than another. Most important, is that it calls attention to some of the culturally specific learning experiences necessary in order for strong Black women to realize personal learning and or change; hopefully a change in ways of knowing that significantly increase an overall sense of well-being.

Kegan (2000) suggests that “a more explicit rendering of transformational learning attends to the deliberate efforts and designs that support changes in the learner’s form of knowing” (p. 53). Kegan’s rendering of transformative learning aptly describes the type of learning that this goal-directed design attempts to achieve within the context of the CI strong Black women study.

References
When Meaning Is Coordinated for Transformation in Conflict:
CMM and Critical Reflection

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Abstract: Conflicts are a part of our lives. While usually unpleasant, they also provide opportunities for growth and potential transformation. The field of conflict resolution is interdisciplinary and the disciplines we enter from provide the lenses from which we understand it. This paper interfaces several lenses to explore the relationship between conflict, transformative learning theory, emotions and CMM, toward reframing conflict in an attempt to create better social worlds (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997). This will come to life more with an application of a CMM model to a conflict in an executive coaching situation and implications for the future.

Introduction

If we interview ten people witnessing a car accident, we will hear ten different stories about what happened. The profound variations cause us to question whether they all witnessed the same accident. Their differing background experiences, assumptions and expectations, cause them to have different interpretations (Mezirow, 2000, 1990). They may also have different emotional responses to the accident, which also plays an influencing role in how they interpret and make meaning of the experience, depending on their level of emotional literacy (Goleman, 1995).

The way in which we frame an occurrence is related to what we elevate and privilege as being more important. The framing and meaning making processes are implicit, yet the resulting behaviors we act and respond to are explicit. In conflict situations we often do not query our assumptions, expectations, feelings or beliefs and react without reflective processes (Argyris & Schon, 1974). Suddenly we are immersed in a conflict without knowing how and why. The processes involved in transformative learning, specifically critical reflection, help surface these implicit processes by bringing them to consciousness. This is based on the belief that when we take deliberate actions to make explicit what is currently implicit, from unconscious to conscious, we will be better able to select appropriate responsive behaviors. This is in comparison to not understanding what influences us and reacting on auto pilot, which may lead us to respond in unproductive or destructive repetitive patterns.

Conceptual Framework

Mezirow’s (2003, 2000,1990) transformative learning, highlights disorienting dilemmas as the event or series of events that take place and call into question the unquestioned meaning perspectives we hold. Conflict is a type of disorienting dilemma. Critical reflection, an aspect of transformative learning, asks us to recognize the assumptions by which we operate, the justifications for those assumptions and to self-judge the rationality of those justifications (Brookfield, 1987). The process of critical reflection, which allows us to surface the assumptions that we and the other party hold, provides us with an opportunity to expand our views and entertain alternative perspectives of how we see the conflict and each other (Fisher-Yoshida, 2003). When we are engaged in conflict we tend to become rigid and entrenched in our own perspective. Holding multiple perspectives stretches our imaginations and enables us to more easily resolve the conflict creatively and constructively.

Conflict situations cause us to have reactions on multiple levels: we feel conflicts physically perhaps as knots in our stomachs, tenseness in our shoulders or heat in our heads; cognitive reactions may be thoughts of victimization, revenge or plotting the use of competitive tactics to win; emotional reactions to conflicts may cause us to feel disappointed, sad or hurt. There have been concerns that transformative learning and critical reflection, more specifically, is too rational and doesn’t address emotions (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Taylor, 2001). This separation of the mind, or rationality and emotions has been criticized as being the perpetuation of the Cartesian dualistic point of view (Damasio, 1999). Damasio (1999) has conducted research that contradicts this duality as his findings show there is a direct correlation between rationality and emotions in that emotions are indispensable to our ability to reason. Taylor (2001) shows this mind-body separation belief is contrary to recent neurobiological testing that supports there is an interdependent relationship between the two. So while the earlier focus of transformative learning may not have been on the role emotions play, there are others who believe you cannot really separate emotions and reasoning. This is a critical point regarding conflict.

Transformative learning has an important role to play in the field of conflict resolution, in that people transform or have disorienting dilemmas in conflict or conflict resolution situations and these transformations take place with a great degree of emotional impact. I propose that in order to develop higher levels of emotional literacy (Goleman, 1995), we need to engage in reflection on our feeling states, so that we are more aware of why we have the emotional reactions and feelings we have in conflict situations. This would help us gain a better understanding of ourselves, the other person with whom we are in conflict and the conflict itself, toward us developing the awareness required to be better able to constructively manage our responses to these emotional triggers in the future. Critical reflection can be used for the identification of these emotional triggers and developing understanding of our emotional states in conflict situations. At the same time, there are challenges we face in being able to take a meta-perspective of ourselves in these emotional states, for the purpose of analyzing the reasons these emotions became aroused in the first place.

One framework that may facilitate this process is the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) (Pearce & Cronen, 1981), which has models to frame and support us in understanding our relationships and events in our lives in new ways. The models allow us to take the conflict, deconstruct and reconstruct it in an iterative process, to create new ways of framing it. CMM offers us a structured process, which has the potential for transformative moments as we shift from holding only our own meaning perspectives to expanding to include the meaning perspectives of others. The CMM models can be used in collaboration with the person with whom we are in conflict to create a shared meaning together as new information is surfaced.

**Conflict**

Conflicts are embedded in systems (Coleman, 2005) although they may appear to be narrower isolated events based on where and how they manifest themselves. There are different types of conflict and they appear at different levels. This paper will focus on interpersonal conflicts as one level in which disputes may occur. In order for us to hold a shared understanding of conflict, I would like to offer the definition of it being defined as incompatible activities regardless of whether they are “real” or “perceived” to be real (Deutsch, 1973; Rubin, Pruitt & Kim, 1994, 1986).

Conflicts may appear to be simple on the surface, but may actually be much more complex depending on several factors, such as length of time it has existed, the number of issues on the table, the number of parties involved, and so on. Coleman (2005) discusses four ways in which the framing of a conflict highlights the complexity inherent in it: the *object problem*, which is defining and distinguishing the main object of interest; the *subjectivity problem*, showing the aspectual way in which we perceive the conflict; the *data processing problem*, emphasizing our limited capacity to process the problem’s intricacies and complexity; and the *dynamism problem*, in that the dynamic nature of the conflict situation makes it more challenging to analyze and process than if we were addressing something static and unchanging. Critical reflection surfaces the lenses we use in framing the conflict and through respectful discourse the assumptions and expectations that make up the parties meaning perspectives can be shared. In addition, the emotional reactions of the parties can also be explored to better understand the role they play in either exacerbating the conflict or mollifying it with a display of empathy. This may facilitate deconstructing the complexity of any conflict situation, so that the conflict can be broken down into more manageable components.

The vast majority of people tend to have negative associations with conflict based on past experiences. In many cases conflict raises unpleasant physical and emotional feelings and very often our conflicts are not resolved well. We have an unpleasant experience during the conflict and walk away from it dissatisfied. This can be due to a variety of reasons ranging from not accurately framing the conflict to understanding the reason for it, to not having the necessary skills to manage it effectively, to not perceiving that we actually have the power to make a difference. This leads us to not want to engage, so we avoid conflict, or perhaps have the opposite reaction where we are overly competitive.

**Transformative Learning and Critical Reflection**

Critical reflection is the process by which we examine our implicit assumptions used to make meaning in our lives (Mezirow, 2000, 1990). Mezirow (1990) addresses three levels of critical reflection, *reflection, critical reflection* and *critical self-reflection*, referring to the depth or centrality of self we reflect. It is critical self-reflection we need to determine the frames from which we operate in conflict.

If we stay responding at the behavioral level to change the dynamics of the situation, we are engaging in single-loop learning, a problem-solving approach to conflict. If we engage in critical reflection and surface the underlying assumptions behind our interpretations and the actions we take, we engage in double-loop learning (Agyris & Schon, 1974) and a transformative approach to conflict resolution (Fisher-Yoshida, 2005).
Argyris and Schon (1974) distinguish between espoused theories, what we say we are applying, and theories-in-use, the protocol we are actually following. Reflective thinking processes will enable us to align our espoused theories with our theories-in-use. If we reflect-on-action (Schon, 1983) we think back to an interaction we had to ascertain deeper levels of understanding, while if we reflect-in-action (Schon, 1983) we reflect in the moment toward more meaningful actions. With enough reflection-on-action we will be able to better engage in reflection-in-action or reflexivity (Fisher-Yoshida & Nagata, 2002) toward more constructive outcomes.

Brookfield (1987) identified five phases of a transformative experience: an event acting like a trigger; appraising the situation; exploring to find new ways of making sense of the experience; developing alternative perspectives resulting in new behaviors or thinking; and beginning an integration of these new perspectives into the existing ones. The exploration phase in which we engage in sense making can include both rational and emotional aspects of the situation.

There are those who strongly support that the inclusion of affect is imperative in transformative learning. It brings a more holistic view so that instead of the mind-body dualism we add the third leg of affect. Boyd (in Dirkx, 2000) based his work on Jung and supports that the strong emotions that may arise in our learning experiences have their roots in unconscious issues we have. This may also hold true for the emotional reactions we have in conflict.

The process of individuation is what differentiates us from each other and so the necessity for surfacing assumptions we hold and bring to our interactions is especially critical. There is also more of an emphasis for highlighting alternative ways of knowing and expression and that some of this manifests itself in “the emotional, affective, and spiritual dimensions of our lives (Dirkx, 2000, p.1).” One suggestion of an alternative way of knowing what we know is that of psycho imagery, which Dirkx (2000) has labeled “mytho-poetic.” Mytho-poetic imagery represents our imagination and compliments the reasoning aspects of perspective transformation that Mezirow et al. (1990) describe. This provides us with a broader palette from which to glean information and to process collectively for deeper mutual understanding toward the constructive resolution of conflict.

Critical reflection states the flow of the process necessary to take place, but does not provide the means by which we can uncover these deep-rooted beliefs and emotions that we hold and the other party holds. The combination of critical reflection, discourse and reflective action exist in the context of the “real world” within which the participants in a conflict find themselves (Mezirow, 2000). CMM has a set of models to use to surface the characteristics of the context, culture, relationship and other aspects that offer alternative ways in which we can explore and frame these conflict situations to gain new insights.

Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM)

CMM is considered a practical theory in that it strives to support practitioners to improve patterns of communication (Pearce & Pearce, 2000). CMM is a set of concepts with models that facilitate surfacing the stories we live by in real-life situations to offer participants alternative perspectives from which to view their conflicts. The four models are: the hierarchy model of actor’s meaning, which highlights that the context within which the communication takes place plays an important role in determining how meaning is made; the serpentine model, which shows that each communication or speech act has a before, a present and an after and that the pattern of this sequence can vary depending on the choices made at each turn in the course of events; the daisy model, showing that there are multiple influences we bring with us to every encounter that shapes the nature of our response and how we understand the response from others; and the LUVUUTT model, an acronym highlighting the role of stories that are lived, untold, unheard, unknown, told and the manner of the storytelling itself (Pearce, 2004).

CMM also offers three principles to apply to deepen our understanding of our communication: coordination, in that what we do is in relation to other interpretations and actions and that effective communication is when we are dancing to the same beat; coherence, as in the stories we choose to tell to make our lives meaningful and the meaning we try to make from the stories of the other; and mystery, which illuminates that there is a significant amount of complexity in the world within which we live and that there is always more than we will know. These principles and tools offer us ways in which to depersonalize our conflict experiences by allowing us to view them together, from a third party perspective. This provides us an opportunity to create a shared understanding as we critically reflect together on the information we are making explicit and then as we co-author a new story about ourselves, each other, our relationship and the conflict.

In an illustration of how the CMM models can be used to better understand a conflict and move it toward a constructive resolution, I would like to offer an executive coaching case as an example. A person working in a financial institution was one of several colleagues in the same group. Four months ago he was promoted to a managerial role over the colleagues with whom he previously had equal status. This shift in relationship dynamics had a significant impact on the team he was now managing and needless to say, he was in conflict with some of the other members. We used the daisy model to elicit on each petal the varied views represented by the different team members:
members about this promotion and the shift in relationship dynamics. The manager whom I was coaching needed to get in touch with a deeply empathic part of himself to really understand from each of the other team member's perspectives, what it felt like to not only have one of your colleagues move past you in career development, but in addition he was now responsible for your career. He was able to capture the varied reactions from his team members on the various petals of the daisy and the illustration helped him see more clearly the impact of this move. He had previously thought of their reactions as sour grapes and through the use of our conversations where we co-constructed meaning, he was able to see the move from their perspective. This was a revelation to him. It had not occurred to him before to try to take their perspective. He was operating under the assumption that this is a tough world, we are in a tough and fickle industry, deal with it. These new perspectives allowed him to entertain offering an invitation to hold a different type of conversation with his former colleagues. The team dynamics showed improvement as a result.

Implications for Reframing and Transforming Conflict

Critical reflection is the process we use to surface the implicit assumptions of our meaning perspectives and how we interpret and make meaning in our interactions with others. CMM is a structured and creative way of unearthing those hidden assumptions, feelings, values and beliefs, ours and those of the other party. Mezirow (2000) says that “Discourse is the process in which we have an active dialogue with others to better understand the meaning of an experience (p.14).” This combination supports the critical reflection and learning potential of all parties involved in a conflict enabling them to hold expanded views of the conflict and their roles in it, more effectively deepen mutual understanding and act with a deeper sense of agency (Mezirow, 2000; Pearce, 1993). Transformation can happen in discourse or in individual reflection. The critical reflection that we engage in through the use of the CMM models is a useful way to surface what is implicit, including the reasons for our emotional states. The risk of not engaging in making explicit the tacit knowledge and feelings from which we act, is that we may be doomed to repeat the same destructive patterns of conflict over and over again.

References


Adults Learning to Reflect: A Study of Assessment of Prior Private Learning

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Abstract: This phenomenological qualitative study explores the nature of a rare version of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), which we are calling Assessment of Prior Private Learning (APPL). Essentially it is a reflective writing experience focused on personal life experience, as opposed to the usual work-related experience, and structured according to Kolb’s (1984) Model of Experiential Learning. APPL is framed by two theories—experiential learning or learning by doing and learning from prior experience or learning for personal development or change. The participating learners describe their experience in five phases, which are, in part, defined by their predominant feelings and emotions, resulting in two types of learning—instrumental and expressive. Depending on how holistically the learners engaged in the process seemed to determine how likely they would experience the latter type of learning. For those who engaged holistically, their relearning of self or expressive learning could be defined in terms of Mezirow’s (1991) Transformative Learning Theory, and therefore this study contributes, in part, to the fostering of the theory in adult and higher education research and practice.

Over the past 20 years or more, since Mezirow (1991) first published his theory of transformative learning, many scholars and practitioners have been fascinated by it. However, the question remains, Can those in higher education actually influence or foster transformative learning among their students in the classroom? Mezirow (1991) defines the nature and stages of transformative learning, but leaves the question of what kinds of external or internal circumstances in an adult’s life may provoke transformative learning. That is the question that we as higher education practitioners need to understand in order to determine if there is a role for us in fostering transformative learning.

Specifically the setting in which this question was explored was an adult, accelerated, degree-completion program’s six-week writing course. The purpose of this paper is to examine the nature of this reflective writing experience and how the learners describe what they learned during this process.

Theoretical Frameworks
In this section, I will provide the following: a brief description of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and Assessment of Private Prior Learning (APPL) and the theoretical frameworks that undergird them.

Prior Learning Assessment
In a 1990 book published by the Council of Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), Mandell and Michelson described eight approaches and fourteen models of PLA. The authors were careful to point out that the eight approaches were not intended as “separate curricular outlines,” but as “emphases within a single intellectual exploration, clusters of interrelated concerns around which appropriate subject matter can be organized” (p. 4). These eight approaches included orientations toward: a) Academic Skills; b) College Orientation; c) Personal Exploration; d) The Meaning of Education; e) Careers; f) Introduction to a Field; g) The Experience of Work; and h) Degree Design.

Of the 14 programs that were chosen by the authors as exemplary of these approaches, only two used “Personal Exploration.” In essence, PLA focuses more on work-related experiences than personal or family incidents. None of the processes or models described by Mandell and Michelson (1990) involved the assessment of adult knowledge based solely on personal or private experiences.

Although there is evidence of experience-based learning that is occurring through the process of Prior Learning Assessment, there is very little information about how this learning occurs or what form it takes. For learners to learn successfully from their prior experience, they must weave a course of reliance on their own past experience and acceptance of the support or challenge from others. In other words they must acknowledge the tension between their own agency and the influence of others in the process of making meaning of their experience (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1993).
Kolb (1984) defines learning as “the process of whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 38). He adds that this definition “emphasizes several critical aspects of the learning process as viewed from the experiential perspective” (p. 38). These include: 1) the emphasis on the process of adaptation and learning as opposed to content or outcomes; 2) knowledge is a transformation process, constantly changing and developing, not an acquisition process in which it is gained and transmitted; 3) learning transforms experience both objectively (i.e., the person’s environment) and subjectively (i.e., the person’s internal state); 4) to understand learning, the nature of knowledge must be understood and vice versa (pp. 36 & 38).

Knowledge, according to Kolb (1984), is the result of the transaction between social knowledge and personal knowledge. This transaction occurs in a process called learning. Hence, learning is both a process and an outcome. The outcome is knowledge. To understand epistemology—the origins, nature, methods, and limits of knowledge—one must understand the psychology of learning and vice versa (pp. 37-38). In essence, Kolb’s Model of Experiential Learning demonstrates that “learning, and therefore knowing, requires both a grasp or figurative representation of experience and some transformation of that representation” (p. 42). Neither the former nor the latter can work alone. Simply perceiving an experience cannot be called learning, and there can be no transformation alone without some state or experience to change or transform.

In modern English-speaking cultures the affective dimension of learning is often overlooked or denied. Yet “[e]motions and feelings are key pointers to both possibilities for, and barriers to, learning” (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1993, p. 15). Two key sources within the learners’ context either positively or negatively influence them, that is, their past experience and the role of others. Their confidence and self-esteem also affect their learning. “Engagement with learning tasks is related to belief in success” (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1993, p. 15). Yet, there is very little information about this adult or experiential learning process, especially in regard to feelings and emotions.

**Assessment of Prior Private Learning**

Although learning to write and earning college credits for prior learning are the primary purposes of Assessment of Prior Private Learning (APPL), as it is referred to for the purposes of this study to differentiate it from the more common PLA, both my professional experience and the literature support the notion that the students also gain more awareness of themselves as persons and lifelong learners. This outcome is grounded in the perspective of human developmental or growth potential of learning or learning from prior experience.

Both Maslow (1970) and Rogers (1983) viewed learning as a form of psychotherapy. “In fact, his “client-centered therapy” is often equated with student-centered learning. In both education and therapy, Rogers is concerned with significant learning that leads to personal growth and development” (Merriam and Caffarella, 1991, p. 133).

The characteristics of this orientation toward learning include the following: 1) Personal involvement—the affective and cognitive aspects of a person should be involved in the learning event; 2) self-initiated—a sense of discovery must come from within; 3) pervasive—the learning makes a difference in the behavior, the attitudes, perhaps even the personality of the learner; 4) evaluated by the learner—the learner can best determine whether the experience is meeting a need; 5) essence is meaning—when experiential learning takes place, its meaning to the learner becomes incorporated into the total experience (Merriam and Caffarella, 1991, pp. 133 -134).

Tennant’s (2000) notion of a more balanced theory of adult learning, that is, the understanding of self as a narrative or story helps clarify the ways in which identity is a “story of the self” (p. 93). For Tennant (2000), identity “is essentially a psychosocially constructed narrative that integrates the reconstructed past, perceived present and anticipated future” (p. 93). Because the Life Learning Papers (LLPs) are, in essence, the students’ stories about what, how, and why they have learned from their prior experiences, APPL may be an ideal setting for adult learners to have an opportunity to retell their narratives and find new or deeper meaning not only of their life stories, but also of their sense of self. “The basic function of a life story is integration—it binds together disparate elements of the self” (Tennant, 2000, p. 94).

Through the process of writing of life learning papers and reflecting on “trigger events,” I have observed that often “disequilibrium” (Mezirow, 1990) within the learners was created. This disequilibrium was frequently uncomfortable and, in some cases, even frightening. As Kegan (1982) has noted, giving up old frames of reference, old worldviews, or . . . old meaning perspectives about how and what we can know is like losing the self (Mezirow, 1990). Yet these papers also provided a way for the learners to recover their balance and experience what Mezirow (1995) describes as the only paradigm that captures true adult learning, that is, transformative learning. This learning often resulted from the learners reflecting on “distorting, inauthentic, or . . . unjustified assumptions” about their prior experience (Mezirow, 1991). “Transformative learning results in new or transformed meaning schemes or . . . perspectives—that is, in perspective transformation. While not all adult education involves reflective or
transformative learning, reflective, and hence transformative, learning surely should be considered to be a cardinal objective of adult education” (Mezirow, 1991).

Although not its primary purpose, the nature of the APPL process affords learners and teachers alike the opportunity to experience or foster transformative learning in a formal educational setting. Along this journey, the learners experience many feelings, beginning with confusion and frustration, mostly directed at the unusual structure of the life learning papers (based on Kolb’s (1984) Model of Experiential Learning) and ending with either more confidence in their writing ability or profound change in self-identity. Yet a review of the literature reveals that few, if any, programs exist in which private learning is allowed to be assessed for college credit, and few, if any, studies have been done on the affective or emotional dimension of prior learning assessment. Thus this research fills a gap in adult educators’ understanding of a way to foster transformative learning in a formal setting. Specifically, the questions asked were: What is the nature of the experience for the learners in the Assessment of Prior Private Learning or reflective writing course; how do they describe the learning that they experienced?

**Research Design and Approach**

The study’s questions were pursued through a phenomenological qualitative research design (Spradley, 1979). Spradley was used to help focus on describing or interpreting the meaning in the language of the informants or participants. He calls it “folk terms.” As a researcher he is aware of what he calls “translation competence,” and he makes a conscious effort to have his informants use their own native language to describe their experiences. Although Spradley’s (1979) emphasis is primarily ethnographic, the guidelines that he recommends were very helpful in this study. As the researcher, I had taught WRT312 for five years and wanted to avoid making any assumptions about what the informants had to say about the course or how they described it.

**Context and Setting**

Founded in 1873 Covenant College (a pseudonym) is a small, church-based, liberal arts institution located in a small town in southwest Michigan. Beginning in the early 1980s with its accelerated, degree-completion adult studies program, the college has expanded throughout the state. It now has four regions (north, central, east, and west).

**Selection of Participants**

Potential participants were selected from members of two adult studies cohorts in two different regions of Covenant College. The researcher did not instruct Module Two or any other course for either group. The group consisted of fifteen women and one man; all were in their 30s. There were ten Caucasians and five Blacks. All worked either full time or part time in various professional positions and were majoring in either Family Life Education or Management and Organizational Development. They both were scheduled to graduate in 2003.

From this larger group of sixteen, through informed consent, a purposeful sample of six informants was formed. Each was selected by his or her willingness to meet with the researcher for three interviews for a minimum of an hour each time. The participant population consisted of five Caucasian women and one Caucasian man. Each participant had successfully completed the module and earned a passing grade on his or her life learning paper. In that way the data was rich and robust for this qualitative study.

**Data Collection Instruments and Procedures**

Because of hermeneutic bias, interview protocols were carefully constructed. The data sources included three in-depth interviews with each participant, the curriculum and faculty guidelines, and four of the participants’ life learning papers. The first interview established the context (Seidman, 1991) of the research participant’s experience. The second interview allowed the participants to reconstruct (Seidman, 1991) the details of their experience within the established context of Critical Analysis and Research Writing. The third and final interview encouraged the informants to reflect (Seidman, 1991) on the meaning of their experience in the APPL course.

**Analysis of the Data**

A combination of the guidelines suggested by both Seidman’s (1991) in-depth or phenomenological interviewing analysis and Strauss (1987) modified grounded theory analysis was used to analyze the transcribed data collected from the 18 interviews. Eventually, profiles (Seidman, 1991) or axils (Strauss, 1987) emerged from the evidence. These categories were further defined or refined until a full, dense phenomenological or modified grounded theory was formed. The data analysis began September 2002 and ended in June 2003.
Findings

The data analysis revealed a five-phase description of the learners’ reflective writing experience and two types of learning—instrumental and expressive.

The Nature of the Learners’ Reflective Writing Experience

In the first phase, two feelings or emotions—anxiety and confusion—dominated the learners as they transitioned from their first module or course into their second one. On the first night of the second module, the learners brought a draft of their first paper for the program. This paper represented 60 percent of their final grade in Module One. Thus it was a high stakes paper, and even with curricular and instructional support, some learners were anxious or worried about it. For example, Faith said, “I have not a clue what I was doing with that paper. I was really lost with that paper.”

While some participants appeared anxious about the first writing assignment, others seemed unconcerned and confident about their writing ability. Yet they were confused about the transition between the two modules in various ways. For instance, John described his feelings that first night as “reasonably overwhelmed.” He added, “I think everybody’s heads were reeling. I mean we had just turned in our first paper, so that was already traumatic enough, and then you’re starting this whole other . . . concept (i.e., life learning paper).”

That challenge of learning how to accommodate the unusual way of thinking about and writing a paper (i.e., Kolb’s Model of Experiential Learning) confronted the learners in the second phase of the reflective writing experience. Although there was curricular and instructional support, the learners indicated that they still felt stressed, overwhelmed, and frustrated. For instance, Bobbi described working on her computer at home as “very frustrating. . . . [With other papers they had flowed] really good when I [was] writing. . . . I mean I just [would] write what’s coming into my head. But [the LLP] just couldn’t flow for me; writing it was very difficult. . . .”

Most learners received no relief from their stress and frustration during the third or fourth phase in which they were instructed respectively in online or library research and peer or collaborative review of their life learning papers, according to the curriculum. In particular, they had no “trust” in the value of sharing their stories and were skeptical whether they were capable of giving each other valuable feedback. John described the experience as “difficult” and compared it to “asking some to check your geometry homework if you don’t necessarily understand geometry yet. . . .”

So for most learners an encounter with a higher “authority” was necessary for them to feel relief from the anxiety, confusion, stress, and frustration that had developed from their encounter with Kolb’s Model and the life learning paper process. This meeting came during the final or fifth phase in the form of a one-on-one conference with the instructor. For instance, Jan felt that the most valuable part of the course was the conference with the instructor. “What really helps . . . when we had the one on one, and we wrote the third section, and he critiqued everything—where we were right, where we were wrong. . . . That’s what helped me out 100 percent,” she explained.

Description of the Learning

The learners’ described their APPL or reflective writing experience in five phases, and they described their learning from that experience in two ways, that is, instrumental or technical and expressive or affective. The first category was more a consequence of learning by doing or learning to write by using the unusual structure of Kolb’s Model of Experiential Learning. This learning manifested itself in varying degrees as a change in the learners’ attitude about or confidence in their ability to write academically and thus to complete successfully their bachelor’s degree. For most learners it was a positive change. For instance, Ariel concluded, “You are better equipped, self assured. I try explaining to people about [the paper], but some things are kind of hard when somebody is not there to be in the midst of it themselves or see it. But I remember being excited about it around people, you know, what I was doing at the time, what we were learning, and so whether they understood it, I don’t know.”

The second category was more a consequence of learning from prior experience or learning. The learners described the manifestations of this form of change from very little new learning to deep and profound learning about self and its relationship to others. This change seemed to show itself most often in the learners’ reconciliation or making peace with past experiences and relationships. For example, Faith, revisiting her topic of marriage and family, accepted her divorce and resolved her anger and hatred toward her first husband. “I guess by the time I finished writing the paper, I had never contrasted the two marriages before. For that [paper] I used both marriages all through [it], and . . . I had always looked at them as [each] a separate entity and never as something that one led to the other. . . . I used to absolutely hate my ex-husband, and since writing that paper and looking and going, you know what? It wasn’t his fault. . . . and I blamed him for everything. . . . In our reflect (sic) back . . . we [had] to really think back on how things were; it’s just a whole different outlook on how [divorce] just happens, and some of
the things that I let happen; and I didn’t realize that I let things happen. And so it was really nobody’s fault. That’s just the way it turned out, and everything turned out fine; and if it wasn’t for those experiences, I wouldn’t be where I am today. So . . . writing the paper did give me that outlook . . .”

Faith described the change as “almost like . . . a weight off my chest. Just like I had felt that [burden] for so long and . . . blamed [my ex-husband] for everything for so long, and I shouldn’t have done that because everything was not his fault alone. And so it was almost like a renewal. I had this weight lifted off me now of all that anger taken off and then a sense of being a new person and just—it was a good feeling.”

Discussion

What obviously rivets the learners’ attention and stirs up their feelings and emotions the most is the structure of the paper and learning how to write by writing and using an unusual format. The learners complain that this technical or mechanistic way of writing or, more accurately, organizing a paper interferes or blocks their previous writing style. They found the process confusing, frustrating, and stressful, as accommodating any foreign language into one’s native tongue might prove challenging. Although the powerful feelings and emotions that the participants described in their encounter with learning how to write suggest a strong involvement of the self (Cranton, 1994; Mezirow, 1991), it remains oddly only implicit in this form of experiential learning. The learning-by-doing aspect of the APPL process evoked opportunities for self-reflective learning (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Brookfield, 1987; Mezirow, 1991; Tennant and Pogson, 1995) that were not exploited in the module.

With the other type of learning, that is, learning from prior experience or learning, which seemingly has great potential for deeper self-awareness or learning, some learners missed the opportunity by resisting or refusing to engage actively and holistically and to reflect critically on their prior experience, whether public or private in nature. Yet, other learners did engage in a learning experience that resulted in a deeper understanding of self, suggesting a transformative experience (i.e., reflective learning that finds assumptions or premises to be distorted, inauthentic, or invalid). “Transformative learning results in new or transformed meaning schemes or when reflection focuses on premises, transformed meaning perspectives” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 6). Therefore the learners had a deep or profound change in self-identity and were unwilling or unable to return to a previous state of being. The learners redefined themselves in relationship to others and made significant, life-altering changes in their behavior. For example, Bobbi, who frankly admitted her dislike for the reflective writing course, recognized, for the first time, her anger and resentment toward her co-dependent parents, that is, her alcoholic father and enabling mother, and was beginning to deal with her feelings and emotions, especially toward her brother whom she also recognized as in a co-dependent relationship with their mother. She admitted that Kolb’s Model was “excellent” in helping her “to take it piece by piece” and “really reflect” on what it was like to grow up in an alcoholic family.

By its very nature assessment of prior learning externalizes or objectifies or problematizes the learners’ private prior experience in the form of written documentation and puts it and thus the learners into relationship with each other and the instructor through the sharing of these documents (Tennant, 2000). So as they are writing the papers, most learners who are successful in this APPL environment are engaged actively in not only a new experience, but also revisiting and restructuring a previous private experience. In other words, as the learners’ are busy with the publicized subject of the course, that is, research writing, their subjective or private learning experiences are also becoming a “subject” and thus the “object” of public attention and discourse; namely, their life learning papers. In essence, the Assessment of Prior Learning seems to be a way for learners to “reauthor” themselves (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999). The depth of this “reauthoring” or redefining or relearning of self could be explained, not by differences in topics, but by differences in the degree of engagement or critical reflection or critical thinking among the learners.

Implications for Theory and Practice

The implications from this study are both theoretical and practical in the understanding of transformative learning theory. First, the evidence seems to confirm the theory is robust and can be fostered in a formal educational setting through a reflective writing process. A key element seems to be holistic engagement of the learners in the reflective aspect of paying attention especially to their uncomfortable feelings and distorted assumptions. Second, because there was evidence that the learners were engaged actively in the instrumental writing yet primed emotionally for a deeper level of learning, the findings indicate the importance of teachers providing curricular opportunities for debriefing or critically thinking about the reflective writing experience itself (e.g., journal writing), so “teaching [or learning] moments,” especially transformative ones, would be encouraged (Dirkx & Prenger, 1997). Finally, fostering transformative learning in a formal educational setting requires more scholarly attention and advancement.
References
Transformative Learning Theory: Five Dynamics for Developing Leaders in Multinational Corporations

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Abstract: Leadership development for 21st century multinational corporations (MNCs) requires that leaders acquire new knowledge and skills, and places an emphasis on developing new capabilities and talents. Transformative learning theory provides a well researched methodology for creating innovative learning interventions to more effectively develop leadership capabilities. A current challenge for the direct application of transformative learning theory by HRD practitioners is its theoretical and descriptive nature. This study reviews the literatures of transformative learning, transformational leadership and the feminist ethic of care identifying through their synthesis specific learning dynamics which are the basis for transformative leadership program design in MNCs.

Development of leaders through the latter part of the 20th century focused on selecting for and developing leadership capabilities aligned primarily with an ethic of responsibility. Desired attributes have included strategic understanding, results orientation, task focus, and competitive orientation. These attributes are important but current conditions call for placing a renewed focus on the ethic of ultimate ends -- where ultimate impact and higher purposes are incorporated (Weber, 1947). Incorporating the ethic of ultimate ends calls for the leadership capacity for (a) personal awareness of beliefs, values and assumptions; (b) human relations focused on valuing the other; (c) incorporating new approaches to communication and decision-making; (d) broadened appreciation for the complexity and contextuality of presenting issues; (e) increased creativity and innovation; and (f) leadership actions aligned toward both short term gains and the greater good.

Research in adult learning provides evidence that planned learning interventions incorporating praxis and critical reflection lead to significant personal transformations. And individual transformation becomes the building block for organization transformation. Transformative learning applied in a corporate setting may offer a learning process for developing leaders with the above mentioned attributes. (Cranton, 1994; Dirkx, 1997; Marsick, 1990; Marsick and Cederhom, 1989; Mezirow, 1990, 1991, 1997, 2000; Sokol and Cranton, 1999; Yorks and Kasl, 2002).

Transformative learning is a form of emancipatory learning that focuses the learner on the "broader purpose, the goal . . . to help adults realize their potential for becoming more liberated, socially responsible and autonomous" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 30). It aligns with the learning that Burns (1978) suggested when he called for educating transforming leaders to a higher purpose. Transformative learning provides a theory of adult learning for developing leaders who are willing to challenge the status quo and actively ask as Argyris (1993) suggested, "Are we doing the right thing," and "Why are we doing this." It provides learning that fosters organizationally and socially responsible decision-making and culture change.

That transformative learning has yet to be incorporated to any extent into leadership development efforts reflects the isolation of the various families of theory, practice and research within the academy. As E. W. Taylor (2003) noted in his comprehensive reviews of the research on transformative learning, “Most of the settings [for transformative learning studies] are situated in formal higher education.” (p. 2) thus, a focus for developing leaders through this leading adult learning process is in its infancy and requires planned introduction by scholar-practitioners in HRD.

A few studies have begun to consider the application of transformative learning theory to the development of leadership. Marsick (1990) recognized, "In the workplace reflection of any kind has been considered a luxury . . . . Yet paradoxically, reflection is becoming more part of the lifeblood of organizations in today's turbulent economic environment . . . . managers are being called upon to make subjective judgments, take risks, and question the assumptions on which they have operated" (23). One study conducted by Brown and Posner (2001) explored the relationship of transformative learning and transformational leadership and suggests that "development programs and approaches need to reach leaders at a personal and emotional level, triggering critical self-reflection, and providing support for meaning making including creating learning and leadership mindsets, and for experimentation" (p. 279). Brown and Posner suggest that transformative learning is highly applicable to accomplish this. And in a recent edition of Advances in Developing Human Resources, Brooks (2004) purports that

transformative learning is a viable theory and research approach for developing human resources. She asserts that transformative learning provides a basis for developing people, so that a change in level of conscious awareness occurs and is appropriate in a variety of contexts, such as managing across national boundaries and learning to be part of a diverse workforce, dealing with complexity, motivating others, and changes in the psychological work contract. Fisher-Yoshida, Geller and Wasserman (2005), three scholar-practitioners, described the application of transformative learning concept to planned interventions for conflict management capabilities, relational leadership capacity and diversity in corporate settings.

A current challenge for the direct application of transformative learning theory to leadership development is its theoretical and descriptive nature. Application in corporate settings calls for the identification of specific learning dynamics which can then be consciously incorporated into the design of leadership development efforts. Geller (2005) using model – building methodology to synthesize three families of theory research and practice – transformative learning, transformational leadership and the feminist ethic of care – suggested a model of relational leadership development identifying five dynamics of transformative learning that operationalize it for application to leadership development interventions. The five dynamics she proposed are a) understanding the role of frame of reference in the process of meaning making; b) recognizing critical thinking as a central tenet for decision-making; c) incorporating praxis, the process of reflecting on action, as a planned activity; d) integrating empathic and reflective discourse in a communal context; and e) appreciating cultural difference. While these dynamics are readily known within the academy, they are not known to practitioners in human resource development nor are they operationalized.

The Five Dynamics of Transformative Learning Theory

Dynamic 1: Frames of Reference Play a Significant Role in the Process of Meaning Making

Left unexamined our frames of reference limit our experiences, our approach to problem solving and our decision-making. To develop leaders, a focus on illuminating frames of reference, "the structure of assumptions and expectations (aesthetic, sociolinguistic, moral-ethical, epistemic, psychological) through which we filter and make sense of our world" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 293), offers the individual insights into ways of knowing and making meaning. Activities designed to surface socio-cultural beliefs, values and perspectives acquired (usually in childhood) through our family of origin, cultural assimilation, and stereotypic representations provide a foundation for knowing the self and engaging effectively with others.

As Mezirow (2000) suggested "We can transform our point of view by being critically reflective of the assumptions supporting the content and / or process of problem solving . . . we change our point of view by trying on another's point of view" (pp. 20 – 21). Identifying current frames of reference and deconstructing them through self-reflection becomes the first dynamic action in a well-planned transformative learning process. Gaining awareness of familial, cultural and stereotypic beliefs influences the way the leader experiences others and events and may at times allow for a perspective transformation.

Dynamic 2: Critical Reflection and Thinking a Second Dynamic for Transformative Learning

Critical reflection is a central tenet in transformative learning and for effective leadership. It provides the means for identifying and challenging assumptions, as well as exploring and imagining alternatives. Mezirow (1990) described critical reflection as a process requiring a person to recognize that "becoming critically aware of our own suppositions involves challenging our established and habitual patterns of expectation" (p. 12) and results in revolutionary ways of engaging with the world as the leader comes to learn that that knowledge is socially constructed, that "there are no fixed truths or totally definitive knowledge, and because circumstances change, the human condition may be best understood as a continuous effort to negotiate contested meanings" (p. 3).

Through the process of critical thinking, the leader is freed to explore and imagine a range of alternatives and experience current circumstances with a new way of seeing that offers options and choices not previously recognized. Creativity is fostered, and with it comes a "reflective skepticism . . . . [Evidenced] when we refuse to accept that the justification for an action is simply 'That's just the way it is' or 'that's how things are done'" (Brookfield, 1987, p. 21).

Critical reflection incorporating reflective skepticism offers the leader an approach to informed commitment after a period of questioning, analysis, and reflection, with proposed action measured for congruence with reality. Critical thinking the second fosters resilience and adaptability to change.
Dynamic 3: Praxis - Reflection on Action

Dewey (1916) described the fundamental process of education as activity to engage the learner in a continuous and alternating cycle of investigation and exploration, followed by action "grounded on this exploration, followed by reflection on this action, followed by further investigation and exploration, followed by further action, and so on" (Brookfield, 1986, p. 15). Transformative learning incorporates praxis "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 1970, p. 36). Argyris and Schön (1974) noted, “All human beings -- not only professional practitioners -- need to become competent in taking action and simultaneously reflecting on this action to learn from it” (p. 4). Clearly praxis is an important dynamic for leaders in the 21st century.

Mezirow (2000) characterized the transformative learning process as "praxis, a dialectic, in which understanding and action interact to produce an altered state of being" (p. xii). In leadership, when action and reflection are integrated, actions are considered not in light of "how do we do this," but rather become about "what do we believe taking this action will do; why are we doing this; what don't we know about taking this action; what alternatives are there that we have yet to consider?" In this process action is put on hold until time is taken to consider in its complexity implications and the longer-term impact. By incorporating the third dynamic theme -- praxis, the leader "stimulates interest among followers to view their work from new perspectives" to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways (Bass & Avolio, 1994a, p. 2).

Dynamic 4: Mutuality and Reflective Discourse

In the 21st century the leader's primary role is to fully engage team members toward shared goals. By giving voice to others and involving them mutually in reflective discourse the leader is able to accomplish this. Mezirow (2003) identified that discourse in the transformative learning process is "Dialogue involving the assessment of beliefs, feelings and values . . . from the point of view of a particular frame of reference . . . . To take the perspective of another involves an intrapersonal process. . . [It] also involves an interpersonal dimension, using feedback to adapt messages to the other's perspective" (pp. 59 – 60). The dialogic process introduces critical thinking as a group process; it focuses a group on inquiry and understanding rather than planning and action.

While Mezirow (2000) acknowledged that the dialogic process requires empathy, Freire (1970) voiced this by describing that dialogue is the act of creating understanding amongst a group of men and women that exists through "profound love for the world and the people" (p. 89). When fully integrated into the collective approach to goal attainment, the use of dialogue builds a foundation of understanding and trust.

Founding itself upon love, humility and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialogue is the logical consequence . . . . [It] leads the dialoguers into ever closer partnership . . . trust is established in the group by dialogue . . . [and] true dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking . . . thinking that perceives reality as a process, as transformation . . . . Without dialogue there is no communication and without communication there can be no true education. (Freire, 1970, pp. 90 – 93)

Dynamic 5: Intercultural Appreciation

Leadership of teams in the 21st century is built upon the acknowledgement and acceptance of difference. Whether within the boundaries of the US where immigration of educated individuals is at its height or in transnational contexts for MNCs, today's knowledgeable workers are likely to reflect differences in country of origin and first language, as well as gender and racial diversity. As transformative learning is based in the contextual understanding of the self and the other, it provides a learning process that allows for the intrapersonal and interpersonal understanding of frames of reference. Frames of reference are initially developed through sociocultural beliefs, values and perspectives acquired in through the family of origin, cultural assimilation, and stereotypic representations within our society.

Hofstede (1997) noted that intercultural communication abilities start with "the recognition that I carry a particular mental software because of the way I was brought up, and that others brought up in a different environment carry a different mental software for equally good reasons" (p. 230). Bennett (1998) discussed the Whorf / Sapir hypothesis noting, "We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages . . . the world is presented in a kaleidoscope flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds -- and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds" (p. 13). The social construction of language becomes a primary determinant of what we see and what we know; in essence it influences our habits of mind.

In certain Asian cultures there is no word "I" thus the concept of "individualism" is difficult to grasp, or conversely the notion of subjugation of the needs of the individual to the larger collective is beyond a western
leader's understanding. To be fully effective in the 21st century leaders and those they lead need to gain an appreciation of a difference. Both Hofstede and Bennett suggest that interpersonal communication can be taught, acknowledging that it requires people have openness to alternative perspectives, a high tolerance for uncertainty, emotional stability and an ability to distance oneself from personal beliefs. These attributes for intercultural competence are developed through the focused application of transformative learning process to leadership development.

Transformative learning through its dynamics -- self-reflection, critical thinking, praxis, mutuality and dialogue and intercultural appreciation -- offers a learning process that supports the development of a cadre of leaders who will be purposely developed to be self-reflective, open-minded, critical thinkers; relational leaders attuned with an ethic of care to both a continuing ethic of responsibility and to an ethic of ultimate ends.

**Figure 1**

*The Five Dynamics of Transformative Learning Theory*

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**Implications of This Study for Professional Practice**

To understand how these five dynamics drive the design process for leadership development, the last section describes two exemplar applications. Each of these experiences sits within larger learning interventions that are intentionally designed to develop the leadership capabilities for specific contexts.

Through the application of the five dynamics of transformative learning, an organization establishes a common foundation for increasing levels of reflective action, intercultural appreciation, employee engagement and ethical action, all of which may positively influence business performance. Leadership development programs tailored to incorporate these dynamics support a multinational corporation’s values, strategic intent, business goals and its performance management approach are designed to build leader capabilities to question assumptions; be accepting of diverse perspectives; broaden understanding of situations; consider the complex inter-relationships that impact business decisions and gain more self-understanding.

**Experiencing a Multifaceted Self**

Leadership development programs traditionally incorporate use of a psychological surveys (e.g., MBTI, Motivation Orientation, Social Styles, ACUMEN), or measures of leadership (e.g., MLQ™, LPI™, Situational Leadership Survey), or to some extent 360° feedback (e.g., Benchmarks™, PROFILOR™ or tailored questionnaires). In my practitioner roles, the feedback I have received from leaders in a number of leading organizations is that when they reflect back on the prior leadership programs, the results from these surveys provide lasting information and for the some the most meaningful contribution of these efforts.

Traditionally, a single survey is selected by an organization to establish a shared language and an agreed way to for leadership to act within the organization. In two U.S. based Fortune 100 organizations and my recent
multinational experience, this has included (at different times and companies), the MBTI™, or the PROFILO™, or the StrengthsFinder™. In each of these multinational corporations, my task was to drive a singular approach to understanding both the self and other across and through all levels of an organization. At the time I thought, “This is enough” as it gives them an understanding of themselves and allows them to use the related model to understand others, but this approach is not enough to build the capabilities of relational leaders.

Fostering leadership development -- through surveys, questionnaires and 360° feedback -- in the 21st century multinational corporation requires acknowledgement and appreciation for the complexity of people. To honour this complexity, one view is not enough. Understanding the self and the other is better done by combining and offering a broad range of tools and experiences each showing a “snapshot” of the individual. In synthesizing these “snapshots,” a more comprehensive and “3-dimensional” view of the leader emerges.

There is a need to evolve understanding of the self and the other by incorporating multiple ways of building self-awareness and recognizing similarity and differences. For example, a management development program might incorporate a combination of surveys and tools that lead to an identification of personal values, offer an assessment of leadership beliefs and behaviors, ascertain preferred learning styles, and define motivation orientation. Through personal feedback and dialogic conversation that provides both conceptual understanding as well as offers individualized feedback, a multifaceted view of the self is gained in relationship with the other. The acquisition of these insights in a collective setting fostering praxis, mutuality and dialogue leads to an awareness and appreciation of the full range of values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour for the self and toward acceptance of sameness and difference of others.

Creating Learning Partnerships That Frame the Experience of Mindful Interactions

Creating learning partnerships in the context of a relational leadership development intervention is a way of showing the value for developing meaningful interactions with the other as described in the keystone of the model. Through the design of a structured interview which seeks to gain an appreciative view of the other, the interviewer (a colleague) identifies what the leader is currently doing that supports good practice and indirectly gains information on opportunities where the individual can become more effective.

The learning partnership provides each person with a view of themselves through the eyes of the other -- an interested but dispassionate person who sees both positive and negative in a broader context. The partnership is a supportive affiliation for leadership development in which encouragement and challenge is given and received in confidence. As the partner is generally a colleague in the same organization, there is shared knowledge of the contextual realities of the work setting.

The initial process with those in partnership is as important as the interviews themselves; it is about establishing a mutually responsive and empathic relationship. Partners are asked to hold conversations first to share insights on themselves; they are encouraged to set ground rules for how they will work together; and agree a plan of action that each commits to fulfilling for the other. Setting a context is a critical part of the pre-interview process and the partners are encouraged to share background information on their leadership performance.

A key aspect of this collaboration involves personalizing the experience of a 360° process and conducting it as a partnered interview process that focuses queries on the strengths of the other. Each person in the partnership is asked to identify three to five key people (boss, colleagues, associates, and customers) to be interviewed by a partner who follows a structured interview format. The partner personally contacts the people identified by the other, and conducts conversations to gain answers to the structured questions. The interviewer then has the responsibility for reflecting on the data and synthesizing it in preparation for sharing in a one-on-one extended conversation held within a larger learning intervention. Over a 3-hour period, the two share their insights and gain increased awareness of how each as a person and a leader is experienced by others. The conversations require mindfulness of the other, empathy and mutual responsiveness, respect and even appreciation for difference, an ethical approach to confidentiality and naturally incorporate elements of dialogue. As the approach used is based on “appreciative inquiry” and “strengths” each person experiences an extended development conversation focused on what they do well, each gains an awareness of his or her personal impact on those interviewed and the strengths that these people value, as well as a preliminary plan for what will be most meaningful and important to them in the context of the group based learning intervention.

By the conclusion of the conversations, a caring and mutually supportive collegial and coaching relationship is generally established. Trust is its foundation. And through this process, the learner relies on the five dynamics of the transformative learning process – self reflection, mutuality and discourse, intercultural appreciation, critical thinking and praxis.

When these five dynamics of transformative learning are consciously incorporated into leadership development programs leaders who attend build skills to question assumptions; be accepting of diverse perspectives; broaden
understanding of situations; consider the complex inter-relationships that impact business decisions and gain more self-understanding.

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A Four Worlds Approach to Transformative Learning

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Abstract: Our present moment is dominated by the modern paradigm, a worldview and way of being that has become global, marginalizing other paradigms and equating knowledge with intellectual knowing. This paper calls for a Four Worlds model of transformative learning that raises awareness that other worldviews exist, explores what they have to offer at a time of planetary crisis, and embraces more holistic and multi-faceted ways of knowing, being, acting and interacting.

Introduction
This paper is grounded in the understanding that we are living in a very particular historical moment. This moment is a complex one encompassing great danger to people and all life, the opportunity to look back and understand the past, and the possibility of moving together through dialogue to a different kind of future. As such, it is a time when deep transformation is not only desirable, but necessary—and possible. Drawing on the contribution of several historical and emergent examples which I will describe as Four Worlds models, this paper examines the contribution of a comprehensive view of transformative learning in both understanding and transcending our present crisis.

The Context
Our moment is a time of grave threat to all life on Earth of an unprecedented “order of magnitude,” as Thomas Berry puts it. At a time of great technological advances, the world faces severe problems, including poverty, militarism, environmental degradation and a devastating AIDS pandemic. These issues are best understood not as a series of unrelated events, but as a multifaceted problématique that has its roots in the assumptions, worldview and social practices of a period of history we now refer to as the modern age. A major contributor to the crisis is the almost totalizing dominance of the worldview and social practices that constitute the modern paradigm, a paradigm that has become global in scope. This is not to say that the modern paradigm is all negative; on the contrary, it was a necessary corrective to the medieval paradigm that preceded it and has had a number of important benefits, for example the development of universal human rights.

The system created by the modern paradigm is now reaching its limits, giving us a unique opportunity to look back at the assumptions, underpinnings and development of the modern paradigm and the period of modernity. Some of the things that are becoming visible include: how things came to be the way they are; what has been lost or discarded, including languages, cultures and worldviews; the effects of the modern paradigm on people in different geographical and social locations; how the wounds of the past affect us now, bearing in mind that everyone is impacted by oppressive or unjust structures and systems; and the lack of power and voice of some worldviews and peoples, and therefore the impossibility- until now- of having a dialogue.

Transformative Learning and Our Moment
At this time of life-threatening tensions under which we all live and the resultant possibility and necessity of understanding our situation and how it came to be this way, as well as creating viable alternatives, there is a vital role for transformative learning. Located as I am in the Transformative Learning Centre (TLC), I fully identify with our working definition that

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transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body-awarenesses, our visions of alternative approaches to living, and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. It is respectful of diverse knowledges and provides a framework for deepening our understanding of the underlying forces that are transforming Canadian society and the world.

In his chapter on peace education, “Shaping Visionaries: Nurturing Peace Through Education,” Larry Fisk distinguishes between educating about peace, educating for peace and educating through peace. Applying the same schema to transformative learning, I suggest that the version evolving in the TLC embraces all three. While the TLC includes interdisciplinary and inter-departmental research and teaching, it is not just an academic area of study. It also pays a great deal of attention to community-university partnerships, involvement in political action, and to building bridges both locally and internationally. Many people are surprised by what we have been able to do with no university funding (beyond a small amount for three years) and no staff. Anyone who has visited our centre with the soft sculpture “meeting tree” making a grotto out of a tiny entrance passage, the Peace Lounge we’ve inspired, the abundant artwork, and most importantly the sense of community, fun and life, knows that we’ve created something out of the ordinary, especially in an academic institution, and that our working definition is not a formalistic mission statement but something that has evolved through our work (and play) together.

Looking at the threefold description of transformative learning proposed above and to our working definition, I propose that in the TLC we educate about transformation by talking about paradigms, worldviews and self-locations; we educate for transformation by developing the necessary capacities and attitudes and by being involved in transformative practices and movements; and that we educate through transformation by all the ways we learn and teach; act and live; relate and interact together.

Our notion of “grounded hope” embodies the idea of learning through transformation, suggesting that we can actively create a viable future rooted in both critique and vision by developing practicable alternatives that recognize the limitations and possibilities of each context. The TLC model of transformative learning helps us to understand the world in a different way and also to live our lives in a different way.

A “Four Worlds” Approach to Transformative Learning

Because of a number of historical confluences and other reasons that will not be explored here, the modern paradigm has not only resulted in a scientistic, mechanistic, impoverished picture of reality, but has also equated this reality with “the truth”. In so doing, much has been lost, subjugated or excluded as not counting as “real”. This includes much of the pre-modern ways of thinking and being, for example, models of scientific thought in which the Earth is seen as a living being, to be respected, and a spirituality that is immanent and pervasive. Pluralistic ways of knowing, including Afrocentric and indigenous systems of thought, were particularly vulnerable to the totalizing influences of modernism.

The dominant perspective embodied in the modern paradigm is the default, the standard against which other worldviews are measured. And the paradigm is not just the ideas; it includes ways we look at things, the “culturally modeled habits of doing and being, perceiving and sensing, thinking and speaking.” It is not possible to understand different worldviews like the African or indigenous worldviews, for example, by comparing them to the modern one and their features do not fit into the categories of the modern worldview. Worldviews need to be understood on their own terms and from their own perspective.  

Peter Cole (2003) puts it this way:

- translating gets us into trouble every time
- translating everything into eurolanguages and europhilosophies
- euro ways of thinking and acting
- our own aboriginal ways of thinking and acting are not even taught to us in the public school system
- and if they are used they misrepresent decontextualize
- the default position is euro everything

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1 Alford (2004) describes this well, referring mainly to the Hopi worldview.
At our moment, as we ache toward a new vision for creative and sustainable living, we are beginning to look both backward to forms of knowing and being that have been lost, and forward to the collaborative and creative models that are developing. I use the title Four Worlds to describe many of the old, renewing and emergent models even if they do not all use this term themselves. Each of the approaches I will be looking at encompasses a range of spheres or worlds as part of its vision of reality, a reality which includes not just what we see but how we see it and indeed how we live.

Examples of Four Worlds Models

Jewish Renewal Based on Kabbalah/Hassidic Model of Jewish Mysticism

Jewish mystics talk of a four- or sometimes five-dimensional reality. These dimensions or worlds have different conceptions according to what is being explored and the particular schema developed. In the Aleph Statement of Principles, the worlds consist of the following: Atzilut (Being); Briya (Knowing); Yetzirah (Relating); and Assiyah (Doing). What is helpful about this model in terms of transformative learning is that the Four Worlds provide a language to understand reality in an expanded, multi-faceted way as well as developing an integrated and holistic practice. Combined with other concepts such as Teshuva (literally “return”, which refers to renewal processes and/or a return to ethical living) and Tikkun (healing, repairing and transforming of both one’s soul and the world), as well as the unfolding process of Becoming, the Four Worlds model has enormous possibilities. An emphasis on Being, for example, is a necessary corrective to the modern society’s overemphasis on Doing, an imbalance that has led to overconsumption, production and technology that threatens our mental and physical well-being, as well as that of the planet.

African World View

While Africa is a big continent encompassing a range of diversity, an overarching Afrocentric paradigm does exist, similar to an indigenous worldview with common principles. In some ways, the African worldview can be seen as a direct antithesis of the modern paradigm as the following model I developed from Wangoola and Karenga indicates:

1. **The community is central.**
   The individual is subordinate and humans are aspects of a larger whole, both community and nature.

2. **People live within reciprocal relationships.**
   These include the community, nature and the dead and the yet unborn. Africans work to live; they do not live to work.

3. **Knowledge is holistic.**
   It is integrally related to spirituality, society and politics.

4. **Nature is alive.**
   We as humans live in harmony with nature, of which we are an aspect. Nature is sacred and deserving of our respect.

5. **Relationships are reciprocal.**
   There is no notion of being except in relationship.

6. **God exists in the world.**
   Many Gods are better than one, and God is revealed simultaneously to all peoples of the world. The living world is sacred.

These points are interrelated and often overlapping because the African worldview is an integrated one with its key feature being **unity of being**.

Seen as a deficit model against the standard of the modern worldview, African cultures have been viewed as superstitious, animistic and not very productive, and the different attitude to time that exists in some African societies is viewed as a problem. Compounding this is the “colonization of the mind” experienced by African (and many other) people, resulting in a lack of knowledge about and belief in one’s own cultural heritage. However, as

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1 Sources for this model include ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal
2 See ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal.
Africans are beginning to reclaim their worldview and sense of being, the African worldview is being revealed as having vital contributions to make, especially in its emphasis on life or a vital force and the prime importance being paid to context and relationships.

Medicine Wheel Teachings

Four is a most important number in aboriginal traditions. In the medicine wheel teachings, there are four directions, representing many different dimensions of wholeness, in much the same way as the Four Worlds of mystic Judaism. In terms of knowing, the dimensions are: physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. Overlaying the four directions are a sense of the sacred, an emphasis on balance, and an unfolding dimension of potential, will and manifesting.

As we saw with the African worldview above, and as the quote from Peter Cole above indicates, worldviews have to be seen on their own terms. It is fascinating that insights from the new physics regarding the nature of reality, space and time have given new credence to Aboriginal worldviews and long overdue respect for indigenous people. In the modern worldview, the categories of Time and Space are so all-encompassing that they subsume all others and it is difficult to imagine another way of looking at the world. But there are other possibilities. Benjamin Lee Whorf points out that the Hopi worldview is permeated by different cosmic forms: the Manifest and the Manifesting. The Manifest comprises all that is or has been accessible to the senses in the present and past. The Manifesting encompasses what we think of as the future, as well as everything that exists in the mind and heart of people and other aspects of nature. It is the realm of expectancy, desire and purpose.

UNESCO - Learning: The Treasure Within

UNESCO commissioned an International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century and the resulting report, Learning: the Treasure Within, is an emergent Four Worlds model of education. With commissioners from every continent and a broad mandate that called for an examination of education in the context of the major turning-points in human development on the eve of the 21st century, the report is at once comprehensive, critical, and visionary. What is fascinating in terms of the other Four Worlds approaches, the Commission felt that education throughout life is based upon four pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be.

Max-Neef’s Theory of Human Needs

Maxfred Max-Neef is a Brazilian economist who developed a comprehensive matrix of basic needs and satisfiers, with needs according to axiological categories (Subsistence, Protection, Affection, Understanding, Participation, Idleness, Creation, Identity and Freedom) on one axis and needs according to existential categories (Being, Having, Doing and Interacting) on the other. The existential needs resonate strongly with the Four Worlds approach.

I see Max-Neef’s work as being important in transformative learning for a number of reasons. Transdisciplinary and systems-based, it encompasses a broad perception of what it means to be human and what prevents people from reaching their full potential. It is people-centred, rather than based on abstract economic models, and it expands the concept of poverty from a lack of material goods only to refer to the pathologies that occur when any human needs are unmet. It offers a way of putting modern economic and social systems into a broad context and demonstrates that economic goods do not necessarily satisfy our needs, and can even destroy them! The matrix is a useful tool for making groups aware of both their deprivations and potentialities, and it respects diversity in the different ways needs can be met. It is also a model for empowerment and self-reliance.

Conclusion

The evolving TLC model of transformative learning involves an appreciation and understanding of each of these worldviews, and I suggest that with its encompassing of different practices, values and modalities, the TLC model of transformative learning can itself be seen as a Four Worlds model. In our courses, the sharing circles we hold regularly with the community and our conferences and other meetings, we incorporate many elements of the Four Worlds models. Spirituality is a vital element of what we do and how we do it. We use rituals such as water ceremonies and indigenous pipe ceremonies in our conferences, and many of us start our classes with a meditation or silent reflection. We pay attention to emotional learning through sharing circles, dances, potluck meals and other

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1. Alford (2004) describes a 1992 Western and Native American Sciences Conference that brought world-calls physicists such as David Bohm and David Peat into dialogue with indigenous intellectuals including Leroy Little Bear and Sa’kej Henderson.
ways of building community. We make use of embodied knowing and art processes, and some of us move our classes to other locations, for example teaching about African values under a tree. And we often include an element of play in what we do!

The Four Worlds models described here, including that of the TLC, are examples of transformative rather than holistic learning. Each recognises the gravity of our present moment and attempts to develop new ways to move into the future. The approaches offer an opportunity to reclaim what was lost and a way to see renewed or newly created possibilities. In the context of our moment, the development of these different Four Worlds approaches offers the opportunity of a respectful dialogue, as we work toward a new type of future. The Four Worlds models all offer a worldview that is radically different from the modern paradigm and many implications for praxis, of learning through transformation.

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What Thwarts Transformative Learning? – Considering Existential Dread

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Abstract: In this paper I discuss how humankind’s intrinsic fear, born of the consciousness of its existence and concomitant vulnerability to existential dread, limits learners’ capacity to learn and to change deeply. This frame can particularly contribute towards enhancing transformative learning in learning communities of diversity.

An existential-dread framing of thwarted transformative learning, both helps to explain the phenomenon and sets a theoretical ground for a pedagogy that addresses it. Thus, this paper in addition to considering existential dread, also suggests educational practices that allow the darkness of dread to forge new capacity for understanding and therefore, for a transformed way of knowing. The reasoning for these practices is supported by feminist scholarship in theology, an anthropological view of initiation and Jungian psychology, all of which attribute value to the darkness of not-knowing.

As adult educators, no doubt our practices take into account that learners are subjects of their experiences and thus of their learning, that respectful dialogue is essential, and that rigorous and critical engagement requires learning environments that make learners feel safe. As proponents of transformative learning, we are aware that disorienting dilemmas can prompt learners to interrogate their frames of reference and that whole-person learning that is reflective about feelings contributes to deep learning and change. It seems, however, that educators, including educators of adult and transformative learning, may be less knowing about what to do when all these strategies are not enough to keep at bay the dark feelings that can overwhelm a learning community of diverse learners. On the other side of that scenario, I suggest that the adult and transformative pedagogies with their emphasis on dialogue, safety and reflecting on affect may tend too readily to control or suppress dark feelings that may live in a community of diverse learners. I contend that the root assumption underlying adult and transformative learning practices is one that focuses on bringing the light of reason to bear on that which is disorienting. Joan Halifax in an edited work (Halifax, 1999) writes, “In our [western] culture, the word education means to be led out of ignorance into knowing and knowledge.” However, I agree with the gist of Halifax’s chapter that we western educators are too eager to reason away the darkness of our unknowing, not recognizing that it is the dark itself that forges new capacities in learners to know more wholly. As educators we may be too quick to bring in the light at the expense of the wholeness of human experience to which the darkness makes its own contribution. Inadvertently we then create conditions in diverse classrooms in which learning is evaluated solely by a criterion based on understanding the other or for tolerance of the other rather than self-realization of the other within.

My awareness of the limits of critical subjectivity and self-reflective practices alone in transformative learning grew through my teaching experiences in the Transformative Learning and Change program at the California Institute of Integral Studies. There, one strategy for transformative learning is to charge diverse learners to grow a community that demonstrates capacity to learn from differences. The rationale for this diverse-community learning strategy was based on a reasonable notion that learners could better see the contours of their worldview and surface their deeply held beliefs and assumptions in the face of worldviews different from their own. The learning community strategy unwittingly created a paradox for learners who were diverse in ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, age, learning styles, personalities and life experiences. On the one hand were immanent archetypal yearnings for the community to be harmonious, unconditionally supportive and aligned—in a phrase, attuned in feeling. On the other hand it seemed that real learning could only happen if contentious differences and dark emotions were expressed and engaged. The polarization between unity and differentiation was exacerbated because learners of privilege usually felt supported in community by opportunities for expressing unity while learners with experiences of oppression were supported by opportunities to differentiate.

It seemed to me that often the learning community rested in a false unity (the “conspiracy of niceness” as one student put it) or simply exercised a measured tolerance. Sometimes learners would swing into contentious differentiation, but the community did not regularly demonstrate the capacity for attunement of feeling, of altruistic
yielding\(^1\) and of mutuality. The usual learning strategies—deconstruction of prevailing culture, categorical knowledge on group dynamics, fostering critical and reflective capacities, the collaborative setting of rules for engagement and even non-rational ways of knowing such as group sculpting, active imagining and storytelling—while all helpful, did not seem quite enough. Not forthcoming was a community consciousness whereby all learners and not just individual ones transformed how they knew self, other and world. Missing in the learning community as a whole, was a capacity for engagement with self and other’s ontological reality, that is, reality as lived rather than merely as talked about, categorized or otherwise abstracted. Also missing was a deeply authentic community affect, one that I suggest can only emerge from mutual struggle and not simply from “making nice” or merely from allowing wanted venting.

Clearly the disorienting dilemma posed by ontological differences could not be approached from the perspective of any one of the differences, but needed a meta viewpoint to hold multiple experiences and feelings. I was therefore drawn to look for explanations through dimensions of human nature that could illuminate the dynamics of transformative learning in the learning community setting. This search led me to return to existential philosophy (which underlies current perspectives on intersubjectivity and participative practices) and specifically to focus on the human feeling of existential dread. Later I was to find that existential dread, while perhaps universal, evokes a particular kind of fear in cultures informed by monotheistic traditions. However, let me not get ahead of myself. The following reflects my beginning research. The reader should keep in mind the particular context in which the research arises, namely as a means to frame the limitations of learners to engage ontological differences and to learn from them.

The Existential Perspective

The existential perspective, as it has developed since the 19th century in western Europe, can inform transformative learning as a historical artifact of western consciousness as much as it can inform explicitly through its philosophy and application to psychology. Kierkegaard, the first of the modern existentialists, dedicated his short life to exposing what he saw as the soul-deadening, over-rationality of his times. He feared that an increasing technical rationality (as opposed to an ecstatic reasoning) that served the industrialization of the age would completely sever humankind from its humanness, from its interiority and its passions and from life as lived (May, 1983). Forty and fifty years later, Nietzsche and Freud with only late awareness of Kierkegaard also responded to the soul sickness of the times, and others followed. Interestingly, in Europe, psychology as the healer of the soul developed through existential philosophy while American psychology developed along behaviorist lines. Only decades later did some American psychologists turn to an existential rendering of human nature (p. 47).

In its content the existential perspective is particularly valuable in recognizing that humanness is an enactment of being and that reality manifests from that enactment. For example, sex and death realize their reality in the person experiencing these and not in the statistically factual abstractions or empirical observations. That is not to say that there isn’t a factual truth garnered by say, biology or pathology. But from the existential perspective, what is real is not the truth in its mere objective and measurable sense, but rather in its lived experience.

The two contributions of the existential perspective—reality as relative to a person’s subjective relationship to outer events and as a reaction to the prevailing epistemology’s dualizing of soul and sense in western thought—I suggest, can help to frame the dynamics of the learning community, itself embedded in the prevailing western, American culture. I speculate that in trying to grasp the contentious situations that arise amongst diverse learners charged with making community, participants, true to the prevailing epistemology, make the other object and in so doing arrest their ability to experience their peers and their lives. Conversely, community members when othered feel betrayed. For rather than feelings of attunement, the propensity to resort to the objectifying way of knowing, positions the knower outside the known. I-It rather than I-Thou (Buber, 1970) then determines the quality of relationship between interlocutors. And thus, the learning community remains a place without real relationship in the ontological or lived sense. Community members do not get the feeling that they are seen wholly and mistrust that they can authentically be the soul and sense that a learning community requires. The soul unacknowledged, withers, and thus, the transformative learning that might have come through encounter, through the meeting of feelings as lived, is foiled by the exclusive object-making epistemology. The learning community embedded in the prevailing culture, I contend, is hamstring by its habitual way of knowing and its habitual way of reacting to its limitations.

Again, the learning communities I facilitated usually maintained a niceness or a civility. These characteristics in themselves, however, do not create the conditions for transforming the community as a place where attunement of

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\(^1\) In Ellenberger’s work (1970, p. 857) Anna Freud offers “altruistic yielding” as a coping mechanism that her famous father neglected to mention. In contrast, Sano (2005) uses the term to mean a developmental quality essential for participating in collective life. This is closer to my meaning.
feeling can weather the range of emotions, both dark and light, about things that deeply matter to the lives of its participants. Let me also be quick to say that attunement does not mean agreement with content. It does mean that the community can live the range of community feeling and in so doing can allow contending realities their existence. It means that the community has the capacity to invite and hold differences and to accept that a synthesized meaning may not emerge for every instance of polarity. It means that the community can surrender to not knowing.

While the existential lens helps to frame the dynamics of the learning community, it did not offer me enough insight from which to fashion a theory that might enhance educational practices. For even if learners are presented with this frame, it does not change their feeling enough for them to transform the prevailing epistemology nor gain insight into the limitations of their ontologies. And as mentioned, even when I applied participatory and holistic pedagogies, they didn’t seem quite enough to foster a deeply embodied and sustained change in the community as a whole. For example, storytelling as a collaborative and holistic method did not always break through defensive, judgmental tendencies or touch the listener. When the story of the other cannot be whole-heartedly received, the other remains object without soul.

Why is it that learners, even when presented with a theoretical perspective and engaged in applied methods, are still not able to transform their way of knowing into an embodied and sustained way of being? I believe the answer may lie in another human propensity—to avoid with ferocity, existential dread, which in western culture is the harbinger of nothingness, the terror of the abyss (Beal, 2002; Kearney, 2003; Keller, 2002; Kierkegaard, 1844).

**Existential Dread and Transformative Learning**

Humankind, suffering the human condition, is a species at war with itself. From a cultural anthropological perspective, humans evolved into consciousness and awakened to the terror of existence (Young, 1991), opening the way for the development of human intelligence. To be terrified by existence does not emerge simply from humankind’s awareness of its physical mortality, rather it emerges from its separation (through becoming conscious) from all that is—from nature and from the cosmos. This terror is an existential dread of not being of creation and therefore not graced with an entitlement to be. Existential dread is the fear of not being. From a Christian-Judaic tradition, humankind, unlike all other creation, is with original sin and from other traditions humankind suffers karmic retribution for not being as they should be. The religiosity of humankind, from the anthropological perspective, is a reaction to its fear of being vulnerable to that which it does not know, i.e., that which is wholly other. Religiosity is not predicated on declaring belief in God or in a particular religion. Rather, it is a dimension of human consciousness that wrestles with its own awareness of its existence.

Anthropologists suggest that culture was initiated to provide humankind a way to manage its primordial terror of existential dread. I would contend that each culture’s epistemology is its particular way in which it creates a livable reality, one through which its members can endure their still present primordial feelings of separateness and the terror that separateness visits upon them. At the foundation of its habits of mind is a culture’s way of knowing through which it manages the immanent unknown that perpetually threatens. A way of knowing then, is sacred to a culture in that it keeps the specter of the unknown other at bay and promotes entitlement to being. Enacting a culture’s sacred way of knowing then, feels vital and essential to the being of its members. Thus, one’s way of knowing is not easily transformed.

From this existential-dread framing, enactment of the sacred ritual of objectification is readily evoked in the face of the unknown that is reflected in one that is ontologically different (whose lived life has garnered a different reality). I wonder if there isn’t an inherent terror in difference albeit at a deeply unconscious level? Does it follow that when a context calling for mutuality (such as a learning community) is mandated, the paradox between the called for intimacy of relationship and the immanent terror of other limits learning? In some cultures, the other is simply not admitted to the fold or is formally branded with marginal social and legal status. In American culture the value of equality, while providing more freedom and opportunity for inclusiveness, also produces its own disorienting dilemmas in its quest for pluralism. However, the existential-dread perspective throws into question whether conventional western approaches to knowing alone, with its emphasis on the light of reason, are enough to meet the challenges of pluralism wholly.

**The Dark That Allows More Light**

From an existential-dread framing what is problematic is not the dark of not knowing per se, but humankind’s dread of it. The more dread-filled it gets in the face of the terror of difference the more it will insist on its ritual way of knowing, and in the case of the West, of objectification and distancing from other, thereby forsaking a deep self-knowing and attunement. And yet there is value in the dread itself if learners are able to surrender to it and are not too quick to avoid it by objectifying it.
From a psychological standpoint, the dark of the unconscious is those dimensions that are repressed and which haunt us and express themselves in distorted ways in conscious life. Repressed in the prevailing American life is the denial of soulful existence, of life as lived rather than as objectified. The embracing of the behaviorist sensibility of human nature, previously mentioned, reflects the particularly American, mechanistic and pragmatic approach to a life of objects at the expense of being. Additionally, the philosophy that reasons a participatory worldview and insists on a reality as lived, while commendable, further reflects the lack in the prevailing culture in that it cannot take these for granted but, instead must expound upon them. More directly, feminist deconstruction theology speaks to the cultural fear of the province of the soul, of the feminine, of the dark, of the monstrous abyss and attributes this to a patriarchal logos that required God to be omnipotent and masterful. Negated then, in the patriarchal interpretation of the Bible (but not in the feminist one), was the contribution of the dark chaos itself to creation (Keller, 2003). Feminist Jungian psychologists also speak to the value of the dark for itself (Goodchild, 2001; Woodman & Dickson, 1996).

From the existential-dread framing, the capacity necessary for learners in learning community to acquire then, is to experience the dread itself that comes over the community when passionate emotions arise around profound differences. Key to developing this capacity in learners is for the facilitator to be intimate with her own darkness. In the overwhelm of the darkness, she is affected for better or worse. For the better, the horizon of her knowing is expanded and a new energy and vitality permeates her being—she is forged by the dark. In a worse case scenario, she recoils and the dark reduces her to a reactive, defensive being that clings irrationally to what she knows and how she knows it. Her facilitation, rather than allowing the dark, tries to deny it, explain it, or to otherwise be too ready to manage an understanding that may undermine the forging qualities of the dark. The capacity to witness one’s darkening is essential for fostering a positive outcome. Vipassana, or mindfulness, is a Buddhist practice that can foster this capacity for bearing witness to the ego self, including its darkening. There are other practices that intend to mediate the ego’s judgment in favor of discernment. Discernment attends without embellishment from the conscious mind—it notices what is. Discernment gives the learner capacity to experience the dark that evokes attunement, allowing analysis then to be more compassionate.

The Dark—What Does It Know?

What learners may come to know about the dark, if they foster capacities to bear witness, is that humankind has sometimes escaped a reckoning with the dark through various means, including scapegoating (Coleman, 1995). In a darkening we try to escape its dread by blaming the other for its awe-full nearing. I suggest that this scapegoating technique happens even today in the most mundane of circumstances. “I am furious because Joe neglected to tell me that five significant people were showing up at our house for dinner tonight.” I think that the fault lies entirely with Joe and not at all with the immanence of anger that lies in me. I am likely to think that my distress is caused by the inappropriate action of the other. What escapes notice is that while the actions have happened in fact, the heat comes from the one angered. The heat is informed by our attachment to a particular construal of an ontological reality that in turn is charged by our relationship to the dark of existence, which is immanent. But in our haste to escape the heat we attribute it exclusively to other, who can now be legitimately “sacrificed”. In sacrificing the other we once again deny our own darkness and miss seeing the culturally-created perimeters of our reality. We do not learn from another if they are made other and made to carry the burden of our darkness. In our righteousness we continue to see the world as we do, perpetuating our habits of mind and our particular reality, rejecting the chance to experience a larger existence beyond that with which we are familiar. We do not learn to know differently.

It is difficult to understand the dark for itself, as counter-cultural as the notion is. To know the dark is to attend to the experience of it, not to seek its cause. In the existential-dread framing of transformative learning, what needs to transform is the automatic avoidance of the dark and along with it the propensity to scapegoat. And again, it is not the dark that needs to transform to light, rather it is the learners’ relationship to the dark that needs to shift. The western epistemology can be obsessed with bringing light to the dark rather than to accept the dark’s value for itself before it moves to analysis. In this obsession, the darkness can be construed as the annihilator rather than as that which forges a more inclusive and compassionate ground for reason.

I return to Halifax’s (1999) writing previously mentioned in this article. Missing in the western notion of education she contends, is the complement to the light of knowledge which she suggests is initiation. Initiation is a
way of knowing often associated with other cultures but which can complement western epistemology. Interestingly, Halifax associates the three phases of rites of passage (initiation) as categorized by anthropologist van Gennep with the Three Tenets in the Zen Peacemaker Order (p. 174). The first tenet is not-knowing and separation from the familiar which fosters beginners mind. This first tenet, I feel, is the most counter-cultural to the western mindset. As mentioned, the West has a particular dread of the unknown due to its particular religiosity, and habits of rational knowing quickly kick in to quell the monstrous dread. In this first tenet, the called for action is submission and surrender. In an objectified world this seems senseless—why subject myself to an object? The second tenet is bearing witness and asks that the initiate be fully present to the suffering and joy of self and others. This too is counter to the particularly American propensity for a pragmatic, “fix-it” outcome. The action called for is simply to put attention to feeling rather than to categorize it and manage it and act upon it as object. The third tenet is healing oneself and others through returning to the world and contributing actions informed by new knowing that mediate human suffering. It is in this last tenet that the American-western worldview makes its contribution. However, without engaging the first two tenets the doing may simply reinforce what has come before. In the existential-dark framing, being must transform before the doing follows suit.

**Sitting in the Dark**

How can educators foster learners so they stay in the dark of their unknowing and not too readily dispel its lived reality? Most important, as mentioned previously, is for the facilitator to know the experience of her darkness. Beyond that there are several educational practices that I suggest for engaging the dark. One is to have learners acknowledge that dread will arise in a diverse community and that members will be wholly discomfited by it. Another is to cultivate the learners’ capacity to witness while experiencing the propensity to be reactive when their way of knowing is at stake. I’ve written elsewhere (Gozawa, 2000) about an original active imagination process in which learners imagine their *cosmic heroes*. A cosmic hero is that which comes to learners’ rescue in the face of the “enemy” that throws into question the validity of their reality. In this process the learner imagines how they are in conflict with another as if they were watching a movie of themselves. How does the person look, feel, think, and act? After securing a mental image of themselves in conflict they are asked to associate a character that captures the essence of the image of themselves in conflict. The character that presents itself is dubbed, *cosmic hero*, the one who comes to my rescue in the face of other. The process awards learners insight into their own reality. They can also assure their hero that rescue is not necessary when the dark threatens. In the space afforded by this reassurance, learners can apply a mindfulness practice to bear witness to their suffering the dark.

Aspects of a mindfulness practice can be understood somewhat in physiological terms. If I am overwhelmed with anger my mind is likely to carry on a conversation with itself. For example, “How could Joe be so unthinking as to bring people over unannounced? How would he like it if I put him in the same situation? How can I get back at him? If I can witness myself. I may notice that such a conversation is likely to constrict my body further, causing shallow breathing, tightening of the muscles and the constricting of blood vessels. In that condition, where both the flow of breath and blood are restricted, the body tires, adding to my anxiety, compounding my fatigue, and heightening my sense of vulnerability. From its primal depths, existential dread is then upon me as the body’s condition signals imminent threat. In contrast, if instead I begin to observe the anger as it emanates from me, and I pay attention to what is happening to my breathing, to my muscles, to my thoughts and so on, such attention to the body-mind tends to relax it. Circulation returns, allowing me to be filled with renewed energy, changing my inner experience and transforming the direness of the circumstance at hand. However, a mindfulness practice is only somewhat known through an objectifying, physiological lens. The deep experience of the practice seems to affect the dimension of religiosity in humankind that I spoke of earlier. Through the practice, I feel my fear soften, opening me to the dark and its forging qualities.

Another consideration is to create the conditions that invite the dark so that learners can apply their witnessing capacities. Asking groups of diverse learners to complete a project, one with a restrictive time limit, brings forward different senses of time and of collaboration and relationship. Both time and relationship have archetypal significance, i.e., their reality is often vested in how different cultures have lived them over centuries. If the community members have been invited to be their authentic selves and the lived experience in the community supports that, then authentic expressions of differences are likely to arise. A Group Demonstration of Capacity (GDOC) is a requirement for the learning community. A major competency, the planning and execution of this group project gives the community of diverse learners plenty of opportunity to live and witness their darkness, which itself is part of the GDOC. And again, much of the allowing of experience is vested in the facilitator’s ability to sit in the darkness of not-knowing even when it evokes ambiguity, chaos and a threatening presence. The facilitator’s ability to sit in the darkness and bear witness fosters the learners to do so as well.
The Virtue of the Darkness

What is the effect of embracing existential dread? In being able to accept and live the dark, I have come to see that learners’ ways of knowing and their capacities to be in community shift towards attunement. They shift, I suggest, because learners have expanded their way of knowing to one that at the very least takes the hubris out of the exclusive use of an objectifying, judgmental way of knowing. Such judgmental tendencies will always favor those who are most aligned with the prevailing culture for their judgments are upheld by the dominant canon. The dark brings a humbling and a softening of the heart for self and other. Initiation into the dark dispels chronic dread through the experiencing of it, i.e., through knowing it intimately. The other is no longer simply out there, but also in here. What was once threatening is less so. What can be taken in and known, expands. I suggest then, that the dark itself, the acknowledgment of dread and being of it, forges new capacity to know. To know the dark through an epistemology of intimacy requires capacity to witness self wholly, in body, mind, and heart as the dark has its way.

Conclusion—The Dark for Its Own Sake

My intention for this paper was to compel educators and practitioners to consider the dark of their unknowing, to hold problematic the limitations of the prevailing way of knowing and to contemplate the effect of existential dread on transformative learning particularly in the context of diverse learning communities. Communities of difference can learn mutually if they together can confront their habitual reaction to existential dread and curb the scapegoating propensity that it extracts. Practices for courting darkness are not likely found in conventional western ways of knowing which rely heavily, as suggested by existential philosophy, on objectification for its relationship to existence. And thus we find that complementary ways of knowing are inspired by non-western ones as in mindfulness and in initiation. Not mentioned in this article, as I am less familiar with them, are western esoteric practices that are also relevant.

In the diverse community setting, the goodness criteria of the prevailing culture will not likely be questioned at an ontological and epistemological level if the dark of unknowing is not allowed its forging contributions to knowing. Even the critical theory lens that uncovers oppression and power inequities moves quickly to critical analysis before it allows the darkening where experience is primary. The intimate witnessing of the dark gives insight to the fierce tenacity of habits of being and can potentially transform relationship to existence. It can soften the heart. What thwart transformative learning? Consider our cultural relationship to the dark. The fear of not-knowing lurks in our cultural unconscious. This dark haunts us for our lack of intimacy with it.

References
Keeping It Real — An Inquiry Into Holistic Practices and Transformative Learning

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Abstract: Participants will share stories about holistic practices and supportive conceptual frameworks.

As faculty in the Transformative Learning and Change doctoral program, we have been engaged in an ongoing inquiry about holistic practice, grounding ourselves in different theoretical bases. We have come to understand that some of the most profound learnings are not those that can be anticipated by the facilitator or mimicked by the participants, but spark spontaneously in the space where the lives of learners encounter each other. In this plenary session, participants are invited to tell stories from their teaching experiences that reflect their assumptions about practices that “keep it real.” Our personal stories are examples of what we invite in the session.

Elizabeth’s Story

In 1993 I moved to San Francisco to help create a doctoral program in transformative learning. As I had been teaching for several years in the Teachers College adult education program, my ideas about transformative learning were influenced strongly by Jack Mezirow’s theory. In contrast, this new program’s vision asserted commitment to holistic pedagogies, to learning community, and to shared power between faculty and students. I worked with a cohort who met once a month for three-day weekends. Acting on my ideas about how to share leadership in curriculum planning, I initiated a practice in which a few students met with me to plan each weekend.

I had good instincts about participatory leadership and little understanding of holistic learning. Imagine my dismay, only two months into this new venture in doctoral education, when the October planning committee proposed a morning of guided visualization and clay sculpting. I felt committed to authentic collaboration on curriculum, but the proposed activity was so far outside anything I had experienced that I felt stunned and befuddled. Knowing my credibility was on the line regarding shared power, I reluctantly went along.

The weekend opened with a “check-in,” followed by the student facilitator’s explanation. After guiding us in visualization, she would distribute clay that she herself had dug in what she said was a sacred location. Keeping our eyes closed, we were to work with our clay in silence, allowing the visualization to manifest. Sitting on the floor in the circle of students, I was feeling bemused. Determined to camouflage my skepticism, I closed my eyes.

The guided visualization lasted about twenty minutes and focused on intentions for the two years we would spend together as a learning community. I found it difficult to concentrate and let my mind wander, grateful that no one could tell I wasn’t actually participating. When the visualization was over, I found clay sitting in front of me. Still skeptical, I peeked through half-open eyes and saw that most of the students were not following the directions. Their eyes were wide open and they were intently modeling shapes, presumably with a plan in mind. However, I wanted to appear cooperative so I closed my eyes and began to knead the lump of river clay. Something happened. I stopped being conscious of appearances and simply lost myself in the feel of the clay.

When we were instructed to open our eyes, I saw a misshapen lump of clay, with a firm broad base and a gradual narrowing of form as it rose from the floor in front of me. I looked again and discerned the shape of a woman, rising from the earth — not fully formed, but in a process of claiming her own sturdy shape. When it came my turn to tell the students what I had sculpted, to my amazement I was overwhelmed with emotion. As I told them my sculpture was “woman emerging,” my voice quivered and tears welled.

Although I did not know it at the time, at least consciously, I was embarking on a decade of profound personal change. My experience as a faculty member in the transformative learning program has changed me irrevocably in my understanding about race, social justice, oppression and internalized oppression. These lessons were the gift of students of color who patiently nurtured my learning. Thinking about my arrogant white-person naiveté, I have often wondered why they decided I was worthy of the time and compassion they invested in my personal learning. I believe they saw a spark of openness — someone who was willing to discover what she didn’t know. My experience of sculpting “woman emerging” was an early contributor to my realization that I had much to learn, that what I thought I knew was not necessarily the most relevant knowledge for the task at hand. Since 1993 I have also practiced a holistic pedagogy that makes frequent use of expressive ways of knowing, like the clay sculpting.
Joanne’s Story

The reader is likely to feel discomforted by the ambiguity of the following story and the seemingly passive role of the facilitator. Space does not allow a full discussion, therefore, as a supplement, I suggest my article in these proceedings (Gozawa, 2005). However, for now readers are invited simply to witness their discomforts as they read the story, the premise being that in our discomforts we discover forgotten parts of our wholeness.

It’s the second face-to-face weekend meeting of the learning community. The eighteen learners had divided into study groups during the previous meeting a month ago. In the intervening weeks, they’ve been working in their groups. But now, the smallest group made up of three white women who characterize themselves as pretty much alike—all in their 30’s, all second year students, all heterosexual—ask if some others would want to join their group to assure diversity. The three women had tried to bring up the issue before when they saw how the groups inadvertently configured based on innocent criteria—days and times people were able to meet during the week and the combination of online and face-to-face meetings that would be most convenient. At first the three were virtually ignored when they informally began to speak about the issue of their group’s homogeneity. The complexity, however, began to reveal itself. One member of a study group that is mostly people of color said, “Here we go again. They’re always trying to break us up for their learning. What about our learning?” I, as the facilitator, felt the immanent darkness. The sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach, the tightening of my chest and the shroud that seemed to drape itself over everything announced the dark’s presence. And so it began...

Now we are in a circle to intentionally dialogue about the issue. The group of three open with pretty much what they’ve voiced online: “It’s not about race; we’d have been happy with a first year student or an older one.” A stately, soft-spoken middle-aged, African-American student, herself a college instructor, says that both in her experience as learner and as teacher she has seen that people of color learn best in groups that reflect and support their difference. I remember how true that was for me when I was a student. Thoroughly assimilated as a third generation Japanese-American, I was surprised to find that my survival and flourishing in graduate school depended on two Chinese professors. I needed them to be their Asian selves in order to discover that part of me that was relegated to the dark. I needed to reclaim the joy of this neglected dimension of myself to heal the fragmentation that prevented my participating wholly in learning and in life.

I see an expression of hurt from members of the group of three. They feel their intentions are thoroughly misunderstood. My heart feels heavy and soft at the same time as I witness each of them. A student of color speaks: “I didn’t even think to check in with how I felt. I believed that what they want is what happens anyway.”

Another intricacy is surfacing. A first-year student, the daughter of Punjabi immigrants who make their living as migrant workers, is speaking.

“I was originally in Anne’s group of three. I got so happy that they wanted to meet often and mostly face-to-face that I joined their group. It was unrealistic because I live so far away. I had to change groups. But I wondered how much Anne’s group wanted me. They didn’t make much of a fuss when I left.”

“How can you say that?” says Anne. “I offered my house for you to stay overnight during meeting nights.”

“There’s offering and then, there’s offering. Maybe you were just putting out because you wanted a non-white person in your group. Anyway, I didn’t get the feeling that you really cared about me.”

Feelings are heating as the dialogue continues. I notice my discomfort. It is the last day of the weekend meeting and the official time for closing is a few minutes away. I am vaguely aware of how I depend on time to demarcate endings and how I use formal endings to escape inner discomfort. But now my attention is drawn again to the young Punjabi woman. Yasmine is being questioned by another student. I see the anguished expression on Yasmine’s face, a face that reminds me of my daughter’s face. (My daughter’s father is Punjabi.) I sense that the questioner does not see Yasmine’s extreme distress. I bring the dialogue to a close. Later my teaching assistant asks me if I am aware that certain students are upset that I cut the dialogue off just when important issues about race were surfacing. I wonder how much I let the “time for ending” drive my action. In the past to be less than fully competent would have undone me. This time I simply notice the community’s darkening and my own.
References
Unfolding New “Forms” of Transformativ e Learning

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Abstract: This paper investigates possibilities for expanding the existing categories of Mezirow and Kegan’s conceptions of transformative learning. In examining Mezirow’s ideal of critical discourse, the author presents a case for generative dialogue as a post-conventional communication ideal that supports the emergence of at least four different kinds of transformative shifts in learners. Drawn primarily from Wilber’s integral framework, this article advocates for broader conceptions of transformative learning that more adequately represent the different “forms” of consciousness that undergo transformation in adult learners.

Introduction

The form that is undergoing transformation needs to be better understood; if there is no form there is no transformation. (Kegan, 2000, p.48)

Since its inception three decades ago, Transformative Learning (TL) theory has continued to evolve from Jack Mezirow’s initial conception (1975, 1978), which provided adult educators with a theoretical framework and a corresponding phase-based process for facilitating transformative learning. Mezirow’s theory has since evolved in response to a growing number of divergent discussions and critical reinterpretations of his work (Taylor, 1998). Existing criticisms include claims that Mezirow’s theory leans towards being a-contextual (Cunningham, 1992), overemphasizes rationality (Clark & Wilson, 1991; Cranton, 1994) and in turn, does not adequately account for other ways of knowing (Kasl & Yorks, 2002) while privileging individual change over social change (Welton, 1995) among other limitations.

Though Mezirow has addressed these criticisms over the years, he has retained the view that “a theory of rationality is central to transformative learning” (Mezirow, 1995, p. 48). Also fundamental to Mezirow’s transformative learning ideal of becoming an autonomous thinker is his core presumption that there is “an inherent logic, ideal, and purpose in the process of transformative learning” (1997, p.11). Inevitably, such a view becomes problematic insofar as Mezirow has maintained that the logic, ideals and purposes of TL are essentially being overseen, if not dictated by conventional rationality. While I am not contesting the validity of discursive reason as a perspective, within the first section of this article I advocate for the development of TL approaches that explicitly honor both the strengths and limitations of conventional reason. This includes an in-depth look at Robert Kegan’s framework of transformative learning. As an extension of this project, within the second section of this article I explore the limitations of regulating transformative learning processes by “critical reflection” (Mezirow, 1997), which remains the linchpin of Mezirow’s conventional ideal of discourse. Partly in support of Mezirow’s view that “transformative learning is rooted in the way human beings communicate” (1997, p.10), I will introduce “generative dialogue” (Scharmer, 2000) as an alternative social learning praxis for supporting and catalyzing transformative learning, which effectively draws upon a broader canvas of ways of knowing and multiple intelligences. Leading into the final section of this article, I will cover four categories or possible “forms” of transformative learning that generative dialogue praxis engages as a postconventional communication ideal.

Expanding the Categorical “Forms” of TL

Initially identified as a dramatic or gradual shift in one’s frame of reference (Mezirow, 1978), transformative learning theorists have since made attempts to broaden the scope of TL theory to include missing dimensions of Mezirow’s work (as noted above), in addition to more “integrative” (Illeris, 2004; Miles, 2002; etc), “holistic” (Cranton and Roy, 2003; Dirkx, 1997; etc.) and “integral” (O’Sullivan, 1999, 2002; Gunnlaugson, 2005; etc) perspectives. A common concern that brings these perspectives together is the belief that recognizing different ways of knowing (Kasl & Yorks, 2002; Taylor, 1998) requires expanding Mezirow’s framework to adequately account for the respective gifts of diverse modes of apprehension. A central question to such an educational project then
becomes, “How might other modalities of knowing and being be conceptualized to avoid marginalizing these vital human potentials within learners?”

In Mezirow’s more recent research, he employs frames of reference as a universal construct to account for a broader array of multiple ways of knowing, multiple intelligences, in addition to an assortment of other mixed categories:

Frames of reference include fixed interpersonal relationships, political orientations, cultural bias, ideologies, schemata, stereotyped attitudes and practices, occupational habits of mind, religious doctrine, moral-ethical norms, psychological preferences and schema, paradigms in science and mathematics, frames in linguistics and social sciences, and aesthetic values and standards. (2003, p.59)

Mezirow unpacks his frame of reference into two basic parts “habits of mind and a point of view” (1997). In his terms, habits of mind are deeply embedded assumptions held by learners and point of view is an outward perspective we take in response to a given life-world situation or set of circumstances. Our point of view emerges from our habits of mind, which are more deeply woven into our character, worldview and habitual way of interpreting our worlds.

Transformative Learning scholar-practitioner Robert Kegan draws attention to the source of Mezirow’s conception of “frames of reference” in pointing out that, “at its root, a frame of reference is a way of knowing” (Kegan, 2000, p.52). Within Kegan’s framework of transformative learning, he maps out the underlying epistemologies of adult learners, with a particular focus on the later stages of development up from the socialized mind (3d order) to self-authoring mind (4th order) and finally self-transforming mind (5th order). Adhering to these specific forms of increasing epistemological complexity, Kegan refrains from distinguishing categories of transformative learning that arise outside his particular constellation. Kegan accounts for the multiple forms or strands of knowing as distinct from different multiple intelligences. Instead he remarks that our frames of reference have affective, cognitive, moral, interpersonal and intrapersonal colorings (2000, p.52). Nevertheless, his metaphor of “coloring” does not adequately honor the fact that different ways of knowing develop both independently and interdependently to one another (Wilber, 2000). In other words, Kegan’s model maintains there is a more primary epistemology, an overall frame of reference or order of consciousness from which we construct our experiences. While this may be true, the converse cannot be ignored—that there are distinct ways of knowing that correspond with different multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983).

By reframing the learner’s frames of reference to correspond with the learner’s multiple intelligences, we can begin to assemble a more coherent transformative learning framework that honors the respective terms of truth or validity of each specific modality of knowing. For example kinesthetic knowing, which develops along different stages of kinesthetic intelligence, can now be assessed on terms internal to its own form of knowing (Ferrer et al, 2005). Kegan is on the mark with his insight that learners will need to develop new epistemologies to meet the different challenges of an increasingly complex and hidden curriculum of adult life. However, to account for multiple ways of knowing as colorings upon a more primary epistemology unnecessarily reduces the scope of one’s transformative learning framework by offering an inaccurate representation of the multiple forms of knowing

Expanding upon Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences (e.g., cognitive intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, kinesthetic intelligence, etc.), Wilber introduce the framework of “lines of development” (2003a) as a way to better differentiate the different developmental capacities of learners. Wilber unpacks the different lines:

Among the two dozen or so developmental lines are cognition, morals, affects/emotion, motivation/needs, ideas of good, psychosexuality, kinesthetic, intelligence, self-identity (ego), role taking, logic-mathematical, relational capacity, worldviews, values, musical skill, altruism, communicative competence, creativity, modes of space and time perception, and meditative stages (2003b).

Given the absence of an overall level or measure of development, learner’s capacities vary depending on the respective developmental line. Wilber also regards developmental lines as “streams” (2000), because though most of these capacities develop in a relatively independent fashion, many draw from the intelligences of neighboring streams. This echoes TL educator Taylor’s point that “recent research has revealed how emotions are indispensable for rationality, such that one cannot reason without emotions or feelings” (1998, p.35). More importantly, Wilber’s category of developmental lines introduces a new set of distinctions to the discourse of existing TL theory by providing an expanded theoretical context to evaluate how learner’s capacities and potentials unfold over time.
Given that multiple ways of knowing have a great value in contemporary adult education discourse (Taylor, 1998), how might we move towards perspectives that encourage a broader multiplicity of ways of knowing in order to better support the different dimensions of transformative learning?

**Moving From Critical Discourse to Generative Dialogue**

As Mezirow (2003), Friere (1972) and other TL scholars have pointed out, perspective transformation hinges upon critical reflection of the tacit assumptions and expectations that we and other people hold. For Mezirow, discourse becomes the chief vehicle or context by which we transform our frames of reference through critical reflection.

Advocating for dispositions that support critical reflection, Mezirow’s ideal conditions of discourse seem well suited for public life within a liberal democratic system. However, within contexts of adult and higher education where transformative learning is an explicit intention and aim, there is a need to support more comprehensive conceptions of discourse that honor the partial truths of conventional discourse practice, but have also developed methods to honor multiple ways of knowing, as well as bring forth other transformative learning objectives heretofore absent from Mezirow’s ideal of a “rational learner” (2003).

In response, this article presents a case for generative dialogue (Scharmer, 2000) as a discourse *praxis* that can support and serve as a catalyst for transformative learning. Emerging from the stream of research following the MIT dialogue project (Isaacs, 1993), generative dialogue provides practices for groups to learn how to learn and think together. Combined with Isaacs research (1993), Scharmer’s stage-based model of generative dialogue (2000) introduces a process model that charts the unfolding of discourse as groups moves through four conversational fields (i.e., politeness, talking tough, reflective dialogue and generative dialogue).

**Exploring Further Forms of TL as Illuminated by Generative Dialogue**

As Kegan (2002) points out, the analytic dimension of transformative learning needs to be better distinguished from its emotional or aesthetic dimension in order to bring more clarity to what form is actually transforming. For some time there has been a lack of consensus or clarity within the field of transformative learning around the question of what exactly constitutes transformation in the context of adult learning and development. Partly this is due to the subject being mysterious (Dirkx, 1997); the language appealing (Brookfield, 2000); and an overall lack of common ground and shared theory (Mezirow & Aalsburg, 2000) within the field.

In response to this challenge, the final section of this article will build on Kegan’s *forms* of epistemology (2000) and the preliminary “lines of development” (Wilber, 2003a) distinctions advanced earlier in the article. Though I focus on these shifts in the context of generative dialogue, these forms are in no way contingent upon this praxis. To a great extent, it remains for future research to determine to what extent generative dialogue is a necessary precondition for these shifts and to what extent each shift constitutes a *fundamental* change in the learner’s consciousness. As a preliminary foreground for such empirical studies, the remainder of this article will expand upon how generative dialogue praxis serves as a conduit for opening up new territories of experience that, in addition to the two previous distinctions, include a change of the learner’s *stages* within *self-related lines* of development and changes in the learner’s *states* of consciousness.

**Change in Learner’s Stages Within Self-Related Lines**

In a nutshell, Kegan’s framework of transformative learning draws our attention to how a person’s evolving order of consciousness structures their experience at various stages of development. Taking a step back from Kegan’s model, let us now consider the ”self” (or self-system or self-sense) that develops in adult and young adult learners. Although there are many ways to depict the self, Wilber has advanced an integral template of the various phenomena of human consciousness that constitute the self, culled from over one-hundred developmental psychological systems East and West (Wilber, 2003b). Derived from these developmental frameworks, Wilber maintains that the self also broadly unfolds through various stages or levels.

According to Wilber one of the primary characteristics of the multidimensional self seems to be its capacity to *identify* with these basic structures or levels of consciousness. When this takes place, we generate a specific type of self-identity, with specific needs, drives and predictions. Kegan has articulated these levels in terms of five stages of epistemological styles, which give rise to the self as a nested series of functional systems. Wilber’s integral spectrum of consciousness relies on a similar categorization ranging from seven to ten functional groupings or basic levels (Wilber, 2000). Beck and Cohen’s Spiral Dynamics framework utilizes eight mimic stages depicting the evolution of values and worldviews. Kohlberg’s scale of moral development works with six stages. Loewinger's ego development model employs a dozen stages and the list of developmental models unfolds, each working with a different scale of measurement and specific feature of consciousness. By bringing this broad cross-section of
developmental models together, Wilber (2003a) points out that each developmental model can be more optimally represented by a specific developmental line. In addition to the multiple intelligences discussed earlier, developmental lines also represent the “self-related” (Wilber, 2000, p.38) lines of development as in the examples listed above. As Wilber points out:

There are the developmental lines in general (cognitive, affective, aesthetic, kinesthetic, mathematical, etc), and, as a subset of those, there are the developmental lines that are especially and intimately associated with the self, its needs, its identity, and its development—and those are the self-related lines” (Wilber, 2000, p.38)

Applying Wilber’s distinction, Kegan’s framework of transformative learning represents one developmental line among an assortment of two dozen lines.

The discourse praxis of generative dialogue serves as a practical context for exploring changes in learner’s self-related lines by offering a “holding environment” (Winnicott, 1965) that supports the development of more complex stages of consciousness along different developmental lines. With practice in generative dialogue, participants become more attentive to the life conditions, beliefs and worldviews we are embedded in. It would be misleading to suggest the practice of suspension brings about a fundamental change in stage within one’s self-related line of development. However, suspension facilitates and simulates the transition from being focally identified with one’s thoughts or feelings to being free to witness them, which gives us a preview of a different self-sense or more complex order of consciousness as in Kegan’s framework. To what extent suspension plays a role in facilitating a stage shift within the self-related lines of development or other multiple intelligences remains a question for future research. Yet again, generative dialogue provides an important function in this process by stimulating both the self-related lines of development and the capacity/skill based lines by giving learners an experience of moving from being one’s ideas to having them; from being one’s thoughts to having them; from being one’s feelings, to having them. With practice, adult learners begin to cultivate a learning disposition that is open to change and evolving more complex adaptive forms of being and learning in the world.

**Change in Learner’s Capacity for Shifting States of Consciousness**

As we strive to become critically reflective of our assumptions (Mezirow, 1997), through the cycles of action and critical reflection that inform Mezirow’s ideal of discourse lies a necessary course of adult learning. However, as this section will attempt to convey, such a stance tends to privilege analysis and critical reflection in ways that often prevents the emergent capacity of meta-awareness (Jordan, 2000) which helps support the emergence of multiple ways of knowing and deepened “states” of consciousness (Wilber, 2003a).

In addition to critical reflection, generative dialogue praxis cultivates meta-awareness as a gateway to inviting and honoring other ways of knowing that would otherwise be suppressed or left unexplored at the margins of group discourse. Integral theorist Thomas Jordan defines meta-awareness as follows:

Meta-awareness means awareness of the sensorimotor schematas, emotions, desires and thoughts that tumble through our being. Instead of being had by one’s habitual behavioral patterns, emotions, desires and thoughts, meta-awareness means that there is a locus of witnessing in consciousness that can make the behaviors, emotions, desires and thoughts objects of attention (Jordan, 2000).

In the context of generative dialogue, the traditional discourse cycles of action and critical reflection are supplemented with an additional cycle of meta-awareness. Before the emergence of the meta-aware position, the learner’s attention tends to be quite absorbed by the emerging content of the discourse itself. During generative dialogue, meta-awareness can take numerous forms within the individual and the intersubjective field of inquiry. In the latter context, meta-awareness often simply involves venturing a meta-conversation about the existing conversation. Within the later stages of generative dialogue, there is a need for recursive conversations about what was just talked about, felt, intuited or sensed. By focusing on being aware of and differentiating from the contents of awareness, meta-awareness becomes a fertile space for supporting the development of other ways of knowing through generative dialogue.

Mezirow characterizes transformative learning as a form of “metacognitive reasoning” (2003) in emphasizing insight into the “source, structure, and history of a frame of reference, as well as judging its relevance, appropriateness and consequences” (2003, p.61). In contrast with processes of meta-cognitive reasoning, meta-awareness involves a similar movement from being embedded in cognition to taking a perspective of one’s content of cognition. Yet meta-awareness is distinct from meta-cognition in that meta-cognitive processes involve
awareness within the context of cognition, whereas meta-awareness includes yet extends beyond the categories of conventional cognitive reasoning. From these expanded horizons of awareness, participants learn to be meta-aware of different intelligences, faculties of knowing and ways of being in the world and classroom.

From Wilber’s integral framework, the transformative potentials contained in the deeper states of consciousness represent what consciousness will later become at higher stages (2003a). In making the distinction between states of consciousness and structures of consciousness, within the context of discourse we have a language to identify subtle states of being that arise within individuals and groups. Before such accolades of great learning can be reached within adult and higher educational contexts, we first need to establish a more coherent basis of practice to cultivate such potentials in our lives. Given that generative dialogue serves as both an evolving container and a discipline within which states of consciousness can be supported and developed, we have yet another vital distinction of transformative learning to assess how a potentially profound shift in one’s worldview or frame of reference can further unfold expanded states of consciousness. More than this, future research will do well to explore the extent to which Mezirow’s disorienting dilemma is necessary to produce a state-shift. In other words, might experiencing expanded states of consciousness within generative dialogue be a by-product of intermediate to advanced forms of the contemplative praxis of suspension and presencing?

Summary
I have argued that while Mezirow’s work brought forth a vital initial contribution to forming the field of TL, a number of his key presuppositions have prevented the emergence of a more comprehensive theory. Mezirow’s cornerstone conviction that TL processes require critical reflection remains an important consideration when designing adult and higher education programs. However, TL can encompass more than a shift in one’s beliefs or cognitive frame of reference. Kegan’s work has been helpful in this regard by bringing other dimensions of transformative learning scholarship into better focus. In conjunction with attention to the features of TL highlighted by Kegan, there is a need to discern the more subtle territories of learner’s consciousness. Given Mezirow’s perspective that transformative learning processes are shaped through our discourse, there is a need for continued research into how generative dialogue and other social learning practices can support and catalyze transformative learning. Building upon both Mezirow and Kegan’s contributions, the additional forms of transformative learning introduced in this article are largely culled from my critical reading of Wilber’s extensive multidisciplinary research, particularly his contributions to consciousness studies. Following the distinctions raised by Mezirow and Kegan’s framework, the capacities and self-related lines of development, as well as states of consciousness, we arrive at a broader set of categories to trace the shifts of consciousness that unfold for learners. While it is not yet clear to what extent each shift constitutes a fundamental change in form of the learner’s consciousness, or how generative dialogue might serve these processes, once again the intent in raising these distinctions is to provide the preliminary sketches of a conceptual framework for future empirical studies.

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The Praxis of Transparadigmatic Inquiry: A Transformative Research Paradigm

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Abstract: This paper presents a praxis—an intentional way of living daily—whereby well-intentioned White people can deconstruct the White psyche and evolve a multi-dimensional, process-oriented, activist consciousness. Grounded in the author’s ten-year heuristic inquiry, this paper briefly describes White moral fog, schisms in the White psyche, and theories on radically transforming social conditioning.

When liberal whites fail to understand how they can and/or do embody white-supremacist values and beliefs even though they may not embrace racism as prejudice or domination . . . they cannot recognize the ways their actions support and affirm the very structure of racist domination and oppression that they profess to wish to see eradicated.

bell hooks (1989)

Ignorance, Denial, and White Moral Fog

A well-intentioned White heterosexual female, I was faced with incontrovertible evidence of my ignorance, denial, and moral fog regarding how I embodied white-supremacist values and beliefs in my first year in a Ph.D. cohort at the California Institute of Integral Studies. Late one April afternoon midway through the year, a fellow student Cleo Manago, the director and founder of AMASSI, a Black cultural affirmation center in Los Angeles, asked to facilitate a discussion on White supremacy. I agreed to participate, as did each of the 17 of us present. Together, we formed a tight, tense circle. Cleo, a dark-skinned man of African descent, leaned towards me. Quietly, he asked: “What does the term White supremacy mean to you? What is your relationship to it?”

My heart leapt wildly into my throat. I gasped for air. In that moment of reckoning, my Whiteness became visible to me. My body tensed. My thoughts fragmented. I took a deep breath, seeking courage to enter into the heartfelt nature of his inquiry. His questions challenged the world as I then knew it. My self-identity, moral character, and personal capacity for engaging in dialogue felt called into question.

At the time, I wasn’t aware that there existed an unspoken norm of silence among White people in our group in response to questions about race. I had no clue that our six-month history of refusing to engage in any substantive discussion regarding White supremacy reflected White power and privilege. Cleo had been direct about his perspective: White group members’ failure to examine assumptions about the world perpetuated systems of power that were not only oppressive to people of Color in the cohort but also life-threatening to people of Color in society.

Soft sunlight spilled onto the brown carpeting through the open second-story window that warm spring Saturday. In the schism created by my colliding thoughts and flooding emotions, Cleo patiently repeated his questions. I sat on the floor to his right, on a purple cushion. He wore a handsome brown and white print Dashiki. Intently, he looked at me. He waited. At last, words stumbled forth from my scattered mind. I couldn’t hear them. I still wonder: “Did I make excuses—avoid the issue? Did I even say the words White supremacy?” Whiteness fogs my memory.

Schisms in the White Psyche

Challenged to live my life in congruence with my deepest beliefs, I searched for ways to research how White consciousness manifested in the domains of my body, mind, and spirit (Hammel, 2000). But transformative learning theories didn’t offer instrumental guidance through the emotional reactivity—shame, guilt, fear, anger—triggered by the dissonance between my White worldviews and my cross-cultural experiences at CIIS, at home, and as a public high school teacher.

In frustration, I turned to my dog-eared copy of Alan Watts’ (1961) book, Psychotherapy East and West. He described a practice for people seeking liberation from “confused thinking and feeling” (p. 57). He suggested that a person follow the false premise that the self is something that can be known, that the self is the body, the sensations, the thoughts, the consciousness (p. 61). I committed to enter into the liberation of my White psyche. I decided to operate under the supposition that my inner experience—all sensations, thoughts, and consciousness—although they felt real—were not manifestations of me but of the social conditioning also known as White supremacist norms and

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consciousness. African-Centr... "African-Centrist Dr. Marimba Ani (1994) describes the White psyche:

The human being is split into rational and irrational (emotional) tendencies. These are thought to represent warring factions of her/his being. The rational self offers the possibility of knowledge (control), while the emotional self is a constant threat to the loss of control. (p. 557).

I recognized this schism in myself.

Judith Katz (1978) also notes schisms in the White psyche: “Racism has been diagnosed as a form of schizophrenia in that there is a large gap between what Whites believe and what they actually practice, which causes them to live in a state of psychological stress” (p. 11). Janet Helms (1990) notes that the White person developing a healthy White racial identity searches for answers to questions such as “Who am I racially?” and “Who do I want to be?” and “Who are you really?” (p. 62)

Actually, however, I sought more than perhaps Helms’ questions imply: I wanted to experience life as more than meaning. Inspired by integral philosopher Raimon Pannikar, I wanted to discover not only “the eyes of intelligence to see, but also the ears of the heart to feel, to hear the unthinkable” (as cited by Vachon, 1995, III, p. 7). I wanted to change the way I experienced the world.

Now I am viscerally aware that the psychic structures dominating European-American consciousness often disconnect awareness from experience (Ani, 1994; Duran and Duran, 1995; Frankenberg, 1993; McLaren, 1997; Walker 1983). The subject-object structure of the English language constricts dialogue. Words aren’t the only medium for communication. Their tonality, rhythm, and symbolism interlace with silence, images, breath, movement, and body resonance. Hazrat Inayat Khan (1982) explains:

The body’s awakening means to feel sensation; the mind’s awakening means to think and feel. The soul’s awakening means that the soul becomes conscious of itself. . . . The evolved soul will feel the vibrations of every other soul. (p. 129, p. 131)

Theories on Profoundly Reorganizing the Psyche

Morris Berman (1981) summarizes Gregory Bateson’s (1972) theory that processes of enculturation are primarily tacit processes taught nonverbally rather than taught explicitly with clearly stated rules (p. 223). Bateson calls cultural learning deutero-learning, referring to the nonverbal process whereby what is learned is tacitly communicated (p. 218). Because of its tacit nature, this communication is invisible to the learner. The only escape from the deutero-patterns of one's life—which Bateson calls Learning II—is understanding the nature of the paradigm, Learning III (p. 231). Bateson explains that it is in Learning III that one recognizes all meaningful communication is meta-communicative. One is aware that the frame is part of the premise rather than at odds with it as is the case in deutero-learning (p. 232). Thus, understanding in Learning III is meta-cognitive—including but not limited to cognitive domains of consciousness.

Jack Mezirow (1991) explains that learning to see the metacommunicative dimension of meaningful communication involves perspective transformations from those tacitly taught:

[Bateson’s] Learning III involves transformations of the sort that occur in religious conversion, Zen experience, and psychotherapy. These are perspective transformations, through which we can become aware that our whole way of perceiving the world has been based on questionable premises. (p. 91)

Gregory Bateson (1972) states that such change brings about a profound reorganization of character—a change in form, not just content (p. 304). The re-formation of a person’s character, according to Bateson, is psychically challenging. He describes what can happen to people who seek to see the cultural framing determining their perception and comprehension:

Some fall by the wayside. These are often labeled by psychiatry as psychotic, and many of them find themselves inhibited from using the first person pronoun.

For others, more successful, the resolution of the contraries may be a collapsing of much that was learned at Level II, revealing a simplicity in which hunger leads directly to eating, and the identified self is no longer in charge of organizing the behavior.
For others, more creative, the resolution of contraries reveals a world in which personal identity merges into all the processes of relationship in some vast ecology or aesthetics of cosmic interaction. That any of these can survive seem almost miraculous, but some are perhaps saved from being swept away on oceanic feeling by their ability to focus in on the minutiae of life. Every detail of the universe is seen as proposing a view of the whole. (pp. 305-306)

A Framework for Radically Transforming Social Conditioning
As a graduate student at CIIS, I searched for a transformative research framework that simultaneously supported the personal deconstruction of the White psyche and the evolution of a multi-dimensional, process-oriented, activist consciousness. I examined different research paradigms, analyzing ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological assumptions. Neither Constructivism nor Critical Theory (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) aligned with an inquiry into the experiences of divesting from internalized White supremacist norms and consciousness, perhaps because of the challenge of rationally conceptualizing research into the deep structures of the White psyche. The Participatory Worldview (Heron & Reason, 1997; Heron, 1996; Reason, 1993; Reason, 1994), the Synergic Inquiry Paradigm (Tang, 1997; Tang & Joiner, 1998), Feminist methods (Lather, 1991; Hurtado & Stewart, 1997), and transpersonal research methodologies (Braud & Anderson, 1998) inspired me, but again none of these frameworks offered specific instrumental knowledge about how to divest from White consciousness.

I developed my own research paradigm, the Praxis of Transparadigmatic Inquiry, to help me develop the capacity to see, pierce through, and transform internalized social conditioning. In this framework, the distinctions among ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology disappear. The Praxis of Transparadigmatic Inquiry is by nature dynamic and emergent rather than fixed, reflecting my underlying assumption that only in the translogical realms of the heart is the anguished bodymindspirit so sufficiently soothed and nourished that deep psychic structures can be transformed. Body, spirit, and mind do not function independently (Panikkar, as cited by Prabhu, 1996, and by Vachon, 1995; Ani, 1994; Tang, 1997; Tang & Joiner, 1998; Chaudhuri, 1977; Gebser, 1949/1984; Wilbur, 1983, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999; Skolimowski, 1994).

| Ontological Assumptions: The Nature of Reality | A primordial reality exists. Reality manifests and evolves. Reality is dynamic and multi-layered. Perceivable dimensions of reality include but are not limited to subjective, objective, collective, historical-economic-socio-political, and transhistorical fields. Reality is only partially comprehensible. Human beings participate with and without awareness. Epistemological shifts in experiencing reality lead to new ontological awarenesses. Structures of consciousness can be transformed. Self-transfiguration is a human capacity. |
| Epistemological Assumptions: The Relationship of Researcher to Research | The inquirer, in relationship, can develop the capacity to see and unlearn the cultural conditioning determining perception and comprehension. The inquirer, in relationship, can experience profound shifts in perception, thus leading to a more process-oriented consciousness. The inquirer, in relationship, can learn to communicate with more awareness meta-cognitively. The inquirer, in relationship, can apprehend the whole and the partial nature of the self as well as the participatory nature of our dynamic, evolving universe. |
| Axiological Assumption: The Role of Values | What is valued is a reflective activist-oriented daily inquiry practice, challenging—at the systems level—dominating paradigms internalized by the researcher. What is valued is explicitly taking a stand according to one’s values while simultaneously living those values as an inquiry. What is valued is embodied congruence of thought, speech, and action—without attachment. |
| Methodological Assumptions: The Process of Research | People manifest consciousnesses reflecting internalized schisms in self, others, and society. Dialogic processes support ontological differentiation and integration. Multiple layers of bodymindspirit can be explored—personal, collective, and transhistorical. In transpersonal states of consciousness, the inquirer and voluntary co-researchers can experience shifts in perception that help them glimpse hither-to-invisible manifestations of dominating consciousnesses. Participants can expand their capacities to hold these data points in awareness, to intentionally shift frames of references, and to intensify and discharge embodied, emotional, and psychic charges and resistance, manifestations of cultural conditioning. |

Living The Praxis of Transparadigmatic Inquiry
The Praxis of Transparadigmatic Inquiry offers instrumental guidance for inquiring into how White supremacist
norms and consciousness manifest, in the domains of body, mind, and spirit. It offers strategies fostering perspective transformations that profoundly reorganize the inquirer’s character. As inquirers surrender to the dialogical nature of the inquiry process, they become more critically conscious and transform the deep structures of social conditioning. The following suggestions are guidelines to White people interested in evolving a multi-dimensional, process-oriented, activist consciousness:

- Find allies. For example, form an inquiry group with others who are also committed to research these questions: “What does the term White supremacist norms and consciousness mean? What is your relationship to it?”
- Make friends with people from different cultures, races, religions, socio-economic classes, genders, and sexual orientations. Care about their experiences. Empathically imagine yourself into the situations they face. Notice when you are comfortable and when you are dis-comforted.
- Be mindful of whatever manifests in the domains of your body, mind, and spirit—all sensations, thoughts, dreams, and consciousness, including judgment, emotion, confusion, forgetfulness, etc. Pay attention to even miniscule visceral reactions, fleeting inner thoughts, unexamined assumptions, and unspoken expectations. For the purpose of this inquiry, assume that whatever manifests is evidence of White consciousness, i.e., social conditioning.
- Take action daily—within the spheres of your personal influence—challenging White supremacist norms and consciousness. If you see no evidence of White supremacist norms and consciousness all day, or if you see evidence but take no action, contemplate what that means about White consciousness.
- Engage in dialogical processes such as mindfulness practice, dialogical dialogue, and Synergic Inquiry. Dialogical processes can be helpful in transforming differences from sources of tension and conflict into sources of learning and wisdom. Dialogical processes pierce the logos—the logical domain of consciousness—in order to reach the translogical realm of the heart (Panikkar, as quoted by Vachon, 1995, III, p. 2). “The dialogical dialogue sees the other as a knowing source, i.e., as another source of self-understanding. I experience the Thou as the counterpart of the I as belonging to the I, and not as not-I. I discover the Thou as another self, as part of a Self that is as much mine as his—or to be more precise, that is as little my property as his” (p. 4, emphasis in original). Panikkar further explains: “Being is more than consciousness, although the latter is the manifestation of the former. . . . We have an essential need of the other to deepen reality” (p. 2, p. 70).
- Pay attention to reactions and resistance as important guides in this process of unlearning White consciousness. Reactions such as anger, tears, fears, guilt, shame, boredom, withdrawal, denial, and/or disconnection may signal cognitive dissonance and emotional overload. Resistance can be an important indicator of the psyche’s self-definition. Visibilizing—giving voice, form, and space to these multiple dimensions of self—creates space for ontological differentiation.
- Note charged or conflictual moments. These are focal points through which the inquirer can tap into deep structures of the White psyche.
- Differentiate and heal the bodymindspirit in sacred space. Sacred space mitigates the chaos of transformation and allows an integrated, embodied awareness to arise.
- Recognize and accept that much of the White psyche will perhaps forever remain unexplored. Yet to the extent that charged experiences manifest with awareness in participatory dialogical processes, perspective transformations will occur personally, collectively, and transhistorically.
- Live this inquiry each day.
- Listen to the wisdom of your bodymindspirit.

This instrumental knowledge of how to see, pierce through, and transform internalized social conditioning such as White supremacist norms and consciousness is missing from transformative learning theory. Yet Edmund V. O’Sullivan, Amish Morrell, and Mary Ann O’Connor, editors of Expanding the Boundaries of Transformative Learning (2002) lay a foundation for this work:
Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feeling, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations, our relationships with other humans and with the natural world, our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender; our body awareness, our visions of alternative approaches of living, and our sense of the possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. (p. 11)

References
Popular Education in Bolivia: Transformational Learning Experiences

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Abstract: Our research examines how the lives of participants in the Education Office of the Oficina Jurídica Para la Mujer [Women’s Legal Office] (OJM), a community-based popular education organization in Cochabamba, Bolivia, were transformed through local leadership training and popular education training, which addressed personal, legal and policy issues. In this qualitative study, we examine the lived experiences of the participants and the OJM’s powerful model for achieving individual, family, community and societal change.

Introduction

Cunningham (1988) and others have argued that adult education helps learners acquire the necessary skills and knowledge that will allow them to work towards social justice. We believe education may provide the opportunity for people to view themselves and their worlds differently – transforming their perspectives and thus opening the possibilities of helping learners effectively promote social justice and action. However, the educational process is complex and often compounded by the sociocultural context in which the learning and the social change are taking place. This is particularly true in places and countries that have a long-standing history of political and social upheaval, such as Bolivia. In the face of poverty and long-term political instability in Bolivia, many adult educators are striving to help their learners achieve justice in the form of economic opportunity and the freedom to maintain their culture with dignity. When popular educational models are implemented that take into account the daily lives within local cultures, true learning and change can be seen. In particular, when women are an integral part of these programs and projects, individuals, organizations, and national groups can be transformed (Fink, 1992).

The Education Department of the Oficina Jurídica Para la Mujer [Women’s Legal Office] (OJM), a community-based popular education organization in Cochabamba, Bolivia, works with women in a Legal Promoter’s Course to address personal, legal and policy issues through local leadership training and popular education methodology. The OJM has developed creative initiatives, such as the Legal Promoter’s Course, to reach out to women and community members. Women who participate in these workshops have often faced domestic violence in their personal lives and historical marginalization in the traditionally male sphere of social action. Through examining this course, the unique and powerful dimensions that women’s perspectives lend to popular educational programs provide insight concerning the real-world applications of current educational theories. In addition, it demonstrates a powerful model for achieving individual, community, and societal change and transformation.

This study describes the Legal Promoter’s Course as a model for women’s popular education and a program which prepares participants to be educators in the realms of family, workplace, and community. The purpose of our research is to examine the methods and practices of this popular education program in Bolivia and the critical role participants within this program have played in its development and implementation. To do so, we employed qualitative methodology in order to further understand how the Legal Promoter’s Course impacted and transformed the lives of its participants. We explored the challenges these women have faced in the traditionally male sphere of social action, including discrimination and exclusion, in addition to the creative initiatives the women participants developed to reach out to their fellow women and community members. Our interests in the program were to understand how popular education programs can facilitate transformation of participants that may help them challenge existing status quo social norms in order to change their lives. Specifically, the research question we addressed was: How does the Legal Promoter’s Course impact and transform the lives of participants on an individual, family, community, and societal level?

Review of Relevant Literature

In order to understand the theoretical perspectives that frame this research, our literature review encompasses different theoretical views that shaped our understanding of the participant’s learning. These areas are: transformational learning and critical theory, feminist theory and pedagogy, popular education, and women and the
Transformational Learning

Transformational learning is taken to an active, political level when individuals understand past experiences within the context of critical theory (Mezirow, 2000; Baumgartner, 2001). Cunningham (1988) argues that when teachers make the decisions of what knowledge is necessary and valuable, education becomes no more than a mechanism for enforcing hegemonic values and social control. On the other hand, knowledge can viewed as socially constructed, spanning formal educational skills like literacy, practical abilities such as street smarts, and emancipatory awareness (Kilgore, 2001). Herein, the acquisition of knowledge is no longer simply a mastering of tasks, but it is a multifaceted entity that each learner plays an active role in creating. Mezirow (1990, 2000) has described this process as transformational learning. As learners become aware of their abilities to participate in the creation of knowledge, their perspectives of themselves and their world’s change.

Transformational learning is taken to an active, political level when individuals understand past experiences within the context of critical theory. Critical theory explores the symbiotic relationship between the awareness described in transformational learning and the realm of action. Critics contend that formal education is based on an individual deficit model, assuming adult learners have something missing from their intellect and that a teacher must fill the void with knowledge. Freire (1970) contends that if learning takes place within the context of real life problems and concerns, and if the learning process is a shared practice between students and teacher, students develop critical consciousness or conscientization. The burden of past failure shifts away from the learner, allowing him or her to understand different ways to challenge existing power structures. In this context, education is explicitly political (Freire, 1970). In this interpretation of transformative learning, the teacher’s job is not to impart information, but to challenge students and to ensure that the voices of the marginalized are fully engaged (Merriam & Brockett, 1997). The teacher or facilitator becomes a co-creator of knowledge.

Mezirow (1991, 2000) describes these experiences, in a cognitive rational approach to transformative learning, as “perspective transformation. Students learn not through disjointed knowledge that is “out there” to be discovered, but instead their way of know is “created from interpretations and reinterpretations in light of new experiences” (Baumgartner, 2001, p. 16). However, Mezirow has been critiqued for ignoring the social justice and social context inherent in engaging in transformative learning (Clark & Wilson, 1991; McDonald, Cervo & Courtney, 1999), although in more recent writings he has acknowledged that context and social interaction are important to perspective transformation. In his review of transformative learning, Taylor (1999) discusses context, culture, and readiness to change as factors that directly influence if transformative learning takes place.

Feminist Theory and Pedagogy

When examining the experience of women in education, the concepts of transformational learning and critical consciousness become slightly more complex. This is due to differences in understandings of how women learn and most importantly, to the historical marginalization of women. Studies (i.e. Maher & Tetault, 1994, Lather, 1991; hooks, 1984, 2000; Goldberger, Tarule, Clinchy, & Belenky, 1996) have determined that a woman’s psychological development is different than male development and relies heavily on relationships and social roles. Due to these factors, a sense of connectedness and affiliation is a crucial component for a woman’s development and education (Ross-Gordon, 1999).

In response to feelings of disempowerment, some women have developed strategies of resistance that reveal benefits of a more intimate form of adult education for women (Ross-Gordon, 1999). Additionally, awareness of women’s developmental differences has led to the emergence of a feminist pedagogy that utilizes open communication as a means of ensuring freedom and equality in the educational and hopefully larger social context. Still, differences among women, whether social, economic or cultural, make implementing one singular method of feminist pedagogy difficult (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

Flannery and Hayes (2001) draw on feminist theory to challenge traditional conceptions of adult learning in three areas: “identity, authority in knowledge creation, and agency within social structures” (p. 33). They contend that women as a group should be seen as having similarities yet also differences from each other. They suggest that “instead of categorizing people as different types of knowers…we can give more attention to how individuals move back and forth among different ways of knowing, and under what circumstances” (p. 35), paying attention to and planning for and with women participants as they move among these circumstances. Tisdell (2001) explains feminist theory and pedagogy as really being about leveling the playing field, about not only “giving women a piece of the pie that men have always had access to, but…about transforming those structure that have treated inequitable gender arrangements (and race and class arrangements) which have been counterproductive to both men and
women” (p. 271). The result of trying to level this playing field has been that women have developed methods of pursuing agency both within and without educational organizations and social structures. This agency may take the form of pedagogical action through popular education, as described in this study of the women in the Legal Promoter’s Course.

**Popular Education**

The concept of popular education relies upon assumptions that unofficial, community knowledge is more valuable than outside “expert” knowledge as a resource for problem-solving on an individual and societal level. Popular education methods often draw upon art forms of an individual culture, incorporating theater, dance, storytelling, music and art into education in order to stimulate reflection and analysis (Merriam & Brockett, 1997). In Latin America, formal models of education have largely given way to popular education, thus pushing implementation of transformational learning and critical theory (Merriam & Brockett, 1997). By definition, popular education is participatory, egalitarian, and is designed to eliminate the power component of the educator’s role. Popular education “strives to develop among targeted social sectors a critical social awareness and understanding of how society functions” (Fink, 1992, p.174-5). It is often combined with skills training in which two levels of knowledge are valued: (1) the traditions, knowledge, abilities, and experiences of participant; and (2) the transmission of new technical skills and information (Fink, 1992).

**Women and the Legal Promoter’s Course in Bolivia**

In Latin America, formal models of education have largely given way to popular education, often combined with skills training in which two levels of knowledge are valued: (1) the traditions, knowledge, abilities, and experiences of participant; and (2) the transmission of new technical skills and information (Fink, 1992). The concept of popular education relies upon assumptions that unofficial, community knowledge is more valuable than outside “expert” knowledge as a resource for problem-solving on an individual and societal level. The OJM’s Legal Promoter’s Course focuses on teaching skills while at the same time promoting social change and justice through its course methodology. The Oficina Jurídica Para la Mujer (OJM), the site chosen for this project, is an innovative non-governmental organization (NGO) that was conceived in 1984 as an option for poor women who needed training in the defense of their rights and in protection from family and societal violence. The mission of the organization is threefold: to change power relations in Bolivian society in order to eliminate social, economic, political and cultural injustice; to eliminate all forms of discrimination against the women of Bolivia and the world; and to construct a truly democratic society that respects life, peace, liberty and diversity (Montano, 2000). Currently, the OJM participates actively in educational programs and in the modification of discriminatory laws, maintaining its strong position in the defense of the rights of women and the elimination of gender discrimination. The principal function of the Education Department is training women from marginalized and rural areas of Cochabamba and other Bolivian states in the knowledge, use and defense of their rights (Montano, 2000). The goal of this combination of access to services, information and training is to provide women with the tools they need to begin to take more control of their lives and education. The work of the Education Department is guided by the principle that if women are aware of their rights and are taught within the context of their experience, they will be motivated to exercise their rights.

The people who participated in this case study were students in the Legal Promoter’s Course, which was developed in 1990 and has been an important aspect of the Education Department of the OJM. The OJM formed the program in response to the urgent need to advance the knowledge of the law and legal rights among women leaders. The general project objective is to increase the effective exercise of human rights from the perspective of gender, class, ethnicity and age, deconstructing patriarchal power mechanisms through leadership and sustained action.

**Methodology**

In the Legal Promoter’s Course, participants are trained to provide legal assistance to women, particularly those with limited resources, and to refer them to the OJM for further free legal assistance. The development of the Legal Promoter’s Course includes both legal and educational training, preparing participants to be educators in the realms of family, workplace and community (Montano, 2000). The format of the course consists of weekly programs that take place from February through October each year with a larger number of participants each session. Through researcher’s observations of the program and from discussions with the facilitator, the methodology of the program is “participatory and living,” making use of role-plays, small group work, storytelling, presentations, field visits and research homework. A primary method of learning is through reflection and discussion (Gutierrez, 2002).

Because of the popular education characteristics of the program, the Legal Promoter’s Course and its participants were deliberately chosen as the subject for this study. We employed qualitative case study methodology
since the program and its participants were a “bounded system” (Merriam, 2002, p. 178), and case study methodology was the most effective research technique in order to reflect the richness of the program participants' individual experiences. The researchers' interests in the program were to understand how popular education programs can facilitate transformation of participants that may help them challenge existing status quo social norms in order to change their lives. One of the researchers participated in intensive field study at the Legal Promoter's Course in Bolivia for three months as an observer and assistant to program leaders. As a full participant in the workshop, this researcher was able to become immersed in the program and develop relationships with participants before beginning a series of interviews. Data for this study consisted of three months of field notes and observations of classrooms, interviews with participants and facilitators, and published documents related to the program.

The interviews were conducted with three current program participants (Nereida, Valentina and Walter), one graduated Promoter (Aide), and the program facilitator (Irma). The study participants’ stories that emerged from their interviews illuminate the strengths and the challenges of the program and of the participants, revealing a direct connection to the concepts of transformational learning, women’s learning and critical consciousness through popular education.

Findings

All participants interviewed had differing perspectives on why popular education was important and what aspects of the methodology made it work. The failure of the traditional education system in the lives of the participants and the importance of a sense of community in an educational setting were emergent principal themes. The use of native languages was also a key factor in the experiences of participants. Additionally, gender dynamics played an important role in the development of the program. Although program facilitators and participants face economic, organizational and societal challenges in sustaining the program, demand for the program among community members kept the program alive and continuing efforts among graduated participants disseminates the internal workings of the program to the larger community.

Impact on the Individual: Personal Transformation

According to the OJM Annual Report (2000), the greatest impact of the program on an individual level is an improvement in self-esteem as participants learn their rights. They often adapt their personal behavior within their home lives and undertake leadership positions in their community organizations (Montano, 2000). Interview subjects reflected upon their shift in attitude and self-image. For example, Aide, a graduated promoter, told her story:

I have changed. Two years ago I was a shy, fearful person. Now I am not afraid of anything. I know that I can confront things. Becoming a Legal Promoter has given me a lot of courage. It has taught me to honor myself. Now my husband doesn’t mistreat me and I don’t mistreat him. He respects my decisions and I respect his. When I started to value myself, he started to value me.

For Walter, a male program participant, the Legal Promoter’s Course served not only as a source of self-confidence, but also as an outlet for his curiosity, his motivation to learn and to teach, and his sense of personal efficacy. Throughout the program he continually researched new topics and explored new concepts with his peers. With his newfound knowledge and the shared experience with his fellow participants, he began to feel a personal sense of efficacy. He shared his perspective, saying “I am never satisfied with what I know. I like to learn so that I can teach. Now, I am always learning and I am always teaching.” The long-term effects of this personal impact were observed as graduates of the Legal Promoters Course consistently returned to the office. One Promoter, a former participant of the class, explained to current program participants, “Whatever you do, don’t miss class. This class changed my life. I am not afraid anymore.”

Impact on the Family

On a family level, many Legal Promoters were able to redesign their gender roles and relationships. Several times this included a redistribution of family responsibilities to relieve the often overwhelming work of the women. Even though many husbands initially resisted these changes, it has been seen that the participation of women in these programs eventually improves the communication within the family, particularly in relation to the children (Montano, 2000). Irma, the program facilitator, explained further, “Very often the women’s relationships with their husbands and their children improve as they learn to make decisions to resolve their problems.”

Sometimes family situations were not possible to resolve; the Legal Promoter’s Course often gave women the courage to make changes in their lives. Considering and following through with divorce is a difficult move to make,
particularly in a culture where single and divorced women are often perceived of as failures. However, with the support of the OJM and an understanding of the legal process, women have been able to make difficult but necessary changes in their lives and to come to terms with them.

**Impact on the Community**

The community impact of the Legal Promoters is evident as program graduates become defenders of human rights in their communities, contributing to the strengthening and democratization of the organizations to which they belong. The practical implementation of the program is both a source of pride for the participants and a true force of change within their communities. Once they have achieved this level of critical consciousness, current participants set goals for what they will do when they have finished the program. Irma elaborated on her perceptions of the power of community outreach:

There are some who join the course as leaders. But after the course, they go to their organization and they are more powerful. They move higher up in the leadership. This integration of Legal Promoters in leadership positions in organizations, institutions, school boards, women’s groups, and so forth motivates other people’s reflection and critical consciousness about the situation of women in Cochabamba, in Bolivia and in the rest of the world.

**Societal Impact**

The final step of the philosophy of popular education is to attempt to change the way the world works. As our discussion has indicated, we saw concrete effects from the program within the individuals, their families and their communities. However, for many of the participants, the program helped them develop a vision of large scale social change.

Irma discussed her perception of the broader impacts of the program:

After a promoter takes the course, she always carries with her the new knowledge – the practical knowledge that she can teach, but also the sensibility and the ability to make people understand how to live in solidarity with other women. The course is a part of the larger women’s movement throughout the world that empowers women to exercise their rights. Wherever you find involved women they are thinking critically in terms of human rights and women’s rights. If we are working as a team, we can really make a difference – make it so women are treated with respect.

While social changes are the most difficult changes to measure, each person had a dream of the impact they had and can make. Nereida’s dream goes beyond the classroom, into the workforce and beyond the traditional sphere of women’s participation:

It would be interesting to start a small business between all of us, managed through the OJM. We could work at the OJM and the other organizations that deal with women’s rights. My goal is that not only do we learn and use our new skills but that we are truly productive. Through a business like this we could create consciousness among the women and within the community about rights and about business that could be very efficient for the whole country.

Regardless of the form of the dream, each person shared the vision of a world where people can live without violence or discrimination. Aide stated it simply:

I think the best part of this course is that it forces people to learn, to recognize what is happening, and because of this there are not as many innocent people suffering anymore. I hope that more people take the course, so that more people can learn their rights as human beings and learn to be respected and listened to.

**Discussion**

As Fink (1992) suggests, a successful popular education model must find ways to meet immediate needs while developing analytical and practical skills. The program must advance on multiple fronts, reflecting the lives of participants. When focused upon women, the ideal program should not focus solely on household issues, but should address social, economic and legal constraints present in the lives of women, which will help participants realize the societal structures that constrain them. Finally, the women should play the role of decision-makers in the program.
and not be passive beneficiaries, thereby developing leadership abilities that they can translate into community and societal leadership roles.

Taking into account the organizational history, structure and teaching strategies of the Oficina Jurídica Para la Mujer and the Education Department, it appears the Legal Promoters Course fits this model. The educational methods employed in the program, including community learning, use of native languages, and reflection and action integrate the learning experience into the daily lives of the learners. The use of participatory methods, discussion and real world examples leads the learners to develop a critical consciousness about themselves and society.

As the program impacts the women and the world, it incorporates gender issues into a larger social movement, affecting both personal experience and public policy. The methodology allows for a technical and a personal understanding, often leading to perspective transformation and transformational learning (Mezirow, 1990, 2000). Within these experiences, the program participants reach a point of critical consciousness in which they stop blaming themselves for their problems and begin to look outward at unjust social conditions that have oppressed them. This examination leads to active participation and efforts to create change, starting at the personal level but advancing to community and societal issues. In this research, the Legal Promoters Course pushed learners to question current societal norms, calling for a demystification of the law and provided the skills to stop the use of the legal system as a method of reinforcing subordination. With this combination of individual and large scale structural change, the Legal Promoters Course served as a guide for popular education programs that seek to empower women and create long-term social change.

The implications of this study in terms of transformative, popular, women’s, and adult education are wide-ranging. There are many programs throughout the world that seek to end domestic violence, teach human rights and facilitate gender equality. The Legal Promoter’s Course, by operating within the larger category of popular education, was not only able to address the immediate needs of the participants but at the same time to train a force of critically conscious educators. The process utilized by the program was strengthened because the women were not held in the domestic sphere, but instead participated in a space in which men and women could work together in a process where there is a balance of power between teachers and students. Through their involvement in this process, societal structures can be and are challenged and shifted as participants become critically aware of the societal forces that shape their personal and political experiences, and further, realize that they themselves are the creators of constantly changing “knowledge.”

There is great need for future research in the area of transformational learning and critical consciousness, particularly its application in the lives of women. It would be valuable to expand future studies beyond Bolivia, comparing the way such organizations work across different cultures. Additionally, it would be interesting to compare the Legal Promoter’s Course structure to more traditional women’s educational programs in order to understand the differing outcomes and the advantages and disadvantages of the varying models. Ideally, with continued academic study in this area and with the expansion and refinement of successful programs, the individual and societal impacts of a program like the Legal Promoter’s Course at the Oficina Jurídica Para la Mujer in Bolivia can have an even broader impact in the fight for gender equality and an end to violence against women.

References


“Activating” Students: A Qualitative Study on the Short and Long Term Impact of a Transformative Learning Practice in an Undergraduate Classroom

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Abstract: This paper presents findings from a qualitative study on the learning experiences of undergraduate students who went through an environmental education course that seeks congruency among its goals, content and pedagogy. The study illustrates the potential roles of a transformative learning practice in motivating and supporting its learners in the life-long learning process of becoming activated individuals” who are committed towards, and actively engaged in, the process of social transformation.

Introduction

In this paper, I use the term transformative learning practices to describe various educational efforts which seek to encourage and support individuals into addressing global crises and participating actively in the process of transforming societies into those built on principles of environmental sustainability, social justice and care through democratic means. Such learning “involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feeling, and actions” (Morrell & O’Connor, 2002).

There are various educational practices emerging from diverse philosophies, discourses and movements that can be described as transformative learning practices. Despite the growing literature on these practices1, however, most of these works are written prescriptively or from facilitators’ perspectives. There have been few empirical studies that illuminate the learning experiences of learners going through these practices, particularly in a classroom setting, and the impact of those experiences on the learners. In order to fill the above gap in the literature and to add to our existing knowledge about potential roles of transformative learning practices, I have conducted a qualitative study on the learning experiences of, and the resulting impact of those experiences on, undergraduate students who were taking, or had taken EDUC193, a transformative learning practice in a higher education curriculum. The data were collected through field observation, semi-structured qualitative interviews with 14 (out of 39) students enrolled in that semester (current participants), and the interviews with eight alumni who had taken the course at different times over the last twenty years (alumni participants). The majority of the current participants had little interest in the environmental and other social issues while, among alumni participants, all but one had a strong interest in those issues prior to taking the course. The findings show that while research participants, coming from diverse backgrounds and personal histories, experienced EDUC193 in different ways, there were certain experiences and changes that were shared by many of the participants.

EDUC 193: A Transformative Learning Practice Which Seeks for Congruency Among Its Goals, Content and Pedagogy

EDUC193 is a course on environmental education for undergraduate students at University of California, Berkeley (UCB). The course started in 1971 and has evolved into its current form over the last three decades. Professor John Hurst, one of the three faculties who founded the course, continues to facilitate. There are usually from 30 to 40 students from various disciplines per class, mostly in their senior year. The course seeks to encourage students to explore environmental issues and environmental education, particularly through the framework of environmental justice, and to engage in actions to address these issues. It also seeks to democratize education. As seen below, the course strives for “congruency between the message and media” (Pike & Selby, 1988), bringing the principles and visions it presents to the students – including democracy, social justice, environmental sustainability, care and respect – into the pedagogy and structure of the course.

Through my observations, I identified the following seven major learning elements in the course: 1) creating democratic learning; 2) community building; 3) becoming informed; 4) engaging in in-depth discussions; 5) engaging in actions; 6) reflecting; and 7) connecting to oneself and to the rest of the world. These elements all come

\[1\] See for example Freire, 2000; Giroux, 1983; hooks, 1994; Mezirow, 2000; Noddings, 1992; O'Sullivan, 1999.
together to create complex dynamics that constituted the learning experiences of the participants. I will briefly elaborate on some of the less self-explanatory elements.

Democratic learning is an umbrella concept that underlies and shapes all the activities, structures and pedagogy of the course. Students are encouraged to take ownership and be accountable for their own learning. It is emphasized to the learners that the students, the professor and the teaching assistants are equal members of the class, each bringing unique knowledge and experiences to be shared. Major decisions regarding the course are made collectively through a process in which all class members participate actively, listening to the voices of others with respect. Students are encouraged to design, implement and facilitate activities in the course. Students also grade themselves based on individual and collective assessments of their experiences within the course.

The course encourages students to “connect” and learn from the world outside. There are various fieldtrips in the course, including a weekend trip to a local nature reserve and visits to organizations working on various social issues. A major requirement of the course is the implementation of community projects. Students are asked to identify an environmental problem (interpreted broadly) in the community, analyze it and develop and implement a project designed to address the problem. Working in groups, students engage in those projects throughout the semester, outside class time.

The Process of Learning

For many of the research participants the process of creating democratic learning was not an easy experience. Participants initially saw this mode of learning as being ideal. They enjoyed the freedom from authoritative professors, competitive grading, mandatory readings and academic penalties that pressured them to attend the class and engage in work. Gradually, however, feelings of confusion and skepticism began to emerge.

Some participants found it difficult to motivate themselves to attend classes and to engage in learning without external pressures. They felt that they were “abusing the system” and were disappointed in themselves. The lack of initiatives among the students led the class to become stagnant at times. In particular, in-depth discussions were difficult when a majority came to the class without doing the agreed readings. Some were disturbed that many of the class sessions were left open for them to initiate activities based on their needs. They felt that the course was “disorganized”. The experience of being immersed in an open-ended learning process where no concrete answer is handed down to them was also disorienting for many. The absence of quizzes, mandatory readings and grading by the professor added to some participants’ uncertainty as to whether they were learning anything. In contrast, some thrived in this new mode of learning and actively engaged in the course activities. Even those participants, however, found themselves struggling with the feeling of frustration and resenting those who lacked enthusiasm and did not contribute as much to the class.

One thing that helped participants deal with the above struggles and engage more actively in the course was the presence of a class community based on mutual respect and care that emerged as result of time and efforts spent on building it. Participants appreciated the warm and welcoming atmosphere of the class and commented that such a community motivated them to come and contribute to class activities. They were also inspired by a number of committed individuals in the class, including the professors and the teaching assistants.

It should also be noted that though some thought themselves incapable of learning on their own without external pressures, all participants, including those who saw themselves as “abusing” the democratic mode of learning, worked enthusiastically and voluntarily on their community projects.

By the end of the semester about half of the current participants, while enjoying their experiences in EDUC193, nevertheless had some reservations or skepticism about the effectiveness of the democratic mode of learning. They saw their struggles as a sign of the failure or shortcomings of this course, and of the democratic mode of learning. The other half remained strong proponents of this mode, and further saw the struggles as part of the learning. These participants realized that their struggles with democratic learning enabled them to see the strengths and the weaknesses of themselves and of others. They observed how a lack of enthusiasm could bring down the energy of the whole class; they saw as well how even one individual can inspire others to make differences to the class and to the larger society. They saw how nothing would change unless they took the initiative to do so. Some further reflected that these observations apply to the process of social transformation itself. They realized that through their struggles with democratic learning, they were learning what supports the process of social transformation and what makes visions and ideals falter and collapse.

All alumni participants were emphatic that the struggles with the democratic mode of learning are an integral part of valuable learning. One reflected, “The gem of the course is in the process”. Another contended that through her struggles she was “really learning about society, and the education system and socialization of the people”. The alumni participants all acknowledged that they did not see the values of their learning process at first, but their understanding and the appreciation of the process evolved over the years since completing the course.
“Becoming Activated”: The Short and Long Term Impact of EDUC193

The learning experiences in EDUC193 brought about various changes among current and alumni participants albeit in different degrees. These changes included: acquiring or deepening knowledge and awareness about various environmental and other social issues; learning to obtain knowledge on their own; increased appreciation of, and care for, nature; questioning the meaning of life and what constitutes a “good life”; and making efforts to live in a more ecologically sustainable way on a daily basis.

All current and alumni participants reflected that EDUC193 fostered or strengthened their commitment towards social transformation. A majority of the current participants, and all of the alumni participants, further saw the course as having supported them in taking an active part in such a transformation process, or to use the phrase of one alumni participant, the course supported them in “becoming activated”. One of the best indications of the powers of EDUC193 in supporting students to “become activated” may be that by the end of semester, 11 out of the 14 participants had decided to go into a profession that was related to addressing environmental and other social issues. Although this includes a few who had already made up their mind to go into such profession prior to taking the course, the number is striking considering that many had little or no prior interest in environment or other social issues. Moreover, for some of these participants, such a decision meant going against the wishes or the values of their parents. Furthermore, of the eight alumni participants, six are currently active in professions actively engaged in addressing environmental and other social issues, and the other two are involved in volunteer activities through which they hoped to address some of the issues. Below, I discuss how the course was a key factor in affecting the “activation” of students.

Fostering and Strengthening Commitment to Social Transformation

Some studies (Dirkx & Kovan, 2003; Rogers, 1994) show how the learning process through which individuals develop and strengthen their commitment towards the common good occur is not only intellectual, but also affect hearts and souls. The findings in this study strongly supported these studies1. Although participants experienced negative emotions such as anger and frustration through their learning in ED193, they felt more strongly the awakening of positive emotions. Through the course activities, especially through the community projects, many participants developed emotional attachments, such as love, care and respect towards the marginalized people they were working with, and subsequently, towards those in the broader society. Many also strengthened their appreciation for and love of nature. These participants see the awakening of those positive emotions as having provided them with a strong foundation for their commitment to make changes in the world.

Findings also support earlier studies (Daloz, Keen, Keen, & Parks, 1996; Dirkx & Kovan, 2003) that indicate that the realm of soul plays a powerful part in fostering commitments to social transformation. The commitments towards social transformation that were fostered among the participants were often expressed in a way that indicated that it was more than a rational decision; it was an imperative that came from deep within. Expressions such as “it felt right”, “meaningful”, “close to my heart”, or what Daloz and his colleagues (Daloz et al., 1996) termed as “the double negative form” – such as in “I can’t help but act” – were used to describe their decision to engage in social actions. Furthermore, many participants voiced their deep satisfaction in following such inner imperatives. They felt that they were being true to themselves, and were happier as a consequence of their active participation in the process of social transformation. Engagement in social transformation was seen not as a personal sacrifice for the broader good, but as a path to a more meaningful life and deeper happiness.

Acquisition of Practical Skills

The activities of EDUC193, especially the community projects, helped participants acquire practical skills to engage in social action. These skills included fund raising, designing and facilitating educational programmes, community mobilization, making presentations, and working in teams. Acquisition of those skills, in turn, gave participants confidence about their ability to make changes. They realized that they had the capacity to overcome what they previously thought of as barriers to making changes, such as “having no funds”. Consequently, many of the participants began to see social actions as something “accessible” and “achievable”. They also began to have a more hopeful outlook towards social transformation.

Alumni participants reflected that the skills and practical experiences they acquired through EDUC193 helped them get jobs related to social transformation. Some of them, in fact, are working on jobs that are similar to their community projects. These alumni also state that they apply those skills, as well as the principles of democratic learning, in their respective jobs.

1The findings in this study further suggest that, as indicated by the awakening of the five senses and the acquisition of practical skills seen among participants, changes also occur in the realm of body as well.

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Finding Concrete Paths for Action

While UCB is known for student activism, many of the participants had little or no knowledge about campus-based movements and opportunities for social actions, or had felt too shy to participate in them. These participants found that EDUC193 helped them to reach out and make active use of various opportunities and resources available to them on campus and in the local community.

The course also encouraged participants to explore and experiment with different ways of engaging in social action. This helped to broaden participants’ notions of social action, and led them to realize that there were many ways they could take part in the process of social transformation. In particular, it helped participants to recognize the potential of education as a tool for bringing about changes in society. Out of the eight alumni participants, six are currently working on “education for social change”. The path of participating in social transformation through education was particularly attractive to those who felt that activism in the form of protests or rallies did not suit their temperaments.

EDUC193 as Part of the Life-Learning Process to Become Activated

The stories of alumni participants indicate that although these participants experienced profound changes through the course, there were still times after the course when they felt lost, or felt their commitments towards social transformation weakening. Nevertheless, what EDUC193 did do was to motivate and to support them to engage in further learning and actions for social transformation. It was through their new phase of learning and actions, that participants further strengthened their commitment and engagement in social transformation. These alumni participants are engaged to this day in a continuous process of engaging in actions and learning, promising further actions and learning. This process resonates with the stories of how environmental activists sustained and strengthened their commitment through life-long learning situated within the very struggles with activism in the study conducted by Dirkx and Kovan (2003).

Thus, it seems that EDUC193 should not be seen as a “Ghandi pill” (Daloz et al., 1996) that transforms its learners into committed and active agents of change at once and in an irreversible manner. Rather, through EDUC193, we see the potential roles that formal education can play in motivating and supporting learners to engage in the process of becoming activated individuals, a process that can take over a long span of time – in fact, even over a lifetime. The implementation of such a practice in higher education is particularly valuable, since many of the learners would be making decisions about, and preparations for, future paths in terms of jobs and lifestyles. For many, EDUC193 was the starting point for the life-long journey of “becoming activated”.

References

Transforming the Paradigm Shift: Narrowing the Distance Between Teacher and Learner Through a Course Redesign Initiative

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Abstract: A shift from the teaching paradigm to the learning paradigm in today’s colleges and universities cannot be accomplished without an accompanying shift in faculty members’ internal perspective or frame of reference regarding learning. We hope to foster this kind of transformative learning experience by using a hybrid course redesign initiative to narrow the distance between teacher and learner by asking faculty to both define learning and to perceive themselves as learners.

In a 1995 article, From Teaching to Learning: a New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education, Barr and Tagg asked institutions and educators to reflect on their missions and proposed a shift from missions emphasizing teaching to missions emphasizing learning. Should institutions of higher education focus on the transfer of knowledge? Or should colleges and universities instead create environments and experiences that allow students to discover and construct knowledge (Barr & Tagg, 1995)? In the ten years since the publication of this provocative article, many institutions have tried to implement the learning paradigm by addressing learning at the institutional level: initiating student portfolio projects, improving assessment strategies, etc. (Tagg, 2003; Fear, et al., 2003). While these institutional changes are necessary, colleges and universities also need to consider the role of their faculty, who may be disconnected from the school’s mission.

We propose that a shift from teaching to learning in today’s colleges and universities cannot be accomplished without an accompanying shift in faculty members’ internal perspectives or frames of reference regarding learning and that a course redesign initiative can foster this kind of transformative learning experience. In facilitating our hybrid course redesign initiative, we hope not only to prepare for a shift in the way our school offers classes, but more importantly, to narrow the distance between teacher and learner by asking faculty to define learning and to perceive themselves as learners. The shift from teacher to learner mirrors the shift from teaching to learning as the teacher/learner locates and reflects on his or her beliefs about learning.

At Johns Hopkins University’s School of Professional Studies in Business and Education (SPSBE), fulltime faculty are complemented by adjunct practitioner faculty who bring real-world experience to the classroom. Like their fulltime counterparts, SPSBE’s practitioner faculty may not have experienced any formal education in teaching. Many teachers of adult learners simply fall into teaching. They may not be overly concerned about their lack of preparation because they believe that when it comes to teaching adults, their only mandate is to share their expertise with their students. Traditional faculty development strategies may further confuse the issue by focusing on specific teaching tasks. Workshops that teach faculty how to write a syllabus or create a rubric for evaluating a learning product, while well-intentioned, fail to address the educators’ beliefs and values about teaching and learning, and yet it is these beliefs and values which provide the foundation for their practice (Taylor, 2003 p.60).

The Course Redesign Initiative

We chose the hybrid course redesign initiative as our vehicle for transformative learning because this voluntary program creates small groups for shared discourse (up to 15 members in the larger group) and asks participants to reflect upon their current teaching practice. At SPSBE we define hybrid (or blended) format courses as those that combine face-to-face classroom instruction with off-campus learning by moving a significant portion of the learning activities outside of the classroom and thus reducing, but not eliminating, time traditionally spent on campus. Off-campus learning may take place synchronously using a course management system, or asynchronously with or without the use of technology. Typically, classes meet face-to-face for the first meeting and then alternate between face-to-face and off-campus sessions. We sought volunteer faculty from across our divisions (Graduate Business, Graduate Education, Public Safety and Leadership, and Undergraduate Studies) and asked them to engage in a ten-week course redesign session. We divided the session between face-to-face meetings and off-campus (or online) meetings to model the hybrid learning experience they would be designing for their students. In communicating with faculty about the course redesign sessions, we emphasized that for our school, the hybrid model is not about simply...
adding technology to existing courses, but about asking how we can improve our practice to better foster learning. Still, for many faculty, the promise of improving their technology skills was the catalyst for their participation.

In applying to join the initiative, faculty had to share why they believed their courses were good candidates for the hybrid format. Most of the applicants were practitioner faculty who believed that adding technology to their courses would improve their course delivery or save them time. Some faculty cited a desire to create a more flexible classroom schedule, not only for themselves, but also for their students. Though the stated vision for the initiative is to improve student learning, no one cited improving student learning as a reason for participating.

In structuring the course redesign sessions, we considered Cranton’s conditions for turning educators’ reflections into transformative learning about their practice:

- The old ways of seeing practice simply do not work
- A "disorienting dilemma" exists
- The origin of beliefs is critically examined
- There are others with whom discourse can be held
- The educator is ready for change
- Freedom from constraints can be achieved
- Support is available
- An alternative way of being is possible. (Cranton, 1996, p. 114)

Did any of our faculty initially believe that their way of seeing their practice did not work? Probably not. What was “not working” was student enrollment. Most faculty were aware that enrollments were not as high as departments wanted them to be, but they did not see a solution in their own practice; rather, they believed improved marketing and more flexible class schedules would increase enrollment. How did we get them to re-envision their practice? In preparation for the first meeting, participants were asked to read Barr and Tagg’s *From Teaching to Learning: a New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education* and to reflect upon what such a paradigm shift would mean to them. Most of the participants were made uncomfortable by the proposed shift. The faculty wondered how they would manage an environment where learning is student centered and student controlled because they feared they would no longer be in charge of their classrooms. While others were willing to give up some control, they envisioned technology (not themselves) as the driver of more powerful learning environments. Finally, some graduate level instructors rejected the article because they believed it addressed only undergraduate education.

One faculty participant described the shift as a move from inputs (teaching) to outputs (learning), and eventually this interpretation became accessible to most of the group. In assigning Barr and Tagg’s article, we hoped to cultivate disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow, 2000) among our faculty and to use the redesign project as a holding environment (Heifetz, 1994) as we asked faculty to revisit their hegemonic assumptions about learning.

**Teacher as Learner: What do I Believe About Learning?**

As the faculty weighed in on the shift from teaching to learning, we asked them to share their beliefs and values about learning. The initial discussions focused on participants’ memories of their best and worst learning experiences. As faculty beliefs about learning are often based on their own learning experiences (Taylor, 2003), these conversations were an attempt to uncover each participant’s assumptions. The participants’ descriptions of their worst learning experiences shared many similarities: poor communication, distant or ridiculing faculty, tedious lectures or class sessions, and no discernable connection between the stated course objectives and the classroom experience. The participants’ descriptions of their best learning experiences were more disparate. Several fondly remembered a charismatic instructor or a teacher who went out of his or her way to connect with students, but there were fewer similarities in the kinds of learning experiences they found valuable. The group had spent several hours talking about learning, but it was clear we had not been talking about the same thing.

Tagg addressed this issue from the students’ perspective in his 2004 article, *Why Learn? What We May Really be Teaching Students*. Tagg cited the work of Marton and Booth in which students from the Open University in the UK described their perceptions of learning. Marton and Booth grouped the students’ self-reports into six categories:

1. Learning as increasing ones knowledge: “Accumulation of knowledge.” “Filling my head with facts.”
2. Learning as memorizing and reproducing: “Learning it up for exams and reproducing it.” Drumming it into the brain and reeling it off.”
3. Learning as applying: “Take in information, see how it can be used.” “Turn it around and make use of it in other ways.”
4. Learning as understanding: “Looking again at things that you know about but with a slightly different perspective.” “To have a process of thought that sort of ‘sets in motion’ when you look at something...tackle looking at something in a far more logical way.”

5. Learning as seeing something in a different way: “Opening your mind a little bit more so you see things in different ways.” “Being able to look at things from all sides, and see that what is right for one person is not right for another person.”

6. Learning as changing a person: “Expanding yourself...you tend to think that life just took hold of you and did what it wanted with you...You should take hold of life and make it go your way.” “It's something personal and it's something continuous. Once it starts it carries on and it might lead to other things...You should be doing it not for the exam but for the person before and for the person afterwards...”

(Marton & Booth as cited in Tagg, 2004 p. 6)

We created an electronic survey incorporating the students’ quotations for our faculty participants. The survey presented the students’ quotations in random order and omitted Marton and Booth’s descriptors (“Learning as...”). The faculty were asked to select the groups of quotations that best matched their perceptions of learning. Not surprisingly, the responses varied. Perceptions of learning can, of course vary, across situations; we may not choose the same descriptors for learning to drive as we would for learning organic chemistry, but the descriptors gave us a language for seeing these differences.

In the next face-to-face meeting, we presented the faculty’s responses in a grid that aligned the quotations with their descriptors. The grid not only displayed the faculty’s responses, the quotations, and the descriptors, but also aligned their responses according to distinctions made by Marton: in the first three categories learning is described as reproducing, while in the second three categories learning is seeking meaning. Marton described a second distinction between the first three and the second three categories: learning as performance vs. learning as development and personal growth (Marton as cited in Tagg, 2004, p. 6). In the final rows of the grid, the quotations were aligned across several cognitive development schemes including the work of Perry; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule; King and Kitchner; and Kegan. The faculty were struck by their lack of agreement on the meaning of learning and also by the proposed alignment of their perceptions of learning with the stages of cognitive development, which we had discussed earlier in the session.

To give more meaning to these relationships, we created a grid in which assessments were aligned with the perceptions of learning and stages of cognitive development (figure 1). Faculty not only had an opportunity to locate their own perceptions of learning, but could also consider what they might be communicating to their students about learning with their choice of assessment strategies. In asking our faculty participants to align themselves along a continuum of cognitive development, we were not suggesting that faculty were in the wrong stages, only that they needed to know where they were in order to understand their beliefs. In addition to reflecting on their own perceptions of learning, faculty were asked to consider the impact of their beliefs on their students. If we administer a multiple-choice midterm to graduate students, are we suggesting that learning is limited to reproducing and performance?

**Group Work**

In the following weeks as faculty created the framework for their redesigned courses, we asked them to consider the relationship between the learning expectations of their students and the types of assessment strategies they chose. Working in groups of three, faculty used the Understanding by Design model (Wiggins & McTighe, 2000) to reconsider their courses: what do we want our students to understand, know, and be able to do? what evidence will demonstrate their ability to understand, know, and do? what learning activities will facilitate their understanding, knowing, and doing? Their face-to-face conversations and discussion forum postings indicated that the shift from teaching to learning was beginning to take hold in small ways. Feedback and questions focused on students and on learning, not on teaching.
### Figure 1
Aligning Assessment With Perceptions of Learning and Stages of Cognitive Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning is:</th>
<th>increasing one’s knowledge</th>
<th>memorizing and reproducing</th>
<th>applying</th>
<th>understanding</th>
<th>seeing something in a different light</th>
<th>changing a person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marton &amp; Booth (as cited in Tagg)</td>
<td><strong>Learning as Reproducing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Learning</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>as Seeking Meaning</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Learning as Performance</strong></td>
<td><strong>as Development and Personal Growth</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Perry</th>
<th>Belenky, Clinchy, et al.</th>
<th>King &amp; Kitchner</th>
<th>Kegan</th>
<th>Synthesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dualism</td>
<td>Received</td>
<td>Pre-reflective</td>
<td>Durable Categories</td>
<td>Unequivocal Knowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiplicity</td>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>Quasi Reflective</td>
<td>Cross-Categorical Thinking</td>
<td>Radical Subjectivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relativism</td>
<td>Procedural</td>
<td>Reflective</td>
<td>Cross-Categorical Constructing</td>
<td>Generative Knowing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Commitment in Relativism</td>
<td>Constructed</td>
<td></td>
<td>Transsystem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Multiple-Choice & T/F quizzes and tests | Midterms and Final Exams | Performance Tasks Case Studies, etc. | Reflective Journals & Evidence Based Discussion | Situated Learning (Service Learning, etc.) | Research & Discovery Projects |


Definitions of learning adapted from Tagg, J. (2004 March/April). Why learn? What we may really be teaching students. *About Campus, 9*(1).
If the discussions about learning that took place in the first weeks of the hybrid course redesign initiative were our way of creating a disorienting dilemma, the actual work of the redesigns was one way of monitoring our progress. Faculty participants considered which activities would work best face-to-face and which could best be facilitated off campus (or online). They also evaluated technologies for making tasks more authentic, sharing resources and keeping groups connected. In modeling the hybrid format, we wanted the faculty to experience what their students would likely experience. What was it like to be a member of a learning group? What would you do if a fellow group member fails to respond to your postings? How do you manage your time and stay connected when you are not meeting face-to-face? In asking faculty to consider these issues, we wanted them to understand their own learning better. Were their learning embodied in the handouts they collected in class or downloaded from our course site or was it a process occurring as they shared discussions and created new learning activities?

**An Alternative Way of Being**

The hybrid course design initiative is one method of getting faculty together to talk about learning. Some of our faculty participated because they wanted to enhance their courses with technology; others sought teaching tips or more flexible classroom schedules. In moving away from the atomistic workshops on course syllabi, evaluating group work and facilitating discussion, etc. we make way for a holistic approach that requires faculty to consider the beliefs that are the foundation of their practice.

Across the country, several institutions are experimenting with courses taught in a hybrid format and the early research indicates that this format benefits students, not necessarily because of the use of technology or flexible schedules, but because the courses being taught in this format have been redesigned (Twigg, 2003). For perhaps the first time, faculty are asking what students know and how they know it. Most of the grant money associated with these initiatives is being spent on assessments that compare learning outcomes for students in the hybrid format courses with students in the traditionally formatted (non-redesigned) courses (Twigg, 2003). Initiatives like these embody the shift from teaching to learning at the institutional level and have the potential of facilitating this shift among faculty.

**Conclusion**

We cannot realize a shift from the teaching paradigm to the learning paradigm in our colleges and universities unless faculty begin to question their uncritically assimilated assumptions and beliefs about teaching and learning (Mezirow, 2000). By bringing faculty together for a course redesign initiative, we create a holding environment where they can question their definition of learning and perceive themselves as learners. In asking faculty to locate their perceptions about learning along a continuum of cognitive development, we allow them to determine where they are now. It is this determination that makes way for the possibility of transformation.

Our first hybrid course redesign session concluded at the end of the spring semester and our second session will continue through the summer months. To date, not all of our faculty participants have completed the hard work of redesigning their courses, but several are clearly engaging in their practice from a different perspective. In fostering a transformative learning experience for our faculty, we encourage them to facilitate transformative learning experiences for their students and narrow the distance between teacher and learner.

**References**


Intersections Between Educators’ Biographies and the Epistemological Transformations of a Profession as Influences on Promoting Self-Authorship Among Graduate Students

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University of New Mexico

Abstract: Kegan’s theory of self-authorship was adopted as the conceptual framework for a qualitative case study of one graduate curriculum in occupational therapy. The study examined, in part, if and how faculty promoted transformations in graduate students’ ways of knowing. Findings suggest that faculty consistently promoted transformations toward what Kegan referred to as fourth-order knowing, but the educator’s own biography and the evolution of the profession played prominently in what specific transformations faculty envisioned for students. Thus as currently conceptualized, self-authorship was limited as an interpretive framework for understanding the classroom processes in this case study. The concept of “authoring lives” was proposed as a more comprehensive lens on teaching and research.

From a constructive developmental perspective, self-authorship is defined as “simultaneously an ability to construct knowledge in a contextual world, an ability to construct an internal identity separate from external influences, and an ability to engage in relationships without losing one’s internal identity” (Baxter Magolda, 1999, p. 12). Acquiring self-authorship is considered highly desirable, if not necessary, for meeting the demands of western post-modern societies. Therefore, a significant body of scholarship describes the epistemic transformations through which self-authorship emerges as well as the teaching/learning processes believed to promote such transformation among undergraduate and graduate students. Self-authorship is generally attained through a series of personal and epistemic transformations which Kegan (1994; 2000) described as a progression from third-order to fourth-order knowing and Baxter Magolda (1999) described as progression from absolute to contextual knowing. Belenky and her colleagues (1996) described a similar self-authorizing progression from received knowing to constructed knowing. Regardless of how the stages of change are conceptualized, these constructive developmental theorists argue that self-authorship develops as one’s assumptions about knowledge, relationships and identity transform into more complex and constructed understandings.

One aim of teaching within a constructive developmental framework is to create experiences where learners’ challenge and transform former assumptions about knowledge and thus incrementally move toward more self-authorship. King and Kitchener (1994), for example, recommended that educators create learning experiences that expose learners to ill-structured problems and solutions, multiple points of view on the same issue, and examples of thoughtful but maybe contradictory analyses; they also recommended that educators ask learners to develop and defend firm arguments for a particular point of view. Such pedagogical practices are believed to steer learners from views of knowledge as absolute or highly personalized into a view and critique of knowledge as assembled in and for a given context.

Much of constructive developmental theory and pedagogy conceptualizes transformation as occurring within the individual learner. The role of the educator is portrayed as one who creates learning contexts to elicit transformation within learners. Less attention is given to the educator’s prior and ongoing journey toward self-authorship or to the journey of an entire discipline toward self-authorship as factors in how constructive developmental pedagogy is enacted among students in a higher education context. The purpose of this paper is to describe one set of findings from a larger case study (Hooper, 2003) wherein the epistemological transformation of a profession and the biographies of faculty intersecting with those transformations played a role in how teaching for self-authorship was enacted.

Background

At the time of this case study, educational reforms so broadly sweeping as to be referred to as a “curricular renaissance” were underway in occupational therapy (Wood et al., 2000). Nationally and internationally, educational programs were mandated to move from the Bachelor’s to the Master’s as the entry degree into practice. Consequently, a large discourse arose around what constitutes graduate education for entry-level practitioners. Additionally, the newer science of how and to what ends humans occupy time through everyday activities over the lifespan was promoted as a central organizing framework for new graduate curricula replacing medical sciences that
had formerly played a large role in curricular designs (Yerxa, 1998). Despite rapid educational change, few investigations sought to understand either how knowledge of human occupation was being interpreted and adopted as a curriculum design framework or how teaching and teaching beliefs were enacted within these new curricula. As a result, this research was originally designed to examine curricular and pedagogical reforms in occupational therapy.

Additionally, educational reforms in occupational therapy were promoted using language highly congruent with Kegan’s (1994; 2000) theory of self-authorship. Not only that, but the field has a long rhetorical and intellectual history congruent with the tenets of self-authorship. For example, occupational therapy aims to empower individuals to influence and construct health, quality of life, adaptation, meaning, and identity through the routines and activities in which they choose to participate. Thus, self-authored lives constitute the aim of the profession’s services. Further, leaders in occupational therapy have often called the field to become self-authoring of its professional service rather than have its service authored by the medical model of health and wellness. Therefore, not only did occupational therapy education provide a context for examining change in the field, but because of such close alliance with self-authorship discourse, it also provided a context for further examining the theory of self-authorship in a graduate, professional education context. While the study as a whole explored a series of questions around occupational therapy education, this paper addresses: To what degree did self-authorship serve as an implicit aim in occupational therapy education? And how did educators promote transformations associated with self-authorship among graduate students?

Conceptual Model (From Hooper, in press)

Kegan’s theory of self-authorship was adopted as one piece of the conceptual model for the study. Kegan (2000) understands epistemological transformation, in part, as an evolving relationship between two aspects of experience; one, those experiences that we are largely “run by, identified with, fused with” (p. 53), and therefore mostly unaware of, and secondly, those experiences that “we can look at, take responsibility for, reflect upon, exercise control over…” (p. 53). Kegan suggests we are “subject” to those experiences we are run by, while we “take as object” the experiences we are aware of. Kegan argues that the demands of modern life require us to reorganize what we are subject to and what we can take as object into more complex configurations over time, continuously expanding the parts of experience we can take as object. The configuration between what we are subject to and what we take as object constitutes our epistemology, or way of knowing, and functions as a screen through which we filter the experiences we consider important from those we do not. Epistemological transformation occurs as the experiences to which we were subject become object.

One such subject-object configuration is referred to as third-order knowing (Baxter Magola, 1999; Igelzi, 2000; Kegan, 1994). While Kegan (1994) identified five different ways of knowing, the two most prevalent in adult development include third-order and fourth-order knowing. Using third-order knowing, adults are aware of and can examine concrete experiences or ideas and can combine concrete experiences into abstractions such as generalizations, explanations, values, beliefs, or hypotheses. Third order knowers can also take their and others’ points of view as object, making membership in various communities possible.

However, while able to generate abstractions from concrete actions, third-order knowing is limited in the degree it can reflect on the abstractions and the broader inquiry process by which they were generated. In other words, individuals relying on third-order knowing remain “subject” to their own explanations, ideas, values, beliefs, and identities. Abstractions become absolute, and though they form the basis for action, remain out of view and unexamined. In addition, third-order knowing does not allow for critical reflection on how identity is co-constructed with the communities to which one belongs. Baxter Magolda (1999) summarized the achievements of third-order knowing as the ability to “reason abstractly and to think hypothetically and deductively...to hold values and ideals...and orient to shared feelings” (Baxter Magolda, 1999, p. 55). While these are important intellectual accomplishments, third order knowing does not fully allow for self-authorship because the abstractions and co-constructed identities that guide action remain outside of awareness.

The transformation from third to fourth-order knowing, on the other hand, does allow for self-authorship. Fourth order knowing is a re-configuration of those aspects of experience that were unexamined in third-order knowing. Gradually, experiences one was run by, or subject to, crop up in awareness and become experiences that can be examined and reflected upon, or, in other words, taken as object. Thus fourth-order knowing allows for an examination of the abstractions that have been guiding action unaware and the larger systems and inquiry processes from which the abstractions were generated. In addition, the values and commitments of the communities to which one belongs come into view and can be examined and critiqued.
As a conceptual model for the research, Kegan’s theory (1994; 2000) was used as a lens for analyzing historical data for ways of knowing used in the profession over time. It was also used as a lens on teaching and on faculty members’ biographical experiences.

Methodology
This study utilized historical research and an in-depth case study design involving one educational program considered an exemplar for implementing educational changes proposed for the larger field of occupational therapy. The case was selected using intensity sampling which samples for greatest potential to provide rich information about the research topic (Patton, 2002; Stake, 2000). The study took place at a large Research I public university. Data were collected over an 8-week period of prolonged engagement. Initial semi-structured interviews were conducted with all nine faculty, who happened to all be women, asking them to reflect on their personal and professional trajectories into academia. This interview was designed to understand key influences on choosing to become an educator and how each educator’s teaching practice reflected those influences.

Each faculty was then observed in the classroom for 3 weeks during the Fall semester. Observation data were collected through field notes, participant observation, and videotapes. The conceptual framework served as one lens through which to observe and conduct field notes on teaching practice. Unstructured interviews often followed the classroom observations wherein faculty described and reflected on their teaching that day. The conceptual framework helped guide some of the questions I asked faculty after class sessions. Videotaped data were transcribed and then analyzed as observation field notes. Researcher-selected segments of videotapes were used as a photo elicitation technique (Prosser, 1998) during the final interview with each faculty. The videotaped segments prompted reflection on classroom processes and helped further understand the implicit transformations each educator sought among students. Artifact review was also conducted on syllabi, class handouts, exams, and course websites (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Patton, 2002, Merriam, 1998). The conceptual framework served to highlight language and emphases within these documents. Altogether nine faculty were involved, 112 hours of classroom observations and 32 hours of interviews were conducted, and 24 hours of classroom experiences were videotaped.

Data analysis occurred throughout and following data collection and included reading interview and observation transcriptions in their entirety, conducting line-by-line coding of interview and observation data, reading literature related to the conceptual framework, documenting analytical notes in my research journal, developing concept maps and data matrices to help make sense of the data as it was being collected, and engaging in “practice writing” exercises to help establish a narrative framework for the data.

Historical data were collected through primary and secondary historical records and writings in occupational therapy. This data was analyzed by comparing Kegan’s criteria for third- and fourth-order knowing with how knowledge in the field was represented in key sources over time. This data collection strategy was added part way through the study as a result of reflection on the conceptual framework and initial interview data. This analysis led me to ask: Could the theory of self-authorship be used as an analytic tool to understand the development of a profession as well as an individual? And what new understandings might be gained by such an analysis?

Findings
In this study, teaching seemed infused with a wider drama than the individual educator who tries to elicit new assumptions about knowing to support self-authorship within the individual learner. Here, the larger drama of the profession’s development and how individual educator’s lives had intersected the best and worst of occupational therapy were important factors in constructive developmental pedagogy. Educational practice also seemed to offer faculty a context for continuing to author and cohere sometimes contrasting identities as clinicians, educators, and scholars.

Faculty Biography
In this study, each of the faculty had formative experiences around different and varied issues, both in the context of occupational therapy and in their broader lives. These issues, in turn, influenced the teaching and learning approaches they selected and the transformative vision they held for students. The vision they held for students was more explicitly focused on the kind of professionals they hoped students would become and more implicitly focused on the stances toward knowledge students needed to adopt if they were to become that kind of professional.

For example, Elizabeth, Martha, and Judith each had different formative experiences around the issue of authority. They envisioned students developing into professionals who sometimes shared authority with clients and sometimes held on to professional authority among health providers. These educators implicitly promoted what Kegan referred to as “fourth order knowing” and Baxter Magolda referred to as “contextual knowing.” But the development of these complex epistemologies seemed tethered to the key issue of authority traced back to how each
The Epistemological Transformations of Occupational Therapy Over Time

Kegan used his theory of self-authorship as an analytic tool to examine the evolution of society over time. I came to believe that the theory could also be used as an analytic tool to re-examine the evolution of occupational therapy over time. As a lens on historical documents and scholarship, Kegan’s theory of self-authorship (1994; 2000) offered a novel understanding of the intellectual history of occupational therapy. Through this perspective, it appears as if the profession may have developed different emphases in and languages for its practice, education, and knowledge over time, but its epistemology or way of knowing remained fairly stable at third-order, leaving the profession incapable of self-authorship until recent decades. The founders of occupational therapy were prominent thinkers in the pragmatist-functionalist philosophy prevalent in the early twentieth century and thus placed fourth-order epistemological demands on the young profession. That is, they challenged practitioners to take as object not only the concrete actions of practice, but also the larger systems of thought by which the profession was being
shaped, including the general philosophy that gave rise to occupational therapy, the inquiry process by which occupational therapy’s science was being developed, and the generalizations being made about why helping people to be meaningfully occupied was a therapeutic agent (Meyer, 1922). However, perhaps because occupational therapy’s emphasis from the beginning was on getting people engaged in concrete activities of living, historical accounts suggest that practitioners were able to take the concrete practices of the field as object but remained subject to the philosophical, scientific, and gendered systems by which its practices were being constructed, reflecting a dominant pattern of third-order knowing in the field (Serrett, 1985; Shannon, 1977). Third order knowing seemed to prevail into the mid-twentieth century as reductionistic medicine became more prominent in health care and the majority of practitioners remained subject to how the field was being co-constructed with medicine. In practice, therapists seemed to merely substitute one set of abstractions about why treatment activities were effective for another, still not taking the abstractions themselves as object: a reflection of the continuance of third-order knowing (e.g. Reed, 1986).

In more recent decades, however, evidence of transformations from third-order to fourth-order knowing can be detected. Occupational therapists have on a larger scale come to challenge formerly taken for granted abstractions about practice. For example, for many years it was often taken for granted that improving body function, such as strength in the arm, leads to improvement in the performance of meaningful activities, such as getting oneself dressed. Bringing the abstraction into view, reflecting on it, taking it as object, scholars revealed its co-construction with the biomedical community and thus its “…adherence to a hierarchical view of order, disorder, and change” (McLaughlin Gray, 1998, p. 355). Taking the abstraction as object, therapists can break from previously held assumptions and self-author practices that instead reflect the influences of intrapersonal, social, cultural, and temporal contexts on human activity (e.g. Trombly, 1995, 1995b; McLaughlin Gray, 1998). Kegan suggested that as one is able to reflect critically on guiding abstractions and the co-construction of identity with others, which only becomes possible in fourth-order knowing, those abstractions and identities can be re-authored, thus making self-definition possible. Therefore, I suggest that recent developments in the field are at their core epistemological transformations, and serve as indicators that a new way of knowing has emerged in occupational therapy that is making new demands of practitioners and educators. Thus as Kegan argued that the evolution of society was at its core a series of epistemological evolutions, each of which placed different demands on citizens’ ways of knowing, this study suggested that a profession’s evolution may also be considered as a series of epistemological transformations making different demands on practitioners’ ways of knowing.

Discussion and Implications

The explicit vision and the implicit transformations that faculty promoted among graduate students did not stand apart from the evolution of ways of knowing in the profession or from how their own biographical experiences had intersected that evolution. Faculty invited students to develop self-authorship around particular issues that in part reflected how faculty lives had intersected the profession. Additionally, teaching seemed to provide a context through which faculty continued to make sense of and author their personal and professional lives.

Therefore, as a theoretical lens on teaching, self-authorship was ultimately limiting. The concept of authoring lives provided a broader frame on teaching practice and theory for this case. Authoring lives afforded a view of the classroom as a site where the ways in which educators had authored their experiences were translated into visions and opportunities for student self-authorship, each with a particular emphasis. In each case, students were prompted as Baxter Magolda described to “to develop simultaneously an ability to construct knowledge in a contextual world, an ability to construct an internal identity separate from external influences, and an ability to engage in relationships without losing one’s internal identity” (p. 12). But self-authorship was further focused around issues important to the development of the profession and how faculty had experienced that development.

Thus, authoring lives helped situate self-authorship in a broader context than the intellectual and intrapersonal development of the individual student. Here, self-authorship was directed in particular ways according to the experiences of each faculty member, what the faculty as an interpretive group felt were the important issues of the field at the time and how the ongoing evolution of the profession was continuing to intersect the life of each faculty.

This study supports Palmer’s (1998) conclusion that learning new techniques, such as those associated with constructive developmental pedagogy, is insufficient for good teaching, specifically teaching for self-authorship. Many educators in fields like occupational therapy enter academia because of a successful clinical career. It is important that the professional development of these educators involve personal explorations into the experiences that shaped one’s journey to teaching, as well as reflection into teaching practice as holding clues to a life being authored within oneself and a life one hopes to evoke within students. The literary term “authoring lives” also helps raise important critical questions about the larger contexts of one’s teaching, namely: Whose “plot” is being
forwarded by the transformations sought among students? Which students are rewarded and which students seen as less successful, even marginalized, by the plot being enacted? Whose vision, power, politics does the plot serve?

References


Finding Voice in a Community-Based Learning Process

Stephen Jeanetta
University of Missouri Extension

Abstract: Community-based organizations are often engaged in learning processes designed to empower the learner to address their own needs and to create social change in the community. Transformation learning is primarily concerned with issues of empowerment and emancipatory learning with social change. Through the experiences of a gender-based community organization engaged in both personal empowerment and social change factors that factors instrumental to their change efforts will be discussed.

Community-based education is a local response to the changes occurring in the world that marginalize people and disconnect them from the values, norms, and customs that are an essential part of their identity. It offers a means of learning that respects those things identified as being important to people and provides an alternative form of learning which helps them grow personally and shape society. This relates to what Paulo Freire (1971) refers to as praxis, people reflecting on the world and its impact on them and becoming active in creating change. Community-based education programs are often closely aligned with liberating or emancipatory models of adult education such as the Highlander Folks School founded by Myles Horton, and the literacy programs of Paulo Freire (Horton & Freire, 1990). Those engaged in liberating or emancipatory models are focused on engaging people at the base of the community in a discovery process that empowers them to create their own change (Freire, 1971; Horton & Freire, 1990). According to King (1989) community-based education should include an aspect of consciousness-raising. Helping people understand and analyze those things happening in their community that are barriers to their own development. Once they understand what is happening to them they can ask who is working on this, what they are doing, and how can I get involved in changing this situation (King, 1989).

Emancipatory learning is often linked to the theory of communicative action developed by Habermas (1984 & 1987) and the process of conscientização (consciousness raising) developed by Freire (1971). According to Habermas, emancipatory learning is the development of self-knowledge. Self knowledge means be able to look critically at one’s own history and biography and look at how that history expresses itself in how a person sees themselves, their relationship to community, and the expectations that society places on them. The work of Habermas has been foundational to transformational learning theory (Mezirow, 1981).

In his seminal work Pedagogies of the Oppressed Paulo Freire (1971) articulated a process of conscientização (conscience raising) that consisted of a establishing a dialogue between the educator and the educando (learner) that was a mutual learning experience. This process of conscientização is an exploration of the sources of oppression faced by the educando and the new understanding that results empowers them to create change in society. This power is manifested in the hope that is created by the struggle to create change and as long as people struggle they have hope that change is possible (Freire, 1994).

Transformational learning theory makes a link to emancipatory models of education through perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1981). Perspective transformation is the process of becoming aware of how one’s assumptions limit their ability to develop themselves and their relationships with others. This new awareness leads to a more inclusive understanding of the world and one’s actions will change to accommodate this new world view. Perspective transformation is based on learners changing their "meaning schemes (specific beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions)," by engaging in critical reflection on their experiences, which in turn leads to a perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991, p. 91). Perceptions are shaped by forces such as culture, language, relationships, and personal insights (Cranton, 1994). Much of the research in transformational learning has focused on the developmental aspects of transformational learning and less on its role in systems change and addressing power structures (Taylor, 2000).

Inglis (1997) attempts to clarify the nature of power, defining it within the context of a system where individuals make the distinction between individuals empowered by the existing system and those struggling for freedom by changing the system. In the latter case personal transformation may actually be a problem for some individuals because unless the system changes there are few ways to fully realize the personal power they have developed for themselves through their personal transformation. Inglis argues for a differentiation between empowerment and emancipation noting empowerment is about developing individual capacities so that people are

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able to be more effective within the power systems in which they find themselves and emancipation is a process of analysis, resistance, and struggle to change power structures.

Community-based education programs often operate programs of individual empowerment but may also have social change as part of their agenda. Through their educational efforts they often utilize emancipatory models of education to facilitate change, sometimes structural change, in their communities designed to end the forms of oppression that affect many of the marginalized people in their communities. Yet the realities of everyday life are such that those involved in these change processes have to confront the realities of living within the structures they face while at the same time working to change them. Often empowerment strategies that help make people more secure in their present circumstances within an oppressive system are necessary in order to develop the capacity of those who would work as agents of change in an emancipatory process. While Mezirow (2000) has argued that transformational learning is a mechanism for creating social change we don’t seem to know much about how a transformational learning process that results in personal empowerment translates into the kind action at the community level that results in social change.

In this paper I will explore how a community-based organization negotiates the space between personal empowerment and creating change in the community through the experiences of WomanSpirit, a gender-based community development corporation engaged in both personal empowerment and community change. WomanSpirit has been engaged in a community-based learning process for the past 10 years they call the Circles of Hope. Circles of Hope is an emancipatory learning model based on the Leadership Support Process (LSP) developed by the National Congress of Neighborhood Women (NCNW). LSP is a dialogue process designed by women for women to “ensure that grassroots women leaders and their professional partners have raised their consciousness as women and can support and empower each other as they work in local communities” (NCNW, 1993, p. 25). WomanSpirit has taken LSP and made it their own by incorporating some of the concepts of Hope and Timmel (1983) Training for Transformation: A Handbook for Community Workers with their own experiences to develop the Circles of Hope process.

This paper is based on research conducted to gain a better understanding of how participation in Circles of Hope has impacted the lives of the women who have participated in the educational process. Implicit in this question is whether change has actually occurred as a result of their participation. Two aspects of this change process are explored. 1) How have the women changed personally? 2) What factors lead to such women assuming the role of change agent in their families and communities? Are there factors in the learning process that facilitates the kind of empowerment that facilitates the transformation of the learners into agents of community change? In this paper I will present preliminary findings based on the experiences of these women.

**WomanSpirit**

WomanSpirit, a not-for-profit, 501 (c)(3), was founded in 1993, by LaDoris Payne Bell. WomanSpirit is a community development and education organization, located in Jennings, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis. The organization’s main concern is the development of women. WomanSpirit has focused on engaging women in a community-based learning process called the “Circles of Hope”, a dialogue process used for personal growth and community development.

WomanSpirit has participated in peer exchanges, dialogue programs using the Circles of Hope process, with other grassroots women organizations and has been involved in addressing national and international development issues important to women. The women from WomanSpirit are able to speak about their experiences as African American, low-income women, in St. Louis, and offer it as testimony in a wide array of international forums where low-income African-American women had not been heard before. As a result of these exchanges they able to incorporate some important concepts into their own development practices. In the process they developed their own voice and a greater understanding of the importance of their voice in shaping the society in ways that benefit the women in their group. LaDoris Payne-Bell, the executive director of WomanSpirit, articulated this phenomenon when she talked about the importance of voice for the poor.

It’s a known fact that when you’re talking about welfare reform or food stamps that you need to get some poor people at the table. But when you start talking about things like State budgets and policies that impact the poor it’s not as apparent that anyone needs be at the table so equipping people to be part of public agendas, public dialogues, and public policymaking I think is a very important part of change (L. Payne-Bell, personal interview, January 9, 2004)
Circles of Hope

The Circles of Hope is a learning process developed by WomanSpirit designed to help women find and use their voice so they can articulate the issues that have the greatest impact on the lives of the women who participate in a Circle. The Circle helps women, explore and understand the issues affecting their lives, develop plans to address these issues and provide a support system that makes it possible for women to try out new ways of doing things for themselves and their families that are productive and healthy for them (Payne-Bell, 1998). The Circles of Hope is an educational process that focuses on empowering women to make educated choices about the important things affecting their lives and their families.

The Circles of Hope process is designed to complement existing programs and resources serving families. It provides a flexible, adaptable, and community-based method of communication and problem solving. Because Circles of Hope integrates issues of peace and justice with the lived experiences of those affected by violence, the specific contents of each group’s agenda is determined by the needs of the families who are members of that particular group. (Payne Bell, 1998. p. 7)

The Circles of Hope process is also one of social transformation. Through this educational process women are able to empower themselves to address the issues affecting their own personal development and transform their families and communities. When asked whether or not she saw their organization as a “change agent” in the community, LaDoris Payne Bell, the executive director, said “we change people and people change communities… so yes, I see us as a change agent” (personal interview, January 9, 2004). The three main aspects of the program are social support, education for action, and organizing for change (Payne-Bell, 1998). These three elements of the Circle work in tandem to create a safe environment for learning that supports the work of the women. Circles are fluid with some being formed for one or two sessions focused on a specific problem or project and others can have many sessions and are designed to address an issue or provide mutual support over time.

Methodology

This study will be conducted using a qualitative research process based on a case study analysis. Seven women involved in the Circles of Hope of process were interviewed. Cases have been developed that profile the experiences of each of the seven women. The case studies provided the basis for a cross-case analysis used to see what can be learned by looking across the cases and begin a theory building process based on the experiences of these seven women.

The women are all members of WomanSpirit and have been part of the organization for at least three years. They have participated in multiple Circles of Hope processes but individual participation rates vary based on the length of time associated with the organization and each woman’s perception of what their role was in the process. Six of the women are African American and only one is less than 50. Three of the women are not regularly employed living on disability pensions, two are regularly employed, one is retired, and one is partially retired and working part-time. Some have spent time on welfare; others are single parents or grandparents raising children. Some are well educated and others have little formal education. What they share as a group is a commitment to working part

This project used qualitative research methods for gathering and analyzing data. Case studies are useful “to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved” (Merriam, 1998, p.19). A case study approach offers an appropriate framework for conducting and analyzing interviews, because it provides a framework that focuses on exploring the experiences of individuals (Stake, 2005). In this kind of framework, it is possible to look at a person’s own interpretation of his/her reality and experience. In order to gain an understanding of the process and its impact on the women who participate in the Circles I looked at how place, process, people, and social structures work together to create a learning environment that facilitated the changes desired by the participants.

Interviews were held at the Imani Family Center, the facility owned and operated by WomanSpirit. They conduct most of their dialogues and other programs at this facility. Each subject was interviewed once for approximately 90 minutes. The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and was transcribed verbatim. I took approximately one hour after each interview to record or note my perceptions of the interviews, documenting what I saw and felt as well as key participant comments.

At this point in the research the preliminary coding has been complete and what will be discussed are preliminary finding based on the initial reading and coding of the data and the post interview notes. A cross-case analysis was employed to see what kind of themes emerged by comparing across the cases. It is a methodology that allows for examining, identifying, and highlighting similarities and differences across cases that share a comparable
profile regarding the area of analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The case studies themselves will not be presented here, instead what will be discussed are findings based on a preliminary analysis of the patterns emerging across the cases.

**Preliminary Findings**

The experiences of the woman at WomanSpirit offer some important insights about transformational learning, developing voice and creating change in the community. A preliminary analysis of the data reveals the following factors as important to both personal empowerment and creating community change. They include place, faith, focus, systems of support, and ownership of the process. These factors are interrelated but illustrate how it’s possible for a group of low income women to empower themselves and engage in a variety of social change activities.

The place is important because it provides a safe place in the community and serves as the only public space for people to meet in their community. There is a definite sense of power that comes from ownership of the place that translates into additional capacity for development. They have committed their resources to securing a place that is theirs because they felt that they needed a place in the community where they lived and worked where they could be safe to do whatever they needed to do. There are no other public places for people to gather meet in their community and they see themselves as providing an important public service.

It’s an ideal place for a woman or a man…We saw a need for a place for all kinds of women. It wasn’t just black women. We all had different colors but we all had some of the same problems just our skin was different. Once we started having our circles and finding out we all had a commonality.

The Imani Center provides an environment in the community where the difficult work of addressing issues of change can occur. They all talked about how they felt when they were there; it is cozy, comfortable, spiritual, relaxing, rejuvenating, never negative, and serene. Most of the women interviewed are deeply religious and they take comfort in the fact that the place used to be a convent.

It fits us, we changed it to reflect our interests and who we are and as we walk around we can see ourselves in the place.

The women take great pride in that the place belongs to them; is paid for, and reflects who they are as women and members of the community. As someone who has been an observer of this group for a number of years, I also have seen how the place creates an environment from which they can engage with other members of the community on their own terms. This is important because when people from other groups, organizations, businesses, and government, join them in a dialogue at the Imani Family Center WomanSpirit is the host and has the opportunity to represent themselves in a way that reflects what is important to them and this is not always possible in other venues.

The space adds to their learning capacity by creating a sanctuary for these women to develop their own voice. Learning in a community-based education context is a discovery process (Mason & Randell, 1995). It involves people developing skills and values based on their experiences and those of their community. It is a process of finding voice. “Coming to voice is not just the act of telling one’s experience. It is using that telling strategy to come to voice so that you can also speak freely about other subjects” (hooks, 1994, p. 148).

Faith plays an important role. First, most of the women have a strong religious faith that is a strong part of who they are. So much of what they discuss in terms of transformation and change relates to their faith relationships. Connections to church are very important but the nature of that relationship is changing. Two of the women talked extensively about how they are active members in their own churches but work as volunteers at other churches because they feel that there is a need in these other churches for the talents they have to share. This type of interaction is unusual in their community and is transformational in that they are intentionally building bridges across faith communities that they believe will change how the churches relate to one another. In describing her involvement in another church that’s not hers one of the women said:

I don’t know if I would even have done that if I didn’t have a wider screen (view of the world) because traditionally you don’t belong to one church and then you go over here and work at another church. I stepped out there because I just see a bigger picture. I really see a bigger picture now and it is unorthodox and I probably would not have done it before but because I have learned in the circle you’ve just got to go where the need is. If there’s something you can do to help you got to stop letting barriers be a reason that you don’t.
Another aspect of faith is a very strong belief that if they keep working on things—doing the best that they can—things will take care of themselves. This is very important because it sustains efforts well beyond what many would consider feasible and this impacts their capacity to create societal change because they operate from a different set of values. Several of the women described the many different roles they play in the broader community. They often value that participation over their own needs and make decisions not based on what they need but on whether or not they can contribute.

Virtually all of the women discussed how the process has helped them focus. Several mentioned that before becoming involved in the Circles process they were often unable to make choices regarding how to respond to specific situations that would arise. The process has helped them focus on what is important and they have used the Circles process as a way of sorting out those things that are important from those things that serve as distractions making it possible for them to respond in ways that are good for them.

It has really helped me become more focused. It was critical because I don’t work a traditional job and because I don’t work a traditional job it is more important for me to be focused now because in a job you can just get up and go…some of the things I have learned here have helped me stay focused in my business so that I can make money and pay my bills.

The women live and work in an urban environment and are susceptible to the multitude of stressors that are inherent in living in an urban environment. Kapel and Daley (2004) note that the multiple stressors in the urban environment that generate many different disorienting dilemmas challenging the promotion of transformative learning. During the past eight years the women in the group have undergone several ‘disorienting dilemmas’ including health issues such as strokes, depression and cancer, loss of employment and constantly changing economic security, separation and/or divorce, and death in the family. The women credit the process with helping them develop the capacity to focus on those issues that are important so they can develop action oriented responses. They believe that they have many of the answers they are seeking and the dialogue process helps them to sort out what is really important from that which is merely a distraction.

The developmental aspect of the Circles of Hope provides a place for the women to grow at their own pace. Support makes it possible for them to get through the issues of the day, gives them hope that if they continue the struggle they will create change, and connects them to other resources in the community.

The circle makes you pull things out of you that you really don’t know you’ve got… We always support each other. When someone had a death in the family we were all there, when someone gets sick we are all here. Whatever it is…it gave me the ability to think of other people other than myself. Working with the different groups has been a heck of an experience that you can’t pay for.

Support can take a number of forms but it’s the support that makes it possible for them to reach outside of their reality and become engaged in broader societal issues that may impact them or the people they care about. For example, access to healthcare is an important issue in their community at this time and was discussed by several of the women. Circles of Hope provides a forum for understanding how changes in Medicaid affect them individually and as a group. It is through their personal stories and those that they hear through their network that they develop an understanding of how changes in Medicaid affect them. They have responded by creating a network of relationships with various service providers that help them get the necessary resources that they need. The system is too vast and complicated for any one of them to negotiate on their own so they benefit from the experience of others.

The women believe that their testimony is an important element missing from the public dialogue. They use the Circles of Hope as a means of informing others involved in healthcare oriented programs and as a group they are engaged in dialogue with other nonprofits, universities, and networks to educate policymakers about how the current system impacts their lives as low-income African American women. They believe their experiences can inform policymakers about the current state of the health care system and how it impacts low-income African American women. In this way they are able to use their learning process as a tool for personal growth and transformation, developing their own voice as low income women, as well as a method for engaging in social change.

WomanSpirit is engaged in several networks including the National Congress of Neighborhood Women (NCNW) and Grass Roots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS International). Active participation in these networks have exposed the women to a wide variety of perspectives that they otherwise would not have experienced, engaging in dialogues with important leaders from around the world who are shaping the future of gender-based development issues including Wangari Maathai, founder of the Greenbelt Movement in
Kenya and 2004 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Monika Jaeckel, founder of the German Mothers Center Movement, and Sangetha Puroshthaman of the Rural Women’s Network in India.

I have never been helpful outside my little circle…friends and family. I never ventured too much outside that circle. Being over here…all kinds of groups of people come over here…and I have connected with many people outside my own circle that I wouldn’t have otherwise.

Each of the women I interviewed spoke of the importance of these and other exchanges. They expressed feeling part of something larger than themselves. As a group they have traveled and exposed themselves and others to different cultures and perspectives on development. It has had the effect of not only changing how they do things but helps them understand how what they do in their community is important to others around the world.

They learned the importance of the environment and the pursuit of principle centered development from the Greenbelt Movement. They have created a peace garden that connects them to the natural world. They learned about the importance of public space for women from the German Mothers Centers. They Imani Family Center is modeled in part on what they learned from the Germans. The concept of ‘hot money’, came from the Indian women. Hot money is money that is controlled by the women and doesn’t subject them to someone else’s agenda. What they contribute to these dialogues is their process and their insights on what it’s like to be poor in America. When discussing what makes their process special they all start off the conversation about who they’ve been able to meet and how that’s shaped their perception of themselves, the world that they live in and how they can make a difference.

References
Transformation on the Ground in Sri Lanka: Just Who is Transformed? Tales From the Inside/Out and the Outside/In

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Abstract: The central question posed but far from answered in this paper is: To what extent do transformative learning theories provide a system of ideas to examine participatory research (PR) and empowerment projects in a developing country, particularly in the aftermath of the Tsunami global tragedy? Further, the descriptions of the project’s four model villages in Sri Lanka attempt to place the reader “on-the-ground” with the intention of stimulating consideration of this question and accompanying ethical dilemmas inherent within PR.

This paper describes a participatory research (PR) project encompassing a capacity development program and advocacy skill building initiative that actively engaged the expertise and resources of three units at a large mid-western university with extensive field experience in university-NGO collaboration: the International Programs Division, the Adult and Higher Education Program, and University Resources for Women. The overseas partners were four prominent women’s non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Sri Lanka: Agromart Foundation, Centre for Women’s Research (CENWOR), Sarvodoya Women’s Movement, and the Muslim Women’s Research and Action Forum (MWRAF). The initial major goal of the grant project, titled Grassroots Organizing by Women or GROW, funded by the US Department of State, Office of Citizen Exchanges, was to stimulate and build the capacities of the leaders of four selected women’s NGOs in Sri Lanka to face new challenges and opportunities for strengthening women’s participation in grassroots democracy within the context of a multi-ethnic society. Within two months of the inauguration of the project, the four NGO partners developed an implementation structure through which each organization focused its energies on a single rural “model village.” In each case, the NGO partner selected a village in which basic survival needs remained largely unmet, especially access to potable drinking water. Two of the four villages include Sinhala, Tamil, and Muslim residents and the other two villages are home to only the Sinhala majority.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The project methodology was participatory research (PR). Perhaps the most empirical of all research methodologies, one of the major problems facing those who embrace PR is to discover the thematic collective in the particular experiences. We posit that although describing this collective is an easier task in the Sri Lankan context than is true in a far more individualistic western context, it is still enormously difficult requiring intense reflection on praxis across cultures that are often inscrutable to western mindsets.

PR, as Gajanayake (2001) noted, has evolved from three primary epistemological roots:

- An anthropological research approach where being an insider to the process is critical
- Paulo Freire’s ideology of consciousness-raising
- Action-oriented research – putting new insights into practice in a spirit of discovery and experimentation

Consistent with these roots is the notion that the roles of both the researcher and the researched are operating out of more equitable power relations and that the possibility of knowledge production is distributed across these roles (Cunningham, 2000). However, the co-principal investigators for this project, although highly compatible, have different histories, experiences, and motivations. Findings are shared from a combined perspective including that of a highly experienced (groundbreaker) participatory researcher (Jaya), who was born and raised in Sri Lanka and moved to the US as an adult, and that of a US born “advanced beginner” (Laurel) in terms of participatory research and international adult education.

In PR, as the power shifts from researcher as expert/authority to the participants as holders of indigenous knowledge, the iterative progression of problem definition, formulation of research problems and questions, and discovery of solutions takes place through dialogue among the participants, researchers included. Building on the
work of Freire, Gaventa (1988) noted, “[PR] attempts to break down the distinction between the researchers and the researched. In the process research is seen not only as a process of creating knowledge, but simultaneously, as education and development of consciousness, and of mobilization for action” (p. 19). In this way, the personal question facing the participatory researcher is not so much one of asking, how good am I at doing research? But one of asking, how good am I at participating in collective knowledge production, consciousness-raising, and taking action? The latter point, taking action, presents a seriously troubling ethical dilemma for participatory researchers, especially for those involved in projects where the non-residential researchers can leave at any time. There are many heady moments in the field - particularly when working in a developing country. It is preposterous not to feel the intensity of human misery. But what are the researchers’ roles in action planning and implementation? How do participatory researchers resist the temptation to raise expectations and over-promise what they will not be there to deliver; or worse, put in motion actions and events that will further aggravate the circumstances of their co-learners lives? These are the primary “research questions” that must continuously guide those who practice PR.

**Key Principles Underlying GROW Project**

As mentioned earlier, the GROW project was directed at enhancing civil society in Sri Lanka through empowerment of grassroots women to enable them to participate in the decision making process in their communities. At the beginning stage of the project the Sri Lankan NGO leaders along with field staff described the key principles that should guide the GROW project and integrated them into the total project process. The key principles were:

1. Gender empowerment through group action (solidarity building) and strengthening team spirit.
2. Harnessing inner potential of the group to face challenges.
3. Local capacity building and leadership development to solve community issues.
4. Community ownership, responsibility and commitment.
5. Consciousness-raising for creative problem solving and decision making on community issues.
6. Community needs identification, prioritization, and planning.
7. Mobilization of local resources for stimulating local development.
8. Partnership building with other stakeholders.
9. Multi-sectoral integration at the community level (holistic development).

Careful scrutiny of these nine principles as they have informed work on the ground reveals numerous elements of Dirkx’s four-lens taxonomy of transformative learning theories (1998). Strongly rooted in Freirean pedagogy, PR created the conditions for participants to reappropriate knowledge “about them” and transform it to be knowledge produced by them. In identifying their own needs and then learning to locate the resources to meet them, community members of the four model villages materially and symbolically constructed different lives for themselves.

The model village residents have renarrated their experience of working with local government officials and, in one village, several young women are preparing to run for local level elected positions in the near future. Daloz’s developmental model of transformative learning (1986) speaks to the narrative as a powerful change strategy. In terms of the local languages, both Sinhala and Tamil (Sanskrit-based languages) have approximately twice as many characters in their alphabets as English. Further, both languages’ verbal forms/structures are quite different from their written forms. Conversations among the project participants were rich with stories, metaphors, poems and proverbs. Most of the workshops have included a “cultural event” evening completely initiated and organized by the participants during which they acted out skits portraying what they were learning and improvised songs that described their interactions and accomplishments.

Public gatherings such as community meetings often begin with lighting the oil lamp and always include time for reflection on the last gathering (a sort of verbal minutes), as well as reflection and a “note of thanks” at the end. These rituals honor the community time, provide public venues for their narratives regarding community issues, problems, and progress, and serve to separate individual family time from community time in a way that brings in a spiritual quality. Dirkx, (1998) has described the role of imagination and expressions of transformative learning occurring through feelings and images. For example, visioning better futures in the model villages were developed through intense small group work and shared through rich descriptions that accompanied intricate drawings on newsprint sheets depicting before and after scenes of the villages.

Mezirow’s (1991) elaboration of perspective transformation presents the most challenges for application to this South Asian context. Even his later expansion (as cited in Baumgartner, 2001), fails to capture the community
construction of new perspectives as opposed to validation of individual change. However, Mezirow’s work has been helpful to Laurel in providing a theoretical lens for her experience of being the western outsider.

Sources of data include copious field notes, interviews, photographs, video clips, aggregated results of iterative needs dialogues with leaders of the four NGO partners and representatives from the villages selected by the Sri Lankan partners, personal reflections of the two field researchers, and consultations with the US Embassy-based Program Officers for this project. Data analysis, defined in PR as, “the group collectively defining the major problem and its parts and visualizing a scenario where the problem is solved” (Collins, 1998, p. 156), took place throughout the two-year project and involved many stakeholder groups from the rural village residents to the national cabinet level, the Minister of Women’s Empowerment and Social Affairs.

Findings

The findings are presented as they relate to the two major project objectives: capacity building for the rural women of Sri Lanka, and advocacy. The latter objective was fully articulated nine-months into the project (through iterative community-based dialogs) as a commitment to draft and submit a declaration to the national government for greater political representation of women at the local, provincial, and national levels. This occurred at an international symposium held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on June 8, 2004. Over 150 people attended it from model village residents to Members of Parliament, including a brief appearance by the Prime Minister.

The many data sources noted above provide rich descriptions of the defining moments identified by the rural residents of each of the four model villages; the actions the villagers took to enact their visions; the villager’s responses to local government officials; and local elected official’s reactions to the villagers’ actions as they became increasingly determined to set their own destiny. In addition, these actions and events are described within the context of highly unstable national politics, tenuous cease-fire agreements, stalled peace talks for the more than twenty-year old civil war in Sri Lanka, and of course, the Tsunami.

Modern history records that Sri Lanka endured 550 years of colonial rule under, first the Portuguese, then the Dutch, and finally the British, ending in independence in 1948. Those outside Sri Lanka consistently characterize the current conflicts as originating from ethnic clashes, but when Sri Lankans speak for themselves they describe them as class/economic at heart stemming from the lack of employment opportunities for Sri Lankan minority groups (Tamil and Muslim), conditions that began under colonial rule.

Karenvila, Galle District

Adjacent to the southern coast, this hilly settlement of 260 families was developed about 10 years ago to relocate refugee families from various war-torn areas. Although it is populated by a majority of Buddhist Sinhalese, it is an atypical Sri Lankan community because these are first generation settlers who do not reside in a multi-generational family context. Further, about 60 families are comprised of widowed mothers with two or three children, having lost the fathers to the civil war.

The GROW I Project’s lead NGO, Agromart, has been active in agriculturally related income generating training and micro-lending in the Galle District for over a decade and selected Karenvila as their model village for several reasons. First, Karenvila was aptly described as the “poorest of the poor” by NGO field staff, there had been negligible intervention from the NGO sector, and the Sri Lanka government had essentially abandoned the resettlement efforts leaving this community in a sorry state with unfinished housing and completely inadequate drinking or bathing water sources. Second, what struck Agromart leaders and field staff was the attitude and energy of the villagers. Despite extremely difficult living conditions, participation at early community meetings was high and a half dozen parents emerged early as community leaders who were eager for change. Nearly three years later, Karenvila has come to the attention of the national government as a model for grassroots empowerment and local leadership development. The villagers have made four significant infra-structure improvements by organizing the projects, locating the resources, and volunteering the labor to: 1) fill and grade an area for a play field that also serves as a weekly market area, 2) regrade paths and walkways throughout the village so that they can now be accessed by at least motorcycles or “three-wheelers,” 3) build a much more conveniently located well for drinking water, and 4) build a large community bathing well. In addition to these community-wide projects, most of the

1 Two of the model villages are comprised of nearly 100% Sinhala majority (Karenvila, and Pitiya), one village is primarily Tamil speaking with about equal populations of Hindu and Muslim residents and a small number of Buddhist (Sinhala) speaking residents (Udayapuram), and one village (Pompekele) that is truly multi-ethnic with about one third of the residents belonging to each of the three ethnic groups.
families in the village now have kitchen gardens, compost bins, rain-collection equipment, and some form of income generating activity. Non-existent waste management at the start of the project has morphed into an avid recycling strategy. Footpaths around houses that were strewn with trash are now terraced, planted, and free of debris.

It is important to stress that the GROW I project was not a development grant and funds could not be used for much of anything other than training. The villagers have learned to negotiate with local government authorities, local elected officials (after the one in office at the start of GROW I sabotaged a project, he was not reelected), locate information, technical, and financial assistance, and organize their own volunteer labor groups. These very skills suddenly were called upon as major life-saving resources for Tsunami victims on the southern coast, just a kilometer away. Karenvila’s drinking well was the only fresh water source in much of the Galle District for about three days after Tsunami. The villagers transported it to the coast by every means possible. They were instrumental in organizing the immediate clean-up and burial, taking over 300 of the deceased to bury in their own village. They have also taken in many displaced families and orphans and assisted in community trauma care.

Villagers described their daily lives prior to the GROW I project as comprised of two primary activities: carrying water and napping frequently. Although many still have to carry drinking water, it is much more accessible and reliably clean. Napping has been replaced by the hum of productive activity throughout the village. Of all their accomplishments, the community bathing well has given them the most satisfaction because it has become the heart of the community – the latest news is shared there first and, they noted, “The best ideas arise from refreshed minds and bodies.”

Pompekele, Ratnapura District

The Ratnapura District is known for gem mining; its central municipality named Gem City. Many of the male residents of this multi-ethnic village are sporadically employed in the gem mines or lapidaries. As gem veins are depleted and workers are laid off until new sites are opened, alcohol and drug abuse (smoking a home-grown marijuana) have been major contributors to domestic violence. This district is also geographically compromised due to natural and man-made factors that result in certain parts flooding semi-annually during the monsoons. As difficult as the terrain is in Karenvila, it is much worse in Pompekele making treks from one part of the village to the small hamlets that tend to flood almost impossible. Sarvodoya Women’s Movement selected this village in part because it is multi-ethnic. Other factors taken into consideration were the acute needs and, like Karevila, the spirit and energy of the residents. Pompekele’s search for a “defining moment” or project around which the community members could harness their energy, develop their leadership skills, and set direction was not as straightforward as it was for Karenvila. Instead, after several small projects such as cleaning up and refurbishing a community swimming area, storms and flooding completely destroyed the home of a villager. This loss galvanized the community and they began the process of negotiation, locating resources, and volunteering their labor to rebuild this house in a much more stable manner. Further, given the location of this particular dwelling along the footpath the village children take to go to school, the decision was made to turn this house into a “community kitchen” of sorts. Now this resident has an income-generating project of making small food items, which the children can buy on their way to school. Not only did the community care for the family by replacing the house that was destroyed, they were able to supply a useful service for the children that would, in turn, provide income for the woman and her family.

A bigger project the villagers have taken on, creating footpaths that are actually usable, has required them to communicate extensively with the local government administrators (staff, not elected officials). Getting attention and resources for these types of improvements in rural villages in Sri Lanka is enormously difficult. The highly centralized bureaucracy is comprised of layers and layers of officials that must consider, approve, and sign requests. Often rural villagers become resigned to their local conditions and don’t even try to bring about change; when they do – it can be an endlessly frustrating process. Through PR, these villagers have discovered their voices and negotiating power. Several very significant construction projects are underway.

This village has also formed a “neighborhood watch” group to deal with some of the social problems around alcohol and drug abuse. Given the multi-ethnic population, this initiative has been very slow to develop and has encountered resistance. Although the villagers acknowledge that the watch group has been instrumental in clearing certain gathering places where these activities took place openly, some villagers report that the problem has not been eradicated, it has just moved elsewhere.

There is scarcely a person in Sri Lanka who has not been affected by the Tsunami in some way but Pompekele’s south/central and inland location experienced little direct impact. However, like all Sri Lankan’s, they have responded generously by volunteering, taking in displaced families, and sharing food, water, and funds.
Udayapuram, Ampara District

The Muslim Women’s Research and Action Forum (MWRAF) selected Udayapuram in the Ampara District on the east coast of Sri Lanka as their model village. This village is located adjacent to the Ampara District Hospital, which employs many of the village residents for cleaning and washing tasks at microscopic wages, resulting in the village residents living as indentured workers. Because this source of work is present, more life-sustaining income generating activities have not been pursued perpetuating a truly vicious cycle of debilitating under-employment. Contributing to this cycle is the unresolved civil war, frequent incursions on the cease-fire agreement, lack of employment options for Tamil speakers, and a constant threat of mutilation or death from the Liberation Tamil Tigers (LTT) to those who appear sympathetic to the Sinhala majority. Imagining much greater misery than living under these circumstances is nearly impossible but post-Tsunami conditions, which include miles and miles of utter destruction punctuated with “Tsunami Camps” assault the senses and wrench the souls of even the most seasoned community development field workers. Further complicating the situation for Udayapuram is that it takes at least ten hours of bone-rattling travel to drive the 150-mile distance from Colombo to the east coast. Laurel was actually making that trip on the very same day that Bill Clinton arrived neatly in 30 minutes by helicopter. Unlike Karenvila and Pompekele, Udayapuram’s remoteness from its sponsoring NGO leadership, makes frequent training and support extremely difficult.

This Tamil-speaking village comprised almost entirely of Hindus and Muslims has truly struggled with PR. Despite early signs of success in setting up a community garden cooperative and a Montessori school, they have not been able to sustain these projects. There are some significant power struggles among the rural women leaders and one woman in particular has been identified as “acting just like an elected official,” meaning that she is corrupt, plays favorites, and has undermined the community spirit and collective action of PR. The possibility exists that this women has become the scapegoat for village angst but the evidence suggests otherwise.

Like Karenvila, Udayapuram is adjacent to the coast but sufficiently inland (about one mile) to have escaped physical destruction from the Tsunami. However, most village families lost numerous extended family members and have opened their homes to refugees, related or not. Similarly, they participated in the initial clean up and buried several hundred of the deceased in their village. There was no time to respect each religion’s particular traditions with respect to burials and sacred rituals. To stem the spread of disease the residents of Udayapuram buried victims quickly and, if the victims were unidentified, they acknowledged the burial with sacred elements from Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist practices. Although this pragmatic approach may appeal to the western mind, it has become the flashpoint for enormous local criticism. Essentially, in the immediate aftermath, all three ethnic groups on the east coast responded compassionately to anyone in need. Tragically, as the national government and LTT compete for the upper hand in distributing aid on the east coast to curry favor with their constituencies, the initial spirit of cooperation has deteriorated.

Despite these extremely difficult and disheartening circumstances, MWRAF’s leadership, field staff, and a handful of village leaders who emerged from the early GROW I workshops are regrouping. The chair of MWRAF, who is also the chair of GROW II’s Core Advisory Group (CAG), Jezima Ismail, is a very prominent Muslim woman who is highly respected throughout Sri Lanka for decades of grassroots to national level development work on behalf of all Sri Lankans. She will be splitting her time for the foreseeable future between Colombo and the east coast, with a special emphasis on Udayapuram. Jezima has enormous influence at the national level and is a media favorite. Her power is evident in that when foreign governments want to deliver aid with strings attached that disempower Sri Lankans, she turns her back on the aid knowing that, in short order, the donor nations will cut those strings and deliver purely humanitarian relief.

Recently, Jezima reported on a meeting that took place right after Tsunami with a very conservative group of Muslim men who were offering substantial financial assistance to the Ampara District on the condition that the Muslim women who lost their husbands in the Tsunami observe the lengthy mourning period by wearing the burka.¹ The typical attire for Muslim women in Sri Lanka is the salwa kameez with a matching scarf as a head cover – lightweight, washable, modest, and appropriate for this equatorial climate. The wool burka poses substantial health risks from heat and lack of washability. In her indomitable style, Jezima got the aid without the conditions. She is equally effective at the grassroots as she is at the national level, completely comfortable is using local language customs and habits, and has even, as she reported, “stayed in practice with chewing betel leaves” so that there is no power distance between herself and the villagers. To interact with Jezima is to have an unwavering model of a participatory researcher who has not a shred of doubt regarding the transformative learning potential of all people. Udayapuram residents and NGO field staff could not have a better advocate.

¹ The fact that this group of Muslim men would even meet with Jezima Ismail speaks to her influence.
**Pitiya, Monaragula District**

South of the Ampara District and further inland, the Sinhala majority mostly populates the Monaragula District. In many ways it is an ecological disaster zone, where over-zealous foreign sugar cane production has completely disrupted the soil and water conditions rendering this area as the most impoverished (prior to Tsunami) of the four model villages. This village was the most unaffected by Tsunami of the four but, in this small country, no one was left untouched. The GROW I Project partner, Centre for Women’s Research (CENWOR), chose Pitiya as a replacement model village for their first selection, which was actually washed away during monsoon flooding in May 2003. CENWOR has a slightly different partnership role in the GROW Projects as it is really a non-profit women’s research institute rather than a field-based NGO. It partners with other NGOs to collaborate on action research projects that benefit women in rural villages. Another factor that sets Pitiya apart is CENWOR’s introduction of computer technology and the Internet as means for connecting the remote, nearly inaccessible villages of the Monoragula District to the rest of Sri Lanka and the globe. These technology-based initiatives were already in place when the GROW I project began. As a result, the local women leaders came to project workshops with a well-developed sense of empowerment and direction for the future. This group of about six women has dealt with some power struggles among themselves, but they are the most politically active of all the rural women participating in GROW I and will definitely be running for local offices in the upcoming elections. Given the ecological problems facing this district, government intervention in this highly centralized country is the only solution. These women have made a courageous decision to become politically active. They have and will be subject to verbal and physical violence in the political context but they are not naïve and have the spirit and energy to proceed.

**Post Tsunami Note**

We are inspired by our Sri Lankan partners, particularly the greatly enlarged and multi-ethnic NGO coalition made possible by the second grant (GROW II), in their ability to conduct community needs assessments, distribute aid, and provide trauma care. That a coalition of NGOs with diverse memberships and missions could not only maintain but strengthen communication and share resources in the immediate aftermath of the Tsunami is remarkable.

**Just Who is Transformed? Conclusions and Contribution to Adult Education**

In reflecting on the ethical dilemmas that reside within PR, particularly for the non-residential researchers, the differing life histories of Jaya and Laurel, and the immense need of the Sri Lankan rural villagers to regain some sense of hope and control of their lives post-Tsunami, reconciling transformative learning theory and experience on the ground in Sri Lanka in some sort of evaluative manner (in either direction) seems a futile exercise, at least right now. Although we admit, prior to our most recent month-long in-country project work (mid-May – mid-June, 2005), attempting such an analysis made sense. We are, however, especially indebted to Kathleen King (2003) for her post 9/11 exploration of transformative learning from tragedy. In that paper, King asks, “One can wonder what was different with this event [9/11] compared to other crises?” (np). Loss of life, destruction, and indeed, shift in the earth’s rotation, all as a result of Tsunami dwarfs 9/11 by several orders of magnitude. But, the quest for understanding transformative learning need not be a game of one-upmanship. We agree that the extent to which the current theory base describing transformative learning includes creating meaning from tragedy on a global scale seems an appropriate question, if somewhat out of our reach given our recent experiences. Although there is an intense desire on our part to share “lessons learned” (and there are many), doubts and questions are on our minds. A more useful contribution to the field of international adult education and transformative learning theory at this time may be our troubled thoughts, ethical dilemmas, problem posing, and reflection/dialog regarding our border-crossing experiences.

**References**


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1 For complete details on GROW I and GROW 2 please see, http://www.niu.edu/srilankaproj/ and http://www.niu.edu/grow2/


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Abstract: When adult students transform their life onto the written page they embark on a process of revisiting, reflecting, and reconstructing their past; and then of revisioning a possible future. Based upon research into the written narratives as well as the experience of having written, a case is made for autobiography’s power to bring new light to the past and to deepen the author’s view of self and the world.

Autobiography as Transformative Learning

In *Father & I: A Memoir*, author Carlo Gébler (2001) revisits the past—the events and relationships of his life as well as the process of becoming the thoughtful witness of his life. Drawing on the metaphor of “Vertigo,” from the move of that title, he describes how the main character, played by James Stewart, relives a past scene at a later time only to see those past events in a different, more accurate light. Gébler observes that writing our life similarly brings the possibility of viewing events from a different perspective, this time with an understanding of and insight into what had happened. Writing can lead to healing. He observes at the close of his memoir, “You can’t change the past but, with understanding, you can sometimes draw the poison out of it” (p. 405).

My own experience with the power of putting pen to paper came some years ago, when, as an adult learner at midlife, I experienced a shift in my perspective of events in my life in the course of a writing project for a class on adult development. Given a choice of topics, I wrote a highly charged and personal narrative recounting a shattering event that hurled me, as wife and mother, from kitchen to career and on to subsequent doctoral study. Up to the point of the writing I had been still attached to this event, still occupied and compelled by it. But once I wrote about it, I was done with it. Once the experience was relived and revealed, its power was lost; and I let it go. As Gébler concluded, writing does not change the experience, but it draws some of the poison out of it. This experience convinced me of the worth of writing about our life. Writing our story changes us; it brings happenings to the surface; it highlights moments and situations; it brings these to conscious awareness; in Kegan’s (1994, p. 293) words, it places us “in grave danger of growing.” My belief in the power of story led me as an educator to draw on autobiography as a method in my teaching. Throughout the past decade students in my graduate and continuing education courses have been given the option of writing their autobiography as an elective final assignment. The format is always the same—“Imagine that an editor has invited you to write five chapters of your life story. What would be the titles of your chapters (what quality would you give them)? Now write two to three pages for each of these chapter titles.”

I have been struck by the facility of these students to write about themselves in a language so different from that of their more formal assignments. I have discovered their capacity to overcome challenges and adversities that rarely surfaced in class. Seeing so much personal expression and reflection in each autobiographical paper led me to expand on its use in a variety of courses; it also inspired me to undertake research to explore students’ experience of this sort of writing. This paper reports on this research; on the basis of the content of selected individuals’ life stories and the findings of follow-up interviews with one group of writers, I explore how writing stages our life in two acts: what we live through and what we learn.

Research Design

This research into autobiography is approached as an interpretive inquiry that draws out the meaning of lived, personal experience. It entails a subjective process of exploration, reflection, and interpretation of the autobiographies I have been collecting from those student writers throughout the past decade. Writers were invited to participate in the study, which required returning their written autobiographies to me (which become part of the data); and one group was asked, in addition, to engage in a follow-up interview. Because I was teaching both in the United States and on various military bases throughout Europe, I was able to collect the narratives of students at various sites, including Canada, where I was guest teaching from year to year.

My approach to the narratives of my students is psychological with respect to adult development and transformative with respect to learning. Within this framework, I begin with a process of reading, reflecting, and
sifting through the many autobiographies in order to uncover particular intentions, themes, problems, or questions. I look closely at where the writer’s story began, what background experiences and events have shaped his or her life, what turning points have presented themselves either from within or without, and what choices have been made at these points. I then select individual narratives and study each as an extended case, paying close attention to each writer’s choice of title for both the autobiography and each chapter contained, and I try to tease out the overall motive or purpose of the writer. I examine also the style, structure, and content of each. I have reported some of the findings of the research in earlier papers (Karpiak, 2000, 2003). My approach has surely been shaped by my own education, which has included the study of psychology, sociology, social work, and more recently adult education, including adult learning and development. It is likely no accident that my very first paper as a doctoral student in a class on adult development spilled out the force of my own crisis in adulthood that had changed the direction of my life in ways I could have neither predicted nor envisioned.

Research Findings

Writing their life story prompts students to revisit episodes and eras of their life, to explore past events and to reflect upon and draw meaning from them. The opportunity presents also to redefine aspects of their self and to restructure their sense of self; and finally, in their final chapter to consider their future and how they are to live. In the following paragraphs I briefly explore each of these aspects and consider them as moments in the process of transformative learning and growth of consciousness.

The Revisit

If you, the reader, were to imagine having your own assignment of writing five chapters of your life, no doubt several possible chapter titles would immediately surface—a move, a marriage, a choice, a loss—signal events, turning points, eras or circumstances that shaped your identity. Similarly, when students return to the site left behind and look back on their life, often for the first time, they delve into the events that have shaped their life—cultural and geographic dislocation, family breakups and parental departures, childhood nurture, and childhood abuse. Some revisit the turning points that have presented significant challenges either in their education, work, or their personal life. They recollect efforts to adjust to life without father or without mother, and to fit in to their new schools or surroundings. By their chapter titles they highlight turning points, icons, and catalysts, as in, “From the Himalayas to Halifax,” “The Diverted Dream,” and “Baseball, Cops, and Blood.” As one writer recalls, “as you are writing you are editing, you are thinking of all the incidents that relate to why you are writing, what you are writing and what your actual feelings are…”

One writer, Angelina, establishes her “revisit” through the use of a unique structure—the “narrative present” (Lejeune, 1989). Writing from the perspective of a woman about to give birth to her first baby, in her narrative titled, “Looking Backward,” she returns to selected scenes of her life, beginning with the sunny kitchen of her grandmother’s home on a tiny Caribbean island. Writing in the voice of a child, she is once again the little girl, who is beside herself with joy and excitement over the delightful news that her mother is coming for Christmas, “I attend the M. Secondary School and am in the sixth grade. As far back as I can remember in my twelve years of living things have always been the same.” She falls back onto the narrative present at various times throughout her narrative, especially when she is recounting a memory of intense feeling, of either pleasure or pain.

Years later, now a soldier in the army, she determines that her continuing idealization of home is standing in the way of her moving forward, so she resolves to return to the place of her birth. The chapter, “Going Back,” describes her painful experience. She wants desperately to stay connected to her family and to this place, but she has changed in ways that they have not. She has become disciplined, determined and goal directed. Panic sets in, and as before, is expressed in the narrative present voice:

….if I do not belong here I am in great turmoil because I do not fit in anywhere else. ….I will admit I am scared. This trip is not turning out to be what I thought it was going to be. I almost regret coming back because I now realize no matter how much I desire it I can never go back. I can only move forward and [the Island] is a fond memory and that is all, it is just a beautiful memory, which I will always treasure.

This use of the ‘narrative present’ continues its compelling effect. Here her narrative structure becomes even more complex. She goes back in time, switching seemingly effortlessly between past, present, and future present in what Lejeune (1989) calls the “indirect free style.” She takes the reader back again to the past, and then writing in the present, imagines the future, and her feelings about what is about to happen. I am struck by the complexity of this structure, by one who has likely not even written anything like this before [Does she know her own capacity to write?]
The Reflection

As writers revisit episodes and eras of their life, they delve more deeply and reflect upon them, drawing meaning from them, trying to make sense of their own life and of life in general (Karpiak, 2000). For most, the process of reflection, of looking back over their life as though it were another’s, is perhaps the most significant from the point of view of their learning. Events are mulled over, some in isolation and others in relation to the whole story. Parents, teachers, and loved ones are portrayed, not only in descriptive terms, but also with respect to their influence in the shaping of their life. Dreaded events spill out for scrutiny, success and failures are assessed, and insights are gained. This process affirms experiences, connects them, looks at cause and effect relationships, explores consequences of certain events, and for some brings a sense of order to experiences.

The signals that learning has happened most often show up in the last chapter of their life story, where the various insights and new understandings are articulated. However, the actual process of this reflection seems to occur throughout each narrative, and perhaps Leann’s structure exemplifies this. Her learning is evident throughout the various paragraphs; as she writes, she learns. In an unusual “voice of reflection,” which these she announces through the use of a different font, she interspersed her story with observations and new understandings, commenting on her life and her own nature, dialoging with her narrative as though it were written by someone other than herself.

I remember my father coming home with bubble gum in his pockets on Friday nights and comic books on Saturday. In his perfect imitation of Donald Duck he always read the comics before we were allowed to. *Funny I thought I had worked through all this many times over on the counselor’s chair but here I sit once again the child, stomach in knots, tears flowing down.* At that time of my life tears never flowed, big girls didn’t cry and I was my daddy’s girl a perfect fit for the box he created.

Leann writes of herself as she writes to herself. She uses her autobiography to engage her own reflections on the self that is described by her self. It is as through she were doing an analysis of herself. [Could it be that others are also doing this, but not actually bracketing this process down as she has done?]

A second structure of the reflection centers on the metaphors that individuals use in reference to the patterns of their life. The metaphors, “from puppet to dancer,” or “the icons of my life,” or “the barren fields,” are most revealing and are strong indicators of the reflective mode. One writer chose to print her chapters on sheets of different color, graphically illustrating the diverse periods of her life. She introduced and outlined them in this fashion:

*When I look back on the significant events of my life--those that have led to real learning--I see color. For example, images of my childhood are surrounded by a soft shade of rose, much like the color of a pale, sparkling blush wine. For that reason, the theme, or through line, connecting my five chapters is color.*

In subsequent interviews students acknowledged the value of going back and dissecting their life, and in the course if it, discovering more about themselves. One student described the writing as, “A process of unraveling, pulling [my life] in a bunch of pieces and then putting it back together.” Students indicated an ability to put things into perspective, to balance their positive and negative experiences. One student recalled, “For me it was enriching because I was at a point in my life [when] I needed to take a step back; I needed to look at my life in order to move forward.”

The Reconstruction

Writing their story motivates students to think more deeply about themselves, and to consider what they have come to know, either about themselves or others. Some begin to see the past in a new way, now noting something different in it that was not seen before. Others articulate their new understandings about their own actions and those of others. For some, writing offers the possibility of validation and self-acceptance. As one student, as she considered her past behavior, remarked, “In retrospect, I played the role of the innocent. I believed tomorrow would always be there.” They make observations about the past and about life in general, “The lessons I learned were through pain or loss—very much like life.” For still others, focusing on their accomplishments becomes a confidence building experience. Several students resolved, as a consequence of their writing, to move forward and get started on their educational and career goals.

Through their narratives some writers confront their past and relive and reveal even the unspeakable, the “uncanny” in their life (Karpiak, 2003). The writing appears to affirm and legitimize what they have gone through.
and gives it a distinct quality or character. For instance, Susan titles her autobiography “Patterns of My Rope,” and she organizes it through the metaphor of “knots.” Her story proceeds through the tightening of the knots within her family, through an exploration of the character of these knots, and finally, to having them come “Undone,” the title of her last chapter. In the subsequent interview, Susan characterizes the writing process as painful and emotional, yet necessary. Writing her story entailed looking backward and then looking forward, integrating her past life with her future. In her words, “because I knew [the autobiography] was important and that I needed to do it, so [it is] almost like to help give me some kind of closure to a stage in my life, and to look back in order to look ahead.”

Writing the unsayable can foster resolution, healing, and closure to the experience. Ginny exemplifies this shift from the opening to the closing of her narrative. She opens her first chapter, “Loss of Innocence,” with the following lines: “the cold steel edge of the razor pressed against my fragile wrist as a willow thin reed of blonde hair fell forward to hide my reflection in the bathroom mirror. Would I have the courage to do it this time?” Her story ends with an affirmation of healing:

The emotional healing process took many years… small steps… great leaps of courage. But today when I talk, whether it is on retreats, or to a room full of legislators regarding the societal affects of incest and child abuse, I can truly say that I am healed… I survived…and I have broken the chain of abuse.

In subsequent interviews writers reveal that through the course of writing their story, they are able, not only to move to a place of greater reconciliation--to draw the poison out, but also to know that they have arrived at this reconciliation.

The ReVision

Author, Nuala O’Faolain’s once observed, “A memoir may always be retrospective, but the past is not where its action takes place” (2003, p. 52). As the student writers come to the end of their chapters, now understanding more about their life and the way in which events have shaped their identity, they most often turn their eye to the future as the place of their action. From this perspective they articulate a possible vision for a future for themselves and for close others. They resolve how they ought to or want to live, to what they aspire as professionals, the sorts of things they want for their children, what kind of partners and friends they hope to become, in what way they intend to serve others, and what they hope to leave behind. More specifically, some vow to embark on further study; and some highlight the importance of taking personal responsibility for actions, for making personal choice, and of doing not only what is expected, but rather what is right. They express their awareness of the universality of many of life’s problems, issues, and concerns. And finally, they affirm the preciousness of life. And whereas their actual actions in this regard cannot be predicted, their heightened consciousness and intentionality would suggest that they have been somehow changed and that this change will find its expression in their world. In her interview and commentary on the effect of writing her autobiography Lisa reveals the power of writing to clear the path for further action:

I realize how important it is to do what is right for you, not just what people expect of you. I think that one of the things that came out of my writing; it was completely examining my life and whether of not this is the kind of life I want to lead.

Discussion

Autobiographer as Weaver of Ones Life

In his book, titled Threads of Life, Richard Freadman (2001) introduces the metaphor of the threads of a weaving to characterize human life and similarly, the writing of one’s own autobiography. He writes, “threads are a powerful metaphor for some conceptions of free will: we are the weavers, and through creative acts of consciousness, we essentially create ourselves” (p. 17). Freadman adds a further note: in autobiography the weaver is the one whose life is being weaved, whose image it the one being created on the weaving; and remarkably, where each step of the process arises from what the weaver has previously cast into thread. Similarly, as student writers sit down to write their life they do the work of gathering the threads of their life together so that a pattern of that life emerges on the page. They, too, become both the subject and the object of their craft. And as their life patterns become revealed, these, too, undergo an alteration in the life that continues. As O’Faolain (2003) earlier remarked, “A memoir may always be retrospective, but the past is not where its action takes place” (p. 52). One student noted precisely that: describing the memory of past experiences as a “landing site,” he wrote, “. . . you develop from that landing site. You sort of use that to go on to the next point. You use that to build your next landing site.”
The Autobiographer Steps Into the Light

Turning again to the opening theme of Gébler’s “Vertigo,” it may be evident that for these students writing their life story reflects elements of vertigo. Events that were previously slightly distorted become revealed in greater detail and complexity; and more aspects and elements of these events become defined and related to one another. Through bringing events and experiences to awareness and composing them as a narrative, these writers engage in a process that heightens their awareness of their “autobiographical self,” and, through it, their growth of consciousness. The significance of autobiography to the growth of human consciousness is advanced by the work of neuroscientist, Antonio Damasio (1999). According to Damasio, the “autobiographical self” is the ‘organized record' of our life: our place of birth, our needs and desires, our typical way of coping. Accordingly, autobiography, through its reactivation and display of the systemized memories of situations and events of that life, would serve consciousness as it evolves over the lifetime. Through consciousness, we gain the capacity to solve various sorts of problems; and through consciousness we develop a concern for others and capacity to improve the overall quality of our life. Damasio likens becoming conscious--of bringing to consciousness what has previously been unconscious and of becoming know to ourselves--as to stepping into the light.

Autobiography as Transformative Learning

Deborah Britzman (1998), who brings to education a psychoanalytic perspective, describes education as, "a psychic event," charged with emotion in which the subject, who is the learner, meets the object that is the knowledge. When education is viewed as psychoanalysis, it reminds one of “the psychic creativity of selves: how the self crafts its meanings of the self in the world, what these meanings do to the psyche, and what the psyche does to these meanings” (p. 10). Britzman reminds educators of “the vulnerabilities, fragilities, and capacities for learning” in each individual, and that education involves the exploration of the “otherness of the self” in the service of human development. Britzman’s approach would support autobiographical writing as a method for the advancement of self-knowledge. In this case, the subject (the writer) becomes also the object of the knowledge (the writer’s experience). When one learns from the event (of autobiography), where there is both engagement and attachment to the knowledge, the learner gains insight, which, in turn permits one to alter and craft oneself.

Transformative learning in adult education shares some features of psychoanalysis, since here, too, adults engage in a process of critically examining and revising the cultural and personal assumptions and meanings that underlie and shape their view of life (Mezirow, 2000, 1991; Brookfield, 2000). Its function is to permit a more inclusive, differentiated, and integrated view of individuals and their world (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow (2000) asserts, “Our understandings and beliefs are more dependable when they produce interpretations and opinions that are more justifiable or true than would be those predicated upon other understandings or beliefs (p. 4). Boyd and Myers (1988) describe the process of discernment, which leads to “personal illumination,” through bringing events into a more complex relationship. These authors identify also the three activities of discernment: receptivity, recognition, and grieving, that, in turn, may be viewed as corresponding to the student writers’ processes of revisiting, reflecting, reconstructing, and revisioning.

Autobiography Stages Life in Two Acts

Just as in “Vertigo,” these student writers’ story comes in two acts: what happened, and what they understood. Having lived their life forwards, they can now turn to understand it and to comment upon it backwards. They revisit sites of childhood (virtually every student writer does). They reassemble the various random events and experiences into an order or pattern of connections and meanings, and they give these a name through their chapter titles. They acknowledged beginnings that had shaped their lives, choices made that determined their life course, and roles they played that defined or limited their freedom. They reconstruct their sense of self through working through the pain and loss (once again), and some “draw the poison out of it.” Finally, they envision a future for themselves and close others--what they might tell their children, what task they could now embark upon, and how they would relate to others. Most individuals demonstrate, albeit to varying degrees, that through the course of writing their stories they had deepened and enlarged their view of themselves and the world around them. In the words of Janet Mason Ellerby (2001), whose own memoir transformed her life:

Constructing a narrative can engender personal transformation. If we are to subvert Freud’s conclusion that we are lived by unknown and uncontrollable force, if the past is destiny, then narrating the past can give us a way of liberating ourselves from it (p. 73).
References
Contrasting Transformative Learning
From the Perspectives of the North and the South

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Abstract: The concept of transformative learning has been a topic of research and theory building in the field of adult education. The purpose of this paper is to examine the contrasting perspectives in transformative learning from the perspectives of the developed countries of the North, and the developing countries of South. The paper aims to analyze and contrast the works of Mezirow (1991) and Rogers (1969) because of their discussion of transformative learning in a more personal and individualistic perspective to those of Freire (1970) and hooks (1994) who approach transformative on a more social and collective context-based perspective.

Introduction
The paper is an attempt to build upon the theoretical perspectives on the process of transformative learning. The focus is an examination of the contrasting perspectives in transformative learning as viewed in the North and in the South. By North I mean all the developed countries of North America and Western Europe characterized by their significant degree of industrialization and their standards of living, including health, education, housing, modernization, and slow population growth (Hardiman & Midgley, 1982). The South refers to those developing countries, many of which are situated in the Southern hemisphere, that lack most, if not all, of the characteristics mentioned above. In those countries the average annual personal income is low compared to that of the developed countries. The economy relies on a few export crops, and farming is conducted by primitive methods. The South is also characterized by rapid population growth. The paper attempts to understand the use of transformative learning from both perspectives and establish educational relationships that help learners and promote transformative learning in their context.

Since first introduced by Jack Mezirow in 1978, the concept of transformative learning has been a topic of research and theory building in the field of adult education. Cranton (1994) articulated that the theory of transformative learning during the past two decades has evolved into “a comprehensive and complex description of how learners construe, validate, and reformulate the meaning of their experience” (p. 22). Elias (1994) defines transformative learning as the “expansion of consciousness in any human system through the transformation of basic worldview and specific capacities of the self” (p. 3).

This paper aims to analyze the works of Mezirow (1991, 1993) and Rogers (1969) as theorists representing the North because of their interpretation of transformative learning on a more psychological perspective. This approach of transformative learning relates to the perspective of the North because the focus of the theory on the cognitive process of transformative learning rather than acknowledging the social context of the learning process. The paper also discusses Freire (1970) and hooks (1984) as representatives of the South because they view transformative learning in a more social and collaborative (collective) perspective. Their perspective is typical of the South because they situate learners in the context of their social environment and help promote collective empowerment. In so doing, people who work collectively make sense of their world by sharing experiences together and taking actions for positive change in their society.

I am interested in transformative learning vis-à-vis the North and the South because even though there is much to be admired about Mezirow (1991)'s and Freire (1970)'s contributions to our understanding of transformative learning, little research contrasting both perspectives has been conducted. Therefore research needs to continue to provide better understanding of the varying aspects of the transformative learning process.

I begin by discussing the theories of Mezirow (1991) and Rogers (1969) as representatives of transformative learning from the perspectives of the North, followed by Freire (1971) and hooks (1994) as representatives of transformative learning in the South. Then, I draw and analyze the similarities and differences between transformative learning as viewed by the North and the South. Later, I discuss the importance of the issue to the field of transformative learning. Finally, I draw conclusions and implications for further studies.
Transformative Learning From the Perspective of the North

Mezirow’s (1991) transformative learning theory is rooted in writings from diverse fields including philosophy, sociology, neurology, linguistics, religion, and education. Mezirow (1991) uses transformative learning to describe the development of adults’ capacities to revise assumptions, premises, and ways of interpreting their experiences in the world through critical reflection. He frames his discussion on instrumental, communicative, and emancipatory learning, but focuses on the emancipatory domain by claiming that emancipatory learning happens within the domains of instrumental and communicative learning.

Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning is based on the process of critically examining and changing the social, economic, political, psychological, and religious assumptions that for the perspective meaning of the individual. A meaning perspective is the psychological frame reference within which the individual defines himself or herself and his or her relationships. Mezirow (1991) argues that change is generated by a transformation of meaning perspective and frames of reference. He states:

Perspective transformation is the emancipatory process of becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions has come to constrain the way people see themselves and their relationships, reconstituting this structure to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, perspective; and finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings (p. 167).

Mezirow (1991) states that “perspective transformation leading to transformative learning results from a “disorienting dilemma” (p. 168). Such disorienting dilemmas common to normal development in adulthood may be best resolved by becoming critically conscious of how and why our perceptions, thoughts, and actions have distorted the way we define the problem and our relation to it. Transformative learning takes place when people change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously making and implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds.

Mezirow (1991) has conceptualized his theory of perspective transformation in a rather orderly way by dividing it into phases that were created inductively from structured interviews. These interviews were conducted as part of a national study of women returning to college after being away for an extended time. His phases of perspective transformation are as follows:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3. A critical assessment of epistemic, socio-cultural, or psychic assumptions
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation is shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploration of option for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning of a course of action
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and
10. A reintegration into one’s life of the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective (pp.168-169).

From these perspectives of the transformative learning process, one sees that growth is implied after negotiating such a change. Mezirow (1991) argues for an interpretation of perspective transformation that can be linked to adult development. He states that:

transformation can lead developmentally toward an inclusive, differentiated, permeable, and integrated perspective and that, insofar as it is possible, we all naturally move toward such an orientation. That is what development means in adulthood. It should be clear that a strong case can be made for calling perspective transformation the central process of adult development (p. 155).

Some adult educators have argued that the link between adult development and perspective transformation needs to be made more explicit in Mezirow’s theory. Tennant (1995), for example, ties Mezirow’s ideas of meaning schemes and meaning perspectives with normative and transformative adult development. According to Tennant, many life changes seem as if they involve transformative learning, but actually fit with expected life happenings (e.g. changes having to do with moving away from home, getting married, having a child, etc.). Mezirow sees the
role of the adult educator as being an organizer of enlightenment. This notion has been questioned by Collard and Law (1989) who suggest that “this in turn raises questions about the nature of that enlightenment, about its normative dimension, a problem most evident in Mezirow’s discussion of perspective taking” (p.104).

Cunningham (1992), in a review of Mezirow’s book Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning, remarks that Mezirow discusses distinctions between his theory and Freire’s, but that he does not include his own concepts of frame, structure, and paradigm in his model, neglecting the social origins of individual growth-inhibiting assumptions. Mezirow (1991) refutes her statement by saying

Cunningham erroneously suggests that I have failed to acknowledge that these meaning structures are produced by economic and cultural power relationships. However, this rather self-evident point is explicitly made on pages 131-138, where I discussed hegemonic ideology, false consciousness, and implicit ideologies, language games, cultural codes; social norms, roles and practice” which constitute sociolinguistic premise distortions (p.251).

Rogers’ (1969) contribution to the discussion of transformative learning is based on the development of the individual. He articulates that the learner strives toward the wholeness and development of a fully human self. By reflecting on his own experience Rogers finds that self-discovery through reflection is a critical step in learning. However, Rogers’ work relative to transformative learning is limited in that it does not include the relationship of the individual to the group and it lacks any discussion of learning and its relationship to social change.

Transformative Learning From the Perspective of the South

Freire (1970) has made an enormous contribution to the development of adult education in fostering democratic social action and political empowerment (Gadotti, 1994). Freire (1970) developed an educational theory for radical social change within the context of literacy programs which were devoted to raising the level of consciousness of the oppressed and disadvantaged of Brazil and Chile. The concept of his theory is that when people become aware of the oppressive social, economic, and political realities that influence their lives they become empowered in order to facilitate the changes they desire. This is what Freire calls “conscientization.” The emphasis of his emancipatory educational theory, also known as liberatory education, involves the development of critical consciousness and emphasizes education for social change, and social transformation. The learner becomes an actor who challenges the dominant culture and creates emancipatory alternatives on a personal and societal level. Freire points out that there must be a unity of reflection and action (praxis) and that they must go together in order to implement the desired changes in the world. Any education that fosters this approach instead of the banking approach (teacher-dominated, knowledge-deposited education) will lead to an awareness of power imbalances. People will no longer be able to tolerate an oppressive society and therefore, will take action to change the status quo.

Freire (1970) contributes to my understanding of transformative learning processes by offering pedagogical theories and practices that assume learners as subjects of their learning, and who have the ability to change and to free themselves from oppressive forms of influence. Freire’s pedagogical approach creates learning processes that enable learners to develop their critical intelligence to question and reinterpret the way they see themselves and their relationship to the world around them. The educator becomes a facilitator instead of an expert of knowledge. His work is criticized in the light of the current transformative learning theory because of his lack of thinking about a more broad based application of the theory in adult education. This educational theory as it affects social change evolves when working with the marginalized, the powerless and the oppressed in his society. Freire gives little attention to the impact of racial and ethnic differences on emancipatory learning processes.

An African-American feminist scholar and a teacher, hooks (1994), writes about her childhood learning experiences and how those experiences have helped her develop her theory about the relationship between education and social transformation. Like Freire, hooks takes a more context-based approach to transformative learning. Due to segregation, hooks was educated in an all Black school where the mostly black faculty nurtured the intellectual capacities and critical thinking skills of the students to enhance their opportunities “to become scholars, thinkers, and cultural workers” (p.2). hooks interprets this educational experience as one strategy to enact a resistance to the strategies of the white racist colonization. She said: “School was a place where I could (momentarily) forget that (oppressed) self and, through ideas, reinvent myself” (p.3). She relates that this shift during desegregation from an all-Black school to integrated schools created a lost sense of autonomy and empowerment because of racism and “taught me the difference between education as the practice of freedom and education that strives to reinforce domination” (p.4).

hooks (1994) understands the conditions that are necessary to foster emancipatory learning in a learning environment. In emphasizing critical reflection as a process of bringing excitement into the classroom, hooks raises
important critical questions that address the role of rational learning in enhancing transformative learning. She writes about the need to disrupt the atmosphere in the classroom where boredom might prevail. She speaks about the notion of happiness in the classroom and that “there seems to be no interest among traditional radical educators in discussing the role of excitement in higher education” (p.7). While she discusses multiculturalism, hooks points out that it is necessary to “build community in order to create a climate of openness and intellectual rigor” (p.40). However, while hooks critiques traditional approaches, her theoretical discussion is limited by her lack of empirical references other than her own.

Freire (1970) and hooks share the same belief that learning can only be transformative (liberatory) when the basis for knowledge claim is participatory, dialogic, and incorporative of praxis. They both believe that education as the practice of freedom must include the importance of critically interrogating the rules and policies of the social, political, and economic policies and that it is fundamental to the relationship of learning to social change.

Transformative Learning From the Perspectives of North and South: Similarities and Differences

Transformative learning is viewed as a process of learning for change and growth from both the perspectives of the North and the South (Cranton, 1992; Freire, 1970; hooks, 1984; Mezirow, 1991). However, in the North transformative learning is based on a more individualistic approach (Mezirow, 1991) whereas it is a collaborative process in the South (Freire, 1993; Flecha, 2000; hooks, 1984).

Mezirow (1981) and Freire (1987) are both among the first theorists in education concerned with radical approaches to empowerment. Their primary concern is to transform political and social oppression perpetuated against class, ethnicity and race in society. They envision people as confronted with social forces that limit their opportunities. Through consciousness-raising, the oppressed or disempowered people are able to reflect and act within the social setting.

Freire asserts that it is inadmissible to advocate an educational practice that does not value the knowledge of lived experience. He states that the educator needs to learn to become a facilitator instead of an instructor. He states that the “educator must not be ignorant of, underestimate, or reject any of the knowledge of living experience with which educands come to school” (p. 58).

Mezirow’s critics argue that his interpretation of transformative learning theory is significant on a learner-centered, psychological level that fails to situate the learner in the context of his or her social environment (Collard & Law, 1989). His theoretical and cognitive emphasis is different from Freire (1970, 1996) in that he assumes that transformative learning is an individual project disconnected from the influence of social context while Freire emphasizes education for social action. He believes that facilitating the awareness of the forces that shape our life inevitably leads to restructuring our beliefs and action.

Mezirow (1991) shares the premise with Freire (1970) that it is important to develop a critical consciousness that does not block the autonomy of the learning for emancipation and transformative change. They share the idea that the result of critical consciousness is the learner’s ability to be critically reflective. For Freire, developing critical consciousness in the individual has the goal of emancipatory social action.

Mezirow (1991) and Rogers (1969) focus their discussions of transformative learning within a personal development, psychological perspective while Freire (1970, 1996) and hooks (1994) center their discussions within a more context-driven perspective that looks at power relations and social structures.

Freire offers pedagogical theories and practices that assume that learners are subjects of their learning when they are given the opportunities have the ability to change and to free themselves from the oppressive forms of influence. His pedagogical approach creates learning processes that enable learners to develop their critical intelligence to question and reinterpret the way they see themselves and their relationships to the world around them.

Though these authors have different approaches, they share some common thinking about how to foster transformative learning. Mezirow’s theory is centered in individual cognitive processes that can occur in individuals and groups of individuals. Rogers, Freire, and Mezirow share the belief that self-discovery through reflection is a critical step in learning although Freire views a combination of reflection and action in learning as necessary for transformation. hooks discusses subjectivity and relationship as important components of transformative learning.

Importance of the Issue to the Field of Transformative Learning

As previously stated, the purpose of the paper is contrasting transformative learning from the perspectives of the North and the South. It is important to understand the limits of each perspective of the transformative learning process and therefore think about building new theories that acknowledge transformative learning in different contexts. The issue is important to the field of transformative learning because it is important that adult educators in North America understand the cross-cultural issues of international research mainly at times when the United States struggles to understand the larger world outside of itself. Adult educators in the South are also struggling to inform
and educate women and men as they work toward developing empowered communities, not simply empowered individuals. Therefore, the implications for adult educators in the US are obvious because of the growing immigration of those populations into North American communities, schools, and the society-at-large.

For adult educators in North America familiar with the individualistic approach of transformative learning, it is important for them to understand the limits of individual transformation that tends to dominate the literature in the context of the South. Given the increasing globalization of national economies and communication networks, it is imperative that adult educators interested in cross-cultural research understand the need to see problems for study not only through their own life experiences, but also through the experiences of the community-based citizens of the South. Such manifestations of transformative learning raise societal awareness and the consciousness of people’s issues. A transformative learning theory that takes into consideration the social context of learning and focuses on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that people adapt while they work together through the sharing of experiences they acquire as a group in a civil society and the way they use the knowledge and skills to positively change their living conditions would better work for both the North and the South. Such transformative learning involves learners in relationship to their society and the world around them, for as learners expand their capability to perceive the world in a different perspective, they respond to and take actions that engenders changes in their society.

Conclusion and Implications

Adult educators and learning theorists and others have explored and developed processes for transformative learning. Their discussion has brought about psychological and social transformation processes. At the psychological level, learning fosters individual, personal transformation that discusses transformative learning from a personal development, psychological perspective (Mezirow, 1991; Rogers, 1969). At the social level all learning is situated within a social/political context and is therefore related to societal transformation (Freire, 1970, 1996; hooks, 1994). Each of these authors emphasizes different components of transformative learning contributing to an increased understanding of what is fundamental to learning that fosters individual transformation and/or social transformation.

There is a need to explore in-depth transformative learning that promotes better understanding of the varying nature of the learning process and the significance of the context in learning. There is also a need to acknowledge the efforts of adult educators in the South who strive to promote learning that empowers not only individuals, but also communities.

The findings from this research can help adult learners to experience transformation in their behavior and changes in the way they perceive themselves and interact with others in their world. Education for transformation will redefine the role of teachers. This model of teaching helps the learners not only to learn the subject matter, but also to experience personal and social transformation.

References

Ethnoautobiographical Inquiries and the Facilitation of Transformative Learning

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Abstract: Ethnoautobiography is an indigenous-based protocol for decolonizing the modernist self. Its protocol takes ethnic origins (genealogy) as pivotal starting point for critical autobiographical inquiries; it grounds itself in time (smaller and larger planetary and celestial cycles), place (ecology, history of place), history (stories and myths), ancestry, and stories of origin and creation. Ethnoautobiography is moral and politico-historical discourse, enlivened by the subjectivity of the inquirer, as it strives to overcome modern strictures and reimagine a native sense of self-actualization and sovereignty during its transformative learning process.

Deconstructing whiteness entails a profound practice of transformative learning. Critical rational capacities and the symbolic content of the unconscious mind need to be engaged rationally, imaginally, somatically, and emotionally for any enduring transformations. From an indigenous perspective this entails more than, say, unlearning racism, since this is only one aspect of the more encompassing process of decolonization. “The process of decolonization refers to deconstructing colonial interpretations and analyses and includes solutions to problems that are imposed upon tribal peoples through the process of colonialism. Decolonization can occur simultaneously with the process of reconstructing tribal relationships because it displaces colonial thought and behaviour while reconnecting with the alliances of the cosmic universe” (Bastien 2004, p. 151), i.e., reconnecting with what is often called an ecological self. If our concern is with the colonial paradigm (of which supremacist thinking, racism, sexism, etc. are constituent parts), then decolonizing inquiries need to take the history of the modern self and its dissociation from a participatory ecological self into account (“alliances of the cosmic universe” in Blackfoot understanding). The recovery of a participatory paradigm that is qualitatively akin to central coordinates in indigenous cultural practices requires transformative learning that reaches beyond a self-reflective understanding of critical rational capacities and the contents of the unconscious to an ecologically based immanent spiritual and ceremonial cultural practice (Kremer 2000).

Safranski (2003) asks how much globalization human beings can take. He suggests that, in a globalizing world that puts us in touch with more and more reality, sovereignty requires the critical capacity to decide which stories to get involved in and which stories to let pass by. Such sovereignty needs to find its grounding in a self that is different from the abstract self that moderns of the Euroamerican mind take for granted (Cushman 1995, Bastien 2003). Since the historical emergence of this self is part of the development of the colonial paradigm its deconstruction requires critical reflections on assumptions that gave rise to abstract and supremacist self constructions as well as the critical remembrance of knowledge practices from which it disconnected (Kremer 2003). Gergen (1991) raised related questions and states that postmodern persons “exist in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction; it is a world where anything goes that can be negotiated. Each reality of self gives way to reflexive questioning, irony, and ultimately the playful probing of yet another reality. The center fails to hold” (p. 7). The contemporary alternative appears to be between a de-centered postmodern self process and an ecological or indigenous postmodern self process (Spretnak 1997). Asserting the latter alternative and developing the capacity for visionary sovereignty and grounding the center of the self in ecological interconnectedness requires transformative learning not just as expansion of consciousness through the transformation of basic worldviews and specific capacities of the self, but also specifically, in the process, a remembering of lost capacities for interconnections with place, history, and community, i.e., an engagement with an indigenous process of “transforming learning transforming” (Kremer 1997). Autobiographical inquiries that follow the protocol of ethnoautobiography catalyze a critical disengagement from supremacist and colonial worldviews and a critical engagement with the renewal of indigenous perspectives in the colonial centers, thus supporting the work of liberation in the colonies (mentioned by Bastien in the above quote).

The coordinates and motivations for this quality of transformative learning through autobiographical inquiries are:

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The overarching context for ethnoautobiographical inquiries is the decolonization of the centers and the creation of margin upon margin throughout the centers, fissures for the remembrance of tribal origins.

The deconstruction of Whiteness (as eurocentered, hegemonic, colonizing, economically globalizing consciousness) is a more specific context that seeks the end of racialism and identity politics, and their essentialist, and often enough phantastic, notions of origin, hybridity, race, Indians, etc.

In an ecological context this means the remembrance of local knowledge, the province, an indigenist perspective of place and its history that deconstructs the objectification of nature.

In the context of the social world ethnoautobiography facilitates the demise of narcissistic individualism, the emergent modern norm, and resolutions of antagonistic constructions of individual and community; now the inevitable tensions between the two may be catalyzed into an agonistic play supportive of individual vision as well as the multivocality of communal histories; “personal stories are coherent and name individual identities within tribal communities and are not an obvious opposition to communal values” (Vizenor 1994, p. 162); struggles for social justice and equality, la lotta continua, find new frames of reference.

In the context of gender roles it means the deconstruction of bipolar categories serving the supremacy of man and the creation not of a vapid androgyny, but the celebration of a multiformous holosexuality.

In the context of shamanism, the oldest stream of endeavors labeled ‘transpersonal’ by modern minds, ethnoautobiography means the remembrance of the communal cultural context from which visionary experiences and healing stories and ceremonies arise; it facilitates the devaluation of visions that have dollar signs as footnotes and are inflated to comical, yet dangerous proportions.

In the context of the modernist endeavor of transpersonal psychology it means the celebration and incantation of participatory events in ways that deconstruct objectivifying, idolatrous, narcissistic, empiricist and dogmatic interpretations of what appears extraordinary between the blinders of the modern mind. It is within a tragicomedy of pathological epistemological errors that willing mercenary actors seek to satisfy presentday spiritual hunger with various ideological mixtures of fundamentalism, inflation, narcissism, dogmatism and other potent ingredients.

In short, ethnoautobiography seeks to create a space in which indigenous and shamanic notions are no longer presented in a banal imperial parade, but where twisted notions of individualism, transpersonal experiences, nature, gender, and sovereignty can be dissolved with severe humor so that the plural roots of Whiteness can emerge from the shadows. Confronting such multiplicity of indigenous roots can be healing and reassuring, yet the search for true origins is an idolatrous pathology. Uncertainty and ever-changing conversations with visionary presences emerging from creation prevent fundamentalist and dogmatic sales of insurance as tricksters force the hand of reflection and awareness.

Out of decolonizing efforts emerges no certainty of knowledge and self, but the assurance of conversations that nurture. Criar y dejarse criar is an Andean notion of visionary presence, “to nurture and be nurtured,” mirroring the Quechua kauan pachari kawsachkauchik, kawsaynichikunawau, uywaypaqmi wywanakuckkanchik - “at this time we are sharing with all our family relations, we nurture to be nurtured ourselves” (Machaca, 1996; Machaca & Machaca, 1994). The Projecto Andino de Tecnologias Campesinas, PRATEC for short, is dedicated to decolonization and cultural affirmation and embraces notions that nurture the diversity or heterogeneity of life in the ayllu, the community consisting of much more than humans.

What happens between the Andean communities of humans, deities and nature is reciprocal dialogue, a relationship which does not assume any distancing and objectification between those dialoguing, but rather an attitude of tenderness and understanding towards the life of the other. Such dialogue does not lead one to a knowledge about the other, but rather to empathize and attune oneself with its mode of being, and in company with that other, to generate and regenerate life. It is a dialogue ... that leads [not to knowledge but] to wisdom. (Rengifo, 1993, 168, translation by Apffel-Marglin; also Apffel-Marglin with PRATEC 1998)

Ethnoautobiography is a visionary and imaginative process that grounds itself in time (smaller and larger planetary and celestial cycles), place (ecology, history of place), history (stories and myths), ancestry, and stories of origin and creation. It takes ethnic origins (genealogy) as one of its pivotal starting points, since it is central to the construction of White selves – after all, the U.S. White self emerged as a contraption emptied by its severance from
places of origin and its contrast to the ‘wild Indian’ self and the African slave self. Devoid of many of the traditions and attachments the early settlers left behind, the contemporary self, conceived as well boundaried and masterful, is also empty – an emptiness that the forces of consumerism are eager to fill in our globalizing economy (Cushman 1995).

The shadowy, ephemeral nature of encounters in imaginal realms renders certainty hopeless, yet precision is achieved, now and again, now and then, in the grounding encounters with actual bears, mosquitoes, and snakes; with Indian doctors, shamanic literary presences, and card carrying impostors; with colonial atrocities, the viciousness of racism, and the wickedness of economic globalization; with personal wounds, illness, and the treacherous grounds of genealogical roots. Such practice of ethnoautobiography is emancipatory not in the sense of progress, but emancipatory from the paradigm of progress. It is a restorative practice not in the sense of the recovery of essentialized roots, but the restoration of a process of balancing through the agonistic play of nurturing conversations. It creates radical presence.

The autobiographical understanding of Indigenous Peoples is, it seems, automatically and inevitably ethnoautobiographical (or reflective of a sense of self embedded in community). When looking at novels and autobiographies this becomes immediately apparent. Examples are Arnold Krupat’s collections Native American Autobiography (1994), Here First (2000, with Swann), and I Tell You Now (1987, with Swann); or Leslie Marmon Silko’s Ceremony (1977) and Storyteller (1981); or N. Scott Momaday’s The Names (1976), The Way to Rainy Mountain (1969), and House Made of Dawn (1966); or Gerald Vizenor’s Interior Landscapes (1990), Dead Voices (1992), and Hiroshima Bugei (2003). Spending time with Indigenous Peoples has made me aware of the social construction and storied nature of my self, identity, individuality, or personhood beyond the notions developed by eurocentered theorists. This led me to contrast the White modernist constructions of self (a racist enterprise) with qualities that define Indigenous self-understanding. Ethnoautobiography emphasizes an anti-essentialist understanding of self and identity by exploring communal and narrative constructions and presentations of identities.

Arnold Krupat, scholar of Native American autobiographies, has observed that

Native American conceptions of the self tend toward integrative rather than oppositional relations with others. Whereas the modern West has tended to define personal identity as involving the successful mediation of an opposition between the individual and society, Native Americans have instead tended to define themselves as persons by successfully integrating themselves into the relevant social groupings – kin, clan, band, etc. – of their respective societies. On the Plains, to be sure, glory and honor were intensely sought out by male warriors who wanted, individually, to be “great men,” but even on the Plains, any personal greatness was important primarily for the good of “the people.” These conceptions may be viewed as “synecdochic,” i.e., based on part-to-whole relations, rather than “metonymic,” i.e., as in the part-to-part relations that most frequently dominate Euramerican autobiography. (Krupat 1994, p. 4)

That egocentric individualism associated with the names of Byron or Rousseau, the cultivation of originality and differentness, was never legitimated by native cultures, to which celebration of the hero-as-solitary would have been incomprehensible. (Krupat 1985, 29)

Notions of ethnoautobiography and autoethnography, using these and similar terms, have emerged in recent years as part of inter disciplinary courses and classes addressing issues of race, multiculturalism, etc. as well as in the field of literary criticism (e.g., Shirinian 2001; Ellis and Bochner 2000). I define ethnoautobiography as creative self-exploratory writing (or oral presentation) that grounds itself in the ethnic, cultural, historical, ecological, and gender background of the author. Part of such writing is the investigation of hybridity, categorical borderlands and transgressions, and the multiplicity of (hi)stories carried outside and inside the definitions and discourses of the dominant society of a particular place and time. As creative and evocative writing and storytelling, ethnoautobiography explores consciousness as the network of representations held by individuals from a subjective perspective, and brings them into inquiring conversation with objective factors related to identity construction.

The term ethnoautobiography highlights issues of ethnicity. The reasons for this choice of term should already be apparent and will be explored further below; it should be seen, particularly, in the context of the history of self which shows that the modernist or White self emerged using ethnic self-denials. This emphasis is, if we use an indigenous sense of presence for the interpretation of the ethno- part of the word, an umbrella for issues of culture, place (ecology), gender, history, and time. Osage Native Carter Revard (quoted in Nabokov 2002, p. 85) stated that “the ‘wild’ Indian was tied to land, to people, to origins and way of life by every kind of human ordering we can imagine. ‘History’ and ‘Myth’ and ‘Identity’ are not three separate matters, here, but three aspects of one human being.” This is a good illustration of what ethnoautobiography is inquiring about. Consequently, its application
means to inquire about the beginning place (our ancestry or ancestries in the sense of specific genealogy); ethnicity; inquiry about indigenous roots; history of place; gender; place and ecology; culture; origin stories and creation myths; and finally, with encouragement for staunch tentativeness, all this may be woven together into some temporary closure – only to be woven again and again, to be made new in the next telling. In a formal sense the dimensions just listed constitute the protocol or necessary and minimal ingredients for ethnoautobiographical explorations, without them presence in an indigenous sense is not an emergent potential.

Following is a list of sample practices or activities that I have used in the past to facilitate ethnoautobiographical inquiries. In some sense they are all necessary ingredients for such explorations of our narratives of self and cultural identity. Given the complexity of such a process, focus and selectivity is necessary. These are suggestions for creative use that are consistent with the definition I have just presented and they are intended to be facilitative and inspirational, rather than obligatory in the form given.

1. **Family tree:** If you don’t know your family tree, then this is a good time to create one or to review the one you have. Check what you know about your ancestry, family stories, place, migrations, and see how it all sits with you. Track your emotional process.
2. Excellent bedtime reading during times of ethnoautobiographical inquiries are the myths, fairy tales, legends and similar stories from your ancestry or ancestries. It is a good way of immersion before you have your dreams that may help you with this deep work.
3. Read something about the history of where you live now. Find at least one piece that goes back prior to colonization, if colonization is part of the history of the place.
4. Read something on the history of where you grew up or spent some significant time as a child. Find something that goes back prior to colonization, if colonization is part of the history of the place.
5. Read something about the history of your ancestors. I suggest you read standard accounts (available within eurocentered academia) as well as auto-authorized accounts (oftentimes discounted as folklore, etc.). Also look at artifacts, sacred sites, crafts, etc. – they often provide information at least as important as verbal accounts.
6. Read articles, novels, and autobiographies that inspire you for your creative writing. (The syllabus contains a few suggestions.)
7. Keep a diary of your explorations (or focus your diary to include ethnoautobiographical reflections); note your feeling process, note resistances, note blank areas, note questions ...
8. Use your usual tools for spiritual work (prayer, meditation, shamanic journey, etc.) to explore ethnoautobiographical questions in the imaginal realm.
9. Use artwork.
10. Track your dreams.
11. Go outdoors, connect with the place where you live.
12. Go to culturally defined sacred places where you live. And, if you have the opportunity, travel to sacred places that have to do with your ancestry/ancestries or with the history of place.

Ethnoautobiographical inquiry emphasizes the narrative nature of human beings and works to deconstruct essentialist notions of self, other, truth, origin, history, ethnicity, authenticity, colonialism, Christianity, emotion (true feeling), and similar concepts and judgments. This hermeneutic understanding presupposes that we are not unfolding from some presumed true essence, but constitute somatic interactive presences as human beings in time and place – imaginative acts of survival grounded in observation. We are entangled in a multiplicity of stories and carry multiple voices. This, inevitably, leads to awareness of hybridity, transgressions between stories, and experiences of uneasy fits of categorical choices and ascriptions. Neither cultures nor individuals are unitary or monistic phenomena; they carry a diversity of stories, attributions, definitions, histories, etc. that may be incorporated in individuals or between which individuals may transgress or merely digress. Acknowledging hybridity opens up what has been called a “Third Space.” Exploring it “we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (Bhabha 1995, p. 209). Presence arises out of the fissures between polarities or the Ginnunga gap, the creative gap of gaps of the Old Norse peoples, the meeting of fire and ice. The colonization of realms set aside for empiricist governance thus gives way to human presence in the imaginal.

Acknowledging uniqueness and individuality, together with our entwinement in stories and conditions larger than a monadic or individualistic self likes to acknowledge, creates presence. In fact, ethnoautobiographical inquiry can be seen as one of the possible injunctive definitions for coming-to-presence. This is not the revival of something past, but an evocation that breaks open the pathologies of modernity that are in the process of destroying what remains as its achievements. Mutuality, community, historical awareness, and egalitarian politics are among
the conditions in which we can develop practices of embodiment that supercede essentialist notions of authenticity or self-actualization. The creation and creativity of such presence is the confrontation with our current postmodern challenges and opportunities as well as the remembrance of the postmodern condition of indigenous roots. Creative writing and oral presentations are important tools for ethnoautobiographical investigations. They obviate any essentialist understanding of self. As Vizenor notes in conversation with Lee, “the autobiographical narrative must be ironic; otherwise some narratives would be more natural and essential than others” (1999, p. 178). While the need for irony certainly pertains to inflationary assertions of the modernist self, narratives deconstructive of Whiteness and reconstructive of indigenous roots find much of their anti-essentialist telling in their persistent critical stance and honesty regarding the subjectivity of ethnoautobiographical stories and their reconstructive, imaginative evocation of older presences for the future. Amidst pain and tears, laughter at White grandiosities, whether at the grand inventories intent on mooring participatory events in categorical schemata or at the romantic representations of the other, will help to burst narcissistic bubbles.

Ethnoautobiography is not autobiography. By virtue of its coordinates (history, myth, place, identity, etc.) it inevitably inquires into the definitions and discourses of the dominant society of a particular place and time and thus questions them (the German hinterfragen, to question or inquire behind the appearances, provides a good image). It does not merely comply with the matrices offered, but works with them creatively and critically. Ethnoautobiography explores consciousness from a subjective perspective and, importantly, relates it to objective factors – thus it is also a moral and politico-historical discourse, enlivened and enspired by the subjectivity of the teller.

This discourse can be situated using Krupat’s (2002) and Rabinow’s (1986) helpful distinctions between nationalistic, indigenist, and cosmopolitan stances (originally developed to identify ethnographical approaches as well as perspectives on Native American literatures). As decolonizing practice ethnoautobiography engages a conversation of indigenist and cosmopolitan perspectives, i.e., local knowledge, ethnic epistemes, and place as sources of knowledge and value on one hand, and on the other a comparative and critical cosmopolitanism that approaches worldliness, universality, and internationalism in response to Euro-centered supremacist notions. Thus we may imaginatively inquire into self narratives outside the bounds and strictures of “the West” or “the Occident.” Our increasing planetary awareness needs to find mediation in our rootedness, i.e. the capacity to be engaged with the conundra created by our simultaneous presence in province and cosmopolis. It is in this way that we may be able to travel with roots and address issues of sovereignty imaginatively, as, for example, Vizenor (1998, p. 190) suggests by noting in the Native American context that, “clearly, the notions of native sovereignty must embrace more than mere reservation territory.” In his discussions sovereignty appears as transmotion, as vision moving in imagination, as the substantive right of motion. Ethnoautobiography, then, is an imaginative and decolonizing form of inquiry dedicated to the remembrance of sovereignty as motion and transmotion among people of eurocentered mind, whatever their ethnic roots. It hails the end of Whiteness. By narrating ourselves freely and for the sake of freedom and egalitarian knowledge exchange we may overcome pernicious identity politics and constructs that limit who we are as inquirers and storytellers. This is inevitably an imaginative and creative act, yet it needs to find its grounding in various tests and trials. Shamanic skills need to find their affirmation in the results – did healing occur? The imaginal realm needs to find anchors in archaeological, ecological, historical, and other forms of knowledge as well as the critical reflection, ethical and political considerations. Transpersonal or integrative states of consciousness are required to find their affirmations in the various trans-personal domains of ecology, history, myth, gender, and more – domains which consciously constitute individuals who work to see themselves as more than the masterful, bounded self of modernity. This is the imaginal space where indigenous people and their modern significance may meet enquiring White minds to liberate and renew their stories from creation.\(^1\)

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\(^1\) This text is partially based on Kremer (2003).


Poudre Valley Health System: A Transformational Work Environment

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Abstract: An initial, exploratory study is being conducted to try to understand more about the impact that transforming corporate cultures has upon individual transformative learning. This paper presents initial findings. Final study results will be distributed at the conference presentation. Poudre Valley Health System began a culture change several years ago, focusing first on employees. Employees were interviewed who had been in the organization for the past 10 years or more to understand their perspective on the changes in the organization; to assess how they view the authenticity, validity, and the effectiveness of the employee focus; and to try to understand how employees view their own transformation through this period.

Great Places to Work

Creating work environments that are motivating and humane has never been more imperative. The reasons are at least two-fold. First, it is becoming more evident that employees are truly the key to long term organizational success in many organizations, and second, even if that is the case, many workers are still working in inhumane conditions.

In our opinion, corporate leaders in the past have claimed to put employees first in organizations but their behaviors have not been congruent with their statements. Historically, highly competitive organizations have been able to succeed because they had access to resources, knowledge, market share, or technology that others didn’t. Employees may now, however, be the only truly sustainable source of competitive advantage (Pfeffer, 1998). We believe that leaders will be increasingly forced to put employees first in their organizational strategy if not for humane reasons, then in order to succeed. To attract, motivate, and retain increasingly mobile workers is a higher corporate priority than ever, and the key will not be simply monetary incentives, but also creating places where people find meaning, nurturance, and enjoyment in their work (Boverie & Kroth, 2001). For once, the interests of both workers and employers seem to be aligned.

Although research has produced differing results about the relationship of employee happiness to productivity (Cropanzano & Wright, 2001; Sinclair & Lavis, 2001) continuing research shows evidence that organizational climate affects corporate market value and productivity (Ballou, Godwin, & Shortridge, 2003; May, Lau, & Johnson, 1999; Patterson, Warr & West, 2004). The companies that are the best to work for may be more productive than their counterparts (Ballou, Godwin, & Shortridge, 2003; Levering & Moskowitz, 2005). These organizations have a range of qualities that include progressive benefits, flexible work arrangements, career development opportunities, challenging and enjoyable work, and high employee trust (Corporate Leadership Council, 2000; Levering, 2004).

Ballou, Godwin, and Shortridge (2003) found that companies having employees with positive workplace attitudes have higher market values than those that don’t. Boverie and Kroth (2001) use the term “occupational intimacy” (p. 71) to describe a passionate work environment, which has the elements of meaning, enjoyment, and nurturing. Chalofsky (2003) found that meaningful work includes three themes – a sense of self, a sense of balance, and the work itself. Chambers et al. (1998) claim that there is a war for the talent in an increasingly free agent workforce, and that organizations will have to create a successful employee value proposition in order to successfully attract and retain talent. Providing a positive organizational climate seems to be a factor in organizational success, in creating a highly productive work environment, and in keeping employees who have a positive work attitude.

The paradox is that many workers may be, and have been, left behind. The second reason creating healthy work environments is imperative is that many employees have either missed the boat that is heading toward ‘best-place-to-work-for’ work environments, or they find themselves in a work-life balance that simply isn’t. Work for these people may be ‘24/7.’ Their work may come under more constant surveillance than ever before. The way they approach tasks may be more prescribed than before. Counter to transformative learning theory, employee perspectives may be more bounded. The organizational ecosystem may be more survival of the fittest than ecologically conscious (O’Sullivan & Taylor, 2004). Critical reflection may be punished rather than nurtured. Neal
Chalofsky & Mary Gayle Griffin (2005) have described how work lost its meaning when work was no longer integral to life and community. This is a time when many employees are still what told to do and not to think.

The challenge - to find humane work environments - doesn’t seem to have changed that much in many ways since Studs Terkel wrote Working (1974) 30 years ago. His description of work as being “...about violence – to the spirit as well as to the body.” (p. xi) isn’t much different than Barbara Ehrenreich’s graphic description of the ‘working poor’ (p. 222) in her 2001 memoir, Nickel and Dimed. “Guilt,” she says when describing how we should feel about them, “doesn’t go anywhere near far enough; the appropriate emotion is shame - shame at our own dependency, in this case, on the underpaid labor of others.” (p. 221-222). The tragedy is when the people Terkel interviewed described themselves as “caged,” “a machine,” “a mule,” “a monkey,” or an “object,” they could have been talking about many call center, accounting firm, or public school employees today, among others.

Organizational and Personal Transformation

Will transforming organizations into more humane work environments also contribute to transformative learning? Do employees move from less positive work environments to more positive work environments with increased personal agency? Do employees perceive themselves less as objects and more as human beings with subjective worth with positive cultural change? These are questions we wanted to start to explore with this study.

Purpose

Two keys to creating successful, sustainable, healthy working environments are to transform organizations into places that are both productive and humane. They must be productive, or successful, if they hope to obtain the resources and support required from leaders - otherwise they will revert to shorter-term, more punitive work practices; and they must be healthy, if they are to obtain the creative energy from employees.

Organizations experiencing significant cultural change focused on employees might affect employee transformative learning as well. The purpose of this paper is to begin to explore the relationship of organizational transformation focused on creating healthy work environments to personal, transformative learning.

Poudre Valley Health System

Poudre Valley Health System (PVHS) is an example of an organization that has improved its organizational outcome measures by, they say, putting employees first. Based in Ft. Collins, Colorado PVHS has, over the last eight years, improved in measures including mortality rate, patient satisfaction, turnover rate, net revenue, net assets, and employee satisfaction. It has received prestigious awards including being named one of the nation’s 100 top hospitals for superior clinical, operational and financial performance; and received a Magnet Hospital designation in 2000, the 18th hospital in the nation and the first in the Rocky Mountain Region to gain that status. Poudre Valley Hospital (PVH) is the only Magnet Hospital in northern Colorado, Wyoming and southwestern Nebraska, the region that the Fort Collins acute care hospital serves. Poudre Valley Health System was the also the first recipient of the Colorado’s highest award for performance excellence.

Ironically, quality and financial results were the last priorities when PVHS began their strategy eight years ago. Instead, they put employees first on their list, then physicians, then quality, and finally finances. In board meetings, unlike many organizations where employee concerns are discussed last, if at all, corporate culture is the first item on the agenda. In a presentation at the 2005 Academy of Human Resource Development Conference, PVHS CEO Rulon Stacey explained that it took doctors awhile to understand that putting employees first would improve everything, including physician support, quality, and eventually financial health. Today, physicians’ confidence and trust in the administration has risen dramatically.

The purpose of this paper will be to describe PVHS’ transformation from an employee perspective to try to understand how employees view their own transformation through this period.

Methods

Participant Selection

Employees who had been in the organization for the past 10 years or more were interviewed to understand their perspective on the changes in the organization; to assess how they view the authenticity, validity, and the effectiveness of the employee focus; and to try to understand how employees view their own transformation through this period.

Participants were chosen randomly from a database of all PVHS employees with 10 or more years of employment at the company. The final list of 12 employees represented a diverse group of clinical and non-clinical employees, who work a variety of shifts and geographic areas.


Data Collection and Analysis

One hour interviews with selected individuals were conducted and transcribed. An initial, rough view of participant responses has been included in this paper. Final study results will be completed and a paper prepared for distribution at the conference presentation.

Results

Changing to an Employee-Focused Culture at PVHS

The majority of employee responses reflected significant cultural transformation in the last several years. Representative comments include:

I think you have a stronger commitment from the employees, because you feel valued. I think you feel honored to work at Poudre Valley Hospital, because we are a good institution, and they try to do good things for the employees.

I think productivity is up more just because you feel like you’re appreciated.

I felt, I mean, in the past, I just kinda felt like, you know, it didn’t matter, why try any harder. It didn’t matter. Nobody cared. That’s the way I thought. And now I feel they care.

Numerous examples of activities that support an employee-focused culture were described, including rewards and recognition, management presence, accountability, and taking the employee survey seriously.

More than one interviewee did not see significant cultural transformation.

There is a lot of emphasis on the employee but because the hospital and organization has continued to grow, I feel like that’s a much harder goal to reach the more the hospital grows. And so, as they are striving for growth, I don’t know that they are maintaining so much the focus on the employees.

I think that in general they try to do a very good job supporting the majority of critical staff, which is nursing, but I see that there’s probably pockets and (our department) might very well be one of those, that are not so well addressed.

Impetus for Change

By far, the reason most attributed for organizational transformation was Poudre Valley Health Services CEO Rulon Stacey.

I think it started when Rulon Stacey became our CEO. When Rulon Stacey came aboard he tried to get the employees, he could see that employees were very unhappy, and he’s done a lot of changes, he definitely makes you feel like you are important.

Rulon Stacey was the driving force. He is very much the main force for the change. Because that is what he wants. He wants this to be a world class place and he reminds you. And to me world class means world class. You are going to do everything to the best of your ability...He makes you feel like, Okay, I want to work harder because I want people to think of us as world class. And I want it to be like that.

I think that Rulon and Margo have been very consistent about trying to improve their visibility. By doing the employee forums and…rounds, where they are basically just available and check out the force.

Rulon actually came down on a graveyard shift, in our unit, and was walking around talking to everybody, and I’m thinking ‘Oh my God, that’s Rulon. He’s here at night.’ Graveyard shift, we must mean something.

Two people mentioned that the turning point for them regarding Rulon Stacey was the time Matthew Shepard, the gay student who was beaten and subsequently died, was hospitalized at PVHS.
You know the way Rulon handled that, it showed he was a caring person. He was there, I think almost daily, to visit with the kid’s family. He handled the press, you know, kept them away from the family…He basically showed his belief values.

It (the turning point in my belief in Rulon happened) when he did the Matthew Shepard thing. Before that he was always real personal. Then you just saw him (with Shepard) like the vulnerable side of someone, you know someone can be strong and still show some vulnerability. He got emotional about it…it touched him a lot.

Transformative Learning as a Result of Organizational Transformation

Most of the personal changes described by employees were about perceived improved self-worth, attitudes, and organizational commitment rather than transformative learning.

It (the cultural change) definitely makes me more appreciative of things…because I know that what I do at work, they greatly appreciate it.

It really gives you a sense of self-worth a boost, that there’s a company out there that thinks you’re valuable enough that they can offer all of this stuff to their employees, that I do make a difference.

I wouldn’t say it’s (organizational transformation) really changed me that much, although I am really happy with the changes that have happened.

I don’t think there’s been a whole lot (of transformation) in the culture, and I think there’s been some. But again, I don’t think it’s affected me all that much. I feel like I have pretty much the same attitude towards coming to work that I always have.

You probably would have seen some difference in the way I treat other people, I kind of, well, feel like I’m an integral part (of the company).

It’s made me want to try harder. I think part of it is because I want my customers to get the best service they can get.

I wouldn’t say it’s changed me that much, although I am really happy with the changes that have happened.

Discussion

Positive organizational transformation does not necessarily produce transformative, personal learning, though it does appear to make employees feel more worthy, committed, and appreciated. Although employee-focused employee change may result in improved employee satisfaction and other productivity scores overall, not all employees apprehend or are positively affected equally, if affected at all.

A challenge for organizational change catalysts is to reach employees who are not perceived as critical (as nurses are, for example, in this case) as others. Although this data will be evaluated more comprehensively, initial review indicates that transformative learning does not appear to necessarily be a result of cultural change.

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How We Come To Be Who We Are:
International Students' Transformational Journey While Studying in the United States

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Abstract: This study explores the possible connections between the current literature and the educational experiences of four randomly selected international doctoral students of a Midwestern university in the United States. Data were collected through in-depth interviews. In this paper, the interplay between transformative learning theories and issues of international students' learning and living in the United States are addressed, including studying overseas, professional advancement, personal development, and internationalization. Implications for education and practice are also provided.

Introduction
Life has many different phases, as does transformational learning. When international students initiate their adventure of studying abroad, the learning and living experiences are drastically different than those in their homelands. First, they must use the host country’s language to communicate and learn at a university. Second, they need to re-examine and re-adjust their previous taken-for-granted assumptions in order to fit into the host country’s culture, educational system and living philosophy. Because of the challenge of disorienting dilemma, studying in a foreign country situates these international students in an uncertain life transition. Whether it is good or bad, easy or tough, they set their mind to attain their personal and professional goals.

Studying in a foreign country reflects Mezirow’s (1991) belief that transformation occurs when any major disorientation challenges a person’s established perspective. These challenges are painful to the individual. The process of managing these challenges often confuses one’s deeply held values and even threatens his or her sense of self. According to Mezirow’s assumption, the event of studying overseas facilitates international students’ transformation both personally and professionally. In addition, Cranton (1994) proposes that “education leads to changes—changes in the amount of knowledge people have, changes in skills and competencies, changes in the way we communicate and understand each other, changes in our sense of self, and changes in our social world”(p.160). Cranton’s assertion suggests that education fosters a person to transform both personally and professionally. As a result, that person will never be the same. Both Mezirow and Cranton’s notions of transformation indicate that studying overseas involves various unknown challenges to an individual. The outcome of this journey is unpredictable, involving either success or failure.

This paper concerns international students in the United States who leave their comfort zone and begin an uncertain journey of change and growth. The purpose of this study is to explore the transformation that occurs as international students learn and live in the United States. The central questions of this research include: How do international students transform as they study in the United States? What are their disorienting dilemmas? What are the events or situations that trigger any transformation that they undergo? Specifically, how does this process impact students’ personal and professional futures?

Related Research
Research has been done on various aspects of international students, such as motivation, adjustment, self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, academic skills, coping strategies, and learning and living experiences. First of all, language proficiency was found positively correlated with international students’ capabilities of learning and living in the United States. Barratt (1994) and Lam (1997) addressed that adequate English language skills could help international students build relationship with a new community, develop a sense of belonging, and enhance their current self-esteem. According to Coward (2003) and Lin (2002), it could also assist international students to better participate in classroom learning and facilitate their adjustment while studying in the United States.

Secondly, academic skills and coping strategies are critical elements for international students to overcome challenges and difficulties while studying at American universities. Coward (2003) pointed out that in classroom learning international students needed to understand the discussion topics to determine when and how they should participate. This learning process enabled them to develop awareness of cultural differences in presenting their own views, as well as to identify their roles as graduate students. In addition, Roongrattananakool (1999) displayed that the


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language barrier drove international students to choose some very conventional coping strategies. Some approaches involved self motivation and discipline, advanced preparation, activities in improving listening and speaking skills, such as watching television, conscious thinking and writing in English, and frequent consults with advisors.

Lastly, only one study was found discussing the transformation of self and perspective of exchange students studying abroad. Shougee presented the transformation ideas in his study “The Experiences, Meanings and Outcomes of Studying Abroad: A Qualitative Multiple-Case Study” (2000). His research showed that studying abroad fosters students’ self and perspective to transform. In conclusion, these studies indicate that studying in a foreign country involves a holistic learning process of changes and growth.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is based on adult development, international students’ learning, and transformative learning theories. And the main viewpoints are as follows:

- Development is a process, “a process of coming-to-be, a process of moving from its potentiality to actuality” (Reeves, 1999, p. 19).
- Adult students often are in developmental transitions, trying to utilize educational experiences to facilitate opportunity for meaning-making and transformation (Daloz, 1986, 1999; Rossiter, 1999; Sargent & Schlossberg, 1998).
- The outcome of education is both unpredictable and transformational, involving conflicting emotions (Cranton, 1994; Martin, 2004).
- Learning foreign languages and cultures can benefit individuals by increasing employment opportunities and promoting harmony among cultures while allowing them to discover their true professional goals (“Passport to Mobility”, 2001).
- The process of using a second language to learn and communicate involves a process of transforming one’s self identity as well as their perspective (Coward, 2003; Grabove, 1997).
- The process of adult development is also a process of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). This transformative learning experience may actually be a “long cumulative process” (Taylor, 2000, p. 20). Transformational learning promotes changes and the way people see themselves and their world (Clark, 1993; Kegan, 2000; Karpiak, 1997, 1999; & Mezirow, 2000).

**Mode of Inquiry**

Since there are very few published studies concerning the transformation of international students in American universities, an exploratory research method, therefore, was chosen to provide some general information in this area. This method was selected to familiarize the researcher with the potential problem or concept. Subsequently, hypotheses, appropriate research design, data collection method and selection of subjects can be established (Joppe, n.d.).

In this study, four international doctoral students from four different countries and disciplines at three different colleges of a midwestern university were randomly selected. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore the meaning they gave to their experiences of pursuing an American doctoral degree. Each individual was interviewed on two occasions, each interview lasting approximately 30 to 90 minutes. The clustering technique was utilized at the initial interview. Karpiak (1996) proposes that the clustering technique is known in other contexts as “cognitive mapping” and “ballooning” and is originally developed as a tool for creative writing by Rico (1983). Utilizing this technique can help researchers to generate research participants’ images, ideas, feelings, and recalled experiences. In this study the clustering technique was used to introduce the topics to the interviewee to express the significance of completing an American doctoral degree from his/her perspective. A second interview was conducted two to four weeks later for a respondent check.

Data analysis was qualitatively-oriented and followed the guidelines of interpretivism through the lens of transformational learning. Denzin (2001) proposes that “every human situation is novel, emergent, and filled with multiple, often conflicting, meanings and interpretations” (p.46). Interpretivism aims “to understand and interpret the world as it is lived, experienced, and given meaning” (p.55). One element of this study is autobiographical in nature to include myself as a student from Taiwan. My own personal and professional transformation is incorporated. Finally, the possible connections between these interview findings and the current literature were also examined.
Findings and Discussion

The research findings indicate that the research participants came to the United States working on a doctoral degree are concerned about being able to have a better life and career in the future. This aim involves issues of professional advancement, personal development, and internationalization. These issues are defined and addressed with the current literature as follows.

Definition of Terms

With respect to the findings, three terms are defined by the researcher as follows:

1. Professional advancement refers to the advanced knowledge and academic skills in teaching, research, and publication corroborated with professors and experts. The goal of this learning process is mentoring the international students to become marketable globally.

2. Personal development emphasizes a genuine desire of international students to break through the limitations of traditional life styles and incorporate learning with changes.

3. Internationalization is a technical term. Knight (2003) showed that the term “internationalization” was first appeared in Australian and British reports in 2000. It refers to “the blurring of conceptual, disciplinary, and geographic borders traditionally inherent to higher education” (para. 2). He further proposed that “Internationalization at the national, sector, and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” (New Working Definition, para. 3). In this study, internationalization refers to the process of mastering the English language and understanding the American culture. Furthermore, it involves interactions with people from different cultures and different nationalities to advocate wider world views, reduced stereotypes, and improved mutual understanding and trust with others.

Professional Advancement

The research participants point out that professional advancement is the core that leads them to study in the United States. These participants and myself select the United States for its leading technologies. We expect the American advanced professional training to develop our competence. We intend to utilize resources from the American educational system to enhance our knowledge and skills in a given profession in order to brighten our future. This phenomenon reflects both Clark (1993) and Kegan’s (2000) assumptions of transformational learning. Clark (1993) mentions that “transformational learning can occur gradually or from a sudden, powerful experience that will change the way people see themselves and their world (p.16).” Kegan (2000) then points out that “transformative learning puts the form itself at risk of change (and not just change but increased capacity). In fact, transformative learning changes how we know” (p.16). For example, the research participants and myself share similar experiences regarding to how we overcome various challenges and difficulties while studying in the United States. We believe that being fascinated by the respective profession we become capable of enduring all the hardship to carry on our study. Also, being able to learn advanced knowledge and to work with experienced professionals is another important factor motivating us to change and grow. The elements of commitment and appreciation help international students to willingly exchange their original disciplinary mind-sets for new possibilities.

On the other hand, four participants and myself have been in three different professions (i.e., business, science, and education) in our home countries for three to six years. Before coming to the United States for studying, we were at a decisive point of our careers. Our professional developments had already reached the crossroad of whether to take a risk of breaking the boundary to move forward or to remain at the safe ground with an unsatisfied situation forever. With the belief that we are capable of pursuing a better life, we decided to advance our professional competence through completing a doctoral degree in the United States. This accomplishment would enable us to have more choices of a desired profession upon graduation. Reeves (1999) names this phenomenon as a concept of development: “It is a process, a process of coming-to-be, a process of moving from its potentiality to actuality” (p. 19). Daloz (1986, 1999) also points out that adult students often are in a developmental transition and that look of education is to “help them make sense of lives whose fabric of meaning has gone frayed” (p.17). To fulfill the need for professional advancement, international students exchange the comfort zone of home countries for the uncertainty of studying overseas. In so doing, we embark on a transformative learning journey.

Personal Development

The decision to study in the U.S is a challenge of choice by the research participants and myself. This decision also involves a genuine desire to break the traditional life pattern and limitations from our past. We are willing to
adapt to a life that is drastically different from that of our parents and friends. Ultimately, we engage ourselves in a process of transition. The unfamiliar circumstances then force us to critically reflect on our situations and options, as well as culminate in actions according to a changed way of being in the world. Sargent and Schlossberg’s (1988) ideas of transition best explain our lives of studying in the United States. They believe that “whether good or bad, anticipated or unanticipated, transitions provide an individual with the opportunity to ‘take stock’ and ‘take charge’ of life. They are the themes that trigger adults to learn and grow” (p. 23). Their belief accords with Mezirow’s (1991) transformation theory in that “the central process of adult development is perspective transformation” (p. 84). Taylor (2000) further indicates that transformative learning may actually be a “long cumulative process” (p. 19). In fact, transformative learning not only promotes change and also change the way people see themselves and their world (Clark, 1993; Kegan, 2000; Karpiak, 1997, 1999; Mezirow, 2000). These studies reinforce that once we decided to study overseas, our life transitions have already begun and our transformations are also in process. Consciously or unconsciously, as international students, we are shaped daily by where we are and what we are doing.

Furthermore, the research participants describe the obstacles they are encountering while living in a foreign country as international students. There are many academic and personal tasks which need to be dealt with simultaneously. Handling these tasks compels us to become a totally independent person. In other words, we must critically examine and modify our frames of reference or habits of mind for survival and making lives easier. Our life experiences echo Rossiter’s (1999) notion that adult learning is about meaning making and transformation. She believes that “adult learners are experts on their own development” (p. 83). Therefore, studying in the United States helps us not only find ourselves at a time of transition, but we also try to link our learning with changes. We realize where we are in life, what we are doing, and how well we are progressing toward our desired goal. No doubt, working on a degree in a foreign country is a holistic learning process; however, it also helps us to link what we are learning with our personal development.

Internationalization

Two phases of internationalization related to study in the United States were identified from the interview findings as: (1) to develop greater proficiency in English and better understanding of American culture, (2) to have more opportunities for interacting with people from different nationalities and races. The research participants and I believe that the United States provides a gateway to internationalization. Besides the opportunity to polish English as the universal language, studying in United States provides extensive interaction with people from many different culture backgrounds.

For example, the research participants and myself know that studying at American universities allows us to interact with people from different cultures and ethnicities because the United States is a melting-pot of many ethnic groups. People from different countries choose the United States to build their new lives. Many international scholars and students prefer the rich and leading academic environment of United States for study and research. Therefore, we believe that such interactions increase self-realization in a much wider scope with a world perspective. Our beliefs reflect Hinchcliff’s (2000) assertion that differentiation promotes creativity. He addresses that providing different perceptions, orientations, and wisdom can stimulate people to reassess what they do, how they think and what they value. This belief also supports Mezirow’s notion of critical reflection during transformative learning. On the other hand, because of the language barrier and culture differences, participants and myself often find ourselves understanding the English conversation, but fail to interpret the actual meaning. Especially in classroom learning, we have to constantly integrate our growing awareness of cultural differences with our traditional views in order to understand lectures and to actively participate in class discussions. Besides knowing various idioms and jargons, the true comprehension of the language involves understanding within the context of American culture. For example, the expression “What’s up?” does not involve a vertical direction of “up.” Knowing the word “up” does not help clarify the meaning of the phrase. These learning experiences match Coward’s (2003) notion that the process of using a second language to learn and communicate is also the process of transforming one’s self and perspective. He assumes that in classroom learning, international students’ learning experience is moment-by-moment constructed and reconstructed in response to the physical and social environment.

In addition, participants and I also realize that we must change our mind-sets and learn to express ideas or thoughts actively in a classroom setting; otherwise, we become invisible. This finding agrees with Foster’s (1997) idea that learning is a holistic process. Foster proposes that language is used as a resource for both cognitive and affective learning. However, second language learners tend to view their learning as cognitive instrumental learning. Besides learning the English grammar and vocabulary, international students need the affective skill of expressing themselves. That is because during the communication process, “the experience as emancipatory and transformative is most likely to occur among learners who develop a sense of identity with the target language and
its culture” (as cited in Grabove, 1997, p.93). Since communication is closely linked with self-image, Foster further indicates that it is necessary for educators of second language to encourage students to attain transformative learning goals.

Both Foster (1997) and Coward (2003) concluded that the process of increasing English proficiency and interacting with people from different nationalities and culture backgrounds is an integration process. It helps international students modify their ways of knowing, thinking, and communicating in order to fit into the host country’s learning environment. It also encompasses the transformation of a new personal identity and worldview in the context of the host country’s culture.

In summary, studying in the United States creates an excellent learning condition for international students to transform. This journey expands both participants’ and my world views and empowers our competence in a given profession. Moreover, the process itself allows educators and the host country’s citizens to transform as well while interacting with international students. Some interactions are accomplished through discussions, information exchanges, and comparison of cultures. Those benefits render it important to explore how international students transform through learning and living in a foreign country.

Implications for Adult Education Theory and Practice

This study serves as exploratory research to better understand the transformation of international students both personally and academically. Based on the research findings, studying overseas facilitates international students’ transformation both personally and professionally. It is apparent that Mezirow concept of providing a nurturing environment and various opportunities for students, especially international students, to transform is essential to the mission of a university. It is important that universities have supportive programs to aid international students as they are in the process of being accustomed to the language, culture, and daily living. It will greatly facilitate educators’ ability to work with international students as they learn and transform. Furthermore, additional studies are crucial for institutions of higher education to better assist international students as they experience dilemmas and changes. Similarly, American students who intend to study abroad can also be benefited by these studies. Equipping them with something to enhance their abilities in growth and transformation will definitely be advantageous.

In conclusion, the reward of studying overseas involves the ability to transform through experiences of learning and through living in a foreign country both in professional and personal dimensions. Ultimately, the process itself also increases the possibility of promoting the transformational journey for those who have encountered these international students.

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Beginning With Values: Constructive Teaching and Learning in Action

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Abstract: We describe our development of a learning environment intended to promote transformative learning in university students. Five values were chosen as the basis for designing and maintaining the learning environment: engagement, deep learning, collaboration, reflection and caring. We present the theoretical basis for these choices and examples of their application. We consider evidence that students recognized and valued this programme of “constructive teaching and learning” and discuss how it can be enhanced as a means of attaining transformative learning.

“I valued how we were challenged to disrupt our taken for granted ways of thinking of the world … to see how ideologies and discourses can uncritically shape the way we view social inequalities.” - Anonymous course evaluation

The particular transformation of interest to us is learning to recognize that dominant ideological assumptions frequently lie hidden in everyday discourse about social justice and inequality. While critical perspectives in Sociology address these assumptions, many undergraduate students actively resist critical perspectives when these are introduced into their courses. Langan and Davidson have studied such resistance (Langan 1997, 2001; Langan & Paquin, 2000; Davidson & Langan, 2004; Langan, Mandell & Braedley, 2004) and they have explored classroom activities for addressing and working with it (Langan & Davidson 2003 & 2005). Sheese (2000) has suggested that approaching students in a dialogic frame that takes their needs and concerns seriously may reduce students’ absenting themselves from engagement with instructors’ ideas. Combining our interests and resources, we designed a learning environment for two Sociology courses that aimed to facilitate the particular transformation stated above. In this paper we wish to describe that learning environment, explain the rationale behind our choices, illustrate some of the phenomena associated with our construction, and begin a discussion of appropriate future modifications.

At the time we designed the learning environment described here, we were not familiar with the concept of transformative learning or the research concerning it. In the interim the International Transformative Learning Conferences came to our attention and we noted a remarkable correspondence between the constructs we had developed and the ones prevalent in the transformative learning literature. Had we been aware of this literature earlier, perhaps we would be further ahead in our work today. On the other hand, perhaps it was that work that allowed us to recognize the significance of the literature when we did become aware of it. In this paper, we use primarily our own descriptive language, but we invite our listeners and readers to assist us in developing further our appreciation of the ways in which the transformative learning research can facilitate our work, as well as how our work might contribute to their understandings.

Setting and Participants

We designed a learning environment for two full-year courses (2004/2005) directed by Debra Langan in York University’s Department of Sociology. The courses involved a total of 325 students (175 in the first-year course, Sociological Perspectives, and 150 in the second-year course, Social Order and Social Organization) who attended one lecture (two hours) and one tutorial (one hour, 25 students) meeting per week. A total of six teaching assistants (TAs) also attended lectures and facilitated tutorial meetings. Sheese and Davidson worked with the teaching assistants in a supportive role throughout the year but had no direct interaction with the students. We conceptualized our setting not only as a university course, but also as the site of an action-oriented research project in which the teaching assistants were collaborators in our efforts to understand the nature of the learning environment we were constructing.

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Theoretical Framework

Background
Langan & Davidson (2005) have described their earlier attempts to present students with feminist analyses of a sort that they hoped would build critical consciousness and enhance the likelihood of change in their students’ social relationships. Initially Langan’s introduction to such things as critiques of the manner in which features of identity (gender, race, class, sexual preference, etc.) affect the life experiences of students and others was literally a presentation, conducted without benefit of other instructional formats. While achieving some success, the more common outcome was strong resistance to the feminist analyses. For example, provided with information about structural inequalities, students continued to express views in individualistic terms and to emphasize that the feminist ‘fight’ had already been won. When Langan and Davidson collaborated in an attempt to bring more student discussion into the course, the results were considerably improved. At that time, however, their conceptualization of the groups was as an aid to reflection on, and ultimately an investment in, critical theory and its application in everyday life. They felt that developing their skill as facilitators of critical thinking skills was the best strategy for effectively engaging the continuing student resistance they were encountering.

Constructive Thinking
Our preparations for the courses described here began with a review of ideas about critical thinking and its facilitation. The most important author we encountered was Barbara Thayer-Bacon, a feminist philosopher of education who argues that theorists need to re-describe critical thinking in a manner that looks beyond logic and that in its account of ways of knowing takes note of such vital qualities as intuition, imagination and emotional feelings. Thayer-Bacon (2000) adopts the term “constructive thinking” to highlight the creation of knowledge as a “transactive sociopolitical process with others”. She characterizes her epistemological view as a “relational epistemology” (Thayer-Bacon, 2003) and places particular emphasis on caring as an element of critical and constructive thinking (Thayer-Bacon, 1993). She defines caring as “being receptive to what another has to say, and open to hearing the other’s voice …” and as involving “a ‘feeling with’ the other.” This conception dovetails well with Sheese’s (2000) conception of the ideal teacher-student dialogue in which each participant is alert to the goals of the other. Thayer-Bacon sees caring in constructive thinking as similar to what Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule (1993) describe as playing the “believing game,” as contrasted to the “doubting game” that is associated with conventional critical thinking. Thayer-Bacon (2003) presents caring dialogue as her response to the relativism that many associate with epistemologies such as hers that favour searching for localized, contextual meanings rather than universal, transcendental truths. It was important to us that the learning environment we designed should support ways of knowing that were consistent with our goal of moving students to understand how truth can be conceptualized as contingent, local and expressible in narratives of meaning. Thayer-Bacon emphasizes that knowers must be sensitive to their relation to the known and to other knowers, and she advocates caring and dialogue as pedagogically valuable in acquiring this sensitivity.

The Learning Environment
Simply conceptualizing the course as a “learning environment” was an initial fruitful step in our design process. The metaphor enabled us to think of the students as moving about cognitively and emotionally in a space that should offer them significant opportunities for development. It made us aware that we could add, remove or modify components of that space based on their consistency with our goals and on the students’ interaction with them. As we discussed our goals among ourselves we realized that many of these goals involved specific values regarding the conceptions and skills we wished the students to develop, as well as regarding the nature of the learning processes we believed would foster them. We decided to specify a small set of values that could guide our initial design of the learning environment as well as our decision-making as the course progressed. We felt that a small set of such values could be presented explicitly to the students as a means of understanding the environment in which they were working as well as a guide to their own learning activity. We employed the name “constructive teaching and learning” to refer to the principle that teaching and learning acts in the course should be guided by the following five values, supported, in part, from our interaction with Thayer-Bacon’s concept of constructive thinking: collaboration, deep learning, reflection, engagement and caring. In the following paragraphs we reflect on our use of these five values as elements of our constructive teaching and learning environment.

Engagement
We believe that students who are engaged with ideas will be influenced by and learn a great deal from them; thus, we seek to promote and acknowledge engagement in our courses. A metaphor we find particularly useful for
fostering engagement is that of Sociology as a conversation. It is drawn from Burke (1941) and fits well with the
tonings of dialogue already described. We organize and present course readings and lectures as a conversation, often
heated, among committed participants in social projects who are deeply engaged with purpose, meaning and
importance. We seek to bring our students into this sociology conversation by facilitating connections between the
knowledge, experience and goals (“meaning spaces”) of the students and those of the course authors, lecturer and
TAs. Course assignments are sequenced to allow students to discuss and build a point of view, with conversation
and feedback at each stage. We repeatedly state explicitly the purpose and meaning of course activities from our
perspective, and we support dialogue among all course participants to help students find meaningful purposes for
their work and, thus, for enhancing engagement with it.

Deep Learning

We shift the emphasis from breadth (large, comprehensive, course content) to depth (a better understanding of
limited course content, and its significance). We characterize deep learning as acting in ways that construct
meaningful connections among items of information, concepts and experience. We encourage the ways of knowing
described by Belenky, et al. (1986) in association with “connected” and “constructed knowers.” Specific elements of
the environment designed to enhance deep learning include: class debates that support students in making meaning
and purpose; case studies that put students in an active learning mode and increase their tolerance for ambiguity and
complexity; and lectures organized around questions generated by students themselves, at times with the help of
their TAs.

Collaboration

Thayer-Bacon’s relational epistemology “describes knowers as social beings-in-relation-with-others, not as
isolated individuals” (Thayer-Bacon, 2003, p. 246). Our constructive teaching and learning strategies aim to enhance
collaborative relationships not only among the students, but among all those involved in the courses. They include
the creation of small groups as the primary site for collaboration (with an emphasis on regular use of five-person
breakout groups in both lecture and tutorial meetings); collaborative development of ground rules to orient
expectations regarding talking, listening and interpersonal conduct; emphasis on dialogue as the means to explore
ideas; attention to the diversity of our students; readings on the ways in which diverse identifications influence
group participation; and readings that permit students to become familiar with and discuss our pedagogical
approaches and their underlying rationale.

A particularly interesting feature of these two courses is that we encouraged the six TAs to become
collaborators in the ongoing decision-making during the term, a deliberate attempt to avoid the TA marginalization
often found in undergraduate courses. Our thought was that student collaboration would be more likely if the
teaching team not only emphasized the value of collaboration, but also could be seen to clearly practice it. The
groundwork for such collaboration was prepared in a set of workshops totaling 12 hours just prior to the beginning
of term in which the teaching team discussed the values guiding the course, debated the best means to operationalize
and implement them, and engaged in exercises that would help the TAs foster student involvement. As well, these
workshops proved particularly valuable for nurturing a sense of community among members of the
teaching/research team. Throughout the term the team met each week either face-to-face or within an electronic
discussion forum to discuss how well particular implementations of the course values were succeeding and what
modifications might be appropriate.

Reflection

We find that students are more likely to begin to conceptualize learning as a reflexive project when encouraged
to bring the data of their everyday lives into relation with the course material’s abstractions. Our constructive
teaching/learning strategies for enhancing reflection include: one-minute papers during the lecture (Davis, 1993), an
ongoing exchange of course journals and writing portfolios among students, and case studies that serve as a scaffold
for movement towards building connections between personal experience and abstract concepts. The following is an
example of one of the journal prompts; students were required to complete such assignments to gain a small number
of marks, but the responses were not evaluated qualitatively:

Can you describe a time when you have used something that you have learned in our course to inform your
understanding of, or your actions in, a situation? Or…can you imagine a time in the future when what you
have learned in the course may inform your understanding or action?
Caring

Caring relationships in education are controversial, Thayer-Bacon (2003) says, because of distinctions we make “between private, intimate, personal relations and public relations” (p. 245). A relational epistemology “embodies fostering caring relationships that both highlight our limitations and contextuality, and show how much we also share in common” (p. 255). We point our students to caring dialogue as the best means to recognize and expand such contextuality and find such commonality. We attempt to model such dialogue, for example, by searching conscientiously for the meaningful intentions behind students’ contributions and articulating these through supportive feedback. Other strategies to demonstrate and enhance caring include: using non-verbal body language to communicate that we care about students (e.g., active listening, nodding, eye contact, smiling, moving within a tutorial room or lecture hall so that physical presence is shared among students); respecting students by being punctual, available for consultation, flexible, and true to commitments; rewarding caring attitudes and behaviours in the classroom; and challenging students while providing support to help them meet these challenges.

Two Episodes in the Learning Environment

Caring and Comfort

Given the limited space available here we limit our description of phenomena observed in the course to two episodes, both involving our emphasis on caring. We were surprised by the extent to which the Course Director and TAs found themselves referencing caring in their reflections on the appropriate actions for various instructional situations. While all members of the team thought of themselves as having been caring in previous courses, many felt that the requirement to consider acts in relation to this value meant that more consideration was being given to the students’ points of view than might otherwise have been the case. Concern, however, was expressed that our emphasis on caring was leading students to form expectations that were not in keeping with our overall goals. Discussion among the teaching and research team members that took place over several weeks, both face-to-face and online, led to considerable evolution in the team’s understanding of the meaning of caring. Initially some TAs worried that students were perceiving our emphasis on caring to mean that we were “push overs,” that ours was a “bird” course, or that we would take care to protect them from the difficulties of learning tasks. Some wondered if the emphasis was leading students to place the TAs in a maternal, caretaking role with a responsibility to make everyone comfortable. Our discussion led us to better articulate that a caring environment is not one that removes all challenges, but rather one that backs up challenges with supports as appropriate (Sanford, 1966). Others reminded us that given the types of insights we wished students to gain, the environment is bound to be uncomfortable at times. The goal of caring, we came to feel, is not to make that environment comfortable, but rather to make it safe for the voice of the other. Used in a caring way, discomfort can be a valuable teaching tool.

Caring and Voice

Our emphasis on caring as being open to the voice of the other led us to appreciate that student struggles with critical analyses of social equality discourse are not something to be overcome so much as something to be engaged. Our own value requires us to take the struggles seriously and to work with them through caring dialogue with the students. One example of an episode in which the Course Director attempted to work in this manner to the benefit of the class as a whole involves reaction to a video presentation in which bell hooks presents a critical analysis of race relations. The initial response in the lecture room was largely negative with several students charging that hooks was “overanalyzing” the incidents that she had described as racist. In an effort to draw out the students’ responses in more detail for analysis, and in part to give voice to those not speaking up in the lecture, the Course Director asked students at the subsequent lecture to complete a one-minute paper in response to the question: “Do you agree with hooks’ argument that representations of race perpetuate the social order (i.e. inequality)?” In addition to demonstrating that, overall, the students’ reactions were more positive than was apparent in the lecture discussion (37 agreed, 48 both agreed and disagreed, 14 disagreed), the exercise clarified a number of confusions/misunderstandings that could then be addressed directly – for example, differences between opinion and analysis, between racism and prejudice, between socialization and dominant discourse, and between anti-racism and multiculturalism. Furthermore, the exercise provided a number of quotations that could be used in small groups for identifying examples of employing either dominant or critical discourse. Several students acknowledged in their responses that they had been reluctant to reveal their agreement with bell hooks during the lecture because of their dis-ease with challenging dominant discourses/ideologies. Once the Course Director had a full range of responses to the video, it was possible in the lecture for her to model dealing with the conflicting views in a productive fashion without being overly concerned with everyone being comfortable.
Towards Transformations

Constructing a Favorable Environment

Our most immediate concern has been to evaluate our success in attaining the type of learning environment in practice that we set out to design in theory. For example, did the students actually experience the environment as one in which engagement, deep learning, collaboration, reflection and caring were present and effective? One approach to examining this question involved asking students to complete a journal entry, toward the end of the courses, regarding their experience with regard to these values in the course.

Can you describe a time during or after lectures or tutorials when there was evidence of one or more of these principles being used in the teaching or learning? What happened? Did the use of the principle(s) help you to learn, and if so, how?

Student responses were very convincing that the majority could recognize these principles in action and had benefited from them. Seventy-three percent (73%) of students described how collaboration had been beneficial, and for each of the other principles or values, a majority of students (engagement, 69%; deep learning, 56%; reflection, 66%; and caring, 53%) described how the principle had positively impacted the learning experience. The following excerpt reflects the predominant themes that emerged from these journal entries:

In traditional classrooms the dominant metaphor for teaching is the teacher as the information giver, knowledge flows only one way from teacher to student. In the lecture Professor Langan provided information to the students, and she also valued and build upon the knowledge, personal experiences, language and cultures that students bring to the lecture hall. She allowed students to share their own personal experiences, which helped me to gain a more of an understanding of the course material and relate to my own personal experiences. I felt in lecture and tutorial my own experiences and knowledge was being valued, which motivated me to be a listener and learn in way that enhanced my learning skills and it help me to make important connections between my own learning and learning with the professor and others around me. Langan encouraged the students to share in lecture by working within small groups. Langan treated students with respect and made sure that we treated each other with respect too. In lecture and tutorial I got to listen to diverse opinions. I felt that I was in an environment that allowed me to learn and engage with others and reflect on my own experiences within the course material. My experience in this course has been positive because I have felt that my learning and understanding of the course has been a shared relationship between the professor, tutorial leaders and myself. I have felt that Professor Langan and my TA care about my learning. (J#4, F.C., 2070D, T5

From our experience this past year we believe that our highest priority for modifications in the learning environment should be the addition of more supports for engaging in caring dialogue. A very simple modification with considerable significance for instructor-student dialogue is our planned introduction into the lecture hall of a box into which students can place questions and comments at the end of class so that these may be used by the Course Director as the framework for the introduction of the next lecture. In addition, we plan to adapt a technique from Sable, Van Esch, and Driscoll (2005), who describe a guided inquiry process that walks students in pairs through exercises designed to enhance listening and collaboration skills. We see these and other similar procedures as scaffolds for moving small group interaction, and classroom interaction in general, closer to our model of dialogue. Overall, we feel that our constructive teaching and learning approach has great potential for creating transformative learning environments. The students responded well to our presentation of a set of values for guiding the planning of activity within the environment. In the coming academic year we plan to refine our operationalization of these values and to continue evaluating our success in implementing them.

Investigating Transformations

The obvious question for those studying transformative learning no doubt concerns the degree to which we succeeded with respect to our transformation goal. Based on completed course work, we do believe that many students are now able to recognize many embedded ideological assumptions to which they were not previously sensitive in discourses. The quote with which we began the paper is just one of several similar statements submitted anonymously by students following the completion of the course, and some students certainly claim that this transformation has led them to act differently with respect to issues of social inequality. Nevertheless, we are not in a position to make strong positive claims in this regard given the lack of data collected specifically with this end in
mind. Now that we have the transformative learning concept as a guide, however, we wish to consider elements that we might add to the course that would allow us to probe directly for a sense of the tie between the students’ developing insights and the changes in their actions that follow from these. Even with our recent group of students it would still be possible to conduct interviews or focus groups regarding such changes, and such a follow-up will be the focus of our next grant proposal.

Our introduction to the transformative learning concept has also allowed us to formulate a more nuanced analysis of the transformations we are seeking in our work. We now recognize that transformations can come: a) in various forms - transformation in a student’s repertoire of discourses (possession of a larger repertoire as a result of the course), transformation in one’s investment in discourse (more invested in critical discourses than before the course), transformation in self-perception/feelings of empowerment (feeling validated and the courage to speak one’s mind), transformation in actions (making different choices, being more active in social causes as a result of the course); b) in varying degrees (on a continuum, from not at all, to a lot); and c) at varying times (at different points during the course, or at future times and social locations after the course has ended). We look forward to continuing to work toward transformations, and to constructing appropriate measures of these transformations, and we welcome any suggestions for doing so that those more experienced with the study of transformative learning might be able to provide to us.

References

Harche Baada Baad:
Caught in the Wind of Faculty Transitions From Traditional to Online Environments

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Abstract: Thrust into new teaching and learning environments, novice online teachers often experience transition. This paper explores transitions of four faculty members in adult education and HRD, assessing roles transformative learning played in their professional development. Viewed through the eyes of a graduate assistant serving as a technical support person to faculty, multiple images and a unique perspective emerge in two voices, student observer and online instructors.

To let oneself go with the wind, swirling and bobbing beyond your control, eventually landing in a new place; this is harche baada baad. Semester after semester faculty blow by me, a student observer, as I offer technical support to those learning to teach in online environments. This paper focuses on describing transitions of graduate faculty from traditional to online environments in higher education and their possible transformative experiences. It includes a dialogue with one faculty member, my co-author, who has experienced these winds of change.

Due to development of information and communication technologies, and their implications for education, online education is gaining importance (Bernard, Abrami, Lou, Borokhovski, Wade, Wozney, Wallet, Fist & Haung, 2004). For graduate faculty teaching in traditional formats, using classrooms as their primary sites, transition to virtual environments is inevitable (Glenn, 2001). Most graduate faculty have had years of teaching and learning experiences in traditional classrooms. Now, with universities embracing distance education, many faculty members have to teach these classes online. Yet, most faculty members do not have prior experience teaching or learning online and are struggling with the new technology and new methodologies associated with this prevailing wind in higher education.

This study investigates graduate faculty who have taught in both face-to-face and online environments and analyzes their transitions from face-to-face to online teaching. This description includes aspects of instruction, techniques used, concerns and efforts in creating a sense of cohesiveness and time invested in this process. Moreover, the study examines instructional methodology, pedagogy, philosophy and technique in order to create the best possible transition experience for faculty.

Two questions guide this research: 1) how do graduate faculty members describe their transition from teaching face-to-face to teaching in an online environment? And 2) to what extent do graduate faculty view their transitions as transformative? Using transformative learning theory as the conceptual framework for this research, this study intends to describe areas of transformation expressed by these participants.

Literature Review

Two bodies of literature under gird this study: transformative learning theory and faculty professional development in online teaching. In his theory of transformative learning, Mezirow (1991) suggests that individuals can be transformed through a process of critical reflection and perspective transformation. Transformative learning can be initiated by a disorienting dilemma; a situation which does not fit one’s preconceived notions; in this case, how teaching and learning take place. These dilemmas, can lead to critical reflection and development of new ways of interpreting experiences. Our meaning schemes are comprised of beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and emotions that guide action (Mezirow, 2000). As described by Mezirow, transformative learning occurs when individuals change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and make plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds and therefore transforming their perspectives. Perspective transformation explains how the meaning structures that adults have acquired over a lifetime become transformed (Taylor, 1998). Transformative learning results in action, action based in one’s transformed perspectives.

University teachers are experts in their content areas, but not all have formal training as educators. For them, research and teaching compete for their time and attention. Regardless of the contexts in which they work, development has been known as improvement of technique or skill and development of new knowledge (Cranton,
1996). This development involves instrumental, practical and emancipatory knowledge. Some level of faculty training or support is sometimes offered as faculty transition into online teaching.

The greater part of faculty learning is self-directed. Faculty members are expected to be independent, to maintain up-to-date expertise in their disciplines, and to be able to contribute to their professions. Knowles (1975) defines self-directed learning as a process in which learners take initiative for analysis and diagnosis of their learning needs, formulate personal learning goals, identify how to achieve them and reflect on their achievement. In order for faculty development to be emancipatory or transformative, it is important that they have control over their learning and access to resources they need. The process of becoming a self-directed learner may be a transformative learning experience for the faculty (Cranton, 1996). While teaching is often a solitary activity, that is even truer for those who teach online, and learning to do so often becomes primarily self-directed.

As Schön (1983) points out, reflection-in-action is key to development. He notes faculties have unique situations that cannot be dealt with by applying sets of standard techniques or theories. They must construct an understanding of situations as they see them and, if problematic, must reframe them. Schön uses phrases like “thinking on your feet” and “learning by doing”, which he explains not only suggest that we can think about doing but that we can think about doing something while doing it. Situated cognition allows learners to apply new knowledge to everyday experience in a setting. Wilson (1993) states learning is an individual and internal process in which knowledge is acquired and stored for future application in relevant situations. While faculty members direct their own learning to teach online, they also do that learning in context and in action, situated in their online learning environment.

Methodology

The population of interest is graduate faculty in a research university that teaches in both face-to-face and online environments. This paper analyzes their transitions from face-to-face to online teaching, as they confront long-held beliefs about teaching that often do not translate to virtual learning environments. As a graduate student responsible for technical support of faculty, Pooneh adds her observations to stories they shared through the interviews.

For the purposes of this study, a qualitative methodology is used (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) because the research deals with human actions, thoughts and behaviors, which are influenced by the environment in which they take place. This study focuses on the individual’s lived experiences and depends heavily on descriptive and narrative data and in order to understand actions, thoughts and behaviors of these individuals.

This phenomenological research studies structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view and of how participants experience different phenomena (Creswell, 1998). In this tradition, we describe a type of experience just as we find it in our own experience, interpret it by relating it to a relevant context and analyze the type of experience. Phenomenology is about the essence of experiences and meaning making. The data was collected through interviews and observation. This reflective data collection was timed to take place after the winds had calmed, but before the memory of what it feels like to be carried about chaotically fades. Interviews ranged from one hour fifteen minutes to two hours fifteen minutes. Each was fully transcribed and coded using open coding and constant comparative methods for data analysis. Several themes emerged, revealing a pattern of transition experienced by each of interview participants. Pooneh’s, the graduate student, observations are captured in brief narratives included in italics in each section of the findings.

By describing the face-to-face and online teaching experiences, and looking at the faculty transition and possible transformative learning, this study contributes to creating a body of knowledge useful to graduate faculty transitioning from traditional to online classrooms and also expands the online teaching literature.

Findings

Standing on the side, having the role of a course assistant, and observing our faculty transitioning from face-to-face classroom to online teaching, brought to my mind the picture of a storm coming from the distance and the wind starting to blow really hard. I witnessed the faculty in a state of disarray. I saw all that they had come to experience as very confident teachers brought under question. I had witnessed these faculty as very strong, knowledgeable, and capable teachers and to see them blowing in this wind was very hard. At the beginning these faculty did not lose their composure and, from where I stood, carried on as before. Then I started to see waves of instability. I was not in a position to impose on or question them. After some time of twirling, I believe that they came to understand that we can be a team; we can collaborate and it is okay not to know. It is okay to admit not knowing. Upon this realization, faculty and I, and other support members, came together.
Blowing About in the Wind

Three of the four faculty interviewed did not choose to teach online. It was part of their job responsibilities or something they had to be willing to do in order to get hired for a position they sought. Once involved, they experienced feeling helpless and disconnected from what they knew about teaching. They felt they could not draw fully on past teaching experiences due to differences present in this new environment. Furthermore, they found teaching online took more time; they experienced conflict between their responsibilities. At a research intensive university, research and writing are primary responsibilities. Because of the extra time it takes, and the initially lower evaluation scores for new online teachers, teaching online felt in conflict with getting tenure.

One source of time commitment was discussion boards. They grew extremely large; frustrating both students and instructors. Students felt they did not get replies back. Instructors felt they were responding. They could not answer every posting, so they put them together, themed them and gave a more comprehensive response to whole class. The students failed to see that was what they were doing, even when the instructor explained it. Instructors felt they were investing a great deal of time in response to students and students were asking, “Where are you?”

From my point of view, it seemed that power was an important part of what was happening. Professors felt a loss of control. Yet, because they had power in their previous teaching situations, it was hard for them to say, “I don’t know.” Saying that is synonymous to saying I have no power. I could see their confusion. Dirkx (2005) helped me name what I saw, that they feel like they had lost their voice and their persona as a teacher; yet that was not the case. That perspective comes from not knowing where they stood, like they were twisting in the wind. As graduate assistants we did not feel we could assist instructors unless we were asked. From where we stood, they still had power, but it was a different power and they didn’t know how to use it. I felt powerless to help them at this stage.

Landing in a New Place

Each participant talked about the importance of colleagues as they began to get their bearings and feel more comfortable in this new environment. They found they were not alone. One instructor was basically self-taught and found it “was very important that there was always someone there if I got really frustrated with something”. One felt that “Sometimes I didn’t feel like I knew enough to know what questions to ask in order to get help”. Another stated, “I know it was very helpful for me to talk to people that taught face-to-face and then online; helpful to hear their stories and get a sense of camaraderie and that they knew the technology really well. I think it would be really harder if a person is going along without a technology source through the transformation. I was lucky I had those”. Another felt supported by the tech team, but struggled with affective dimensions of her teaching. “I started saying to people, ‘Did you ever come up with this problem’? Or, ‘I feel like I’m not there as a whole person’. That’s when I started talking with [a colleague] about cyber affectiveness; asking, ‘What’s missing in this equation? What about me isn’t coming through’? Or, how can I make these things come through’? Then I kind of turned it into a research project and said, ‘If I’m going to do this, I’m really going to figure this out’”.

When you land, you see that it is not a question of power at all. It is the beginning stages of realizing that you have all the building blocks and all you had to do was to try to make meaning and sense of these valuable pieces in hand and start putting them into use in this new setting. I, as a graduate student, and the rest of the support staff, were there as “apprentices” to help the “master”. When you landed in that new place, and realized you were as good as you were before, you told us what you needed. We took your words and what you wanted to do, and put it in a structure that would work. We know the structure and technology, but it only makes sense when we put your content in it, your knowledge, and your input. That collaboration makes it work. My knowledge is only as good as your use of it and your knowledge is made valuable by learning ways to use it online. The students in the online course could not see in you what I saw in you in the classroom. The collaboration is the stepping stone that helps you, as faculty get to that new place so that you can be the teacher you are in that place also. Then the students could see you shine as a facilitator and could see you as a resource for their learning.

Seeing in New Ways

Faculty came to see their online teaching in new ways. Engaging I reflection, they developed strategies to deal with it more effectively; making it their own. They learned the importance of both seeking and accepting feedback, even when it’s difficult, and seeing it as a help instead of a criticism. They spoke of letting go of perfection or the ideal of being perfect. They also put limits on postings and built other controls into new courses. As they took these steps they found their online teaching opening new doors to other opportunities.
It appears that you no longer feel oppressed with the online environment. Before you didn’t know what was wrong. People say, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”. You didn’t know it was broken; now you can distinguish that. Having landed in this new place by acknowledging what you don’t know, and through collaboration, gave you freedom and liberation to dream of new ways of doing things and to come to new understanding of your knowledge.

Naming the Experiences

Harche baada baad, a Farsi phrase, was the image that came to mind when Pooneh thought about the experiences of faculty members as she observed them. Study participants used a range of images or metaphors to describe their experiences. One professor compared learning to teach online to going into a shoe store and trying on shoes that don’t fit. At first she felt the shoes were ugly and did not fit well. Looking back, she did not feel she could pick good shoes to wear. Another asked,

Are you familiar with the little bitty sponges that come in the little capsules? That’s the metaphor I’d use. A little dried sponge in capsule. Maybe there is a cup of water splashed on me the first year so I let myself have only a cup of water on that sponge the first year. And as I grew and learned about teaching online and about myself, I was able to say I’m swimming in a ten gallon tank now. So the metaphor is the sponge just really soaking up the water and expanding and expanding and expanding. I know as I take that little bitty dried up sponge and keep moving it to different tanks of water, bigger bodies of water, I soak up more, I expand more, and I touch more.

Another likened it to an inverted tree. Responding to my puzzlement, she offered to explain, while also drawing it.

If you have a tree, it’s usually the leaves and everything are scattered all about. They’re all here, there, and everywhere and all the limbs are very thin. And then as you get to the trunk, and you’ve got a really thick trunk, and then you get to the roots and they’re thick and they’re meaty, but they go out in these directions. There’s a lot less of them than there are limbs, but they’re more solid. And so, if you turn it upside down, I started here and it’s kind of scattered and coming at learning and instruction from a million directions because I didn’t know what I was doing; especially when you’re a new instructor in general, let alone going into online learning. Well, think branches, not a lot going on there, and coming in with strands of things. Going through the online learning experience is the trunk and then kind of coming out with…I’m not as scattered. I think I know what I’m doing a little bit more. My focus is a lot better; a lot stronger. So that’s why I’m saying an inverted tree.

The fourth professor talked about two images. The first related to her as an online instructor. The second related to the way she came to view online teaching and learning.

I would say I took baby steps at first, but in that baby sort of way of false confidence that there’s always going to be somebody to catch you, and there was…I would say that I’m moving toward dancing…because I can see the point at which I’ll be free online…I’m beginning to see how I can put that [freedom and creativity] into my assignments and things that I didn’t feel safe to…I’m gaining a little bit more power in my voice…I would say that I began hardly being able to walk and now I’m dancing. So that’s a change for me…To me, dancing symbolizes freedom and creativity and expression. I could create something that would be beautiful to watch.

The way she viewed her task also changed. “I’ve come to the conclusion that there are some things that you cannot do online or that are not as effective as when face-to-face. However, there are things that are possible online that are not possible face-to-face. So, I think it’s an environment that offers us something unique and if we bind that by always holding it to the standard of making it like a face-to-face class, we’re losing that opportunity.” She went on to talk about the fact that she had been comparing apples and oranges, but she discovered that online teaching is not a fruit at all, it’s more like a shoe. You can put it on and go in all kinds of new directions if you recognize it for what it is, rather than trying to make it be something it is not.
Discussion
Throughout the interviews participants detailed their transitions from face-to-face to online teaching. The question remains, however, did they also experience transformation?

Sailing on the Wind
Study participants did not enjoy being tossed about chaotically on the wind. As one pointed out, “I’d rather sail on the wind, using its power, but taking control of where I’m headed”. As time progressed, that is what each did. They set limits around their time. They created strategies for being visible to online students, while not allowing it to consume their focus. Making it a site for their scholarship, some devised a way for their time investment to fulfill more than one job responsibility. Through videos, audio recordings, stories, synchronous meeting programs, video cams and other means, they established ways of accessing and drawing on affective dimensions of themselves as teachers, disconnects they had previously experienced online. In addition to enhanced communication, they devised and employed strategies for online student collaboration.

Making Peace With Chaos
According to chaos theory, chaos can lead to higher levels of organization (Wheatley, 1992). Chaos is necessary in dynamic systems and lack of it can cause a system to die (Capra, 1996). For faculty participants in this study, another dimension of taking control is recognizing wind as a constant. Instructors did not view online teaching and learning as a finite topic to master. They made the courses their own and then sought ways to increase their effectiveness. Constantly on the outlook for additional technologies or strategies, they also created methods or processes when they could not locate what they needed. Harnessing the wind to move forward purposefully, they remained open to opportunities for new understanding and practices the chaos presents them. They evidence awareness that experiences of not knowing may lead to discovering or creating new knowing.

Whither Transformation?
Loss of identity, feelings of disconnect, confusion and frustration that accompanied beginning to teach online can be viewed as disorienting dilemmas or triggering events for instructors involved in this study. Whether they also resulted in transformative learning is another question. Senge (1990) explains that change does not mean abandoning one’s values and precepts. He goes on to say that we must learn not to abandon the core while simultaneously letting go of past ways of doing things. Kegan (2000) says that transformation should not refer to just any kind of change, even those that are dramatic and consequential changes. Changes in one’s knowledge, confidence or self-perception as a learner, motives for learning and self esteem are all worthy of noting, yet it is possible for any number of these changes to happen without transformation taking place because they could all occur within an existing frame of reference. Mezirow (1991) considers transformative learning as those changes in basic perceptions of context and meaning complexes that are deeply incorporated and which are often unconscious bases for individual meaning schemes and perspectives.

Our analysis revealed that participants experienced both evolutionary and revolutionary change. For one faculty member, learning to teach online was a developmental process. She evolved based on her desire to become skilled in this area. She uses her skills in increasingly widening circles; graduate student to faculty member to program coordinator to campus online teaching resource. One is making peace with lack of perfection in her online teaching and devising strategies to handle the situation in ways that work for her. She is evolving while trying to focus on all of her professional responsibilities and expectations, especially in relationship to research and writing. She has developed a system that works for her and for her students, evidenced in positive feedback on student evaluations.

The third professor appears in the midst of transformative learning, as she is undergoing changes in her long-held perspectives related to teaching. Initially agreeing to teach online because she felt she had no choice, she came to see endless possibilities for learners in this setting. She now has her own voice in that area and feels she has a unique contribution to make as a researcher. More importantly, she no longer holds online teaching accountable to face-to-face standards. She is attempting to discover the unique opportunities presented to students to learn in completely different ways in this environment. She is committed to discovering the ways online teaching and learning can surpass that of traditional settings. Her image of her role as a teacher is undergoing dramatic, although not yet complete, change. Once an avowed “non-techie”, she now feels she has important contributions to make in online teaching and learning, based on creative insight or ability to imagine new processes, rather than on technical skills.

The fourth professor painstakingly conquered the world of online teaching. Having done so, she left her academic position, deciding to use the skills she developed in a different professional arena. She felt her experiences
opened doors for her. They also helped her become aware that she was not willing to sacrifice her values about time and work-life balance in order to do her work at the level she wanted to if teaching and researching simultaneously.

The transitions experienced by participants included professional development, evolutionary or incremental change, skill building, knowledge creation, and learning, in relation to teaching and learning and self-perception. Two of four instructors evidenced on-going perspective transformation of frames of reference or meaning schemes.

Implications and Recommendations

Participation in the study created additional opportunities for these instructors to make meaning of their online experiences, a process they appreciated. One participant felt empowered by her participation, stating to Pooneh, “I want to acknowledge you for stepping back and valuing the teacher’s experience and thank you for giving a voice to us”. Through her observation of and participation in these faculty transitions, another voice was also heard, that of a student involved in technical support. Her perspectives served as helpful lenses through which to view experiences. Brookfield (1998) encourages critically reflective teachers to use four lenses for reflection on teaching: students, colleagues, one’s autobiography, and the literature. This study facilitated two of those lenses for faculty participants.

Pooneh’s observations and reflections reveal her assumptions about teacher-learner and faculty-graduate assistant relationships. She concludes that expertise of both parties, technical assistants and faculty members, are necessary. Yet, she views this relationship as master and apprentice; clearly stating that power and initiative for assistance are prerogatives of instructors. Her stance reveals another potential area for perspective transformation.

Images became a valuable dimension of this study. Organized around a student’s image of the transitions of new online instructors, multiple ways faculty viewed their work also emerged. The images suggest an effective follow-up to the interviews. Deshler’s (1990) process of metaphor transformation could be helpfully employed in a group discussion by the faculty participants. The emergent metaphors could be discussed, compared, and analyzed. Deshler’s process leads to choosing an image to capture the desired outcome. Once established, these metaphors could be used by the instructors for further individual and group reflection on their online teaching experiences.

Each faculty participant offered several recommendations for new online instructors. Their statements follow:

- Expect some difficulties, be open to feedback, assess your role and figure out who you want to be…A lot of different competing demands are going to be presented to you when you start teaching online and I think the two big ones are quality of your work for the students and how you are ok with the decisions you make in terms of limiting your time online. How you negotiate that over time is the biggest challenge and it requires that you develop a good sense of yourself and your values and goals.
- It’s important to find people that do things the way you think it should be done; going to conferences and finding people that seem to have a lot of success in online learning and seeing what you can take from other people and use for yourself. There’s a lot of great things going on out there…techniques, strategies and methodologies for online teaching and learning…If you’ve got something that you want to do, and it’s not working, take the time to look around and see what other people are doing. There’s a lot of interesting and creative techniques that people are already using that can be put into online classes and modified.
- Think about what you care about in your teaching and research. I’m very interested in collaboration. So, that may be my unique piece to figure out and work on in online teaching. Even if you’re not a techie, there is something you can contribute to our understanding; something you understand because you are an introvert or really good at reflection, for example. Find that thing and then help the rest of us to benefit.
- The highlight is seeing that by me taking a risk, by me being scared to try something new and trying it anyway, that I was able to model that for other people…I was able to make a difference in their lives and in some ways not in the way they intended…Today you may not see how it is possible, and yet be willing to commit, to say, “I’m going to give it my all anyway and I don’t know what the end of the semester is going to look like on day one.” do it anyway…So my advice is, jump in.

Conclusion

Technical issues and challenges will not be primary determinants as to whether or not faculty members will persist as online instructors. The meaning made of their teaching experiences and teaching lives will. This personal level has not been adequately addressed in the literature and presents an opportunity for our continued research.

At the conclusion of our work together on this paper, Colleen thought about the many times as a teacher that she had watched students blow past her, twisting and turning in the wind. Although it is sometimes difficult, she also knows it is sometimes part of the process. She feels confident that they will, in fact, land in a new place where they
see the world around them in new ways. Unless they are endangered, she tries not to interfere with that process; believing they need to find the place where it is right for them to land, not a landing strip that she chooses for them. She realizes that this process may be relevant for new online faculty as well.

As I was witness to this journey of frustrations, failures and, finally, triumphs for faculty, I realized that no matter what stage of our personal or professional lives we are in, we are not finished. We can grow, reach out for help, and take a leap of faith to come to a better place. I know, because I saw my professors do it. Harche baada baad, moved ahead by the wind and bobbing out of control in the process of coming to land in a new place.

References


Contemplating the Self: Holistic Approaches to Transformative Learning in Higher Education

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Abstract: This paper reports selected findings from the author’s doctoral study of the transformative learning experiences of 16 adult learners in a graduate level course entitled “Spirituality: An Integrating Factor in Mental and Physical Health.” The course aimed at catalyzing transformative learning and spiritual development using a holistic, multimodal pedagogical strategy that employed imagery and contemplative practices. Based on a microanalysis of the students’ inner learning processes, this paper shares insights into holistic pedagogical strategies and the role of extrarational human capacities in transformative learning in a higher education classroom setting.

Research Design and Methods
This research was conducted as a qualitative case study of the experiences of one cohort of 16 masters and upper baccalaureate level students who took this course during one of the years in which it was offered. The data for the study were the students’ weekly self-inquiry papers written throughout the semester, written curricular materials, and the researcher’s own participant observation in the course. This study used a three-leveled Gadamerian hermeneutic process of textual interpretation, with the first level focusing on the students’ learning outcomes, the second on the key features and patterns of the students’ learning journeys through the curriculum, and the third on the researcher’s learnings as a person and transformative learning facilitator.

Description of the Curriculum
This semester-long course was designed by Professor Jared Kass, who has taught it since 1987 in the Division of Counseling and Psychology at Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The curriculum offered a multilevel approach to transformative learning and was structured around a central experiential problem, namely how the psychospiritual model of change presented in the course could help the students to change a health-risk behavior or attitude that each selected to work on during the semester. As students learned from the didactic material about the connections between their formative experiences, worldviews, spirituality, and well-being, they were able to immediately apply that knowledge to their concrete change goals. The course worked at five complementary levels. At the level of praxis, it modeled a psychospiritual theory of change that the students could bring to their clients in clinical and other helping environments. At the behavioral level, the curriculum challenged the students to modify a personal health-risk behavior or attitude. At the cognitive level, the course sought to foster transformative learning by helping the students to make positive changes in their sense of self and worldviews. At the psychological level, it sought to help them heal core wounds and achieve greater wholeness by applying the psychospiritual model of change to their own lives. At the spiritual level, the course aimed to foster the core spirituality through the use of contemplative practices drawn from world spiritual traditions. Key features of the curricular delivery were (a) a carefully cultivated climate of psychological safety, (b) emphasis on group process, and (c) the supportive guidance of a skilled transformative educator.

Because the pedagogical approach was designed to work at multiple levels of the self, it used a multidimensional pedagogical approach that challenged students to explore and value multiple ways of knowing. By interweaving traditional didactic teaching strategies with holistic learning approaches, students learned and grew not only cognitively, but also emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. The curriculum included traditional approaches to the transmission of knowledge, including lectures, readings, classroom discussions, and a variety of experiential exercises. The heart of the experiential work in the course was a carefully sequenced set of weekly self-inquiries papers in which the students were guided through a personal exploration of their personal histories to uncover how their formative experiences contributed to a less than ideal sense of self and worldview that contributed to their health-risk behaviors and attitudes.

The self-inquiry process moved forward in three principal legs, each of which challenged the students to employ different inner capacities, starting with a predominantly cognitive/rational emphasis in the first two legs and emphasizing the affective, imaginative, intuitive, and spiritual dimensions in leg three. The self-inquiry assignments

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during leg one called primarily for cognitive recollection, reflection, and analysis as the students wrote their “spiritual autobiographies” in which they reflected upon their formative experiences in their childhood homes, communities, religious traditions, and society at large. During leg two, the students used a critical reflective and analytic process to examine their health-risk behaviors and attitudes and how those were linked to their stress coping responses, formative experiences, and worldviews. Leg three was comprised of five carefully sequenced semi-guided imagery and contemplative exercises that used the students’ powers of imagination and intuition to explore their core selves and to heal wounds left by their negative formative experiences.

**Mandate for Research Into Holistic Transformative Pedagogical Approaches**

Mezirow (1991) used the term emancipatory education to refer to organized efforts to precipitate or facilitate transformative learning in others. While Mezirow held that the key processes by which transformative learning takes place are critical reflection and discourse, other transformation theorists have pressed for the exploration of extrarational dimensions of the transformative process, including affect, body-centered knowledge, intuition, imagination, the unconscious, and spirituality (Cranton & Roy, 2003; Dirkx, 1997, 2000, 2001; Hart, 2004; O’Sullivan, 1999; O’Sullivan, Morrell, & O’Connor, 2002; Taylor, 1997; Tisdell, 2003). Taylor (2000) reported research indicating that transformative learning can result when teachers employ extrarational learning modalities, but noted that scholars of transformative learning are just beginning to understand educational initiatives of that sort. Speaking from a feminist pedagogical and critical theory perspective, Hart (1990) argued that pedagogy must concern itself with enlightenment of the heart as well as the mind and that more attention should be given to the noncognitive and nonlinguistic dimensions of the critical process itself, including affect and the libidinal elements of human interaction. Jaggar (1989) likewise presented a vision of a more inclusive epistemology in which emotion is seen as equally important as observation, reason, and action and in which each of our human faculties represents an aspect of human knowing that is intertwined with and inseparable from the others and therefore necessarily is involved in the development of the whole person. Kasl and Elias (2000) reported that they have found that a pedagogical approach combining the holistic process of discernment and the Mezirowean process of critical reflection has proven to be most effective. However, they also noted that adult educators need to become more familiar and skilled with strategies to facilitate discernment, including ways of working with the imaginal, archetypal, mythic, affective, and somatic realms. Yorks and Kasl (2002) made a compelling argument for approaches to transformative learning that involve the whole person. In particular, they recommended Heron’s model of facilitation (Heron, 1992, 1999), which is based on a multileveled model of the human psyche as comprised of affective, imaginal, conceptual, and practical modes, each of which gives rise to a distinct way of knowing (the experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical respectively).

**Research Findings Regarding Student Learning Outcomes**

Level I of this study identified the key themes in the students’ self-reported learning outcomes at four levels. With respect to the self, they reported: (a) greater self-understanding and awareness, (b) more positive feelings about the self, (c) empowerment and discovery of inner resources, (d) greater connectedness to the core self, and (e) more complex cognitive awareness. In the relational realm, they reported: (a) greater awareness of their disconnection from others, (b) increased empathy, tolerance, and trust for others, and (c) concretely improved relationships. In the area of their health-risk behaviors and attitudes, they reported: (a) greater understanding of the links between their formative experiences, worldviews, and current health-risk behaviors and attitudes, (b) reframed attitudes towards the risk behavior or attitude, (c) healthier inner moves and preventive strategies, and (d) concrete steps towards change. Regarding their personal spirituality, they reported: (a) deeper core spirituality, (b) increased spiritual practices, (c) increased desire for spiritual community, (d) connective awareness, and (e) a sense of a spiritual path and new resources for the journey. Using theoretical standards drawn from a variety of literatures, it was determined that the students experienced meaningful levels of change in the behavioral, cognitive, psychological, and spiritual realms as a result of this course.

**Micro Analysis of the Students’ Inner Transformative Learning Movements**

Level II of the study explored the students’ learning journeys through the multimodal pedagogical curriculum to uncover the ways in which this multileveled learning outcomes came about. By closely analyzing the students’ contemporaneous writings, it became evident that in each leg, regardless of the pedagogical modality employed, the students experienced parallel structures of learning, including a variety of learning moves, learning results, and learning blocks. This microanalysis of the students’ inner learning movements revealed that rational and extrarational processes were intertwined at each step along the path. What was most striking were the specialized yet complementary contributions that rational and extrarational processes made to the ultimate transformative
Role of Affect

Neuman’s study (1996) of transformative learning in a leadership development program identified four ways that affect played into the learning process: (a) provocative or triggering of the critical reflective process; (b) evocative or supplying the content to be reflected upon; (c) barriers to learning if the learner refuses to acknowledge and deal with his or her feelings; and (d) byproducts of the perspective change since intense feelings, such as grieving, can accompany the loss of old meaning structures. Affect played all of these roles in the student’s learning journeys in this study—and more.

In the motivational dimension, the students experienced various emotions that increased their desire to do the hard work of inner change. The exercises during the first leg of the curriculum stimulated inner turmoil, which gave rise to both a desire for rational understanding and a longing for peace and meaning. During the second leg of the journey, the students began to see more clearly how they had been wounded during their formative years and how the psychological defenses they had built to protect themselves continued to negatively influence their present ways of thinking, acting, and feeling. This awareness stimulated feelings of anger and sadness, which again led to longings for peace and healing. The contemplations in the third leg, especially the imagery of healing the wounds of the outer heart, were particularly effective in evoking healing cathartic release and new positive feelings.

While there were strong emotional forces pushing in the direction of change, there were equally strong countervailing emotional forces of fear and ambivalence pushing back, slowing or thwarting forward movement towards transformation. Once the students uncovered their inner defensive structures, they then had to face the prospect of letting go of those defenses and the well-worn ways of being associated with them. These competing affective motivators and inhibitors of change were equally balanced at the end of the second leg of the curriculum such that further change was inhibited. As the students moved into the third leg of their journey, however, a number of them were able to make deep change. A focal area of the study was to try to understand what operated at that juncture in the curriculum to enable change to occur. I concluded that there were three primary aspects of the imagery and contemplative practices used in the third leg that led to transformation.

First, the exercises enabled the students to allow previously repressed emotions to surface, be accepted, and integrated. Rather than employing critical reflection, the students gave the affective and intuitive processes center stage by simply letting difficult emotions come into awareness, experiencing them in the present, accepting them, and in some cases, releasing them. Rather than thinking about their emotions, the students simply gently allowed the emotions to surface, to take up space in awareness. By accepting those parts of the self that previously had been kept out of awareness, the students gained a more whole and authentic sense of self. These affective experiences were then cognitively processed to interpret and make sense of the affective experiences, resulting in revised perspectives on self and the world.

Second, the exercises enabled the students to acknowledge, grieve, and release old ways of being. Boyd and Myers (1988) emphasized the central role of grieving in the transformative process, and the students in this study certainly experienced some of the elements of grieving. In particular, they mourned the prospective loss of old defensive structures, ways of being so ingrained that to shed them felt like losing a part of the self. In some cases, the students experienced emotional catharsis as they allowed feelings to surface and take up space. Some shed tears or experienced anger or sadness. Prochaska and Norcross (2003) indicated that catharsis is an effective process of change. According to Boyd and Myers, at the conclusion of the grieving phase, the individual enjoys a period of restabilization and reintegration. However, contrary to Boyd and Myers’ model in which positive affect is seen as the end product of the prior transformative process, this study suggests that the experience of positive emotion elicited by the contemplative state was, in and of itself, a transformative element. During and after their healing imagery contemplations, the students wrote that they experienced new highly positive emotions of peace, joy, well-being, and connectedness. In some cases quite intense, these new positive feelings gave them a taste of a radically new way of being, a new sense of self, and a reliable contemplative path to attain that state at will.

Third, the contemplative exercises produced a deep experience of positive emotion and connective awareness accompanied by a release of energy or a creative outpouring at the culmination of this process. Loder (1982)
identified this energetic outpouring as a key element in the spiritual transformative processes. These direct positive experiences served as motivators for change by giving the students a lived experience of a new way of being, a state that they could hope to experience more reliably and frequently by adopting the contemplative practices they had learned in the class. The students’ direct experience of strong positive emotions allowed them to make the leap of faith over the chasm that they found between their cognitive understanding of their dysfunctional inner defenses and the attainment of actual inner change.

Thus, this study ascribes a far more critical role of positive emotions in the transformative process than has generally been recognized. Why might that be the case? Research in the field of emotional intelligence suggests that the direct experience of positive emotion not only contributes to well-being and psychological resilience, it has a transformative effect in its own right. Positive emotion has been shown to broaden the possible thoughts and actions that come to mind and builds inner resources (Fredrickson 1998, 2001 cited in Tugade & Fredrickson, 2002). Positive emotions have been shown to produce flexible, inclusive, creative, and receptive thought patterns (Estrada, Isen, & Young, 1997; Isen & Daubman, 1984; Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987 cited in Tugade & Fredrickson, 2002). By triggering broader mindsets, positive emotions build adaptive resources, including resilience, optimism, and creativity (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2002). Because these positive inner experiences can be drawn upon at later times, positive emotions enable people to transform themselves by becoming more creative, knowledgeable, resilient, integrated, and healthy (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2002).

Role of Imagery

A key finding from the microanalysis of the students’ learning journeys is that they found rational insight insufficient to produce transformation, at least within the time constraints of this semester-long course. The students seemed to hit the cognitive wall, so to speak, at the end of the second leg of the self-inquiry process after they had exhausted their analysis of the links between their formative experiences, worldviews and sense of self, and current health-risk behaviors and attitudes. When the curriculum then asked them to imagine that their negative worldviews were inaccurate and that the positive worldviews they desired could be achieved without resorting to their health-risk behaviors and attitudes, the students simply could not make the imaginative leap. It was not until they engaged in the imagery and contemplative exercises of leg three that they were able to make what one of them aptly called the “leap of faith.”

The literature suggests a number of reasons why imagery is effective in fostering positive self-change. Sheik and Jordan (1983) pointed out that meaning depends on images, especially since images generate an emotional attitude that provides meaning about the object of the image. Moreover, they noted that images are windows into the unconscious that allow access to preverbal memories and thus have been found effective in recovering repressed material, even in the presence of defenses. Imagery serves the process of integrating the personality (Nelson, 1993). Galyean (1986) noted that imagery expands and deepens human capabilities on all levels, physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual, and thus contributes to a growing repertoire of techniques available for optimizing well-being. The conscious and deliberate exploration of our mental imagery supplies information about our deeper selves that may not be available at the conscious level and taps into emotions, which in turn provide energy for change (Kast, 1993). Imagery used in combination with meditation can contribute powerfully to spiritual development and personal growth. Imagination may activate the hot spots for endorphin creation in the limbic system, which may account for the feelings of bliss, harmony, peace, and connective awareness that accompany peak states of consciousness (Nelson, 1993). Noted therapists such as Emmons (1980), Assagioli (1965), and Kretschmer (1969), combined imagery and meditative techniques into their therapeutic methods. This combination allows for deep exploration of the levels of personality and a recentration of personality around its fundamental core (Crampton, 1969; Gerard, 1964). Imagery has been used in educational settings for (a) relaxing, centering, and focusing, (b) accelerating and expanding cognitive mastery, (c) deepening affective growth and inner awareness, and (d) creating transpersonal awareness (Galyean, 1986; Harrison & Musial, 1982).

Role of Contemplative Practices

The literature, both scientific and spiritual, indicates that, like imagery, contemplation produces multileveled results. At the physical level, it produces relaxation, stress coping, and health. At the psychological level, it fosters self-awareness, insight, a stronger internal locus of control, self-directedness, and self-actualization. At the spiritual level, it leads to a sense of connective awareness. In the students’ contemplative exercises, they achieved a brief foretaste of a new way of being, not just a new way of thinking. They experienced the self in new ways—more empowered, more connected, more joyful—and in that experience had a direct perceptual or presentational knowing, rather than propositional knowing mediated by concepts or language. In his work on contemplative psychology, deWit (1991) pointed out that contemplative practices offer a dual strategy for knowing: (a) a conceptual way of
knowing, that is, a “thinking about” that produces communicable knowledge, and (b) a nonconceptual or perceptual way of knowing through mindfulness, attentiveness, awareness, and intuition. These strategies are complementary. Thus, the contemplative aspects of the curriculum gave the students a broadened form of knowledge about the self and on the basis of this new knowledge they could then reformulate their self-concepts in ways that conformed to their new experiences of self. The contemplative state also provided an inner state that neutralized fears that often block transformation. Amodeo (2001) wrote of the power of contemplation to create a sense of inner safety and stability in the core self. By making contact with the core self, the students discovered a safer, surer footing in the core self and a tantalizing experience of a new way of being that created a safe platform from which change in the more superficial aspects of the self could be negotiated. From that radically broadened perspective on the self experienced during contemplation, the students were much more able to objectively see, evaluate, and shed dysfunctional aspects of the constructed self. In other words, the contemplative center of the self served as the platform, the reliable ground, on which the students could stand as they examined and deconstructed the more superficial layers of the socially constructed self. Kegan (1982) has observed that human development requires gaining distance from and perspective on the self as currently conceived and in which one is normally embedded. By achieving a radically altered sense of self as connected to others, nature, and the Spirit of Life, the students’ sense of self was transformed.

Contemplation is compatible with more rationally oriented approaches to transformative learning because it involves an effort to detect and become freed of conditioning, compulsive functioning of mind and body, and habitual emotional responses (Naranjo & Ornstein, 1971). Wilber (1997) regarded contemplation as a way of knowing that is parallel to and complementary with mental and sensorial ways of knowing. A recent study of practices in higher education revealed that 86 % of the 152 higher education faculty who responded incorporate contemplative practices in their classrooms (Duerr, Zajanc, & Dana, 2003). Hart (2004) likewise argued that contemplation is a third way of knowing that complements the rational and sensory modes generally emphasized in schools. He advocated the incorporation of contemplative techniques, including guided visualization, journaling, movement, and meditation, into pedagogy because such practices enhance performance, character, depth, and cognitive complexity and foster greater awareness of the contents of consciousness, the deconstruction of role, culture, and beliefs, and the ability to hold multiple perspectives and exercise conceptual flexibility.

Conclusions: Towards a More Integrated Theory of Transformative Learning

Using Kegan’s developmental model (1982, 1994, 2000), an approach to transformative learning which uses purely cognitive rational approaches to achieve primarily cognitive change in meaning schemes and perspectives might be viewed as seeking to move learners from Kegan’s developmental position 3, in which individuals have define themselves by the norms and values of their groups towards position 4, in which individuals are autonomous and have what Kegan (2000) called the “self-authoring mind.” However, while the self-authoring mind was adequate to the demands of modern society, Kegan argued that post-modern culture requires “self-transforming minds” and fifth order consciousness, which involves a sense of unity and connectedness amidst diversity. In order to prepare learners for the demands of our increasingly complex and diverse world, therefore, an integrated theory of transformative learning must be founded on a multileveled model of the self and transformative pedagogy must seek to cultivate multiple ways of knowing, including contemplative practice.

References


Focusing: An Approach to Accessing Presentational Knowledge

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Abstract: Focusing is a body-oriented process for self-awareness which can serve as a powerful catalyst for personal insight and transformation. This one-hour experiential session will provide participants with an introduction to the core concepts and movements of the Focusing method. They will observe a demonstration of Focusing, experimentally identify the felt sense, learn the steps of Focusing, and explore how Focusing can be used as an approach to accessing presentational knowledge in transformative learning and in qualitative research on transformative learning.

Rationale for This Workshop

Focusing is a method for accessing presentational knowledge in transformative learning experiences. According to Mezirow (2000), “learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience as a guide to future action” (p. 5). There are two major processes by which we perceive and comprehend: scanning and construal. “Scanning involves exploring, differentiating, recognizing, feeling, intuiting, and imagining” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 24). There are two forms of construal: presentational and propositional. Propositional construal is related to comprehension or cognition and involves experiencing things in terms of categories and linguistic symbols. Presentational construal relates to perception and is prelinguistic.

Mezirow attributed the term presentational to Heron (1988). Heron’s facilitation model (1992, 199) is based on a complex articulation of the contribution and interaction of rational and extrarational elements of the human capacities for change and transformation. Heron views the human psyche as comprised of four modes (affective, imaginal, conceptual, and practical), which give rise to four ways of knowing (experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical). The relationship of these four forms of knowing are represented in the following figure:

According to Heron, the propositional mode of knowing is built upon the foundation of presentational and experiential ways of knowing. While Mezirow’s theory of transformation privileges prepositional knowing, Heron viewed each of the four ways of knowing as of equal value. Yorks and Kasl (2002) proposed Heron’s model as the possible basis for a more inclusive transformative learning theory that attends to the contribution and interaction of the rational and extrarational human capacities for change and transformation.

Yorks and Kasl (2002) made a compelling argument for approaches to transformative learning that involve the whole person. They observed that a key fault line among transformation theorists is their view of “experience” and its role in the transformative learning process. They pointed out that Mezirowean approaches to transformative learning are rooted in Dewey’s pragmatist conceptualization of experience as a noun, as an object that can be had and then can be reflected upon in the learning process. In contrast, holistic theorists view “experience” as a verb, as a being with the here and now in a way that gives rise to a valid form of knowing without the mediation of rational conceptual processes. This distinction has critical implications for both understanding the inner learning movements that carry forward the process of transformation and for the choices of pedagogical strategies that are employed to

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catalyze and support transformation in structured learning environments. Based on their practical experience, Kasl and Elias (2000) reported that they have found that a pedagogical approach combining the holistic process of discernment and the Meziroian process of critical reflection has proven to be most effective. However, they noted that adult educators need to become more familiar and skilled with strategies to facilitate discernment, including ways of working with the imaginal, archetypal, mythic, affective, and somatic realms.

Focusing enables a learner to more skillfully access and learn from presentational knowledge. By Focusing, the learner gains awareness of prelinguistic and extrarational sources of meaning and gains a fresh perspective on the self and a new awareness that can augment and complement propositional ways of knowing. Mezirow (1991) noted the importance of this form of bodily experiencing to interpretation and construal of our life experience. Citing Gendlin’s attention to the felt sense of the self and its situation, a phenomenon Heidegger referred to as Befindlichkeit. Mezirow noted:

[T]he meaning of this felt sense is implicit; that is, it is never equal to specific cognitive units. We explain our felt sense by interpreting it and reflecting on our interpretation, using it as a criterion for assessing the correctness of our interpretation of our situation. Knowledge of our felt sense is conscious. Heidegger wrote, “Understandability is always already articulated even before it is appropriately interpreted. Speech is the articulation of understandability.” (Boyd & Myers, 1988, p. 62). This reference is to the domain of “presentational construal” (p.32). It is important here to highlight the fact that this prelinguistic domain affects and, in a sense, monitors our efforts to apply linguistic concepts to our experience. The process by which this happens is intuition. (Mezirow, 1991, p. 14)

Introduction to Focusing

Developed by Eugene Gendlin (Gendlin, 1981), formerly of the University of Chicago, Focusing is an outgrowth of both the experiential movement in psychotherapy and the phenomenological movement in philosophy. As a philosopher, Gendlin was deeply interested in the relationship between bodily experiencing, concepts, and language (Gendlin, 1962). As a psychotherapist, he was also interested in how successful therapeutic change could be facilitated. In his research with Carl Rogers into the factors that contribute to successful psychotherapy outcomes, Gendlin discovered that the single factor that most predicted therapeutic success was the patient’s own way of closely attending to his or her immediate inner experience during therapy. (Rogers, Gendlin, Kiesler, & Truax, 1967). From the marriage of these two sides of his work, Gendlin (1981) created Focusing as a teachable method that enables an individual to gain access to and learn from the primary source material of his or her existence, the ongoing flow of bodily experiencing.

Gendlin described Focusing quite simply as “a process in which you make contact with a special kind of internal bodily awareness” which “feels meaningful, but not known” (Gendlin, 1981). More recently Gendlin described Focusing as “spending time sensing something as yet undefined that comes in one’s body in connection with some specific problem or aspect of one’s life” (Gendlin, 2000). That “something” is the phenomenon that Gendlin termed the “felt sense.” It is this ongoing flow of experiencing and the shifts that occur in the felt sense that bring about the process of helpful change in the personality (Gendlin, 1964). When he refers to the body, Gendlin does not mean the gross physical body. He does not mean the stress-related backache or the muscular stiffness from overexertion, nor does he mean feelings or emotions. Rather, he is referring to the interior experience or place where we sense our situation in the environment and tacitly understand how we can interact with the environment (Gendlin, 2000).

To teach people how to contact their felt sense, Gendlin (1981) developed a six-step method. In a nutshell, the six-step method starts with clearing a space, a process of identifying and mentally setting outside matters of immediate concern. Step two is finding the felt sense. The Focuser scans the inner space in the middle of the body to find that vague but yet unknown sensation. In step three, the Focuser looks for words, gestures or symbols that seem to fit the inner felt sense. This is called “getting a handle” on the felt sense. In step four, the Focuser resonates the handle against the felt sense to discern whether there is a feeling of congruity between them and, if not, to continue to refine the handle until a sense of congruence is reached. In step five, asking, the Focuser internally asks for information from the felt sense using one of a

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1 Gendlin’s name is erroneously cited as “Grendlin” in Mezirow (1991).
2 Gendlin has devoted many pages to articulating his philosophy of the body. I do not presume to summarize his philosophical work here. The reader should understand that this paper uses language in its ordinary sense and not with the philosophical precision contained in Gendlin’s work. For further explication of Gendlin’s philosophy, see (Gendlin 1962, 1964, 1991, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2000).
number of open-ended probes or queries that Focusers have found to be helpful. In the last step, receiving, the Focuser accepts the knowledge that has come from the body.¹

The Focusing steps are intentional acts that the Focuser can take in order to locate, stimulate, and stay with the bodily felt sense. However, these steps do not describe what the body does of its own accord in response to the Focuser’s intentional acts. The organismic process that occurs during Focusing is not “caused” or “made to happen.” Rather the Focusing steps create a hospitable inner climate for the felt sense to emerge, and then we let go. The body takes it from there. When the body responds, the Focuser experiences a sensation of inner movement or a release of bodily tension. This phenomenon is called a “felt shift.” Focusing is now used in a wide variety of non-psychotherapeutic contexts for problem-solving, theory development, creativity, health care, and other applications.

Relevance to Qualitative Research on Transformative Learning

Focusing is a useful process for various forms of qualitative research methods, including hermeneutic and heuristic research (Moustakas, 1981, 1990). It can be used in first-person consciousness studies to reveal workings of the inner subjective world (Lennox, 2001). As such, it is an ideal tool for studying interior experiences of transformative learning. While like meditation in some respects (Welwood, 1982), Focusing is even better suited to research into states of consciousness because it emphasizes the skill of accessing deep levels of the self without losing contact with one’s cognitive and verbal functions. Moreover, Focusing is a method that can be taught step-by-step and has a large body of teaching literature available. Finally, as a process that was developed based on scientific clinical observations, Focusing is well suited for human science research.

Focusing can be used as an organized method for indwelling, the heuristic process of being with the phenomenon under study in order to fully draw out its detail, texture, nuances and meaning. As such, it can be used to enrich the inquiry into phenomena in the life world. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) cited the specific benefits of using Focusing in phenomenological research as follows:

[T]he focusing process enables the researcher to identify qualities of an experience that have remained out of conscious reach primarily because the individual has not paused long enough to examine his or her own experience of the phenomenon. Through the focusing process, the researcher is able to determine the core themes that constitute an experience, identify and assess connecting feelings and thoughts, and achieve cognitive knowledge that includes “refinements of meaning and perception that register as internal shifts and alterations of behavior.” (p. 51)

Example of the Use of Focusing in Doctoral Research on Transformative Learning

In my doctoral dissertation (Lennox, 2005), I used Focusing in my qualitative study of the transformative learning experiences of students in a structured transformative learning curriculum in higher education (Lennox, 2005). The principal data for the study were the students’ weekly self-inquiry papers written throughout the semester, which were analyzed using a three-leveled Gadamerian hermeneutic process of textual interpretation. The first level examined the students’ learning outcomes; the second uncovered the key features and patterns of the students’ learning journeys through the curriculum; and the third elicited the researcher’s learnings as a person and transformative learning facilitator.

When the data of the research is texts of past events, the researcher must open herself in a dialogical way that Gadamer (1975/1989) called “effective-historical consciousness.” By taking this stance towards the texts, the researcher is involved in a “fusion of horizons” in which past events are seen and understood through the lens of the researcher’s own viewpoint. In his critique of social scientists who believe that historical events can be understood in an objective manner, Gadamer retorted that not only is such objectivity impossible, it results in self-alienation that is the opposite of understanding. True understanding, Gadamer argued, can only be achieved when the researcher appreciates that she is seeing through her own horizon and that she must recognize, appreciate, and examine her own horizon (Gadamer, 1975/1989; Hekman, 1986). Thus, Gadamer argued, the truth found in this process is neither the original author’s meaning nor the interpreter’s understanding, but rather a fusion of the two.

While my data were recent student writings rather than texts from the distant past, the principles Gadamer articulated still apply. I brought my own life experiences of change and transformative learning to the task of understanding the students’ experiences expressed in their writings. My own perplexities and professional passions drew me in close to the students in the study. I brought my own hunger to understand the deeper processes of human change and healing that were evident in the texts. I also brought my own deepest questions about my own life to the

¹ Other prominent Focusing trainers have either adopted Gendlin’s six-step model (Campbell & McMahon, 1997; Hinterkopf, 1998) or modified it slightly for ease of teaching (Cornell, 1993; Friedman, 1995).

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interpretive task. In so doing, I entered into the kind of reciprocal relationship between researcher and text that Gadamer described. In this reciprocal relationship, not only does the interpreter ask questions of the texts, the texts ask a question of the interpreter. The answers sought in a text only makes sense when understood from the vantage point of the researcher’s question. Gadamer (1975/1989) wrote: “This is the reason why understanding is always more than merely re-creating someone else’s meaning. Questioning opens up the possibilities of meaning, and thus what is meaningful passes into one’s own thinking on the subject” (p. 375).

According to Gadamer, in the third level of analysis, the researcher develops a subjective “I” relationship with the data. Taking this stance the researcher opens herself to the other, hears deeply, and is willing to be changed by the other. By simultaneously appreciating her own horizon and yet moving into the subjective understanding of the creators of the texts, the researcher engages in self-reflection that leads to self-understanding, which is an integral part of the process of interpretation (Hekman, 1986). Palmer (1969) explained how and why this fusion of horizons leads to the researcher’s self-understanding:

The dialectic of question and answer works out a fusion of horizons. What makes this possible? The fact that both are, in a sense, universal and grounded in being. So the encounter with the horizon of the transmitted text in reality lights up one’s own horizon and leads to self-disclosure and self-understanding; the encounter becomes a moment of ontological disclosure. (p. 201)

Gadamer (1975/1989) also told us, “To question means to bring into the open” (p. 363). To bring my questions into the open, I used a heuristic research method. In heuristic research, the researcher herself is the research instrument. According to Tesch:

Heuristic research is not done in an intellectual or academic manner, but becomes “an integrative living form”, where the researcher is “being involved, committed, interested, concerned” and open to “intuitive visions, feelings, sensings that go beyond anything one could record or think about of know in a factual sense.” (Tesch, 1990, p. 70 citing Moustakas, 1981, p. 212)

In conducting a hermeneutic analysis, the researcher does not remain detached, but rather comes to the interpretive task “as a whole, living person with a past and a future.” Park (2001) wrote:

This requires an attitude of openness and willingness to listen to the messages emanating from the object of interpretation. The knower and the known thus participate in the process of knowing, in which what they bring to the encounter merges together. This process assembles disparate pieces of information into a meaningful whole or pattern, rather than dividing it into analytical components as variables in a functional equation. Interpretive knowledge is synthetic and integrative, rather than analytic and reductive. In coming to an understanding, the interaction between the knower and the known produces changes in both. In interpreting, we always encounter something new and unexpected, and we gain a new experience, by virtue of which we become altered. (p. 83)

I intentionally cultivated this “attitude of openness and willingness to listen” to the texts by fully exploring the embodied and connoted sense of openness using an application of Focusing called “Thinking-at-the-Edge.” Developed by Gendlin (2001), Thinking at the Edge (or “TAE”) is a whole-person process used for theory development. As I worked with my qualitative data in the early to middle stages of my analysis, I was feeling frustrated because my earlier attempts to analyze the texts using a cognitively-derived coding approach had yielded little more than “meaning confetti,” bits and pieces of disconnected data that revealed little of importance. I knew that I needed to find a new way of being with the texts. I needed to stop treating the texts as objects “out there” and find ways to bring them inside of myself so that I could empathically understand the human experiences expressed in them. This is the kind of “merging” to which Park (2000) referred.

To develop the level of receptivity to the deeper meanings in the data, I used TAE to hermeneutically explore the multiple meanings of openness and “instances” of when I had felt fully open to an experience or to another person. From that exploration I developed a fuller embodied understanding of how to “be open” to the data. Through this process, I was able to discern that the researcher’s methodological openness involves the following series of inner moves: (a) preparing for opening, (b) suspending the inner censor/filters, (c) immersion—a protracted period of being with and being in the data, (d) incubation, and (e) letting come. All of these moves were in the realm of presentational construal. After that process brought forth themes and connections in the data, the next steps of meaning-making were to reflect on what came, and make sense of it by bringing rational processes to bear in giving
shape to what came from the earlier, more intuitive process. These latter steps yielded prepositional knowledge.

Having come to understand more fully how to prepare myself, I was then able to use this process of opening to prepare my own state of sensitivity and receptivity to the data as I conducted the multiple readings of the texts. After deep and thoughtful readings of a student’s work, I would ask myself, “How does this story “cross” with my own? The process of “crossing” is derived from Gendlin (1997). Gendlin described crossing as what happens when two diverse items are brought together in consciousness and from their juxtaposition new awarenesses arise about some aspects of the two items. According to Gendlin (1997), the process of crossing generates “a certain kind of truth” (p. 55). He wrote, “when two things cross, each becomes implicit with the other one with the result that what they are really able to generate between them comes out” (Gendlin personal communication, 2004). In this manner, I opened myself to the texts and allowed myself to be permeated by them and changed as a result of my deep communion with them. The results of this process constituted the findings in my third level of analysis, the level in which Gadamer states the researcher relates to the texts from the position of the “I.” From this process of indwelling and reflection upon the data, I was able to bring to light multiple levels of meaning, which were recorded in my third level of analysis.

Conclusion

Recently Cranton (2003) and others from the holistic stream have called for a merger of the various streams of thought on transformative learning theory into a more comprehensive vision of transformation that encompasses perspective transformation in the cognitive rational realm and authenticity and individuation in the psychological realm. In line with Cranton’s position, I argue that an integrative theory of transformation needs to go even further to address and involve all of the levels of the self, including the affective, imaginal, conceptual, and practical. Just as critical reflection and discourse have served as the principle vehicles for the creation of prepositional knowledge in transformative learning, Focusing can serve as a vehicle for the creation of complementary presentational knowledge.

References


The Tree of Hope: Creativity as an Approach to Transformative Learning

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Abstract: Creativity is an essential component of transformative learning. Delegates of the Transformative Learning Centre (TLC) at OISE/University of Toronto explored this concept through the presentation of a participatory banner painting exercise at the 5th World Social Forum, held January 2005, in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Participants of this session were invited to visually express their visions of ‘grounded hope’, the organizing principle of the TLC. In this paper we discuss this experience and present the role of creativity in transformative learning and social change.

“Dreaming that another world is possible is a key creation action to make this dream come true”. (Eccher, Fernández & Pereyra, 2003)

Introduction
Whether understood in ecological, cultural or cosmological terms, there is general agreement that we have reached a turning point in history (Goodman, 2003; O’Sullivan, 1999). To all effects, we have now reached a point where our survival and life on earth are threatened by a systemic crisis. The need for fundamental change is being felt with an increasing ‘breakdown or breakthrough’ sense of urgency. Essentially a paradigm shift is needed and already underway; a creative moment of unprecedented dangers and unique opportunities (Goodman, 2003).

People are manifesting their resistance to neoliberalism, domination by capitalism and all other forms of imperialism. The protests in Seattle, Québec City, Genoa and Cancun are amongst the most vivid examples. However, resistance is not enough. As Carl Jung has stated, “The dream drives the action”. Envisioning and acting upon proposals for change are necessary to make another world possible. The World Social Forum (WSF), an annual open meeting of civil society, is a site where people converge in shared resistance and with multiple proposals for change. This paper shares our experience presenting a participatory banner painting exercise at the 5th World Social Forum in January 2005 in Porto Alegre, Brazil. At this workshop we encouraged participants to use their creativity and the notion of grounded hope to engage in a transformative experience at the WSF and better explore their visions for change. This paper also sets the stage for a similar experiential session presented at the 6th International Transformative Learning Conference in East Lansing, Michigan.

Preparing the Ground
The Transformative Learning Centre (TLC) at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto, Canada, defines transformative learning as “experiencing a deep, structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world” (TLC, 2005). Building on the work of cultural historian Thomas Berry, Edmund O’Sullivan (1999) develops the model of ‘survive, critique, create’ as a framework for a planetary education. This visionary framework draws on what he defines to be a ‘transformative moment’; a moment simultaneously composed of a critique of the dominant culture, a vision of what an alternative may look like and indications of how the culture can engage in the process of change. Consequently, the model of ‘survive, critique create’ isn’t linear, nor necessarily in a particular order. Nonetheless, ‘survive’ is the contextualization of our present moment - a paradigm shift signalling the end modern era. In terms of the development of a critical consciousness, the ‘survive’ mode entails working through feeling of denial, despair and grief. The ‘critique’ mode examines the factors and conditions that have brought us to this devasting historical moment by questioning our matrix of thought, hierarchical power and our saturation of consciousness. Finally, and central to this discussion is ‘create’ where the critique is transcended with visionary themes towards a planetary consciousness.

“Without the tragic contradictions between what is and what could be, would we even have the dream?” asks Goodman (2003: 170). Using creativity as an approach to transformative learning allows us to free our
imaginations, de-colonize our minds, and reclaim the right to dream. According to Dian Marino (1997), we need to legitimate thinking about the future. This creative process of dreaming needs to be brought out into the open and nourished by the power of the community. Collective dreaming, collective visioning - giving it legitimacy and affirming people as history makers and shapers. This powerful and liberating approach enables us to move beyond the critique, search inside ourselves, appreciate what is and envision and uncover what could be.

**Planting the Seed**

It is fitting that the idea for this workshop sprang out of a class at OISE on Transformative Learning. After watching a video on the WSF, several students began to discuss the possibility of attending and perhaps presenting a workshop at this forum for social change. The TLC showed full support for this idea and suggested that we attend the 5th WSF as delegates. This was to become a powerful experience through which we were to share a transformative learning experience with others.

As delegates of the TLC, an inclusive and horizontal group, we felt it was important to include its members in our planning process. We took advantage of TLC circles (monthly gatherings) to discuss our ideas and plans for the forum and gain feedback. Our discussions at these circles allowed us to develop our ideas and better integrate the TLC’s energy into the project.

For the 5th WSF, workshops and activities were organized around eleven themes; these themes were to facilitate discussions, networking and collaboration amongst participants. Transformative learning, a visionary and holistic approach to a planetary education, would have fit into any one of these themes. Using a participatory voting process, we invited TLC members to help us choose the theme that they felt was most reflective of transformative learning, or how they would like to see us participate in the WSF. Through this process we collectively decided to enter our workshop and represent the TLC under the theme of ‘Arts and creation: weaving and building people’s resistance culture’.

**Nurturing the Roots**

As part of our workshop, we wanted to share our understanding of transformative learning with a particular focus on the role of creativity in social change. Based on discussions with past WSF participants and our own adult education practice, we also wanted the workshop to be participatory and experiential. This would enable us to overcome language barriers and to provide participants with a unique learning opportunity.

After reflecting on how to approach such a workshop we decided to use the TLC’s guiding principle of “Grounded Hope” as our working theme. We felt that not only was this theme appropriate, given the importance of hope in the face of disturbing global trends, but it also complimented the WSF’s slogan “Another World is Possible”. Over the course of our process we constantly reflected on the links between these two themes.

In discussion with members of the TLC we chose the image of a tree, often seen as a metaphor for life and hope, to shape the visual arts component of our workshop. We decided to engage participants in discovering art as a means for communication, especially considering our tendency to rely on words. We felt that different methods of expression needed to be encouraged. We soon realized that not only could our project offer a means to facilitate communication across cultures and languages, but it could also bridge geographic distance through a visual dialogue. Members of the TLC could co-create with workshop participants at the WSF through the collective creation of this ‘tree of hope’.

**Establishing the Core**

The meetings that we held with other knowledgeable artists about how we could best engage in collective banner painting reinforced certain principles in our minds. We affirmed that we were far more interested in the process than the outcome. This led us to make several decisions. The first was that we would like the effort to be collective rather than that of a few individuals. Because of the relatively small size of the canvas we were proposing, this posed a problem; how could we bring up to fifty people around a banner to paint together? We decided to take on an approach similar to quilting whereby the leaves of the tree would be cut out and participants could paint these separate pieces on their own or in small groups as well as paint on the main canvas. The leaves would then be joined to the tree at the end, creating a collective banner. Our second decision was that those who engaged in the project should have the opportunity to tell or express their own personal stories and visions. Consequently we opted for an open theme – that of hope. Also, after painting the participants would be invited to describe in words, if they chose, what they had expressed visually or reflect on the painting process. Our third decision was that in order to emphasize the notion of dialogue, we would invite members of the TLC to engage in a visioning exercise and paint the outline of the tree, but have the painting of the leaves begin at the WSF in response
to the symbolic outline of the tree. Upon our return, members of the TLC would be invited to paint their own leaves in reaction to those painted at the WSF.

We began to seek and explore the theme of hope at the January TLC circle held shortly before we left for Brazil. At this circle we invited members to take part in a visualization exercise, at which they expressed their visions of hope using pencils, pens, and paper; we created drawings, poems and ideas. We realized that we could use these as images of inspiration at the WSF. Members also shared their suggestions as to how we could best structure our workshop at the forum. We prepared for our journey.

Watching an Idea Flourish

During the last week before we left for Brazil, our biggest challenge became the fact that we had mistakenly been left off the agenda of the WSF. Although we made every attempt to secure ourselves a workshop time and location once we arrived, we were unsuccessful and ended up having to draw on our own creativity to secure a location for the visual dialogue that we had proposed. We set up the materials in the ‘Che Guevara tent’ at the Youth Camp. The Youth Camp, an area attached to the WSF grounds, is a site where many participants of the WSF camp and take part in additional activities and discussion groups. Upon looking back, this location was ideal for our workshop; as youth ourselves we shared experiences with the youth at the workshop and have been able to carry some of their vitality back to Canada. Young people came, painted, discussed, experienced, and took pictures of themselves and what we had all created. After several hours, what had begun as an outline on a canvas was full of colour, energy and stories. Although we faced many language barriers, we felt that we were able to share this experience of learning and expression with those who joined us.

When we returned to Canada we engaged in a number of activities as a follow up to this experience. We translated the written descriptions from Portuguese, Spanish, and French into English. We reported our experience back to members of the TLC. And we led a painting session with the members, allowing them to engage in a visual dialogue with the leaves that had already been created. We then placed the leaves on the tree and glued them in place. Finally, we hung the completed banner in our Peace Lounge, just around the corner from the TLC office, for all to see and experience.
Beside the banner we posted the participants’ written reflections. Through their words many powerful themes about the potential and the importance of hope are revealed. We present here the major themes offered by the participants:

- **Hope for a better future and the achievement of peace, freedom, unity, colour, compassion, understanding and, for this artist: “Liberty, Love, Justice”.**

- **How they have gained hope from those who walked before them:** “Pocho was a social activist from Argentina. He was a path maker and worked like an ant for a better world. He was assassinated by a policeman on the 19th of December, on top of the school where he worked. We have hope because he marked our path.”

- **Hope linked to the natural world; hope being like the cycle of life in that it is a living force that grows and gains energy; hope existing as long as there is life:** “Care and preservation are the pillars of any feelings of hope. The drop of water… for me it is essential for any thought of the future.”

- **The importance of diversity and solidarity:** “The union of blacks and whites, the presence of the four elements and of love, representing hope for the world.”
Hope as an enabler: “Hope: What takes down the wall at the end of the road and lights the path on the horizon.” This suggests a cycle; that our hope for the future gives us strength to create our future.

Hope being realized through struggle: “May the strength of change never die in human beings, as it gives us life and helps us believe in tomorrow. A better world is possible – we need only fight for it.”

The transformative nature of this workshop: “Hope: Constant search of a better world with peace, love and equality. Painting in search of this left me tranquil and at peace. I painted with love and I perceived that all the paintings had demonstrated ‘diversity’ of people and much harmony.”

Grounding Our Hope

What this exercise reflects is that there are as many dreams as there are individuals and as many visions as there are communities. None of these dreams are static, none are the answer, as looking for the one answer would be contrary to dreaming (marino, 1997). Plurality is crucial; one must caution against any assumption of there being one answer, one dream, and one vision. Organized around the inspiring slogan ‘another world is possible’, the 2005 WSF brought together over 150,000 people because of the understanding that the world we seek to create includes a diversity of possible worlds (Santos, 2003). Our experience has been that offering people the opportunity to express and explore their hope of another world using the visual arts is transformative and revealing. By putting paint to canvas the conceptualization of this dream world enters the realm of the concrete, of the possible. While it can be safely assumed that participants of the WSF and members of the TLC have already embarked on a transformative learning journey, workshops such as ours offer a valuable opportunity to engage both the ‘critique’ and the ‘create’. Providing time to better visualize our dreams, express our emotions, and share them with others enables us to ground our hope.

Implications for Adult Education and Adult Educators

The experiences that we have witnessed and theme of hope that emerged from this workshop suggests that this creative process has offered many transformative moments and opportunities for learning. However, we will never know its full impact given that transformative learning is an on-going journey. In reflecting on the implications of creativity as an approach to transformative learning for adult education and adult educators, three main implications for inquiry and practice come to mind.

First of all, we see such workshops as important in that they encourage people to explore and have a greater sense of their visions of another world. Having this discussion as part of a group experience is also significant as it generates and reflects the diversity of visions.

Secondly, Miles (1996) captures the challenge of adult educators quite succinctly in her reference to the book We Make the Road by Walking (Horton & Freire, 1990). Horton and Freire affirm that effective adult education for social change must be grounded in social action, but that this need not be large scale actions or revolutions, that often “little pockets of hope and adventurism” can be just as effective (1990: 94). Miles (1996) concludes that the challenge for progressive adult educators is to find, foster and serve these ‘pockets of hope”’. Creativity is central to this process and the use of artistic mediums can be a powerful way to promote and support transformative learning.
Thirdly, having used transformative learning as the visionary framework it is relevant to return to O’Sullivan’s main thesis which also reads as a challenge: “the fundamental educational task of our times is to make the choice for a sustainable planetary habitat of interdependent life forms over and against the dysfunctional calling of the global competitive marketplace” (O’Sullivan, 1999: 2). Guided by the model of ‘survive, critique, create’ we believe that all educators need to integrate a transformative learning approach in their practice and in lives. Given that hegemonic forces are constantly in the process of reasserting themselves, maintaining this transformative learning practice involves continually transcending our assumptions, furthering our understanding of political economy, and using an integrative analysis of systems of oppression - all with much hope and creativity.

**Envisioning What Could Be**

At the 6th International Transformative Learning Conference, participants will have reflected on the theme of ‘appreciating the best of what is: envisioning what could be’. Through this experiential session we will have provided participants with an opportunity to experience for themselves creativity as an approach to transformative learning. Drawing on our shared experience of the WSF, together we will continue the visual dialogue across space and time to envision another possible world - grounding our hope.

**References**


Transformative Learning Communities at a Distance

Mary T. Lewis, Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center
John Adams, Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center
Nancy Southern, Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center

Abstract: As the practice of distance education grows the demands increase on instructors, learners and administrators to explore and possibly transform their methods of teaching and learning. This paper draws on findings from a Ph.D. dissertation concerning assumptions that need to be explored as well as the skills that need to be expanded and developed. The paper then presents one institution’s identified best practices for professors, learners, and administrators when creating and facilitating vibrant, engaged transformative learning communities offered at a distance.

Introduction

According to a report by International Data Corporation, the use of distance education tools has greatly increased over the last fifteen years. In 2002 approximately 85% of two and four years colleges offer distance education courses. This was an increase of 23% from 1998. Student enrollment also greatly increased during this period and is expected to continue to so. (American Federation of Teachers, 2001) During this time there has been a major push for both educational and corporate training instructors to reshape their teaching/training methods to fit distance education formats. The majority of both trainers and educators are struggling with ways to integrate their teaching methodology with the current technology (Shrivastava, 1999; Powell, 2001; Petrides, 2002).

Adult teaching and learning at a distance requires a modification of skills and practices for both the instructor and the learner. As the field of distance education continues to grow, so does the literature on best practices for creating the most effective learning environment. Recent studies have shown that distance education can offer increased flexibility for learners, increased interaction between instructors and learners as well as among learners, and "improves student performance on examinations that require complex reasoning skills" (Shapley, 2000, p. 1). For instructors, distance education provides an "opportunity to teach their students both course content and how to become lifelong learners" (Serwatka, 2002, p.46).

Transformative Learning and Expanding Capacity to Learn

Transformative learning provides a framework in which adult students learn to understand how they learn, how they have made their past choices and how they can expand their future possibilities. According to Jack Mezirow (2000), a professor at Teachers College, Columbia University who is the originator of a particular learning theory called Transformative Learning, “the goal of adult education is to help adults to realize their potential for becoming more liberated, socially responsible, and autonomous learners—that is, to make informed choices by becoming more critically reflective as ‘dialogic thinkers’” (p. 30). Transformative learning as a teaching and learning process adds depth and complexity to one’s thinking process and understanding. It also develops critical thinking skills, which include critical reflection, critical questioning and dialogue that allow adult learners to adapt to the changing demands of the present state of the world.

Robert Kegan (1994), a developmental theorist, states that the ability to practice critical thinking skills is based on our level of consciousness or way of knowing. A way of knowing is a developmental filter. These filters screen how we understand events and relationships. Many theorists have called this part of human development, “knowing.” Parker Palmer (1998) describes knowing as “how we make community...Knowing is a human way to seek relationship and in the process, to have encounters and exchanges that will inevitably alter us” (p. 54). Kathleen Taylor, Catherine Marienau and Morris Fiddler (2000) explain that:

[from our earliest moments, and continuing throughout life, we seek to make sense of what goes on around and within us. As we learn and grow, however, the process of that sense-making changes; it takes on new, more complex forms. We do not merely gain knowledge as we mature (the informational explanation for change and growth), but we also know in a different way (the transformational explanation). (p. 350)
Education’s purpose is to prompt the learner’s development in critical thinking and dialogue skills which increases his/her way of knowing or consciousness. (See Workshop Handout 1 for a model of phases of human consciousness “Versatility in Human Consciousness: by John D. Adams, Ph.D.) According to Laurent A. Daloz (1999), “[the] proper aim of education is to promote significant learning. Significant learning entails development. Development means successively asking broader and deeper questions of the relationship between oneself and the world” (p. 243). Transformative learning theory offers a teaching and learning framework which fulfills Daloz’s description of education’s aims by encouraging learners to identify how they construct their current knowledge, thereby becoming aware of the processes that they engage to reconstruct or transform their previous knowledge as they encounter new learning and change. Understanding human developmental ways of knowing and learning enhances transformative learning theory and practice.

Transformative Learning Within Community

Learning communities provide the setting in which the process of transformative learning can occur. Transformative learning requires the development of critical thinking skills, which include reflection and dialogue. It is through the sharing of the learners’ reflections on their experiences with the content matter that each member of the learning community grows and expands his/her understanding and knowledge of the subject. Although transformative learning can occur when people are alone and even under the harshest of conditions, it is within a supportive learning community that it flourishes. Being able to share with others who are also forming opinions and perspectives allows the learner to discover conflicting beliefs and assumptions, unresolved questions, and gaps of understanding. “[I]n community with others the learner will broaden his or her understanding of an experience beyond where it might go in isolation” (Rodgers, 2002, p. 863).

From the field of transformative learning, studies have described an ideal learning environment for adults engaged in transformative learning as a “place where people can draw upon resources to make sense out of things and construct [or reconstruct] meaningful solutions to problems” (Wilson, 1996, p. 3). Characteristics of an ideal environment that promote transformative learning are based on a plethora of information from diverse fields of study. Edward Taylor (1997), in his review of 11 studies found that the:

- ideal learning conditions promote a sense of safety, openness and trust
- offer effective instructional methods that support a learner-centered approach
- that promote student autonomy, participation and collaboration
- and use activities that encourage the exploration of alternative personal perspectives, problem-solving and critical reflection. (pp. 48-49)

From the field of distance education Ruth Brown (2001) found that “[t]he process of forming a community of learners is an important issue in distance learning because it can affect student satisfaction, retention and learning” (p. 1). In building learning communities, Brown found that it is important that the qualities described by Taylor -- safety, openness, trust, support, autonomy and collaboration -- are present. Rena Palloff and Keith Pratt (1999), also integrate both the qualities of an environment that support transformative learning with the importance of developing distance learning communities:

The key to the creation of a learning community and successful facilitation online are simple. They are as follows: honesty, responsiveness, relevance, respect, openness and empowerment...When faculty create a container for participants in which these elements are present, group members can feel safe in expressing themselves without fear of how they will be perceived, allowing for active, rich discussion. (p. 20)

Palmer (1998) created a model of a learning community relationship where both teacher and learner move beyond learning ‘in community’ to being members of ‘a learning community’. In a learning community the role and responsibility of the membership changes from believing that “I am responsible for my learning and may increase it by listening to others as they discuss their learning” to “I am responsible for my learning and responsible to share my thoughts with other community members so that learning is increased for all of us.” For Palmer the subject is in the center of the community surrounded by the learners, the instructor and the resources that give voice to the subject and provide support and challenge for the learners.

In a learning community, “[e]very member, every person must be an ‘educator,’ available at a moment’s notice to share knowledge, wisdom, skills and perceptions with those in need. So the responsibility falls on each of us – whether fully mature or not, whether ‘formally’ trained as educators or not – to ‘teach’” (Rose, 2004, p. 3). Teaching others or sharing understandings with them helps to deepen our own learning by discovering the gaps and
disconnects in our thinking. “The classroom becomes a community when understanding both the material and one another becomes our mutual responsibility” (Hart, 2001, p. 51).

**Distance Education**

According to Palloff and Pratt (1999) there are five key qualities of distance education:

1. Separation of teacher and learner during at least a majority of each instructional process.
2. Use of educational media to unite teacher and learner and carry course content.
3. Provision of two-way communication between learner and teacher or learner and tutor or educational agency.
4. Separation of teacher and learner in space and time.
5. Volitional control of learning by students rather than by the distance instructor. (p.5)

The act of learning to teach and learn by use of distance educational tools is a transformative experience for both the instructor and the learner. Assumptions about teaching and learning must be altered. New skills must be learned and new accommodations must be made to balance home, work, and school life. Distance education and learning that is transformative offered within learning communities are highly compatible. For the learner, there is an increased appreciation for the flexibility of learning, increased time to reflect on and discuss information, as well as higher satisfaction that the material has been learned and will be retained. (Petrides, 2002)

**Integration of Transformative Learning Communities at a Distance**

A dissertation case study (Lewis, 2005) explored the question: What are the success factors for transformative learning in the field of adult distance education using a learning community model? The study’s purpose was twofold: first, to identify best practices for instructors and students; and second, to explore ways that learning can be augmented and expanded. The study took place during the second half of the Fall 2004 term. Data collection instruments included telephone interviews and e-mail exchanges with the instructors and the department director, student pre- and post-course electronic questionnaires, and daily observation of each course’s Blackboard discussion board by the researcher. Three themes which would help to expand and deepen online learning emerged during the analysis phases.

1. The first theme was that individual beliefs and assumptions concerning collaborative learning versus independent learning need to be explored.
2. The second theme concerned the ability to form virtual relationships that are sufficiently meaningful to support transformation. This included both creating a human online presence and forming textural-based relationships. This was best achieved by participants within a learning community engaging the skills of online dialogue.
3. The third theme concerned the guiding role academic administration can play as it works with the instructors and students to expand, deepen, and encourage online transformative learning communities.

**Saybrook Graduate School Matrix of Best Practices for Online Learning**

Simultaneously Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center held a conversation that addressed the issues associated with teaching and learning online in transformative learning communities in its Committee on Best Practices for Online Learning. The matrix that the committee developed is a behavioral and attitudinal list of practices which exemplifies the image of an engaged, vibrant online learning community in which collaborative learning occurs. (See Workshop Handout 2) This matrix contains material gathered first from participants of an initiative co-led by students to identify best practices for students, instructors, and administration. It was discussed and expanded by the committee composed of fellow students and representatives of the faculty and the school’s administration, of which the researcher was a member.

The committee viewed a successful process of online transformative learning within a community as a constantly-evolving relationship between the three parties. The committee selected the four highest prioritized practices from a longer list of best practices to create the matrix. All members of the committee entered the conversation with the assumption that adult online learning occurs best within transformative learning communities. The matrix was shared with both the instructors and the students at the beginning of the spring 2005 term. Application of the matrix and evaluation of its impact are ongoing. The creation of space to hold conversations that explore students, faculty and administrators assumptions concerning the value of collaborative versus individual learning and teaching enhances the process of skill development and adaptation to this type of learning and teaching.

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Closing

The philosophy and practices of transformative learning communities work well with the tool of computer-mediated education. Learner satisfaction and assessment of learning are higher in distance learning settings that employ reflection and dialogue within community.

Besides content, learners learn about “themselves…and about how to collaborate with others in geographically distributed teams. They learn what it takes to pace themselves in order to get the job done” (Palloff and Pratt, 1999, p. 166). These are life skills that can be applied to working and living in a global community that respects diversity and requires negotiation of difference. The tool of distance education when guided by a pedagogy that simultaneously supports the expansion of one’s point of view, the development of individual openness, and acceptance of differing perspectives, amplifies the development of the skills that build community in life as well as in education.

References
VERSATILITY IN HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS
John D. Adams, Ph.D.

<table>
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<th>LOOP A</th>
<th>LOOP B</th>
<th>LOOP C</th>
<th>LOOP D</th>
<th>LOOP E</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Systemic</td>
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<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Policy &amp; Practice</td>
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<td>Mind-Body Interact</td>
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<td>STRUCTURE</td>
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<td>WORK MEANING</td>
<td>Minimal Contribution</td>
<td>Job</td>
<td>Vocation</td>
<td>Life Work</td>
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* Each larger loop retains access to all enclosed loops
* Communication across more than one loop is difficult
* Versatility indicates range of appropriately flexible choices of response available
### Workshop Handout 2

**Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center Matrix of Best Practices for Online Learning Handout**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Administration</th>
<th>Learners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Subject matter**<br>is the focus that organizes the group and provides boundaries and connections | ➢ Evoke peer-to-peer learning, while remaining a presence and “holding” the space  
➢ Break the topic down into relevant discrete areas for dialogue/exploration  
➢ Express learning the objectives of the course clearly and monitor how well these are being met as the course develops  
➢ Encourage, flow with, and follow emerging themes  
➢ Make one discussion assignment at a time and tie each to the readings assignments | ➢ Actively support the on-line learning community and sharing of best practices  
➢ In admissions material, and at Residential Orientations, provide clear guidelines and expectations that students will engage in online course work at Saybrook  
➢ Provide support for faculty, as they explore how best to support learners who are not yet comfortable in the on-line learning environment to develop and expand their abilities to be independent, self-directed learners  
➢ Take full advantage of the electronic medium in course content (i.e., audio and visual files, links to other sites, etc.) | ➢ Participate regularly in the on-line classroom and be proactive about initiating dialogue in new areas  
➢ Be clear about why you are taking this course on-line—have clear learning goals for the course  
➢ Express interest in other learners’ ideas  
➢ Take risks and don’t be reluctant to show your lack of knowledge |

| Qualitative focus<br>thrive on diversity, ambiguity, and creative conflict | ➢ Establish a culture that appreciates differences, not knowing the answer, and healthy disagreements  
➢ Facilitate comprehensive, high quality dialogues and online discussion of the successes and challenges of learning in community on line  
➢ Allow for and pull for emerging issues | ➢ Facilitate instructors’ approaches to course delivery and course management to support an effective & “alive” learning process  
➢ Ensure that there are procedures for resolving conflicts & issues that cannot be resolved within a course  
➢ Provide support for the on-line work to expand and move in new directions  
➢ Provide regular feedback on the overall quality of the on-line learning process | ➢ Be open minded to the emerging depth and breadth of a topic  
➢ Develop your own on-line identity and learning process as a professional and a scholar  
➢ Be open to interactive learning  
➢ See the opportunity value in interaction and in embracing healthy disagreements |

| Community / group dynamics<br>includes respect, support, and inquiry. | ➢ Launch the on-line course at the previous Residential Conferences whenever possible  
➢ Schedule group conference calls at the outset of the course, and again 2/3 of the way through  
➢ Facilitate group development and group dynamics effectively  
➢ Place priority on developing a Learning Community | ➢ Maintain awareness of on-line culture development as an ongoing process  
➢ Support emerging new topics, Residential Conferences follow-up explorations, etc., arising in the on-line environment  
➢ Facilitate the establishment of community online norms, etiquette, rules, and expectations. Encourage each cohort to review these and make them their own.  
➢ Consider support for one subject at a time modularity (i.e. 5-6 week focus then move to a new subject) | ➢ Share your experiences, understanding of, and assumptions about, the subject to expand both your own and your peers’ understanding of the subject  
➢ Listen with care and reflect on others’ contributions in order to expand your understanding of the subject  
➢ Embrace fierce dialogue (dig deep!)  
➢ Assume all are well-intentioned and have high aspirations -- Be respectful in your on-line postings |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal reflection / group dialogue</th>
<th>Shared responsibility for learning for all members of the community</th>
<th>Skilled use of technology in the learning environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➤ Continually develop your own understanding and skills for on-line teaching ➤ Initiate and facilitate a dialogic process in the class ➤ Create space for both reflection and dialogue ➤ Be a role model for reflection and new learning</td>
<td>➤ Stimulate learners to initiate themes and ideas related to the course topics ➤ Challenge each learner to take individual responsibility for getting what s/he wants and needs in the course ➤ Include in course expectation building that the topics for discussion will be drawn from the reading assignments ➤ Send out an expectations letter that emphasizes the interactive nature of the course</td>
<td>➤ Be ready to add new features to your approach as these become available—e.g., audio and video streaming ➤ Understand when to use each on-line feature as appropriate ➤ Tutor learners who are less familiar with the technology ➤ Be able to use all of the technical features available in on-line learning environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ Create and make available tools on how to learn and what learning looks like in on-line communities (what advantages does learning in community offer the learner?) ➤ Reinforce the interactive opportunities of on-line learning regularly (e.g. during appearances at RCs) ➤ In mentoring courses, assist the learners to develop their skills to optimize learning online ➤ Continually examine how assumptions are affecting the practices of the institution</td>
<td>➤ Commit to continuous improvement of the on-line learning process ➤ Convene regular faculty and learner sharing &amp; review sessions ➤ Continually seek new ways to engage learners and faculty in developing new ways of knowing ➤ Publicize the opportunity for andragogy-based learning in the on-line environment</td>
<td>➤ Make technology training available at the level of the needs identified ➤ Understand the technology and how it can best be used to create a learning environment based on the best approaches for achieving the learning goals ➤ Have a support line available for both learners and faculty ➤ Establish a skill building course early in the program (at the RO, like the Library Research course). Allow learners to “test out” of it if already adept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➤ Continually develop your skills for identifying your assumptions and perspectives and how these relate to the course material and to others ➤ Continually develop your skills for constructively engaging differences in ideas and perspectives ➤ Be eager to share, disclose, and reflect ➤ Be willing to learn from your interactions with the instructor and the other students</td>
<td>➤ Take initiatives in the learning process ➤ Be proactive about initiating dialogue in new areas ➤ Take risks to share your assumptions and experiences upon which your understanding of the subject matter is based ➤ Move your framing of the process from “This is about my learning” to “This is about our learning.” Synergy creates something larger than its parts</td>
<td>➤ Be eager to embrace the technology that is available ➤ Be willing to ask for help when you need it ➤ Be read to use new features as they become available ➤ Be/get technologically literate—no excuses!</td>
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Hidden Dimensions of Transformative Learning: 
Dreamwork, Imagery, Metaphor and Affect Expressed Through Experiential Painting 

Randee Lipson Lawrence  
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Abstract: This paper describes the possibilities that exist for transformative learning as one gains access to his or her internal sources of knowledge. This knowledge often presents itself as intuition, which comes to us metaphorically in the form of symbol and imagery. Emergent knowledge is discussed through the understanding and interpretation of dreams both individually and collectively. Experiential painting, a method of unearthing holistic (encompassing cognitive, affective and spiritual) knowing through focus on process rather than product is also described. Tapping into these hidden dimensions of knowing can promote transformational learning through self-knowledge, lead to informed decision making and promote personal and global healing.

Our greatest ideas come to us in silence and solitude, where the whisper of intuition can only be discerned above the shout of intellect and the raucousness of reason.  
Elaine Creasman

Transformative learning has gained considerable attention in adult and higher education over the last two decades. Mezirow described perspective transformation as

. . . the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and, finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings. (1991, p. 167)

This concept of perspective transformation has had a tremendous influence on how we understand adult learning and change; however this definition also implies that transformation is a rational process of critically reflecting on one’s assumptions to expose and change distorted meanings. Sometimes the information that we need to solve problems or to work toward transforming self and the world in which we live lies just beyond our reach. Opportunities for transformative learning are available to us but are often veiled or hidden. We can access this hidden knowledge by paying attention to imagery that present themselves through dreams and other creative and intuitive processes such as metaphor, story, art, dance, poetry, photography, meditation and quiet contemplation.

According to Mezirow (1991) we learn through the consensual validation of our ideas and presuppositions. When these ideas and presuppositions emerge as imagery from dreams or the unconscious mind, they are often dismissed as fantasy that cannot be validated through rational means. Building on Mezirow’s seminal work, others have more recently explored other than rational means of transformative learning. For example, Dirkx (2001) (building on the work of Hillman, Heron and Chodorow) discusses the role of emotion and symbolic meaning. Paying attention to the images that present themselves is a way of connecting inner self to the outer world. Dirkx uses the term “extrarational” (p. 64) to connote meaning that extends beyond what can be explained in rational ways. Rather than “non-rational” which describes the phenomenon by naming what it isn’t, extrarational, like “extraordinary” implies something greater than itself. It takes us to the edge of what is known and beyond. Imagery almost always provokes an emotional response. “Emotionally charged images, evoked through the contexts of adult learning, provide the opportunity for a more profound access to the world by inviting a deeper understanding of ourselves in relationship with it.” (Dirkx, 2001 p. 64)

Shilling suggests that various art forms as “the voices of the past as they speak through us” (2002, p. 153) can be used in indigenous education to help people heal from colonization. Dreams and the expressive arts provide a mechanism to tap into intergenerational knowledge to promote personal and collective transformation.

This paper explores transformational learning that can occur as we gain access to inner wisdom and imagery that comes from the deepest recesses of our soul. There are many ways to tap into this unconscious wisdom.

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paper highlights the potential for transformative learning through two doorways: attending to dreams, and through a process of spontaneous or experiential painting.

Dreamwork

Dreams are a great source of knowledge within each of us, yet this knowledge is often ignored or dismissed as too fanciful to be given serious attention. Many people claim they do not dream or cannot remember their dreams. I believe this knowledge is accessible to all of us if we learn to tune in and pay attention.

According to Delaney (1991) dreams are always expressed in metaphor and exist to reveal unconscious thoughts. Hobson (1991) informs us that certain brain cells are shut down during REM sleep. During this period there is a loss of self-reflective awareness, critical judgment, and linear logic. As a result one is free to become totally self involved. Rational voices become quiet, wild and unbelievable events are not censored out, and analogical thinking through symbol and metaphor increases. Hillman (1979) believes that in order to be fully attentive to our dreams “we must sever the link with the dayworld” (p. 13) meaning we must act as if our rational waking life does not exist. As Hillman describes, “….because dreaming is imaging, our instrument for undistorted listening can only be the imagination.” (p. 55) Capturing the knowledge and wisdom that becomes available during this process can enhance transformational learning.

While Hillman (1979) advances a phenomenological perspective of seeing the dream as we actually experience it, others believe that individuals who engage in dream interpretation work often find it helpful in healing from trauma, becoming more self-aware and improving the quality of life. Signell, (1990) a Jungian analyst, believes that working with female archetypes can assist women to find insights into their own dreams. She has discovered that these insights cannot only help women to resolve their own problems but can help others as well through discovering universal patterns and themes; what Jung referred to as the collective unconscious. Some dreamwork theorists such as Taylor (1992) have even used dreamwork in groups to work toward social transformation. An example of this is the work he did with community volunteers on unlearning racism and engaging in non-violent social action.

Experiential Painting

Dreamwork is not the only way to surface unconscious wisdom. Lawrence and others (2005) have discussed how knowledge can be constructed through artistic expression in ways that cannot occur through rational means. Cassou and Cubley (1995) developed a process called “The Painting Experience” where people spontaneously and creatively allow imagery to emerge from deep within. The focus is on the process of painting with little or no regard to the outcome. There are no rules or expectations. The authors advise:

If you feel tense in front of your paper, put a generous amount of paint on a brush and scribble. It is a pure action that serves to open up the movement of the arm and hand. Painting without caring about the result stimulates new energies within and prepares the ground for the next step. (p. 28)

Freed from the need to do something artistic, people can experience the transformative power of the imagery. Lipsett (2002) uses a similar method of what she calls “spontaneous painting” to deepen connections between humans and the earth and to create a sacred space for planetary healing. In order for hidden knowledge to be revealed through this painting process one must be willing to let go of ego or self. According to photographer Freeman Patterson (1989) “preoccupation with self is the greatest barrier to seeing” p. 9. Letting go of self or the need to create something in a certain way frees us to fully express what is present. This expression has both emotional and spiritual dimensions.

Personal Stories

The remainder of this paper illustrates the hidden dimensions of transformative learning through the lived experiences of two women, Michele and Suzanne (pseudonyms). Michele has been working with dreams personally and professionally for a number of years. Suzanne is a visual artist who practices experiential painting.

Inner Wisdom and Decision Making

Dreams can be a source of inner wisdom that can assist with decision making when one is experiencing a major life transition. At midlife, Michele found herself in a troubled marriage with three teenaged children. While part of her knew it was time to leave the relationship, influences from her strict upbringing were weighing on her. The unspoken voices of her family were telling her she should stay and work things out no matter what. Michele starting paying attention to her dreams. She noticed that she was having recurring dreams about houses in disrepair or with
missing parts. She realized that the houses were symbols for her disintegrating marriage. At the same time she also had dreams about building and remodeling. These dreams told her that something positive was emerging and they affirmed her decision to leave the marriage and move on. Soon she began dreaming of hotels as states of transition. Michele described her dreams as “her own inner therapist” leading her and showing her that she had her own inner resources to make good decisions. She realized that she did not need others to tell her what was right or wrong.

Suzanne, finds this inner wisdom through the symbols and imagery that appear in her painting, particularly spontaneous painting with no agenda. She described a time when she was in a difficult living and working situation and “on the verge of burnout.” At this time she was taking a course on spirituality. A mentor encouraged her to paint over the Spring break as a way to relieve her stress and achieve more balance in her life. Suzanne decided to paint images that had come to her in prayer and through journaling. The painting, which she later called Light out of Darkness helped her to shift her perspective on the direction her life was headed. In Suzanne’s words:

Art is a way of seeing my soul that I didn’t have words for or wasn’t aware of it in my left brain, in my linear way of thinking. It frees up a wisdom of symbol and image that’s deeper than thinking. And out it comes in front of you so you can begin to dialogue with it. You can begin to see what is going on within you that is deeper than you realize. Each of us might have a symbolic language such as in dreams and in our subconscious, and it’s a way of getting to know your own symbolic language.

Self –Knowledge, Growth and Development

Symbolic imagery that emerges thorough experiential painting and through dreams can promote transformation as we begin to see ourselves in new and different ways; thus imagining new possibilities and ways of being. Suzanne grew up with a mother who was very assertive. By contrast, Suzanne learned to not stand up for her own beliefs, preferring to avoid conflict at all costs. After her mother died, Suzanne became aware of images that were surfacing in her painting. “I’m holding the Earth and she [my mother] is holding me as I hold the Earth. I can feel her support in a way that I never did. It’s deepening”. As she sensed her mother’s presence and support through her painting, Suzanne felt freer to be more assertive about what was really important to her.

Michele found that her dreams helped to envision new career options. She had recently started teaching adults for the first time. She began to have dreams in which she was teaching but had forgotten her notes. In her dreams Michele was very confident and self-assured. The dream images translated into a waking confidence, which challenged her inner-critic that said “you can’t do this”. Working with dreams helped Michele to get in touch with her gifts, to accept her imperfections and to recognize how much power she really had, allowing her to be successful in her career transition.

Personal and Global Healing

Dreams can be a vehicle for getting in touch with emotions that are beneath the conscious level that are often threatening or perceived to be taboo in one’s culture. Michele’s children blamed her for her divorce. One son would not talk to her for a year. Michele found that her dreams were a place where she could express her own anger that she did not feel she had permission to express in waking life. In her dreams she safely expressed anger at her children for not supporting her decision. This awareness transformed her perspective on the situation, which allowed her to give them the space to work through their pain in their own time. “Dreams always keep me honest”, said Michele. “I become more aware of emotions, especially anger and frustration that I may not be in touch with in waking life”.

Painting is another way to become aware of and release strong emotion. Through painting we can allow ourselves to express feelings that we may not feel comfortable expressing or may not have the language to put into words. Suzanne discovered that painting was away to help her deal with the pain and horror over the destruction of the Earth. “On paper I can allow myself to express the terror or the compassion…. I am a child of the universe. I am participating in the evolution. If we are going to have a mindchange we need to learn to live in a different way. I realized this through my painting.”

Lipsett (2002) also found that painting allowed her to strengthen her connection with the Earth.

Spontaneous painting over time nurtures our wildly Earthy aspects and opens our hearts and minds to all Earth beings. By emptying ourselves out, we create space to let nature in. We become one with the wild and spontaneous life force and learn a new way of listening. We co-create sustainable guiding visions, honor the earth with our authentic creations, and find ourselves on speaking terms with the Earth once again. (p.216).
Collaborative Learning

Exploring imagery through dreams and experiential painting can have the power to be transformative for the individual. Working with the images in a group can be even more powerful due to the synergy that occurs when the experience is shared in a group context. Dream circles are a way for people to share and get feedback on their dreams. Often people can see images in the dream that suggest new ways of viewing the dream and new insights for the dreamer. Mezirow (1996) stated “We make meaning by projecting images and symbolic models, meaning schemes based upon prior learning, onto our sensory experiences and imaginatively use analogies to interpret new experiences” (p.162). These experiences often come into our awareness through our dreams. In previous research (Lawrence, 1996) I discussed how sharing experiences in group contexts often helps people to see the connections between their experiences and that of others; assisting them in coming to new understandings and new perspectives. Gaining access to the experiences of others through the sharing of dreams in a dialogical process can deepen our understanding of our own experience and can have profound impact on how we live in the world.

Jeremy Taylor (1992) organized a group of white social activists in the San Francisco Bay area in a project aimed at combating racism in the community. While the activists appeared to be deeply committed to the cause, they actually ended up alienating and causing resentment among the black community members due to unconscious internalized racist attitudes and behaviors. Recognizing that a connection existed between individual emotions and the larger social patterns associated with racism, Taylor involved the group in sharing their dreams. “Having failed to accept aspects of ourselves, it became inevitable that we would project these unacceptable internal energies outward in a systemic pattern of unconscious racism” (p. 186). Dreamwork surfaced these unconscious racist attitudes and group dialogue opened up a deeper exploration of peoples’ fear and pain. This awareness translated into the activists changing their external behavior, which allowed them to work more effectively with the black community on combating racism.

Experiential painting also has more transformative potential in group settings. Suzanne conducts painting retreats and holds monthly sessions for interested individuals simply called “Come and Paint.” The group starts with a brief meditation inviting members to open their mind, heart and soul and then to let go or surrender to whatever occurs. The group paints in silence for several hours. At the end of the session people share their experience, and if they choose, their artwork. As in the dream circle, opportunities to explore the imagery through the synergistic dimensions of group work often lead to greater knowing.

Conclusions: Learning to Float

Tapping into unconscious knowledge and wisdom can be a way to promote transformative learning. This learning is both individual and collective. It can inform decision making, result in greater self-knowledge, and facilitate personal and global healing. People experiencing a major life transition often feel lost and confused. It is as if one has swum away from shore without knowing how far it is to the other side. Panic may set in as one realizes there is no anchor or source of stability. It is too far to turn back, yet the destination is uncertain. There is great temptation to hitch a ride on the first passing boat, simply going along and ending up wherever it lands. However, there is another alternative. One can simply turn over and back float, allowing one’s body and mind to relax, giving space for images and ideas to bubble up from those hidden dimensions of consciousness. If one is fully awake and paying attention, new directions and opportunities can emerge allowing one to move to the next phase of life with intention.

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Transforming Our Spiritual Self Through Critical Thinking

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Abstract: Scholars have addressed critical thinking, but not how it transforms our spiritual self. This paper examines how critical self reflection as a transformative process leads to the examination, development and transformation of our spiritual self as we examine our assumptions, values and beliefs and determine the need to enhance them. It includes an examination of the literature in critical thinking, transformative learning, and spirituality and learners' journals from a graduate level course in critical thinking.

How Critical Thinking Works
Research done by the author over the years while teaching graduate courses on critical thinking prompted a look at just how the development of our spiritual self was a part of critical thinking. Much of what is said is based on the analysis of learners' reflective journals and the literature of critical thinking, adult learning, spirituality and self development. The background for this paper is the effort that has gone into writing a book titled; The Spiritual Character of Critical Thinking and how the process investigated in the book is a transformative process. It illustrates how typical learners encounter the process and how to assist them in developing their ability to be critical thinkers. Comments made by learners in their reflective journals as they engaged in the critical thinking process during a graduate course on critical thinking prompted the idea that there was more to critical thinking than had thus far appeared in the literature. A more intense research effort was mounted after several years of reading the journals and noting the expressions of something going on that was character transforming and related to critical and spiritual-like experiences as described in the works of Norris & Ennis (1989).

Critical thinking is definitely a creative process in that it creates new and enhanced sets of values beliefs and assumptions. It also requires a set of creative thinking and problem solving skills to fully engage in the process. It is universally accepted among critical thinking scholars that the process is initiated by some trigger event. Brookfield (1987) maintains the triggers can be positive and he cites learners’ accounts of peak experiences as triggers. However, there is a definite void in the literature reporting on the occurrence of positive triggers and the resulting engagement in critical thinking. As we explore that we begin to find some reasoning for the uplifting feelings generated when we are engaged in the critical thinking process. At the breakthrough moments we find a sense of exhilaration. Perhaps we do not generate the same sonic boom, like a jet aircraft does, but we definitely know we have gone beyond where we were.

The Self and Identity
According to Dobeort, Habermas and Nunner-Winkler (1987), the concept of identity is a sociological equivalent of the self. They say the identity is the stable element defined by the sociological environment of our existence and remains stable despite changes in biographical conditions and positions in social structure. It is that element that we think of as being consistent even though we encounter differing life conditions. Once we have established our identity, we count on that remaining pretty much the same from that point forth.

The self on the other hand is in a constant state of change and development. The self exists only through transformation. While the identity has sociological meaning the self has personal meaning and has within it the dialectic of being unique and yet one with others.

Our Inner and Outer Lives
The real benefit of the spiritual development of the ‘self’ is what occurs in the outer life of the individual. Many have indicated what resides within the person often manifests in the outer reality of that person. Dyer (1995) specifically says that thoughts become things, i.e. what we think we often see becoming a part of our outside world. Miller (2000) has said that whatever is filling our beings will be reflected in our outer world. There is interaction and communication between the inner and outer worlds of our ‘self’ and it is in this interaction that we either manifest in our lives what we desire or what we have allowed ourselves to think. Zander and Zander (2000) refer to the "downward spiral talk" we hear in our thoughts and in our organizations.

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As we get caught up in our drive to get, acquire or secure our 'piece of the pie' we begin to act upon or more sadly to react to our assumptions. We fail to realize our assumptions are created within a particular context and we fail to respond to changes occurring in that context by enhancing our own assumptions. We also often fail to act from our inner self and instead continue to have our "calculating self" (Zander & Zander, 2000, p. 81) dominate until we have a trigger event occur in our life.

Critical self-reflection is a self-directed and almost always transformative activity and is usually accompanied by a trigger event that launches us into the process (Brookfield, 1987). It is only after this trigger event that we engage in critical thinking. There is most definitely a process involved in which, as we are considering alternatives for our lives and situations or examining claims others have made, we begin to ask determinant questions about how we regard our behaviors and reasons for those behaviors and how that relates to our inner or spiritual self.

As we engage in the process of critical thinking we find that not only are all our behaviors based on some assumptions we hold, but we also find the limitations created by our assumptions only appear to be real rather than being real (Zander and Zander, 2000). Authors such as Brookfield (1987, 2004), Moore and Parker (1998) Norris and Ennis (1989), and Ruggiero (1998) have looked at the process as it relates to the physical, material and intellectual realm of our existence. As facilitators of the process we need to understand how we can go beyond those realms and see the possibilities for our spiritual self. Because we have shied away from and separated our spiritual realm from our learning rationality – primarily because that is a private and personal arena – we have failed to see the connections between these realms. Also, because we have confused spirituality with religion we have left the spiritual realm of our existence to those who are theologians or seminary prepared or at least theologically astute. Recently, Tisdell (2003) has explored how spirituality and culture interact in the process of adult learning. Her work stopped short of looking at critical thinking as the process that triggers the transformation of our spiritual self.

Norris and Ennis (1989) speak of a "critical spirit" (p.11) as being what motivates critical thinkers to apply these abilities to their own thinking as well as that of others. They also say this is likened to the character of the critical thinker. It is not a big leap to go from what Norris and Ennis have delineated to the concept of the spiritual self playing a major role in a critical thinking process. They say that to become a critical thinker requires "a transformation of character" (p. 176). If we label that the transformation of spiritual self we can easily see the linkage to the premise of this paper. It implies that critical thinkers must be autonomous decision makers, open minded, to not only others' ideas, but to the possibility that their own basic assumptions may be flawed and in need of enhancement. This would require the use of creative thinking in the development of alternatives to previously held assumptions, values and beliefs. This is what the process of perspective transformation requires.

Conflict and Chaos

In life we constantly come face-to-face with examples of human error, ignorance, oversight, and misjudgment. "There was a woman in Chicago, for example, who tied knots in the cords of her lamps and electric appliances in the belief that it would cut down on the amount of electricity she used and thus help her save on her utility bill" (Moore & Parker, 1998, p. 3).

Where the uncritical accept the first version of thoughts they form about what others say, and tend to accept things at face value, critical thinkers challenge all ideas by engaging in a definitely different process. Ruggiero (1998) says that engaging in the critical thinking process causes us to ask questions such as:

- Is there a relationship between values and beliefs or between values and convictions?
- Is there value in the values we hold?
- How aware are we of our values?
- Where do our values come from?
- Does our level of education change our values?
- As parents and teachers can we shape children's values?

There are a number of misconceptions about the process of critical thinking. One is that just being able to support our beliefs with some form of reason, makes us a critical thinker. Essentially everyone has reasons, even though they may be weak. The real determinant of whether we are critical thinkers is whether the reasons are good and sufficient and can stand the test of being so. Another misconception is that as critical thinkers we never imitate or assume the thoughts or actions of others. "Critical thinking means making some decisions, regardless of how common those decisions are" (Ruggiero, 1998, p.13). A third misconception is that critical thinkers have all the right answers in their heads.
One of the worst misconceptions is that critical thinking cannot be learned. Even the most careless, sloppy thinker can become a critical thinker by developing the characteristics of one. However, becoming a critical thinker is not a matter of just deciding to become one. There is always a trigger event that leads to a person becoming a critical thinker. People can learn, in other words, they can be assisted in knowing how to engage in the process of their thoughts and to use their minds actively as well as passively. Getting learners to engage in the process is often difficult because critical thinking requires a trigger event. What we try to do as educators and facilitators of the process, is to get the learners to recall the events that were or could have been their triggers. The reflective journals required of the learners in the critical thinking class were a help in getting them to critically reflect on the events that could have been triggers for them.

When they engaged in the critical thinking process they most often indicated they were engaged in a situation where, in order for learning or change to take place, they had to give up an attitude about some closely held value, belief or assumption and replace it with another attitude. However, it is not a simple matter of giving up one attitude and replacing it with another. The attitude has to be unlearned and we must open ourselves up to the transforming power of learning and be open for the new one to take hold (More, 1974). And, we still have not dealt with the change, modification or enhancement to the underlying value, belief or assumption. We have just adjusted our attitude toward it so we are open to the change. In all of this replacement process, there is a time lag between knowing it is time to change and the feeling of its rightness. During this time lag it is chaotic, because we are not comfortable yet with the new. It is also a time of having to acquire knowledge and information that will help us formulate a new attitude and values, beliefs or assumptions. This is a peak time of learning for us and it is an emotionally charged time.

The presence of the lag in time results in a conflict being developed. This occurs because we have to begin the process of giving up some part of our 'self' before we have completed the formulation of the new part. Even if we are only enhancing a value, belief or assumption we have to pry ourselves loose from the old way of knowing and feeling. At that time, we do not know if any newly formulated value, belief or assumption will be congruent with who we are or our culture. We do not know if we will find as much of a secure place in our new value, belief or assumption. We have to "... admit we are wrong before we can possibly recognize, let alone feel, what is right" (More, 1974, p.7). From all of this we produce resistance and conflict in our 'self'. More maintains that learning involves feeling as well as knowing and that unlearning produces conflict.

Most of us attempt to have some sort of system in our life in which we have a set of values that make us feel comfortable. We then strive to preserve the system where we feel contented, happy and secure. We also seek to have a system that is fulfilling for us on a physical, intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual plane. It is our desire to obtain and maintain a system that gives us what we most commonly referred to as our motivation.

Some of the impetus for critical thinking and critical self reflection and the accompanying change in self comes from the feelings engendered when the individual is subjected to being an unknown. When those about us are making statements about not knowing why we are the way we are, or giving us cues that we are not in sync with our world, it creates a disorienting dilemma. We begin to get messages that we are somehow or other, less than acceptable in their eyes. Our sense of belonging is threatened or damaged and we seek to reduce the threat or repair the damage. These are the types of triggers that launch us into the critical thinking process.

Another part of the impetus for change or engagement in the critical thinking process comes from the sense of not belonging, which is interpreted as not being accepted by others. When this occurs it becomes much more difficult to have the sense of accepting ourselves. It can be argued that we must accept our own self before there can be any expectation for others to accept our self. Or it could be argued that non-acceptance by others prevents accepting our self. Either way, it is in this conflict that the drive for engagement and critical thinking is evoked.

To lose our sense of belonging is painful and the threshold of that pain is a pivotal point in the critical thinking process. Before we will change or learn, we must cross the threshold of pain, where it is more painful to remain where we are, full of the feelings of being incongruent, left out, not belonging, out of synch, etc., than it is to face the imagined or anticipated perceptual pain of making a change in who we are. It is this threshold of pain that keeps us in our old way of being or old way of knowing until we come to that time of knowing we must change and finally feeling it is the 'right' way to do it. That latter element is what propels us over the threshold. It is the point of our transformation (Fry, 2003).

**Religion and Spirituality**

Spirituality and religion are not the same concept at all in my opinion. Unfortunately when it comes to these kinds of topics it is a matter of opinion. There is no way to prove one way or the other whether I am right or not. Religion to me is the path we follow in our journey toward spirituality. True spirituality may be one of those conditions we always can aspire to but can never totally reach. Spirituality may be the end goal and religion the...
means of trying to achieve it. Being a constructivist I am used to the idea of people having their own version of the truth and that many variations of the truth can exist simultaneously. The pursuit of spirituality is a life-long journey just as learning is co-terminus with life and critical thinking is a life-long process (Tait, 1995; Wulff, 1996, cited by Fry, 2003).

Fry (2003) says "spirituality reflects the presence of a relationship with a higher power or being that affects the way in which one operates in the world" (p. 705). This concept is not as narrow as any one religion with its dogma, tenets and doctrines (Zellers & Perreive, 2003). It is likened to the search for meaningful purpose in life (one might say dharma) and the interdependent connectedness with others. The quest for spirituality is one in which people seek their dharma and a personal relationship with their particular version of a higher power, which may or may not be called God (Tait, 1995; Wulff, 1996, cited by Fry, 2003).

"Spirituality may be defined as a selfless sense of love and compassion for others, respect and concern for well-being and life, and reverence for the universe and its creation" (Conger & Associates, 1994, p.12). According to Gibbons (1999) “Spirituality, once an aspect of religion, has turned the linguistic tables and religion is now seen as one of many possible spiritual paths. Once spirituality was a path to deep communion with God. Now God, for many, is no longer the object of their spiritual search: the path is one of communion and connectedness with many other transcendent conceptions” (p.3). Gibbons quotes King as saying "Spirituality is the search for direction, meaning, inner wholeness, and connectedness to others, to non-human creation and to a transcendent" (p.3). While we do not want to be too indefinite or abstract on one hand, we have to try and avoid definitions that are too concrete, hard and fast on the other hand. With the concept of spirituality the words of our human language are inadequate or cannot be accurate enough when we try to apply them to the realities of spirituality (Underhill, as cited by Gibbons, 1999).

Tisdell (2003) writes extensively about spirituality and how it is involved in adult education and she states that:

- Spirituality is an elusive topic and evades definition and most definitions seem inadequate.
- Spirituality and religion are not the same but many people see them as being related.
- Spirituality is an awareness and honoring of wholeness and the interconnectedness of all things.
- Spirituality is fundamentally about meaning making.
- Spirituality is always present (although often not acknowledged).
- Spiritual development is moving toward greater authenticity to a more authentic self.
- Spirituality is about how we construct knowledge through largely unconscious and symbolic processes.
- Spiritual experience most often happens by surprise (p. xi).

Adult learning takes place in many different venues and contexts. Some of them we expect it to happen in, such as the classroom or adult development setting or as we critically self reflect and make new meanings from journals or as we recall previously constructed experiences. But, it can also take place in movie theaters, while at a play or other pop cultural events. Tisdell (2003) relates how attending a play with her father was a definite learning experience for her.

Adult learning definitely has a spiritual dimension and the spiritual dimension of our lives is an important element in our learning. Most often we see the expression of that dimension in such areas as art forms, music or storytelling, even though storytelling is an art almost lost because of our obsession with TV. The spiritual dimension is often a factor of how we make meaning of our connections and relationships with others. For many adults that spiritual dimension is associated with the connection we have to a higher power or sense of a transcendent power.

Tisdell (2003) indicates we have shied away from dealing with spirituality in our professional practice areas of adult education, but it is beginning to be dealt with in more of those areas. Educators and others are beginning to write about how that dimension of their practice has been relatively unexplored and many academics are encouraging new doctoral students and other researchers to investigate the area.

One of the reasons for not exploring spirituality in the past has been our inability to rigorously define it. What we are finding is a greater tolerance for ambiguity and thus the courage to explore what is beyond the ability of our five senses to perceive.

Tisdell (2003) cites Sloon et al. and Ziegler as reporting that more than 30 medical schools in the U.S. actually offer courses exploring the connection between spirituality and health. There is a growing interest in exploring these connections in adult education and following the work of some groundbreakers like Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) there has been more emphasis given to finding ways in which spirituality and connection play out in adult learning. So we are seeing a break in the silence that has existed in the spiritual realm.
of learning, education and meaning making. Those who have been focused on the emancipatory aspects of adult learning have written more and more about the significance of spirituality (Tisdell, 2003).

Although there have been more and more publications on spirituality in education there has been a lack of literature that deals with the connection of spirituality and the process of critical thinking. Critical thinking is certainly an element within the overarching concept of adult learning. It is a very special aspect of learning that brings into consciousness the dependence of learning on the transformation of our perspectives, our worldviews and our views of our selves. In the process of critical thinking we are finding ways to examine our values, beliefs and assumptions and in a deliberate way finding creative alternatives to who we think we are and what we stand for. We are beginning to recognize that as we do that we are re-examining our connections with our selves and others as well as our sense of a higher power.

Whether we are trying to discern the spiritual character of learning and adulthood or the spiritual character of critical thinking we must realize that we are trying to put into words what is beyond words. Weisbust and Thomas (1994) say it is trans-conceptual and trans-mental and because it is paradoxical, trans-logical and of the mandalic sciences. Because we are trying to describe that which goes beyond our ordinary sensory perception with words and descriptions that are within our normal sensory perception, we often encounter paradoxes and contradictions of what we have known as true. As we begin to explore the spiritual realm of our critical thinking process we must be ready to go beyond the many closely held, accepted as true, basic assumptions upon which not only our behavior but our faith is based.

When we try to define the spiritual character of critical thinking it is perhaps better to follow the lead of Maslow as cited in Weisbust and Thomas (1994) and just "...skate past philosophical complexities as fast as you can" (p. 123). So we turn from trying to provide rigorous theoretical definitions to providing examples of what has been a part of the experience of learners engaging in critical thinking. As the journals and dialogue of learners have been examined it is evident there is very little that separates the learner having profound spiritual insights from those just dabbling with critical self reflection. Weisbust and Thomas said Maslow noted that the difference between the "...most spiritually advanced 'peak experiencer' and the ordinary person is only a matter of degree, not kind" (1994, p. 121). It seems to follow the adage that some people come to the fountain of knowledge and only wet their lips, while others quench their thirst. So it is with the learners engaging in critical thinking. Some will fully engage and dig through several layers of assumptions, values and beliefs. Some will just graze around the edge of the pool of assumptions and barely get their feet wet while others have plunged into the depths. But, what separates them is not what kind or type of person they are but just how willing they are to critically self reflect.

**Involvement of an Other**

In the process of critical thinking there is always an 'other' involved and the most challenging function for this 'other' is to allow the critical thinker or learner to learn. Being the facilitator of the process is much like the words of Heidegger, cited by Collins (1991), "teaching is more difficult than learning because what teaching calls for is this: to let learn" (p. 31).

There are many studies and reports in the adult learning literature on the value of collaborative learning with adults and children. These studies are especially pertinent to looking at the spiritual character of critical thinking because the critical thinking process cannot take place without the involvement of an 'other'. The 'other' is required to reflect back to the critical thinker what is being said or demonstrated in the critical self reflection on the inner, closely held values, beliefs and assumptions. We need that sounding board to be our mirror for where we are in the process. It is often necessary for us to get a nudge from the 'other' to help us explore more deeply our values beliefs and assumptions.

When we engage in the process of critical thinking we are starting to examine the armor we wear to protect our inner self. It often becomes important to us to keep that armor intact, which is why the process of critical self reflection becomes difficult and we need to enroll the services of an 'other' to assist us. When our personal armor is in jeopardy of being penetrated or banged up, we heavily resist any challenges to our personal point of view or our personal frame of reference. What we often fail to see is that it is our frame of reference that prevents us from seeing or perceiving any possibilities other than those already imagined or a part of our constructed experience.

It is generally accepted that to fully engage in critical thinking it is necessary for there to be the involvement of an 'other'. It is not a process we can engage in without having the aid or support of a person serving as the other. Grant (1988) says critical thinking is contextually bound and that the teacher (or facilitator) must have a broad and deep understanding of subject matter in order to teach critical thinking. She also says the teacher must have "a representation of that understanding in multiple forms as work activities for students" (p.2). The teachers' representation of their understanding will frame the reference point for the learners to develop their thinking. An especially pertinent element for consideration is Gore's (1993) citation of Foucault's idea of power-knowledge
relations and how those relations in the pedagogical institutions so heavily influence the values, beliefs and assumptions formed, analyzed, evaluated and enhanced in the critical thinking process.

Whenever those relations exist, wherever knowledge is dispensed and wherever the context for critical thinking is framed, we have, not only opportunities for, but abuses of the development of the spiritual character of learners and critical thinkers. Many of us do not have a complete awareness of the far reaching impact of elements of the critical thinking process. We therefore do not realize how, when and in which contexts our spiritual self is being shaped when we engage in critical thinking. Critical thinking takes place in many bizarre places. It is not constrained to formal educational settings.

We must be open to the possibility of looking at critical thinking in a different light and examining how we can more effectively facilitate the engagement of learners in the very private matter of developing their spiritual self. Even though it is a self directed process it can be enhanced with the support of an other.

References
Transformative Learning: Its Role in Theory and in the Classroom

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Abstract: This paper defines Transformative Learning in a more limited fashion than much of the current literature and positions it within a personal learning theory. A philosophical discussion on the application of Transformative Learning in the adult-learner classroom follows. The questions raised in the paper are intended to spur theoretical discussion, to galvanize readers into developing their own approaches to transformative learning theory, and to act as a platform for considering the ethical and practical aspects of transformative learning in the classroom.

Introduction

“This course is about changing who you are.” So went the introduction to a mandated corporate diversity training session. Depending on individuals’ mindsets, this proposition may have proclaimed an exciting start; or it could have triggered a daydreaming episode accompanied by a faux-interested game face; or it might have raised hackles in the best ‘we’ll just see about that’ sense. The potential reactions to that dramatic introduction and to the course were as varied as were the people in attendance. The trainer could never realistically expect to deliver on his promise of transformation to every attendee: any fundamental changes experienced by audience members would be completely serendipitous.

Some years later, another diversity trainer shared her perspective on that earlier introduction. She believed that it did not matter one iota if attendees themselves were personally transformed. She focused on shaping compliant behavior. Whatever the desired behavior’s motivational source – strong belief in moral rightness, fear of legal consequences or job loss, a mindless willingness to follow the current code of conduct, an understanding that this was just good business, or a profound personal paradigm shift – she left to the individual attendees. So long as the resulting behavior and the expressed spirit with which it was exhibited met legal, societal, and corporate requirements, the training had met its instrumental objectives. More importantly, her results were far more effective than the ‘causes as cudgels’ (Zemke, 1996) philosophy espoused by the earlier trainer.

Getting Started

Learning is generally accepted to mean “…a relatively permanent change in behavior or in the potential to make a response that occurs as a result of experience.” (Davis & Palladino, 2002, p. 234) This definition closely conforms to those provided by many psychologists and educators, including Merriam and Caffarella (1999, p. 250) and Driscoll (2000, p. 11), who exchanges the term ‘performance’ for ‘behavior.’ Most adults enter educational situations with the intent or the hope of taking action on learned material.

Mezirow (2000, p. 20), however, in a considerable departure from such readily accepted definitions, initially leaves performance and behavior in limbo, preferring instead to concentrate on learning as transforming personal frames of reference to make them more dependable and as generating new justified interpretations. While he describes subjective behaviors as required during the learning process itself – defining problems, reframing assumptions, engaging in discourse and critical reflection, exploring roles, re-integrating new perspectives, etc. – it is almost as an afterthought that Mezirow appends the need to act on the newly derived insights at some unspecified point in time (2000, pp. 23-24). E.W. Taylor’s research study (2000, p.314) indicates that the need to act is an essential factor in transformative learning, at least in group settings.

The challenge with developing a cohesive and comprehensive learning theory, of course, is that there are so many possible variables to consider in any situation. The case for cross-disciplinary assumptions consilience in theory development (Driscoll, pp. 9-10) describes this challenge. In keeping with cross-disciplinary consilience, then, it seems to me that four primary assumption types are encapsulated in a learning theory. They are: 1) the learner’s social and cultural context, 2) a human growth/developmental theory, 3) a theoretical psychology foundation, and 4) an educational framework minimally composed of andragogical approaches and instructional techniques. Each of these disciplines brings its own vocabulary, its own assumptions, and its own value to the mix. To ignore any one of them when generating a learning theory would likely result in consequential internal theoretical errors or theoretical logic gaps.

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A Personal Learning Theory

To position transformative learning effectively in the classroom, it was first necessary to develop a personal perspective on learning theory in general. Figure 1 presents my theory diagrammed as a sample learning timeline and incorporating the developmental, psychological, and social/cultural components discussed in the previous section. The construct hangs from a developmental superstructure, which essentially maintains that change and personal growth – physical, psychological, and cognitive – occur throughout a lifespan and that those changes follow a generally consistent developmental pattern from person to person in a particular society. Erikson’s stage theory (1975) is the exemplar here, largely because the psychosocial crises he associates with each stage reflect and require increasingly more complex levels of critical thinking processes, as well as increasingly more integrated relationships with self and community. Those are also concepts central to transformative learning theory.

**Figure 1**

**Personal Learning Theory Timeline**

This psychosocial development is simplistically depicted here as linear, although not all people progress gracefully, or even at all, through all the named stages, of course. Some become mired or ‘stuck’ at one spot on the continuum. Some stumble through a stage without having fully mastered its particular developmental tasks, making the journey through the next stages all the more troublesome. Kegan’s developmental ‘helix of evolutionary truces’ (Daloz, 1999, pp. 64-67) is an elegant and probably more accurate portrayal of the spiraling and iterative nature of development. His view on increasingly complex epistemologies (Kegan, 2000, pp. 60-63) also models a growing capacity for ‘knowing.’

In Figure 1, behavioral and social learning combine, despite the fact that they are really very different learning theories. The diagram proposes to show, however, the sporadic timing and strength of these particular learning theories at various points in the developmental stages of a person’s life; the two theories’ combination on a single line expresses the basic belief that the timeframes during which they each hold sway are generally similar. Periodic episodes of social and/or behavioral learning, scattered randomly throughout adulthood on the diagram, indicate new situational learning required for role changes or as a result of movement into untested societal or global cultures.

Cognitive learning plays a lifelong role in the diagram. It is well accepted now that the ability and desire to learn can continue throughout a lifespan (Gross, 2003). I chose K. Warner Schaie (1978-79, 1990 to represent this learning theory on the timeline. Schaie’s stage theory of cognitive learning also easily coexists with Erikson’s and Kegan’s developmental stages in that it posits an ever-expanding emphasis on commitment to others and to the seeking of meaning in life. In fact, the approaches almost mesh, rather than merely coexist.

The factory icons in Figure 1 represent the constructivist learning theorists, whose premise rests on learners’ abilities to develop mental structures (models) and to ‘make meaning’ from their current learning based on previous experience, the environment, and their present perceptions of reality (points of view). Constructivist activities are largely continuous: hence the dotted line along the entire timeline. Note, too, that the constructivist theory is positioned between the social and cognitive, since it depends on both for configuring a learner’s particular point-in-time interpretation of reality. This placement also recognizes Vygotsky’s ideas on the importance of social interaction in negotiating ‘meaning’ (Driscoll, 2000, pp. 385-386).
Light bulb icons in Figure 1 symbolize instances of insight learning, which can occur at any time during a lifespan. These are relatively frequent happenings, and we recognize them by our Gestalt-like ‘ah-ha!’ reaction when we chance upon them. Insight learning is defined as “the sudden grasp of the concept or the solution to a problem that results from perceptual restructuring” (Davis & Palladino, 2002, p. 258). It is a cognitive process, which explains the bulbs’ positioning on the cognitive timeline. The important aspects of insight learning are that it 1) represents a restructuring of perceptual understanding, 2) engenders a relatively immediate instrumental response, and 3) is often generalized to other learner situations. While not necessarily paradigmatically revolutionary (Kuhn, 1970), insight learning does generate new points of view in the learner and enables the creation of new mental models. Ron Howard (2003), Academy Award-winning director and producer, calls them “moments of discovery” and likens them to “creative breakthroughs” that are “exhilarating” when they “come out of left field.”

Transformative learning events are depicted with exclamation points. In contrast to insights, these episodes are much less frequent and far more profound. They impact explosively on the learner’s core assumptions and value systems, altering not only perceptions and mental models, but also the fundamental belief systems of learners. Neither are they necessarily immediately correlated with instrumental behaviors. For this reason, I have positioned them on the developmental timeline, despite the fact that they are acknowledged to require higher level thinking skills for ultimate resolution. Learning from these events can lie latent and unobservable, perhaps for a very long time. As with the other theories melded into this personal perspective, transformative learning is said to assist in a learner’s growth, in her ability to form meaning, and in her capacity for epistemological self-understanding and what Kegan calls “self-authorship” (2000, p.64).

Distinguishing between insights and transformative learning can be confusing. The former are far more common and are immediately actionable. It is difficult to imagine someone literally transforming fundamental value and belief systems on a regularly occurring basis: that seems more suggestive to me of an inability to have successfully navigated Erikson’s adolescence-based identity confusion psychosocial crisis, instead. Transformational learning is outside the ‘normal’ developmental thread of a person’s life, and yet the impact of that learning affects his future developmental path. Hence its placement in the diagram.

Finally, Figure 1 shows an additional set of what I call confounding variables that affect the learner’s capacity and openness to learning at any moment in time. The unique patterns generated by these waves flicker and flare daily (think biorhythms) and over the long term, much as does the aurora borealis from an observer’s perspective, without particular regard for one another or for the other theoretical constructs in the diagram. They can charge our ‘learning batteries,’ and they can just as readily impede our progress. So, while static on the page, Figure 1 illustrates what I consider to be a dynamic and exciting – and fairly inclusive – personal learning theory.

**Development and/or Transformation**

The ‘transformation-is-development-and-development-is-transformation’ circular argument often encountered in the literature frustrates me with its lack of clarity. Why do we need both if they are the same? How do we differentiate them from one another and from learning theories? This dilemma prompted me to create the analysis matrix in Table 1, which attempts to bring various learning constructs into better focus by identifying and assessing how and whether key learning concepts are addressed in the various theories. (X = ‘inclusion’)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idea ↓</th>
<th>Theory→</th>
<th>Social/Dev.</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Constructivist</th>
<th>Transformational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interplay between social context and learning</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X ‘situated cognition’</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning is recursive</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning is individualistic</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interplay between affect and learning</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X ‘emotional intelligence’</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interplay of relationship and learning</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X ‘communities of learning’</td>
<td>X ‘social negotiation’</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of critical reflection and critical analysis</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners seek meaning and ‘make sense’ of life experiences</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X ‘meaningful learning’</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Learning goals
- Become an ever more highly functioning adult within a culture

### Identify entities, relations, and attributes that the learner must ‘know’

### Learning in context for deployment in meaningful activity

### “Develop requisite learning processes to think and choose with more reliable insight”

### Additional key concepts and/or vocabulary
- Expectancy
- Valence
- Locus of control
- Self-efficacy
- Observation
- Vicarious [reinforcement or punishment]
- Knowledge can exist independently of learner
- Information processing theory
- Memory models and schema
- Epistemological awareness
- Cognitive flexibility
- Mental structures can be both different from reality and viable
- Epistemic fluency
- Self-directed
- Epistemological change
- Trigger events
- Frames of reference
- Habits of mind
- Points of view
- Subjective reframing
- Reflective discourse use

### Notes:

Once again, disappointment loomed. I craved some clarity and even the occasional obvious distinction. I eagerly anticipated conspicuous gaps and major differences. What resulted, instead, is a picture of mature theories whose authors and followers have developed well thought-out theses, informed by one another, supported over time by research, and validated through experience. The perspectives may vary and the vocabulary may be discipline-centric, but the primary constructs are in general agreement. Distinctive and defining boundaries for transformative learning did not manifest in Table 1. Neither did a distinction appear to set it off from development in general.

My frustration is with the lack of boundaries and with the all-encompassing aspects of transformative learning in the literature. It can be epochal or it can be evolutionary. It can be intentional or it can be assimilative. It can be intrapersonal and it can be interpersonal. It can exist along a spectrum from insight to genuine transformation. It can be pretty much whatever the author wants it to be, morphing to fit a case or example: it is a theory for all seasons, just so long as critical reflection and altered mental models are somehow involved. And still the amorphous transformation ↔ development dilemma persists.

In my continuing effort to bring some definition, rigor, and clarity to this issue, Table 2 proves more helpful, by contrasting two sets of the opposing descriptive characteristics above (in green).

### Table 2
**Learning During the Developmental Journey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Level</th>
<th>Intentional</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Transformative</th>
<th>Assimilative</th>
<th>Constructivist</th>
<th>Social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epochal</td>
<td>Intentional</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Transformative</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Constructivist</td>
<td>Assimilative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental</td>
<td>Intentional</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Transformative</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Constructivist</td>
<td>Assimilative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 positions other theories (in gold) relative to transformative learning, sets them apart from one another, and illuminates the interplay required among them all for continuing development. This classification recognizes the conditions under which various types of learning primarily occur and distinguishes transformative learning as epochal and unintentional. This accords with my personal transformative history. What my life’s transformational events have in common is a disorienting dilemma, a relatively immediate alteration in perspectives or core belief systems, significant psychic and emotional impact, and the fact that none of them occurred in the classroom.

### Transformational Learning in the Classroom

Given the distinctions made in Table 2 and the learning theory diagramed in Figure 1, the central question is: What is the role and responsibility of the teacher or facilitator in this process? I maintain that the teacher’s role is threefold: 1) to enable the learning environment, 2) to provide structure, context, and content around course-related material, and 3) to provide individual support as requested or required. It can be difficult to separate the three in a highly functioning learning situation. The prime responsibility, then, of the teacher is to do everything possible within the limited context of the learning situation to assist learners in reaching their course-oriented learning goals.
Weissner and Mezirow see it somewhat differently. They differentiate between the learner’s objective and the adult educator’s goal, which they see as helping the learner “...think and choose with more reliable insight, to become a more autonomous thinker.” (2000, p.348) In this view, the teacher has a ‘higher’ motive than does the student. They take the stance of somehow knowing what ‘more reliable’ and ‘more autonomous’ mean. Assuming those are the ‘right’ goals for any student seems presumptuous, leaving aside the fact that defining them operationally may be problematical. It certainly casts some doubt, in my mind, on the theorists’ espousal of valuing learner self-direction. As an aside, if the students are not ‘elevated’ in some transformative way (and how would you know that?) during a course of study – due to an unreadiness for change, personal contextual factors, stressful life events, lack of predisposition, inability to see the relevance of the material, or other variables (E. Taylor, 2000) – has the educational experience, then, been unsuccessful?

As mentioned, I believe the teacher’s highest motive becomes enabling the students’ success in meeting their own objectives. This is not an insignificant difference. When the teacher enables students in meeting their goals, then she has accomplished her mission – and more importantly, theirs. If, along the way, she has created situations and introduced or modeled cognitive tools which also expand any student’s capacity for reasoning, for visioning the future, or for developing new life-enriching abilities, then that is a bonus for all involved. But it is not generally her prime objective. And those methods and techniques are only tools or are part of the course content. For me, a student’s developmental changes are ancillary benefits, not the goal. It boils down to a matter of intent and scope.

How can a teacher’s function include the responsibility for personal transformation among her students? To meddle, uninvited, beyond our mandate – and even perhaps beyond our capabilities – can generate unanticipated aftereffects, not all of which may be beneficial. “How many of us feel comfortable and capable...in dealing with emotionally laden issues in our classrooms? How ethical is it...to create conditions that put...students in such emotionally challenging classroom experiences?” (E. Taylor, 2000, p. 315) There are, or should be, lines between promoting learning, entering a therapeutic realm, or promulgating personal upheaval.

There is, too, a quite pragmatic issue around designing a course with transformative learning objectives (unless the course is specifically about ‘transforming your life, assumptions, and belief systems’). A quick peek at Figure 1 highlights the dilemma. At course start, each learner will begin at his own position(s) on the developmental, cognitive, social, and constructivist timelines and with his own unique set of swirling confounding variables. A ‘time slice’ or vertical ‘snapshot’ profile cut through the timeline will be different for each learner. It is challenging enough to design effective educational interventions around more manageable knowledge, skills, and attitudes requirements without having to imagine, plan for, create, execute, and then assess transformational objectives as well. Factor in students’ own varying learning intentions. Then speculate on the overweening assumption underlying a premise that transformative learning objectives could be adequately defined and met with a high degree of efficacy, consistency, quality, and ethical rigor.

So what might be the value of transformative learning theory in the classroom? Its value relative to teaching is primarily in its instructional techniques and in its humanist underpinnings. Based on humanist concepts of the worth and potential for growth of all people, the transformational learning approach encourages self-exploration and self-authorship, even as these capabilities proceed along individual developmental timelines determined by the learner, not by the teacher or classroom schedule. The instructional techniques of critical thinking, reflection, and discourse are tools that can significantly enrich our teaching and that can as significantly enhance learners’ abilities to deal with the world. With practice, they can also become part of a learner’s cognitive toolbox.

Fostering Versus Enabling Transformative Learning

I began this paper with an anecdote from my corporate career. My point then – and my point now – is that teachers are not in the business of transforming students. Students are in the business – perhaps – of developing themselves. I disagree with transformative learning theorists when they advocate fostering transformation. Instead, I promote the concept of enabling an optimum learning environment where transformation can take place if it’s going to. The distinction is subtle, but very real. To foster means to be active in promoting and nurturing: it presumes functional interference. To enable means to allow or to make feasible; it is about permitting learners more latitude, and it depends on non-intrusiveness by the teacher.

It follows, then, that I also disagree with the propensity toward social activism championed by some transformational theorists, who apply a political dimension to many realms of study and who perceive the world primarily in terms of power relationships. I believe this is both a limiting and a dangerous perspective. I have no problem with encouraging students to probe socio-cultural assumptions, but I do have a problem with teachers who elect to have students challenge those assumptions based on the teacher’s premise that they are de facto faulty and are necessarily filled with inequities and oppression. For relatively impressionable students to exchange, on their own, a socially- and historically-inculcated socioeconomic perspective for another is one thing. To have them create
a new one at the (perhaps subtle, but nevertheless intentional) behest of a teacher, is another. “Whose interests are we serving by fostering transformative learning?” (E. Taylor, 2000, p. 315) Where does education end and manipulation or indoctrination begin? If the teacher’s political, economic, and power structure agendas are of such priority, she can climb a soapbox, grab a pulpit, or become a media pundit. But keep it out of the classroom.

This suggests we revisit an earlier thesis – that the learners’ separate objectives, and not the teacher’s, should be the guide for a course of study. Suppose we are teaching a group of village women in Central America to earn money by raising goats. Some would have us awaken in these women a desire to think about the inherent power dynamics of the culture, “…the crosscurrents of the struggles for material superiority and ideological legitimacy…” (Brookfield, 2000, p. 137). Perhaps there may be a receptive learner in the group for those lofty concepts, and perhaps her worldview and epistemology will be transformed enough to allow her to move on to lead political and social reform movements. There will be others, however, with different agendas. Some will be content with new milk and cheese ingredients in their family cupboards; some will learn to sell goat by-products to elevate the family living conditions; others may develop a desire to build an entrepreneurial and cooperative goat empire; while still another may answer an altruistic calling to share her knowledge with the women of the next village over the hill. There may even be some who don’t grasp the basics and who end up slaughtering their goats for the immediate satisfaction of putting meat on the table. Who can say which, if any, of these women may have undergone a transformational learning experience? Is a shift in self-efficacy or locus of control or sense of personal worth enough? Is accumulating and acting on a new store of knowledge enough? Is the mere act of undertaking some personal exploration enough? Or must a broader political or social awareness be kindled or fanned into flame?

Each woman will have her own learning objectives and should be enabled in meeting them. Once that is done, then additional life experiences, further learning, ongoing reflection, group discussion, resulting insights, and/or transformational experiences may occur, all of which are fodder for assessment and some of which may carry her further along her developmental path. She may never uncover “hegemonic assumptions” or delve into her “epistemological way of knowing,” and she may very well not be the worse for that omission. The same is true for adult students we are teaching in North American classrooms, students who came to us to learn about project management, instructional design, diagnostic technology trends, or even the inner workings of the U.S. two-party system. “How do we hold our own convictions while honoring our students’ rights to theirs?” (Daloz, 2000, p. 119)

Summary

My personal learning theory is grounded solidly in developmental stage theory, in the power of cognitive psychology, in the criticality of acknowledging cultural and social contexts, and in constructivist learning theory, itself a melding of cognitive and social learning theories. I can find few signs in the transformative learning literature that would prompt me to include it with a separate ‘stream’ of its own in Figure 1 or as a ‘named’ component in Figure 2.

Figure 2
An Integrated Learning Theory
I have made a very real distinction between what I believe are epochal transformational learning events and incremental developmental progress. According to psychology and learning theorists, development by definition is transformational. A person goes from potential to actualization; his abilities move from latency to fulfillment; he comes into ‘being’ over time, constantly qualifying and refining the essence of that being along the journey’s path. Transformational events and their associated learning assist in this developmental progression, but do not define it.

The real value of the Transformative Learning theorists for me is that they have shone a light on these unusual learning instances and have described the concomitant before-and-after-makeover characteristics well. In this fashion, the theorists have penetrated into the hidden nature of a set of critical learning events previously unexplored. As they have done so, they have both expanded the sphere of cognitivist thought and have provided developmental psychology with additional insights into how significant personal change can occur over relatively short time spans or out of a ‘normal’ developmental sequence.

References
Intergenerational Dialogue: Appreciating Diversity and Envisioning Hope

G.J. Macdonald, University of Toronto & OISE/UT
E. O’Sullivan, University of Toronto & OISE/UT
R. Sadhra-Corks, University of Toronto & OISE/UT

Abstract: This experiential session provides an opportunity for participants and presenters to engage in an active, spontaneous, dialogue about troubling contemporary social issues from transformative intergenerational perspectives. During the scholarly dialogue participants will be encouraged to consider both transformative unlearning and transformative new learning perspectives, perspectives that value both research knowledge and practice knowledge. Together participants will engage in a holistic process of inquiry, a process that values the logical/cognitive and connected/intuitive capabilities of human beings.

This session provides an experiential forum for an intergenerational dialogue between presenters and participants. The session will open with the three presenters dialoguing about the challenges of integrating transformative education within a research intensive university. As an elder and founding member, O’Sullivan will share the story of the origins of the Transformative Learning Center (TLC) at the Ontario Institute for Education, University of Toronto. He will share highlights about his founding colleagues, identify how the centre found a home within an institution that was becoming increasingly corporatized, and discuss the impact of having the TLC on his worklife and his students. Macdonald, a mid life adult, will then highlight her story of unlearning and new learning when bringing arts based learning into both undergraduate and graduate classrooms through visits to the Royal Ontario Museum, specifically to the Judaic and Muslim galleries. As the youngest presenter and graduate student, Sadhra-Corks will share her perspectives of her expectations and her unlearning and learning within the context of the Transformative Learning Centre. As the three presenters dialogue together, their diverse intergenerational perspectives will emerge and other participants will be welcomed to join the dialogue. This opening session will take approximately fifteen minutes. At the end of fifteen minutes, participants will be invited to identify a new focus for dialogue and at the end of the second dialogue a third dialogue will be organized. Dialogue topics are open, will emerge spontaneously, and ideally will reflect the conference themes.

The dialogues will take place in an inner "transformative circle", consisting of four chairs, arranged in the center of the room, identified as an elder chair, a mid life adult chair, a youth chair, and an open chair. The remaining participants will sit in an outer circle of chairs surrounding the inner chairs, and while in the outer circle, will be asked to assume an active “witness” role. Presenters and participants will flow spontaneously and voluntarily between the inner and outer circles. Participants are free to participate as active “witnesses” throughout the session or to engage in the inner transformative circle. When in the inner circle, participants in the elder chair will be asked to represent the voice of an elder person, but they do not need to be an elder person in years. This remains true for the midlife and youth chair as well. The intention in this dialogue is to ensure that intergenerational perspectives remain in the foreground as issues and narratives are shared. Multiple perspectives along the journey of life will be honoured, and the scholarly dialogue will encourage appreciation of the diverse yet connected perspectives of youth, mid life adults, and elders. It is hoped that participants will find a space during this session to listen to diverse perspectives and share their own perspectives, thus creating a time for personal reflection, supported by a community of scholars who gather together to honour their life journeys and engender hope for a sustainable future.

Founding of the TLC

The TLC was created in 1993 by the coming together of O’Sullivan and several faculty and students of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) and some interested community partners, all of whom were looking for a way of creating a stronger sense of community and collaboration in broad areas of environmental, feminist, anti-racist, aboriginal, adult and popular education theory and practice. The faculty were scholar/activists who from a variety of diverse perspectives were looking at ways of combining inter-disciplinary practices, new knowledges, and alternative strategies for community and global change. All shared an interest in “transforming” contemporary educational and social paradigms.

G. J. Macdonald, E. O’Sullivan, & R. Sadhra-Corks, University of Toronto & OISE/UT, g.macdonald@utoronto.ca. Presented at the Sixth International Transformative Learning Conference, Michigan State University, Oct. 6-9, 2005.
O’Sullivan moved on from his early work in critical psychology to an examination of the suffering of mother earth due to the destructive actions of humans and identified the need for the academy and its partner communities to become deeply immersed in new learning about how to protect the planet and its glorious life giving powers.

A Personal Narrative of a Transformative Journey

A doctoral student at the time, Macdonald remembers needing a new thesis supervisor and passing by a room in which O’Sullivan was speaking. After a few moments at the doorway, listening to O’Sullivan share a transformative moment in his life that occurred during a visit to Ireland when he was a youth, Macdonald felt certain that this was the person who was to be her knew guide in her transformative learning journey. As the journey unfolded Macdonald was immersed into a new world, a connected world, where multiple perspectives were valued and interfaced. Feminist perspectives, ecological perspectives, anti-racist perspectives, healing perspectives, indigenous perspectives, and peace perspectives framed her new learning. As she began this journey she learned that she had to unlearn many of her old ways of understanding the world, and let go of the old eyes with which she had created her understanding of the world. This was an uncertain journey, made more uncertain by the knowledge that her new learning was challenging the dominant forces in society, in institutions of higher learning, in government, in religion, and in our understanding of ourselves as human beings. Issues of sustainability, social justice, human rights, peace activism, balancing work and family life, and caring emerged as issues that needed to be explored and acted upon. Her knew knowledge demanded both unlearning and new learning. She engaged in a transformative process of unlearning and new learning and over time relinquished her old thesis topic and undertook a new thesis study, a heuristic study that would allow her to explore her personal world and the social world, a study that would begin the construction of an alternative was of thinking and feeling and acting in the world. Her new topic, Sustaining Energy for Caring: The Experience of Mothers who are Nurses, led her to explore caring, physics, critical psychology, feminism, ecology, alternative healing, mothering, sustainability, stress, burnout, energy and peace. It was a transformative learning journey, one that changed her understanding of the world, her place in the world, and her purpose in life. The process created connections, was deepening, and shifted her centre, thus impacting upon her children, her family, and her social world. Her children grew up with new understandings of their role in protecting the earth, her daughters and son learned that feminism is a way of looking at the world from the perspective of women and how the world contains and creates them, and her community gained an activist. She initiated a collective organization within her community and provided leadership over four years as a new high school was birthed in her neighbourhood, a new high school eventually named Marshall McLuhan Catholic Secondary School. The school opened in September 1999 and construction was finished in September 2000, just in time for Macdonald’s son to begin high school. Her daughter followed two years later and today approximately 1,000 youth enjoy a wonderful education at Marshall McLuhan. And thus the impact of the transformative journey begins to emerge, the impact on Macdonald, her children, her family, her community and not discussed by equally profound her impact on the University of Toronto where she teaches in the Faculty of Nursing is committed to transforming power structures and relationships and creating a university where notions of excellence incorporate peace, caring, sustainability, social justice, healing, anti-racism, balancing work and family life, and parenting effectively.

Unlearning: Intellectual and Emotional Work

Macdonald (2002) suggests that the literature on unlearning is scarce but that is in intense intellectual and emotional work. The management literature identifies that the corporate world has attended to unlearning sporadically since the 1980’s and that increasingly attention is being given to supporting unlearning in workers who are being asked to accept new learning within the workplace. The world of education has brief references to unlearning as well, and there are isolated instances of unlearning being addresses in a few other professions but overall, the lack of understanding about the centrality of supporting the process of unlearning is disappointing (Macdonald, 2002) considering that we live in the information age, a world when the basic premises of society are being challenged and people are being asked to adjust to technological changes that challenge the very nature of human life. Macdonald (2002) argues that unlearning involved a process of discernment, one that involves moving through stages of grieving that allow a person to reflect upon their past experiences and beliefs, and consider the impact of these upon their relationships and personal and work life and community. With support through this grieving stage, people can come to terms with their past and thus are prepared to let go of the past and open to the new. Such a process needs to be incorporated into our dialogues as we struggle to move forward and consider how we as human beings are going to build a sustainable future. It is a challenge that we can’t leave to the next generation, it is a challenge that all generations must engage in together, as we struggle to challenge how we co-exist
with the natural world and how we can survive while making the changes needed to create a sustainable future for the generations not yet here.

Sharing the Dialogue

One notion that we must unlearn if we are to open to the possible futures that are present implicitly in the universe, is the notion that we must plan and contain our dialogues and insist that before we gather together we can predict the topics that together we need to explore. We must learn to trust the process of our dialogues, to have basic rules that ensure that people will not get hurt intentionally during the process, such as respecting all life sustaining perspectives but limiting destructive dialogue such as racist perspectives and to allow our journey to unfold as it should, spontaneously, and with attention. We invite all those participants who are prepared to engage in a meaningful discourse about the themes of this conference ‘Appreciating the Best of What Is, Envisioning What Could Be’ together with us for one hour to experience this spontaneous process of intergenerational dialogue. What will emerge will not be predicted but it will be powerful.

References

Executive Coaching Process: Professional Development With the Potential to Transform Diverse Perspectives

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Abstract: This paper presents a conceptual model intended to frame executive coaching processes used in organizations as a professional development experience with transformative learning potential. Specifically, the paper examines various learning capabilities needed to integrate a diversity perspective into the executive coaching process as it emerges as a critical dimension of HRD practice. This model represents the early development of results from a Diversity Practitioner Study applied to concepts drawn from selected executive coaching and transformative learning literature.

Fierce competition, rapidly changing technological advances, globalization and shifting market and workforce demographics all converge to provide a context where organizations face a growing need for effective leadership. The complexity of today’s business environment demands that Chief Learning Officers, and other development professionals, devise flexible yet impactful strategies and tactics for assisting leaders and employees at all levels of the organization respond to the 21st century success requirements of adaptation and renewal (Corporate Leadership Council: Trends in Learning and Development Programs, 2004).

Since its introduction to the business literature during the 1980s, the concept of executive coaching has emerged as a powerful new field in the applied HRD arena largely driven by the need for flexible and customized development programs for executives (Zeus & Skiffington, 2002 p. 3). In fact, “meeting with an executive coach” ranks in the top 4 of critical leadership development strategies along with level of decision making authority, creating a leadership development plan and interacting with peers (Corporate Leadership Council: Selecting a Leadership Development Strategy, 2001). The need for coaching in organizations is clear given that 35 to 75 percent of all top executive promotions are viewed as unsuccessful according to research conducted by The Corporate Leadership Council. Further, the direct replacement costs for failing executives range from 15 to 30 percent of their annual six figure salaries. A study conducted by The Harvard Business School in 2003 reported a worldwide coaching market exceeding 1 billion dollars annually. The study suggests this number will double in the next two to three years, with companies spending anywhere from $50,000 to $120,000 per executive for 18 to 24 months of coaching. Fueled by increasing demand, the number of available coaches is also on the rise. For example, The International Coaching Federation reported growth in its membership ranks from 3,000 in 1999 to over 7,000 in 2004. Rapid growth of the executive coaching field presents both an opportunity and challenge for HRD practitioners.

Problem and Purpose Statements

One element rarely considered in the coach-client relationship, yet critical to the effectiveness of partnerships is diversity—the differences that define and determine our worldviews and our ways of relating. Rapidly changing workplace demographics driven by a growing labor shortage, the aging workforce, against the backdrop of an increased number of women and minorities entering the workforce, suggest that recognizing and clarifying diversity’s impact on the coaching relationship should be a guiding principle for effective coaching practice. This paper draws on selected executive coaching and transformative learning literature as a basis for describing how the executive coaching movement, currently sweeping the nation, can open new doors into the executive suite by leveraging diversity and creating inclusive work environments needed to achieve executive parity.

This paper sought to discover potential connections between emerging coaching literature and selected literature in the areas of transformative learning and workplace diversity. Specifically, building on previous Diversity Practitioner research, the purpose of this inquiry was to integrate key elements from these three tracks of literature (coaching, transformative learning and diversity) into a comprehensive approach that seeks to build the strategic learning capabilities needed to leverage diversity in the coaching process intended to generate breakthrough results. To achieve this aim, the inquiry focused on responding to three core research questions. (1) What are the various ways executive coaching is defined in the literature and are there opportunities to expand the meaning to include a diversity perspective informed by elements of transformative learning theory? (2) What are the intended outcomes

Terrence E. Maltbia, Teachers College, Maltbia@aol.com. Presented at the Sixth International Transformative Learning Conference, Michigan State University, Oct. 6-9, 2005.
of executive coaching and to what extent is diversity and transformative processes can help to better facilitate such aims? And (3) In what ways can the emerging coaching processes used in practice be employed to leverage diversity through the applications of various transformative learning strategies?

Methodology, Summary of Case Study Findings and Limitations

This paper is a follow-up to a descriptive, exploratory qualitative case study conducted by the author. The case study included a sample of 20 diversity practitioners located across the United States and selected for their contribution to the emerging theory and practice of diversity initiatives in or for Corporate America. Specifically, a sample of 12 external practitioners participated in the study drawn from a sample of 16 individuals that were identified from the workplace diversity literature as “thought leaders” by applying an “extreme case” sampling strategy (Patton, 1990). The primary sources for participant identification included databases (i.e., A.S.T.D TRAINLIT, ABI and ERIC), resource guides listing diversity consultants and internal consultant (e.g., The Diversity Directory, Hunt-Scanlon) and conference brochures listing key note speakers (e.g., The Society of Human Resource Development). The study also included 8 internal participants in the lead diversity role for their organization.

The data gathered during face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the 20 participants were supplemented by selected literature (i.e., workplace diversity, learning from experience and critical pedagogy), respondent demographic data and other case documents (i.e., written materials including books, articles, diversity strategic plans, training materials, etc.). One of the study’s key findings pointed to a need to examine the organizational transformation literature and the transformative learning literature to gain insights for driving the diversity change process. The model for creating strategic learning capabilities was the result of that work and is reported elsewhere (Maltbia, 2004).

Summary of The Diversity Practitioner Study Findings

This paper continues the line of inquiry outlined above by focusing on the emerging field of executive coaching, as its transformative potential, which was identified in The Diversity Practitioner Study as a critical area for future research (Maltbia 2001). Three findings from The Diversity Practitioner Study (Maltbia, 2001) guide the focus of this inquiry. First, the successful implementation of diversity initiatives must be the responsibility of line executives and managers. As a result, the Diversity Practitioner’s primary role is that of advisor and educator. When effective, Diversity Practitioners rely heavily on the use of influence and strategic skills in their advisory role to CEOs and other company executives. Second, Diversity Practitioners employed a three-phased learning and change process including (1) creating awareness and generating diversity related knowledge, (2) building diversity skills and capabilities and (3) applying the learning to real-world situations diversity related challenges and opportunities to realize their intentions. Third, while much progress has been made to change the face of diversity in organizations, there is still much to be done. In light of these findings, this paper argues that much can be learned by integrating what is known about leveraging diversity in organizations with emerging executive coaching processes informed by transformative learning development strategies.

Limitations

The executive coaching literature reviewed came from the popular literature, where popular literature is defined as information found in various publications not typically refereed (Plunkett, Egan & Garza, 2004). Popular literature is used here given the current academic coaching literature’s focus on counseling or clinical psychology perspectives and the general lack of research and scholarly writing focused on the subject of executive coaching. The 10 primary sources included in this summary of the popular executive coaching literature were identified using a number of databases identified by a search conducted on Teacher College’s Milbank Memorial Library’s electronic tools (e.g., Digital Dissertations, ERIC and ProQuest e-Journals) and a review of proceedings from conferences focused on coaching during 2003 and 2004. As such, they represent authors cited frequently by recent (posted since 1995) literature reviews and dissertations focused on coaching in organizations and appearing as keynote speakers at professional coaching conferences. Examining the race and gender make up of this sample reveals the elite sampling procedure employed resulted in a majority of the authors included being White and Male, with only one Black Male and two White Females. This profile may represent a limited integration of multicultural perspectives given their demographic make-up, yet this group appears to be representative of the “certified” or “professional” coaches currently available to organizations.
Review of Selected Literature

The Meaning and Purpose of Executive Coaching

While no uniform definition of executive coaching exists, five key themes emerged when reviewing the various ways the concept is defined in the literature, including executive coaching as (1) a process, (2) a partnership, (3) a balance between individual and organizational needs, (4) a way of working and (5) a new face of leadership for the 21st century (Dotlich & Cairo, 1999; Flaherty, 1999; Freas, 2000; Hargrove, 2000; Hudson, 1999; Thomas, 2000; Watkins, 2003; Whitmore, 2002; Whitworth, Kimsey & Sandalhl, 1998 and Zeus & Skiffington, 2002). Executive coaching is a process, specifically a motivational process that involves an intimate, one-on-one relationship between a senior organizational leader (or high potential leader) and a coach, generally external to the organization. Further, executive coaching involves working in partnership with clients to construct a highly individualized set of interventions.

Coaching processes are designed to unlock the client’s potential by setting clear goals, creating supporting action plans, seeing the future with strength and optimism in what’s possible and reflecting on the outcomes of one’s actions to learn and take informed future action. In short, the group of authors reviewed for this paper frame executive coaching as an active and collaborative partnership between the client and coach. The primary activity of the coaching relationship is dialog where issues related to the client’s values and beliefs, as well as performance issues related to effective leadership are explored, plans developed and action taken. In this way, executive coaching helps organizational leaders build their capacity to lead, as well as coach within their organizations to “spark learning and build the capabilities needed to succeed” (Hargrove, 2000, p. 5).

Potential Benefits and Limitations of Executive Coaching

There is a growing understanding of the potential benefits (e.g., direct 1-on-1 assessment & support, quick results when linked to personal development plan) and pitfalls (e.g., lack of integration with other processes, low buy-in & poor client/coach matching) of executive coaching; the various types of executive coaching (e.g., derailled executives and high potentials); and how executive coaching programs are being implemented in organizations (e.g., Corporate Leadership Council 2000, 2004; Gegner, 1997; Dotlich & Cairo, 1999; Freas, 2000; Watkins, 2003 & Whitmore, 2002). Yet as demonstrated in the selected literature summarized in this paper, few leading thinkers in the field of coaching directly address the impact of diversity to the coaching process. Of the ten primary literature sources included in this study, only two explicitly address the role of diversity in the coaching process (Flaherty, 1999; Thomas, 2000). This omission appears to extend to the practice of preparing and the ongoing professional development of executive coaches. A review of the current leading coaching associations and training certification organizations do not explicitly list any form of working productively with “diversity” as a core coaching competency. For example, of the 13 competencies listed on The International Coaching Federation’s website, there is no mention of diversity and cultural competence related capabilities. (http://www.coachfederation.org/credentialing/en/core.asp).

The current state of affairs represents a significant gap in the emerging coaching literature and its practice because (1) organizations by necessity are having to work in multicultural environments driven by changes in market and workforce demographics, and (2) despite significant changes in demographics of the available talent pool today and in the future, minorities and women continue to report coming up against glass ceilings in many organizations suggesting differences in selection, development and promotional opportunities (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). Thomas (2000) provides an additional diversity-related perspective. He describes a number of barriers to the use of executive coaching as a developmental tool for leveraging diversity, for example, traditional social allegiances result in white males in power being more comfortable coaching other white males in comparison to women and minorities and women and minorities often find it difficult to trust organizations when they see others like themselves clustered in positions near the bottom, making productive coaching relationships difficult.

Transformative Learning and The Executive Coaching Process

Building on work of Patricia Cranton (1996, p. 47), this author believes that executive coaching, as a professional development experience, has the potential to be transformative under the following conditions: (1) inclusion of a variety perspectives (e.g., feedback from knowledge, diverse observers); (2) articulation of assumptions (i.e., client and coach make the origins of their thinking explicit, including the sources of one’s own cultural programming, as well as, others related to issues of power, privilege, oppression, race, gender and other dimensions of human diversity (3) promotion of dialogue amongst executive coaches and their clients as a strategy for examining underlying assumptions about difference, as well as, explore various issue tensions associated with period of change (i.e., equity, preservation, productivity and transitions); (4) facilitation of critical thinking (e.g.,
applying Brookfield’s 1991, 5 phase process: trigger event, appraisal, exploration, developing alternative perspectives and integration); (5) application to important work related situations.

Frederic M. Hudson (1999) frames the two major functions of coaching as (1) performance coaching (or outer work focused on improvement of knowledge and skills needed to generate business results) and (2) being coaching (or inner work related to resilience, beliefs, values, self-esteem, courage, purpose and the centering needed to be present). Performance coaching focuses on what Mezirow (1991) has called instrumental learning (gaining technical knowledge related to cause and effect relationships in the environment, Cranton, 1994 p. 9). To date, much of what Hudson refers to as “being coaching” draws partially on what transformative learning theory terms emancipatory knowledge and emancipatory learning, that is “removing or freeing ourselves from forces that limit our options and our control over our lives” (Cranton, 1994 p. 16). I say only partially here because common tactics used by many executive coaches today focus on self-reflection, not necessarily critical-reflection (i.e., focused uncovering submerged power dynamics and relationships including hegemonic assumptions that we believe represent commonsense wisdom and that we accept as being in our own best interests without realizing that such assumptions at the same time often work against us in the long term by serving the interests of those opposed to us) and generating feedback from others about key leadership behaviors are competencies as a means to foster self-awareness (Brookfield, 2000).

Being coaching is about how individuals show up as leaders and should be informed by both communicative forms of learning (guided by practical knowledge and a concern with understanding what others mean) and emancipatory learning. The selected literature for this paper revealed little emphasis on understanding what “others mean,” instead seemed to focus on gathering perceptions about the client’s leadership behavior from others. The self-reflective focus of executive coaching aims to enhance the client’s self-awareness. The work of Cary Cherniss, Daniel Goleman and others has placed the importance of self-awareness at the very core of the executive coaching process (2001). Their work on what is coined “emotional intelligence” highlights the importance of both IQ and EI as influencers of organizational effectiveness (e.g., attract and retain talent, innovation, productivity, efficiency, customer loyalty and profitability). Recently, a number of executive coaches have applied Goleman’s framework of emotional competencies to their professional practice.

First, the framework focuses on the recognition of self-awareness (or personal competence related to being emotionally self aware, having accurate self assessment and displaying self confidence) and social-awareness (or the social competence related to empathy, service orientation and organizational awareness). The recognition of self-awareness and social-awareness can be used as a foundation for working in the being coaching dimension. It is important to note the idea of “leveraging diversity” is embedded in EI competency of empathy in this framework. One strategy used to facilitate critical self-reflection informed by transformative learning theory is to use content reflection (i.e., examining the description of the presenting problem, challenge or opportunity, the “what”), process reflection (i.e., examining the “how” or action strategies used to achieve individual and organizational aims) and premise reflection (i.e., questioning the resenting problem, challenge or opportunity itself, the “why”) to examine meaning perspectives (or beliefs); combined with engaging in a reflective across the three domains of instrumental learning, communicative learning and emancipatory learning (Cranton 1994, p. 51). Using such a process, one might reflect critically on the fact that the concept of diversity is embedded in the competence of empathy.

Second, the framework focuses on regulation through self-management (the other critical aspect of personal competence related to emotional self control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, achievement drive and initiative) and relationship management (the other set of social competencies related to developing others, influence, communication, conflict, visionary leadership, catalyzing change, building bonds and teamwork). Self-management and relationship management provides a platform for performance based, action coaching by building on insights gained from a solid foundation of self-awareness and social-awareness. This paper argues, as Jack Mezirow (2000) does that “effective participation in transformative learning requires emotional maturity— awareness, empathy and self control—knowing and managing one’s emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing emotions in others and handling relationships—as well as clear thinking” (p. 11). While the emotional intelligent competence framework embeds the notion of “leveraging diversity” within the context of empathy, the strategies promoted in transformative theory to facilitate critical reflection represent a more expansive, inclusive and productive application of this approach as it applies to executive coaching. The dimensions and dynamics of diversity are omnipresent in everyday and work life, and as a result, it critical to “encourage viewpoints that challenge prevailing norms of the dominant culture in diversity matters related to class, race, gender, technology and the environment” given that “agreement and action based on the unchallenged norms of a culture will be obviously less informed and dependable than those based on a wider range of human experience” (Mezirow, 2000 p. 12).
Preliminary Findings

The findings presented in this paper applied the model for *Building Learning Capabilities to Leverage Diversity for Breakthrough Performance* (see Figure 1) by using it as a conceptual framework to content analyze a total of 56 executive coaching process steps described in the selected literature, in addition to the five steps outlined in The Corporate Leadership Council Study (2000, p. 6; Maltbia, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994, pp. 55, 183-184).

Definition of Strategic Learning Capabilities and Connections to Leveraging Diversity

Drawing on various ideas from the organizational transformation and transformative learning literature, for the purpose of this paper, strategic learning capabilities are defined as “intentional and performance driven learning linked to strategy that clearly defines the core competencies necessary for current and future organizational success.” The strategic learning process involves identifying critical knowledge and skill areas needed to support organizational core competencies (Maltbia, 2004, p. 745). The model in Figure 1 is based on the assumption that leveraging diversity is a process of strategic learning and change intended to enhance performance and facilitate organizational renewal. Organizational renewal is the ability to continuously adapt to the external environment and respond to emerging problems, challenges and opportunities. While not the only factor, winning companies are beginning to understand that leveraging diversity can contribute greatly to creating and sustaining an adaptive enterprise. Further, executive coaching is increasingly an element of comprehensive leadership development and talent management processes in organizations. Given the role coaching plays in influencing the both the make-up and mindset of future leaders, this paper examines potential synergies between the coaching process, transformative learning and strategic learning capabilities can be applied to leverage diversity in organizations. The model’s basic components include (1) three strategic learning capabilities, (2) three related outcomes associated with each learning capability and (3) three different learning foci needed to generate the desired learning outcomes (Pietersen, 2002; Maltbia, 2004).

Figure 1

*Building Learning Capabilities to Leverage Diversity for Breakthrough Performance*

Drawing on concepts from Jackson (1991) and Sanchez & Heen (2000), the model asserts that understanding diversity, as a form of human performance, is a function of examining the three dimensions of context, content and conduct. The three strategic learning capabilities for leveraging diversity respond to the “where/when/why,” the “what” and the “how” of leveraging diversity. The three strategic learning capabilities are: (1) achieving and sustaining contextual awareness (know “why” theoretical knowledge); (2) creating conceptual clarity (know “what” or strategic knowledge); and (3) Taking informed action (know “how” or practical knowledge). The reflective potential of learning during and from experience provides a capacity to repeat this cycle of learning for perspective, knowledge and informed action, over and over again, and can result in personal and organizational renewal and transformation. The following is an outline that represents a synthesis of the 56 executive coaching process steps found in the selective literature applied to a 3-phase strategic learning process informed by transformative learning tactics. Only the Phase I will be described in detail due to space limitations.

Phase I: Achieving and Sustaining Contextual Awareness—a 2-step process that includes: exploring needs and expectations, including contracting for a successful coaching relationship (Step 1) and completing a customized
assessment and feedback process (Step 2). Here the first three phases of Mezirow’s 10 phase process of personal transformation can be used as a map to guide the coach in helping the potential client articulate the nature of the presenting problem, challenge or opportunity (the disorienting dilemma) triggering the motivation to engage in executive coaching; testing the client’s willingness to undergo a rigorous process of self-examination (or self-work) of one’s meaning perspectives (epistemic, sociolinguistic and psychological) to guide the diagnostic work and related interventions related to both “performance” and “being” coaching; and participating in a critical assessment of internalized role assumptions and related expectations. Process, content and premise reflection, combined with critical questioning should be used to interpret the results from various front-end assessment tools such as: The Hudson’s (1999) life review (or equivalent) to examine background factors that shape the client’s worldview, behavioral patterns, values, sense of the future and so on (Whitmore, 2002), The Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory (Hammer, 2003) to gain insight of client’s style understand intercultural stress, employee surveys and cultural audit data (Maltbia, 2001), combined with interviewing key stakeholders and assessing 360 feedback (e.g., EIC), reviewing strategy and performance documents. Assessment and feedback places an equal focus on self-awareness and social awareness as a foundation to self-management and relationship management. Overall Aim: learning for boarder perspective.

Phase II: Creating Conceptual Clarity—a 2-step process with a focus on: goal setting (Step 3) and development and action planning (Step 4). Here the coach works with the client to use the assessment results to define laser beam focused performance objectives (business results) and development objectives (personal leadership competencies to better understand one’s own emotional tendencies, including reaction to various dimensions of diversity in order to show up as a leader in ways that unleash personal and collective aspirations). During goal setting and action planning, the coach actively works to balance challenge with support to help client to explore possibilities outside the client’s normal assumptions and safety zone, examine both intended and unintended consequences of planned action and establish a personal accountability process. Overall Aim: learning for knowledge that is focused and aligned with personal and organizational objectives, as well as, strategic initiatives.

Phase III: Taking Informed Action—a 2-step process with a focus on: executing the plan combined with continuous coaching support (Step 5) and evaluation of results both indicators and metrics (Step 6). Throughout the action process the coach helps the client explore how diversity is omnipresent throughout all work interactions, continuously diagnose the diversity factors related to the situation at hand, devise appropriate responses for outcomes with a positive impact on diversity and reflect on the results of such action. The coach’s role is to work with the client to foster reflection-in-action while recognizing teachable moments. Overall Aim: learning from experimentation and experience as a basis for renewal. While preliminary, the findings from this literature review provided additional insight from the perspective of diversity into this frequently utilized HRD practice. Importantly, the findings illustrate a significant gap in the literature— and more than likely a related gap in practice and how strategies and tactics found in the transformative learning literature might be applied to help address this gap. As chief architects of organizational culture an executive’s daily actions and decisions directly influence the climate of their company and the related outcomes. In the executive coaching relationship it is critical to continually ask the question: How are you doing?

References


Exploring Stories as Transformative Learning (and Vice Versa)

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Abstract: This experiential session invites participants to collaborate in the construction of the session by sharing your stories of transformational learning (no more than 5 minutes long please) from one or more of these possible perspectives: as learner, as facilitator/instructor, or as observer. The session will move between telling stories and constructive dialogue on the stories describing elements of transformational learning. You are invited to extend this interaction after the session to move beyond the experience of an isolated, one-time conference session.

Introduction  
This not a “paper,” in the traditional academic sense, rather it is an invitation to a “happening” (now that dates me!). This experiential session invites participants to collaborate in the construction of the session by sharing your stories of transformational learning from one or more of these possible perspectives: as learner, as facilitator/instructor, or as observer. In the interest of full disclosure, you should know my proposal for this session did not overwhelm the two of the readers who provided electronic ratings that were forwarded to me. In fact, they did not recommend including it in the conference. Apparently there was enough space and some grace to give us an opportunity to create this story-sharing experience.

The announcement of the 2005 Transformative Learning Conference (TLC) described certain expectations for experiential sessions. During our session, we are to “demonstrate new and innovative practices in transformative learning (TL) through creative, interactive formats” as well as “integration of the theoretical, practical and experiential.” The use of a variety of art forms was encouraged “recognizing that sometimes the method is the means” (Dirkx, et al, 2005). This paper provides a proposed agenda, theoretical context or framework for our discussion and a partial “script” to help us structure what happens during the TLC session. Rather than sharing your story from a primarily cognitive-rational frame of reference, participants who choose to contribute a story are encouraged to draw on and share the environmental and emotional content of the story. Remember, storytelling may also involve poetry, music, movement, and multiple storytellers. I hope this session description intrigues you enough that you plan to share a story (no more than 5 minutes long please) or collaborate further after the TLC. The session will move between telling stories and constructive dialogue on the stories describing elements of transformational learning. You are also invited to consider the possibility of extending the interaction on this topic after the session, perhaps collaborating further in some way, to move beyond the experience of an isolated, one-time conference session.

Proposed Agenda  
There are several possible points of entry into this experience: talking with me prior to the session, at the appointed hour of the session, during the remainder of the conference, and after the conference. Participants are strongly encouraged to bring a story to share (in either oral or written form). At the appointed hour we will convene and collaboratively structure the hour. This type of open structure conference session that depends on collaborative participation is fraught with wonderful possibilities and a few pitfalls. I wonder if anyone will choose to attend? Will anyone participate by sharing a story? Assuming a few adventurous participants will be attracted to this open structure, the session might develop something like this:

Henry S. Merrill, Indiana University, hmerrill@iupui.edu. Presented at the Sixth International Transformative Learning Conference, Michigan State University, October 6-9, 2005.
• Brief Introductions
• Identification of volunteers with stories to share
• Telling our stories – followed by appreciations from other participants
• It is possible to capture storytelling, appreciations dialogue on poster paper or with digital video
• Questions to promote dialogue and reflection:
  o What aspects or elements of transformational learning did the story engender?
  o Where do you get a story about a TL experience?
  o How do you build or structure a story to share it?
  o How do you know it’s a story about an authentic TL experience?
• Concluding our hour together: Sharing reflections on the experience – try to keep it to 5 words per person (if a large group - doesn’t have to be in a sentence) or write it on the 3x5 card provided
• Pose the question: Does anyone want to extend this experience, such as meeting again during the conference to tell stories we haven’t heard, work collaboratively to write about this one-hour experience to share with others through some form of reflection, building on and refining the structure, or creating some kind of publication?

Description of the Theoretical Perspectives

The impetus for proposing this experiential session, with the possibility of interaction and/or collaboration prior to, during and/or after the conference, comes from several sources. First, I have considerable experience with teaching and doing college theater, so story and collaborative creation are important parts of me. Second, during the 1970s I was very active in a wilderness adventure-based experiential program focusing on the individual-in-community as orientation for first-year college students. Third, I have been working on ways to use stories, mostly as case studies and simulations, in online graduate courses for several years. I’m planning to extend this use of story by having students do personal life course narratives to investigate adult development and learning in an online course. Finally, I completed a graduate course in storytelling three years ago, so this session is a way to integrate that experience further into my own personal narrative and professional growth.

Moving beyond my experiences and interests outlined above, this theoretical framework weaves together readings from sources on experiential learning, Mezirow’s transformative learning and Ileris’ learning theory. These theoretical perspectives, or at least dimensions of them, tend to focus on a holistic, integrative level of complexity and functioning. As such, they are open to the charge of being too abstract and cognitively based. To provide a counterbalancing perspective, we start with the multiple perspectives on experiential learning, described and analyzed by Fenwick (2003). These five theoretical perspectives enable the practitioner to more effectively target the audience and match learning processes and purposes with appropriate strategies and events that may be more integrative of cognitive, emotional, kinesthetic and social dimensions of learning.

The first theoretical perspective for discussion is experiential learning. What are the definitions and elements we should consider for this session? Tara Fenwick (2003) presents an excellent analysis of the development of experiential learning in her book Learning Through Experience: Troubling orthodoxies and intersecting questions (2003). Space does not allow a thorough review of her analysis, however, I do want to include some elements in detail to provide important context on these perspectives. In a discussion of the nature of experience, Fenwick describes these different types of experience: direct embodied experience, vicarious experience, simulated experience, recalled experience from personal memory and collaborative experience. In our TLC session, we will draw primarily on the vicarious experience (listening to others’ stories) and the collaborative experience types. Fenwick describes collaborative experience as “…joining others in a shared community of experience whose meaning is constructed together amid conversation and joint action.” (p. 13)

Several other important dimensions of experience are identified and discussed by Fenwick that are important to experiential learning events or processes and our collaboration during the TLC session. The first dimension is Purpose. What is the purpose of the learning and is the learner’s purpose different or in harmony with the instructor’s purpose? Another important dimension is Interpretation. Each individual brings her or his unique perspective and mind/body/emotion makeup that filters and interprets the experience. The other dimensions that interplay in an experiential learning event include the intensity of Engagement, the cultural and personal concept of Self, and finally, the historical, geographical, cultural and socio-political Context (p. 13-19).

Fenwick identifies and describes five theoretical orientations of experiential learning drawn from the 20th Century foundations of adult learning and more recent literature from a variety of discipline perspectives. The following categories and concise descriptors are excerpted from her Table 2.1 (pp.40-41) to enable easy and useful comparison of each perspective.
Perspective: Constructivist Theory -- Reflecting upon concrete experience

- Focus and key questions: Focus is on how individuals construct meanings from their experience to produce knowledge.
- Learning process: Constructing personal understanding from action in the world. Through reflection from experience, learner creates relevant structures of meaning.
- Learning purposes and desired outcomes: Develop more inclusive, integrative, discriminating mental constructs which can enable individual's success in new situations.

Perspective: Situative Theory -- Participating in a community of practice

- Focus and key questions: Focus is on practices in which individuals have learned to participate. What constitutes meaningful action for a particular individual in a given context? How do people learn adaptively in situations where they engage in activities?
- Learning process: Becoming more attuned to constraints and affordances of particular situations. Learner progresses along trajectories of participation and growth of identity.
- Learning purposes and desired outcomes: Improve participation in interactive systems, in social practices valued most by the learner/community. Participation becomes more meaningful personally, socially.

Perspective: Psychoanalytic Theory -- Attuning to unconscious desires and fears

- Focus and key questions: Focus is on the self – how it is crafted, repressed, recovered, understood.
- Learning process: Unlearning old strategies of survival. Working through dilemmas to explore one’s desires, attachments, self and resistances to knowing.
- Learning purposes and desired outcomes: Come to tolerate the demands of the self and the social. Come to accept and understand (recovered) selves. Become aware of deep desires and fears, and find more productive ways to satisfy them.

Perspective: Critical Cultural Theories -- Resisting dominant social norms of experience

- Focus and key questions: Focus is on how power circulates to repress or enhance experience and learning. How is identity limited or liberated by prevailing cultural codes?
- Learning process: Naming repressive cultural practices and discourses. Linking personal experience of oppression to larger forces. Acting with others to create a more democratic, equitable, sustainable society.

Perspective: Complexity Theories -- Exploring ecological relationships between cognition and environment

- Focus and key questions: Focus is on co-emergence of systems (learner, setting). How do cognition and environment become simultaneously enacted?
- Learning process: All parts of the system are continuously learning. As one part copes with new situations and conditions, it changes behavior which influences changes in the parts around it. Disturbance in any system part, when amplified, affects learning of all parts.
- Learning purposes and desired outcomes: Describe and analyze learning in systems. Become more capable of more sophisticated, more flexible, more creative action.

(Fenwick, 2003, pp.40-41)

Fenwick (2003) represents the concerns of many contemporary theorists and critics that experiential learning, especially the orthodox, Humanistic-Constructivist theory (individuals reflecting upon concrete experience) has
become too institutionalized and serves as an instrumental method rather liberating purpose. The other troubling and intersecting questions she summarizes in these six critiques: “1. Critique of the educative notion of building a coherent self. 2. Critique of the belief that individuals exist separately from their social contexts. 3. Critique of models representing experience as concrete. 4. Critique of educative emphasis on cognitive reflection in experiential learning. 4. Critique of experimental trial-and-error as useful learning. 6. Critique of the notion that adults are empowered through critical reflection on experience.” (p. 76) Fenwick also poses important questions about whether and in what ways experiential learning should be bounded before it subsumes many categories and strategies of formal, informal and nonformal learning processes.

The next component of the theoretical context important for our session is learning theory. Illeris (2004a) describes a comprehensive learning theory that incorporates the individual process of knowledge acquisition, through both the person’s cognitive and emotional dimensions, and knowledge integration through interaction with what he calls the “Sociality” dimension or “socially situated context” (p. 87). Illeris describes four types of learning, cumulation, assimilation, accommodation and transformation, and how each contributes to the development or change of the individual’s psychological patterns. He argues that this learning theory helps explain and support transformative learning “as the term for the structurally most comprehensive kind of learning that includes simultaneous restructuring in all three learning dimensions” (p. 84-85).

In a section focusing on experiential learning, Illeris (2004b) defines experience and discusses its role in learning. He defines experience as an “... overarching concept that in a total and subjectively important way, embraces the cognitive, emotional and social-societal dimensions of learning, the internal psychological acquisition processes and the social interaction processes” (p. 157). Illeris emphasizes that the “subjectively perceived problems of the participants” (p. 157) must be perceived as important, based on previously established patterns of experience, and governed by a future-oriented action perspective. In a vein similar to Fenwick’s summary of critiques, Illeris notes the tension between experiential learning in a capitalist society as being distorted from liberatory to a more passive, banking model isolated from an authentic context.

The primary theoretical starting point for understanding and investigating Transformative Learning (TL) elements in our stories is this description from Mezirow: “Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our-taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will provide more true or justified to guide action. Transformative learning involves participation in constructive discourse to use the experience of others to assess reasons for justifying these assumptions, and making an action decision based on the resulting insight” (2000, p. 7-8).

Despite the fact that one persistent critique of TL is that it focuses primarily on cognitive processes in reflective isolation, Mezirow does articulate the importance of complex situational and socio-historical factors. “The process of self-empowerment, acquiring greater control of one’s life as a liberated learner is, of course, always limited by social, historical, and cultural conditions. . . . Our identity is formed in webs of affiliation within a shared life world. Human reality is intersubjective; our life histories and language are bound up with those of others. It is within the context of these relationships, governed by existing and changing cultural paradigms, that we become the persons we are” (2000, p. 27).

Mezirow (2000) also recognizes the importance of reasoning and/or intuition to critical reflectivity and that both are influenced by conditioned emotional responses (p. 21). It is also germane to this proposed experiential learning event, to note how he describes the importance of imagination to TL. “Imagination is central to understanding the unknown; it is the way we examine alternative interpretations of our experience by ‘trying on’ another’s point of view. The more reflective and open we are to the perspectives of others, the richer our imagination of alternative contexts for understanding will be” (p. 20).

This theoretical framework has moved from Fenwick’s presentation of experiential learning, through a brief recap of the comprehensive learning theory developed by Illeris, to Mezirow’s primary description of transformational learning and the importance of discourse. A final important component for our purposes is how personal narrative in telling life stories enhances the possibility for TL. Rossiter (2002) provides this perspective for the theoretical framework on using stories as the central focus in this session: “A narrative orientation to education is grounded in an understanding of narrative as a primary structure of human meaning and narrative as metaphor for the developing self” (p. 8). After warning that narrative cannot be reduced to a “handy toolkit of teaching techniques,” she continues, “What we can do is recognize the autobiographical dimension of learning. We can appreciate that stories – like education itself – draws us out, lead beyond ourselves. And we can conclude that narrative – in its many manifestations – functions as a powerful medium of learning, development, and transformation” (p. 8).
Framework for Scripting Our Stories

The final piece I promised is a way to help script our stories for this session. This framework has been developed during the last three years to help me and students develop case- and simulation-based events for online adult education graduate courses. It uses a familiar framework for structuring a story: WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, HOW and WHY. You don’t need to structure a story in this sequence for presentation, but these elements are important to consider when creating the narrative to describe the events of the story.

WHO are the key characters (provide important relationships and visual description)?

WHAT information about character roles, the task, or journey is necessary?
- Is it an individual or an organizational situation?
- What is the conflict?

WHEN does it take place? Is it a short or long timeframe?

WHERE is the setting and location? Describe needed context.

HOW is it resolved?

WHY is it a story about an authentic TL experience?
- What aspects of TL are engaged?
- Is it a sudden or incremental transformation?

Questions to guide our dialogue/analysis, dissecting Mezirow’s description of TL (2000, p. 7-8):
- What aspects or elements of transformational learning did the story engender?
- Did this story demonstrate more capacity for inclusion, discrimination (about behavior, events, and actions) openness (to what?), capability for emotional change, and reflection?
- Is a character able to “generate beliefs and opinions that will provide more true or justified to guide action”?
- Does this story illustrate “participation in constructive discourse to use the experience of others to assess reasons for justifying these assumptions”?
- Does this story illustrate “making an action decision based on the resulting insight”?

These are some additional questions that have occurred to me as I work through the process of writing this paper and shaping our TLC session since I wrote the proposal:
- Where do you get a story about a TL experience?
- How do you know it’s a story about an authentic TL experience?
- Who is the best person to ask and answer these questions?
- Is TL such a subjective, phenomenological experience that only the individual can assess it?
- Is there a rationale for an observer to be able to formally assess an individual’s TL experience?
- If so, under what conditions?

In Conclusion

At the end of this hour together, it is my intention to have collaborated in this experiential session with participants who accepted the invitation by sharing brief stories of transformational learning from one or more of these possible perspectives: as learner, as facilitator/instructor, or as observer. The session will have moved easily and comfortably between telling stories and constructive dialogue on the stories describing elements of transformational learning. We will have at least explored, if not “demonstrated new and innovative practices in transformative learning (TL) through creative, interactive formats” as well as “integration of the theoretical, practical and experiential” and “that sometimes the method is the means” (Dirkx, et al, 2005). Another measure of success will be to have a few people interested in interaction about stories and TL after the session to move beyond the experience of an isolated, one-time conference session.
My own next steps include continuing to develop and reflect upon on my personal narrative to better integrate the various facets of my life/career journey as theater person, higher and continuing education administrator and faculty/facilitator of adult development and learning. These words by Palmer in *A Hidden Wholeness* (2004) pose the question motivating me: “The divided life may be endemic, but wholeness is always a choice. Once I have seen my dividedness, do I continue to live a contradiction – or do I try to bring my inner and outer worlds back into harmony?” (p. 17). The circles of trust and importance of silence, mutual respect, individual responsibility-taking and self-directedness described by Palmer are important in the creation of theater and storytelling as well as creating an environment to support transformative learning. Dominicé, in *Learning from Our Lives* (2000), provides a perspective, methodology and a wealth of resources for me to assist students in developing their life course focus in the course on adult development and learning. The rationale he presents “suggests how practitioners can collaborate with adult learners to explore life history themes relating to personal and social learning, enabling learners to become increasingly self-directed in their learning activities” (p. xix).

**References:**
Coaching and Transformative Learning: Theoretical Underpinnings

Susan R. Meyer

Abstract: Coaching is a field of practice in search of theoretical underpinnings. Early explorations suggest that coaching has roots in fields including education, adult development, psychotherapy, and social systems theory. In the past two years, theory-builders have begun to explore the natural fit between coaching and transformative learning. To date, most coaching research focuses on executive coaching. This paper explores how transformative learning theory informs personal coaching.

A Profession Seeking Its Roots

In 2003, the International Coach Federation held its first research symposium as a way to investigate the theoretical underpinnings of the coaching profession. Like many professions coming into its own, coaching was now in search of a theoretical base. Although coaches come from diverse backgrounds and preparation and have equally diverse practices, as the field grows as a profession, it becomes increasingly important to develop the theoretical underpinnings of practice.

The origin of coaching has been variously linked to the late 1980s, when an American financial planner found that his clients wanted advice about life and work (Anonymous 2002) and to the Socrates way of working with his students (Bagshaw and Bagshaw 2002). Recently, it has been called a sophisticated form of teaching (Buck 2004). It is this school of thought that spurs exploration of what a deeper understanding of the role of transformative learning in coaching.

Stein (2003a) feels that coaching theory will find its roots in fields including education, adult development, psychotherapy, and social systems theory. The emphasis on the need for deep change, if the effect of coaching is to be lasting, underscores a strong link between coaching and cognitive and behavioral theories within psychology and transformative learning theory, particularly as expressed in Mezirow’s (1978) early work around perspective transformation, within education. In the coaching process, cognitive psychology and behavioral theories are linked as the client’s cognitive restructuring is demonstrated in lasting behavioral changes. This dual focus on helping clients “do” and “be” calls for a theoretical framework that includes an understanding of personal constructs.

The goal of the coach is to guide the client through a process changing old habits of mind to new beliefs that create a supportive environment for what Cashman (1998) labeled life-enhancing change. This process is informed by theorists including Jung, Mezirow, Ellis and Bohm. Given this focus on deep change, the nature of the coaching relationship can be seen as a form of transformative learning.

This paper describes a few of the roots of coaching within transformative learning theory as set forth by Mezirow and discusses related constructs that informed or were informed by Mezirow’s work. It links these constructs to the coaching process and raises questions for further exploration.

Transformation and the Coaching Process

It is easy to see how stories and clarifying questions are central to coaching – stories of the past and stories of the real and imagined future. Stories of the past are examined as sources of strength or as blocks. When there are successes, questions help identify action steps likely to lead to future successes. The client must recognize these steps before he or she is able to replicate them. If the story is about a block, questions are used to probe for alternate interpretations. This process helps the client move from remaining a victim of circumstances and others’ actions and motives to taking control; from remaining stuck in one story to becoming open to multiple interpretations. A central feature of good coaching, then, is the process of joint examination of the stories, or interpretations of events, that clients tell and the generation and examination of multiple meaning perspectives.

The goal of the coach is to guide the client through a process of changing old habits of mind to new beliefs that create a supportive environment for what Cashman (1998) labeled life-enriching change. It is a process that links cognitive psychology with behavioral theories, as the client’s cognitive restructuring is demonstrated in lasting behavioral changes. In this, transformative learning is based on a process similar to that seen in the literature describing the development of emotional intelligence competencies. Given this focus on deep change, the nature of the coaching relationship can be seen as a form of transformative learning.

In discussing transformation, Cashman (1998) says:

Susan R. Meyer. Presented at the Sixth International Transformative Learning Conference, Michigan State University, October 6-9, 2005.
One of the most effective ways to take this journey to a more integrated, complete understanding of ourselves is to explore deeply our personal belief system. ... Beliefs are transformational. Every belief we have transforms our life in either a life-enriching or a life-limiting way.

Compare this to how Mezirow (1991, p.167) defines transformative learning: the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have

Come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world;
Changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more
Inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and finally, making choices
Or otherwise acting upon these new understandings.

Underlying Mezirow’s original theory was the notion that a shift in underlying perspective occurred as a result of a disorienting dilemma (1991, p.4-5). This can often be the situation that leads an individual to seek coaching. Similarly, Buck, Kassel and Meyer (2005) describe our minds as pattern recognition machines; when something happens, the coaching client tries to fit it into pre-existing patterns. When the new information fits, they will rarely evaluating their thinking, but when it doesn’t fit, and discomfort ensues, most will create explanations to relieve that discomfort. Often, though, these explanations, or assumptions, limit thinking, create negative energy, and hold the individual back. Together, coach and client examine and question expectations, perceptions, and the meanings given to experience. This leads to the co-creation of a new meaning perspective and a new way of being in the world.

The steps involved in transformative learning, as originally conceptualized by Mezirow (1975), closely parallel the coaching process. As outlined in Cranton (Cranton, 1994, p. 23), these include:

- Experiencing a disorienting dilemma;
- Undergoing self-examination;
- Conducting a critical assessment of role assumptions;
- Recognizing that one’s problem is shared;
- Exploring options for new ways of acting;
- Building competence and self-confidence in new roles.

In the coaching process, the steps may include:

- Experiencing conflicting intentions;
- Seeking the assistance of a coach;
- Following the path of inquiry to identify source of conflict;
- Conducting a critical assessment of underlying assumptions;
- Reframing or letting go of old ways of thinking;
- Exploring options for new ways of acting;
- Testing and reinforcing new behaviors.

**Changing Clients’ Lives One Construct at a Time**

As described above, coaching, as transformative learning, requires the examination of the individual’s belief system in areas where current beliefs lead to ineffective action. Kelly (1963) called these individual units that comprise the individual’s belief systems constructs. Each construct, or unit of belief, is open to examination in the coaching conversation. Kelly (1963) feels that people seek to improve their constructs. They alter them to provide better fits, and subsume them with superordinate constructs or systems that better fit with their current worldview.

In aiding clients with this process, the coach is facilitating transformative learning. Kelly (1963) also describes conditions unfavorable to the formation of new constructs. The perception of threat can arise when a new construct is incompatible with high-order constructs upon which the individual is dependent for living. Instead of attempting to reframe the situation and move forward, the client becomes increasingly dependent on old constructs and freezes, remaining stuck in an unproductive pattern of behavior. There is a preoccupation with old material. In order for transformative learning and personal change to occur, new material needs to be interwoven with old. Kelly (1963) describes this process:
But life, to our way of thinking, is more than mere change. It involves an interesting relationship between parts of our universe wherein one part, the living creature, is able to bring himself around to represent another part, his environment. … Because he can represent his environment, he can place alternate constructions upon it and, indeed, do something about it if it doesn’t suit him. To the living creature, then, the universe is real, but it is not inexorable unless he chooses to construe it that way.

Underlying Mezirow’s (1978) original theory and Energy Pattern Coaching (Buck, Kassel and Meyer 2005) is the notion that a shift in underlying perspective occurs as a result of a disorienting dilemma. Kelly (Kelly, 1963, p. 8-9) describes this as follows:

Man looks at his world through transparent patterns of [templates] which he creates and then attempts to fit over the realities of which the world is comprised. The fit is not always very good. Yet without such patterns the world appears to be such an undifferentiated homogeneity that man is unable to make any sense out of it. Even a poor fit is more helpful to him than nothing at all.

This can often be the situation that leads an individual to seek coaching. Together, coach and client examine and question expectations, perceptions, and the meanings given to experience. This leads to the co-creation of a new meaning perspective and a new way of being in the world.

In coaching, there is a continuous process of framing and reframing, as is found in Schön’s (1987) reflective practicum. Cranton (in Mezirow and Associates, p. 181-2) reminds us, “Our frames of reference are complex webs of assumptions, expectations, values, and beliefs that act as a filter or screen through which we view ourselves and the world.” For this process to occur, there must exist the conditions of what Schön (1987) calls a learning laboratory – a safe environment within which to try new constructs. These conditions parallel those of a good coaching relationship. Gonzalez (2003) described coaches engaged in transformative conversations. She states that the process (Gonzalez 2003, p.98):

…is dialogic and collaborative and encourages the exploration of alternative ways of acting and reacting, and personal reflection and awareness, all in the context of a trusting relationship.

**Theoretical Bases for Transformative Coaching**

In a similar vein, Hargrove (1995, p. 62) states: “Transformational coaching involves helping people surface, question and reframe their stories when their current stories are disconfirmed or break down.” Hargrove (1995) says that he drew heavily on Argyris and Schön in the development of his own coaching perspective. He suggests using these questions as a model for clarifying stories from clients. An emphasis is placed on not accepting the client’s interpretation at face value – or as the only interpretation – of the situation. He feels that coaching uses triple loop learning – “transforming who people are by creating a shift in people’s context or point of view about themselves.” (Hargrove, 1995, p.27)

Many approaches can lead to this transformative process. Sherin and Caiger (2004) describe using rational-emotive therapy techniques in the coaching process:

When the expectation or belief is unreasonable or unrealistic, the consequences tend to be unhealthy and maladaptive. When the belief is realistic or reasonable, resulting emotional responses may be negative … but not necessarily unhealthy … and the consequential behaviors … will not be maladaptive …. Once the relationship is understood and accepted, the coach can begin to work with the client to change those beliefs that they have identified as unreasonable and problematic by challenging and disputing them… .

A good coaching conversation is built on the premise that change is not just possible, but is a given, so the nature of the conversation is transformative. (Meyer 2003) The coaching client has made a decision to change in some profound way and the work coach and client will do together will create new beliefs that will result in actions supporting the shift. This requires becoming conscious in the Jungian sense. Cranton (2003) describes this as:

examining the unexamined, becoming aware of depths of the Self, moving underneath the surface of life. It occurs through introspection, reflection, delving into our emotions and imagination, and as Sharp (1998) says, “asking the right questions, again and again” (p. 136).
This process describes transformative coaching. Further, the relationship between coach and client facilitates the kind of relationship Taylor (2003) describes, citing Carter’s (2002) finding that:

relational communication (highly personal and self-disclosing) for mid-career women, not rational dialogue (analytical, point-counterpoint discussion) proved essential for transformative learning.

The coach can be seen as a skilled helper engaged in a specialized form of dialogue. Brookfield (1987) discusses Egan’s view of the skilled helper. Egan found that people are helped to construct preferred scenarios by imagining a different future. The helper’s role goes beyond simply posing questions and allowing people to struggle with them. They should also assist people to develop goals that are specific, realistic, and in keeping with their own values. This viewpoint links the “being” aspects of coaching with the “doing” aspects.

Another perspective on the coaching conversation comes from McBride, Voetterl, and (2003), who introduce Bohmian dialogue as a tool to foster transformative learning and Stein (2003b), who discusses coaching as discourse. In Bohmian dialogue a group of individuals can develop and share meaning together. Conditions are created that allow for what Mezirow, in defining transformative learning, (Mezirow 2000, p. 7) describes as:

the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open … so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action.

Tennant (1988) sees development as a dialectic process. He cites Berger and Luckmann, who see personality as a social construct. Each individual’s sense of identity is constructed in a social world. The way we construct our identity is based on how our parents and others treat us and on our internalized perceptions of this treatment. We take on and internalize the roles and attitudes of significant others and extend this to an identification (or way of being) with the world at large. It is this process that life history and journaling can explicate. The life history surfaces internalized constructs and makes possible reflection on those constructs.

In a paper linking transformational learning and transformational living, Dirkx (Dirkx in Taylor, Sawyer, Dirkx 2003) could be describing the desired outcome of coaching:

Through this inner work, we develop a more conscious awareness of our personal myths or stories, the collective myths of our cultures, and a richer, deeper sense of who we are and what we are about. (Dirkx in Taylor, Sawyer, Dirkx 2003)

Much as in Argyris’ (1985) Action Science case work, these dialogues provide the opportunity to examine underlying assumptions, to reframe them, and to emerge with a different mindset or perspective. Jane Vella (1995) writes extensively about the value of dialogue in transformation. She reminds us that the integration, through dialogue, of self-examination and self-discovery has long been recognized as a vehicle for personal change.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper links the underpinning of a theoretical framework for coaching in construct theory and in transformative learning theory as described by Mezirow (1978, 1990, 1991, 2000) both because of the link between the feelings of discomfort that bring clients to coaching and Mezirow’s (1978) early notion of disorienting dilemmas. The connection is strengthened by the reliance in coaching on examining and altering individual constructs or mindsets as a precursor to behavioral change.

The process of coaching described earlier in this paper, so closely paralleling the process of transformative learning, is used in a wide range of coaching contexts from overall improvement of quality of life, specific help around issues like ADD or substance abuse, career change, or handling life transitions through executive coaching. These theoretical connections should be explored through context-based and cross-context research on transformative coaching with clients in a variety of contexts. Currently, coaching research focuses heavily on the effectiveness of executive coaching, as seen in studies including Axford 2004, Bagshaw and Bagshaw 2002, Brocato 2003 and Goldberg 2005. Far less work has been done in the area of personal coaching.

Finally, Gonzalez’s (2003) recommendations for theory-building include further exploring the relationships between coaching and the theories of Vygotsky, Bruner, Freire and Mezirow. The questions that comprise the construction of an overarching theoretical framework are many and complex. Considerations must include both development of evaluation measures and the content of coach training programs, which currently exist outside traditional academic settings, and, with few exceptions, include no theoretical framework. How do the various
theories we employ complement and contradict each other? How can these best be incorporated into coach preparation? What are the implications for coach training and certification? Should we, as other fields have done, enrich professional preparation by including more theory in our training programs? Should candidates be evaluated on both theory and application? I join Kaufman (2004) in inviting others to join in this journey of discovery.

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Transformational Learning in the Course of Living, Exploring, and Studying Abroad

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Abstract: Study abroad is a milieu in which an active participant encounters experiences that often result in a transformational learning experience. This phenomenological pilot study peers into the interior forces that propel some students into a new zone to explore other worlds, with other languages, and cultures and as an outcome return home with a deeper meaning or change of perspective in their own lives.

Introduction

“…believing too strongly in the reality of our culture’s world, we miss the larger reality behind it” (Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, p. 59). Perspective transformation begins when one peers deeply and intensely into the assumptions acquired through and ascribed by society (Mezirow, 1978). Students who decide to take a scholarly journey into an often-unknown land open themselves to perspective transformation. Study abroad emerges as the ideal gateway for students in a world that is consistently becoming more global to learn about other cultures and worldviews. Yet, having an experience or situation does not always promote transformation. (Merriam, 2004). Moreover, it supports the affective development of students (Astin, 1993). An enlarged understanding of the validity of sending students to study abroad may result in a stronger impetus for extending study abroad initiatives, which, in turn supports the need to continue doing research into this phenomenon.

Problem Statement

A report conducted by the American Council on Education found that fifty percent of high school seniors that plan to attend college are interested in studying abroad (Hayward & Siaya, 2001). Interestingly, the total amount of study abroad participants amounts to a little over one percent of the nation’s undergraduates. There are various reasons why students do not take advantage of study abroad as researched by the Institute of International Education; financial constraints, lack of faculty guidance, means of assessing learning, and the rising numbers of nontraditional students (Open Doors, 2003). Ambivalence to sojourning outside of American borders is not a new phenomenon, dating back to Thomas Jefferson and the founding fathers the notion of sending students to other cultures was viewed as a threat to the moral values of society.

As the world becomes more global in scope graduating seniors with international experience will have broader world perspectives. Sending students to study abroad is a means to transform student world visions by providing a venue that requires a student to step out of his comfort zone to experience a new world. Transformational learning theory maintains that certain developments in life bring to the surface a change in one’s frame of reference.

Research Questions

The purpose of this pilot study is to gain an understanding of the experiences of students who studied abroad in countries where English is not the main language, and where this experience resulted in the questioning of previously held assumptions about life.

1. Does study abroad provide students with experiences that challenge preconceived notions about the world that exists outside of United States borders?
2. What experiences lead the participant to reflect on prior assumptions?
3. Did a change in perspective occur because of a disorienting dilemma?

Literature Review

An educational program that takes place outside of the geographical boundaries of origin of a student is labeled study abroad (Kitsantas, 2004). As a research phenomenon, study abroad has undergone various sorts of research in the United States beginning in the 1950’s after World War II. The more recent studies aim to gauge the effects of study abroad on college student intercultural competence (Alred & Byram, 2002), in-and-out of class cultural learning (Talburt & Stewart, 1999), national identity (Dolby, 2004) assessment (Merva, 2003), and foreign-language skills (Wilkinson, 2002).

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In the study by Dolby (2004) a greater awareness of the influence of the American corporate and media culture on other nations resulted in a greater self national identity. While in Australia, the students encountered confrontations with natives about the United States and as a result, the students themselves questioned their prior assumptions of what they viewed as their own national identity and reevaluated these misconceptions. Because the native language spoken was English, the challenges were often verbal which allowed the students to get a greater understanding of the conversation. In many other studies, language barriers did not allow for depth in expressing attitudes. Regardless, in all studies there was a mention of some attitude change because of living and studying in a foreign country and being confronted with negative attitudes about the United States.

One’s frame of reference is challenged which can bring forth a new perspective of life (Mezirow, 2000). Transformational learning theory maintains that the lenses used by humans to view their surroundings are comprised of personal experiences and values. To understand the impact of study abroad on creating a scenario for independent thinking one only need to look at the studies that suggest this very transformation occurs. Students living in a new environment, specifically a country far from home will inevitably encounter situations that are new and often times scary. Learning and growing from these situations will help empower young people to succeed in a world that is becoming more global. Experiences offer the adult learner a “living textbook” (Lindeman, 1926, p.7) that can provide meaning in relation to a life event. Various studies demonstrate that there is an impact on student perceptions after studying abroad (Alred & Byram, 2002).

Methodology
A phenomenological approach was the method used to gain insight into the experiences of students who arranged their own study abroad at a university with no support or guidance with this endeavor. A phenomenological approach was undertaken because the objective was to use the words of the participants to paint a picture of the experience. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 5 undergraduate students who studied abroad during the past two years at an institution that itself had no study abroad department or staff. One of the students was a foreign language education major while the remaining four students were foreign language minors with a major of International Business. All five students are Caucasian. Two are married and the remaining three are single. (Nationally, 83% of students who study abroad are Caucasian [Open Doors 2004]). Most of the students (4 out of the 5) had prior international experience, which means that they have traveled outside of the United States in some capacity. The subjects invited to participate in the study came from the general population at a Southwestern University. The subjects filled out informed consent forms. The individual subjects were chosen because they had studied abroad which required the use of purposeful sampling to obtain the rich information necessary for the study yet, the snowball effect provided 2 of the 5 subjects.

The data was derived from interviews conducted in various locations. The participants decided upon the time and place for the interview. All of the interviews took place after the return of the students from studying abroad. The analysis of the data was qualitative and interpretive to construct meaning from each individual experience with study abroad. Interviews revealed how the students interpret their experiences while studying abroad and focused on how the experiences of these adult learners resulted in experiential learning. The transcribed interviews were coded for themes. A colleague read the transcripts to help ensure validity. One validity threat was that I, the researcher, had studied abroad three times. A situation that could produce bias as to the researcher’s perspective on study abroad. The subjects read copies of the transcripts of their interviews as a means to validate the material.

Data Analysis
The in-depth interviews generated three main themes: (a) students were aware of a change of perspective but could not clearly articulate that change, (b) students were proud of themselves for taking the steps to make the sojourn come to fruition, and (c) students felt that their time abroad was priceless.

The Lived Experience Hard to Put Into Words
In response to a question about his experiences abroad Matthew, a man of 51 years of age responded:

…it was kind of metaphysical, I don’t know- it’s hard to say I only know that it confirmed what I suspected about the importance of being immersed in the culture, it showed me that on a personal level that- things work out.

The notion that the experience was “metaphysical” related to the fact that certain experiences are truly hard to label or put into words. The participant was aware of a change yet at that moment found it hard to articulate. To
further the point, Clint, a senior international business major, reflected on an experience he had while in the mountains of Mexico:

I can’t put a price on the waterfalls that I saw or the clouds I saw coming into the mountains. You can’t put a price on that stuff… it’s one of the first times my heart and my mind agreed on what was going on, even if I couldn’t put it into words.

Kim elaborated on her experience having noticed how she had changed because of studying abroad:

I’m kind of a shy person but I’m not so much anymore. I’m more interactive…I changed more emotionally you know when you experience a new culture it’s hard to explain but it changes you completely… really, I mean experiencing a new culture always changes you for the best- how can it not?

Experience: Self-Empowerment - I Did It!

Lily had the strongest self-empowerment moment when in her interview she reflected on her venture abroad and loudly emphasized:

I can’t believe I did it- all by myself. I’m so proud of myself, ha ha ha.

Kim found that making the dream a reality was not so difficult once she made up her mind:

When I graduated high school I decided that I wanted Spanish to be part of my future- so my first year in college my mom and I talked about study abroad… we sat down and decided that it would be something new and different. I went during the summer my first year and what was weird is that the international office on campus did nothing to help me but give me a book- the rest was up to me- and I did it!

Cost Is No Excuse for Not Going

There exists a false notion that only the wealthy have the means to study abroad. This is no longer the case. In this study, four of the five participants had to make significant sacrifices to pay for their study abroad. Interestingly, the sacrifices were not much different from the cost of staying home.

Kim realized that the cost was relatively the same as it is at her home university:

It was expensive for me, but it would be no different than what I would have paid here at one of the major universities for the seven months- living and classes. But it was well worth if even if it’s for one semester

Clint, a senior, was enthusiastic about having gone on his journey and found that no price could take away the experiences that he will forever cherish:

The overall $600 experience was worth six thousand, I mean it there was not a price I could put on the relationships that I made and the experiences that I had.

Discussion

The results of this study provide a framework for looking deeper into the experiences of students who study abroad. Although each situation is distinct due to inherent personal characteristics as well as external circumstances, conclusions can be made which suggests that study abroad is a valuable means to further educate individuals outside of the four walls that surround a classroom in this country or in any other. The learning that took place came most often from situations that arose specifically when the participants were outside of the classroom and their senses made the experience much more real. The moments lived, breathed, and viewed will forever be etched into the souls of the participants. From these moments, a new perspective on life has been achieved be it directly or indirectly as a result of studying abroad.

The ill perceived obstacles to studying abroad by many students are not so great or impossible to overcome. All the students employed in this study had to make a small sacrifice to achieve the goal of studying abroad. The results, as stated by all, were well worth the effort (which was never considered impossible) when one looks at the experience as a whole. Students that take the steps necessary to study abroad come back with an intangible good that will forever be a part of them. The senses experience many delectable moments that words cannot always describe.
The depths for each student and each experience are immeasurable yet visible. The students noted that they had lived something that was not easy to articulate but that in their beings the changes were notable. Without the assistance of the university, all the students in this study created the opportunity to study abroad and felt empowered by their autonomous actions.

Conclusions

In conclusion, all five sojourners were thrilled with themselves for taking the initiative and studying abroad. Their experiences, although different, resulted in some type of personal growth be it a change of perspective in relation to life, career, world issues, or academics. Most importantly, the period after returning was most critical when they admitted to questioning prior assumptions about life which runs parallel to the thoughts of the full transformational cycle where the stage of reframing comes after alienation (Mezirow, 1978). This stage of reframing one’s notion of reality was most severe upon return when the prior status quo became less clear and often called into question. The students experienced situations in which now they were the outsider. As never before, they found themselves being more understanding of students from other countries that were studying at their universities. Study abroad is an enlightening opportunity that should be afforded to every college student. Age, sex, gender, race, marital status, and socioeconomic background are important factors yet the student who studies abroad will live a different experience for this very reason. Understanding that each experience has its own flow with its own plot and own rhythm emphasizes the critical importance to understanding life changing experiences (Dewey, 1964). Imagine if all universities did as most of their mission statements suggest- internationalize their campuses- how better prepare the students of a land where only twenty-seven percent of the population has a passport.

References


Examining the Baggage:  
First Steps Towards Transforming Habits of Mind Around Race in Higher Education

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Abstract: Through the use of an experiential learning exercise designed to activate awareness of white privilege (McIntosh, 1998) we, the authors, teach women with the intention of developing critical awareness about race. We find that psychologically, the women become poised to cycle or recycle through models of racial identity development, while in transformative learning terms the women take first steps towards transforming their habits of mind around race.

Introduction

Bag lady you gone hurt your back
Dragging all them bags like that
I guess nobody ever told you

All you must hold on to
Is you, is you, is you…
So pack light

In an age of politically correct color blindness, it is important that higher education engage students in honest discourse about diversity (King, 1991). Throughout higher education, most faculty as well as students regard themselves as multiculturally aware, without regard for varying degrees of multicultural competence (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; King, 1991). Transforming perspectives related to race and other diversities requires students to become aware of their identities, influences that have shaped those identities, and their attendant habits of mind and ways of being (Sheared, 1994). What does it take to foster openness to questioning previously unexamined and unquestioned perspectives in order to consider alternative perspectives on race?

If our students believe they are multiculturally aware, then merely assigning readings and lecturing about the salience of race generally would merely perpetuate superficial attention to race and racism in education (King, 1991; Kolb, 1984). Thus, we begin with bags women bring to classrooms, unpacking them to create awareness of racial distortions they may not realize they are carrying. This paper draws on the work of Kathleen Taylor (2000), focusing on teaching with the intention of developing critical awareness about race. The notion is that we cannot get past race and racism in our classroom environments until we first take account of how race influences our lives (Blackmun, 1978; Essed, 1991). In this vein, this work bridges psychological theories of Nigresence (Cross, 2001) and white racial identity development (Helms, 2001), specifically focusing how racial identity develops in women learners (Hayes & Flannery, 2000; Collins, 2000), with transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000). On the side of transformative learning theory, this bridge is anchored in Mezirow’s idea that transformative learning cannot begin until a person arrives upon a “disorienting dilemma” or triggering event (2000). On the side of racial identity development, a racial encounter experience is necessary in order to foster growth (Cross, 2001; Hardiman, 2001). In merging theory with practice, we as adult educators can create the “disorienting dilemma”/triggering encounter, enabling students to critically review their bags in order to connect book knowledge about race with one’s habits of mind (Taylor, 2000). The goal, in the lyricist Erykah Badu’s terms, is to enable students to “pack light” around the seemingly intransient color-line (Dubois, 2004). This goal we have for our students is particularly relevant as our students are educators: the bags educators carry influence the education of generations to come (hooks, 1981/1995).

This paper begins with a theoretical discussion of the intersection between the “disorienting dilemmas”/triggering events of transformative learning theory and the encounter experience necessary to foster racial identity development. The discussion then turns towards Taylor’s (2000) idea of teaching with developmental intention, addressing the benefits of experiential learning in the development of cultural awareness. Finally, we detail our method of inquiry, presenting analysis of the written reflections of women in our combined class as they engaged in an experiential learning exercise designed to activate awareness of white privilege (McIntosh, 1998). We find that the employment of this exercise creates a disorienting dilemma for women, both black and white. Psychologically,
the women become poised to cycle or recycle through their racial identity development. In terms of transformative learning, the women take critical first steps towards transforming their habits of mind and ways of being about race.

Transforming Habits of Mind Around Race: Intersecting Transformative Learning Theory and Racial Identity Development

Within the field of psychology, the post-Civil Rights Era is marked with growth in the numbers of African Americans among the clientele of psychologists, as well as growth in the numbers of African Americans clinically trained in psychology. The combination of these factors gave awareness to the limited applicability of the Erikson (1963) model of identity development, as applied to African Americans. Towards this end, models of racial identity development were developed, beginning with models of black identity (Cross, 1973, 2001; Jackson, 1976, 2001) and emerged to include white identity development (Hardiman, 1979, 2001; Helms, 1984), ethnic identity development (Chavez and Guido-DiBrito, 1999; Ferdaman & Gallegos, 2001; Kim, 2001) and multiracial/ethnic identity development (Root, 1996; Wijeyesinghe, 2001).

Models of monoracial identity development are generally centered in the context of interracial contact, often, but not, necessarily negative. These models also generally present three phases of contact: pre-encounter, encounter, and post-encounter (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001). During the pre-encounter phase people are generally unaware of the influence of race and it is not until an encounter experience, or in transformative learning terms a disorienting dilemma/triggering event with someone of a different race, that a self-appraisal regarding the meaning of race is made. During the post-encounter phase a person can choose to accept and integrate or reject and deny new knowledge about race. Contemporary theorists add that there is no pinnacle of racial identity development (Tatum, 1997) and that people can and should recycle through the phases (Cross, 2001).

The bags students bring to higher education are “polyrhythmic” and vary by their familial, work, and educational experiences, but also by race, class, and gender dynamics (Sheared, 1994). For many, the bags are full of the discourse of colorblindness, which minimizes the awareness of race, while the everyday impacts of race persist (Essed, 1991). In this vein, colorblindness may be well-intentioned, but upon critical reflection is a widely held habit of mind that serves to preserve white racial dominance (Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999; King, 1991). Dubbed dysconsciousness by Joyce E. King (1991), colorblindness is “an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation that accepts the given order of things as given...is a form of racism that tacitly accepts dominant White norms and privileges” (p.135). Yet, a more wholistic understanding of race and racism can be fostered when we teach with developmental intention (Taylor, 2000) regarding race. Through the creation of a disorienting dilemma, educators can provide an encounter experience, presenting students with the opportunity to cycle and/or recycle through racial identity processes. In this vein, it is the role of the adult educator to present the racial challenge, providing the opportunity for students to transform their habits of mind (Mezirow, 2000) around the salience of race.

Teaching With Racial Identity Development Intentions

In consultation with scholars across three continents and reflection on their own practices, Taylor, Marienau, and Fiddler (2000) analyzed the literature of adult learning and development, and found that educators believed that the process of arriving at developmental outcomes was most important. In particular, they found that educators fostered student learning through experiential learning techniques, which according to Taylor (2000) meant that “rather than depend on information about something, learners were encouraged to experience something” (p. 163). This emphasis on experiential learning is rooted in the theoretical frameworks of David Kolb (1984) and is found to be pedagogically beneficial in a range of disciplines within higher education, as well as more generally developing cultural awareness and democratic engagement (Nagada, Gurin & Lopez, 2003). In particular Chavez and Guido-DiBrito (1999) contend that in making visible the invisible influence of race, the learning of all students is enhanced. For students of color, heightening the awareness of race creates a safe learning environment; whereas white students benefit from exposure to the “multicultural skills, an enhanced ability to compare and contrast multiple perspectives, and keen reflective and observational abilities” students of color develop out of necessity, given hostile and sometimes abusive learning environments (Chavez and Guido-DiBrito, 1999, p. 45; see also King, 1991).

Unpacking Excess Colorblind Baggage: A Transformative Learning Point for Racial Identity Development

Our research goal was to test a strategy for mitigating resistance to challenging ideas about society and opening students to the idea that racism still exists. To explore, we held a combined class session of our graduate education courses, with a total of 27 students: 18 White, 8 African American and 1 Native American. In terms of gender, 20 students were women – 5 black, 15 white. We submitted to students a 50-item survey developed by Peggy McIntosh (1988), which lists some everyday privileges associated with whiteness. Students were to check each of
the survey prompts which contained a privilege they perceived themselves as having. In the second stage of the exercise students were to stand up while the faculty counted back from 50 the number of privileges. As a student’s total number of privileges was called s/he was to sit down. As expected, white students sat first, white men generally before women, and generally counting privileges in the range of 30-50. Students of color generally saw themselves as having 15 privileges or less, younger and female students sitting before older and male students. At the end of this stage students wrote another reflection and we began class discussion about the exercise. In evaluating student written reflections throughout the exercise we found that even among graduate students reaction to white-privilege is strongly linked to racial identity development. Data was interpreted according to the “constant comparative” method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The contrast in student responses was most apparent when we compared reactions of black and white women.

White female graduate students in our study began largely in a pre-encounter like existence (Cross, 2001; Hardiman, 2001), as if they had never confronted racial issues. As such, introducing critical perspectives on race without connection to why race still matters may have been ineffective. Their bags were full of dysconscious colorblind ideological discourse. Conversely, these women had much vested in their gender identities. For example, a woman in her fifties noted that “[t]he white privilege that I enjoy is something that I am usually not conscious of unless it is brought to my attention,” but asserts her “acute” awareness “of the limitations which are placed upon me due to my gender.” Without the exercise, time spent discussing racial matters may likely have been accompanied by parallel internal discussions that gender matters too. For these women a point of connectedness, an experience, was needed to extend empathy beyond one’s sense of lack of gender privilege (Belenky, et. al., 1986; Flannery, 2000).

However, that connectivity was not uniformly distributed. One of the women, in her mid-twenties began by expressing outright resistance and defiance to the exercise: “This survey made me feel very uncomfortable because it is obvious which answers you desire. …This survey appears to be very biased and was not an appropriate learning tool.” Even after the dramatic display of white students sitting well before students of color, she remained developmentally foreclosed, denying what she just witnessed: “Are people really treated in this manner? Perhaps I am naïve but it seems farfetched to me that things of that actually go on.” From this perspective, no longer are there just two black professors, but with student a total of eleven people of color, conspiring to make her believe that “things of that go on.” She cannot even name the “it” – racism. Helms (1984) describes the naiveté and resistance whites express regarding information about race and racism in her White Racial Identity Development (WRID) model. In such a stance, acknowledging the existence of racism is overwhelming, leading to a retreat towards colorblind norms (Helms, 1984; Hardiman, 2001). In terms of transformative learning theory, a student in denial may stand “in grave danger of growing” (Keagan, 1994, p. 293); however, this growth can be delayed or altogether averted (Daloz, 1988; cf. Cohen & Piper, 2000). Aversion itself is a function of privilege (Helms, 1984).

The fact of being black did not correspond with states of racial identity development nirvana for black women in the study. Their bags were full too, largely with pain regarding past racialized experiences. These women were most interested in putting racial issues behind them to focus on scholastic and labor market goals. For some of the women, bringing up issues of racial privilege put them on the spot – an area of deficit for women who otherwise seem to have their lives together. One woman in particular felt that the exercise made the fact that she was Black more obvious and highlighted the marginalization that quite often comes with being Black particularly in professional fields like higher education administration. The exercise for them largely prompted a post-encounter recycling through the immersion-emersion phase of Negresence (Cross, 2001). At a prior time, they found ways to cope with, and integrate, their personal knowledge of race and racism. However, the exercise seemingly stirred up latent pain, and perhaps anger and frustration.

Recycling in one’s racial identity development raises the question of whether recycling occurs in transformative learning processes? Extending Edward Cell’s notion that there are learning benefits to revisiting one’s past experiences (1984), we posit that rather than a linear process, transformative education has cyclical elements akin to a spiral staircase. As we progress, we do so in parallel rounds.1 From Cell’s work, new learning is generated when old experiences are analyzed from a new perspective, given present positions on the staircase (1984). Taking Cell’s thoughts a step further, a person can engage in parallel experiences which create new narratives and opportunities for further growth around old issues. In this vein, the black women in this study were able to reflect anew on race and racism. At best this experience helped them re-cycle through nigrescence and towards a more integrated understanding of their racial identity development (Cross, 2001). At worst, they were able to reflect on the colorline (DuBois, 2004), extending the struggle for racial understanding even into this new millennium.

1 Note here that the imagery of a staircase dictates that just as steps can be taken forward, steps can be taken aback. The staircase image along with the concept of backwards steps will be further explored in future works.
Despite one student’s resistance, all the women were able to draw on this experience and connect with care and concern for the future. While the work of Belenky, et. al. (1986) and Hayes and Flannery (2000) generally regards the power of connection for white women, Patricia Hill Collins’ work in the area of black feminism highlights the importance of connectivity in the assimilation and integration of knowledge for black women (2000). Most dramatically in the exercise, one black woman with male children totally disregarded her personal racialized experience detailed in her first reflection, and focused on the plight of her children after seeing two black men as the last students standing. A white woman in her mid-thirties whose husband is African American/black expressed similar concern for their future born: “It [the survey] also brings fears to my mind about how my children will fare.”

Yet, the point of connectivity for the majority of the women was towards the general state of the world: will it ever change? It is at this point, after the “disorienting dilemma” encounter that students in this took first steps towards transforming their habits of mind around race. Says mid-twenties white woman, “What we do with the privilege we have is the key. Do we use it for good or bad?” With a newly found racial awareness this woman is poised to integrate this tangible knowledge and further develop her racial identity. She has, in fact, learned something. Her future individual and collective action will display whether transformative learning or mere critical reflection actually occurred (Brookfield, 2000). Says black woman in her early thirties, “I hold hope in my heart (in spite of my frustrations) that one day we will achieve civil and human rights in their purest, most sacred forms in all things.” This woman expresses what Cornell West describes as “tragic hope” (2004). In spite of the pain she shared as conjured by the exercise and reflections on the cyclical failings of Americans to achieve racial harmony, this woman has recycled, coming to a point of emersion – a merger of racial knowledge with an inner peace regarding its existence (Cross, 2001). She too appears to have survived the danger, and grown (Keagan, 1994).

Implications for Practice

Through unpacking excess racial baggage learners can grow multicultural awareness and transform their habits of mind around race and racism. However, in presenting the “disorienting dilemma” encounters, educators should appreciate the pedagogical implications of the differences students bring to learning enterprises. With this in mind, we suggest three recommendations for practice.

1. Specific goal-directed transformative learning aimed at racial and gender awareness: blending experiential and scholarly learning opportunities when addressing matters of social controversy. On the whole, our presentation of an exercise on white privilege before entering a discussion on critical race theory was instructive. We wanted our discussion to be meaningful and given levels of introspection in which most of the women engaged, this much we achieved. Without opportunity to see and develop empathy, it is likely that many of these women would have largely remained foreclosed to the idea that race still matters, while others preferred to forget. While Taylor (2000) emphasizes the importance of the experience in experiential learning, graduate students especially need the content, the theoretical bases to understand their individual experience, as well as to effectively contribute to the broader scholarly knowledge base. Moreover, discussions and experiences with issues of race and racism were not one time events. We revisited the concepts and ideas throughout the remainder of the course; encouraging students to make connections between course content and the experiential exercise.

2. Respecting diversity of experiences and ideas within groups. Discourse requires awareness and inclusion of diverse perspectives within and across racial and gender lines. How we engage around these topics, however, is not without challenge because of the loaded nature of our individual bags. Responses of these women reflected overlapping identities of race, class, gender, marital status, and so on. While there was much convergence along racial lines with respect to connectivity, empathy, and pain, at the outset there was a diversity of opinion as to whether and how race matters. Colorblindness is a dominant theme in popular conceptions of race, with significant prevalence in academia (King, 1991). Therefore, assuming that we carry similar “bags” along racial is fallacious stereotyping. The implication is that educators should avoid positioning particular students as “tokens”, one-person representatives of whatever group, for answers or discussion points on diversity matters. The pain black women, in particular, demonstrated reveals that they would rather not be put “on the spot.” While we as good educators want to further in-class dialogue on many controversial matters, singling out students may have the effect of evoking such pain in an unbalanced manner. In our exercise, everyone shared their personal experiences, which had group implications, but ultimately students spoke on behalf of their individual selves.

3. Transformative learning in higher education: measuring demographic diversity in teaching evaluations. Last, we began this enterprise feeling that we as junior faculty did not want to be penalized for addressing controversial social matters we strongly believe need to be discussed and analyzed in higher education settings, especially among future educators and administrators. Knowing that our bags are full of different bundles and these bundles are in part grouped along racial and ethnic lines render data points of demographic diversity important when evaluating teaching evaluations by students. These data points are an important reference, not only...
in courses where controversial social matters are the center of the syllabus, but in all classes. Just as students have bags, educators have bags as well. Educators, who recognize good pedagogy requires diverse perspectives and inclusion of diverse course materials, visit these issues in “content-neutral” domains.

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Exploring the Use of an Art Quilt as Commemoration and Catalyst for Transformational Learning: Artistic Representation and Experiential Learning Session

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Abstract: This experiential session will collectively explore using controversial images on an art quilt as a catalyst for transformational learning. The session provides variety and makes use of a variety of intellectual competencies, linguistic, spatial, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal. The viewing of the quilt, accompanied by music offers a non-traditional way to access prior knowledge and emotions. The addition of reflection, journaling and/or discussion can help learners make meaning of the experience in ways that resonate with their individual strengths or preferences.

As educators and change agents, we can aide learners in shifting perspectives by practicing and exploring the impacts of using the imagery of art as a catalyst for transformational learning. This paper and corresponding experiential session will discuss and explore using art to create “an experience” to access implicit memory, evoke emotions and stimulate perspective shift. This paper also reviews the role of imagery on memory, emotions and it’s corresponding impact on attitudes and habits. Most importantly for educators interested in transformational learning, this paper will provide insights on implications for using art and imagery as an educational tool in the classroom and the experiential session will provide a practical model to explore.

This experiential learning session and display of an art quilt will explore creating “an experience” as a catalyst for perspective shift. John Dewey describes an educative experience as “something to prepare a person for a later experience of a deeper or more expansive quality”(Jackson, 1998, p.6). Art illuminates and dramatizes issues and often provides “an experience” of great intensity. Art is also a sorting mechanism of the artist displaying what is important and omitting the trivial. Dewey explains that although aesthetic experiences are temporal, memories of the experience forever change us and impact future experiences (Dewey, 1934). Our habits and behaviors are a result of previously acquired experiences and attitudes which are in constant evolution as we become exposed to new ideas. Memory is not merely a reproduction of past experience, but rather a complex reconstruction by which we give meaning to our experiences, influenced by the past and the present information (Bartlett, 1932). Viewing and making meaning of art’s images require subconscious review of past knowledge in long term memory to integrate and reconstruct new meanings from the images.

History of Art and Imagery as a Tool

The medieval church routinely used the power of imagery to elicit emotions, change thinking and modify behavior. The church used art like a key to unlock the rational mind and enter the unconscious realm of the soul. The transformational power of art was revered enough to be controlled through the centuries through various forms of censorship by the Church and other political entities (Dewey, 1934). Some contemporary scholars of transformative learning, also believe the unconscious, or soul, has a large role in the psychosocial, emotional and spiritual dimensions of learning (Dirkx, 2001a, Dirkx, 2001b). Tisdell and Toliver discuss the inseparability of spirituality from learning when they state, “Spirituality is about how learners make meaning and how they construct knowledge through unconscious and symbolic processes, often cultural, manifested in such things as image, symbol and music”(Tisdell and Toliver, 2002, p.391). Native Americans, Australian Aboriginals and some tribal cultures in Africa consider dream states and visual imagery integral to their cultural ways of knowing. Tribal doctors use dreams, intuition and visualization of images to gain wisdom and aid diagnosis. Viewing, understanding and appreciating art, is inseparable from personal and cultural interpretation and is an integral part of identity construction (Freedman, 2003, Jackson, 1998, Tisdell and Toliver, 2002).

The visual arts have history of use as a learning tool and have both feared and revered for their power. Contemporary controversy around censorship of the arts has history stretching back to ancient philosophers. Plato’s treatise “ The Republic” advocates government control of the dangerous transformative power of artistic images.

Plato believed, because art conveys emotion it creates psychological disequilibrium in citizens and can lead to anti-social, anti-government acts. Plato advocated that educated citizenry should be exposed to the arts, but only arts that were government sponsored and sanctioned (Hjort and Laver, 1997). Modern society and government officials

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continue to practice censorship and control the power of art with both overt and covert censorship through their policies and funding practices. Patricia Cranton provides this definition of power, “power can be defined as a person’s ability to influence another person’s behavior and attitudes” (Cranton, 1994, p.129). Having power to influence learners is a goal of most educators. If art and imagery is as powerful as many believe, perhaps it deserves a larger role as a classroom tool.

**Imagery and Emotions in Advertising**

The writings and musings of ancient philosophers and early educators parallel current research and practices of contemporary executives and politicians. Imagery is a powerful force in impacting memories, emotions and behaviors. Advertisers capitalize on the human ability and propensity to evolve and change habits with the introduction of new ideas through images. Billions of dollars are spent annually on imagery designed to further the “perspective shifts” of consumers and voters. The use of the power and influence of art and imagery by advertisers and politicians to further their own agendas runs counter to the intentions of transformational educators. One of the goals of transformational education is to empower learners and to enhance their understanding of the choices they make. Transformative learning strives to free adults from the passive acceptance of realities imposed by others (Mezirow, 1990). Although the agendas of advertisers are contrary to the intentions of transformative and emancipatory educators, they use imagery because it is an effective way to access memory and emotions. Public attitudes and habits are impacted daily through the use of advertising images designed to evoke emotional responses, perspective shifts and behavioral change in consumers. More studies could be done in educational settings to explore imagery’s impact on learner’s unconscious memory and emotions in the decision making process. Educators should not overlook the potentiality of art and imagery as a cue and catalyst, to illicit unconscious memory and emotions which precede attitude and behavior change.

Advertising images, like art, prioritize and suggest what consumers should notice, what is important and by it’s absence, what is unimportant. The images provide cues to help access the emotions necessary to sort, evaluate and integrate current information. Advertising researchers have found that motivating cues are essential for memory activation (Braun-LaTour, et al, 2004). Images provide cues to activate implicit memory or non -conscious recall priming consumers for attitude and behavior change (Braun-LaTour, 2004 Schmitt, 1994). Research has also shown that certain types of images have greater impact. Advertising copy testers routinely test images for their effectiveness on activating and reconstructing memory and creating change. The intensity of emotional response often differentiates between successful and unsuccessful ads. Neuroscientists have used physiological measurements of the brain to show that successful ads, or ads that effectively influence behavior, show higher levels of emotional engagement and long term memory decoding (Hall, 2004). Studies on political advertising have shown, “Candidates can significantly alter the motivational power of ads simply by sing music and images to elicit emotions such as fear or enthusiasm” (Brader, 2005).

Ads with a high affective content that are emotionally arousing are effective in memory reconstruction. Some advertising studies indicate “shock advertising “that violates viewers current social norms is effective and often outperforms both fear and information ads in the area of attention, recall and recognition (Dahl, Frankenberger, and Manchada, 2004). Studies on the memory impacts of stress hormones suggest memories are strengthened and last longer at higher stress hormone levels and Alzheimer patients retain and recall memories for stressful events longer than pleasant events (McGaugh, 2003). Brader also suggests people process information differently in different emotional states. Positive moods lead to greater reliance on existing beliefs, but negative moods lead to greater reliance on systematic processing. Fear or anxiety disturbs routine, focuses attention and activates thinking to alleviate the perceived threat (Brader, 2005). Emotion and unconscious memory are devoted to human survival. Instantaneous reactions generated from fear, danger or pleasure precede conscious awareness (Weiss, 2000). Some neuroscientists suggest that all cognition is preceded by unconscious processing. “The brain is always done with it’s processing before we are conscious of thought” (Gazzaniga, 1998, p.63). There are survival decisions being made and physiological changes occurring before we are conscious of the relevance of incoming information.

Art can also be a prioritizing and focusing mechanism. Individuals have certain expectations from memories that help sort and make sense of images. We see, perceive and understand art through this filter of our meaning schemes and perspectives. Controversial or provocative images can have greater impact because of the psychological tension they create (Solso, 1996). Our eyes perceive an image with certain expectations, which may or may not be fulfilled. When an image does not match our expectations it motivates by creating attention to minimize the dissonance. “Visual dissonance is defined as a state of emotional tension when one experiences a disparity between what one expects to see and what one actually sees”(Solso, 1996, p122). Viewing controversial or unexpected art can enhance focus and increase cognitive processing to reduce this dissonance.

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Like advertising images, visual arts that evoke emotion and help access that memory may influence social attitudes and behaviors, too. Viewing controversial art images addresses the emotional component that precedes and accompanies transformation. Scholars in the field of adult education parallel the sentiments of marketing and advertising researchers when they suggest critical thought, and accompanying attitude and behavioral change is preceded by emotional engagement. Rational thought is not possible without being initiated by emotional engagement (Brookfield, 1991, Callahan, 2004). Taylor’s discussion of the role of emotions and unconscious ways of knowing validates this importance when he states, “it is feelings that are often the trigger for reflective exploration, and by exploring one’s feelings, greater self awareness and change in meaning structures often occur” (Taylor, 2001, p225).

Other scholars agree on the importance of emotions in learning, but see their role as larger than merely acting as catalyst for reflection and rational thought. Emotions are key part of the intuitive, extra-rational and spiritual aspects of transformational change and the affective and imaginative are also valid ways of knowing. (Dirkx, 2001a). He offers an alternative to the reflective and rational focus of learner’s perspective shifts when he states, “Transformative learning does not necessarily require extraordinary events in our lives, nor does it require that we think deeply and analytically about our beliefs and assumptions. Dramatic opportunities for transformative learning reside in imaginative engagement with the everydayness of our lives in what Thomas Moore (1996) refers to as the “re-enchantment” of everyday life”(Dirkx, 2001b, p16).

Ethics and Use of Imagery’s Power

The power of art and imagery is a double edged sword. On one hand it can communicate vital messages, illuminate alternatives and illustrate excellence, the flip side can “seduce us into adopting stereotypes, convince us to accept unrealistic body images, and persuade us to buy products without critical reflection” (Freedman, 2003, p.24). Art is powerful tool and catalyst for attitude and behavior change, but there can be widely differing agendas for domination of that power. The irony of examining what advertisers and politicians know about the power of art and imagery is the polarity of their intentions in using power in comparison to the intentions and potential of using power for transformational learning. Manipulation of emotions to influence consumer or voter behavior, usurp power and further the agendas of others is the antithesis of critical thinking and transformational learning A key difference between politicians, advertisers and transformational educators is their mission and intention, specifically with influencing an individual’s locus of control.

A tool is merely an instrument. It has no agenda. Ethics and agenda are the domain of the craftsman using the tool. Mezirow states” the educator’s responsibility is to help learners reach their objectives in such a way that they will function as more autonomous, socially responsible thinkers” (Mezirow, 1997, p.8). A tool can be used to either build or destroy. As educators and master craftsmen of our trade, proficiency with a wider range of powerful tools can help us create the learner empowering results we envision. Contemporary belief in this powerful tool is pervasive. Some advertising researchers estimate the average consumer in the United States is exposed to 3000 advertisements per day (Dahl, Frankenberger, et al, 2003). How often do educators use art and imagery in the classroom? Is controversial art and imagery in the classroom effective as a tool for transformative learning? There are many questions that could be investigated on the use of art in the classroom. This experiential session will not only provide a model for using art in the classroom but will hopefully expand thinking and increase dialogue on the possibilities.

The Quilt “Education: The Path to Social Justice”

This experiential session will focus on viewing, reflection and discussion of an art quilt titled “Education: The Path to Social Justice.” The quilt is a visual commemorative of many of society’s barriers and the diverse individual transformations of adult learners. Many of the quilt squares provide contradictions to viewers previously held perceptions of reality. The quilt is made of 16 squares with images depicting adult learner’s issues of 1.)Ecology, 2.)Empowerment 3.)Respect 4.)Freedom, 5.)Justice 6.)Community, 7.)Democracy, 8.)Technology, 9.)Security 10) Family 11.)Gender roles 12.)Courage 13.)Health 14.)Immigration 15.) Knowledge 16.)Peace.

Quilting is a uniquely appropriate art medium for transformational learning because of it’s tradition of representing societal change and transition. The traditional "Jacob’s ladder” quilt pattern has been known by many names, including: Underground Railroad, Road to California, Off to San Francisco, and the Covered Wagon. These various names all represent movement and change. The “Oberlin Underground Railroad ” art quilt is an example of an artistic representation of historical social change. This quilt consists of twenty panels of images that commemorate Oberlin’s history as a safe spot for slaves on the journey to freedom. The “Oberlin Underground Railroad” quilt is used as a learning aide in history classes in Oberlin’s schools. The images from Jean Ray Laury’s award winning quilt, “ Barefoot and Pregnant” reminds us of barriers and challenges on life’s journeys. Her quilt

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chronicles comments made by the late Senator Van Dalsom in a legislature session advising several ways to control uppity Southern women, including, keeping them “barefoot and pregnant.” Karey Bresnehan’s recent book tells the story of American women exhibiting commemorative 9-11 art quilts in the 6 weeks immediately following the September 11th tragedy (Bresnehen, 2002). The arts, and more specifically, art quilts, are frequently used to both express and evoke complex emotions about current social issues.

Showing the quilt at this years 6th International Transformational Learning Conference hosted by Michigan State University is also a uniquely appropriate venue for this art quilt experiential learning session. Michigan State University’s Museum houses the Great Lake Quilt Center which is dedicated to preserving the history of this traditional folk art form in the region. Michigan State University’s Museum is dedicated to understanding, interpreting and respecting natural and cultural diversity. The museum regularly showcases quilt and textile art exhibits providing opportunity for emotional reflection and perspective shift about represented social issues. Upcoming MSU museum exhibits include: “Weavings of War: Fabrics of memory” and ”Siyazama: Traditional Arts, Education and AIDS in South Africa”(MSU, 2005). “Weavings of War” showcases quilts representing artists personal experiences with war. It will include quilts from areas in violent conflict all over the world. The “Siyazama Project” uses the innovative approach of artistic expression to break down barriers of traditional social beliefs and open lines of communication about the AIDS virus. Viewing folk art can be culturally relevant way for learners to process new information. Artistic images can also be more powerful and effective than words and print in transforming attitudes and behaviors in pre-literate learners or cultures with an oral tradition. Quilt art is also an appropriate medium for modeling diversity in classroom practices. Womens’ arts and crafts have been historically allocated to the margins and dismissed as social commentary (Clover and Markle, 2003).

Because art modifies our way of perceiving the world, it can be powerful medium to teach us new ways of thinking and feeling. Objects of art are more than simply the “outer materials” or medium, they also deliver the “inner materials” of images, observations, memories and emotions of the artist (Dewey, 1932). Viewing or “experiencing” art is not a passive activity but is uniquely transactional as the viewer integrates and reconstructs individual meaning from their own memory with the artist’s images. Provocative images can either confirm or disturb current beliefs, leading to reflection and growth. The images on the “Education: Path to Social Justice” quilt will provide learners with many opportunities for emotional involvement and reflection on current social issues. The “Family” square with it’s depiction of marginalized single family households, interracial couples and same sex marriages alongside socially accepted traditional, fundamentalist, patriarchal and violent marriages encourage viewers to see society through an unconventional lens. The "Ecology" square explores topics of colonialism and global oppression with images of toxins and waste flowing from the privileged, rich and educated North to the illiterate and poor South. The “Justice” square with prison images depicts one of the results of inequities of educational access. The images from the democracy, freedom, and security squares present critical alternatives to mainstream media views.

“The Experience”

The design of the experiential session strives to be accessible and inclusive by utilizing a variety of intellectual competencies, linguistic, spatial, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal. Learners use a variety of intellectual competences enabling recognition and resolution of problems, preceding new knowledge acquisition (Gardiner, 1983). The design of an experiential learning session that includes multiple intelligences validates and empowers by embracing the diversity and unique strengths of learners. As Gardiner discusses, using art, or music in the classroom benefits learners by helping them access their non-traditional unique cognitive strengths (Gardiner, 1983). Diversity in presentation not only empowers by validating learners unique preferences, it can expand their inventory of learning tools. Stephen Brookfield also offers insights about the value of nudging students out of the comfort zone of their habitual ways of accessing information, introducing and offering practice in expanding their ways of learning (Brookfield, 1990). In his book, “The Skillful Teacher,” Brookfield offers guidelines for evaluating an instructor or judging the merit of an educational approach. Some of his guidelines follow 1.) Are teachers using a range of teaching approaches, 2.) Do they use visual materials as well as relying on oral and written communication? 3.) Do they alternate opportunities for individual work with group collaboration4.) Do they allow periods for reflective analysis? (Brookfield, 1990). Designing an experiential session using art in the classroom can easily meet these criteria.

The viewing of the quilt, accompanied by music opens an inner window for reflection. The addition of journaling and discussion can help learners make meaning of the experience in ways that resonate with their individual intellectual preferences and potentially expand their inventory of ways of learning. A description and outline of “the experience” follows:
Introduction
The initial 10-15 minutes of the session will be used for viewing the quilt. The quilt will be displayed and accompanied by music. Additional photographic copies of the individual quilt squares with the artist’s reflections will also be displayed as a gallery to help manage the flow of larger sessions and give all participants an opportunity to view the quilt and images. Also included in the viewing are comments and reflections of previous viewers.

Reflection/Journaling
10-15 minutes will be provided for individual reflection, free writing or sketching. These thoughts can be shared and donated to made part of the exhibit or simply as a private reflective exercise in making meaning. A handout will offer questions or suggestions to help prompt reflection for participants new to this type of extemporaneous reflection. Some examples of potential prompts include: Which of the images were most memorable to you? Why? Were you surprised by anything you saw or your feelings about the experience? What images do you see that are missing from this work?

Small Group Discussion
15-20 minutes will be available for small groups to discuss their insights and provide feedback on the possibilities and potential pitfalls of using controversial art as a catalyst for goal directed transformational learning. Smaller groups are used to maximize opportunities for dialogue.

Closing
Review group discoveries and explore the potential and pitfalls of using controversial art in the classroom as a tool for transformation.

References
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Spreading Wings: Connections Between Batey Midrash for Secular Israelis and Transformative Learning Theory

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Abstract: This paper connects between the theory of Transformative Learning and the Batey Midrash1 (houses of study) for secular Jews in Israel. Upon analysis, many of the educational elements that make these houses of study so exceptional and so successful in helping their students integrate their secular Israeli identity with a new integrated fuller identity as Jews who live in Israel can be viewed as Transformative Learning Theory.

Introduction: “I Spread My Wings, It Was a Transformative Experience”

Young and old men and women sit in a circle. Each person holds a handout with Jewish texts relating to tikkun, the kabbalistic term meaning "repairing a broken world,” as well as a few poems and personal reflections written by Anna. Anna, a young Russian immigrant, speaks in accented but excellent Hebrew and reads about her journey that began as an assimilated Jew in Russia, continued with immigration to Germany with her family, and then a visit to Israel, and ended with the decision to settle there permanently.

She speaks of the difficulties of immigrating and contrasts the loneliness of her childhood with the eventual sense of “coming home” to Judaism and Israel despite separation from her family in Germany. She uses the metaphor of trees: a tree without leaves or roots to describe loneliness and alienation, a tree typical to Russia, to symbolize her desire for permanence, throughout many immigrations to other countries, a lonely tree with passports instead of leaves to describe her transient life, and finally, a tree full with leaves to describe reintegration within her own self.

She then plays on the words tikkun meaning healing, and nituk a Modern Hebrew word connoting alienation or separation, both have the same root letters but have the opposite emotive meaning. She presents Jewish texts from various sources, historical periods, and styles that teach about alienation and the inner work involved in effecting tikkun. Interspersing the textual lessons with relevant narratives of her own life story, she ends her presentation by describing her emerging tikkun and sense of wholeness and transformation. The participants, who listen intently, are moved to tears. Some hug Anna; others slowly give her words of appreciation for her teaching and courage.

This is a description of a year-end project presented by a student in an Israeli beit midrash (the word midrash in Hebrew, comes from the Jewish traditional approach to study which includes seeking through study) that teaches Jewish texts to secular Israeli Jews. The quote that opens this paper, about spreading wings, came from another student who used art and poetry in her presentation. She talked about “coming home,” “feeling whole” and “being transformed” at the end of a long process of study and reflection. The creation of these institutions began after the Six-Day War, when young Israelis confronted issues of life and death, of power and occupation in such a strong and consistent manner. Their numbers and popularity increased as the questioning relating to issues of identity and life in Israel became more intense, making a significant leap following Rabin’s assassination. Today there are over eighty such programs throughout Israel.

Issues of identity for secular Israelis following these traumatic events, could be viewed as a disorienting dilemma in the framework of the theory of Transformational Learning. This dilemma is both individual as well as communal for large segments of the Israeli population. These Israelis joining programs like the batey midrash find an echo to their questioning and dilemmas within the framework of the houses of study, which encourage and support the questioning and reflection within the framework of the studies. Many of these Israelis feel that the dominant, secular characterization of Judaism, has been too simplistic. The feel that the dichotomy between “religious” as adherent to all the rules and familiar with the Jewish tradition on one hand and “secular” as a citizen of the Western world, with no adherence to the tradition and its sources has not served them well. They feel it has denied them the opportunity to connect Judaism with the emerging Israeli identity and thus denied them of accessing a tool that helps them relate to the pain and difficulties of living and struggling in Israel. As they join the batey

1 “Beit Midrash” literary means house of study in Hebrew. The plural-- “houses of study” is “batey midrash” used frequently in this paper.
midrash they hope to find opportunities for reflection and change that we would define as reaching a perspective transformation. (Mezirow 1991a p. 167) “I swore to myself that if I returned safely to Israel, I would try to understand what is so special about Israel--its land, its history, and its people.” (from interview with students)

The educational philosophy of these houses of study is influenced by many progressive educational philosophies and methodologies, but doesn’t follow any one single theory in particular, including Transformative Learning. Yet, there is no doubt that both faculty and students view transformation as a key outcome of the study process, as the quote in the opening section illustrates. When I conducted my participant observer research of the phenomenon of Batey Midrash in 2000 and 2001, I was struck by the similarities between some of the elements of Transformational Learning and what happens in these houses of study, even though my intent in the study was to look at issues of identity formation and organizational dynamics and not necessarily at the educational theories. As I became more aware of Transformational Learning, the connection between the two became more and more salient. In this paper, I will attempt to point to one of its key features and attempt to highlight some of the similarities and points of convergence between these two, with the hope that the mutual contribution will be of help to both. Most but not all material presented in this paper is based on observations and in depth interviews with participants, teachers and administrators of Beit Midrash Elul in Jerusalem. There were observations and interviews with students and staff at four additional batey midrash.

Hevruta – The Core of the Beit Midrash

We can view the structure of the batey midrash as a series of concentric circles. Student, participate in the three circles and contribute to them in different ways. Each student comes with his/her disorienting dilemma that stems both from a particular life narrative and circumstances, as well as a collective re-evaluation of some of the basic assumptions of modern day Zionism. The core of the Batey Midrash is the hevruta. They are each composed of two to four individuals working together as they study the text and share of themselves. The composition of the hevruta is fixed for the year so students learn to collaborate, share, argue, teach each other and confront what they are engaged with. For some, the re-evaluation leads to the desire to connect to those Jewish texts that they had been alienated from, and through the connection, a desire to integrate their Jewish identities in a fuller manner. At the outer circle, of the various simultaneous hevrutas in the batey midrash there is a community of learners in which non-traditional learning methodologies as well as community building activities are conducted, and finally, beyond the particular school community, there is the Israeli society that is going through major changes and crises, and to which some of the batey midrash students respond by enlisting in social action activism and all of them make the study of Jewish texts and engagement with Jewish sources part of their lives.

Throughout the study process of the batey midrash we can see parallels to Transformative Learning in which students constantly engage in reflective assessments of premises, identify and judge presuppositions. (Mezirow 1991 p. 8) create new meaning structures and ultimately reach perspective transformation (Mezirow 1996 p. 163) “I feel I have found my voice, I have grown wings that take me to new and far heights” said students in the interviews. As opposed to traditional frontal teaching, learning takes place in hevrutas that work together to understand and assimilate the text. While teachers have a role, including the selection of themes, and basic texts to study and guide the students, students have many ways of guiding their own study journeys. At all times the personal perspectives of the learners are given the highest value. For example, a student whose daughter was killed in a terrorist attack during the same school year turned every assignment and most study sessions to opportunities for exploration of questions of pain, love and loss. She also attempted to find ways of healing by composing songs in memory of her daughter and singing them to the group as a whole. A student whose background was in psychiatry was encouraged to bring Freud and Winnicott to the study table, and the one who is a poet and a painter was encouraged not only to read and own poetry as her contribution to the learning process, but to also conduct creative writing workshops for the whole group. In contrast with the rational model of critical reflection presented by Mezirow, students become engaged with symbols and images. Many of these symbols, while pervasive in the Israeli society, seemed previously foreign to this population (like study of Jewish text, like the concept of God, purity etc.) The power of the process of engaging with them through the study in the batey midrash is that these students learn to feel comfortable with them and use them as vehicles for exploration and self discovery (Dirkx 2000a )

An important guiding principle for the study discussions, presentations and text choice, is that all opinions are valid and important and that even arguments are conducted in a non-judgmental and open manner even when passions flare, and the arguments can reach a point of screaming at each other over conflicting opinions of theology or politics. There is no official theological position or interpretation of the texts and there is an understanding that no one has answers, and everyone is on a search. “Everything is open” said one student (one can for example express doubts about God, or the intentions of a figure such as King David, while other colleagues may have very
different opinions) Mezirow mentions a similar point when he says that students should have the “opportunity to refute, reflect and to hear others do the same.” (1996 p.171)

The process of learning through interaction with colleagues, and with the texts themselves is a reflective process, in which all participants including the teachers reflect on the meaning of the learned texts to their own lives and that ultimately brings about not just knowledge but a personal and communal transformation. The members of the hevrutas develop strong personal bonds of intimacy and trust over the course of the year. The study in hevruta within the framework of ideological openness is a safe and powerful method of forging connections to each other and to the text and to explore new feelings and ideas. Students describe these chevruta studies as: “we were in love; I spread my wings and was never the same” “this is what redemption is about” “I feel closer to my study partners than to any of my other friends. I feel naked and free at the same time. I share with them what I don’t share with anybody else.” said a student, trying to explain what she described as an “intoxicating need to be in the study environment”

The study in the hevruta is based not just on openness to finding personal meaning in the text, and lack of dogma and censorship, but also, as Tennnant (1991) maintains, it encourages students to explore and push their own boundaries, to explore beliefs and ideas that are different from the ones to which they have become accustomed. Teachers see it as their responsibility to push students in directions that are less obvious or comfortable for the students, with the understanding that it will lead to more growth and development and that the environment is safe enough that students will usually accept the challenge in the same spirit. “Enough with feminism, we know you are a feminist, and we know it is important to you, today try another role, see what thoughts and feelings come up” said one of the teachers, a strong and known feminist herself, to a female student, known for her feminist views and commitments. By learning to be critical of their values, meanings, and purposes, the students are on their way to what Mezirow (1997 p.11) calls more autonomous thinkers which is in his view the most important element of adult education.

The larger communal study sessions go beyond the small hevrutas as an additional vehicle for study, reflection and connection. The day opens and closes and at special various times, the community of learners gathers as a whole. In addition to hevruta the personal search within the communal setting continues, and provides further opportunities for reflection of positions, assumptions, and especially meaning. While Etting (2003) talks about women’s transformation in community, the point that she makes about sustaining personal change through community, certainly is valid in this case too. In those communal gatherings, members of the group as a whole hear from each other about what has been learned, what insights, questions or developments have emerged. Other times a student or a guest teacher, or the groups marks and celebrates particular year and life cycle events. During the community events especially, participants are encouraged to engage and use alternative “knowing” and learning modalities— painting, poetry, journaling, singing and composing, are used as ways of sharing the learning and exploring with the community as a whole. By breaking down the boundaries between disciplines and modalities: students have an opportunity for integration or as some of the students labeled it “organic learning” “one needs philosophy, literature and psychology, music and art to make sense of Talmud, but one needs the Talmud to make sense out of literature, psychology and philosophy, music and art when one belongs to the Jewish people,” said one of the interviewees.

Spiral of Reflection

The studies in the batey midrash create a constant spiral of reflection from the personal to the communal to the national and back to the personal but at a higher and wider level than before. From a different context, Saavedra (1996) presents a similar idea when she discusses the continual engagement in cycles of inquiry. In the batey midrash the subject matter of the studies, as well as the reasons for it, are intertwined and interrelated and the learning modalities encourage the continuous bridging between the various levels of involvement. In a unit discussing King David’s wars for example, there were many discussions about leadership, morality of leadership in face of interpersonal responsibility and especially in the face of war. The parallels to the then present Israel in the midst of a crucial election campaign and an Intifada were drawn, materials in political science were read, Shakespearean movies were shown and poetry about King David was read and written. “Everything is included in everything” mentioned one of the students. As the knowledge grows, and as the comfort with the subject matter and the learning environment grows, so grows the integration of the identity as Israelis who are connected to the history and culture of Judaism and Israeli society who chose to remain loyal to their pluralistic, universalistic values. The original dichotomy between “religious” who are Jewishly knowledgeable and “secular” and Jewishly ignorant fades with this integration. “First it is a mess, but later it starts to work itself out and it actually starts to make sense” was one of the students’ comments about the reflection and integration process. Mezirow talks about integration as important for perspective transformation; (1995 p.50) “This is not a sociological or historical matter, this is a process
that involves the soul, the spirit, the intellect and the body” reflected another student, making a very similar point to
the one made by the Group on Collaborative Inquiry (1994 p. 171) referring to the important of intuition and to
having all human functions available for knowing.

Alongside the integration, the spiral opens the opportunity for breaking through new grounds and new meaning
out of the encounter between the elements mentioned. Students are encouraged to read texts with “barefoot reading”
meaning reading with no previous baggage, no history, no theology, no literary analysis, and no past footprints, just
fresh reactions as if it were the first time they encountered it or the subject related to it. This brings daring, surprise
and creativity into the process.

Students begin the journey into Jewish ancient texts out of a personal crisis a disorienting dilemma which is
shared by many of their fellow citizens. The study at the Beit Midrash presents an opportunity for an encounter with
other people who are going through similar dilemmas but approach them differently because of their different
personal narratives. Both personal and communal perspective transformation and integration take place in a setting
that goes beyond their personal lives. (Boyd 1989 p. 459) The deep intimacy and encounter with the “other” leads
some of them to take it a step further in the concentric circles and engage in social activism that connect their new
found knowledge and their social political principals and values. Scott (1986 p. 72) talks about the same point when
he says that perceptual capacities become more universal and begin to reach beyond the individual concerns and
perspectives.

Additional Learning Modalities

As the opening story points out, the batey midrash understand that there are many different ways of knowing
and learning and that such important journey as they are engaged in needs to address the affective as well as the
cognitive and rational modes of relating to the learning and reflecting process. There is a range of modalities to
which all students are exposed, and in addition, there is encouragement of experimentation with art and other
modalities even if they are new and unfamiliar to some students. Boyd (1991) talks to this point when he maintains
that the discovery of new talents brings about a sense of empowerment and that a deeper sense of self leads to a
stronger sense of individuation and ultimately more sustained change.

Some of examples of additional learning modalities in batey midrash are: a few times a year there is a creative
writing workshop in which all students are taught poetry and creative writing on themes related to the ones being
studied. No one is forced to read their work if they do not feel comfortable, but they are encouraged to do so. A
literary journal with these pieces comes out yearly. There is an exhibit gallery in which students are encouraged to
exhibit sculpture, photography, and paintings interpreting the materials studied. Composing music and performing it
are common as well. Some of these are presented instead of or alongside verbal responses and reactions. All these
contribute to the Mytho-poetic view of Transformational Learning that isn’t reachable with rational methods of
reflections. (Dirks 2000) It relies on images, symbols, language and poetry representing the deeper emotional levels
of individuals’ lives.

Conclusion

Summing up, we have pointed to some similarities between Transformational Learning and the change that
takes place in these houses of study in Israel. Id addition to the classical concepts of Transformational Learning we
would concur with those theories that add the more communal, interpersonal and symbolic aspects of reflection.
Ettling (2001) posits that the process of change as a cumulative journey and not one of a series of systematic steps.
This process, includes many elements: social construction of identity, the context of relationships, relationship to
community and accessing various ways of knowing. Brooks and Watkins (1996) refer to is as Action Inquiry and
view them as important elements in reaching transformation.

The desired outcome of this process for the batey midrash as educational settings to assist students in reaching a
breakthrough in how they view their connection to Judaism and Jewish text. An additional outcome is that batey
midrash expand the way in which they view their identity as learners, as Israelis and as spiritual people, while at the
same remaining committed and loyal to their pluralistic Western values. The students as individuals revise the
interpretation of the meaning of their experiences and through it find as Mezirow describes, new ways of
approaching their future. (Mezirow 1996 p. 162)

By exploring the commonalities between Transformative Learning theory and the educational processes of the
batey midrash in Israel, this paper has pointed to some of the elements that other informal education programs can
learn from their Israeli counterparts regarding transformation and change of adults around issues of identity,
diversity, pluralism and encounter with the “other,” while maintaining core values and beliefs. By highlighting the
connection to Transformative Learning, this paper can point to some of ways in which the batey midrash and
similar programs both in Israel and elsewhere can improve and develop even more, by consciously applying principles of Transformative Learning.

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Situating Transformative Learning: 
Communities of Practice as Corporate Venues for Emancipation

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Abstract: Corporations are challenging environments for transformative learning. Past attempts to create parallel structures have often succumbed to corporate culture because they have ignored the larger socio-historical context. Communities of practice provide true, sustainable contexts in which meaning is democratically negotiated and identity experiences are promoted. They serve to counteract the corporate culture’s overpowering influence over the company’s economy of meaning. A case study demonstrates some “transformative moments” that result from this new perspective.

To address the theme of this conference, “Appreciating the Best of What is: Envisioning What Could Be,” I would like to focus on the latter part of that statement—what could be. After almost twenty years in the corporate learning field, I only recently came across transformative learning theory. I am intrigued by it and have come to appreciate what it is. At the same time, I must also deal with the problems of both implementing and sustaining personally and organizationally impactful learning activities in an oftentimes furtively oppressive environment, which forces me to continually look to what could be—that is to realize theory into practice and then circle back and critically reexamine the theory.

Corporations, particularly large, established ones, are challenging environments for transformative learning. Far from promoting ideal conditions for critical reflection and rational discourse, corporations usually exemplify the dialectic of modernity Marcuse (1991) referred to as the “comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom [that] prevails in advanced industrial civilization,… What could be more rational than the suppression of individuality in the mechanization of socially necessary but painful performances.” (p. 1). It is tempting to attribute control mechanisms to corporate culture, a vague term bandied about, but whose essence is rarely specified; this pedestrian and dismissive attribution absolves us of our responsibility to dive further (and more critically) into its source and potential counterforces.

So how do we promote and sustain transformative learning in corporate environments? Yorks and Marsick (2000) examine two methodologies, action learning and collaborative inquiry, which can serve as containers for transformative learning elements. While these methods seem to have some success, two nagging realities still remain. First, though companies strive to emancipate the individual from the oppressive elements common to corporate cultures in which these activities are embedded, more often than not, the culture wins. For example, underlying the GE Workout action learning process described by Yorks and Marsick is this leadership philosophy:

Cultural change gets real when your aim is execution…. You need to change people’s behavior so that they produce results. First you tell people clearly what results you’re looking for. Then you discuss how to get those results…. Then you reward people for producing the results. If they come up short, you provide additional coaching, withdraw rewards, give them other jobs, or let them go. When you do these things, you create a culture of getting things done. (Bossidy and Charan, 2002, p. 86)

Such an authoritarian, behavioristic Taylorism cannot help but influence the extent of legitimate critical reflection in the action learning activity. A similar experience led to its implementation failure at a major chemical company with whom I had experience.

Second, the focus of these activities is on teams, which Senge (1990) identified as the critical structure for the learning organization. Teams, however, are temporary, and at the completion of the project, launching of the product or finalizing of the decision, individuals lose their social anchor and must weather the storm of the culture alone. Sustaining the learning and the spirit of such learning is questionable.

The answer I believe resides in defining the socio-historical context in which the learning takes place—that is, situating the learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991). As Cranton (1994) points out, transformative learning’s neglect of context has been one of its criticisms. In truth, Mezirow (1991) does address the notions of “communicative communities,” social movements, and the impact of cultural context on meaning, but the primary focus has been on
establishing an epistemology addressing cognitive transformations in individuals. Yet Lange (2004) reminds us that “…transformation is not just an epistemological process involving a change in worldview and habits of thinking; it is also an ontological process where participants experience a change in their being in the world including their forms of relatedness.” (p. 137). To this I would add that it is not only changes in their forms of relatedness but changes through their forms of relatedness. To better participate in this process of ontological exploration, we must further examine both the function and morphology of these social relationships. In this paper, I will examine Wenger’s communities of practice theory of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1996; Wenger, 1998a; Wenger, 1998b; Wenger & Snyder, 2000) and how it helps better define the nature of learning in organizations. In particular I will focus on three major components: 1) the negotiation of meaning in a community of practice 2) communities of practice as social ecologies of identity, and 3) the concept of an economy of meaning. Finally, I will briefly describe “transformative moments” from my corporate community work which exemplify these concepts.

Meaning Negotiation

At the foundation of transformative learning theory is “learning as meaning-making” (Mezirow, 1991). Transformative learning involves the critical examination of meaning schemes and perspectives to uncover and modify distorted assumptions. To Habermas (1972), knowledge results from consensus reached in discourse within a scientific community. Rational discourse, however, is often treated as a method that stands alone, independent of a social context. Instead of putting the individual and his/her cognitive form at the forefront of organizational analysis, Wenger (1998b) instead puts an emphasis on practice. Practice, as he defines it is “doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do” (p. 47). Practice is not used in the conventional sense of repetitive action, but rather to describe social practice of experience and engagement: “Practice is, first and foremost, a process by which we can experience the world and our engagement in it as meaningful.” (p. 51).

The process by which we determine meaning within a practice is through the negotiation of meaning. Negotiation does not just mean an agreement between people. Rather, it is a complex, dialectical, productive process— at once historical and organic, common and unique, resistant and malleable. It is the combination of acting, interpreting, understanding, thinking, and responding all at once. It involves the whole person (much the same way as Buber’s (1974) I-Thou relationship contrasts his I-It relationship). Fundamental to the negotiation of meaning within a practice are two processes: participation and reification. Participation is both the act of taking part in the practice itself as well as the relationships of mutuality, but not solely harmonious mutuality, that the taking part entails. Reification is the projection of our participatory meanings onto the world—the thingification if you will.

In the process of negotiating meaning, participation and reification dance with each other as an interacting duality. If participation is overemphasized, providing few anchors for coordination or to recognize meaning schemes, then reification must begin to take the lead. If reification is overemphasized, allowing little room for shared experience and dialog, and thus the generation of new meaning, then participation must step up. The lack of balance in the latter case leading to hyper-reification of cultural symbols and of humans themselves is identified as a key source for the alienation and anxiety of humans in modernity (Bewes, 2002; Fromm, 1975). Through this dance, the practice constantly evolves in time, writing and rewriting its history. Thus, negotiation of meaning is not an ahistorical process, nor is it a subjective process influenced by externalities, be they objects, events, or people. Rather, it is a never-ending, intersubjective identity experience inextricably linked to a practice that takes place in time and place.

Communities

The place in which practice happens is a community. Unfortunately, the word community has lost much of its original meaning from overuse. Teams, get-togethers, even hallway conversations are dubbed communities. Perhaps the reason for this indiscriminant labeling is our driving need to reclaim a depth and goodness of relationship that we had once and desperately crave. After all, as Bauman (2003) astutely points out, we can belong to bad teams, or bad organizations, or bad departments, but you never hear of anyone belonging to a bad community. In a previous paper (Plaskoff, 2003), I distinguished communities from a number of structures in organizations (teams, departments, for example). A few things are critical to point out here. First, communities embody practices through three elements (Wenger, 1998b): mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. Membership in a community is defined by mutual engagement—that is, mutual accountability (or I prefer responsibility, since it implies drive from within rather than enforcement from without) for a negotiated enterprise and the diverse relationships, both harmonious and conflictual, that both differentiate and integrate the individuals. The joint enterprise is a continual negotiation of how the community does what it does. This joint action is continually reshaped and serves as the wellspring for mutual responsibility amongst members. Finally, the shared repertoire is
the historically developed resources for negotiating meaning. These can be both reificative (e.g., a charter) as well as participatory elements (a social expectation).

A community is distinguished from a team in a number of respects. First, the team is generally organized around a reified product or outcome, as opposed to an organic practice. Second, a community combines elements of both discontinuity and continuity—with a primary focus on continuity. Teams are designed for discontinuity—they are meant to disband once the project is over. Finally, teams involve the coordination of multiple meanings brought from a variety of practices to produce an outcome based on meanings established often by external forces (such as the organization). Thus, they are beholden to the oppressive elements that weigh down many corporate structures. Communities of practice are usually non-canonized (Brown and Duguid, 1991), even unsanctioned groups that focus on learning and the negotiation of meaning within a single practice. Thus, they are driven by democratic forces from within rather than authoritarian forces from without.

Identity

Much as transformative learning is an identity experience, so is involvement in a community of practice. To Wenger (1998b), identity is a negotiated experience through community membership that defines who we are by the ways that we experience our selves through participation and reification, by what is familiar and unfamiliar, defined by the boundaries of our communities, and by our historical situatedness. Our continual state of becoming is defined by Wenger as learning trajectories, pathways of learning and identity that are defined by our relationship to participation in practices and multi-memberships in community. Learning and the resultant state of change in our identities are not just individual activities, but are tightly bound to the collectives we participate or do not participate in.

Economies of Meaning

One more concept is worth discussing to complete the picture: the notion of an economy of meaning. Wenger (1998b) points out that different meanings can carry different statuses in the organization; not all have the same weight and different meanings can compete with each other for hegemony. By calling this phenomenon an “economy of meaning,” Wenger implies that meanings have relative values that are the result of a negotiated process controlled by frameworks of legitimacy. Resultant meanings are subject to ownership; that is “the degree to which we can make use of, affect, control, modify, or in general, assert as ours the meanings that we negotiate.” (p. 200).

Obviously power has a significant role to play here. The exertion of power through ownership to demand or distort meaning without an effort to share it can cause alienation with those groups without power, leading to oppression and marginalization. Ownership does not have to be negative, however. One can use one’s ownership to further engage others in appropriating meaning or to bring others into the dialog to expand existing meanings. The relation between power and meaning is complex and requires significant explanation. Suffice it to say here that legitimate meaning is a complex interaction of ownership of meaning and social relations of that ownership. In a corporation, legitimacy of meaning and the extensive ownership of meaning by the corporation as a whole play a critical role in alienation of employees from their work, their learning and their knowledge, as well as the oppression that prevents transformation on both an individual and collective level.

A New Lens

Instead of just viewing an organization as a collection of individuals or a collection of teams or departments, it is fruitful to view complex organizations as social ecologies of identity that emerge from the interaction of multiple communities of practice. Using this lens can bring a new light on some work that has been done on transformative learning and organizational transformation. Some have described “parallel structures” as “liberating structures” as means of facilitating the space necessary for rational reflectivity and dialogue (Lawler and Mohrman, 1985; Yorks and Marsick, 2000). We can see why quality circles failed and that action learning and collaborative inquiry can have only limited sustainability within a corporation. For the most part, both of these attempts form only weak structures that are not truly separated from the overarching corporate structure. Their practice is weakly defined, if defined at all; they are designed for discontinuity; and the ownership of meaning that they seem to have does not reflect what they truly have.

Parallel structures that emancipate must be able to truly own and share meaning and to have the freedom to negotiate that meaning. Unfortunately, systems within a corporation reinforce legitimate meanings based on an epistemology and ontology of business that is often objectivist, pessimistic, and conventional (as seen in the quote from Execution). Corporate meaning is reified often in subtle ways, making it hard deviate from. For example, most companies institute a performance management system—a system that encourages the setting of goals and the
monitoring the completion of those goals throughout the year. In and of itself, this can be empowering. However, when the system reflects skepticism about human motivation to work, the need to control behavior, the linking of worth (promotions and raises) to the accomplishment of tasks the company wants you to work on, the meaning of work disappears. Indeed, as Alvesson and Deetz (2000) point out, most empowerment is not liberating because employees are only empowered to do what the company wants you to do.

So parallel structures constructed by the corporation and sanctioned by the corporation for defined purposes of the corporation rarely provide open and democratic venues for true and continuous negotiation of meaning. Instead, adult educators should look in the interstitial spaces of the organization—at the unofficial practices that form the engine of learning in the organization and teach them how to “learn community.” This is the work that I have been involved with in two different corporations and a number of consulting engagements. To move from the abstract to the concrete, from the theory to the practice, we will now look at how nurturing a community created a parallel and emancipatory structure for one particular practice. A large pharmaceutical company developed a matrix organization—cross-functional teams responsible for delivering product and functional organizations responsible for maintaining the processes and integrity of the specific functional domains. Since team members dually reported to both the team and the function, they got caught in the middle of fierce political battles for control of the economy of meaning. One particular group, scientific communications, was responsible for documenting the product specifications. Having just changed their name from medical writing, they were going through an identity crisis—what did the organization do and what value did they bring to the teams. This was the trigger event for the transformative experience. Space prevents me from covering all the complexities of this three-year engagement and a previous paper (Plaskoff, 2003) covered much of the methodology. What I will do here is highlight what I will call “collective transformative moments”—moments in which the collective emancipated itself from the conventional assumptions of the organization and took ownership of its meaning negotiation process.

False Start - Restart

My first attempt at nurturing a community the area failed. The management allowed us to meet with a group of practitioners to present the concept and run a mini-design session. These early participants were selected by management, and most were not interested in the concept. My introduction of the concept of a community of practice was too tightly coupled with the organizational leadership and the functional power structure, thus not allowing the participants to freely negotiate meaning. Meaning was dominated by interpretations established by the function. I cut the effort off, and moved on to other possibilities.

To my surprise, however, a few interested practitioners from the original group approached me together confidentially. As I spent time with them talking about communities of practice, discussing and dialoging about the possibilities and strategically thinking about how to restart the effort, I uncovered a very subtle trigger—the majority of these writers required more social interaction and a stronger sense of belonging. In addition, they sought to create an environment for the free flow of ideas and for the types of close relationships that could help them work and share with each other across team boundaries, in direct opposition to the corporate culture, which stressed team affiliation over functional affiliation and which saw the free flow of ideas as a potential threat to its highly controlled infrastructure. These discussions led to the formation of a core group of practitioners independent of the functional organization. The individuals felt a strong need to relate and through this need realized a new identification with their colleagues (and their management for that matter) that served as the kernel for a parallel structure for emancipatory dialogue.

Redefining the Practice

I led the core group through the exercise of completing a community charter, which involved a discussion about their practice, the values they espouse, the dreams they have for their practice and the relationships they want to foster. Because practice is set in an historical context, one of the long-time members of the organization discussed how the practice grew at the company. Much like storytellers of old, she recounted the tales of the heroes during a ten year period of failures and victories and retified sacred symbols during the growth of the practice. In this way, the more experienced member brought the newer members into the stream of history.

A passionate discussion about the practice ensued. The recent name change had caused an unrecognized identity crisis with the practitioners that the formal organization was either unwilling or unable to recognize. Turmoil plagued the understanding of the joint enterprise for it was different amongst the practitioners and those on the periphery of the community (internal customers, other team members, etc.) defined the practice based on an outdated conception. Perhaps this was the true transformative trigger, one that lay quietly behind the scenes waiting to be discovered. The facilitated dialogue catalyzed the further critical reflection.
As the group became proactive in owning their negotiation of meaning and taking on mutual responsibility for the practice and each other, the practice organically takes form. One key innovation introduced by the group was likening themselves to “scientific storytellers.” This powerful metaphor became the foundation for further defining the repertoire and their mutual engagement in the practice. Their passionate focus became legitimizing their practice within the larger team organization.

Eventually, the work of the community came to the attention of leaders in the functional organization, who approached them for help with using the practice work to help define the formal organization, particularly using the scientific storytelling metaphor. The parallel structure had not only led to the collective transformation of the community, and through it individual transformation, the results of its critical reflection crossed over into the functional organization which also began to question assumptions stemming from the broader corporate culture.

**Relationship to Management and the Organization**

With other communities, two rules were established to try to minimize the influence of potentially oppressive organizational systems that would hinder open dialogue, mutual responsibility, and a democratic environment for negotiation of meaning. First, talk about or mention of community work in relation to performance management was prohibited. Not only did this promote a more communicative rather than instrumental relationship amongst members, it prevented management from manipulating the meaning of membership from outside the community. Second, management was not invited to participate in the community. Most management in the organization embodied the core assumptions of the organization, and the power relationship tended to limit community democracy. With this group, the first rule stood. In terms of the second rule, some felt uncomfortable having management involved, while others felt there no issue. At the beginning, one manager was actively involved and two others were peripherally involved. As time went on, some members considered uninviting the management from participating. After some very open and frank dialogue about the company’s supervisor-employee relationships and the unproductive asymmetric power structures, members decided to embrace a new set of assumptions about management. In the end, they decided that managers could participate, but management could not; that is, managers would participate as equal practitioners while in the community and would even at times work for the community leadership, but they would not function as management within the community. Both managers and non-managers learned to manage multiple identities manifest in their multi-membership—in the community and on the product team, or in the case of manager, as a practitioner in the community and as the manager of the organization.

As the community grew and the elements of the practice became more reified, the more formal organization which paralleled the community became a unique oasis within the larger organization—one in which the practice organically evolves though a mutual commitment from both management and non-management. Critical reflection and open dialogue to enhance the practice are the norms. During the three years that I worked with the community, many changes happened in the greater organization—budget cuts, changes in management, dismantling of teams, and consolidation of scientific communications groups. Normally, insecurity follows this type of upheaval as workers lose their anchors and their direction. The risk involved in critical reflection and action from that critical reflection often falters. In this case, however, the community remained a steady anchor, minimally affected by the changes. Another community withstood reorganization of their management to a subsidiary with which the group in the past held a very combative relationship. The community outlives the team and the departmental structure because the lifespan of the practice, particularly if it is core to the business, is potentially unlimited.

**Summary**

Transformative learning within corporations is limited by a potentially oppressive environment. Unfortunately, many attempts to create parallel structures for critical reflection and transformation are not structures and are not really parallel, but rather subject to some of the same constraints set up in the economy of meaning in the larger organization. This makes it difficult to not only difficult to implement transformative learning approaches but to sustain both their results and the transformative perspective. Communities of practice can provide a true and continuous parallel structure in which an emancipatory environment can be enacted.

Community of practice theory is extremely complex, multifaceted and comprehensive. This only serves as a starting point for investigating the emancipatory nature of communities of practice. Further studies of negotiations of meaning of practices with larger organizations as well as the impact of economies of practice on that negotiation process are required. In addition, further research is needed to investigate the impact of communities of practice on social transformation in the larger organization. Communities could have a powerful impact on the future of business as well as the function of society as a whole.
References
The Exquisite Experience of Mundane Wisdom

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Abstract: This paper is a descriptive summary of the discoveries made from a research inquiry project conducted for a doctoral dissertation, The Embodied Sage: An Inquiry into Body Wisdom, in the Transformative Learning and Change department at the California Institute of Integral Studies. This paper situates body knowing in Transformative Learning, and justifies how knowing in and through the body is a complimentary transformative epistemology.

Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning is the expansion of consciousness through the transformation of basic worldview and specific capacities of the self; transformative learning is facilitated through consciously directed processes such as appreciatively accessing and receiving the symbolic contents of the unconscious and critically analyzing underlying premises. (Elias, 1997, p. 3)

Transformative learning theory was given its name by Jack Mezirow in the early 1970s. This theory has drawn upon the works of scholars who precede Mezirow, including Thomas Kuhn, Paulo Freire, the Frankfurt School of German philosophers, and Jurgen Habermas (Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 1998). The theory of transformative learning is dynamic and continually evolving as scholars explore new approaches to understanding how human beings expand consciousness, examine worldviews, shift paradigms and make meaning of experience (Elias, 1997; Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 1998).

In examining our hegemonic worldview and the assumptions, behaviors and thoughts that make up such a worldview, we dismantle the mindset that contributes to the marginalization of self and others. By shifting our habits of mind and becoming more inclusive, discriminating and open, we contribute to a social climate and context that is pluralistic.

Embodying Transformative Learning

Stepping into an embodied paradigm offers a new way of seeing, being, and experiencing the world. Engaging the world through an embodied lived-body, shifts the frame of reference from a logical thinking centered paradigm to a sentient, sensory embodied paradigm, which radically transforms a person’s way of being with and in the world. In this way, body knowing is a process for catalyzing transformative learning.

Experiencing the world in a lived-body is an ontology. Engaging the world as an embodied sentient being gives the body knower a frame of reference through which to experience, make meaning, and ultimately, learn. Knowing that occurs through an embodied paradigm is a radical departure from learning that occurs in a mind-centered paradigm. In a mind-centered paradigm, knowing is abstract; knowledge is something obtained from outside the knower. In an embodied paradigm, the knower uses experiential knowledge of the sentient body, the ethereal body, the pre-cognitive body, the physical body, and the intuitive body to access knowing and create knowledge. Body knowing is transformative because it shifts our way of being in and with the world by offering a way of being of the world.

Body Knowing

Body Knowing is an inner subjective experience of the lived-self within self and of lived-self in the world, from which a person makes meaning of self, self and other and self and world. Edmund Husserl best describes the inner subjective self using the German term, leib. In the text, Phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, Ludwig Landgrebe translates Husserl’s definition of leib as follows: “Leib refers to the body as lived, the subject-body serving as that center about which our personal worlds are organized” (Welton, 1981, p. 34). Leib is a way of living embodied. Leib is a way of experiencing the world and oneself in the world that situates the lived-body as the perceptual nucleus. Situating the lived self at the center of all experience is a way of being, an ontology.

There are many kinds of body knowing that have been the subject of research and debate within these disciplines, such as sensory knowing (knowledge we exchange between our bodily senses—sight, sound, touch, taste, smell, etc.—and the world in which we live), (Stoller, 1997; Johnson, M., 1987; Gendlin, 1962, 1978), autonomic knowledge (our body's systems working together to keep us alive), (Varela, et. al., 1991) and movement knowledge (somatic disciplines that train the body into its proper alignment), (Johnson, D.H. 1983, 1994, 1995).

The focus of this inquiry was on body knowing that is sometimes referred to as pre-cognitive, pre-logistical, pre-conscious, or pre-conceptual body knowing. The terms pre-cognitive, pre-logistical, pre-conscious, and pre-conceptual refer to the essence of the experience of the subjective knower who is attuned to the knowing that occurs from within the body (subjectively) and beyond the boundaries of the body (ethereally), prior to attaching meaning, definition, and interpretation to our experience. Eugene Gendlin states that “experience” itself is not solely a composition of “logical scheme(a)” based on “sense perception,” but is “a powerful felt dimension of experience that is prelogical” (1962, p. 1).

The experiential body knowing explored in this research project is an ontological body knowing, rather than a methodological or procedural body knowing. It is the inter-subjective experience of being of the world as an embodied spiritual, sentient being, rather than in, on, or witness to the world. Such body knowing implies a unitive consciousness, being in connective relationship with all that is, not separate from it. It is in and through our bodies that we experience ourselves, our world, and even our thoughts.

The French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who devoted most of his scholarly life to the phenomenological inquiry of perception, describes the human knowing body relationship with the living world, as being in “perceptual reciprocity” (Abram, 1996, p. 153) with the living world. In The Spell of the Sensuous, David Abrams exemplifies Merleau-Ponty’s theory of perceptual reciprocity when he says, “to listen to the forest is also, primordially, to feel oneself listened to by the forest, just as to gaze at the surrounding forest is to feel oneself exposed and visible, to feel oneself watched by the forest” (1996, p. 153).

Emergent Discoveries

The primary research method used for this inquiry project was Organic Inquiry. Organic Inquiry begins with a personal query of the primary researcher. It is a transpersonal methodology which is situated within the larger family of participatory methods. Organic Inquiry is a direct descendant of qualitative feminist research methods because its co-creators honor and engage the egalitarian and humanitarian tenets of feminism while revering the spiritual and divine energies in the universe. Throughout the process from data collection to reflections and analysis, organic inquiry situates the researcher and co-researcher at the nucleus of the study, while honoring their experience and the story of their experiences as formidable data. From this place, the researcher and co-researchers can access their inner story in their “natural setting” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000b, p. 3) and make meaning in this context.

The data for this research project was first person experiential stories told to the primary researcher by six co-researchers. After collecting and analyzing the data from the six co-researchers and juxtaposing it with the existing literature on body knowing, three recurring and significant themes emerged: Interconnectivity, Embodiment, and Wisdom.

Interconnectivity

Interconnectivity is a way of being in reciprocal relationship with everything in the universe. Sentient existence is inextricably linked with all that exists within and outside of the identity “self”. Systemically, we are part of a universal living system with which we are interdependent and in which we are reflected, like “an ever-changing holarchy, where each part reflects the whole, and where nothing exists apart from the whole” (Olds, 1992, p. xiii). As embodied beings, we are interconnected with this systemic web through and beyond the boundaries of our bodies. Body knowing is the portal through which we engage this unitive relationship (Abram, 1996; Capra, 1996; Olds, 1992).

In the co-researchers stories, the body’s interconnectivity with place and home is reflected repeatedly. Jules, a co-researcher in this inquiry discovered that her interconnective relationship with three-dimensional places aided her
in accessing her body knowing and body wisdom. Jules describes walking in two very particular places that are significant to her, and felt the boundaries of her corporal body dissipate, and she became place.

Another co-researcher, Sage, discovered through sharing her story, that home is not a locale per se, but a surrendering to that which is larger than her individual embodied self. To experience home, Sage allows her self to fall into the infiniteness of the interconnective web of existence.

In each of the co-researchers’ stories, there is a tacit understanding that they are a part of something larger than themselves. Although none of the co-researchers name their experience as systemic or interconnective per se, their stories reveal a tacit sense that their body-selves are a part of an interconnective web.

As embodied beings, our knowing bodies are an integral, integrated part of the systemic web of life. Our bodies are the sensory locus for reciprocal exchange with all that comprises this web. In *Metaphors of Interrelatedness*, a text that looks at psychology from a transpersonal, systems theory perspective, Linda Olds proposes that being Self is being a whole being that interrelates with other whole beings systemically. And that Self is the channel for interconnective knowing.

Self might mean a perspective by which attention is paid to wholeness, to interrelatedness. Perhaps one “selves” or one “is selfing” when we perceive wholeness, we tune in to our connections, our participation in greater wholes.

Self is channel to a way of receiving information in terms of its connections. Self means seeing from the center. (Olds, 1992, p. 91) In this instance, Olds is presupposing that self is a “way of thinking, self is a viewpoint or a perspective, not a thing” (Olds, 1992, p. 91), as is our body, which is “not a thing,” but a “viewpoint or perspective.” Therefore, our “center” viewpoint or frame of reference is an ontology through which wisdom is exchanged between self (lived-body self) and other wholes in the living system.

If we perceive ourselves from an objective or disembodied frame of reference, we reinforce our own disembodiment and detachment from self and universe. However, if we are courageous enough to flow against the tide of hegemonic thinking (which fosters dualistic thinking of object and subject) and transform our consciousness to one that posits us integrally with all that is, we can access the collective unconscious and universal wisdom that is present.

Perceiving our lived-bodies as part of a larger whole, of which we are a systemically integral part, has a very profound impact on our consciousness. It can radically alter how we show up in our own bodies and show up in and participate with the world around us. Haridas Chaudhuri makes the connection between interconnectivity with the universal community and our consciousness.

. . . world is one, and all human beings, regardless of differences of race, religion, culture, and ideology, are members of one international family. Until and unless we have this inner vision, not as just an intellectual idea which doesn’t change behavior, but as an inner vision, spiritual experience, or emotional experience, of this fundamental unity of existence and inseparable interdependence of all individual human beings and races and peoples of the world, then we are not going to set aside the habit of dualistic thinking. For this, what is necessary is the discipline which brings about an inner growth of consciousness. This is a matter of vital importance—this inner change of consciousness. (Chaudhuri, 1977, p. 81)

The source of disconnection from our global community is systemic. There are multiple components and reasons as to why we live so emotionally, physically and spiritually distanced from our ecological community. Robert Marrone points a finger at our fragmented world-view as a reason for our disconnectedness.

Our connectedness to the whole, indeed the holiness with which we once merged with all of Nature is now fractured and disturbed, and the sacred harmony is defiled and devalued. This is the heartbroken ethos of a technocratic, self-centered world-view that is turning the global landscape into a toxic wasteland—and is also responsible for the holocaust of the animal kingdom, as well as the human suffering wrought by famine, stress, cancer, birth defects and wars over depleting planetary resources. (Marrone, 1990, p. 8)

Marrone is making a direct correlation between our consciousness and our actions. Through a disembodied, dualistic paradigm we cannot see how our actions and choices both individually and collectively have a long-term and devastating impact on the collective consciousness of humanity and the planet.

*Embodying the Present*

Another theme that emerged in the data and the literature was embodying the present. Beginning with the premise: by virtue of our mortal human existence, bodies inhabit the present. Because we are embodied, we are here
now, feeling and experiencing what is before us. Therefore, we exist in the present moment. While this is true, our bodies also respond to our mind’s vacillation between the future, the past and the present.

Imagining through conjecture (as in the case of the future) or through memory (as in the case of the past) occur and are experienced by the body in the present. The mind may have the capacity to draw the body into its imagined timeframe, but the body still inhabits the present.

In Phenomenology of Perception, Maurice Merleau-Ponty articulates this presence of being when he says,

What is past or future for me is present in the world. It is often said that, within things themselves, the future is not yet, the past is no longer, while the present, strictly speaking, is infinitesimal, so that time collapses . . . Past and future exist unmistakably in the world, they exist in the present, and what being itself lacks in order to be of the temporal order, is the not-being of elsewhere, formerly and tomorrow. (1962, p. 478)

Merleau-Ponty poses the possibility that by “not-being of elsewhere” i.e., not being in the past or the future, we exist in the present. Lieb, the worldview of inner subjectivity, is one possible way of knowing presence. Through our subjectivity, we can reside in the present and still know past and future in its present state of existence.

Wisdom

The term wisdom in this context does not imply ultimate truth or definitively right. The embodied human experience is liminal. The body, like the mind, is fallible; that which our bodies infer as tacit is not always so. The knowing body is not a source of absolute truth, but an ontology through which our hermeneutical experience is made known.

Some of the co-researchers who participated in this inquiry project experienced wisdom proprioceptively, that is, they experienced sensations outside of the boundaries of their physical bodies, yet perceived the information within their sensory bodies (Abram, 1996; Merleau-Ponty, 1968). Others experienced wisdom through their ethereal bodies: the spirit or energetic light body that transmits energy and occupies space without mass. For others, wisdom was experienced tacitly, which means it is implied and directly known without interpretation or filtration.

Intuition was another mode of gleaning wisdom for the co-researchers in this study. Each co-researcher’s experience of intuition was different. Some experience physical sensations that only arose when intuitive insight was present, such as: peculiar feelings in their abdomen, chills throughout their body, heat currents or surges, etc. Others experienced mental visions on their inner movie screen. And some had an idea pop into their mind that was seemingly “out of the blue,” which they interpreted as an intuitive insight.

Regardless of how each co-researcher experienced wisdom in their body, it became apparent that the wisdom they experienced was not an ethereal wisdom that came from the divine, but a mundane wisdom they possessed within themselves. For the co-researchers, discovering that wisdom could generate from the body was an exquisite experience. Prior to conducting this inquiry, the participants thought of wisdom as a source outside of themselves.

By identifying the mundane embodied self as a source of wisdom, the co-researchers shifted their perceptions of themselves; one of the first steps in transformative learning. With a new way to see and appreciate their capacity to generate wisdom, the co-researchers of this inquiry were emancipated as learners and transformed as people.

Transformative Learning Theory and Body Epistemology

Some of the co-researchers were able to expand their paradigms and transform their way of being in the world as a result or querying their body wisdom. Simultaneously, they shifted their perceptions of themselves in the world by embracing the belief that they are an integral part of an interconnective web that is larger than their individual selves. Consequently, their bodies and minds shifted from being objects in the world, to being somatic subjective participants of the world. Therefore, body knowing can be a catalyst for expanding our paradigms from a limited way of seeing and perceiving ourselves as objects and their parts, to an expansive way of being that allows us to experience our existence as somatically subjective, integral and mutual; humans being of the world integrally and mutually with all of existence.

The discoveries made in this research inquiry were intended to contribute to the larger conversation of knowledge theory, specifically Transformative Learning theory. Originally, this inquiry assumed that body knowing might be a potential stand-alone epistemology that could be added to the other categorical epistemologies. After conducting this inquiry it is found that body knowing is best suited as a complementary epistemology that works in concert with other rational and non-rational epistemologies rather than a stand-alone epistemology.

Using the body as a source of knowledge and wisdom, while simultaneously using another epistemology has the potential to make the learning process more holistic for the learner.
John Heron, a scholar of knowledge and learning, has categorized four areas of knowledge in an “up hierarchy” (Heron, 1992). Heron uses the up-hierarchy model to denote the inverted sensibility of categorizing epistemologies. Heron’s model is intended to demonstrate the variations and multiplicity of learning styles and show that each are compliment to the other, none being truly hierarchical.

According to Heron (1992) the four categories of knowledge are:

- Experiential knowledge (knowledge of feeling)
- Presentational knowledge (where the imaginal and conceptual mode interact)
- Propositional knowledge (knowing about)
- Practical knowledge (knowing how).

If learners were to engage their body knowing in concert with any of these epistemologies, it would potentially open the learner to a radical new way of accessing wisdom. The co-researchers in this study exemplified that when they access knowing from their somatic center, they infuse their knowledge with qualities such as empathy, compassion and deep emotion which do not otherwise get evoked.

If body knowing were used to complement the various epistemologies, the learner could potentially have a more deeply integrated learning experience, while simultaneously expanding their capacities for knowing. This kind of expansion and integration are the foundational building blocks of transformative learning theory (Mezirow & Assoc., 2000).

References


Both Sides of the Coin in Community College Faculty Development:
Transformative Learning Needs Transformative Leadership

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Abstract: Faculty development programming generally includes the areas of instructional, organizational and personal development, although the tendency is to focus on teaching and learning. Informal interviews were conducted with community college faculty developers concerning the implementation of transformative learning opportunities within the personal realm of staff development. Having strong transformative leadership support was identified as key to the success of such programming. This paper takes a preliminary plunge into the deep-end of faculty development at community colleges.

Faculty Development programming in the Community Colleges appears ready for growth. Transformative learning opportunities can be offered in the personal development area but transformational leadership seems to be a necessary catalyst in bringing these about. Specialists in the area of professional development in higher education, specifically those from the POD (Professional and Organizational Development) Network identify three primary focuses of professional development programs on college and university campuses. Primarily these are: 1) Instructional Development, 2) Organizational Development and 3) Personal Development – in that order. These experts acknowledge that most faculty development efforts in higher education settings are geared toward promoting skills and techniques for effective teaching and providing information about student learning. This noble focus seeks to enhance instructional skills of pedagogy and to expand on them as common bonds for faculty across disciplines. Few ‘Centers of Excellence’ offer much in the way of organizational programming though; such as conflict management, team building or collaboration efforts, which might specifically target enrichment efforts for administrators and deans. And even fewer programs, appear to offer many opportunities within the personal development category (New Faculty Developers Workshop, 11/5/04). Though there are a wide range of services possible, such as learning Spanish or artistic outlets for creativity, it is within this realm of faculty development that potentially powerful personally transformative learning could occur for the individual instructor or staff member.

Literature Review

Hubbard and Atkins (1995) summarize the evolution of faculty development and state that early efforts of the 1970s were focused on improving instructional effectiveness. Approaches then expanded to include the complexities of the teaching/learning process and new information about cognition and student development. More recently, “there has been renewed interest in both personal and organizational approaches that address issues of faculty vitality and renewal” (p.118). Following a comprehensive analysis of faculty development, Baiocco and DeWaters (1998) came to the conclusion that “higher education must increase efforts and offer a radically different faculty development program to ensure that faculty will understand the changing nature of the student population, education and their respective disciplines” (p.40). According to Lawler and King (2000), this “call for change” (p.6) pushes us toward a model of development that focuses on professional development and growth (emphasis added). Brookfield (1986) reminds us that as adult learners, faculty and staff involved in professional development activities strive to make meaning of their learning and apply it to their lives. Certainly principles of andragogy (Knowles, 1980) are applicable to considering the needs of adult participants in professional development programming.

Transformative learning approaches in faculty development are those that offer opportunities for the personal growth and development of the teacher (or administrator, department chair or staff person) in a way that their professional work with students is often enhanced as well. Although teachers have more opportunities to develop skills in pedagogy and in the subject matter of their discipline, what are rarely available are considerations of their role in the profession, teacher renewal and their vocational vitality (Intrator & Kunzman, 2004). According to Mezirow (2000), the process of transformational learning actually alters our mental meanings and perspectives in ways that make us more capable of change and reflection. By gaining a clearer understanding of ourselves through introspection and our affective responses, educators are more aware of their own purpose and place in the profession. Key concepts in transformational learning theory involve experiences, critical reflection on the personal affects of our experiences and the individual’s development as an outgrowth of the process (Merriam and Caffarella, 2007).

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1999), in addition to understanding the learner in their sociocultural context. Dirkx (1997) delves into the emotional and spiritual aspects of transformational learning as he encourages us to nurture adult learning at the interface of their soul. It is within these contexts of transformational learning that organizational and personal faculty development programming has been explored.

**Guiding Questions**

At the community college level, teaching and learning represent the typical primary mission. Even so, I have wondered why faculty development programming often does not include those events which focus on the needs of organization and the needs of the individuals within that organization. How can the field of faculty development itself be expanded transformatively to offer support for these additionally identified major component areas of programming? What does it take to promote and increase faculty development efforts in these directions as well; on the one hand, having aspects that support the structural dynamics of departmental functioning and on the other hand, offering individual opportunities that could be personally growth producing possibilities for the people themselves? An understanding of these connections to comprehensive faculty development programming might be of assistance to the successful functioning and funding of those community colleges who are striving to reach their full potential.

**Method of Study**

To explore these issues further, the literature was examined and informal interviews were conducted with several faculty developers at three community colleges in the mid-western United States. Participants for the study were selected either through contact with the Oklahoma Faculty Developers Consortium group or because of their known involvement in offering transformational learning experiences through their professional development campus programs. Specific community college professionals were identified as serving in a faculty developer capacity on three campuses and contacted for participation through email. Guided but open-ended individual interviews were then conducted either in person or by telephone concerning their experiences in promoting faculty development on their campuses. Although the types of transformative opportunities that are offered and described differ among the three community colleges in the study, a qualitative review of the findings indicated a consistent theme which suggests that the organization and the individual might be inseparable aspects of the same coin.

**An Autobiographical Image**

Still wet behind the ears, I have taken a preliminary plunge into the little explored deep-end of faculty development in hopes of coming up with a prized coin between my thumb and forefinger. In fact, a childhood experience comes to mind. Every summer my friends and I went to the swimming pool at the local neighborhood park. We often made up our own games using whatever was handy: a shiny coin would do. One friend would toss the coin into the pool and the other would dive in to retrieve it. As the diver, I remember keeping a keen eye on the coin from the moment it left the toss of the fingers and floated down through the water to the bottom of the pool. Sometimes I could easily follow it, but other times it got lost quickly from my focused watch at the surface. Once I spotted it, in I would go with my eyes wide open and fingers outstretched pushing myself to swim deeper, all the way down and back up again, before I ran out of breath. In a splash of effort, I was on the bottom with the coin retrieved. Then, with a big push off I would shoot back up through the water with a successful show for my effort.

**Interview Questions**

A set of general questions were used to explore overall issues in initiating faculty development efforts in community colleges with professionals on three campuses. Participants for the study were from faculty development programs at Rose State College (RSC) and Oklahoma City Community College (OKCC), both in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and from the Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD) in Dallas, Texas. Ten interview questions were designed to gather information about their perspectives on the goals, challenges and supports they have experienced regarding their faculty development programming efforts.

Although a range of questions were discussed with the faculty developers in the study, this paper will attempt to present those examples and situations that they have described about their programs which are consistent with transformative types of learning opportunities. The following discussion section describes three different approaches of transformative learning that were supported by transformative leadership in their administration. The first presents a case of Formation programming, the second, a case of Transformative Learning Communities and the third, offers a case example of an organizational change which suggests transformation in the campus culture.
Discussion Section

The Center for Formation

At the Center for Formation in the Community College (CFCC), a collaborative project of the Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD), the Fetzer Institute and the League for Innovation in the Community College, their stated mission is to “enable community colleges to create transformative communities of faculty, staff, administrators, trustees, community partners, and those for whom we all work and with whom we all learn: our students” (CFCC brochure, 2002).

Although a wide-range of staff and organizational development services are offered through the Dallas County Community College District, their more transformative faculty development programs were developed in consultation with Parker J. Palmer, author and creator of the Courage to Teach Teacher Formation programs (Palmer, 2005). Dr. Allatia Harris, District Director for Faculty Development and Core Curriculum Evaluation for their DCCCD seven campuses, explained that all formation options are voluntary and “invitational” in that “no one is forced” to participate. As a grass roots initiative in response to the standing ovation Parker Palmer received from their faculty at a conference offered campus-wide in 1997, formation efforts were strategically conceived and offered through a process they call, “seepage”. The retreats, formation groups, facilitator trainings, and mentoring programs have grown in participation and acceptance by word of mouth without any type of hard sell promotion (Personal communication, 3/11/05).

Interestingly, Palmer’s contact with the District was due to the transformational leadership of Bill Tucker, their administrative Vice Chancellor of Planning and Development Affairs. According to Dr. Harris, it was his visionary sense that recognized the application of Teacher Formation work to the Community College. Transformational leadership, from the organizational perspective, can be described as a deep change that results from leaders who are willing to take significant risks toward organizational renewal (Quinn, 1996). From the world of business management, this author explains that in addition, organizational leaders of today must also make deep changes themselves. From the very beginning, Bill Tucker and other administrators from the DCCC District have participated in the formation process themselves with the support of their Chancellor. According to one author writing on university presidents, “Good leaders are seen as good listeners, responsive to others, and committed to the institution and integrated into its culture” (Birnbaum, 1992, p.121). It seems clear from this example that transformational learning opportunities for the faculty and staff at this community college were fully backed by the visionary transformational leadership and support of their administration.

A Transformative Learning Community

Creating an environment that supports teaching and conveys value for innovation and risk-taking promotes deep learning and significant change, according to Knight and Trowler (2000). Claudia Buckmaster, Humanities Professor for Rose State College in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and part-time coordinator for faculty development, described the environment on her campus as being, “A great institution with acceptance, respect, tolerance and value for the individual and encouragement for innovation”. With a very supportive President providing encouragement, their faculty development program “Teaching in Communities” was initiated because of the need for faculty to connect with one another and reduce the isolation experienced on campus (Personal communication, 2/14/05). Consistent with Tinto’s principles of learning communities as: shared knowledge, shared knowing, and shared responsibility (Ebersole, 2003), these T.I.C. groups have been gathering for five years now and interest is growing.

Each annual study group of 10-15 faculty base their learning community on focused discussions of the book, “Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher” (Brookfield, 1995), which includes writing their own teaching journals and participating in retreat experiences together. The small group approach presented in this book encourages the use of autobiographical writings and critical conversations in order to promote the habit of critical reflection on who, why and what teachers do. According to Brookfield, it is through reflective practice that transformation is found for the individual at the small group level. Although he emphasizes, reflection alone is not enough to bring about action and change through the individual into the world. In speaking with one faculty development advisory committee member, who is a long time faculty member at the college and currently near retirement, about her Teaching in Community experience she said quite succinctly and sincerely, “It saved my life”.

A Transformative Organizational Structure

Dr. Martha George, Psychology Professor and Director of the Center for Learning and Teaching at Oklahoma City Community College (OCCC) in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, spoke of their newly initiated WOW! Faculty and Staff Development program as a true “cultural change” that has been supported by both their Provost and President. Specifically, she said she has a good working relationship with her Provost who has had “blind faith” in her abilities
to pull off this new program. The particular cultural shift she referred to comes from their new format of offering a multitude of programs to all employees at the college with no distinction between their roles as administrators, faculty or staff; which is quite different from the traditional faculty development that had been historically offered (Personal communication, 2/24/05). A similarly designed program is offered through the previously discussed Dallas County Community College District’s Staff and Organizational Development department, whereby the program does not compartmentalize by employee classification but invites all personnel to participate. Back at the Oklahoma City Community College, during a tour of their facility and Center for Teaching and Learning Resource Room, Kathy Wullstein, Director of the Distributed Learning and Instructional Services programs emphasized the nature of community colleges in comparison to large research universities and stated, “They are often the place where innovative changes regarding teaching will happen first (Personal communication, 2/28/05). At least on these two community college campuses, innovative teaching structures are being offered to the adult learner employees.

In looking at this phenomenon of faculty development within the community college context, it appears that professional development is seen as an effective process for organizational change, according to Stern (2003). By seeing employees as change agents for transformation of the institution, the point is made that colleges must also address the task of self-renewal. This author goes on to say, “Active participation in professional development activities, especially when participants are empowered to relate their role to making a difference in the college, provides the opportunity for informal leadership development and ultimately organizational change” (p. 4).

Concluding Comments

A national study of community college faculty was conducted in 2000 at the UCLA Community College Studies program where responses from 1,531 full-and part-time faculty across the United States were compared with similar survey results from those in 1975. The main purpose of the research project was to examine community college faculty professional practices and attitudes. Rather than the professoriate developing into a faculty with a strong professional identity, responses indicate that overall they have become increasingly fragmented since 1975.

In an essay for the American Council of Education Alliance, B.K. Firestone (1996) offers a progressive connection for this transformative focus on both the individual and the organization in faculty development:

The individual commitment to self-knowledge teaches you who you are, connects you with your history, unites you with others in the human condition, and challenges you to deeper relationships; the renewed interpersonal relationships provide the foundational knowledge person-to-person about human differences and the commonalities of the human condition; these inter-personal relationships strengthen the individuals involved together to go out and contribute to their communities. Stronger communities are built by people who understand relationships and who know themselves and how to “know others”; comfort with community enables us to face intimacy, encounter difficulty, and build environments in our organizations that are comprised of people and not systems. Learning/teaching begins with self - then one other - then a few together - and so on… This is the way it tends to happen with authenticity and lasting effects (Ebersole, 2003, p. 1).

Claudia Buckmaster, Humanities professor and part-time faculty developer, said it best when she and I talked about her goals and efforts to expand the faculty development programs on her campus. “Faculty development takes administrative support. You really need a president with vision who sees the possibilities and is excited about it” Unfortunately, she was concerned that her administrative leaders were losing their capacity for vision and energy and knew that funding her proposed expansion was going to be a challenge (Personal communication, 2/14/05).

To understand this concern better, in a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Drago-Severson, 2002), findings from a qualitative study of 25 school leaders in a wide variety of K-12 contexts indicated that indeed financial resources had the greatest influence on leadership practices for the professional development of their teachers. These administrators expressed value for staff development opportunities that promoted reflective thinking and dialogue among colleagues to reduce isolation, increase a supportive environment and improve cultural leadership on their campuses. Although they were in favor of transformational learning experiences for their faculty and, in fact, attempted to incorporate approaches utilizing critical reflection, collaboration and transformational experiences, almost all of these school principals emphatically discussed the limiting influence financial resources had on their capability to support professional development.

Future Research Directions

An important perhaps continuous and circular question rises to the surface: How can we promote organizational development that will energize administrative leadership who will support personal development
opportunities of transformational quality for faculty and staff in the community colleges? Future research in examining both sides of faculty development further is needed and the community college, with its noted ability for adaptation and change, may have the potential for real transformation in this area. I hope this first dive has been useful to others in the pool of faculty development and I trust there will be many more deep-end endeavors yet to come. Hopefully, after a long swim and a big deep breath, we will put that prized coin in the bank as an investment in the growth and development of our faculty: which is ultimately intended to enrich the future of our community college students, who deserve transformational learning experiences in the classroom too.

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Abstract: Drawing upon the metaphor of Alice’s perplexing adventures in Wonderland, participants will explore the role disorienting dilemmas play in transformative learning. Just like Alice, learners encounter a world filled with bewildering experiences—some lead to transformative learning while others do not. A question remains: when, how, and under what circumstances do disorienting dilemmas lead to transformative learning? Bailey Scholars will convene this interactive session, guided by a recent inquiry into what leads to transformative learning.

Inspired by Lewis Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking Glass, we draw upon the metaphor of Alice’s perplexing adventures in Wonderland to explore the role disorienting dilemmas play in transformative learning. As Alice steps through the looking glass, or mirror, she enters a world filled with bewildering experiences causing her to pause her and reconsider who she is in relation to the profoundly perplexing world that surrounds her. As she journeys from one turbulent experience to another, she begins to view herself differently and comprehend her reality in a whole new way—she is transformed.

Many learners are similar to Alice in that they encounter disorienting dilemmas, “activating events that typically expose a discrepancy between what a person has always assumed to be true and what has just been experienced, heard or read” (Cranton, 2002, p. 66). They are profoundly challenged to find ways to make sense of the experiences that threaten their identities, values, and worldviews.

Often, such disorienting dilemmas remain unprocessed, chalked up to experience or simply dismissed as bad luck. At other times, disorienting dilemmas become catalysts for transformative learning, a process in which learners undergo deep changes in their assumptions, perspectives, or behaviors (Cranton, 1992). In reconciling the disquieting experience with their definition of self, learners are forced to find alternative ways of perceiving and assimilating information that caused the perturbation.

While some studies (Elias, 1993; Clevinger, 1993) provide some insight as to why some disorienting dilemmas lead to perspective transformation, it is still unclear what factors trigger or inhibit transformative processes. The critical question remains largely unanswered: when, how, and under what conditions do disorienting dilemmas become catalysts for transformative learning? With this question in mind, an ad-hoc group of Bailey Scholars conducted a semi-structured inquiry through interviews with faculty and students to understand their experience with disorienting events and transformative learning. Participants shared their stories of disorienting experience and their associated transformations. Preliminary themes were used to inform the experiential session—Exploring Wonderland Together.

Bailey Scholars Program

At Michigan State University, learners in the Liberty Hyde Bailey Scholars Program (hereafter called the Bailey Scholars Program) seek to create a respectful, trusting environment supportive of whole person development in a learning space where they can actively explore personally meaningful questions in dialogue with others who also search for resolution of life’s disorienting dilemmas. In the Bailey Scholars community, learners practice the process of critical reflection and often share their transformative learning experiences with one another. This practice, grounded in the oral tradition of storytelling, creates a learning culture that celebrates and reinforces transformative learning.

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**Our Inquiry**

Bailey Scholars who self-selected into our inquiry included male and female faculty members and students who ranged in age from nineteen to sixty years of age. Participants responded to semi-structured, open-ended questions during the conversations that were videotaped. As they shared their disorienting dilemmas, rich descriptions of turbulence, contexts, people, events, and interactions emerged. Three faculty scholars analyzed interview tapes and transcripts, identified themes individually, and then compared their findings to come to a consensus on them.

To summarize, scholars spoke of the factors that contributed to turbulence and of the reasons why their dilemmas “tipped,” shifting from disorienting to transformational. Participants were in various stages of making sense of their experiences. As a result, some participants had already emerged from their dilemmas while a few continued to find new meanings. Several participants described paradoxical turbulence, where some disorienting dilemmas were, at the same time, positive and negative.

**Vignettes: What Constitutes a Disquieting or Disorienting Event?**

Disorienting dilemmas, either positive or negative, are unexpected happenings—though many people may immediately think of dilemmas as having negative connotations. They cause one to question prior assumptions, values, and worldviews. Disorienting dilemmas are catalysts for transformative learning, according to Mezirow (1978a). Transformative learning is non-linear and may occur all at once—in an “aha” moment—or may be “more like an unfolding evolution rather than a response to a crisis” (Pope, 1996, p. 176). Mezirow (1994) distinguishes between these two modes of meaning restructuring as “epochal” and “incremental” (pp. 229-230). In our inquiry, three main themes emerged as answers to the question: what constitutes a disquieting or disorienting event? The participants related stories about shifts in worldview caused by experiencing another culture (Costa Rica, India, Nepal), about deep questioning of assumed values as part of “growing up,” and about profound challenges to deeply held pedagogical values in the classroom.

**Experiencing Another Culture (Culture Shock and Reverse Culture Shock)**

Almost all of the participants shared stories about how their experience with another culture gave them pause to reconsider their own personal and culturally held beliefs. One participant, for example, shared at length the difference between cultures that are focused on the independence of the individual (like the American culture) and those focused on the family or community. Her experience while studying abroad in India caused her to reconsider her own beliefs about individuality, privacy, community, and family. During her five-month stay, she gradually found ways of preserving her own private time even while in the midst of others.

Another participant experienced a more epochal transformation in a rainforest. A student who had enrolled to become a physical therapist traveled to Costa Rica and found herself in the middle of the rainforest, “suddenly, all sweaty and dirty and happy. I turned to my friend and said, ‘This is it. This is what I want to do with my life.’” She returned to school to pursue a degree in fisheries and wildlife and to spend her summers conducting fieldwork, where she once again experienced the satisfaction of being smelly and dirty, engaging all of her senses in the study of ecology.

One student described a cross-cultural shock that was a disorienting dilemma when she roomed in college with a student of a different race. The student was offended by patently racist art that the roommate had hung on the wall, but was unable to speak of it to her roommate. Over the semester, the turbulence between the two increased until the roommate who had hung the offending art moved out at semester’s end. Another roommate of an opposite race moved in. Hurt by the interactions with the prior roommate, the student was fearful that the new relationship would be similar to the last. However, she was willing to give the new roommate a chance; she allowed herself to trust in uncertainty and be open to whatever happened next. There was no repeat of racism; she found her voice and talked with her roommate about things that were upsetting to her. She began to value interdependence and felt more able to deal with the unknown.

Returning “home” after such transformative learning experiences was also cited as another kind of disquieting or disorienting event, requiring another round of “sense-making” and perspective transformation. After living in a vibrant culture in India and Nepal, one participant said it was a shock to return to American to find everything white, sterile, inauthentic, and veiled. She misses “the rawness that I was in India” and hopes someday to return to know herself in the beautiful, raw chaos.

**Questioning Assumed Values as Part of “Growing Up”**

Several participants shared stories about the times in their life when they deeply called into question the values their parents had instilled in them. One participant had always assumed she would get a job, get married, have children, earn some money, and be comfortable—all by the age of 25. As she approached that age, she realized this...
vision of her life was not possible. She found it deeply challenging to craft a new course for her life given the expectations she and her family had for her. After a difficult period of transition, she is on a satisfying life course different than the one she and her family had originally envisioned.

Another participant talked about being raised to be an independent woman—someone who could stand on her own two feet. She was someone who did not need to rely on others to stand strong. When she was confronted with a serious illness, the participant was forced to turn to her parents and to her advisor for assistance. She was not happy having to ask for help because it went against everything she had been raised to believe in. As she recovered with the kind support of others, her view of the world changed. Now, she feels much more comfortable asking others for help and believes it to be a sign of strength instead of weakness.

A recent alumni shared how disorienting it was to have completed her degree and to be out in the world of work. During her years on campus, she was goal-oriented, ambitious, and achievement-driven. She had clear learning goals and a vision for what she wanted to accomplish. Through this drive came success. After having reached her immediate goal of graduating from college, she was left without a dream or goal for the next phase of her life. She described feeling as if she were in a vacuum before she started to appreciate the effect of not having a dream or a goal. This realization caused her to reconsider her life’s path and to create a new set of dreams. She was able to transition out of a disorientation, almost a depression, into a new phase of her life.

Profound Challenges to Deeply Held Pedagogical Values in the Classroom

Two faculty scholars shared their troubling experiences when their deeply held pedagogical values were challenged in the classroom and tenure home. During his interview, one scholar was still coming to terms with the gap between his expectations and the expectations of his students. His pedagogical approach was constructivist, learner-centered, and experiential. He was excited about creating a classroom where students would take partial responsibility for their own learning—where they could have a voice in what they learned and how they learned it. He believed that “the students would love it!” but became disappointed when they did not. The dilemma occurred because many of his students were not interested in such a teaching style; they preferred a teacher-centered classroom where they did not have to take responsibility for their own learning, where they could participate as passive learners. This situation leaves the faculty scholar wondering whether he should stay true to his deeply held pedagogical values or whether he should modify them so the students in his classes learn through an approach more consistent with their preferred learning style.

Similarly, another, more senior faculty member spoke about the unresolved dissonance he experienced when he held a joint appointment in a traditional academic department and in a more experimental teaching program. In his tenure home, he was expected to produce research, teach “just the facts,” and participate in a rank-based hierarchical system. In the experimental teaching program, he enjoyed multiple forms of scholarship (including outreach scholarship), engaged students in whole-person development, and participated as an equal among peers. Over time, the faculty scholar found his philosophy about education to be more aligned with the teaching program than with his academic home. Constantly shifting between the two created cognitive and emotional dissonance—a long-term disorienting dilemma. Ultimately, the faculty member found that there was no space in his home department to become the teacher he wanted to be in both places. After some time experiencing this unresolved dissonance, he retired from the university and now takes teaching assignments if and when they match his pedagogical preference.

Under What Circumstances Does a Disorienting Event Lead to Transformative Learning?

When Alice passed through the looking glass, she demonstrated a willingness to be changed; to be open to new experiences. Curious, she actively engaged in her journey and demonstrated an internal locus of control that created positive turbulence out of negative turbulence. Gryskiewicz (1999) identified four main elements that drive positive turbulence: difference, multiple perspectives, intensity, and receptivity (p. 3). We perceive openness to experience to be somewhat different than the receptivity that Gryskiewicz (1999) mentioned; openness to experience is about actively engaging in process rather than merely being receptive to new experiences.

“Fostering transformative learning is not just about making sense of experience through dialogue; it also involves creating experiences that can help facilitate understanding among the participants involved” says Taylor (1998, p. 52). Affect and emotions are also an important part of transformative learning (Gallagher, 1997). Transformation, says Hart (2001) “is both an outcome and a process; it is the push and the pulse that drives self-organization and self-transcendence” (p. 12). Furthermore, transformation comes from “earthquakes in our worldview and from tiny sparks that offer a glint of insight” (Hart, 2001, p. 150). Transformative learning is therefore supported by creating space for reflection and discourse about disorienting dilemmas, as experience and action help to create the context for critical reflective thinking (Mezirow, 1990).
The participants in our inquiry revealed five elements that seemed to create conditions for their disorienting dilemmas to become transformative events: critical self-reflection, conversation with others, support of a community/space; skills and abilities; and an open attitude.

- **Critical self-reflection**—participants used a variety of techniques to actively seek out hidden meaning in their disorienting dilemma. Some wrote their thoughts and impressions in journals so that they might return to them later to find insights. Others spent time reflecting quietly on their own. In both instances, participants sought to step outside of their own perspective and experience to make sense of the new situation they were encountering.

- **Conversations with others**—some participants actively engaged others in conversation, and through these conversations with a supportive other, insights about changes in assumptions, values, and behaviors became more evident. Again, these conversations were more than simply “talking with someone” to blow off steam; they were active dialogues where both members were seeking new understanding and new knowledge through one another.

- **Support of a community/space**—participants described the importance of being part of a community that focused on learning (even stretch learning), in that they felt affirmed in seeking out new knowledge about themselves even when it was difficult to engage in such a self-reflective process. Others mentioned the importance of “having a space” where such issues could be discussed with others.

- **Skills and abilities**—a few participants explicitly mentioned that they had learned skills for framing and re-framing their experiences, allowing them to see the situation from different perspectives. These skills helped them understand their disorienting dilemmas from alternative viewpoints. Without these skills and abilities, they may have simply dismissed the dissonance without seeking the grain of truth embedded in it. Some participants alluded to these skills and abilities without directly mentioning them as significant in their transformative experiences.

- **Open attitude**—several participants mentioned how important it was to have an attitude that embraces turbulence, dissonance, and oscillation with openness and adaptability. The self-control for not panicking in the face of something new or different was also noted as important for “staying open” to new experiences and new perspectives.

For the students in the study, transformative learning was an internal process that involved reflection, self-knowledge, openness to experience, active participation in learning, being in learning environments that provided physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual stimulation, and being in spaces where one can fail without being judged. As one student remarked, “transformative learning leads to empowerment. To know that you’ve thought of an idea yourself, that learning is yours, you can claim it for yourself.”

Because participants in the study were curious, they demonstrated a willingness to try to adapt to new ideas, experiences, and cultures, and were open to new contexts, and thus experienced transformation as a result. Those whose disorienting dilemmas became a transformative experience exhibited a tolerance for ambiguity and were at ease with uncertainty. Their openness and receptivity to new experiences often created the space for emergent learning and broader, complex self-knowledge. As one participant noted, “my perplexity is realizing how complex I am as a person and that to know herself fully will be a lifelong journey.”

**Transformative Learning Through the Lens of Chaos, Complexity, and Dynamical Systems**

When Alice steps through the looking glass, she steps into a world of uncertainty, dissonance, and ambiguity. As in Alice’s world, our reality, according to Prigogine & Stengers (1984), “instead of being orderly, stable, and equilibrial, is seething and bubbling with change, disorder, and process” (p. xv). Chaos refers to non-linear or dynamical systems. Our existence is nested in dynamic systems; “Our relationships, perceptions, values, emotions, ideas, choices, coping strategies—all our life processes are embedded in and emergent from our complex interactions with dynamic systems” (Robinson, 2004, p. 10).

Complexity, states Doberneck (2003) “refers to interactive, dynamic, or synergistic circumstances” (p. 24). Sanders (1998) observes that, “Most of the world is made up of complex adaptive systems,” including the social world “of people, politics, and commerce” with “many interconnecting points” (p. 161). Complex adaptive systems change or respond to new information through an adaptive process (p. 161), much like learners who embrace disorienting dilemmas and adopt new perspectives through a process of transformation.

Chaos ensures change; without oscillation and dissonance, all would remain in equilibrium. Chaos theory has its disciplinary roots in theoretical physics and natural sciences and is quantitative; however, its concepts have been
applied to social sciences to help explain attitudes, behaviors, human development, and organizational change. There are many important concepts in chaos and complexity theories, but the ones we emphasize include oscillation, emergence, turbulence, self-organization, and bifurcation (or tipping points).

Chaos and complexity theories are lenses to examine the “nonlinearity, uncertainty, and unpredictability of social systems behavior” (Krasner, 1990). Robinson (2004) used concepts from chaos and complexity theories to explore human behavior in higher education—perceptions, attitudes, and strategies of disaffected male undergraduates. Doberneck (2003) conducted an inquiry into the complexity sciences as an emerging organizational paradigm, and Cutright (2001) applied chaos theory to leadership, planning, and policy in higher education.

Exploring Wonderland Together: Outline for an Experiential Session

Drawing upon the tradition and culture of storytelling in the Bailey Scholars Program and upon emerging themes from our inquiry, this session will be organized around these provocative questions: “What constitutes a disquieting or disorienting event?,” “What happens as a result of a disorienting dilemma or event(s)?,” and “Under what circumstances does a disorienting event lead to transformative learning?” In small groups, participants will share personal stories of their own “perplexing adventures in Wonderland” and explore under what circumstances it was possible for their disorienting events to lead to transformative learning. Each group will be invited to reveal the themes that emerge from the dialogue.

After the dialogues, several Bailey Scholars, including undergraduate scholars, will share their personal stories of how disorienting experiences, both in and out of the classroom, have led to transformative learning. Vignettes, including some on video, will be used to illustrate how different individuals “step through the looking glass” and navigate through their own perplexing adventures. Because not all disorienting dilemmas lead to transformative learning, a critical focus throughout the session will be on if and when disorienting events lead to transformative learning.

As the session concludes, we will invite participants to consider how to modify their pedagogy to create the context necessary for disorienting dilemmas to become transformative. In essence, together, we will explore how to improve our practice so that our learners’ adventures in Wonderland bring them to new and meaningful constructions of their identities. Session handouts will include references to the literature on transformative learning and chaos and complexity theories in higher education and literature about the Bailey Scholars Program.

References
At the Movies: Creating “An Experience” for Transformational Learning

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Abstract: This paper explores the use of film as an educational tool for promoting transformational learning through the enrichment of the classroom. Specifically, this study focuses on how the use of film and film clips can contribute to the process of transformative learning for university graduate students. The study suggests that cognitive, social, emotional, and personal experiences appear to be ingredients that contribute to meaningful transformational experiences. The study also suggests that the creative use of film shown in an atmosphere of complexity provides a meaningful way to connect familiar settings of popular culture and personal experience with philosophical, theoretical, and educational issues.

Introduction
Despite increasing awareness of the importance of creating an environment that attends to transformative learning, teaching frequently lacks opportunity for creating “an experience” (Dewey, 1934). If educators are to foster transformational learning among students, it is essential to incorporate modes of teaching that allow for “an experience.” In this regard, Dewey (1934) contends that through “an experience,” individuals come to see and appreciate aspects of the world in novel ways, resulting in a transformation of the individual’s relationship with the world. For that reason, the critical value lies with the experience rather than from being the passive recipient of the intellectual work itself. In other words, students involved in learning should not be mere observers but should be active participants “carried forward” by the “activity of the journey” (Dewey, 1934). According to Dewey (1934), knowledge relates to only one phase of the learning experience. It is the process of interconnected interactions that is essential for a meaningful educational experience to occur.

My experiences in higher education have afforded me the opportunity to be involved in classes in which a variety of creative approaches have been incorporated to create “an experience.” One particular approach involved films, either as clips or in their entirety as a means of illustrating relevant concepts and theories. Some of the films included Chicken Run, Educating Rita, My First Mister, and Thelma and Louise. Clips from Thelma and Louise were viewed to depict various aspects of the disorienting dilemma in the transformative learning process. Selected scenes from My First Mister were shown in conjunction with John Dewey’s concept of “an experience” as well as of transformative learning. A succession of scenes from Educating Rita illustrated the plight of nontraditional students in higher education. These films increased my understanding. Through the use of questions, listening, and dialogue by the instructor, my learning was enriched and expanded, allowing me and I believe the other students in the class the opportunity to engage in insightful critical inquiry and reflection.

Because of these experiences I undertook further research into this process to gain an understanding of how the use of film could enhance formal knowledge and personal growth and development. This paper presents findings of my study into the use of film as an educational tool that promotes transformational learning. It explores the use of films and film clips depicting transformational learning themes and issues that are studied in adult education.

Theoretical Perspective
The following theoretical propositions concerning imagination, critical thinking, and narrative inquiry underlie the study of utilizing films as a viable method for enhancing adult learning and education.

- Experience is essential for learning (Dewey, 1934; Doll 1997; Eisner 1993).
- Critical inquiry is a foremost facet of transformational learning (Palmer 2000; Maslow 1976) and can be engaged in through critical thinking and reflection (Brookfield 1992).
- Discourse allows adults to grow and develop through reflection by examining meaning from life events, by recognizing themes and patterns, and by reflecting on past events in view of current worldviews (Damasio 2003; Wilber 2001; Dewey 1934).

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Imagination is central to the creative process and carries with it powerful implications for learning, thinking, reflecting and growth of consciousness. (Bohm and Peat 1987; Damasio 1999, 2003, Eisner, 1993).

Transformation of perspectives occurs as thinking shifts in the course of growth and development and is of value over the course of one’s life (Kegan 1984).

The use of film clips are a narrative technique and can “operate as a language” and when viewed with others create mutual experiences (Monaco 2000)

**Purpose of the Study**

This preliminary study was designed to explore the use of film as an educational tool that promotes transformational learning. The questions addressed include: How does the use of film clips in the classroom contribute to the process of transformational learning for students? In what ways are films clips used as a possible transformational tool? Specifically, what do students say about their experience concerning the use of films in the classroom?

**Methodology**

The methodology of this study draws on the guidelines of Interpretivism, a methodology that seeks to gain an understanding of a phenomenon through inquiry and the process of meaning making (Densin and Lincoln, 1994). The meaning is derived from the actions of those directly engaged in the experience. Therefore, this research is concerned with the interpretive meaning of the participants’ experiences. For that reason, I will seek to straightforwardly portray the participants’ experiences within the context of the classroom of students in which film or film clips were utilized. By including students’ descriptions of experiences with the films in their own words in the learning context a “broad net” (Karpiak, 1990) will be cast in interpret the data gathered about the use of films in the classroom.

Data was collected through personal interviews with six participants who were in graduate school, had experienced the use of films in the classroom as part of the learning activity, and were willing to be interviewed. A primary intention of the design of this study in relation to data collection was to allow each individual through non-directive methods to freely express their experience with the use of films in the classroom. The participants were simply asked to relay their experience about the use of the film as part of the learning experience. As the students discussed their experiences, follow-up questions were asked to provide the individuals with the opportunity to clarify, expand, or to illustrate. Following this the participants were asked specific questions to help provide understanding regarding the specific nature of how or why the film use was effective in their particular learning experiences.

During analysis the main themes were coded by clustering them into areas of experiences marked by change, taking note of disorienting dilemmas, shifts, transitions, and transformations in action, thought, or understanding as the students described their experiences. The next step of analysis consisted of searching for emerging patterns in the data. In relationship to their experiences with films consideration was given to students’ illustrations and associations regarding instances of experiences, observations, and awareness, including changes that may have occurred in their frame of references and habits of mind. Because the interpretive mode of inquiry is concerned with the meaning of experiences, events, or behaviors I attempted to portray the participants’ experiences accurately reflecting the process of their experiences through the lens of adult development, perspective transformation, and complexity science.

**Findings**

“All conscious experience has of necessity some degree of imaginative experience.”

John Dewey

Four areas of experiences were revealed through the interviews: emotional experiences, cognitive experiences, social experiences, and personal experiences. Each area of experience appeared to be complex and interwoven. Based on the interviews these experiences altered the interactions that occurred in the classroom allowing for growth and development. Moreover, the change in interactions that occurred in the classroom brought about by the use of films appeared to give rise to a changed atmosphere in the classroom that, in turn created opportunity for the transformational experiences that the students reported.
Emotional Experience

Emotionally, the students are fond of the use of films. They reported that the use of films made the class more entertaining and interesting. One student stated that simply the anticipation of having a film to look forward to initially increase their eagerness to be in class and more attentive. Another student noted, “But when a film is used I feel better, more alert. I think more and my mind doesn’t wonder.” For this student the emotional feeling influenced mental awareness and focus.

Emotional experiences were also connected to cognitive experiences in that mood influenced thought and ultimately acquisition of knowledge as well as understanding. One student commented that since she was entertained with television and videos, she found that the use of films made learning “more automatic,” “more meaningful” and allowed for “better understanding of the journal articles.”

Social Experiences

The use of films and its connection to diversity in social experiences was also reflected in statements made by the students. Reportedly, more students contributed to the class discussion, more interaction occurred between students concerning the subject, and more students attended to what others were discussing. One student said, “More of us talk. More than the same few add to the discussion. I know I do more. There’s just more discussion. It’s like the class gets adrenalin.” Another student maintained, “I think the movies give us something everyone can relate.” This student also stated that personal experiences that other students share “seems to make more sense – I know more where they are coming from. I don’t begin to just block out what they’re saying.”

One middle age professional commented on the experience of watching clips of Educating Rita and the changes that he noted among the students. Reportedly, some student had interpretations of Stephen Brookfield’s article about adult students returning to higher education, but their comments were confined to the article and Brookfield’s descriptions. But after viewing the film the students became willing to share freely about their own experiences of the ‘imposter syndrome’ or ‘cultural suicide.’

Personal Experience

The third experience related to their personal awareness of their own individual change when films were utilized as part of the curriculum. Students took note of a difference in attention, involvement, and connection. The students each noted behaviors about themselves that were different when films were used than when films were not used. Reflection-on-action “involves thinking through a situation after it has happened” which is essential for the “effective process to be truly effective” (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999). One student realized that she often did not pay attention to what student said and would “tune back in when the instructor talked” He said, “I begin to pay attention to what students had to say.” Another student acknowledged that personally they become more involved in the class experience, “It also helped me ask questions. I let myself get involved in the class discussion.” A student confessed movies help her become less “detached” and more “connected to myself, to the class, and the subject.” Several students mentioned that they learned as much “about myself” as the subject because they related to the movies.

One particular student recalled watching clips from The Doctor, a film about a physician’s personal battle with cancer and his process of transformation throughout the course of is treatment. She mentioned that she had previously had just “memorized stages of transformative learning.” After viewing the film clips she “understood disorienting dilemmas and how we all have them and what we can go through that makes us really change.” Purportedly, the students no longer felt restricted to list of stages described in the theory but were able to share dilemmas that had brought about significant changes in their own lives.

Cognitive Experience

Cognitively, several factors were mentioned by the interview participants. First, the participants felt that films were particularly useful to visual learners. One student said, “I’ve always been a visual learner. I just learn more when I can see something about what I’m learning.” Another student revealed that “…because it’s visual it’s very concrete.” Secondly, the use of films assisted with recall of specific information. How the use of the films influences memory is depicted in the statement: “And more than anything the movie helps me remember later on specific points we discussed in class. I think about the scene then I remember the details of what we discussed so much more.” Thirdly, the use of films illustrates elements of the theory or concepts being discussed “But through the action in the movie you see what the theory is all about. Theory means so much less until you can apply it or at least understand how it relates.” The films illustrate elements that help make the theory more relevant. This is apparent in the statement, “I understand it in theory, and even think about applying it, but with a movie I really do relate the ideas to how they apply to everyday situations and everyday people.” Supposedly the films also illustrate the theories in a

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way that makes the discussion less abstract. “It makes what we discuss in class more concrete. I begin to see the connection to real life experiences. It connects the theory to a story and so then I can connect it to real life. It really makes what we’re talking about mean more.”

Discussion

Drawing from the interviews with respect to these experiences four themes emerged. The themes of aesthetics, anticipation, awareness, and complexity each in their own unique way appeared to contribute to the learning environment that the use of films generated. The interwoven nature of these elements appeared to create an atmosphere conducive to the opportunity for the occurrence of transformative learning whereby students experience insight and discourse through interconnections with other students as well as to the theories and concepts presented in the class.

Aesthetics

Some may use different language in trying to conceptualize what it means for students to have aesthetic experiences. In this paper, I refer to it as a term describing creative and artistic experiences that involve the senses and emotion beyond that of simple pleasure but that tie imagination to perception, insight and experience (Eisner, 1997). The students in this study experienced the pleasure of viewing the film clips because of vivid color, sound, and action. It appears that through the creative imagery of films the individuals come to see, appreciate, and value aspects of the world in a new way, resulting in a transformation of individuals’ relationship with the world. Also, it appears that when films were utilized students perhaps experienced the expansion of perception—cognitively, socially, or emotionally, and an expansion of meaning. Conceivably, the aesthetic use of films allowed students to observe, imagine, reflect, feel, and perform differently creating an experience that merged with a network of conceptual knowledge that transformed not only their experiences but also their perceptions. It is possible that viewers are transported by these sounds and images to the action of the film which is then interrupted by the cultural elements in the story, their own prior experience, and its relationship with the subject of discussion. For instance, the student who recalled Educating Rita related to the sights and sounds of the film when “Rita was walking through the campus to her first class” to his own experience of returning to school and to Stephen Brookfield’s article concerning the dark side of being a student. It allowed the student to connect to those human qualities which make-up essential elements of the theory. It appears that for this student the aesthetic portrayal of the human conditions depicted in the film clips brought to life the elements that exist in the theory.

Awareness

The use of films appears to also foster awareness of the subject matter in relation to students’ experiences. Connecting subject matter with experience in such a way that it induces “a vital and personal experiencing” is essential to making individuals more aware of themselves and the world around them (Dewey, 1938). In other words, students may need to have vital “awareness” with the subject matter in their everyday lives. The process of awareness first leads to reflection, then to “letting-go” of external to internal focus, and then finally to “redirection,” which involves a change in the quality of attention (Deprez and Verela, 1987). In order to induce a vital personal experiencing of the subject matter, more must occur than simply telling students about the subject matter. In the interviews each student reflected on how the use of films allowed them to connect the theories discussed in class to real life experiences so that the theories took on new and important meaning for them and understanding of others in the class as well as for those in which they worked and lived. In fact, the students described experiences in which they began to suspend judgment about certain beliefs by turning from or “letting-go” of habitual beliefs to a “redirection” of attention making it possible for new or different points of view as new frames of references was revealed to them (Deprez and Verela, 1987). The film Dead Poet’s Society portrays the struggle against conforming to society by encouraging students in the film to “seize the day.” One student reflected that he began to become aware of how he had conformed and had rejected his authentic self vocationally and academically. “Sitting there I realized I was only doing what I thought everyone else wanted me to do.” Through the discussion of what was seen in the film this student and reportedly others began to become aware of how they had conformed. Moreover, they began to discuss how they would like to become true to their own authentic self.

Anticipation

The theme of anticipation also appeared present throughout the interviews. Much like our society who anticipates the coming attractions at the cinema, students also reportedly began to anticipate the next film to be shown and discussed in class. Anticipation is the force that moves an experience forward. Just as suspense moves a drama forward, anticipation moves students to act on and experience ideas (Wong et al., 2001). The students
reported “looking forward” to the films and being “drawn into the films” and ultimately “drawn into” active participation of the class. They also commented on the energy that they felt emerged from the group when films were shown. One student stated that it was “like the class gets a shot of adrenalin.” From these comments it appears that when a film is shown anticipation is created which is key to experience because it is an instigator of action. Damasio (1999, 2003) contends that emotion is critical to conscious development, and may in fact be a predecessor of conscious development. The anticipation generated by the use of films evoked emotional experiences, which were later accompanied by the emotions that were brought forth from the films themselves. The question that emerged with respect to the interviews was how anticipation when combined with aesthetics fostered awareness? I believe that fourth theme suggests how an atmosphere was created allowing the elements of anticipation and aesthetics to cultivate awareness.

Complexity

Elements of complexity appeared to occur as films are introduced and utilized in the classroom. Complexity is an open system in which different elements interact dynamically to exchange information, to self organize, and create different feedback loops where cause and effect are non-linear and emergent properties occur (Cilliers, 1997). Considering the interviews several elements of complexity appear to create a transformational atmosphere. It appeared that when films were creatively utilized the instructors allowed the class to be at the edge of chaos. Within the open system of the classroom teaching became non-linear, flow occurred, and improvisation was allowed as the interaction ensued among the many class participants According to the participants the instructors taught nonlinearly. “She lets the class just talk. At first it seems to go off on a tangent but then I realize how it all relates.” Reportedly, instead of teaching in a linear, systematic order, instructors carefully selected the elements of the content that were most vital and crafted these together with an eye towards the development of anticipation and personal experiencing to create an atmosphere conducive to learning. According to the participants when films were used effectively in classroom the instructor would “weaves the clips with the discussion.”

This is contrary to traditional teaching and learning. Most often instructors enter the classroom with a firm, linear agenda for the class. But, according to the students interviewed when films were used the discussion in the class often diverged in different directions. The instructors allowed the class to proceed in nonlinear ways, the direction of the class was unpredictable, but remained relevant. Consistent with complexity theory the input and output were not always balanced (Doll, 1997). In other words, how the class unfolded was unpredictable. This allowed for flow, another element of complexity which is described as a creative process whereby one is free of self-consciousness and time constraints allowing one to be totally captivated by the activity. (Bohm and Peat, 1987). When flow was encouraged one comment unfolded from the response of another student. Often the course of discussion took unanticipated directions creating the need for a third element of complexity theory: Improvisation. Through improvisation new or different activities were initiated or concepts were discussed in unanticipated ways. Improvisation permitted the flow of the class to continue and ultimately allowed the class to self-organize.

Transformational Learning

In order for transformational learning to occur there are certain conditions that must be present. Kegan (1982) maintains that those involved in adult and higher education facilitate adults’ ability to create higher order of consciousness. Brookfield (1992) challenges teachers to create opportunities for students to reflectively think about themselves and the world in order to formulate changing perspectives. Mezirow (2000) also believes that educators have responsibility to promote an environment in which critical reflection is possible so that transformative learning can occur. Mezirow (1990, 2000) also purports that transformational learning involves critical reflection in three phases: reflection on one’s assumptions, dialogue to validate insights, and action. How is this accomplished in the classroom? This study suggests that when films are utilized for educational purposes the instructor has the opportunity to create an atmosphere in which the process of transformational learning can at least begin to occur. In this study when films were used qualities of complexity emerged and remained over time creating “an atmosphere” that often transported the class to the edge of chaos in which transformational learning could potentially occur. Within this atmosphere reflections emerged, dialogue occurred, and questions were formed. Also, in the midst of this atmosphere beliefs about concepts were also reconsidered, ideas were generated, and networks among the students and between the students and the instructors were formed. While the interviews do not suggest lasting transformational learning took place, the interviews revealed a transformed atmosphere that allowed for students to begin experiencing change in terms of their attention not only to the dynamics and flow of the class but to their own assumptions and insights.
Conclusions

This preliminary study suggests that the use of films creates opportunity for a variety of transformational learning experiences to occur. The cognitive, social, emotional, and personal experiences that were revealed in the interviews appear to be ingredients that contribute to a meaningful educational experience by connecting the subject to students, students to each other, and students to themselves. The creative use of film shown in an atmosphere of complexity appears to provide “an experience” in a way that connects familiar settings of popular culture and personal experience with philosophical, theoretical, and educational issues. This provides students with share memorable images that illustrate and provoke philosophical and reflective thought and dialogue in the classroom setting.

Because experiences are central to growth and development, the aim of utilizing movies as an integrated part of the curriculum appeared to aesthetically create opportunities for shared experiences for the students to explore. Interpretively, it appears that meaning of concepts and theory can be enhanced through the use of films and film clips. In fact, certain elements of the films convey meaning, and, more importantly, contain elements that allow the students to discern all that a film is attempting to communicate while realizing the meaning of theories and concepts.

Possible Significance for Adult Education

Several questions arise from this research. What other experiences and processes contribute to authentic learning and growth of consciousness in higher education? How can adult educators better assist their students through learning that promotes growth and development? What other aesthetic tools besides film can be utilized to facilitate transformative learning among students of higher education? For instance, how can music, literature, and poetry be integrated into learning? Also, in what other ways does the use of films and other aesthetic tools relate to chaos and complexity theory?

References

Living in the Field of Transformation

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Abstract: This paper recounts how we, three doctoral students, engaged a process of lived inquiry to demonstrate our capacity in the field of transformative learning. Our inquiry focused on the process of our own inner transformation as a pathway to serving the evolution of our capacity as facilitators. The research is grounded within a transpersonal paradigm utilizing heuristic, organic, relational, co-operative epistemologies with an intention to integrate our learning into body, mind, spirit and emotions.

Problem Statement

Often as facilitators of transformative learning, we create a space for our students to question core beliefs and assumptions. We might invite them to take a leap of faith across an abyss of groundlessness to find wholeness, expansion or self-actualization as possible remuneration. Many scholars have explored practices and techniques that encourage this kind of facilitation for others (Cranton, 1994). However, as facilitators of transformative learning, we wanted to fashion a process by which we could create the conditions necessary for our own transformations to occur, such that through the ensuing embodied wisdom, we could evoke such conditions of transformative potentiality for others. Therefore, rather than wondering how or what we could do for others, in this study we were compelled to ask, “who can we become?”

Introduction

There are many studies which suggest that transformative change is far from being the rational process that Mezirow’s work suggests (Amann, 2003). Taylor (1998), a leading scholar in the field of adult education, has reviewed several that suggest perspective transformation incorporates emotional, spiritual and transpersonal dimensions not accounted for in Mezirow’s model. In this paper we will explore the process and results of a required research project of a year and a half in length in which three doctoral students created a small learning community to engage in transpersonal and cooperative ways of knowing and being that challenged assumptions of foundational conditioning, dysfunctional patterns, perspectives and meaning frames. This required doctoral research project is known as a Group Demonstration of Capacity (GDOC) and is completed after two years of coursework in the Transformative Learning and Change Department at the California Institute of Integral Studies. Our chosen research purpose was to engage in a process supportive of our individual and group desires to self-actualize and to notice, discuss and document the process in such a way that might lend us to better know how to create conditions conducive for the facilitation of transformative learning.

Research Context

Unique to our particular GDOC community was the core desire and purpose of be-coming servant leaders (Jaworski, 1998) on the path toward integration and wholeness. This yearning guided our co-creation of an intensive, residential learning community that met for a period of one to three days per month for a year and a half. Our learning community (GDOC) was made up of three able-bodied, white women, who were raised in middle to upper class, college educated, urban-based families. The process itself became a research process of be-coming – a process of becoming the change we want to see in the world. Uniquely, our primary aim was not an attempt to accomplish or know any specific concept, fact or construct, nor to create scientific facts or test out a hypothesis. Instead, the study was about noticing and naming a process of living through the setting of intentions. It is also important to note that no formal plan was created for the realization of those intentions other than a practice of cultivating the spiritual, emotional, psychological, physical, intellectual, interpersonal and metaphysical dimensions of our lives. Within our transpersonal research paradigm (Anderson & Braud, 1998), we placed emphasis upon the healing process of be-coming whole within a fragmented self/world, such that our work as facilitators of transformative learning would thus come from a deeply embodied field of lived experience.
California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) in San Francisco, California strives to create learning environments that simulate the integration of mind, body and spirit. By examining Eastern and Western ways of knowing and being, our school creates educational experiences that promote the integration of activism with holistic, spiritual living. At CIIS, there is a fundamental assumption that holistic integration is essential to the processes of enlightened learning and healing of our Western culture and globalized world. It is our assumption and experience that embedded within the prevailing Western worldview are structures and processes that promote dualism, hierarchy, domination and a separation of spirit and matter and that these fundamental elements of Western culture (and our conditioning) have led to serious dis-eases in our culture and in the world. We also assume that fundamental to such dis-ease in our own lives is 1) an inherited somatic dread of insatiable deep-seated feelings of lack, 2) the institutionalization of relational disconnectedness and cognitive analysis as a way of knowing self and other and, 3) a somatic disconnection from the nourishment of intimate relationships with self, other, community and nature.

Notable Characteristics of Our GDOC Learning Community

Our lived experience of transformative learning pedagogy has been the CIIS academic two-year course requirement called Learning Community and our co-created GDOC transformative learning community. The CIIS course requirement involved a large group of nearly twenty people of multiple ethnic and cultural backgrounds, although dominantly white and ninety percent female. While the fundamental structure and content of the two-year course was created and driven by the academic philosophies of our Professor Gozawa (Gozawa, 2000; 2003), emphasis shifted monthly as students and faculty co-created content as best matched the needs of the community at the time. In the large group, we engaged primarily in the traditional transformative learning practice of questioning assumptions and developing self-reflexivity. We certainly experienced transformation and capacity development in this environment; however, it was profoundly different from the small learning community experience we created for this research. The key foundational differences we can identify are the explicit use of the transpersonal paradigm and emergent methods, our extremely small number (three), the absence of ethnic and gender diversity (we are all white and female) and our shared ontologies, epistemologies and yearnings that combined and no doubt contributed to our interpersonal affinity and feelings of safety.

Research Process: Co-creating Transformative Learning Community

As the foundation of our purpose was highly relational, we were committed to spending considerable and concentrated time together. Each month we met together for a period of one to three days in an intensive residential setting. In these sessions and throughout each month, we intentionally created sacred space where transpersonal ways of knowing and being could be facilitated. We committed to being open in mind and heart to any and all possibilities that arose in and out of our group process. We accomplished this by creating individual and group intentions, generating a set of guiding questions, storytelling, journaling, meditation, visioning, art, sharing meals, creating ritual, spending time with nature, as well as time in reflection upon our emerging individual and group processes within transformative learning theory and literature. These practices were done to deepen the integration of mind, body, and emotions and facilitate the development of transformative learning capacities (such as emotional intelligence).

Each time we met, we gathered in a circle and listened to the stories that had been woven into each of our lives since we had last been together. We listened as witnesses and supporters for each other. We then looked for patterns or themes in each person’s experiences and in relationship to each other. We listened for the yearnings of the individual and of our group and then renewed or set new intentions informed by these uncovered yearnings.

Methods

We were committed to ensuring that how we engaged in the research task was congruent with our ontological and epistemological frames. The nature of our process found inspiration within Heuristics (Moustakas, 1990), Organic Inquiry (Clements et al., 1998; Clements, 2002) and Cooperative Inquiry (Heron, 1996). These core methods found integration in our study as demonstrated by our intense, holistic participation in our GDOC transformative learning community and in our consistent documentation of our lived experiences and learning within the community and in our lives in general. Creating a relational field or container around our process was the first priority in our study. We did this by engaging in transpersonal processes (Heron, 2001) and cooperative ways of knowing to hold and situate our relationship, intentions, inquiries and practice of transformative learning. One of our aims was to constellate or become aware of the “field” (Sheldrake, 1996) of connectedness between us that we believed would support our development as facilitators of transformative learning and as healthy, relationally minded human beings. Our shared ontology also held synchronicity (Jung, 1968) to be a real phenomenon, serving
as a window into realms of relation and reality imperceptible by our existing active senses and thus, able to serve as a guide to future action and awareness.

Data consisted of journals, images, artwork, memories, graphic drawings and feedback from professors. All data was analyzed using a variation of a phenomenological approach whereby we gleaned over the data multiple times, looking for phrases, words and stories that seemed to contribute to or was connected to inter/intra-transformation that could be thought of as cursory themes. We then gleaned over the data multiple more times refining the themes until the data was exhausted. A “Demonstration of Capacity” was held as a ceremonial rite of passage toward the end of the process and an extensive integration paper was written (Ross et al, 2005).

Research Findings and Discussion

We invite you to read this section in the spirit of the adage “the whole is greater than sum of its parts”. Our data analysis yielded four identifiable outcomes: 1) the emergence of a “field of transformation” (Ross et al, 2005) in the interconnected moment to moment lived experience of each community member, 2) inter-subjective (synchronously similar) experiences, 3) the spontaneous evolution of five transformative learning capacities, and 4) the manifestation of explicitly stated intentions written during the inception days of the research.

Emergence of a “Field of Transformation”

Our greatest discovery was that, through our process of engaging in relational ways of being and transpersonal/collaborative ways of knowing, something profoundly shifted in our experience of life. We began to live in what we have named a “field of transformation”, a consciousness that held and connected all our experiences. Where there had been fear, disconnection and isolation, now present were greater experiences of magic, synchronicity, flow, and a connection to wisdom beyond our localized selves. Rather than simply contemplating our assumptions, the river of life would bring each one of us profound lived experiences that challenged our very core identities and patterns of limitation.

An important ongoing notion was that our research was more about engaging a way of living (rather than engaging upon a task or activity), while intentionally noticing ourselves along the way. This experience became like the transformative learning version of the movie “The Truman Show” (Rudin, 1998) where everything in our life seem staged to cause our expansion towards the full manifestation of our intentions. In essence, our commitment towards attentiveness as a moment-to-moment metaphoric, archetypal, synchronistic sacred path became the living field of our be-coming. In the classroom setting of our larger CIIS learning community, exercises were created to challenge our assumptions and core beliefs one weekend each month. In the GDOC learning community, our daily lives became our classroom and wisdom beyond our localized self designed the curriculum to cause us to shift and change.

Another important dimension of this “field” was the communal nature of our consciousness. Prior to our research project, each of us considered ourselves isolated sojourners on a path towards wholeness. The emergent nature of our communal consciousness encouraged a different sense of continual interconnection. This was a radical departure from our Western individualistic conditioning.

Inter-Subjective Experiences

Data analysis produced ten synchronously similar lived experiences that were so precisely alike both in content and timing that we could not disregard their oddity or unlikelihood. Naming these synchronicities as intersubjective experiences (Heron & Reason, 1997, Mansfield & Spielgelman, 1996) provided a deeper level of understanding and comprehension to our experiences. We are proposing that the presence of intersubjective experiences, as supported by scholarly literature, contributes to the validity of our process and outcomes.

We would like to note that the intersubjective experiences named here were particularly prominent because they involved times of obvious personal growth, fundamental transformative learning shifts that affected the very ground of our being. Interestingly, we were only aware of some of the intersubjective experiences as they were occurring while others were discovered during data analysis. These ten named themes are descriptors of what we all experienced:

1. Synchronicities
2. Feelings of Homelessness
3. Examination of old frameworks and patterns
4. Being “othered” by our community
5. Engagement with the unknown
6. Truth telling
7. Dietary changes
8. Surrender
9. Sensations of abundance
10. Embodied knowing

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In our process, these intersubjective experiences were beneficial in creating a profound sense of community. It was deeply comforting to share our similar distresses, rather than to be lost in isolation. These mirrored experiences also contributed to developing and embodying transformative learning capacities, which we will discuss further in the next section. Specifically, we guided and supported one another in be-coming more self-reflexive and authentic in crossing the dreaded abyss of groundlessness with greater safety.

**Transformative Learning Capacities**

From the onset of our research, we set out to develop capacities conducive to the facilitation of transformation. These capacities emerged in each community member. It is also important to note that throughout the relationship, profound differences emerged in arenas such as our ways of making meaning, our sense of timing, levels of commitment and ways of creating order. These differences often provided the spark for capacity development. Some of those that surfaced included the capacities to:

1. Name “what is”
2. Follow somatic guidance
3. Hold “space” for others
4. Welcome and embrace the shadow
5. Live in extended periods beyond our perceived ability to cope

A few months into our research process, we began to notice that there was something about our way of being together that fostered a need to speak aloud what was most obviously happening in our own inner experience or in what we were witnessing in the experience of others. Once named, we felt an energetic release in our bodies that resulted in a dramatic shift of perspective. This somatic release occurred regularly when we engaged in this practice which we called “naming what is.” Stephen Gilligan, in his book *The Courage to Love*, points to the importance of this capacity: “Proper naming involves seeing an experience, touching it with human presence, holding it, and giving it blessing. Without this implicit base of love and respect, the named experience will hold no human value” (Gilligan, 1997, p.109).

We also learned to trust the feelings in our bellies, or somatic guidance, that would inform us of disconnection in the relationship or a need to take a specific action. We would facilitate processes for each other to name what was being denied or what was unknown in our individual lives and in our group dynamic. We also developed a capacity to hold “space” for each other during times of intense shadow exploration. Many times, life-long fears, pain or anger was named that had previously been avoided. These emotions then transformed into greater awareness, and thus increased the intimacy, knowledge, peacefulness and joy within our GDOC relationship and in other relationships in our lives. This capacity has continued to evolve and deepen throughout our relationship.

**Manifestation of Intentions**

Our central intention was to “be the change we wish to see in the world”. By the end of our research process, each member of the GDOC learning community had experienced profound shifts in themselves. As a result of these transformations in our ways of knowing and being, we all began to experience extraordinary breakthroughs throughout our personal and professional lives. We discovered that we were able to generate the same experience of magic in communities and groups with which we worked. Our lives are completely different in how we participate in relationship and how we create change in the world. Through this process we learned the beauty and magic of creating our lives from a place of receptivity vs. force and control. In spite of having no clear action steps to create the changes in our lives we desired, extraordinary change occurred.

**What Made Our Process Different?**

In hopes of contributing to the expansion of transformative learning pedagogy, we offer the following elements to our process that were essential to making it a unique transformative learning community experience.

**Communion With Nature**

When we first began gathering for our research together, we each valued the life-giving potential of nature. Each time we met as a community we spent time in nature. We often took walks in various landscapes and took time to share about our lives, walk quietly, and entertain scholarly discourse. This time in nature seemed to feed our soul, our creativity, and our relationship with each other, the earth and the cosmos. This activity was fruitful and a deviation from most of the transformative learning pedagogy we had encountered.
Shared Commitment to Transformation

Sri Ramakrishna once said, "Do not seek illumination unless you seek it as a man whose hair is on fire seeks a pond." (Quoted in Campbell, 1991, p.202). We all wanted transformation that much. We were prepared to go “the full monty” for our process. We held an unabashed commitment towards our own growth, healing and transformation even at the cost of discomfort, pain, exhaustion, and suffering. Underlying this commitment was a deep yearning to invite the greater intelligence of the universe to be the central and sole driving force in our process and the intention to recognize the necessary continuous surrender into a force that is much larger and more powerful than our localized selves. We all shared an intuition that through surrender to this process, a river of support, guidance, and manifesting potential would emerge. Our central overarching yearning was to be of service, perpetually be-coming such that we might be of full service to the health and healing of all beings. Our explicit and shared intentions were guided by this commitment and seemed to centrally contribute to the creation of our process, discipline, relationship, and eventually, our outcomes.

Shared Explicit Intentions

Each of us brought a belief that the process of setting intentions invites an energetic creative flow toward the manifestation of those intentions. Our relationship and ways of being with each other became the container and fertile soil within which to plant the seeds of our yearnings. We went through repeated processes of solidifying our intentions. This became a central practice in our emerging method. Our core intentions for our process were as follows:

1. To be in relationship with the primary aim of mutual growth and learning.
2. To place nurturing attention on our organic process and allow for the emergent to teach.
3. To bring sacredness and mindfulness into everything we do together, using the practice of speaking from the heart with love, humility and the keen mind.
4. To take individual responsibility for our own experience through courage and the action of speaking truth.
5. To understand community building as healing by practicing cooperative and appreciative inquiry as a way of holding space for one another.
6. To bring beauty and love to all of our interactions and experiences.
7. To listen to the silences.
8. To look for and name the deeper longings of the group
9. To guide and document the process, while mutually developing individual capacity.

Centrality of the Sacred in Our Learning, Relationship and Process

As we look back upon our year and a half of intensive transformative learning community we have found that how we were in relationship was notable to our outcomes. Perhaps, it was the explicitness of how we saw the purpose of ‘our relationship’ and the unity by which we each filled our yearning to engage, nurture and create a sacred relationship. This primary relational purpose supported one another in our healing and transformative journeys towards wholeness in order that we might be of greatest service to all beings.

Clearly, this was a deep yearning that each of us had for much if not our entire lives. We sought out graduate school and immediately employed our academic assignment towards this central process. We always took a spacious amount of time to thoughtfully and compassionately connect to our own body, heart, mind, and spirit. From that place, we created sacred space within which all discussions or work would be held. We also engaged in transpersonal ways of knowing such as being led by synchronicity and attending to metaphoric or archetypal dimensions of our reality as guides to our unconscious conditioning or Selves. We also engaged in practices of collaborative knowing which held that we could only come to know wisdom through surrender and willingness to engage in our collective. We found that undoubtedly, what we have come to know and continue to learn in our process was centrally possible because we were a “we” and not an “I.” By engaging in relational ways of being and transpersonal/collaborative ways of knowing perspective transformations occurred.

Conclusion

Often in the process of questioning core assumptions, there is a real danger of transformative learners becoming lost in the chasm of groundlessness and forgoing the expansion and expanded quality of life this path promises as its reward. As Novak argues, the transformative learning process is incomplete until it culminates in embodied change: “Perspective transformation represents not only a total change in life perspective, but an actualization of that perspective. In other words, life is not seen from a new perspective, it is lived from a new perspective: (quoted in Paprock, 1992, p.197).
Our findings suggest that the transpersonal, relational worldviews and organic, collaborative methods we engaged in this study, along with deep commitment, willingness and compassion, cause this critical transformative learning outcome of actualized change. The validity of this work is further supported by the many physicists, philosophers and researchers who have been independently exploring the nature of reality and confirm that the great spiritual traditions of the world are correct in describing matter as illusion and describing the unity of all living and non-living things (Ash and Hewitt, 1994; Capra, 1975; Grof, 1998; Talbot, 1991; Wolfe, 1996).

These findings have significant implication for practitioners, such as ourselves, whose intention it is to integrate mind, body, spirit, and emotions and develop capacities for larger group transformation and/or global transformative change. Such fields of connectivity can be harnessed to profoundly support and guide both facilitators and learners on their journey toward expanded perspectives that are lived rather than merely seen.

References
‘DISCOVERY’ - A Transformative Learning Tool to Awaken the Spirit of Self-Enquiry

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Abstract: ‘Discovery’ is a Values Clarification Transformative Learning Tool aimed to introduce basic human values to a person and to initiate a process of self-enquiry, which takes care of the need to learn to learn. The tool is presented in the form of a game using ‘snake and ladder’ with hundred parables/stories forming the backbone of the game. The eleven theme-based spirally evolving charts are included to inquire into specific dimensions like team building, creativity, self-esteem, leadership, etc. With exploration as the key methodology, the players are taken through three levels of learning – beginning with Explicit learning to Experience sharing to an Abstract conceptualization process. This leads the player towards a belief level change that is transformative in nature. Having been used over a decade and half, this tool has multiple uses in schools, organizations, and communities - both at the self-level as well as the group level.

Introduction

In this information era, knowledge is accessed easily. Though everything is defined to the last detail with remarkable clarity and certainty, often learning becomes mindless due to our inability to absorb the essence, by getting caught with the certainty of the form. With speed and life’s innumerable variables, the coping mechanism seems to be through monotony rather than sensitivity, resulting in loss of learning opportunities.

This paper aims to describe a learning tool that has kindled the ‘Transformation’ process over a decade and a half amongst adults, youth and children at varied levels. The tool titled ‘Discovery’ has been designed in an easy to use game format with a reflective process built into it. The paper is aimed towards providing a clear understanding of the methodology of the tool, the theoretical basis on which the tool is built, the sharing of some of the users at an experiential level, and the multiple uses of the tool to initiate a process of ‘Transformation’ in the users.

Theoretical Construct

Learning – It’s Meaning

‘As the level of consciousness enhances it will no longer be the survival of the fittest, but the survival of the wisest (Sampath J.M. 2004). Learning, as noun, is meant to be ‘The process of acquiring knowledge and skill’ (Webster’s dictionary p.312) and Wisdom is meant to be ‘the ability to make right use of knowledge’ (Webster’s dictionary P.625). Smith (1982) refers learning to

1. The acquisition and mastery of what is already known about something.
2. The extension and clarification of meaning of one’s experience or
3. An organized, intentional process of testing ideas relevant to problems (P.34).

The concept of change is inherent in the concept of learning (Crow and Crow, 1963). Learning has also been seen as a change in the individual, due to the interaction of that individual and his environment, which fills a need, makes him more capable of dealing adequately with his environment (Burton, 1963 P.7). In the last two decades, there has been a keen interest in learning that brings in deep change and transformation. In the last fifty years there have been many research aimed at understanding adult transformative learning methodologies.

Transformative Learning

A thorough or dramatic change in the form, character etc., is the meaning of the word ‘Transform’ as given in the oxford dictionary. The roots of exploration on transformative learning emerge from Adult learning theories. The inquiry had two streams. The scientific stream propounded by Edward. L. Thorndike through his publication ‘Adult Learning’ in 1928.

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1Located in the intuitive/reflective stream, the transformative learning tool described in this paper is titled ‘DISCOVERY – an instrument that can make you look deep within’.

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The other was the artistic or intuitive / reflective stream propounded by Edward. C. Lindeman (1926) through his publication ‘The meaning of Adult Education’. Lindeman was strongly influenced by the educational philosophy of John Dewey. Lindeman has stated that the resource of highest value in adult education is the learner’s experience. ‘If education is life, then life is also education. Too much of learning consists of vicarious substitution of some one else’s experience and knowledge…Experience is the adult learner’s living textbook’ (P.9-10).

Theoretical Construct of the Tool Cum Game

For learning to be transformative in nature, it has to facilitate a ‘Deep Change’ (Quinn 1996). The change has to be at the core level of the individual and reflect in the behaviour of the person. If change has to be at a core level it should question the values/beliefs of the individuals. Consistent behavioral change cannot be effected without clarifying the values of the individuals (Sampath, 1999).

A value is a type of belief, centrally located within one’s total belief system, about how one ought or ought not to behave, or about some end-state of existence worth or not worth attaining (Rokeach, 1968). Values are also termed as global beliefs that transcendentally guide actions and judgments across specific objects and situations (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952).

The meaning of values, based on which ‘Discovery’ has been built is arrived through facilitating over 500 groups globally in gaining clarity on their personal values in the last decade. The meaning of values that has evolved during these processes has been – ‘My Values are the beliefs I hold within myself that governs my behaviour in any given context. Some of these beliefs are known to me while others are not’ (Sampath, 1999). People build their values and other cognitive maps out of their own personal experiences. A person’s values are rooted in his / her personality, and also in the norms of reference groups and of the society to which the individual belongs. People interrelate their values and form value systems, which indicate their choices in their affairs. ‘Even the acts and concepts that we apparently ‘share’ with others are at bottom individual and idiomatic’ (Allport 1961 P.29).

Values Clarification process, since it works at a self-level, have been classified into ‘Spiritual growth processes’ in the past. In the East, the transformative learning processes have been focused towards questioning the past conditioning, through reflection and deeper level of introspection to expand the individual spectrum of consciousness. But largely, these processes have been directed towards understanding self through clarifying one’s values. The evidences for these are from the Indian ancient scriptures, writings on Kriya yoga (Paramahansa Yogananda 1998) Zen philosophy, Buddhist teachings etc.

In the background of above review of literature, the process that most works in clarifying values as an ongoing learning process leading to transformative learning draws a direct connection to experiential learning process. It is also believed that as individuals mature, their need and capacity to be self directing, to use their experience in learning, to identify their own readiness to learn, and to organize their learning around life problems increases steadily from infancy to pre-adolescence, and then increases rapidly during adolescence (Erickson, 1950, 1959, 1964; White, 1959; Iscoe and Stevenson, 1960; Getzels and Jackson, 1962; Bower and Hollister, 1967; Cross, 1981).

The Approach

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning begins with the experience followed by reflection, discussion, analysis and evaluation of the experience... From these processes come the insights, the discoveries and the understanding... All this is then conceptualized, synthesized and integrated into the individual’s system of constructs which he imposes on the world through which he views, perceives, categorizes, evaluates and seeks experiences (Wight, 1970). Learning as a cycle begins with experience continues with reflection and later leads to action which itself becomes a concrete experience for reflection (Rogers, 1996). ‘Experience is, for me, the highest authority. The touchstone of validity is my own experience. No other person’s ideas and none of my own ideas are as authoritative as my experience. It is to experience that I must return again and again, to discover a closer approximation to truth as it is in the process of becoming in me’ (Rogers, 1961 P.23). Kolb’s model had made significant contribution to adult learning (Kolb, 1939). Jarvis (1987) comments that the belief that adult teaching should be grounded in adult’s experiences and that these experiences represent a valuable resource, is currently cited as crucial by adult educators of every conceivable ideological hue.

This transformative learning material ‘Discovery’ uses ‘Reflection’ and ‘Clarification’ with ‘Abstract Conceptualization’ as key processes to stimulate transformation in individuals.
Description Of ‘Discovery’

Aim / Objective

The primary objective of this tool is to introduce basic human values to a person and to initiate a process of self-enquiry, which takes care of the need to learn to learn. It also aims at giving the multiple facts of a ‘Value’ and in the process enhance our understanding of each value or value related attribute, quality or trait.

Contents of ‘Discovery’

‘Discovery’ is packaged in the form of a kit containing one general play chart, eleven theme-based play charts, a Story album and a User’s guide.

Rationale Behind the Use of the Contents

The Story Album. Discovery is built in the form of a game using parables and stories to initiate the thought about a value or attribute or quality, which are important to understand how to be a human. The Story Album contains 100 parables / stories that bring forth powerfully a value or an attribute or a trait that one need to understand to be human. Values clarifications have been the outcome of the processes of reflection, enabling cognitive and moral development (Brookfield 1986; Schon, 1987; Senge, 1990; Mezirow, 1991).

Using stories / parables for values clarification is nothing new. Ancient stories and parables have been storehouses of learning. The Zen, Sufi, Biblical stories, Jatakas, Panchatantra, Hindu mythology, Aesop’s fables and Chinese literature have used stories to facilitate better human understanding and thereby a deeper enquiry into the values. The Panchatantra, famous for stories on values was originally in Sanskrit language written anytime between 100 BC and 500 AD. They were formulated by a teacher called Vishnu Sharma, to teach worldly wisdom to the four dull–witted sons of a king in South India. Later it came to be known as the fables of Bidpai in Europe. Others like Aesop of ancient Greece, phaedrus of ancient Rome and Jean de La Fontaine also collected and wrote many tales.

‘The human heart seeks the truth in which alone it finds liberation and delight. Alas, the first reaction to truth is hostility and fear. But, caught in the trance of ‘Once upon a time’ the message gets across to listeners, because one can oppose the truth, but who can resist the story?’ Vysya, the author of the Epic Mahabharatha says, “If you listen carefully to a story you’ll never be the same again. It is because a story will worm its way into your heart and break down the barriers to reality” (Mellow 1987 P.xxi). Richard Bandler and John Grinder who are pioneers in the area of Neuro–Linguistic programming in their book ‘Frogs into Princes’, prefer using metaphor artistically. ‘I don’t have to listen to clients’ woes, and I get to tell very entertaining stories. Clients are usually bewildered, and often infuriated, that they have to pay me to listen to my stories. But the changes they want occur anyway…another way to make sure there is no dependency. You do things covertly that they don’t have the faintest idea what you are doing and the changes they want occur any way’ (Bandler, 1979).

Rationale Behind the General Play Chart

Discovery is primarily built as a Snake and Ladder game given in the General play chart. The chart has 100 boxes each of which represents a value / trait / quality or an attribute. The chart has 10 ladders and 10 shakes. While the ladders represent the values tending to be more positive, the snakes represent the values tending to be more negative. Each box on the play chart has a corresponding story in the story album that is provided in the kit.

Figure 1
A Snap Shot of the General Play Chart

Figure 2
A Snap Shot of the Theme-Based Play Chart
The familiarity with the game is at once a comforting feeling for the Learners. This lets the Learners dwell into the deeper part of their selves from this comfort zone. Once the individual feels motivated from within to use the game, the process thereafter empowers the individual and the learning starts taking place at a subtle level. The visual symbol of snakes and leaders provide a clear picture of the effects of the positive and negative sides of life.

The stories in box 1 and box 100 have been made compulsory to all learners. Story 1 titled ‘House of Learning’ gives an insight into the process of learning and removes any kind of dependency by the learner on the teacher. The intension is that individuals who use this tool may see it from their own point of view and learning is not forced towards any conclusions. The story no. 100 is titled ‘House of Constant Awareness’ and it conveys the need to make learning a constant process. The purpose is that every learner needs to continue his/her learning and also be constantly aware of the process inside and outside the learner.

**Rationale Behind the Theme –Based Play Charts**

The ‘Discovery’ tool contains eleven theme–based play charts, related to Team–building, Leadership, Creativity, Excellence, Inter–personal relationship, Let go, Self-esteem, Change, Learning, Success and Communication. (Refer Fig.2)

The purpose of these theme-based play charts are to enable the individual to gain deeper insights of the various factors that facilitate and restrict development of these competencies. By providing focused exploration of a specific theme, the learners get to explore deeper into themselves through the parables/stories and discover the realities from varied angles while also building themselves based on their own reality. The themes have been chosen based on the need expressed by varied groups of people from different spheres of life and also the author’s own bias.

The process in the theme-based charts opens with ‘House of Learning’ and branches into specific theme, depending on the subject under focus. The process comes to a completion when the group or the individual reaches the ‘House of Constant Awareness’. The empty space that is provided before reaching this last house is given to allow the individual or the group to ponder over any issue, which they feel, has not been covered on the theme under focus. The visual layout of the play-chart lays emphasis on the supportive and restrictive factors in each of these themes.

**The Methodology Used To Initiate Transformative Process**

The process of using parables/stories to convey values has existed for long. But there was always a facilitator and a context around which the parables/stories were narrated and were left to the individual to process the learning at a later date. The extent of learning depended on the Individuals and the ability of the facilitator to carry across the message. Therefore over a period of time they got restricted to moral development. Over a period of time the ability of the parables to connect to real life diminished. This tool cum game process aims to bridge the gap between ‘Learning in story’ and ‘Learning in Life’. When looked with a microscopic view, every specific event in our life is a story by itself.

The parables / stories in ‘Discovery’ are explored and processed at three different levels –

**Level 1: Level of Explicit learning**

**Level 2: Level of Experience Sharing**

**Level 3: Level of Abstract Conceptualization through Introspection**

**Level 1: Level of Explicit learning**

In this level there are three simple statements given which bring out the central theme of the story. While there is a fine difference among these statements, each of them carry the central theme of the story in it. Learners should choose one statement which each of them think is most appropriate.

**Level 2: Level of Experience Sharing**

In this level there are three options for a learner to share their own experience from their life, related to the character’s experience in the story or share an experience of someone known to them. At this level, the parable/story goes into the background and the real-life story of the Learner comes into foreground. On one side it acts like a deep connectivity to self and on the other recapturing life’s experiences enables a re-audit of the experience in the light of the value discussed. This process deepens the integration of the discussion into self and makes the process inside–out.
Level 3: Level of Abstract Conceptualization Through Introspection

In this level, deep fundamental questions based on the value abstract as well as value related to one’s self have been raised. From experience sharing the Learners move on to abstract conceptualization through deeper level of introspection. Significant personal learning entails fundamental change in Learners and leads them to redefine and reinterpret their personal, social and occupational world. In the process, adults may come to explore affective, cognitive and psychomotor domains that they previously had not perceived as relevant to themselves (Brookfield, 1986, p.213-214).

Table 1
An Illustration of the Three Levels - Searching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. We generally end up searching for things in the wrong places.</td>
<td>A. Share an incident wherein you found yourself searching for the solutions to your problem in the wrong place.</td>
<td>A. What is the nature of “Searching”?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Quite often we look for solutions in the wrong places.</td>
<td>B. Share a similar experience of someone whom you know.</td>
<td>B. Where do I look for my solutions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Solutions are always to be found where the problems crop up.</td>
<td>C. Share what prevents you from going to the root of a problem.</td>
<td>C. How do I discover the root of my problem?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Possible Outcomes Of Using Discovery

The outcomes of the process are given in terms of the Learners reflections after using Discovery. The reflections are shared in the Learners own language to retain the originality and intensity of the reflection.

1. 16-year-old Boy in a youth workshop – “I realize I never thought about the way I was thinking”
2. Regional Advisor, United Nations, Bangkok – “I first read ‘Discovery’ six years back. Since then I have revisited the book several times. Each encounter unfolds something new; something precious and brings infinite joy. ‘Discovery’ would definitely be a baggage that will travel with me quite a distance in my life”
3. Director – Education, Training and Development, Human Resources, Ford Motor Company – “A key part of the learning process is reflecting on and understanding your view of the world. ‘Discovery’ is an excellent tool for helping managers seek a deeper understanding of their values and beliefs. I took ‘Discovery’ home to my family for their reaction. It was an instant hit. We use it as the basis for talking about and clarifying our values as a family.”
4. Director, Construction Company, India – “For a long time we have been hearing that the best management is self management. But how to do it? How to find out what I need to change in myself so that I become a better human being and continuously improve as a professional manager, son, brother, friend and generally as a human being. I have been using discovery on and off with tremendous results. I have been able to appreciate myself with all my follies and have positive improvement in all my relationships. The ability to say I agree that I have made a mistake and accept the same is a major change in me.”

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Conclusion

Caught in the web of life, we become numb to how we are living our life. Discovery as a tool cum game initiates a process that sensitizes an individual to understand various facets of life that one is living. At an Individual level this game enables a step-by-step method for soul searching. When played in a small group it provides an opportunity to understand how each of our lives is woven with our own stories and how each experience we go through is a story by itself with potential to provide important learning’s from life. The approach Discovery takes is to move from being prescriptive to learning out of life through realization. Discovery, with its own structure and design has the ability to worm itself into self and throw up many a stark realities for the self. This leads to a truth true to being really human. Therefore this tool cum game can be used in a variety of ways. Primarily this can be used as a self-administered tool for deeper reflection by using only the story album; as well as a training / reflection tool in personal growth sessions.

The varied contexts include -

- The theme-based charts can be used in specific training programs like Team building, Creativity etc.
- In Executive Coaching - The coach could, with great skill, facilitate understanding of certain subtler issues.
- In Counseling – The facilitator can use the tool in the game format to open up the process with the counselee or use the format for deeper reflections.
- In Values Education – In school context, this can be used for discussions on values and to imbibe with ease the process of self-reflection among the students.

While these are some of the contexts in which this tool can be used, in the hands of a creative person focused on enabling Transformative learning for self &/or others, ‘Discovery’ has found multiple uses.

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Consensus in the Classroom: Transformative Learning for Democratic Citizenship

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**Abstract:** Consensus in the classroom is a practical strategy that requires and causes a shift in meaning perspective particularly in the areas of authority and democracy. Innovative decisions that respond to the specific needs of the group members arise, students develop their sense of personal authority and responsibility, and a lively learning community results. Linda tells stories from her experiences using consensus decision-making as a public school teacher with both middle school and primary grade children.

**Theoretical Perspective**

Building on the foundations laid by a wide variety of educational theorists such as John Dewey (1938), Alfie Kohn (1993), Edward Cell (1984), Jack Mezirow (1991), Paulo Freire (1997), and Spencer Kagan (1994), consensus in the classroom is a practical strategy to create the conditions that increase the likelihood of transformative learning occurring for people of any age. The implementation of consensus in the classroom requires a shift in meaning perspective on the part of the teacher and students, particularly in the areas of authority and democracy.

John Dewey (1938) identified that the basic conflict in education theory was between development from within the learner and formation imposed upon the learner from the outside. He believed that the source of knowing is within the individual learner and "there is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education" (p. 20). With consensus in the classroom, authority for learning resides in the learner in collaboration with the teacher, rather than in the teacher-as-expert.

Alfie Kohn (1993) remarks, “A teacher that makes unilateral decisions, regardless of their merit, is in effect saying that the classroom does not belong to the students but only to her/him; their preferences do not matter. People do not usually cheer when things are done to them. That is why teachers contemplating a new way of doing things ought to bring the children in on the process” (p. 199). When teachers do so, their students begin to gain a larger perspective on the classroom system and learn through experience that they can make a difference in initiating and implementing change in the system.

Edward Cell (1984) describes what he calls response learning as a rudimentary form of education in which an outside authority determines what is best for the learner, rewarding them when they are performing according to the standard, and punishing them when they are not. Jack Mezirow (1991) would describe this sort of learning as mindlessness, which he says "leads to self-induced dependence on external authority, diminished self-image, and reduced growth potential” (p. 115). Paulo Freire (1997) calls it banking education. “There is no such thing as a neutral educational process,” concludes Freire (p. 16). He goes on to say that an educational process either functions to bring about conformity to the system or to bring about the discovery of how to participate in the transformation of the world. Spencer Kagan (1994) questions: “How can we possibly prepare our students for full participation in a democracy by structuring our classroom autocratically? It is an amazing feature of our democratic educational system that we have settled so universally on an autocratic social organization of our classrooms” (p. 9.1). Implementing consensus decision-making processes in the classroom gives students practice in taking responsibility for their own learning, their relationships with each other, the classroom environment, and the class as a learning system or community.

Mezirow’s transformation theory (1991) provides a description of the way adults “learn to negotiate meanings, purposes, and values critically, reflectively, and rationally instead of passively accepting the social realities defined by others” (p. 3). Whether with children or adults, consensus in the classroom provides a practical way to elicit learning through the experience of speaking one’s own meanings, purposes, and values; listening to those of others; and negotiating agreement rather than passively accepting social realities defined by others. In the process, assumptions are inevitably challenged when there is disagreement and surfaced in order to get to agreement.
Democracy in Action: Benefits of Consensus in the Classroom

Consensus decision-making bestows benefits to the teacher and students individually, and to the class as a whole. Instead of making all the decisions and trying to take care of everyone's needs, the teacher shares both that authority and that responsibility with the whole class. Innovative decisions that respond to the specific needs of the group members arise from this shared authority. Students develop their own personal authority and responsibility, thereby avoiding power struggles and victimhood. Students and teacher alike develop more trust in one another and expand their capacity for self-expression. Everyone benefits from full participation and creative decision-making, and the class moves toward conscious community. To illustrate these benefits in more detail, Linda tells her own story as a classroom teacher, in the first person.

Shared Authority and Responsibility

In my consensus classroom everyone had authority. Since no decision was made without everyone's agreement, each participant had veto power. In effect, everyone was president! Moreover, varying opportunities arose for different people to take leadership at different times.

I felt relaxed knowing I could count on my students to speak up for themselves if something was disturbing them. I did not have to carry the responsibility for everyone's comfort, but simply took care of myself and trusted the students to take care of themselves. We all came from this premise of self-responsibility as we responded to whatever situation arose—and the situations were always different, always alive. By participating in decisions, everyone knew why we had the agreements we had. When some did not keep an agreement, anyone could remind the offender about it. With this shared responsibility, I was freer to be myself, which was the best gift I could give to my students.

Participation in consensus decision-making empowered my students and me together to be responsible for our environment. We each took responsibility for ourselves by speaking up for our needs, interests and limitations. Students took responsibility for their education by participating in discussions on how to fulfill requirements. We all took responsibility for the classroom environment by coming to agreements that made it a comfortable place for everyone.

Encouraging everyone to be an authority allowed ideas to emerge that otherwise might never have had a chance. If it were up to me as "the authority" in the room to come up with all the ideas, we would be limited to my experience, memory and creativity. Allowing ideas from anyone in the room gave us thirty times more of a resource to draw upon. Moreover, these innovative decisions created opportunities for student leadership.

Opportunities for Student Leadership

Every year in my middle school classes, students decided by consensus to elect a president whose job was to lead class meetings. The president practiced a consensus-style of leadership—facilitating the decision-making rather than making the decisions for the group. Different personal styles emerged as students learned that there are many "right" ways to facilitate a meeting. By the response of the class, the student leaders learned what worked, and what did not. They received direct feedback when a technique or approach was not effective. For example, one class president, Angela, who was very bossy at first, received feedback at a few frustrating meetings, and then began to invite more input.

Two practices originated through consensus decisions made in one of my first consensus classes and then came to function in my classroom year after year: a class court and a money system. Both provided opportunities for student leadership. A judge presided over the court and the rest of the class was the jury, making decisions by consensus. A treasurer managed the bookkeeping and distribution of funds in the money system. Both were elected offices.

Students in some of my middle school classrooms came up with another leadership role, that of teacher for an occasional lesson. One year, students expressed interest in art instruction, and everyone agreed that Terry was a good artist. We decided that he would teach a series of drawing lessons once a week on Fridays. My style of teaching art was to provide materials and techniques and let the students create. In contrast, Terry took the class through the steps he used to draw a cartoon character, showing how to give the character different expressions and positions. This was a lesson my students would never have gotten from me. In addition to learning how to draw a cartoon character, they were empowered by having a peer in front of the class and learning from him. Moreover, Terry had the opportunity to share his expertise, to make his special contribution and be honored for it.

In my consensus classroom, students even conducted academic lessons. June, who was very good in math, explained to the rest of the class how to add fractions—the content of that day's math page. She demonstrated her

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1 The remainder of the text is excerpted from Chapter 2 (Sartor & Brown, 2004).
own method and strategy. The class responded with respect and appreciation, and some students understood her explanation, while they had not yet understood mine. Miguel led a history lesson. He had different students read out loud from the book and then he conducted a discussion on the answers to the questions at the end of the chapter. When someone asked a question to which he did not know the answer, he said to the class, "Does anyone have an answer to that question?"

In that class, when we came to a consensus about students leading academic lessons, everyone wanted to make it work, and so they cooperated with each other. I sat down and became a student for the period. (They loved the idea that they could put my name on the board if I talked out of turn.) The students who taught a lesson came away with a better understanding of the content taught and probably a new respect for what it takes to be a teacher.

*Inner Authority and Interpersonal Conflict*

Sharing authority provided students with many opportunities to develop a sense of inner authority. Through the experience of the consensus process, students learned to look inside to clarify their own wants and needs, so they could better articulate and advocate for them. When they heard each other's wants and needs, they discovered ways that everyone's needs could be met, without competition. They learned to focus on what really matters, rather than "winning" or "being right." By speaking clearly and listening respectfully, they were less likely to get caught up in power struggles or feel like victims. They discovered their own capacity to resolve interpersonal problems without having to appeal to me to decide what was "fair."

Authority emerged as a process more than a position. All the members became increasingly aware of the whole situation from their individual perspectives. Consensus discussion provided a remedy to the situation that occurs in the well-known parable of the "blind men and the elephant." Instead of each reporting what he perceived and assuming himself to be the authority on the whole elephant as occurs in the story, in consensus, each man would communicate his perspective and listen to the others, so all would have a more complete sense of the elephant.

Sometimes students discovered later that they were not satisfied with a decision, and realized how they failed to speak up for their own wants and needs when the decision was under discussion. They often learned to check in more carefully with their inner authority about their wants and needs before agreeing with a decision another time.

When my students or I realized after the fact that we were not satisfied with a decision, we faced the dilemma of whether to live with it or bring it up for reconsideration. Either way, we practiced an important skill—either active acceptance or assertiveness—that helped us avoid feeling like victims.

I found that as the year progressed and each student learned to check in with his/her inner authority, I did not have to check out every decision with the class by asking for agreement. I could trust more and more that they would speak up when something was going on that conflicted with their wants or needs. So when someone asked me for permission to do something with the class by asking for agreement. I could trust more and more that they would speak up when something was going on that conflicted with their wants or needs. So when someone asked me for permission to do something with the class that would have an effect on others, such as setting up a project in a corner of the classroom, I would say, "It's okay with me as long as no one objects." If anyone did object, the students concerned could negotiate directly. Only if negotiation did not resolve the issue did we need to discuss it at a class meeting.

*Moving beyond power struggles.* Power struggles occur when people are caught in what appears to be mutually exclusive positions. In my first year of teaching using the consensus process, I found myself in a power struggle with my principal that turned into a lesson for both my students and me. I hadn't said much to the new principal about what I was doing with consensus; I knew I had the superintendent’s support but I felt concerned that the principal might not support it—might even stop my experiment before it had a chance to get off the ground. Because of my reticence, when the principal came into my classroom to evaluate my teaching, she had no idea of the intentions behind what she observed and made several criticisms that seemed harsh to me. I had attempted to arrange the desks in a big circle to facilitate egalitarian class discussions, but the size of the desks made it an awkward rectangle that skirted the room, and it was difficult to move around them. Her evaluation culminated in a written notice demanding that I come up with a new seating arrangement within a week.

At first I dug in my heels, certain that the principal had no right to tell me how the seats should be arranged in my classroom. I felt angry and powerless. However, when I stepped back to see a bigger picture, I realized that my larger goal of implementing the consensus classroom was more important than my immediate conflict with the principal. I also realized that I could continue implementing the consensus classroom while accepting her directive. I asked her if the students could participate in deciding how the seats would be arranged. She agreed, adding the stipulation that she wanted to see the plan before we actually moved the desks.

When I told my students, I wasn't surprised that they too were angry, and I found myself in the midst of teaching a spontaneous lesson about power struggles. I pointed out: "You often get into power struggles with each other or with adults in your lives, and some of you have gotten into them with me. Matt and I often get into power struggles, like the other day when he refused to do his math and had to stay in during break. We both ended up
angry and feeling crummy about ourselves and each other.” Though in a power struggle it may appear that there is a winner and a loser, actually both lose. In a power struggle between teacher and student, or principal and teacher, the one with greater authority often appears to be the winner; however, as in the example with Matt, the person in authority actually loses, too, because of hurt feelings and resentment.

After talking about power struggles and airing our feelings about the imperative, we were able to engage in a lively discussion about different room arrangements. We ended the period with an excellent plan for grouping in clusters, a plan that the principal approved and that the students could claim as their own, thus experiencing their sense of their power to affect outcomes and removed the need to struggle. They learned to trust that issues were resolvable and that everyone could be a winner.

Consensus gave my students an alternative to power struggles. Students learned to listen to each other, to articulate their needs and wants, and to have their needs and wants included in the decisions. This provided them with a sense of their power to affect outcomes and removed the need to struggle. They learned to trust that issues were resolvable and that everyone could be a winner.

Avoiding victimhood. Power struggles often result in someone feeling like a victim. If something occurs that violates our sense of fairness or disturbs us in some other way—and we don’t know how to affect change—we may fall into blaming others, looking to authority figures for rescue, or simply collapsing. We in effect give responsibility—and power—to someone else.

As my students learned to speak up for themselves and received from each other they sometimes discovered that others saw things in a similar way, which made them feel less alone. Sometimes other students were willing to change their behavior to accommodate the concern, which empowered the student who spoke up. Involvement in the consensus process helped students speak up for themselves in one-to-one relationships, as well as in groups. The listening and speaking skills we practiced in our consensus classroom contributed to our effectiveness in solving interpersonal problems. Students learned to express their concerns and needs without having to assign blame: “This is how your behavior is affecting me” instead of “You shouldn’t be doing that.”

Through the consensus process, students also saw how their actions affected everyone else in the group. When we discussed problems openly, we brought interconnections to light. My experience was that all children—even adolescents who might often appear cruel—were really caring inside. When they knew that their own needs would be met and their own wants considered, they felt cared for and supported, and more open to considering the needs and wants of others.

At sixth grade camp one year, the students in one cabin group took an extra serving plate of desserts, so another cabin group did not get theirs. I was angry, but baffled about what to do since the damage was already done, so I simply confronted the guilty group, letting them know that the other group missed out because of their decision. A few minutes later, the offending group came to an excellent consensus: “Let’s give our dessert to them tomorrow.”

By listening to each other’s needs, wants and feelings, my students could usually find solutions to their conflicts. The more experience they had with finding solutions that worked for everyone, the more faith they gained that problems were resolvable, without victims.

In my consensus classroom, students got into the habit of speaking up, so they more easily resolved interpersonal conflicts on both an individual and group basis. And they often carried their communication skills onto the playground, into other classes, and into their lives at home.

During an interview for the video about the consensus classroom (Consensus Classroom, Inc. 2000), Rhonda demonstrated that she had gained the tools to effectively communicate feelings in her life outside the consensus classroom. She recounted an incident in eighth grade, when her teacher snapped at her and sent her out of the classroom. Later Rhonda spoke to the teacher about how she felt about the incident. The teacher not only listened to her, but—according to Rhonda—actually changed the way she treated other students as well.

The inclusiveness inherent in the consensus process encouraged diversity. Students experienced their power as equal to and shared with the others—power-with instead of power-over, reducing the sense of “winners and losers,” or "us against them."

Full Participation

Using the consensus process for decision-making promoted one hundred percent participation in my classroom. Students learned that everybody’s voice mattered. And when everyone participated in the decision, the intrinsic motivation in each individual for supporting the decision increases, because participants had no reason to consciously or unconsciously sabotage the activity.

Full participation occurred both in making the consensus decision, and in the activity itself. The degree of participation in the decision-making process was often reflected in the degree of participation in the activity. Even before I experience the consensus process used extensively, I had found it useful to come to unanimous agreement in
order to encourage full participation in P.E. “Before we go out,” I would say, “I want everyone to agree about what we are going to do, because I want everyone to play.” I had noticed that, without such agreement, some students would participate minimally or refuse to play altogether and sit on the side. Their lack of participation often disturbed the focus of the whole group. The activity was far more successful—and more fun—when everyone was fully involved.

Deciding on an activity by consensus generated enthusiasm for it and insured group focus. The particular activity chosen by consensus did not seem as important to the dynamic of full participation as the fact of coming to a consensus about it. As the sole authority in the classroom—before I began using consensus as a general rule—I would "assign" a learning activity and then I would have to enforce it and motivate the students with a reward/punishment system. I found it so much easier to carry out an activity when the idea came from the students and they had agreed to do it. Students were generally more motivated to carry out decisions they had personally helped make.

One of my favorite examples of full participation occurred at the end of one consensus year. My sixth grade class went out to do a yurt circle, a group challenge activity in which everyone holds hands in a circle and every other individual leans from his or her ankles in or out, counterbalancing each other (see p. XX). Each student ends up in a position impossible to maintain alone. While my class was involved in the yurt circle, a few stragglers who were not participating in their seventh grade PE class came over to interfere. Simply having seventh graders watching could be enough to distract most sixth graders, but my students were so involved that they ignored the seventh graders, even when the intruders began circling the group. I'm not sure whether any of my students even noticed. The magic of full participation was in effect.

I found that consensus leading to full participation was particularly easy with any activities that were generally recognized as "fun," such as physical education. I also experienced success with silent reading, literature, social studies, science, art, and even homework. With consensus my job was much easier because it awakened the intrinsic motivation of the students.

Silent reading was an activity that I could assign, but then I would have to act as "police person" to make sure everyone was participating. It worked better when the students suggested it and came to a consensus about it. Having experienced silent reading in earlier classes, they seemed to enjoy it because of the freedom to choose whatever they wanted to read and the relaxed atmosphere it provided. Every year someone would put it on the agenda as something to add to our day. When the idea for silent reading came from them and they all agreed to it, I could sit back and enjoy my own reading, modeling the behavior I wanted from them.

Choosing a literature book by consensus led to full participation in reading the book together. Once we all agreed on which book to read, interest in the content was enhanced and there were fewer complaints when it was time to read. Enthusiasm for and attention to the story was contagious, evoking the magic of being part of an active, focused group.

One year when we were studying Mesopotamia, the textbook suggested setting up a Mesopotamia fair in the classroom. I didn't feel strongly one way or the other about the activity, although I knew it would be valuable if everyone was interested in doing it, so I put the idea on the agenda for the next class meeting. We easily reached consensus in favor of creating the Fair. We brainstormed potential topics and students signed up individually or in groups to create projects that demonstrated something about the topics. We may have spent two periods—forty-five minutes each—of class time planning and starting the projects, and the rest was homework. Then we spent two more periods presenting the projects and constructively evaluating them. The tone was one of cooperative support. Everyone experienced teaching a brief lesson about his or her topic to the whole class. Through receiving and giving feedback, students learned how to speak honestly and sensitively in support of each other's work. My job was made easier by the shared responsibility, and the result was an impressive display that we saved for Open House.

I used a similar process with the science curriculum. At that time, our district didn't have a well-defined science curriculum, so individual teachers were free to come up with their own. This was an excellent opportunity for me to share this decision with my students and to take advantage of their interests, knowledge and resources as well as my own. First we brainstormed possible unit topics and chose one. Next we brainstormed questions and sub-topics. Each student signed up to research one of these sub-topics. While the students were doing research in the library, I had a welcome surprise. Because they had all been through the process of brainstorming topics as a group, each student was familiar with every other students' topic. While pursuing their own research, several students ran across something that they recognized would help someone else. I witnessed several whispered conversations in which students eagerly brought something useful to their classmates' attention.

Usually the first consensus decision I placed before my students on the first day of school was what to do for homework. When the class came to a consensus about homework, I got much better results than when I alone determined what the homework would be. For one thing, after an in-depth discussion about it, the students were
more likely to remember that they had homework and what it was. Moreover, the reasons for doing a particular assignment usually came up in the course of the discussion, giving the students a better sense of purpose. And of course they were more motivated to act on their own decisions. Full participation in homework extends the school day. When students complete work at home that otherwise would have to be undertaken during the school day, class time is freed up for consensus discussions and special class activities.

When everyone in a class had an investment in the success of their decisions, complex systems could develop that otherwise might not have worked. When implementing a money system in the classroom, for example, many small decisions needed to be made. The system was far too complex to be organized by a sole authority, but with shared authority the students made it work. We had to design a system that each person felt was fair. Whenever a problem arose—for instance, someone lost a significant amount of money or someone began to mistrust the banker—we added it to the class meeting agenda and then came up with a solution that worked for everyone. The money system developed in its own way each year. One year my students decided to pay themselves ten dollars of class currency each time they completed their homework, and to fine themselves twenty-five dollars when they did not do their homework. If I had come up with the idea, I think it would have seemed like punishment, because the fine was greater than the reward. Since it came from them, however, it worked to support them in doing their homework—much to my delight.

Full participation was both a requirement for and a gift of consensus. It was a joy to work with students in making and carrying out decisions when everyone participated fully.

References:
Passionate Scholars: 
Adult Development and Transformative Learning in a Non-Traditional PhD Program

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Abstract: In this exploratory study, alumni of an innovative PhD program completed an open-ended self-administered questionnaire. They were asked to describe the intellectual, personal, and behavioral developments that they attributed to their graduate school experience, and aspects of their experience that they believed to have affected those changes. Developments included characteristics of transformative learning, from Mezirowian, Jungian, and Freirian perspectives. Learning experiences identified included an interactive self-directed dialogical learning process, close faculty-student relationships, and perspective challenging curricular content.

This paper adds a new level of analysis to a pilot study (McClintock, Stevens-Long 2002; Schapiro, Stevens-Long, & McClintock 2005) that explored the relationship between adult development and non-traditional doctoral education. In that study, alumni of an innovative PhD program completed an open-ended self-administered questionnaire in which they were asked to describe the intellectual, personal, and behavioral developments that they attributed to their graduate school experience, and to specify aspects of their experience they believed to have affected those changes. Findings indicated a wide array of changes in all areas, which are summarized below. In this paper, the data are analyzed further in order to explore the relationship between the reported outcomes, the academic and contextual influences to which students attributed those outcomes, and various models of transformative learning. Following Taylor’s (1998) delineation of three strands of transformative learning theory, these include Mezirow’s model of perspective transformation, Jungian individuation and personal development (as transformative learning, see Boyd 1991, Boyd and Myers 1988, and Dirckx 2000), and Freirian education for critical consciousness and social transformation (Freire 1973).

From the perspective of transformative learning theory and research, this study should be significant because of the need, as Taylor (2000, 1998) points out, for additional empirical research on transformative learning as it occurs outside of formal adult education classrooms. In particular, this study explores experiential and affective learning in the context of trusting interpersonal relationships between faculty and students, all of which are key characteristics of Fielding’s learning model. In its focus on the three domains of cognitive, personal and behavioral development, the study may also help to answer Cranton’s and Roy’s (2003) call for a more integrated understanding of the various dimensions of and paths to transformative learning.

The larger research project of which this study is a part began with the question: How ought we conceive of the purposes of graduate education and what do know from research and practice about how to structure it to achieve those ends? In this project we start from the premise that a new covenant is needed between society and higher education that balances the hyper-specialization typical of graduate curricula with broader societal needs as well as the developmental and career realities of graduate students. Our vision is one that moves education beyond the life of the mind to incorporate the development of the learner as a whole person and the needs of society. It draws on research on adult development (Stevens-Long & Michaud, 2003) and human learning (Halpern & Hakel, 2003), innovative practice in adult education (Schapiro, 2003), and dialogue regarding scholarship, professional practice and societal needs (e.g., Boyer 1990, Carnegie Foundation, 2003, McClintock 2003, Schön 1987, Shulman, 1987). In regard to both the ends and means of graduate education, transformative learning theory adds a valuable dimension to this conceptualization.

Conceptual Frameworks and Pilot Research

As a first step in re-thinking graduate education, we developed a conceptual framework that extends the traditional emphasis on cognitive educational outcomes to include personal and behavioral outcomes (McClintock and Stevens-Long 2002). This framework included both the self-concept and the self-in-action, and suggested
outcomes in regard to three facets of adult development: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. In regard to the analysis of the means or process of graduate study, we made use of a framework that assumes four general facets of any formal educational experience: curriculum content and structure; learning process; interpersonal relationships; and organizational structure and process (Schapiro, 1999).

The original pilot study, which we are building on in this paper, focused on mid-career doctoral education in Fielding Graduate University’s School of Human and Organization Development. This program is based on a student-centered distributed educated model integrating brief face to face residencies and seminars with individualized mentor-guided study, on-line seminars, and other forms of computer mediated communication. In this exploratory study, we surveyed doctoral graduates using an open-ended self-administered questionnaire. A self-selected sample of 59 graduates (about 15% of the total alumni group) responded by describing intellectual, personal, and behavioral developments that they attributed to their graduate school experience. They gave examples of each, and specified aspects of their experience at Fielding they believed to have affected the changes they described. Through qualitative data analysis we developed descriptors of four facets of each of the three learning outcomes in our conceptual framework. We also identified key influencing factors in regard to each of the four facets of the educational experience. Since this is pilot research intended to develop theoretical insight and methodological procedures, no attempt was made to achieve a sample that is representative of the population of program alumni or that represents critical kinds of variations in that sample. It should be noted that given a low response rate of unknown representativeness of an already self-selected sample of adult learners, we make no claims to the generalizability of these findings nor to their ultimate validity. In an important sense, we wanted this self-selected sample to assist us in exploring the nature of graduate learning in a fresh way, and that is just what we did.

For purposes of the analysis to be done in this paper, the three strands of transformative learning are briefly defined as follows:

- Mezirow (1991) defines transformative learning as both process and outcome. “Transformative learning is the process of learning through critical reflection, which results in the reformulation of a meaning perspective to allow a more inclusive, discriminating and integrative understanding of one’s experience. Learning includes acting on those insights...” (p.16).
- Boyd (1989 quoted in E.Taylor 1998) defines individuation as “a fundamental change in one’s personality involving conjointly the resolution of personal dilemmas and the expansion of consciousness resulting in greater personality integration (p. 13).”
- Freire defines education for critical consciousness (conscientization) as “the process through which men [sic] not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness of both the sociocultural reality that shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality” (Freire 1976, p. 27).

While an extended discussion and comparison of these perspectives is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to keep in mind that these strands have some similarities as well as differences, and the processes described may in some ways overlap with one another. Indeed, as we look at the data in this study from these perspectives, it will be clear that various outcomes and experiences relate to more than one of these kinds of transformation.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

In what follows, the findings from the original pilot study are summarized and discussed in relation to the theories of transformative learning identified above; first the data about the outcomes of the graduate education experience, followed by the data about the learning process. The findings were derived from a qualitative analysis of the themes identified in response to the self-administered questionnaire described above. In the earlier studies noted above, these data were related to theories and research in adult development, supporting the notion that doctoral study may catalyze movement to the higher reaches of adult development, not only in the cognitive domain, but in the personal and behavioral domains as well. That study also raised many questions about how changes in each domain are connected to each other, and about the particular experiences which may lead to particular kinds of change. Adding the transformative learning perspectives may help to answer some of these questions.

Outcomes

In describing how graduate education has affected their cognitive development, respondents described themselves as being more perceptive, thinking in complex ways, seeing multiple perspectives, and being better able
to appreciate research and theory. In regard to their personal (ego and emotional) development, respondents described themselves as being more tolerant of themselves and others, being more confident, experiencing expanded consciousness, and experiencing positive emotions. In regard to their behavioral development, respondents described themselves as being continuous learners, communicative, in flow, and resilient. Table 1 presents a summary of the data supporting these conclusions, including the main themes and sub-themes within each of the changes noted, illustrating the sorts of statements that were coded as falling under each category and the number of respondents (out of an N of 59) who indicated each item. While it is the words of the participants themselves that would add richness and depth to these various categories, that level of detail is not possible in this brief summary report.

Many of these outcomes, which were derived through open coding and not through a pre-designed template, resonate strongly with Mezirow’s notion of perspective transformation. In terms of cognitive change, these include items such as: “is more perceptive” which includes the development of reflective/critical thinking, a competency needed if one is to engage in the sort of reflection that the model calls for. The item “sees multiple perspectives” which, as we can see, includes questioning assumptions and examining one’s own and others perspectives, is close to the concept of perspective transformation itself. And since for transformative learning to occur, one must critically reflect on one’s self, the personal changes in regard to becoming more tolerant of self and others, and developing greater awareness also provide evidence of transformative learning. Finally, the related behavioral changes indicate that the respondents were acting on their new perspectives, and not just thinking about them. We can also see evidence of Jungian individuation in these outcomes, appropriately in the personal development column. Indeed, experiencing expanded consciousness as embodied in greater awareness, and integration, and in changes in spiritual life, sounds much like a definition of individuation itself. The behavioral changes indicate that the respondents were acting on their new perspectives, and not just thinking about them.

Table 1

OUTCOMES: Code Categories and Frequencies for Respondents and Subcategory Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is More Perceptive (36)</strong>&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td><strong>Is More Tolerant (40)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reports Continuous Learning (37)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is reflective/critical thinking (31)</td>
<td>Of others (15)</td>
<td>Does research (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is analytical (9)</td>
<td>Is more compassionate (14)</td>
<td>Has new skills/roles/products (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is able to diagnose situations (5)</td>
<td>Of the self (11)</td>
<td>Continues to learn (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is able to suspend judgment (3)</td>
<td>Of complexity (10)</td>
<td>Explores/experiments (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinks precisely (3)</td>
<td>Of change (10)</td>
<td>Is Independent (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thinks in Complex Ways (30)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Is More Confident (31)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Is Communicative (29)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinks systemically (18)</td>
<td>Of self, own voice, ideas (29)</td>
<td>Collaborates (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrates and synthesizes (18)</td>
<td>Empowered/Autonomous (5)</td>
<td>Relates well to others (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sees complexity/ambiguity/patterns (7)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Expresses self well (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceives social construction (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sees Multiple Perspectives (27)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Experiences Expanded Consciousness (24)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Is in Flow (19)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See the perspectives of self and others (23)</td>
<td>Greater awareness (16)</td>
<td>Behavior attuned to others (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions assumptions (12)</td>
<td>Feels integrated (9)</td>
<td>Trusts intuition (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciates diversity (8)</td>
<td>Changes in spiritual life (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appreciates Research and Theory (23)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Experiences Positive Emotions (14)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Is Resilient (16)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can apply theory (18)</td>
<td>Passion (7)</td>
<td>Takes reflective action (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can appreciate research (15)</td>
<td>Feels calm/centered (6)</td>
<td>Copes well with change (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joy and optimism (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appreciates life (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many of these outcomes, which were derived through open coding and not through a pre-designed template, resonate strongly with Mezirow’s notion of perspective transformation. In terms of cognitive change, these include items such as: “is more perceptive” which includes the development of reflective/critical thinking, a competency needed if one is to engage in the sort of reflection that the model calls for. The item “sees multiple perspectives” which, as we can see, includes questioning assumptions and examining one’s own and others perspectives, is close to the concept of perspective transformation itself. And since for transformative learning to occur, one must critically reflect on one’s self, the personal changes in regard to becoming more tolerant of self and others, and developing greater awareness also provide evidence of transformative learning. Finally, the related behavioral changes indicate that the respondents were acting on their new perspectives, and not just thinking about them.

We can also see evidence of Jungian individuation in these outcomes, appropriately in the personal development column. Indeed, experiencing expanded consciousness as embodied in greater awareness, and integration, and in changes in spiritual life, sounds much like a definition of individuation itself. The behavioral changes indicate that the respondents were acting on their new perspectives, and not just thinking about them.

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1 Parentheses in Bold contain number of respondents; Parentheses not in bold contain number of responses.
change “being in flow” may also be evidence of this same process in action. Thus, it appears that for many of these respondents, a rational process of perspective transformation was accompanied by a more personal process of personal growth and integration.

While the data analysis as summarized above does not speak directly to a conscientization as defined by Freire, the raw data provide many examples of a heightened consciousness in regard to issues of gender and race-based oppression and economic inequality, along with a commitment to act on that awareness. In the themes noted above, these changes are reflected in part in the cognitive changes such as “thinking systemically” and “perceives social construction,” in personal changes such as becoming “more confident of self, own voice, ideas” and “empowered/autonomous” and in behavioral changes such as “takes reflective action.” Indeed, taken together, these outcomes sound much like conscientization itself.

The summary analysis above clearly suggests evidence of transformative learning of various kinds, and evidence that many respondents may have experienced all three kinds of transformation. The findings of this pilot study therefore provide ample data to warrant more in-depth study of transformative learning as experienced by students at Fielding and in other doctoral programs as well.

Learning Experiences

In describing what aspects of their graduate educational experience had led to the changes noted above, respondents identified the following as key factors: a learning process that was self-reflective, self-directed, interactive, and experiential; within the context of interpersonal relationships (faculty-student and student-student) characterized by equality, support, acceptance, and inclusion of diverse people and perspectives; through curricular content and structure that often leads to a transformation in perspectives and world views (e.g. systems thinking, theories of human development and consciousness, social constructionism, critical theory, use of self as an instrument of change); within an organizational structure that provides for student involvement in governance and in organizing the learning experience itself. Table 2 provides a summary of these data, including the number of respondents who described each of the categories and themes listed. It is also important to note that respondents were simply asked to describe any Fielding learning experiences that may have contributed to the changes they described; they were not given any frameworks or templates within which to respond.

Table 2

| EXPERIENCES: Categories and Frequencies for Respondents and Subcategory Responses |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| **LEARNING PROCESS (41)**^1 | **INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS (22)** | **CURRICULAR CONTENT AND STRUCTURE (34)** |
| Interactive and collaborative (34) | Community support (12) | Content of knowledge areas studied (20) |
| | | (adult development, systems thinking; social constructionism, critical theory) |
| | Faculty as colleagues (10) | Workshops at sessions (16) |
| Self-directed (19) | Diversity (9) | Structure of knowledge assessment process (9) |
| | | (overview, depth, applied/experiential) |
| Self-reflective (15) | Bonding with students (5) | Dissertation (9) |
| Experiential/applied (10) | | |

These experiences are clearly consistent with what Mezirow and others (E. Taylor 2000, 1998) have described as key elements in the transformative learning process. The first phase of that process, the creation of disorienting dilemmas, may be brought on, in this context, by the paradigm-challenging content of the curriculum along with the requirement for application of theory to practice, for self-reflection, and for critical reflection on one’s own and others’ assumptions. All of these requirements are included in the experiences and outcomes summarized above and described at some length by the respondents.

It is also important to note that the relatively unstructured and student-directed nature of the Fielding learning experience, in which students design their own studies in consultation with their faculty mentors, may in itself be a

^1 Parentheses in bold contain number of respondents. Parentheses not in bold contain number of responses.
disorienting dilemma as those in authority are not telling students what to do but inviting them to decide for themselves. As that dilemma often requires students to change their perspective on the nature of knowledge and of the teaching-learning process, and their role in it, the Fielding learning process as a whole may be a significant transformative learning experience in itself.

Discourse/dialogue, the other key factor identified by Mezirow as central to transformative learning, is clearly included in the “interactive and collaborative” nature of the learning experience, a major theme identified by the respondents. These findings also lend support to the importance of close faculty-student relationships, a factor not highlighted by Mezirow but identified by others, such as Robertson (1996) and E.Taylor (2000), in his review of the research literature.

What is unique about these findings as compared to other empirical studies of transformative learning within adult graduate education is that the Fielding learning experiences are not primarily classroom based. They occur in the context of faculty-student mentoring relationships (such as those described by Daloz 1996), self-organized study groups, conference-like gatherings of the full student-faculty learning community, and on-line seminars and forums. The close relationships and interactive learning process described by many of the respondents may provide a supportive context and a crucible in which students can experience both the disorientation brought on by new experiences and new perspectives, and the dialogue and discourse through which new meaning can be created.

The learning processes that support individuation have been less well identified in the literature (Boyd 1991; Dirkx 2000). At Fielding, the required for self-reflection, the study of human development and consciousness (K. Taylor 1996) and the emphasis on affective as well as cognitive dimensions of learning are probably implicated. The self-directed nature of the learning process, and the mentoring relationship to which the student can bring his or her whole self, all provide a context in which the expansion of consciousness and psychological integration characteristic of individuation can occur.

While experiences such as dialogue, experiential learning, self-reflection, and the study of critical theory could all support a Freirian process of conscientization, respondents did not identify praxis, the social action/reflection cycle, as one of the main themes in their experience. There is much anecdotal information indicating that many students do indeed engage in such a process, but that did not come to light in this research. In the next phase of this project, other questions may need to be asked in order to get a better understanding of this aspect of students’ experiences.

What could be gained from more in-depth study of students’ experiences is a more nuanced understanding of the relationships between the various kinds of transformation experienced (perspective transformation, individuation, and the development of critical consciousness). We also hope to identify the various learning experiences that contribute to each kind of change, and the interaction of the content, process and structure of that learning. Since many of these factors are especially characteristic of the Fielding Graduate University’s approach to adult learning (Knowles, 1998; Schapiro, 2003), a significant question arises as to the relationship of the changes described above to the content versus the process of the educational experience. Doing similar research among students from more traditional doctoral programs, and in different fields of study, will help to answer that question.

Next Steps

The data from this initial exploratory study as a whole form a rich basis for speculation on the relationship between graduate education and the higher reaches of adult development and the nature of transformative learning. It also suggests ideas about the dimensions of mature adult behavior and the model of a scholar-practitioner. Ultimately, we hope to outline means of collaborative critical transformative education that will optimize these outcomes. Further research which includes a wider variety of contexts and programs of study, and involves more in-depth interviews will enable us to broaden and deepen these findings.

As a next step in this ongoing research project, we will be surveying recent graduates from all three Fielding schools (psychology, education, human and organization development), and following up the survey questionnaires with in-depth interviews with those at two extremes: those indicating significant transformation or development, and those indicating little or no transformation or development. This wider and more diverse data pool, and more in-depth data and analysis will allow us to begin to answer some of these questions. In so doing, we also hope to shed some new light not only on the outcomes and processes of Fielding doctoral study, but also more generally on the dimensions of adult development, the nature of transformative learning, the education of the scholar-practitioner, and the relationship between them.
References
Dirkx, J. (2000), Transformative learning and the journey of individuation. ERIC Digest No. 223. Columbus, Ohio Eric Clearinghouse on Adult, Vocational and Continuing Education.


Sites and Sounds From Canada: Multiple Places and Voices

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Abstract: We experience the Transformative Learning Centre (TLC) as a work in progress, a process, a community. Our understanding of transformative learning develops as we interact, write, engage in dialogue across diversities, and play with new ways of doing things. What defines us exists in our publications, our conferences and sharing circles, and the lively space we call the Peace Lounge. Our presentation is an invitation to experience and understand who we are and how we interact.

Introduction

Our presentation will take the form of a dialogical sharing circle. Five members of the Transformative Learning Centre (TLC) at OISE/UT, representing different geographical locations, pedagogical approaches and social justice work, will come together to discuss the TLC and its work. In the circle, we’ll weave together stories of our research, our projects and our own transformative moments. In so doing, we will share with each other and the audience the distinctive history, philosophy, and activities that make the Transformative Learning Centre the vital place it is.

We have chosen a circle for a number of reasons. This form, familiar to indigenous peoples and participatory practices, facilitates the sharing of experiences and visions from various locations, research and innovative projects. The circle is reflective of our multi-local and holistic understanding of the profound changes in body/mind/spirit possible in transformative learning. This circle will represent a microcosm of what happens in our Centre.

Through the circle and the dialogue process, we will individually and collectively present the work that we do at the Transformative Learning Centre, outlining the principles, the conceptual approaches and the vision that inspire this work.

The Transformative Learning Centre

The Transformative Learning Centre is based at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). It was created in 1993 by the coming together of several faculty members, students and community partners who were looking for a way of creating a stronger sense of community and collaboration in broad areas of environmental, feminist, anti-racist, aboriginal, adult and popular education theory and practice. The faculty were scholar/activists who from a variety of diverse perspectives were looking at ways of combining interdisciplinary practices, new knowledges, and alternative strategies for community and global change. All shared an interest in “transforming” contemporary educational and social paradigms. We were also united by our interest in the role of learning in global and local change and by our preference for university and community partnerships in research and field development.

Probably the most outstanding feature of our Centre is that it dances with diversities. In honouring our diversities, we make a point of not prioritizing any one location. Members of the TLC (faculty, students and community partners) bring many different academic disciplines, backgrounds and interests to a common project of transformative learning. As a collective, we take a multidisciplinary approach, constantly linking academy and community in many diverse areas of research, practice, and education. This includes, for instance, health, environmental, development, anti-racist, feminist, labour, popular, indigenous, peace, citizenship and media education.

Transformative Learning

Our working definition of transformative learning is the following:

Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other

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humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body-awarenesses, our visions of alternative approaches to living, and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. It is respectful of diverse knowledges and provides a framework for deepening our understanding of the underlying forces that are transforming Canadian society and the world.

In our work at the TLC, the concept of transformative learning has an explanatory and a normative dimension. At the explanatory level, following the insights of Jack Mezirow and associates, it helps us to better understand why, when and how learners challenge their own assumptions about themselves, and about the social and the natural world. At the normative level, following the insights of Edmund O'Sullivan and others at the TLC, transformative learning is part of a vision and strategy for building a better world, particularly in relation to the contribution that education can play in this process.

In sum, transformative learning makes us understand the world in a different way, changing the way we experience it and the way we act in our day-to-day lives. Transformative learning has an individual and a collective dimension, and includes both personal and social transformation.

At the Transformative Learning Centre we are inspired by the notion of grounded hope. We believe that one of the best ways to predict the future is to actively create it, moving together towards our collective visions by developing viable alternatives that recognize the limitations and possibilities (especially the possibilities!) of each particular context.

**Goals of the TLC**

- To provide an interdepartmental structure for community-university partnerships in research and field development.
- To provide a forum for the discussion of interdisciplinary issues related to learning in community and global transformation.
- To provide a means for faculty and students to participate in specific networks requiring membership from a community-university base rather than formal academic structures.
- To support interdepartmental instruction in transformative learning studies and related areas.

**The TLC Approach to Transformative Learning: Grounded Hope**

In the Transformative Learning Centre we are inspired by the notion of grounded hope. We believe that one of the best ways to predict the future is to actively create it, moving together towards our collective visions by developing viable alternatives that recognize the limitations and possibilities (especially the possibilities!) of each particular context. We believe that another world is possible, and that education can play a role in bringing about a more just, caring, democratic and sustainable planet.

For survival we need hope, but a hope based on critical vision. The prologue of Edmund O'Sullivan's 'Transformative Learning: Educational Vision for the 21st Century', has the title *The Dream Drives the Action*, a phrase which Thomas Berry attributes to Carl Jung. The dream is the visionary-utopian side of hope. In our formulation, it encompasses the rekindling of a relationship between the human and the natural world that goes far beyond the exploitative relationships of our current transnational global market economy. A different kind of prosperity and progress needs to be envisioned which embraces the whole life community. All our human institutions, professions, all our programs and activities need to function in this wider planetary community context. We are in need of a global-planetary vision today whose scope and magnitude will open us up to the wonder and the joy of the universe. We are in need of a spiritual vision which has embedded within it a consciousness that keeps us vitally connected to the natural world and to the unfolding of the universe. We need an enchanted consciousness that awakens us the awesome quality of our experience within this grand mystery into which we have been born. We need an embodied consciousness that connects our bodies to the deep mystery of things and reunites body and spirit.

A transformative vision of education needs to be built on the foundational processes of the universe: differentiation, subjectivity and communion. We need a conscious vision that expresses the multiple expressions of the human (differentiation), the manifestation of our depth dimension of interiority (subjectivity) and a relational dimension that allows us to embed our lives into multiple expressions of community and which opens up into a deeper appreciation of the fact that we are participants in a grand planetary community. The interaction of these processes allows a simultaneous articulation of both difference and the communal. The creativity of the community will be grounded in the awe and respect for the larger biotic community: the web of life.

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Organizational Structure
The TLC encourages open and supportive collaboration with all OISE/UT departments and centres. Currently, the TLC has five main programs of research, teaching and action:

1. Peace and Human Rights Education
2. Environmental Education
3. Popular Education and Community Development
4. Spirituality and Education
5. Citizenship Learning and Participatory Democracy

Brief History
As noted before, the OISE faculty members who came together to form the TLC were primarily senior scholar/activists who, from a variety of diverse perspectives, were aiming at combining inter-disciplinary practices, new knowledge, and alternative strategies for community and global change. It became clear that they all shared an interest in "transforming" contemporary educational and social paradigms. They were also united by an interest in the role of learning in global and local change and for university-community partnerships in participatory action research.

Since 1993, the TLC has been the sponsor and home of the "Greening of OISE Committee" and the "Green Bag" Lunch and seminar series, which has hosted numerous visiting scholars from Norway, Uganda, China, Ireland, Costa Rica, Australia, Korea, New Zealand and the United States. It is a member of CIVICUS (the largest global civil society organization), the Canadian Alliance for Democratic Learning (CANDLE) the North American Alliance for Popular and Adult Education (NAAPAE) and the International Paulo Freire Institute (Brazil). The TLC has worked closely with the Centre for Women's Studies in Education, particularly in support of the Dame Nita Barrow Visitorship and Lecture. It has also supported the Centres for Education and Work, the Centre for Integrated Anti-Racist Studies, and the Indigenous Education Network. The TLC has also participated actively in the first three editions of the World Social Forum, held in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2001, 2002 and 2003, in the first Toronto Social Forum (2003), and in the third edition of the World Education Forum (Porto Alegre, 2004).

Throughout the years, the TLC has organized many colloquia, debates and conferences. Among our most recent conferences were the International Conference on Transformative Learning (2001), the International Conference on Lifelong Citizenship Learning, Participatory Democracy and Social Change (2003), the International Conference ‘Spirit Matters’ (2004) and the International Symposium on Community Based Peacebuilding (2005).

In the last few years, the TLC has produced several publications. Among them are: Edmund O'Sullivan's Transformative Learning: Building Educational for the 21st Century; O’Sullivan, O'Connor and Morell’s, Expanding the Boundaries of Transformative Learning; Anne Goodman's Now What? Developing Our Future: Understanding Our Place in the Evolving Universe; Mundel and Schugurensky's, Lifelong Citizenship Learning Participatory Democracy and Social Change; O'Sullivan and Taylor's, Learning toward an Ecological Consciousness, Brian Milani's Designing the Green Economy: the Post industrial Alternative to Corporate Globalization; Clover, Follen and Hall’s, The Nature of Transformation: Environmental Adult Education, and Dei, Hall and Rosenberg's Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts: Multiple Readings of Our World.

Reflections on Multiple Sites and Voices at the TLC
The Transformative Learning Centre at OISE/UT attempts to hold together and in tension concerns based in critical pedagogy, peace education and conflict studies, feminist approaches to learning, post-racist and post colonial education, indigenous knowledge and ecological studies.

Probably the most outstanding feature of our Centre is our effort to utilize diversities creatively, including the diversity that exists within each of us. In honouring our diverse locations of scholarship, research and practice, including in local and international communities, we make a point of not prioritizing any one location but rather see the diversity itself as a source of creativity and a catalyst for social change. We understand and are coming to appreciate both the difficulties and potentiality of diversity, and seek to develop processes that honour and support the multiple voices without trying to impose one viewpoint or to force a consensus.
Questions for the Michigan Dialogue

Our dialogue will be framed around the following questions:

1. Where did you come from and how did you arrive here?
2. What are your hopes and visions for the future?
3. What are your suggestions to improve the work of the TLC?

We have certain hopes and expectations for our session. We anticipate that we as the participants will gain a deeper understanding of each other, and that our understanding of transformative learning will be expanded. We expect that the audience will have a better sense of who we are, what we believe, and our conception of transformative learning. Finally, we hope that our presentation will inspire reflection and discussion on possibilities for the future.
Community-Based Multicultural Immersion Programming:  
A Transformative Learning Context?

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**Abstract:** Multicultural immersion programming and its relationship to transformative learning is an unexplored topic in the transformative learning literature. This interpretive case study gives voice to the learning experiences of two diverse adult learners who participated in a community-based multicultural immersion program. The finding revealed key program elements that were derived from the author’s merging of four adult education theoretical models, along with aspects of Jack Mezirow’s (1996) Theory of Transformative Learning, which were unexpected findings.

**Introduction**

Research on the changing demographics in the United States (Johnson & Packer, 1998), along with the rise in racial and sexual discrimination and harassment cases and complaints (DeSimone & Harris, 1998) have alerted American communities and organizations to the importance of creating suitable social and work environments for all their members. In responding to this concern, many educational and community organizations have embraced the benefits of human diversity by creating multicultural education programs, which help individuals develop competencies for understanding and respecting human differences in dissimilar cultural settings (Banks, 1981). However, despite these efforts, research has confirmed that numerous problems still confront many minorities and women seeking to fully integrate into today’s communities, organizations, and society (Johnson & Packard, 1987).

For example, stories of discrimination, racial harassment, gender discrimination, gender harassment, discomfort, alienation, frustration, and overall lack of success in fully integrating into communities as well as organizations and society still abound (Banks, 1981; Cox, 1993; DeSimone & Harris, 1998; West, 1993). What is missing from this body of research is the learners’ perspectives on the factors that have promoted, encouraged and supported learning (including transformative learning) in multicultural immersion programs. In an attempt to build research and improve this practice in the areas of multicultural education and adult education, a focused case study of learners’ experiences in a multicultural immersion program (MIP) explored this phenomenon.

**Definitions of Key Terms and Concepts**

Prior to presenting the research problem and purpose, definitions for a number of terms and concepts are provided (i.e., multiculturalism, multicultural education, multicultural immersion program (MIP) the research site, community-based education, diversity and diversity training) that are used throughout this study. Recognizing the myriad of ways these terms can be conceptualized, for clarity, this study will adhere to the following working definitions.

**Multiculturalism**

A philosophical position that stresses that the human diversity of a pluralistic society should be represented in all institutions (especially educational institutions), in such a way that encourages people to retain their individual cultural identities, as well as having equal access to power (Banks, 1981; Grant, 1992).

**Multicultural Education**

A concept with supporting processes intended to help individuals in educational settings develop competencies needed to understanding and respect human differences. Recognizing that equal access does not guarantee fairness for all, multicultural education strives to prepare individuals to work actively towards achieving structural equality in organizations (Banks, 1981; 1992).

**Multicultural Immersion Program**

A community-based multicultural education centered program in a Midwestern urban city where seventy-five people spend seven days experiencing food and the culture of five communities of color which include the following...
cultural groups; European American, African American, Hispanic American, Arab American and Native American discussing issues of concern to those communities (MIP Official Records, 1996).

**Transformative Learning**

Learning understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation on the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action (Mezirow, 1996, p.162).

**Community-Based Education**

Education focused on the facilitation of responsive systems designed to take collective action where agencies work collaboratively within the community to address issues such as substance abuse, housing, violence, crime, teen pregnancy, ill literacy, and various kinds of discrimination using a broad range of resources (http://www.ncea.com/2002).

**Diversity**

A term that captures the many ways in which human beings differ, for example people differ with regard to race, gender, age, class, language, disability, sexual orientation, military experience, personality and so on (Wentling and Palma-Rivas, 1998, p. 241).

**Diversity Training**

A concept practiced in the form of workshops and seminars designed to help individuals in organizational settings become more knowledgeable about, personally value, manage and generally become more responsive to human diversity in an attempt to address environmental and systemic inequalities such as racism and sexism (Herbst, 1997, p. 70; DeSimone and Harris, 1998).

**Problem Statement, Purpose and Interview Question**

A problem addressed in this study is that little is known about what is learned in community-based multicultural education programs from the perspective of adult learners. This lack of knowledge limits the ability of community-based multicultural educators and adult educators working in similar areas in determining what adults have learned in these kinds of programs. Moreover, it limits their ability to determine and if they are using appropriate theories, instructional methods and materials to promote this kind of learning. Therefore, a main purpose of this study was to help community-based multicultural education program designers and facilitators, and adult educators working in the areas related to community-based multicultural education proceed from a more informed perspective when developing such programs. The following research question was posed to guide this inquiry: (1) what factors were perceived by adult learners to promote their learning (including transformative learning) in the community-based MIP?

**Theoretical Frameworks**

In understanding and analyzing the learners’ perspective of their learning experiences in the MIP through a theoretical lens, the work of four distinguished adult education authors were selected who focused on (a) learning from experience through reflective processes and attending to feelings (Boud & Walker, 1993), (b) leaning from experience related to polyrhythmic realities, the intersection of one’s race, gender, class, language, and other cultural factors in the learning environment (Sheared, 1999), (c) learning from experience related to Schon’s (1993) work on reflection in action offers five learning strategies known as framing, reframing, integrating perspectives, experimenting and crossing boundaries that describe learning as the interaction of action and reflection and (d) learning form experience related to Kasl, Dechant and Marsick’s (1993) work on group learning in the context of adult progression and growth in learning which describes their experience of learning together as a research team and how this experience enhanced their understanding of their research. From these theoretical underpinnings, a conceptual framework for the study emerged. Below, two of the primary theoretical frameworks used in this study mentioned above will be discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

**Learning From Experience Through Reflective Processes and Attending to Feelings**

Boud and Walker (1993) offered a means of analyzing an experience that is relevant to any type of learning experience, including that of adults participating in a community-based MIP. As part of their research, Boud and Walker analyzed a specific shared experience to understand how action and reflection interact; they then created a model of reflection processes in learning from experience. In their model, Boud and Walker illustrate how learning from experience occurs in nonlinear stages of preparation (the use of strategies and skills focused on promoting
learning in the learning environment), experience (using experience as a foundation to stimulate reflection in action), and reevaluation (reflection, integration of experiences, validation of experiences, and appropriation or, in other words, owning experiences.

**Learning From Polyrhythmic Realities**

Sheared’s (1999) polyrhythmic realities model of learning from experience (see Figure 2) highlights the intersection of the learner’s race, gender, class, language, and other cultural factors (i.e., history, sexual orientation, and religion) in the learning environment as they relate to the learner’s lived cultural experiences. The concept of polyrhythmic realities is relevant to the process of giving voice to cultural factors in a multicultural learning environment. It is “an alternative way to address the effects of race, class, gender, language, and other cultural factors in a classroom environment” (p. 40). The “YOU” in the center of the model represents the adult learner or the teacher. It is placed in the center to show that race, gender, class, language, and other cultural polyrhythmic realities affect how one may see oneself and how one may be perceived in the learning environment. The polyrhythmic-realities framework acknowledges a different way of knowing that is not grounded in the Western linear tradition.

![Figure 2](image)

Sheared’s viewpoint was used in this study to connect the concepts of giving voice to polyrhythmic realities as they related to adult learners’ lived cultural experiences and learning from reflection. A relationship was established between Boud and Walker’s (1993) three-stage model and Sheared’s (1999) concept of polyrhythmic realities. Sheared focused mainly on giving voice to learners’ lived experiences in the learning environment as they intersect with race, gender, class, language, and other cultural factors. These concepts were inserted into Boud and Walker’s model (depicted in Figure 1) and were used to translate the process of giving voice to polyrhythmic realities in the learning environment into a process that draws upon reflection in terms of thinking and action. The resulting new model is shown in Figure 3.

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1 Author’s adaptation of concepts in V. Sheared, “Giving Voice: Inclusion of African American Students’ Polyrhythmic Realities in Adult Basic Education,” *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, Summer 1999, No. 82, pp. 33-48.
The Learning Environment

**Preparation**
Giving voice to learners in the learning environment through use of dialogue to uncover their their polyrhythmic realities, i.e., the intersection of learners’ race, gender, class, language, and other cultural factors.

**Experience**
Connecting to learners’ lived cultural experiences.

**Reflective Process**
- Acknowledges different ways of knowing not grounded in Western linear traditions.
- Acknowledges the relevance of different ways of knowing.
- Acknowledges the value of different ways of knowing by taking ownership of this knowledge.

Schon’s (1987) viewpoint of reflection in action and Kasl, Dechant and Marsick’s (1993) viewpoint of reflection in action and on group learning in the context of adult progression and growth in learning were used in this study to analyze and interpret the findings. The work of Boud and Walker (1993), Sheared (1999), Schon (1987) and Kasl, Dechant and Marsick’s (1993) provided the framework for this study in the context of giving voice to multicultural ways of knowing and being. The framework was useful to this study because it provided a perception of how learning takes place through reflection when giving voice to lived cultural experiences in the learning environment.

**Methodology, Research Site, and the Participants**
A qualitative interpretive case study research design was employed to explore the factors that promoted and inhibited learning in a Midwestern community-based MIP from the perspective of 21 diverse adult learners. A unique community-based, social-action-focused MIP, located in a Midwestern urban city served as the research site. The MIP was developed in 1996 by members of the New City Coalition, to address the racial tension this urban city often experiences. The goal of this community-based MIP is to develop a network of multicultural leaders and educators who will be prepared to facilitate on-going dialogue and cross-cultural collaborations aimed at closing the racial divide in their communities, workplaces, and society in general (MIP Official Records, 1996). The program’s content consists of a multicultural ideology, the history of racism and ethnicity in America, democratic values in America, and concepts of multicultural awareness, knowledge, understanding, and sensitivity (MIP Official Records, 1996). The overall population sample comprised of 455 people who had participated in the MIP over a 7-year period, 1996 through 2002. Out of the population sample, 21 individuals were selected who participated in this program from the MIP’s master list who had taken part in the program from 1996 through 2002. To gain an understanding of what these 21 adults had learned from the MIP over the seven year period, three participants from each of those years were selected based on their race and ethnicity, type of work setting (i.e., corporate, nonprofit, educational, government, or other), and availability to take part in the study to make up the sample of 21 participants. However, the demographic backgrounds of the two study participants being highlighted in this paper were as follows: One was an African male, age 40, with bachelor’s degree, who had been working in community

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setting for 5 years. The other study participant was a Caucasian American male, age 50, with a masters degree, who had been working in a corporate setting for 20 years.

Data Analysis
Data were gathered through a demographic questionnaire, in-depth interviews, and official records from the MIP. Member checks and follow-up telephone interviews were also used to increase trustworthiness of this inquiry (Merrriam, 1998). To begin the analysis process, the questionnaire responses were tabulated and compiled. This information allowed for a view of interview responses by participants’ race/ethnicity, gender, age, educational level, occupation, work setting, and years of work experience. Next, the interview transcripts were coded for common themes and patterns, connections, and any discrepancies between interview and questionnaire responses. There were also certain limitations due to the scope of the study and the use of qualitative research methodology. For example, the study lacked a longitudinal perspective and the researcher came to this study with 6 years of experience working in the areas of diversity training in corporate settings and multicultural education in academia. In recognizing these limitations and biases, every effort was made to ensure that the ideas and perceptions of the participants were represented accurately by remaining aware of the above limitations and biases when the findings were analyzed, interpreted and reported.

Findings
Two of the study participants experienced a reflective, and deeper awareness of multiculturalism (or in retrospect, aspects of transformative learning) in the MIP by getting below the surface of multicultural awareness and seeing the bigger picture of multiculturalism in these ways. One participant spoke about seeing the bigger picture of multiculturalism as a result of participating in the MIP in this way:

I think the most important other thing that I probably learned from it is that we have to be prepared to die for what we believe in, and my belief is that we’re all one family and I still don’t think that everybody who went through that immersion process sees that. Some folks are in it for the benefit of I, me, instead of us, our and us. However, many people went through it understanding that they’re not alone in this world and that you can work with everybody. I say that again because, after that immersion program, my feeling spiritually is that again there have to be more multicultural immersion education programs in the world today. I kind of cried inside because my feeling is where has this program been? How come nobody’s talking about the Marcus Garveys, the Martin Luther Kings the Malcolm Xs, the troops, and all the folks from different races as well. They kind of die out slowly and come back around the holidays, and it shouldn’t be that way. It should be something that we can teach our children and we can learn from ourselves. That’s why I’m so interested in moving forward with this process and seeing what’s going to be the next process. What are we doing to do now? Where are all those folks, are they just back to work, are they just “I went through it and I got a plaque on the wall”? I think I understand that I would die for that cause because people die for me. That has just made me feel just totally reborn. (Oliver, African male)

Another participant experienced a deeper level of multicultural awareness and of seeing the bigger multicultural picture in this way:

By leaving me stunned, the MIP somewhat in shock, it forced me to re-look at the perspective from which I’m looking at the issues. Rather than this way it’s kind of work around and look at it from the other point of view. And so I guess that’s clearly one thing that I walked away with until some time later. Because keep in mind that when I left the program, I was still very much in shock. Secondly, I certainly learned specifics about the cultural groups that I was exposed to, historical details that I never knew, food-related rituals, religious- and spiritual- related rituals. I keep coming back to the circle of, in the native people, there’s a spiritual circle experience. That was one of the more moving experiences where the class sat around in a circle, and the representatives of the group that sponsored it smoked a pipe and did some things, and we learned about how that holistic spiritual experience was very relevant to the culture (Dan, European male).

These two participants voiced that the MIP brought them into a deeper awareness of multiculturalism by allowing them to see the bigger multicultural picture from their view. This involved being willing to die for what one believes in because other people died for you and being shocked into a deep awareness of multiculturalism to
this day because of what one learned in the MIP about multiculturalism. That learning forced one participant to rethink his perspective of multiculturalism to this day.

**Linking Multicultural Immersion Programming and Learning to Transformative Learning Theory**

Mezirow’s (1991) theory, presents four ways in which learning can occur. First, learning can occur when we expand or clarify an existing meaning scheme. Second, we can acquire new meaning schemes in the form of fresh knowledge, attitudes, or skills that fit into our existing meaning perspectives. Third, we can transform our meaning schemes when we have experiences that no longer support an existing attitude, belief, or point of view. We reflect on the underlying assumptions that supported the previous view and modify our meaning scheme. Over time, meaning perspective may be transformed through a collection of changed meaning schemes. The fourth way in which learning can occur is through perspective transformation. A major life experience (such as a death, illness, or loss of a job), which Mezirow called a disorienting dilemma can cause one to reexamine their existing meaning perspective, which can bring about a change in that perspective (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow (1991) also offers a type of learning that represents emancipatory learning which uses reflection to identify and challenge distorted meaning perspectives. “Emancipatory knowledge is knowledge gained through critical self-reflection and supported by communication with others that allows us to test the insights we have gained through reflection” (p. 87). Through the process of critical reflection and communication with others, adults develop meaning perspectives that are more inclusive in nature, diverse in perspectives, and integrative of experience.

In linking transformative learning theory to multicultural immersion programming and learning, the two adult learners participating in this study had an opportunity to dialogue with others in the MIP to test their prior and present insights regarding their experience with and understanding of multiculturalism, and engage in critical self-reflection to identify and challenge distorted meaning perspectives, which challenged their existing meaning schemes and perspectives. Based on the findings presented, Mezirow’s (1991) theory of transformational learning is another approach in the adult education literature that could be used to provide a theoretical perspective for understanding how adults learn and transform from their experiences when participating in a community-based MIP and similar programs.

**Conclusions and Directions for Future Research, Dialogue and Practice**

Allowing participants’ to giving voice to their past and present experiences with cultural diversity and their polyrhythmic realities, the intersection of race, gender, class and language and other cultural factors in the learning environment introduced them personally to real world multicultural ways of understanding, knowing and being. Also making space for emancipatory learning allowed the participants to challenge their meaning perspectives and engage in a reflective process of learning from experience and critical self reflection, which helped them to get below the surface of multicultural awareness and make meaning of their MIP experiences.

Exploring the implications of multicultural immersion programming for fostering transformative learning in adulthood, has left a few questions for further consideration: How can adult educators incorporate multicultural immersion programming concepts and transformative learning theory into their classes and programs? How can educators of children and youth incorporate multicultural immersion programming concepts and transformative learning theory into their classes and programs? And are there others academic disciplines and non-academic settings where multicultural immersion programming infused with transformative learning theory will work? To answer these questions, further research and dialogue is needed on the practice of multicultural immersion programming guided by a transformative learning theory framework to determine how to best design this type of innovation to promote multicultural immersion learning and transformative learning simultaneously.

**References**


Mentoring for Transformative Learning:  
The Importance of Relationship to Create Learning Communities of Care

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Abstract: So often when we speak of transformative learning, we focus on what takes places within the individual. As educators we try to understand how it occurs and what we can do to help it occur, taking more of a stance of doing rather than one of being. In creating the conditions for transformation, we cannot forget the importance of our relationship with students. This paper considers transformative learning as a relational process and explores the nature of the student-teacher relationship as a place within which transformation is made possible. Understanding it as such calls us to participate with students in creating communities of care in our learning environments, which hold relationships in a way where we can both challenge and support one another in negotiating meaning, expanding horizons, and taking shared responsibility for co-creating a better world. This paper builds on the work of Laurent Daloz and Nell Noddings in extending the understanding of the transformative learning relationship. Daloz’s work speaks to the importance of a mentoring relationship grounded in care, and proposes that the relationship can be extended into mentoring communities. Noddings speaks to the importance of caring relations in teaching and the extension of that care to taking responsibility for our way of being in relationship with students, understanding that it affects not only their learning but who they are as people and how they live their lives. I propose that extending the concept of care as primarily an interpersonal relationship to one of “being in care” in Heidegger’s notion of care as a way of being in the world can bring new understanding to the mentoring relationship that can transform. Habermas’ validity claims in establishing communicative competence and action are important to integrate into this way of being in care.

Teacher as Mentor

Daloz (1999) addresses the importance of the relationship between teacher and student with his statement: “The question for us as teachers is not whether but how we influence our students. It is a question about a relationship: Where are our students going, and who are we for them in their journey?” (p. 5). I have come to understand that my relationship with students is critical to creating the conditions that support transformative learning. The nature of the relationship can establish a context of openness and trust that both challenges students and supports them in being vulnerable to explore in ways that create the possibility for transformative learning. When students know that I care about them as people who are striving to make a difference in their own lives and the lives of others, and as learners on the path to greater understanding, they are more willing to take risks and be vulnerable, as they question their own assumptions and ways of being and doing. I hope my relationship with students evolves into being a mentor, someone who can make a difference in their lives. Yet, I cannot only focus on my relationship with each student, I must consider my relationship with the whole and what I am doing to develop a learning community where we all feel we belong and are held in care.

Adult students come back to school because they have dreams of a different life. Many of the students I teach are accomplished professionals whose careers may have not taken them in the direction they had hoped or they want to expand their horizons and do work that better serves the greater good. Most don’t come expecting transformation, yet in working with them as a teacher/mentor, I hope that is what they experience.

Mentors are advocates and supporters of people. They are passionate about their work, willing to take risks, and willing to challenge us and our thinking. They help us grow as people, discover aspects of ourselves that were previously unknown, imagine new possibilities, and realize our dreams. Mentoring requires that we know the whole person; who they are in the context of their life. Then we have a better opportunity to help them create relevancy and meaning from our teaching and their learning experiences and hold the tension that opens the possibility for transformative learning.

Daloz’s (1999) work on mentoring offers us a window into the importance of the quality of the relationship in teaching as mentoring. In describing the mentor, Daloz highlights the almost “hero” status given to mentors. Yet, most of our mentors are very ordinary people who touched our lives because of their passion for their work and their...
A mentoring relationship that is held in care bridges the distance between us, creating a safe space for vulnerability. As mentors, we also need to be vulnerable; a natural occurrence that comes with care. By sharing openly the challenges we have encountered and what we have learned about ourselves through our own journey of teaching and learning, we create a relationship of truthfulness and trust. Teachers, who are mentors, have the ability to connect their own lifeworlds with the lifeworlds of their students, creating opportunities to reinterpret life experience through an expanded horizon.

While we often don’t think about mentoring relationships in terms of authority, they are very much about authority. They are formed by granting others the authority to influence our lives. We grant others authority because of the respect we hold for them and their contributions to the world. Granting authority to others graces a relationship and creates a space where we can belong and participate together. Granting authority requires self-confidence and awareness, as we welcome the knowledge and expertise that others bring to us. To admit that others, whether they are in positions superior to ours or not, have authority based on their knowledge, experience, and understanding, requires that we feel secure in who we are and what we know. Mentoring relationships that foster transformation require that both student and teacher be willing and able to grant authority to each other and hold authority in a way that takes responsibility for one’s own learning and that of others.

How I hold my authority as a teacher can either limit student learning causing them to learn what they think they have to learn, or enhance it by opening up possibilities for learning that is meaningful and relevant to them. If I hold my authority over students, how likely will they enter that space of unknowingness and vulnerability that is necessary for transformative learning? If I don’t hold my authority in a way that challenges them to question their own assumptions, I also greatly limit their learning. Some of the questions I hold as I continuously learn the art of teaching and mentoring are: How am I creating learning environments where students feel they belong; where they can bring all of who they are and take risks in sharing themselves with others? How well am I balancing my way of challenging and supporting students? How am I fostering conversations that allow for negotiating new meaning? Am I presenting new ideas that challenge their current thinking? Am I asking questions that unlock deeply held assumptions? Am I inviting students to challenge my assumptions? How gracefully do I respond to those challenges?

**The Relational Nature of Transformative Learning**

Teaching is a relational act. Students and teachers come together each belonging to a unique and shared history and tradition, with a sense of who we are in relationship to one another, to others, and to the world. Mezirow (1991) describes transformative learning as a process that "involves reflectively transforming the beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and emotional reactions that constitute our meaning schemes or ... meaning perspectives." (p. 223). While individually we may create new meaning from our life experience, a shift in meaning perspective comes from the tension that is created by encountering different perspectives and ways of being that cause us to question what we thought was reality. If these perspectives and ways of being are held by others with whom we have no relationship, we might easily ignore them. If they are held by those we respect and trust, a tension is created that causes us to consider these different perspectives and question our own assumptions, values, and opinions.

Habermas (1984) differentiates communicative learning, where meaning is negotiated, from instrumental learning, where facts and figures are learned without fully understanding the meaningfulness of the activity. Communicative learning recognizes the importance of another person in the process of reaching new understanding. Most students I initially encounter are only familiar with instrumental learning, as this is what has been expected of them throughout their academic life. Their understanding of learning as instrumental has come from teachers who taught that teaching was about giving information, explaining, and taking an objective stance in relation to students to be able to maintain standards and fairly evaluate performance. These assumptions create a distance between teacher and student that inhibits the possibility for transformative learning.

Transformative learning is, by nature, communicative learning. Therefore the relationships involved in the learning, whether they are teacher and student, student and student, family or work colleagues, are important to bring into the learning context. Communicative learning requires a sense of belonging to a tradition and to the world, recognizing that we are born into a place in history that we share with others. Habermas’ (1985/1987) four validity claims of mutual comprehension, shared values, truth/truthfulness and trust provide a way to develop communicative competence for the purpose of negotiating meaning and taking communicative action. Teachers have the ability to bring these validity claims into the teaching and learning process, thereby inviting students to participate in an on-going conversation and relationship the enables meaning to be negotiated through sharing understanding and risking assumptions.
I have adapted Habermas’ work by creating a visual model, figure 1, of communicative competence that helps others understand it as contextual and relational and holding the intention for new understanding. As teachers, we participate with our students, within this communicative relationship. At the core of communication is the intention to reach new understanding. We do that by participating together through language and action, establishing mutual comprehension, shared values, truth, and trust. Participating in this way may require us to examine our own assumptions about teaching and learning and our relationships as students and teachers. While communicative competence can take place between two people, it is best supported within learning communities that can self-organize and share different perspectives through inquiry, story, and dialogue.

Learning communities are developed by inviting others to participate in creating the conditions for transformative learning that realize the potential for shared understanding and collaborative action. The helix in figure 2 displays my understanding of the increasing arenas of participation from invitation to becoming a learning community. The importance of invitation cannot be underestimated. We may sometimes enter learning environments because we have to be there and other times because we want to be there. In either case, an invitation to enter a learning community where we may possibly experience more than we expect can shift the way we chose to participate. Once we accept the invitation to participate in new ways, we create the possibly to become engaged in the process. When the engagement leads us to question assumptions and see the limitations of old thinking and the opportunities in new possibilities, creative energy is set free and students and teachers alike begin to share the learning space, taking responsibility for creating the necessary conditions to become a true learning community. Those conditions include: meaningful relationships, purposeful work, shared leadership, communicative and
cultural competence. The commitment to a new way of being in relationship is the key to working together to create a learning community that supports the vulnerability and risk associated with transformative learning.

When I first started teaching, I focused heavily on the knowledge and experience I could bring to the students. With a background in management and organizational development, I understood the importance of engaging students in experiential processes to support personal learning, skill development, and application. My approach to teaching however was grounded in my understanding of self as an individual who was shaped by my knowledge and experience. I strived to find the best approaches to communicate what I knew. In essence, I saw myself as somewhat of an expert, someone knowledgeable enough to teach others. I held my authority over students, albeit, more lightly than teachers I had in my academic experience, establishing the boundaries for learning and evaluating the students according to the quality of work they produced.

My doctoral study of hermeneutics and my teacher and mentor, Ellen Herda, transformed my understanding of self from that as an individual, separate from others, to a person always in relationship. Herda’s (1999) text explains the importance of this relational understanding to inquiry and conversation that can transform people, organizations, and societies. I came to understand that it was through my relationships with others, that I could share not just my knowledge, but also my understanding and how I came to that understanding, my way of being, and my passion. I also came to believe that as a teacher, my greatest gift to students was the relationship I could have with them and the relationships I could foster among them that supported their learning journey. In essence, my focus became creating a learning community where we could all participate together to create meaningful inquiry and conversation that generated new understanding, upon which we could change ourselves and the way we took action in the world. My understanding of caring about my students and about teaching shifted to one of understanding myself as “being in care”.

**Being in Care**

Noddings (2005) makes the distinction between the virtue of care and caring relations. Most of us would claim to be caring individuals, as care is a virtue commonly held. Caring relations requires us to understand who we are in relationship with others and to accept responsibility that our actions, how we live and interact with others, always affects the ability of others to live well, learn, and take action in the world. Care is a way of being. It extends beyond what we feel for others to how we live and take action together.

Being in care is a whole systems concept. Some people who live their lives “in care” also have the ability to be in caring relationships with other individuals. Other people who live their lives “in care” are not necessarily good in interpersonal relationships. In terms of teaching, the character, Professor Kingsfield, in the movie *The Paper Chase*, comes to mind. He expressed his care through the way he challenged students to stretch their boundaries of thinking and learning. When I think about the two teachers who were my most influential mentors, the same is true. They were both people passionate about their life and work and willing to risk the interpersonal relationship to challenge me and my fellow students to push past our boundaries and question the assumptions that were limiting our ability to think and act in accordance with our educational aspirations. I remember how I felt when one of my mentors said to me in the middle of a presentation to the class “I don’t care what you think. I only care about what you are learning.” The embarrassment I initially felt did not translate into a feeling of being held in care. Yet, it was that statement that made me take a look at my own assumptions and started me on my journey of transformative learning. As teachers and mentors we want to help create disorienting dilemmas in the minds of our students. Our ability to do that is enhanced through our relationships with them that are ground in communicative competence.

I have learned about being in care from my study of Chinese culture and from being both a mother and a teacher. As a mother of a daughter born in China and abandoned at birth, I have learned how her ability to develop a confident sense of self is predicated on her discovering who she is as member of our family, as a person who belongs to two different cultures and traditions, and as a unique person in the world. The importance of belonging to a past, present, and future is seen in the eyes of these children who have found themselves transported to a different place in history. My role in helping my daughter construct those relationships is my greatest responsibility. In teaching international Chinese students, I encountered their practice of Guanxi, the Chinese way of relationships, which helped me understand how to balance the authority relationship as teacher with a level of care that brings students into a personal relationship. These Chinese students held me in great respect as a teacher, granting me a greater degree of authority than I had experienced with my American students. Yet, they were also comfortable bringing me into a personal relationship where they could teach me about their culture. Their ability to grant me authority seemed to free the relationship. As mentioned in the earlier comments about authority, how we hold our authority relationships as teachers, in our other professional positions, and as parents, either invites people into our lifeworld or keeps them apart. The way I hold my natural authority as a teacher in relationship with my students enables us to co-create that path. The way I invite students to share that authority for teaching and learning enables
them to take responsibility for appropriating their learning. I must find the right balance of authority and care that will enhance our ability to share learning and take action in the world.

Sharing authority for teaching and learning brings us into a relationship of care that allows us to enter and share that space of unknowingness and vulnerability that is necessary for transformative learning. Cranton’s (2000) work speaks to the importance of individuation, normally considered an essential part of growth and development into a unique individual, separate from others. While we can hold individuation as important in our ability to think and act independently, I like to think of it as a process of coming to understand who we are in relationship with others rather than separate from others. Through understanding the relational nature of self, I understand that an important condition of transformative learning is creating communities of care, which support the discovery of self through meaningful relationships, mutual understanding, and collaborative action.

Creating Learning Communities of Care

In the American culture, we have learned to see ourselves as separate individuals and have constructed our educational environments based on that notion. Yet we live in a world where understanding ourselves as always being in relationship is important. In this time of cultural complexity and high anxiety, our responsibility as teachers increases as we help create the conditions for students and ourselves to exist within this complexity and its resulting anxiety and create new understanding and opportunities through transformative learning. Communities of care are places to which we belong and can participate together in shaping our learning environment and discovering how we can act together to create change. Teachers and students both hold and grant authority gracefully, respecting the ability to learn from one another and their different life experiences and perspectives. The care that is present is felt by all and creates the safety for risk and vulnerability.

Although we may not yet live in a world where care is the fabric that weaves us together, our role as teachers and students of transformative learning provides us with the opportunity to influence cultural change through the way we participate in learning communities where care is both the virtue and the passion that brings us together. Kegan (1982) states that to "hold without constraining may be the first requirement to [good teaching and] care" (p.162). In considering what this means, as teachers, we have to loosen the boundaries, allowing for students to negotiate their work in a way that is meaningful to them and that challenges them to stretch the boundaries of their consciousness. By creating learning communities that respect the unique qualities each person brings, we foster a sense of belonging to something much greater than ourselves and thus extend our care beyond ourselves and our immediate relationships to others who live in the world. A process I use in the classroom and in organizations that has worked well in creating a community of care is to engage participants in small group conversations that ask each person to address the questions: What do you value most about yourself, your life, and your work? What are your passion, talents, and hobbies? What are your aspirations? What influences (people, culture, and events) have shaped you? These questions bring people into a meaningful conversation that creates mutual comprehension, shared values, truthfulness, and trust and results in a sense of belonging and care. Diversity is recognized and valued and care for one another is expressed. Once these conditions are established, participants engage with others and with me in ways that foster communicative competence.

This ability to respect, honor, and care for one another requires us to value diverse life experiences, values, and perspectives. We have to continuously examine how we bring diversity into our own lives, how we engage the diverse perspectives of others, and how often we question and change our own beliefs and assumptions and experience our own transformative learning. We also must ask ourselves in what ways we are bringing our students to the encounter with "the other". How are we introducing them to diverse perspectives in theory and practice and creating the opportunity and safety for them to express and explore their own diverse perspectives? Our encouragement and care can help overcome the fear students often have in speaking openly and truthfully. As we all learn to hold the tension of diverse perspectives we can negotiate new meaning in our lives and imagine ways we can peacefully live and work together.

I believe the purpose of transformative learning is what Mary Catherine Bateson (1989) calls composing a life. We don’t compose our lives alone. We co-create them through the relationships we have with others. Bateson’s (2004) work speaks to the integration of people, culture, relationships, and care. She states: “More and more it has seemed to me that the idea of an individual, the idea that there is someone to be known, separate from the relationships, is simply an error . . . we create each other, bring each other into being by being part of the matrix in which the other exists.” (p. 4). When we can bring all of who we are to our teaching and learning, share our traditions, our joys, our struggles, and our aspirations, and come to appreciate the richness of our diversity and common purpose, we can create communities of care where we participate together, learn from one another, and work together to take our transformative experiences out into the world.

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References
The Living Colors of Transformation in Education:
Multidimensional and Cultural Perspectives

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper and session is to discuss our own experiences of transformation and healing from oppression based on not only our formal education that grounded us in the literature about oppression and privilege, but in our own creative response through the arts as a way of knowing and experiential learning.

Theoretical Framework and Grounding
In the past 20 years, there has been much discussion in the field of adult education surrounding both individual and social transformation. Much of this discussion has centered on Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning from the perspective of the individual, with a primary emphasis on the role of critical reflection and rationality (Mezirow, 1995; Taylor, 1997). The discussions of how to teach for social transformation have focused on challenging power relations based on race, gender, class, and sexual orientation, and how to teach to challenge power relations grounded in various separate and intersecting theoretical frames. Some of these include critical pedagogy based on feminist and womanist theory and pedagogy (Johnson-Bailey, 2000; Sheared, 1999), and the work of Horton and Freire (1990). Various frames that focus on challenging racism and/or ethnocentrism include Africentrism (Colin & Guy, 1998), critical multiculturalism and culturally relevant educational frames (Guy, 1999; Sheared & Sissel, 2001), and critical race theory upheld by educators such as West and Peterson (Peterson, 2001; West, 2001).

What has been missing from the literature, however, is how adults heal or work through oppression based on some of these group-based identities by drawing on the arts, their creativity, and their spirituality, which also connects to their affectivity and may lead to transformational experiences. Our assumption is that transformation cannot be forced, but it can be fostered in using these creative ways of connection and relationship. In this experiential session, we will introduce our theoretical framework and relationship to transformational learning. Following the introduction, we will demonstrate our experiences of transformation, and ways that educators can engage in transformational practices, through the singing of black spirituals, meditation and connecting to our spirituality, and using the transformative powers of poetry and metaphor to bring about healing. We will also discuss the idea of the “cultural imagination” and draw upon the use of the arts to facilitate dialogue about transformation in the classroom. Through this session, we will use creative ways or “other ways of knowing” to demonstrate our theoretical and experiential views of teaching for transformation.

Since the dawn of the new millennium, there has been some discussion on the role of spirituality and “other ways of knowing” and what such ways of knowing offer to our understanding of how adults come to know and learn (English & Gillen, 2000; hooks, 2003; Tisdell, 2003). In considering these issues in higher education, Laura Rendón (2000), former president of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) in her presidential address called upon academics to reconnect what she refers to as “the scientific mind with the spirit’s artistry” (p. 1) in their higher education work. In drawing on her own Chicana background and the wisdom of the Aztec and Mayan traditions that have informed her own life, Rendón suggests that a new framework is needed that reconnects the rational world of the intellect with matters of the spirit, “that allows us to bridge our inner and outer knowing, and that honors our humanity while incorporating high standards in our work. We need a marriage between precise inquiry and poetic intuition” (p. 5). After she shared her points about the importance of science and precise inquiry, and why it needs to be joined with other ways of knowing, Rendón shared one of her own poems about how various aspects of her own identity relate to her cultural background as a Chicana, and to her own work as a professor in higher education. In following Rendón’s charge of paying attention to “the spirit’s artistry” or the work of our own creativity, the purpose of this article is to discuss our own experiences that led to transformation and healing from oppression. These experiences are based not only our formal education that grounded us in the literature about

oppression and privilege, but in our own creative response through the arts as a way of knowing and experiential learning.

Our Creative Response to Ways of Knowing

The three of us started an informal discussion relating to a graduate-level course on cultural and historical issues in adult education. As women of different racial and cultural groups, we set up our discussion as a dialogue to make clear how different aspects of our positionality affect each of us individually and communally in our engagement with creativity and experiential modes of learning that are both a response to and a part of our transformative journey. We shared a common interest in researching the multidimensional aspects of learning and the use of creativity in learning, and were grounded in the belief that this learning is influenced by our cultural backgrounds and perspectives (Guy, 1999). During the process of this dialogue, we defined culture as the “totality of socially transmitted social patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of creativity” (Herskovitz, as cited in Guy, 1999, p. 7). However, we wanted to not simply define culture, but discuss the ways in which culture, as it intersects with other aspects of our positionality, affects our personal experiences and learning processes.

As part of this process, we found that there were limitations in communicating our message by means of the printed word, on two-dimensional paper. Somatic ways of knowing, intuition, the use of song and music, and relational aspects of humanity could not be reduced to the written medium. In our creative presentation that supports this paper, we explore other ways of knowing through culture and imagination to communicate research in multidimensional ways, which we identify as “The Living Colors of Transformation in Education.” This submission is an innovative and provocative approach to scholarship informed by the experience and dialogue of three educators interested in furthering the field of creative aspects to learning. Creativity is an area often overlooked in adult education, but, we believe, is central to the transformational experience.

Reflecting on Spirituality and Culture in Higher Education

Heather

A few authors (Tisdell, 2003; Yorks & Kasl, 2002) have begun to address the affective component in learning, but rationality is still privileged in the systems of the dominant culture. Michelson (as cited in Yorks & Kasl) observed that “the cerebral, the objective, the universal, are seen as superior to the subjective and particularly . . . [in order] to have power over experience” (p. 184). Rationality is one way of knowing, but there are many ways to construct knowledge, especially when considering the idea of transformation in education.

Felicia

Intuition is one of those ways. I often feel things, experience them, before understanding them. I used to ignore that intuitive knowledge, because there was not a rationale for it. I later realized the significance of paying attention to intuition through reading works like A Women’s Way of Knowing (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1997) and looking at other theorists, beside stage theorists, who researched the affect of being. One such researcher is Katie Cannon (1988), who explored black womanist ethics. The Black women’s literary tradition points to the power of these women to draw from a psychic connection which is embedded in cultural tradition and transmitted by oral communication from one generation to the next. For me, having the capacity to catch the oral tradition and make meaning in the personal, cultural space is a powerful manifestation of using one’s intuition. My African-American culture in its purest form absolutely reinforces intuition. Like other cultures that mainstream, African Americans began to assimilate into the dominant culture. That does not mean that we forget who we are. I have to bring all of my identities, my polyrhythmic realities (Sheared, 1999), to the learning process. These different ways of knowing form the “Living Colors of Transformation in Education.”

Libby

My identity is constantly shifting in terms of how I understand the way systems of privilege and oppression inform my life. For me, a middle-class white woman, these living colors come through when examining the connections between culture, the imagination, and considering transformational experiences in teaching. Some of my own thinking about spirituality, the cultural imagination, and transformation is based both on the literature and an earlier qualitative study that I conducted a few years ago, involving educators who drew on spirituality in their teaching about cultural issues. To me, spirituality and transformation are connected.
Heather

Our relationship to a greater life force does have a connection to the way in which we view the world, and opens up opportunities for transformation. For some, this might be a relationship to God, to music, to Allah, to nature. This raises an ethical question, though, of whether to introduce spiritual aspects into the classroom and, if so, then how?

Libby

Many researchers and educators, like myself, are pursuing the question of what the role of spirituality is and should be in higher education. There have been many recent book length discussions dealing with the role of spirituality in education more generally, one being Glazer (1999), or in higher and adult education more specifically (Bennett, 2003; English & Gillen, 2000; Kazanjian & Laurence, 2000; Parks, 2000, Tisdell, 2003). In addition, there have been numerous recent articles on the subject, such as Astin’s (2004) discussion of his study of student spirituality in higher education that indicates spirituality is an important concern for many students, and Sarath’s (2003) consideration of the role of meditation in the higher education classroom. Hartley (2004) has also recently reviewed research of the past 15 years and notes the concern that higher education has always had with the development of student values, attitudes and beliefs; at different points in history. However, institutions of higher education have separated these issues from spirituality and cultural contexts. In relating this to transformation, it is difficult to experience a shift in perspective unless one connects with his/her spirituality, culture, and creativity.

Felicia

My way of learning is all about my spirituality and culture. My experience spirals back to those individuals who were brought from Africa through the middle passage to the shores. They were stripped of everything that they had, including the kind of ways they communicated, such as hieroglyphics. They could not read the English language, so they relied on their intuition to make meaning and to learn and to pass on that learning. In culturally relevant education, we would seek to understand and appreciate the contributions of different cultures, such as these African Americans. I also work to reduce prejudice and work for social justice for all oppressed groups. I believe that if one group is oppressed, we are all oppressed. Therefore, everyone suffers from oppression of one type or another.

Heather

For me, as a white woman, I do not feel as connected to the kind of oppression you experience as a black woman. But, I experience a different kind of oppression because I have a chronic illness, and I use creative ways to make meaning of my disease. I am connected to my culture and spirituality through the use of creativity. When I was diagnosed with diabetes as a child, my mind disassociated from the feelings of having a chronic disease. It was actually a creative way to get out of the pain, but I needed to work with others to make that connection again. Through poetry, writing, and the arts I have been able to find my voice. It has been a transformational experience for me. I may have an idea of what you are feeling.

Felicia

Yes, that is an excellent example. My creativity was my way of survival. It was my road of moving out of, and rising above, the pain. That creativity came through the voice for me; not always singing, but always having a song in me. The songs lifted me out of the sexual abuse that I was experiencing. There were songs that lifted me out of the culture that was riddled with drugs and prostitution. The song was planted in me by my mother.

Libby

Creative expression, like writing and song, is connected to the spiritual and cultural imagination. We construct knowledge and meaning in powerful and often unconscious ways through image, symbol, art form, ritual, music, and sacred story. Faith development theorist, Fowler (1981), notes that the “forming of an image does not wait or depend upon conscious processes. The image unites ‘information’ and feeling; it holds together orientation and affectional significance. As such, images are prior to and deeper than concepts” (p. 26).
Constructing Knowledge Through Creative Expression

Heather
For me, writing is a way to construct knowledge through the use of metaphor and images. Where you, Felicia, had a song, I had a word. There are limitations to the written form of communication, but writing gave me a voice. I had a word, even if I could not speak verbally, my pen could say it for me. I might crumble the paper and throw it away, but at least I had said it. Reflecting on that, it was a way for me to not be silent. Sometimes I would write my thoughts in the sand, so that I would know no one would find it. In essence, I was talking not really to God, because I did not own that word in my vocabulary, but to the ocean, or the sand. I was telling the sand my troubles. I was connecting my feelings to the sky. That was my way of escape, like your singing.

Felicia
That relates back to the intuitive and creative understanding of learning, which can lead to healing. I still feel that the song, or the voice that is manifested through song, has such a restorative property. I created a workshop called, *Sisters Singing a New Song*, which ties the cultural piece to finding healing and the voice. I am convinced that although my ancestors were brought over on slave ships and separated so that they could not communicate, the moaning, the chanting, the grunting and the crying out on the ships preserved them and their voice. When they got here, that moaning then became spirituals that told their story of eschatology of hope in the future. Even though they were chained and bound, with the songs that they sang spoke of what is to come in the future. Songs like, *Steal Away, Steal Away Home*, had nothing to do with home, heaven. It had to do with the north. The voice gave them a way to touch the suffering they were healing. I am convinced that we can still do that, so this workshop had to do with finding the tonal voices and sounds inside of the hurting. The women were moaning, and grunting, and screaming, and crying out. Then I identified a place of pain where they were at that moment and attached those sounds to that pain. They expressed that it was a cathartic release. Then they put their own words to this moaning and expression of pain. I took the eschatological escape through the voice and attached it to a contemporary time.

Libby
For me, connecting with my spirituality brings ultimate meaning-making and a sense of wholeness, healing, and the interconnectedness of all things.

Felicia
If the world of academia and business could put their arms around creative expression and intuition in learning, it would open up a whole new way of making meaning with how we deal with pain, bad news, oppression, racial differences, reconciliation, gender issues, and adversity. The creative process meets a soulful need. This can be an uncomfortable place, but it can lead to healing.

Relating to Adult Education

Libby
I believe healing and transformation happens when people begin to engage their imagination in thinking that things can be better. They are imagining they can experience healing. Engaging imagination helps people to see from multiple perspectives, to visualize new possibilities, and potentially to create something new in light of a new understanding of self, others, and human history (Greene, 1997). Indeed, it is the task of higher education to help people to see from multiple perspectives and live more effectively in a culturally pluralistic society. Service learning opportunities, engaged dialogue about current issues, and problem-posing techniques are some emancipatory education strategies for teaching across cultural borders that are typically used in higher education. Teachers can also engage the cultural imagination; indeed, the more dimensions of learning engaged, the more likely it will be sustained and transformational, since it is more likely to be grounded in learners’ entire beings, rather than strictly in their heads. Further, engaging the cultural imagination may connect to the spiritual for some without pushing a religious agenda, in the same way that incorporating aspects of meditation on music or art that Sarath (2003) describes in his *Jazz and Contemplative Studies* program at the University of Michigan. The cultural imagination also invites people not only into their creativity, but into their greater authenticity. In combination with other modes of knowledge construction in community, it creates a more holistic learning situation.
Felicia

If we are looking at the whole person, not just the mind of the person, then wellness is a key aspect of that person’s identity. In a holistic learning situation my womanness and my blackness can speak along with my identities as a mother, a friend, and a follower of the faith. They form together with my identities as an educator and a student. When you can feel free to express yourself on all those levels and all those parts, then that brings connectedness.

Libby

We also have to look at the forces that shape the culture in which we are trying to interpret this dynamic. It is dominant andro/euro-centric, and so those forces that value primarily male traits, such as logic and reason, hold down those other areas that value creativity. Zhang (2002) has shown that the more creativity-generating thinking styles are more complex, and are related to a holistic mode of thinking, and “the more norm-conforming and more simplistic thinking styles are significantly related to an analytic mode of thinking” (p. 331).

Heather

I can appreciate both the cognitive and affective ways of learning, and I believe that further research and literature is needed on the ways that creativity and learning are connected to create transformational experiences. We have used our experiences to further knowledge in this area, and my hope is that other educators and researchers will have the same interest to continue developing and testing theories about this use of creativity, culture, intuition, and healing in bringing the living colors of education into practice.

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Making Meaning of the Varied and Contested Perspectives of Transformative Learning Theory

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to help initiate a discussion of the varied perspectives of transformative learning, beyond the unitary conception of Mezirow’s transformative learning theory. Seven perspectives of transformative learning (psychoanalytic, psycho-developmental, psycho-critical, social-emancipatory, cultural spiritual, race-centric, & planetary view) are introduced and critiqued around shared constructs drawing conclusions about how they inform our understanding of transformative learning theory and the practice of fostering transformative learning in the classroom.

Introduction
Transformative learning in adult and continuing education has been around for over 25 years and continues to be the most researched theory of adult learning (Taylor, 2000). Most significant, is the preponderance of literature, both conceptual and empirical, framed within the seminal work by Jack Mezirow (2000; 1991). This ubiquitous focus on Mezirow’s theory, often leads to uncontested assumptions of a unitary conception of transformative learning, overshadowing a growing presence of other theoretical conceptions. Even though some effort has been made in the past to make sense of the varied perspectives of transformative learning (e.g., Dirkx, 1993, 1998; Taylor, 1998), their contributions to transformative learning theory are not fully appreciated. At present, it can be argued that there are a significant number of divergent conceptions of transformative learning theory being engaged in the field (e.g., Boyd & Meyers, 1988; Brooks, 2000a, 2000b; Cranton, 2000; Daloz, 1986; Kegan, 1994, 2000; Tisdell, 2003; O’Sullivan, 1999, 2002). In addition, there are others where the word transformative learning is not used, but clearly they are referring to similar ideas (Johnson-Bailey, 2001, In-press; Freire, 1970; Sheared, 1994), and they address issues, such as the role of spirituality, positionality and emancipatory learning that are given little attention by the dominant theory of transformation. The exciting part of this diversity of perspectives is that it has the potential to offer a richer view of transformative learning, beyond the dominant paradigm. Unfortunately there has been little effort to critically analyze these diverse perspectives through shared constructs, synthesizing their underlying assumptions, and most significantly drawing conclusions about how they inform our understanding of transformative learning and the practice of fostering transformative learning in the classroom. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to analyze these varied perspectives and develop a framework that helps make meaning of their underlying assumptions about transformative learning.

Identification of the Varied Theoretical Frameworks
The first step in this analysis was the identification of varied perspectives of transformative learning. A number of criteria were established for selection purposes: a) the theory/model refers to transformative learning directly or in related terms (e.g., perspective transformation, consciousness raising); b) it offered insight into the learning process of significant adult personal/social transformation; and c) it furthered the understanding about the practice of fostering transformative learning. With these criteria a number of authors were identified and their work was critically reviewed within a framework of shared constructs similar to Merriam and Caffarella’s (1999) framework when discussing different theoretical perspectives of adult learning (e.g., worldview; goals/purposes; locus of learning; learning processes, teachers role, students role; methods).

From the analysis of the literature seven perspectives of transformative learning were identified and organized into two groups indicative of their locus of learning (individual and sociocultural). The first three views, psychoanalytic, psycho-developmental, and psycho-critical, the locus of learning is the individual. The remaining four views, social-emancipatory, cultural-spiritual, race-centric and planetary, the locus of learning is sociocultural. Each is discussed briefly, focusing predominantly on the meaning of transformative learning and the teacher and student roles. A chart is provided with an overview of the key assumptions of each view on the fifth page of the proceeding (Table 1).

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Psychoanalytic

The initial perspective of transformative learning is a psychoanalytic view, which is framed within depth psychology. This view recognizes the unconscious self and the powerful role it plays in shaping our everyday lives (Boyd & Meyers, 1998; Cranton, 2000; Dirks, 1993; 2000). Transformative learning is seen as a process of individuation—a lifelong journey coming to understand through reflection the psychic structures (ego, shadow, persona, collective unconscious, etc.) that makes up one’s identity. It involves the discovery of new talents, a sense of empowerment and confidence, a deeper understanding of one’s inner self, and greater sense of self-responsibility. Transformation from this view is defined as “a fundamental change in one’s personality involving jointly the resolution of a personal dilemma and the expansion of consciousness resulting in greater personality integration” (Boyd, 1989; p. 459). The locus of learning is the individual, where an intrapersonal dialogue with the Self is essential for individuation. A teacher is seen as a “seasoned guide,” a compassionate critic who questions the learner, helping students engage in discernment—working through the personal and collective unconscious. In addition, to the emphasis of exploring the unconscious there is an appreciation for affective and symbolic ways of knowing. The transformative process occurs predominantly within a context of grief/loss, which involves three activities, receptivity (willingness to engage concerns), recognition (awareness, acceptance of concerns), and grieving (a talking back to the extra-rational message). The student’s role is one of self-analysis and engaging holistically in the transformative process. The significant contributions of this view about transformative learning are the role of the affective, the centrality of an integrated Self, and an emphasis on interdependency, not autonomy, as an outcome of a perspective transformation. Concerns raised include the lack of appreciation for the role of context (e.g., social and historical) and positionality in learning and the difficulty of fostering this approach in a higher education classroom, where there is typically a strong emphasis on rational ways of knowing.

Psycho-Developmental

A second perspective is that of a psycho-developmental view of transformative learning (e.g., Daloz, 1986; Keegan, 1994; 2000). It is across the lifespan, based on the assumption that transformative learning reflects continuous, incremental and progressive growth. It is influenced by the personal and social context, through a series of steps and phases away from a concrete, egocentric, context free, and non-reflective view of the world toward a more progressive developmental meaning perspective. Central to a psycho-developmental view of transformation is epistemological change, not just change in behavioral repertoire or quantity of knowledge, but instead, both change in our meanings and meaning form, where “we change the very form by which we are making our meaning” (Kegan, 2000, p. 53). Furthermore, from Daloz’s (1986) perspective, framed predominantly within a higher education setting, there is an appreciation for both the role of critical reflection and holistic ways of knowing. The educator engages in a mentor relationship with adult learners, where the student and the teacher form a partnership in the educational endeavor. Similarly to the previous view, within this view there is an appreciation for other ways of knowing (holistic) beyond the rational. In addition, it introduces the essentiality of relationships in learning and a greater appreciation for contextual influences in learning. Concerns are similar to those found in the psychoanalytic. They include an overemphasis on the psychological difference, and not enough appreciation for cultural difference. Transformation is about personal growth and development, not social change.

Psycho-Critical

A third perspective of transformative learning is a psycho-critical view (Mezirow, 1991; 2001). It is a rational, constructivist, and universal view of learning, explaining a process of constructing and appropriating new or revised interpretations of the meaning of one’s experience with a goal of greater personal autonomy and independence. Transformative learning refers to a process of transforming “taken-for-granted frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action” (Mezirow, 2001, p. 7-8). The teachers’ role involves taking a consensual approach to teaching, with an emphasis on the centrality of experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse. The student is seen as a rational constructor of knowledge, where meaning making happens in a logical and thoughtful manner, and the affective aspects of learning are recognized, although not seen as central to the learning process. To this view’s credit, its emphasis on constructivism, dialogue and critical reflection has been most been most influential in the evolution of transformative learning theory. Criticisms of this view have centered predominantly on its minimal attention to other ways of knowing, over emphasis for rationality, and it lack of attention to power and social change, despite its cooptation of Habermas’ view of emancipatory learning.
Social-Emancipatory

A fourth perspective of transformative learning is that of a social-emancipatory view, which is rooted primarily in the work of Freire (1970). This view is about developing an “ontological vocation” (p. 12); a theory of existence, which views people as subjects, not objects, who are constantly reflecting and acting on the transformation of their world so it can become a more equitable place for all to live. Its goal is social transformation by demythizing reality, where the oppressed develop critical consciousness. A teacher’s role is that of a political agent, not a facilitator, recognizing that education is never neutral and anything less would be a laissez-faire approach to teaching (Freire & Macedo, 1995). Three broad concepts/methods are central to fostering emancipatory transformative learning. First, is the centrality of critical reflection with a purpose of rediscovering power and helping learners develop an awareness of agency to transform society and their own reality. Second, a liberating approach to teaching couched in “acts of cognition not in the transferal of information” (p. 67), a “problem-posing” (p. 70) and dialogical methodology. A problem-posing approach of education is the act of praxis, that of moving back and forth in a critical way between reflecting and acting on the world. Third, is a horizontal student-teacher relationship where the teacher works on an equal footing with the student. Similar to psycho-critical view, this view emphasizes a problem-posing and consensual approach to teaching, although its primary goal is social transformation, not personal change. Concerns with this view include its over emphasis on rationality and class analysis, and the practical challenges of using this approach in the classroom.

Cultural-Spiritual

A fifth perspective of transformative learning is a cultural-spiritual view (e.g., Abalos, 1998; Brooks, 2000a; 2000b; Tisdell, 2003), which is concerned with the “connections between individuals and social structures (race, class, gender, etc.)... and notions of intersecting positionalities” (Tisdell, 2003, p. 256), in relationship to how learners construct knowledge (narratives) as apart of the transformative learning experience. In particular, it appreciates a culturally relevant and spiritually grounded approach to transformative pedagogy, with a goal to foster narrative transformation—storytelling on the personal and social level through group inquiry, engaging the learner holistically (critically, emotionally, spirituality, & somatically), contextually situated, both in place and history, with an appreciation of the moral dimensions of learning (Brooks). Tisdell emphasizes a similar holistic approach to learning (e.g., personal, political, historical, sacred) by encouraging cross-cultural relationships; establishing authentic learning environments; and fostering cultural and spiritual awareness. Multiple theoretical perspectives influence this view. In addition to a psycho-critical view of transformative learning, she draws on critical and feminist pedagogy, multicultural education and critical multiculturalism. Elements essential to fostering a cultural-spiritual view of transformative learning include an emphasis on authenticity, developing learning communities, promoting a culturally responsive curriculum, and the exploration of communal and symbolic dimensions of cultural identity. The teacher’s role is that of a collaborator with a relational emphasis on group inquiry and narrative reasoning, which assist the learner in sharing stories of experience, and revising new stories in the process. The strengths of this view is its effort at addressing many of shortcomings identified in previous views, particularly the role of positionality, other ways of knowing, and spirituality in the transformative process. Concerns arise with view with its intent of addressing the role of culture among all students. As long as the dominant cultural view is included within a course of study there is a potential for repressive tolerance. Brookfield (2003) argues that the mainstream “presence inevitably overshadows the minority ones, which will always be perceived as alternatives but never as the natural center to which one should turn...” [and this] ensures the continued marginality of minority views by placing them in close, comparative association with dominant ones” (p. 502).

Race-Centric

A sixth perspective on transformative learning is a race-centric view (Johnson-Bailey, In-press; 2001, Sheared, 1994). This is a perspective that puts people of African descent at the center, where they are “subjects of historical social experiences rather than objects on the margins in European experiences” (Asante, 1987; p. 20). It is a culturally bounded, oppositional, and non-individualistic conception of transformative learning. Ironically, since Black women have such an intimate experience with their social position and power, Johnson-Bailey (In-press) concludes that “transformational learning as the only medium in which we exist, learn, and teach. Since it is the air we breathe, maybe we just take it for granted and don’t attend to or claim it sufficiently.” Essential to this view is engaging the polyrhythmic realities—”the students’ lived experience within a sociocultural, political, and historical context.” (Sheared, 1994, p. 36). For change to occur there must be a recognition of oppression and privilege within the process of transformative learning. In addition, there are three key concepts to fostering transformative learning: promoting inclusion (e.g., giving voice to the historically silenced); promoting empowerment (e.g., not self-actualization but a belongingness and equity as a cultural member); and learning to negotiate effectively between
and across cultures. Furthermore, transformative teaching is seen as a deliberate and conscious strategy, employing a political framework (e.g., consciousness raising, activism; and providing a safe learning environment) with the expectation that it “may be necessary for one to undergo some form of self-reflection and transformation in order to teach transformation” (Johnson-Bailey, In-press). The strength of this perspective is its emphasis on race as the unit of analysis and the social-political dimensions of learning. Furthermore, it has the potential to address some of the concerns raised by Brookfield (2003) by foregrounding interest of Black students, instead as the “other” or the alternative view. Concerns arise when those who are from the mainstream/dominant wanting to engage this approach when fostering transformative learning. Is this approach feasible for educators from the mainstream culture?

**Planetary**

A seventh perspective on transformative learning is a planetary view. It is a view that takes in the totality of life’s context, much beyond the individual and addresses fundamental issues in the field of education as a whole (O’Sullivan 1999; 2002). The goal of transformative education is a reorganization of the whole system, creating a new story from one that is a dysfunctional and rooted in the technical-industrial values of western Eurocentric culture, to a view that gives greater attention to the natural world. This planetary view recognizes the interconnectedness between the universe, planet, natural environment, human community and the personal world. Fundamental to this perspective is an emphasis on quality of life issues, fostering a community’s sense of place, diversity within and between communities, and an appreciation for spirituality. Transformative learning is a holistic endeavor on the individual level like the psychological orientations of transformation, but at the same time the shift in the frame of reference has a planetary emphasis. It is a “shift [that] involves our understanding our ourselves and our self locations; our relationship with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power interlocking structures of class, race, and gender; or body- awareness; or visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy” (p. 11). Similar to the cultural spiritual view of transformative, this perspective makes an effort to address many of the concerns raised by in previous views, particularly those views with the individual as the locus of learning. Most significant, is recognizing the individual not just from a social-political dimension, but from an ecological and planetary dimension and the related implications. Transformation is not only about how one views their human counterparts, but how as humans do we relate with the physical world. Shortcomings can be seen in its lack of insight into the learning process on an individual level and a clear pedagogical strategies for fostering this view.

**Discussion**

This discussion is organized around some of the key tensions that exist between and within the different perspectives of transformative learning. Beginning with the goal of transformation, this analysis reveals one of the most fundamental tensions among the varied conceptions—the emphasis each gives to personal or emancipatory transformation. The various perspectives cover the spectrum from a focus on self-actualization to planetary consciousness. This tension between looking inward at the self and looking outward from the self at the world and the human-environment relationship is clarified by an analysis of the locus of learning of the various theoretical perspectives. For example, learning is rooted in the inner psyche (ego, super ego) discussed in Boyd’s & Meyers (1988) and Dirkx’s (1993) psycho-analytic model of transformation, where on the other end of the continuum O’Sullivan’s (1999) emphasizes the natural world as location of learning (cosmological), where the individual and universe cannot be separated. Between these two ends, the most recent writing of transformative learning, is the cultural spiritual perspective, which appreciates both the personal and the political/social. The locus of control situated within a cultural orientation (e.g., positionality) (Brooks, 2000a, 2000b; Tisdell, 2003) of learning. Related to this tension, is the emphasis on individual and/or social action. Those views that more rooted in the individual give little attention to social change. Where the individual and society are seen as one in the same, action for social change is much more a product of transformative learning.

A second tension is the role of difference in learning. The more psychological centered models (e.g., psycho-analytic, psycho-developmental, & psycho-critical) tend to reflect a universal view of learning. If difference is recognized it is through a lens of individual differences (e.g., learning styles), not a social or cultural difference. On the other hand, those views that appreciate the role of the difference (social emancipatory, culturally relevant narrative, race-centric, & planetary) place much greater emphasis on positionality, where there is an appreciation for the role of culture in transformative learning.

A third tension is that of role of spirituality in the transformative process. As a concept it seems to emerge among several views (e.g., psycho-analytic, cultural spiritual narrative, and planetary view). On one level, these views make meaning of spirituality and learning in similar ways, such as recognizing: the role of images and
symbolic processes in knowing, the power of the unconscious and the imagination, and the importance of being authentic and fully present in the learning environment. On the other hand, differences seem to emerge around its role and intent in the transformative process. The psychoanalytic view sees spirituality as a means to nurture or facilitate the “human soul” in the transformative process, towards greater self-knowledge. The cultural spiritual view sees engaging spirituality as essential to fostering culturally relevant pedagogy. Their emphasis is on the communal dimension of spirituality, facilitating “a greater understanding about one’s own culture and that of other people” (Tisdell, 2003, p. 42).

Despite the diversity revealed in the tensions among the various views of transformative learning there is still much they hold in common. The core elements identified in Mezirow’s perspective, that of a constructivist orientation to learning, the essentiality of experience, critical reflection, and group dialogue (Taylor, 1998), are all found in some manifestation in the other perspectives as well. A difference is seen in what each emphasizes, the source of experience, and how experience is engaged within group dialogue. For example, the psycho-critical and social-emancipatory place an inordinate emphasis on rationality in the construction of knowledge. Experience is rooted in present and practical events that are logically and critically engaged within a group, with the social-emancipatory emphasizing a more political analysis. On the other hand, the psycho-developmental, cultural spiritual, and race centric views appreciate the role other ways of knowing, recognizing how the affective, couched in the narrative form (storytelling) brings clarity to experience. The developmental perspective remains within the personal, while the race-centric and cultural spiritual moves from this same experiential source to a political and cultural analysis.

Finally, an insight that emerges from this analysis is further clarification of the significant shortcomings of the dominant model of transformative learning (e.g., Mezirow), particularly in the area of other ways of knowing, positionality, and the role of spirituality and political consciousness in the transformative experience. On the other hand, even though the remaining perspectives are quite well articulated, most lack any extensive empirical research to support their theoretical assumptions about transformative learning (Taylor, 2003). This lack of research is reflected both in the nature of the transformative process and the practice of fostering transformative learning, further marginalizing and contributing to their lack of appreciation by scholars and practitioners. This analysis of the varied and contested perspectives provides an opportunity to address long overdue questions concerning transformative learning theory. More specifically, what do the varied theoretical perspectives reveal as a group about transformative learning as an adult learning model? How do they offer insight into varied sites of practice of adult education and among and across diverse populations? What do they reveal about the practicality of fostering transformative learning? This review of the varied and contested perspectives transformative learning not only begins to address these questions, but also provides new light and vigor into the ongoing discussion of transformative learning theory.

Table 1
Organizing Framework of Varied Theoretical Views of Transformative Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locus of Control: Individual</th>
<th>Theoretical View</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Teacher’s Role</th>
<th>Student’s Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychoanalytic (Boyd;Cranton;Dirkx,)</td>
<td>Interdependence</td>
<td>Seasoned Guide</td>
<td>Self-analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psycho-developmental (Kegan; Daloz)</td>
<td>Lifelong personal development</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>Protege</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psycho-critical (Mezirow)</td>
<td>Autonomy/Independence</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Rational constructor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locus of Control: Socio-Cultural</th>
<th>Theoretical View</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Teacher’s Role</th>
<th>Student’s Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social-emancipatory (Freire)</td>
<td>Conscientization</td>
<td>Activist-class</td>
<td>Learner activist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural-spiritual (Brooks; Tisdell)</td>
<td>Cultural-spiritual consciousness</td>
<td>Cultural Symbolist</td>
<td>Co-creator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race-centric (Johnson-Bailey;Sheared)</td>
<td>Race consciousness</td>
<td>Activist-race</td>
<td>Learner activist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planetary (O’Sullivan)</td>
<td>Planetary-consciousness</td>
<td>Guide</td>
<td>Self-directed revisionist</td>
<td></td>
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References
Pitfalls and Promises of Teaching for Transformation
Within the Contexts of Management Education and Managerial Practice

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Abstract: This paper explores what has been written about the promises and pitfalls of teaching for transformation within the contexts of management education and managerial practice. The focus of this paper is on the critical reflection aspect of transformational learning theory.

Noer (1997) predicted that “Organizations of the future will be characterized by unending transitions. Leadership processes will be needed that will result in the development of people who have learned how to learn and organizational systems with the capacity for collective learning” (p.19). Thus, organizations will need to place a higher priority on transformative learning and not just technical skill development. Organizations must create an environment conducive to continuous learning at the personal and organizational levels. To create an environment that fosters autonomy, it is necessary to change perspectives that have worked in the past but are no longer relevant. Before managers can facilitate learning for others, they must embark on their own transformative journey. This includes questioning their own meaning schemes and perspectives; changing these structures to make possible more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspectives; and finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings (Mezirow, 1991).

Transformational learning has been described as producing fundamental change that is recognized by self and others (Clark, 1993). It is a theory about change, fundamental and sometimes dramatic, in how we see ourselves and the world around us (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Critical reflection is integral to transformational learning (Brookfield, 1995; Laiken, 2002, Mezirow, 1991, 1998, 2000; Merriam, 2004). Yet, we have noticed in our own professional experiences that managers and organizational leaders appear resistant to engaging in reflective practice. This paper reflects findings from our foray into writings about critical reflection vis-à-vis management and leadership development. More specifically, we report on four questions about critical reflection that emerged from a preliminary review of the literature: 1) in current action-oriented organizations, what is meant by critical reflection, and how is critical reflection used within the literature of management education? 2) What are the perceived barriers to teaching and practicing critical reflection from the perspectives of management education programs in the workplace and higher education? 3) What are the perceived potential consequences of critical reflection for managers, organizations, and management educators? And 4) Are management educators and workplace trainers equipped to facilitate the development of critical reflection for managers?

Herein, we have elected to focus almost exclusively on critical reflection as an important element for transformation. Additionally, we hover over the individual aspect of critical reflection instead of the social or organizational. We leave for future writing concentrated explorations into other important aspects of transformative learning, including critical reflection for social transformation, critical pedagogy, and critical theory. This paper unfolds by addressing each of the guiding questions, as we highlight some of the major concepts about critical reflection in the contexts of management education and managerial practice. We conclude by summarizing the major points of the paper and offering implications for additional scholarship and practice.

Toward a Definition of Reflection and Critical Reflection

Our review of the literature revealed varied uses of reflection and critical reflection. They appeared across a wide array of topical areas, including organizational transformation; innovation; reflexivity; emotional intelligence; teacher education; creativity; identity; social transformation; problem-based learning; action learning; empowerment; critical management studies (CMS); and critical management education (CME). In some cases, the terms seemed to be used interchangeably, creating perhaps the first pitfall of teaching for transformation (Brookfield, 2000; Hoyrup, 2004; Reynolds, 1998). Brookfield (2000) noted that reflection and reflective practices are some of the most “commonly invoked” terms in educational theory (p.125). He stated that this situation is made worse by “conflating the terms reflection and critical reflection, as if adding critical makes the reflection deeper and more profound” (p.126). Reynolds (1998) also acknowledged the frequent use of reflection in management
education and development, but noted that critical reflection, “as described by critical theory or critical pedagogy” is very different and seldom found in management education or management practice (p.1).

Mezirow (1998) differentiated among reflection, critical reflection, critical reflection of assumptions (CRA), and critical self-reflection of assumptions (CSRA). He defined reflection as a “turning back” on experience that does not necessarily imply making an assessment of what is being reflected upon (p.1). Mezirow explained that critical reflection is making a choice and believes that it can be either implicit, “as when we mindlessly choose between good and evil because of assimilated values,” or explicit, “as when we bring the process of choice into awareness and assess the reasons for making a choice” (p.2). CRA requires making an assessment of what is being reflected upon. When the object of critical reflection is an assumption, “a different order of abstraction is introduced with major potential for a change in one’s established frames of reference. “Critical self-reflection of assumptions … involves a critique of a premise that the learner has defined as problem” (Mezirow, 1998, p. 2).

Brookfield (1995) defined critical reflection as “becoming aware of the implicit assumptions that frame how we think and act … the depth of a reflective effort does not, in and of itself, make it critical. Reflection becomes critical when it helps us to understand how considerations of power frame and distort so many educational processes and interactions” (p.5). Brookfield (2000) takes exception to Mezirow’s belief that critical reflection can be implicit or mindless. For Brookfield, “critical reflection focuses on making explicit and analyzing that which was previously implicit but mindlessly accepted” (p. 131).

Reynolds (1998) noted that reflecting, particularly reflecting on experience, is central to the theories of learning, which inform thinking and practice in management education and development. From Reynolds’ (1998) perspective, critical reflection is the cornerstone of emancipatory approaches to education. Reflection, as a management learning concept, is used primarily as a key element of problem-solving. In both domains, reflection is at the core of the learning process, especially with regard to learning as “developmental” and not merely as acquisition of information. The crucial distinction in usage of terms lies in the questioning of contextual taken-for-granted social, cultural, and political assumptions, which is the hallmark of critical reflection in critical theory (p.1).

Yorks and Marsick (2000) looked at transformational learning in organizations through the exploration strategies designed to effect transformative learning. They cited the work of O’Neil (1999) and the description of four theoretical schools of action learning as illustrated by a pyramid. At the base of the pyramid is the Tacit School, which resembles a traditional executive development program. Reflection, when it occurs, is incidental and typically involves the expansion of existing frames of reference. The Critical Reflection School is at the top of the pyramid. At this level, practitioners demonstrate acquired learning goals of earlier levels and reflect on the premises that underlie the thinking of managers and provide the basis for their habits of mind. Yorks and Marsick believe there is greater potential for personal learning through transformation of points of view and habits of mind emerging from programs based on the Critical Reflection School. The authors acknowledge that this level produces more “noise” in the organization and resistance to the process. “For this reason most of the programs in large corporate organizations are patterned after the tacit school.” (p. 259-260).

Brown and Starkey, (2000) provided a psychodynamic perspective of learning in organizations and the role of critical reflection. From this perspective, “learning involves the understanding and the mitigation of ego defenses that tend toward a regressive retreat from a changing reality” (p.103). Brown and Starkey went on to say that “If skillfully managed, the outcome of critical reflection … is a self-reflexive and wise organization, secure in its ability to negotiate identity change as part of its future strategic development” (p. 103).

Although we did not find a common definition for, or use of, reflection or critical reflection, patterns of characteristics did emerge. For example: Critical reflection is an aspect of the reflection process (Mezirow 1998; Brookfield, 1995: Reynolds, 1998). At its most basic level, reflection is that “looking back” on experience directed at problem solving. Critical reflection appears to have gradients along a continuum, between critical reflection from an experiential perspective and critical reflection from a critical pedagogy perspective. Critical reflection from an experiential perspective refers to an examination of the premises or habits of mind that have prompted behaviors and actions. From a critical theory or critical pedagogy perspective, critical reflection must involve the examination of political and social constructs and assumptions that result in the imbalance of power dynamics within the context being examined. As Brookfield (1995) stated, just because reflection is not critical does not mean it is unimportant or unnecessary; but learning theory does suggest that critical reflection is necessary for transformation. However, the literature we consulted was most voluminous when discussing possible reasons for choosing not to engage in critical reflection of this type.

Perceived Barriers to Critical Reflection

Perceived barriers to critical reflection include natural resistance to dis-order and contradiction to self-perception; assumptions that critical reflection is a natural activity; constraining cultural, interpersonal, and
organizational norms on communication; cognitive development and life stage demands; perceptions of criticism instead of critique; lack of organizational support for practicing critical reflection; pace of work and lean staffing strategies; focus on instrumental tasks; intermingling of philosophical orientations (i.e., cognitivist and social learning), the discourse of critical theory, and discussions about reflection and critical reflection.

Brookfield (1995) observed that critical reflection is something that we instinctively resist for fear of what we might discover – “who wants to clarify and question assumptions one has lived by for a substantial period of time, only to find out they don’t make sense?” (p. 2).

Robbins (2005) noted that “We aren’t built to identify our own assumptions without lots of practice, yet the wrong assumptions are fatal”. (p. 1). “When we don’t know something, we assume and often we do not realize that we are doing it … and some assumptions run so deep they are hard to question” (p.2). Robbins presented and questioned several closely held assumptions about job performance and satisfaction, dispelling the assumptions with well known but disregarded facts. He acknowledged that the assumptions are held because managers do not question their deeply held beliefs.

Mezirow (1998) discussed cultural constraints to CRA and the validating dialog required for transformation. He cited Argyris and Schön (1974) who “have identified the most common frames of reference or ‘theories-in-use’ that inhibit such learning as: (a) achieve the objective as the actor defines it, (b) win, do not lose, (c) suppress negative feelings, and (d) emphasize rationality (use cool reason to persuade others). These values lead to instrumental learning and strategies of seeing interpersonal interactions as win lose games and secret efforts to manipulate others. The result of this perspective is to limit learning to strategies and tactics for achieving one’s own objectives” (p. 193). Mezirow (1998) continued, “The organizational norms that commonly inhibit critically reflective learning include: let buried failures lie; keep your view of sensitive issues private; enforce the taboo against public discussion; do not surface and test differences concerning organizational problems; avoid seeing the whole picture so one does not see how problems are connected; protect yourself by avoiding interpersonal confrontation and public discussion of sensitive issues; protect others in the same way; control the situation and the task by making up your own mind and keeping it private; and avoid public dialogue that might refute your view. If transformative learning is important, then traditional mind sets of this kind must be identified and replaced with a more open model of communication” (p. 193).

Merriam (2004) argued that a higher level of cognitive development might be a prerequisite to engaging processes such as critical reflection and reflective discourse for transformational learning. Mezirow (1998) argued that such development is likely a combination of age and education. He acknowledged that not every adult is able to practice critical reflection because of other pressing needs, such as sociocultural and economic situations that demand more immediate satisfaction over self-actualization.

Laiken (2002) observed that “organizations devalue critical reflection by using derogatory language, such as ‘mushy’ or ‘touchy-feely,’ and by maintaining systems, processes, and behaviors which relegate critical reflection to an isolated corner if it is supported at all. If skills involved in critical reflection are not valued and practiced even minimally in the action-oriented workplace, it should not be surprising that these skills are generally underdeveloped among managers” (p. 3).

Brown and Starkey (2004) believed that organizations fail to learn because of ego defenses, specifically denial, rationalization, idealization, fantasy, and symbolization, deployed to maintain a collective self-esteem. Although a degree of defense is appropriate in healthy individuals and organizations, “overprotection of self-esteem from powerful ego defenses reduces an organization’s ability and desire to search for, interpret, evaluate, and deploy information in ways that influence its dominant routines” (p. 105).

Cranston (2002) advised that teaching critical reflection for possible transformation requires time and opportunity if one wishes to guide students in discussion, reflection, exploration of divergent thinking, experimentation with nascent perspectives, reflection once again, and so on. Liimatainen, Poskiparta, Karhila, & Sjogren (2001) also identified the increasing pace of work and reduced personnel resources as barriers to learning reflective practices. As a result, students and practitioners are “more or less socialized to advance the prevailing practice” (p.9). Laiken (2002) highlighted the paradox of action versus reflection as a critical factor in blocking transformative learning in the workplace.

Yorks and Marsick (2000) identified the bounded nature of critical reflection in organizations. The focus of critical reflection is on instrumental task performance issues at the individual, work unit, and organizational levels; but “for the most part the political dimension of how the organization functions is off limits as are discussions of larger social consequences” (p. 274).

Reynolds (1998) acknowledged that there are many reasons why critical reflection has not become established within management education, including that managers are likely to regard with caution any form of analysis that publicly critiques their positions and makes them feel patronized by the “high moral ground” frequently taken by
Obstacles such as these are compounded when, by its nature, the purpose of critical reflection is to examine social processes which for most people, most of the time, are unnoticed or unquestioned” (p.2).

Perceived obstacles to critical reflection were articulated in the literature separately from perceived consequences of critical reflection, although we believe that the two are not discrete considerations. Perceptions of anticipated consequences could trigger self-monitoring activity so that anticipated consequences serve as perceived obstacles to critical reflection.

**Perceived Consequences of Critical Reflection**

Contrary to the number of obstacles to critical reflection, the number of perceived consequences found in the literature was noticeably lower. Perceived consequences included negative social and professional repercussions (see obstacles), emergent “truth” revealing a disappointing Self, sense of hopelessness, expectation that nothing of value will result, and encounter with the “dark side of transformational learning” (Brookfield, 2005, pp. 12-17).

Fenwick (2003) cautioned that professionals within academia and a business environment might be placing themselves at professional risk if they engage in critical reflection, especially if it leads to transformation:

Management students are preparing for work contexts that are highly competitive, overwhelmingly complex and bewildering, where they expect to be evaluated rigorously according to dominant notions of strategy and success…Against this, critical disciples may appear pathetically unsuccessful to our students, a collection of outdated Marxist refugees or hopelessly inactive academics comfortably drawing tenured salary within bureaucracies. (p. 4)

Robbins (2005) observed that we are terrified of the truth:

We are afraid that the truth will reveal us as incompetent, that our situation really is hopeless, that we really are not as great as we pretend we are. So we cling to our beliefs, no matter how hard the truth tries to break free … nothing tells the truth like solid data and the guts to accept it (p.2).

Robbins challenged managers to consider what they did the last time they identified and collected data that contradicted their beliefs. Did change occur, or was the data explained away to protect comfortable preconceptions?

Brown and Starkey (2000) suggested that individuals and organizations are not motivated to learn because learning requires anxiety-provoking identity changes. “Rather, they maintain individual and collective self-esteem by not questioning existing self-concepts” (p.102). It is Brown and Starkey’s position that “information that threatens an organization’s self-concept is ignored, rejected, reinterpreted, hidden, or lost” (p.103).

Oldham and Henderson (2003) lamented that “Some students reported difficulties in seeing action resulting from reflection, and the concern that they were merely revisiting the same issues again and again.” (p. 12)

Brookfield’s (2005) research with graduate students learning the process of critical reflection revealed that some outcomes compose the “dark side” of transformational learning, thus defying the rhetoric of emancipation and empowerment of some of the relevant literature in adult education.

It is important to note that perceived obstacles to, and consequences of, critical reflection are, after all, perceptions and not necessarily known facts. As such, they, too, would benefit from critical reflection on assumptions that contribute to their formation. But even if an educator or workplace learning professional were to overcome perceived obstacles to, and anticipated consequences of, teaching for transformation, are they adequately prepared to guide learners in critical reflection?

**Preparedness of Management Educators and Workplace Trainers**

We found no discussion on whether or not management educators and/or workplace trainers are equipped to facilitate the development of critical reflection. Interestingly, the management profession is known for its preoccupation with the development of competencies in the workplace. However, we encountered no such list of competencies for the educator interested in facilitating the development of critical reflection for management learners. At present, the literature holds mostly prescriptive accounts of ways in which management educators in the workplace and in higher education have attempted to teach reflection. The literature did support the need for skilled facilitation (Brown & Starkey, 2000; Yorks & Marsick, 2000; Oldham & Henderson, 2003). It also provided suggestions and case study reports regarding techniques, skills, and strategies for facilitation of critical reflection and critical thinking.

Reynolds and Vince (2004) encouraged taking management education “out of the classroom” and into the workplace through action learning and valuing managers’ experience. Reynolds and Vince did not discuss the skills
that would be required to facilitate action learning in the workplace, but they acknowledged that for many academics it is a challenge to accept the experience and meaning that managers give to that experience.

Mintzberg (2005) offered guidance to the management educator of MBA students, suggesting that they refrain from teaching management until program participants have accumulated significant managerial experience in the workplace. Armstrong (2005) described a program created by Mintzberg for mid career managers:

The concept is based around five managerial mind-sets, called reflection (oriented toward self), analysis (oriented toward organization), worldliness (oriented toward context), collaboration (oriented toward relationships) and action (oriented toward change). Each module encourages sharing, reflection sessions, and …interactive workshops…. Activities take place in rooms carefully designed to facilitate small- and large-group communities. (pp. 231-2)

In their work with nursing education, Liimatainen, Poskiparta, Karihila, & Sjogren (2001) highlighted the need for an “open and supporting learning environment” as well as supervisors and mentors “committed to reflective practice” (p.9). This attention to the climate of the organization is supported by Mezirow (1991), who identified “ideal conditions” for dialogue toward transformational learning. Cranton (2002) suggested that freedom, openness, fearlessness, and hope are necessary in order for transformation to take place.

Redding, Jeris, Connolly and Moran (1997) explored the role of learning consultation as an alternative to process consultation in working with groups to facilitate team learning. This pilot study suggested that “a more active and confrontational approach may be required to help teams become aware of “defensive routines” that limit “discussion of the undiscussables” and to actively engage in the surfacing of assumptions.

The role of the management educator interested in helping students to develop critical reflection, therefore, seems to depend on the acuity of facilitative skill; the ability to create and maintain an open and supportive climate inclusive of hope that a workable alternative will be identified; and design expertise that promotes exposure to, communicative sharing of, and meaning-making from, divergent experiences and perspectives.

Summary and Implications

Workers within contemporary organizations are encouraged to engage in continuous learning by critically reflecting on assumptions that have been unproblematicized and taken for granted. In their roles as learning coaches within the organization, managers are frequently charged with developing skills in critical reflection among employees. Some managers, management educators, and management scholars seem to resist the practice of critical reflection, which can lead to perspective transformation. This review of the literature suggested that clues to this resistance could be rooted in the way that reflection and critical reflection are inconsistently defined and utilized across contexts and texts; in real and perceived obstacles to teaching, developing, and practicing critical reflection; in real and perceived consequences to teaching for, developing, and practicing critical reflection; and in the attitudes, skills, and competencies needed to teach for transformation.

These findings point to implications for continued scholarship in, and practice for, the development of critical reflection within the contexts of management education and managerial development in the workplace:

- Monitor the ways in which one discusses and disseminates information about reflection and critical reflection, and provide definitions that describe the difference/s between the two;
- Develop facilitative skills with an emphasis on communicative competence for guiding learning from experience, question posing and question finding, and discussion;
- Teach how to critically reflect by preparing the learner; informing him or her about possible outcomes of the process; identifying perceived obstacles to its enactment; facilitating questioning of assumptions that underlie these perceptions; providing hope that critical reflection will lead to a workable resolution; and assisting the learners to identify possible realistic and acceptable (from their perspectives) alternatives with which to move forward;
- Foster a climate of freedom, inquiry, and safety in which to question assumptions, express different points of view, experiment with possible alternatives, and practice the art of critical reflection;
- Recognize that learners might differ in levels of cognitive development and life cycle readiness to engage in critical reflection and that the mastery of critical reflection requires time, opportunity, relevance, and practice;
- Critique management but not the manager if thou wisheth to be heard; and
• Continue to identify and explore potential ethical concerns surrounding the development of critical reflection among managers, including whether or not it is even appropriate to teach for transformation, given the constraints and risks of the workplace context.

References
Self-Transformation in Inter-Cultural Communication

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Abstract: The studies of inter-cultural communication describe identity negotiation as a process of a stress-adaptation-growth dynamic that leads immigrants to change their worldviews. The change of worldviews shares many features with self-transformation that is illustrated in adult transformative learning studies. By an empirical study on immigrants' identity negotiations, the purpose of this paper is to understand the applicability of adult transformative learning in facilitating immigrants' identity negotiations.

Purpose

Inter-cultural communication, as a change of cultural context to an immigrant, is a chance to build new memberships with the groups of a new culture. The change of memberships to social groups requires one to negotiate his or her social identities. Empirical studies indicate immigrants have experienced stress or difficulty, the feeling of powerless and insecure in the process of identity negotiation in the context of cross-cultural contact (Alkhazraji, 1997; Hovey, 2000; Lee & Chen, 2000). Through a process of stress-adaptation-growth dynamic, inter-cultural communication studies assume that identity negotiation in inter-cultural communication could lead to personal growth (Kim, 2001; Ting-Toomey, 1999). For research interests, inter-cultural communication studies have not extended their research foci to contemporary learning theory. As a matter of fact, what have been observed in inter-cultural communication studies about the phenomena of identity negotiation share many features with the process of self-transformation that is described in the studies of adult transformative learning. Consequently, we may be able to apply the knowledge that we gain from both studies to facilitate adult immigrants in gaining better control of their identity negotiations. To verify the assumption about the relation between identity negotiation in inter-cultural communication and adult self-transformative learning, the research question for this study is to explore immigrants' self-transformation experiences in the process of identity negotiation, if there is any.

Theoretical Framework

Self-transformation as a process that results in both studies (inter-cultural communication and transformative learning) has been described as a transformation of a worldview of individuals. Inter-cultural communication studies propose a cognitive focus—mindful communication as a skill to control identity negotiation in inter-cultural communication. To conduct a cognitive focus identity negotiation or mindful communication, Ting-Toomey (1999) suggests that individuals have to equip themselves with transcultural competence (See Table 1). Most importantly, the individual has to evaluate his or her situation that includes the cultural context and the individual's transcultural competence consciously.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Abilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance for ambiguity</td>
<td>Ability to meet new situations with mindfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-mindedness</td>
<td>Ability to respond to cultural others in non evaluative ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Ability to shift frame of reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectfulness</td>
<td>Ability to show respect and positive regard for another person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>Ability to adapt appropriately to particular situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity</td>
<td>Ability to convey empathy verbally and non verbally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Ability to engage in divergent as well as systems-level thinking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hui-wen Tu, Penn State University. Presented at the Sixth International Transformative Learning Conference, Michigan State University, Oct. 6-9, 2005.

1 Data from Ting-Toomey (1999).
What is described in inter-cultural communication studies about immigrants' conscious control of their identities negotiation is similar to critical thinking or critical reflection that was proposed as one of the techniques of transformative learning by adult education researchers (Brookfield, 1990; Mezirow, 1997). Critical reflection is the conscious and explicit assessment of consequences of our existing meaning structure or frame of reference. By rational conscious focus, the researchers assume that an individual is able to examine his or her life interest and the power that control over his or her life. Technically, both critical thinking of adult transformative learning and cognitive focus identity negotiation of inter-cultural communication studies, are highly related to rational cognition. Meanwhile, inter-cultural communication studies also noted that identity negotiation is not always under conscious control. A realistic individual cannot always be conscious of his or her identity completely because the core of the identity—that is composed of historical influences, genes, and one’s ego—is sometimes too implicit for one’s cognitive awareness (Erikson, 1959; Rangell, 1994). Mindless response is common in our communication. Sometimes individuals' communications are at the "reactive" stage rather than the reflective thinking stage (Ting-Toomey, 1997). Non-cognitive focus identity negotiation (mindless communication) is the term to describe identity negotiation that is motivated or directed without cognitive focus; it can be promoted by an individual's emotions or other affective factors. Non-cognitive focus identity negotiation generally is dominated by people's preference of behaviors. People's preference for their own culture may explain the force of emotion and affective factors in identity negotiation because one's cultural preference—language, social norms, and beliefs are the primary elements that feature one's cognition structure (Ting-Toomey, 1997; Stephan & Stephan, 1992). Non-cognitive focus identity negotiation that is described in the studies of inter-cultural communication is also similar to adult transformative learning that is resulted from non-critical thinking. Some researchers argue that the emphasis on critical reflection as a rational approach to transformative learning overestimate the importance of critical reflection in transformative learning experiences (Clark & Wilson, 1991; Dirkx, 1998, Taylor, 2001). They also studied self-transformation that was conducted without critical thinking, such as emotion and feeling, those non-conscious factors in transformative learning (Lyon, 2002; Taylor, 1993). Adult education researchers’ attentions on self-transformation that is resulted from non-critical thinking implicate that non-cognitive focus identity negotiation in the context of cross-cultural contact could be studied for educational purposes. Accordingly, an empirical study of immigrants' self-transformation experiences may answer the applicability of adult transformative learning to the facilitating of immigrants' inter-cultural adaptation, especially in the process of identity negotiation.

Methodology
The investigation employs in-depth interviews with ten Taiwanese immigrants in Delaware to gain insight into Taiwanese immigrants' identity negotiation experiences in the context of inter-cultural contact. A description of one's self-transformation experience composes three major elements: what one perceived of him or her self and his or her relations to the world, the turning point of one's life, and what she or he was after the turning point of his or her life. Accordingly, the research phenomena for this study may have started a long time ago. To approach the research phenomena, the data collection for this study relied on participants' self-descriptions. Three forms of data were collected from ten participants: structured face-to-face questionnaire interviews, semi-structured interviews, and direct observation. In order to reflect participants' experiences and the turning points of their life, biographical analysis (Denzin, 1989) was employed in this study. The data analysis of this study was conducted via the following steps: 1) transcribe the interviews; 2) create the narratives; 3) arrive at themes; 4) summarize; 5) gather participants' input on summaries; 6) note changes in the summary.

Findings
Three major findings emerged from this investigation. First, some participants' self-transformation experiences were the results of non-cognitive focus identity negotiations. When compared with participants' descriptions of self-transformation, participants' experiences of self-transformation that were conducted without cognitive focus tended to experience less pressure than those conducted with cognitive focus. However, participants who had experienced cognitive focus self-transformation generally felt that they had learned something to improve themselves and to make their lives better. According to their descriptions, this process involved the comparison of two cultures, synthesis and integration of knowledge, and a better understanding of the self. Second, some participants experienced more than once of self-transformation in a period of time. Those experiences included self-transformation that was conducted without cognitive focus and self-transformation that was conducted with cognitive focus. Third, cognitive focus identity negotiation does not always leads one to self-transformation. Some participants became more comfortable with their original frame of references after self-evaluation and examination.
Interpretation

The Definition of Self-Transformation

Participants who experienced cognitive focus identity negotiation may result in self-transformation or retaining their identities. From participants' self-descriptions, those who retained their identities actually had an evaluation of their situations in the cultural context. For instance, Wei-da had noticed that his children's cultural concepts were different from his. He felt he was a Taiwanese who was raising American kids in the U.S. He was conscious of his new identity; he knew his new identity—a resident of the U.S. would bring him more obligations to this country. He was a research manager in a pharmaceutical company; he felt that his cultural behavior, such as his feature and eating habit, did not influence his work. He agreed that making some changes would improve his relations with his colleagues and his children. However, he concerned about his change (nationality and cultural behavior) would make his family in Taiwan feel he were betraying his roots. Most of all he felt had passion on his native culture. In Wei-da's case, a consideration about his situation made him felt comfortable about who he was. Wei-da did not change his worldview, but he changed his attitude toward his maintaining of his cultural identity. The change of worldview was defined as the result of self-transformation (Kim, 2001; Mezirow, 1997). Researchers do not deem people who choose to retain their identities as having a changed worldview or self-transformation. According to the participants, they retained their worldview confidently after the process self-reflection and evaluation in two cultures. They were happy about who they were and what they were doing. Participants' experiences suggest that the changes of attitude at some levels are the change of self, this fact impacts our definition of self-transformation.

Self-Compromise in Self-Transformation

Self-transformation could be a result of self-compromise. According to participants' descriptions, their options of self-transformation were depended on the evaluations of their internal and external resources, and the considerations about the liability—things they may lose regarding the options they choose. In some case, participants dropped what they assumed as valuable in order to accomplish their tasks in daily life. For example, when Guoming was elected to be the leader for a local Chinese community, he did not like "authority." He did not like the way Chinese do business (relationships first and business second). In order to get thing done, he compromised what he assumed to be correct, and he adopted the Chinese way to work with people in the Chinese community. From a communication perspective, the self is always negotiated in avowal and ascription (Hecht, Jackson & Ribeau, 2003; Martin & Nakayama, 2002). Guoming's experience shows how one compromised his idea of self in his negotiation between the identities he assumed about himself and the ascribed identities he received form others.

Intercultural Resources and Self-Transformation

Guoming changed his attitude and values (he learned to speak up and not to overemphasize authority) during his working with American workers; then his self-transformation was challenged by the Chinese community when he became a leader in Chinese community. People in the Chinese community value authority and relationships. Guoming felt that he could not finish his job successfully because he ignored the traditions that were valued in the Chinese community. Therefore he changed his attitude again. He became more Chinese. Guoming addressed that he realized these cultural differences and his roles in these cultural contexts because he had this position. He was not aware of these differences before he was promoted to the leadership level. Accordingly, resources (positions) gave one a broader view to evaluate self in the cultural context.

Critical Events and Self-Transformation

The participants' biographies also showed a possible relationship between non-cognitive focus self-transformation and cognitive focus self-transformation. In those cases, the participants' sudden awareness of their non-cognitive self-transformation could lead to a cognitive focus self-transformation. For instance, Jana had lived in the U.S. for ten years before she went back to Taiwan to see her dying mother in a hospital. In their last meet, she kissed her mother on her forehead, and told her mother that they would meet in the heaven soon. Jana's behavior surprised her relatives. Jana was told by her sister that her behavior was too westernized and improper for Taiwan's culture. Jana had never thought of her change and her identity since she became an American. Jana was surprised by her change, and became conscious about her behavior when interacting with people of different cultures. Jana's cross-cultural contact gave her a chance to reflect on her identity. Her non-cognitive focus of self-transformation caught her relatives' attention, which motivated her to conduct cognitive focus identity negotiation. Jana's experiences of self-transformation suggests that non-cognitive self-transformation could lead to a cognitive focus
self-transformative learning experience if we could promote immigrants to become conscious of their situations and the changes they have made.

Summary
The major purposes of this paper were to explore immigrants' self-transformation experiences in the process of identity negotiation. Through participants' self-descriptions about their experiences of identity negotiation in the United States, the research purposes were achieved. Significantly, both the participant and the researcher recognized that this study helped them have a better understanding of themselves in this cross-cultural context.

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The Role of Archetype and Symbol in Transformative Learning

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Susan K. Lorenz, Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Abstract: Our experiential workshop discusses both transformative learning theory, particularly a personal and imaginative approach as discussed by Dirkx, and interpretations of transformative theory as seen through the lens of Jungian psychology and personal understanding. The importance of archetypes, symbol, mandalas and dreams to helping individuals make meaning of their lives in the context of transformative learning is emphasized.

Introduction

A defining condition of being human is our urgent need to understand and order the meaning of our experience, to integrate it with what we know to avoid the threat of chaos… (Mezirow, 2000, p.3).

Transformative Learning theory describes a deep learning that engages a person’s mind and soul at a level that may cause the person to reflect on some of their beliefs, or orientations towards life. It is often facilitated by the experience of a disorienting dilemma, such as divorce, job loss, relocation or other upset in our life. John Dirkx discusses the two major approaches to Transformative Learning: “transformative learning represents a heroic struggle to wrest consciousness and knowledge from the forces of unconsciousness and ignorance…. Transformative learning also involves very personal and imaginative ways of knowing, grounded in a more intuitive and emotional sense of our experiences…this is manifest in the symbolic, narrative and mythological. It is a view of learning through soul” (Dirkx, 1997, p. 79-80). Like the rhizomes that Carl Jung discusses in his metaphor for our collective unconscious, skeins of knowledge and desire to grow may lie just below our consciousness, where we may understand these possibly disturbing elements through archetype and symbol. When we can engage our conscious mind and heart with understanding archetypes and symbols, we may develop insight into issues in our lives that lead us into the waters of transformative learning.

From a Jungian perspective, Transformative Learning may be viewed as part of Individuation, as a process part of learning who we are, as we become our Authentic Self. After all, transformative learning requires reflection, a process of going into our self, critical analysis, and the ability to step back and see a wider perspective, and often a much deeper perspective. These are some of the elements of the “Journey of the Hero,” a journey that most of us make, or strive towards, in our life on this planet, as we get older.

Journey of the Hero

Historically, the Journey of the Hero involves either a “physical deed, in which the hero performs a courageous act in battle or saves a life. The other kind is the spiritual deed, in which the hero learns to experience the supernormal range of human spiritual life and then comes back with a message” (Campbell, Joseph, 1988, p. 152). In most of the journey of the hero stories, the hero either starts with trying to find what she or he has lost, and wants to reclaim, or they feel a need for something that isn’t available to them in their culture or society. Thus they embark on their adventure.

The Hero’s Journey

The hero starts with a call to adventure, then may have a refusal of call, finally going across the midpoint of the journey, from whence one cannot return, crossing the invisible divide, The Threshold of Adventure. Once this threshold is crossed, the Hero goes on, bravely or with temerity, committed to the journey. Once on the journey, the hero often finds hurdles, set-backs, disorienting dilemmas and other bewildering experiences, and as the hero struggles to make sense of these challenges, she or he may develop new insights, figure out how to deal with these challenges, and become more confident in their abilities. Sometimes, when things seem dark for the hero, a helper or helpers appear, unbidden, and assist the hero in much the same way that Virgil assisted Mentor. Finally, the hero

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1 Adapted from Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces (Jaworski, 1998, p.89).
must undertake the most difficult and dangerous part of the journey and experience the “Supreme Ordeal,” which successfully undertaken, results in the Apotheosis of the hero. When the hero returns to her or his society, she or he has changed, and received the Elixir, or Gift that, for many of us, is a new insight into who we are, resulting in much greater authenticity and self-knowledge. These gifts often provide help, sustenance or some other boon to the society or group to which the hero belongs. In the process of the journey, the hero is transformed and may bring back something important to share with their people. This transformation usually is seen as a growth experience in the hero transitioning from one state to another in the process of becoming the authentic self. Early in the journey, or at some point into the adventure, the hero may find him or herself in a liminal state, that is a transitory state from the ending of the former life, and not yet through the adventure to where the hero becomes changed and enters the new state.

Important guides on the journey include archetypes and symbols, common to all humankind, yet unique to each individual. Once we are able to identify archetypes and symbols, we can make personal meaning from them, using them in a personal way that illuminates our inner selves and brings us closer to uncovering who we are.

Archetypes

Archetypes are “identical psychic structures common to all men (and women), which I later called the archetypes of the collective unconscious. They correspond to the concept of the ‘pattern of behavior’ in biology” (Jung, 1956, p. 158). These archetypes come from “an inborn disposition to produce parallel thought-formations, or rather identical psychic structures” (Jung, 1956, p. 158). “The archetype, as a glance at the history of religious phenomena will show, has a characteristically numinous effect, so that the subject is gripped by it as though an instinct. What is more, the instinct can itself be restrained and even overcome by this power, a fact for which there is no need to advance proofs” (Jung, 1958, p. 158).

The idea of Archetypes is an ancient one. It is related to Plato’s concept of ideal forms: patterns already existing in the divine mind that determine in what form the material world is brought into being. But we owe Jung the concept of psychological archetypes: “the characteristic patterns that pre-exist in the collective psyche of the human race, that repeat themselves eternally in the psyche of individual human beings and determine the basic ways that we perceive and function as psychological beings” (Johnson, 1986).

What About Symbols?

Symbols are an integral part of our everyday lives, appearing on such commonplace objects as the back of a dollar bill (eye in triangle), or reaching out to us from art and nature. A common factor of symbols is that their meaning is not readily expressed in intellectual terms (i.e., defined by words). Many times we have a strong sense of what a symbol means, and other times we only know that it has a meaning that we know is true yet are unable to pin down in terms of our immediate life. We feel that the truth floats just outside our reach, a carrot without a stick.

An example of a symbol that has caught the attention and imagination of westerners is the Holy Grail. Most of us are familiar with the grail as a goblet, either the fine crystal goblet of Wagner’s opera, the simple wooden version in Indiana Jones or perhaps the gold goblet of Monty Python which the French claim they’ve “already got one”. All three were believed to have held the blood of Jesus, carried to safety by Joseph of Arimathea. However, the grail takes other forms in the many versions of the legend that have been written through the ages. In Chrétien de Troye’s “Perceval”, the grail is a chafing dish that contains whatever food the diner most desires (Cline, 1985, p. xx). In “The Mabinogion”, the grail takes the form of a large cauldron, in which the dead are placed after battle and return to life by the next morning (Gantz, 1976).

To approach the meaning of this symbol, one must look for common factors, in this case the fact that in all examples mentioned, the grail is a vessel. However, the fact that the grail is a vessel still circumambulates around the core truth – a vessel can be just that, something we use to cook in or drink from, not exactly a concept that would hold the attention and stir the imaginations of minds across centuries let alone profit-driven film producers. We can look to other common factors, for example, the contents of the grail, to get closer to the meaning of this symbol. The gourmet French find the food they most desire their chafing dish grail, the Christians use the grail to contain the blood of the Son of God that was sent to earth to save their souls and grant them eternal life through his death and rebirth, and the Welsh use the grail to bring their dead warriors back to life to fight another day. While we can sense a pattern of rejuvenation or rebirth (via spiritual or physical sustenance) in these three motifs, we also sense that the grail symbol begins to devolve from the archetypal to the personal, and the core meaning threatens to slip from our grasp. Frantically, we circle back to ponder the Germanic grail in “Parzival”, which takes the form of a chunk of asbestos-containing mineral with healing powers (von Eschenbach, Wolfram, 1980).

Other symbols that may have a universal resonance across cultures include the Uroboros, the sign of eternity and rebirth in the dragon or snake that eats its own tail, and the Phoenix, a bird that arises from its ashes after
puriﬁcation and renewal by ﬁre! Even simple geometric shapes, such as the triangle, serve as symbols. “The triangle symbolizes the tendency of the universe to converge towards the point of unity” (Jung, 1974, p. 228). It is also a symbol of strength. Many of these symbols are found in the work of the ancient Greeks, Egyptians, Chinese, Native Americans and South Americans as well as the Celts and African tribes people. Seeds and young plants often symbolize new life, while autumn leaves and barren branches may signify death.

Mandalas: Unique and Powerful Symbols.

“Mandala is the Sanskrit word for ‘circle,’ but a circle that is coordinated or symbolically arranged so that it has the meaning of a cosmic order. When composing mandalas, you are trying to coordinate your personal circle with the universal circle. In a very elaborate Buddhist Mandala, for example, you have the deity in the center as the power source, the illumination source. The peripheral images would be manifestations or aspects of the deity’s radiance.

In working out a Mandala for yourself, you draw a circle and the think of the different impulse systems and value systems in your life. Then you compose them and try and ﬁnd out where your center is. Making a Mandala is a discipline for pulling all those scattered aspects of your life together, for ﬁnding a center and ordering yourself to it. You try to coordinate your circle to the universal circle…to be at the center” (Campbell, 1988, p. 271).

We can use a circle to represent our unconscious, both collective and personal, and another circle to represent our conscious awareness. Becoming whole occurs in the area overlapped by the two circles. The size of the overlapping area is directly related to our self-knowledge. Many people have just a small overlap, and may wonder why their lives seem out of synchronicity, or why they have trouble making meaning of their lives. The greater the overlap, the more the circles superimpose on one another, the more we are fully integrated between our conscious awareness and our unconscious and the more whole we become. Individuation is the process for becoming whole, as we journey through life.

**Figure 1**

*Levels of Integration*

*Low Level of Integration*

collective/personal unconscious

individual consciousness

**High Level of Integration**

collective/personal unconscious

individual consciousness

Dreams

Dreams are one means that we have of connecting with the collective and personal unconscious. The language of the unconscious is primarily visual, relying heavily on images of people, places and things that may or may not be familiar to us. These images may be comprised of archetypes and symbols to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the subjective or objective nature of the dream.

In their book, *The Way of the Dream*, authors Marie-Louise von Franz and Fraser Boa mention: “Initial discoveries show that dreams reveal a profound relationship between our inner and outer states of being and give insights into the depths of the human mind hitherto unplumbed by the conscious intellect. Properly deciphered, they contain important information about the physical and mental health of the individual… The Swiss psychiatrist, C. G. Jung was a pioneer in dream research. He discovered that dreams attempt to regulate and balance both our physical and mental energies. They not only reveal the root cause of inner disharmony and distress, but also indicate the latent potential for life within the individual. They present creative solutions to everyday problems and inspirational ideas for the creative potential of life.” (von Franz & Boa, 1992, pages ix-x).

In their work, von Franz and Boa caution that in their experience, much of what we dream we may call ‘subjective,’ since the meaning of the symbol, or meaning of what others may be doing in the dream has personal
significance to the dreamer, therefore, relying on published dream dictionaries will only provide a static description of a dream element, for example, falling out teeth indicating ‘losing our bite on things.’ Dreaming of a friend or relative stealing our car, or being our lover, is rarely an objective item, and often may prompt us to ask ourselves what part of us is stealing our car or being our lover, and what stealing and loving may mean to us.

In her book, Dream Theatres of the Soul, Jean Benedict Raffa mentions: “I believe our dreams show us who we really are and what we can become. The healthy, life-enhancing power that is the birthright of every human being comes from developing our individuality. The more aspects of ourselves we develop, the more empowered we become. Thus dreamwork is essentially about personal empowerment…Authentic power comes from transcending the limitations of the physical world and serving the development of our souls. As we consciously do this through dreamwork and other intentional psychological and spiritual practices, we acquire new awareness and develop new senses like intuition, inner knowing, and the ability to see, hear, feel and understand things that were not apparent to us before. When this happens, we become empowered to promote love, compassion, and unity in every aspect of our lives” (Raffa, Jean Benedict, 1994, 12-13).

Summary

In the context of Transformative Learning, we can gain insight and understanding about ourselves, through becoming aware of archetypes and symbols, so that when we resonate to certain images that we see, dream or think of, we can try and make meaning of them in the context of getting both their collective unconscious meaning and the personal meaning for us, in our lives. Doing this may help us to merge our circles, and reframe our lives, making meaning as we grow. Becoming self-aware, authentic, and willing to seek understanding, to question our beliefs, and to be open to learning our all hallmarks of truly Transformative Learning.

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Expanding Stories of Ourselves, Others and Us in Dialogue:  
A Relational Approach to Transformative Learning in the Engagement of Diversity

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Abstract: Groups exploring social identity group differences in dialogue were invited to reflect on transformative dialogic moments to explore and identity discursive practices consequential to creating that experience. Two group reflection sessions, each preceded by individual interviews, facilitated by the researcher using the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM), reflected on episodes identified by people as having been transformative. The reflection itself produced new transformative dialogic moments, a double-loop learning effect. The enabling discursive conditions are discussed.

Today’s social environment is fast moving and challenging. On a daily basis we are called upon to respond with great speed to multiple levels of complexity including but not limited to sociopolitical issues, multiple group identity affiliations and social roles. Under such pressure, we are likely to rely on our taken-for-granted assumptions, beliefs and frames of reference. Transformative learning theory suggests that taking the time for reflection, particularly in the presence of a disorienting dilemma, provides the opportunity to challenge our habits of mind and action, opening the door to novel ways of being, thinking and engaging (Mezirow, 2000). Most of the literature on transformative learning theory orient the discussion from an individual, cognitive perspective (Taylor, 2003). This study builds on the theory of transformative learning on two dimensions. One is in the application of the theory to the engagement of socially and historically defined group differences, otherwise referred to as social diversity. It also builds on the transformative learning literature shifting the locus from an individual, cognitive perspective to the in-between, or relational arena. The study showed that through shared reflection, dialogic conversation and attending to mutuality, people expand their deeply embedded stories of their social group identities to embrace those of others whose stories are significantly different from their own.

Overview of the Study: Theoretical Foundations, Participants and Methodology

The study described in this paper is grounded in social construction and communication theory as well as relational theory. Building on Martin Buber’s definition of dialogic moments (1958), and more recent writings from Kenneth Cissna and Robert Anderson (2002) transformative dialogic moments were identified when meaning “emerges in the context of relationship and when one acknowledges and engages another with a willingness to alter their own story” (2002, p.186). McNamee and Gergen (1999) describe the transformative process as “first transforming the interlocutors’ understanding of the action in question … and second, altering the relations among the interlocutors themselves” (1999, p 35). Relational theory identifies the relationship as a source of growth and development (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Surrey, 1991). These definitions shaped and guided the reflective lens as well as influencing what was defined as data. The data was identified as what occurred in the group reflection rather than what was talked about in the reflection. The analysis was focused on what was created in the movement between and among people in conversations.

The people who collaborated with this study were members of two pre-formed groups whose purposes were to explore their collective group identity differences. One group was exploring faith differences and included 18 women from different denominations of Christianity and Judaism, and from the Muslim and Bahá’í traditions. The other group was exploring issues of race and gender and was composed of 8 people: 2 African American women, 2 African American men, 2 white women and 2 white men.

The methodology designed for this study, an appreciative collaborative inquiry, integrated different aspects of action inquiry research methodologies such as participatory action research (Park, 1999, 2000), collaborative inquiry (Bray, Smith, & Yorks, 2000) cooperative inquiry (Baldwin, 2001; Heron & Reason, 2001) action inquiry (Torbert, 1991), and appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider, Barrett, & Srivastva, 1995; Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 1999). The methodology was informed by the principles of an appreciative inquiry in that the inquiry invited people to talk about the focus of the inquiry: transformative dialogic moments. Based on social construction theory, the principles of appreciative inquiry suggest that what you talk about is consequential to what you produce.

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The methodology resembled an action inquiry (Torbert, 1991) more specifically a collaborative inquiry (Bray, Smith, & Yorks, 2000) in that it involved the participants in an iterative, recursive and reflexive process, both individually and as a group, in exploring the research questions. Each step was shaped and influenced by what emerged from participants in the prior step. The focus of the first group reflection session was informed by the individual interviews that preceded it. The subsequent individual follow-up interviews were reflections on the first group. Participants were given a transcript of each group prior to the individual follow-up interviews. The second individual interviews shaped the process for the second group reflection.

The purpose of the study was to discover when people created transformative dialogic moments in the process of relating, what were the discursive processes that:

- Fostered transformative dialogic moments in the engagement of social group identities with a history of conflict,
- Enabled people to stay engaged in the story of the other while being aware of their own story, and
- Sparked people’s curiosity to understand the other and, consequently, oneself in relationship to one’s group, in a new way.

The data was generated from guided reflections of episodes from prior group meetings selected by the group members as having been transformative. The reflective process was facilitated during two consecutive group meetings. Individual interviews were conducted prior to and following each group interview to deepen the reflection. In the first individual interview people were invited to tell a story about a transformative dialogic moment they recalled from their group experience. The interviews themselves were generative (Barrett, 1995). While there had been connections and disconnections in the life of the group, the interviews amplified the connections, what enabled those moments with particular regard to the quality of the process and the relationships.

The Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM): A Practical Theory and a Reflective Tool

The heuristics from the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) (Cronen, Pearce, & Lannamann, 1982; Pearce, 2001, 2004) as well as circular questioning (Tomm, 1984a, 1984b), shaped the interviews and guided the analysis. One of the premises of CMM is the belief that meaning emerges in the process of relating, the back and forth between people in conversation and communication events. Thus the focus was less on what was meant by what each person said, and more on what meaning was being made in the process of the turns of the conversations and episodes. Each of the CMM tools provides a magnifying glass for different aspects of the meaning making process. The CMM model was used to guide the group meetings as well as to analyze the transcripts of those meetings.

Four of the heuristics: the LUUUTT model, the serpentine model, the daisy model and the hierarchy model were shared with people during the individual interviews and again, at the beginning of the first group session. As one chooses tools to help them do something, people in the reflection process chose what tools they found helpful to explore their stories. Each of the heuristics is described along with an example of what it created in the reflection process.

The **LUUUTT model** amplifies stories. LUUUTT is an acronym for the stories lived, the stories untold, stories unheard stories unknown that, once explored, expand the collective sense making, the storytelling process, and the stories told. This model creates an invitation to explore discrepancies in how we tell our stories lived in order to create new, shared meaning. As one person would begin to tell the story of a particular episode, another would add to it either with something that was part of the shared lived story, or something that was an untold story, or was an unheard story. In the process of retelling the story of the episode, stories unheard become stories told. Unknown stories were identified thus creating the opportunity for new, shared discoveries. Using this model as a reference gave the group members language to identify a how their process of storytelling was following an unspoken rule of politeness. While the rule of politeness (as they put it) had created a sense of safety for some, it was an inhibiting factor for deeper engagement for others. This unspoken rule, once articulated by the members of the group, unleashed a new level of storytelling that created new transformative dialogic moments in the reflection process.

The **serpentine model** calls attention to the process of emerging meaning from one speech act to another. The serpent is a visual metaphor of how the meaning of a particular moment is made by what preceded it and what follows, and by the way people define the boundaries of a particular episode. People in conversations with identity group differences that have histories of conflict often have different temporal boundaries that define and shape their group’s narratives. One person’s episode may begin when the story was first told in the group while the episode and consequently the meaning for another is contextualized back 100 years. When people can, together, reflect on how interpretations are made based on differently construed historical events, the potential is created for new patterns of engagement. The serpentine model highlights how our response contextualizes the meaning of what has come before,
in a moment, or in history. We have a choice whenever we respond, to shift undesirable patterns of relating, thereby inviting new shared meaning and better social relationships. In one of the groups the episode selected was when a member told the group about her experience at work on September 11th, 2001. As a Muslim, she was suddenly a stranger to her colleagues of 20 years in the hospital where she worked as a physician. The process of reflecting on the impact of that story on group members since it had been shared created a transformative dialogic moment. People in each of the faith groups, including the woman who initially created the episode by telling the story, changed their perspectives of their faith group in relationship with others.

The daisy model depicts the stories or conversations from our past experiences, relationships and inherited narratives that we use to make interpretations. In the process of relating, each of us brings the particular petals of our daisy that, from our perspective, pertains to the situation. Some petals are more pronounced than others representing how we choose to amplify some conversations more than others. The daisy model was a prompt to deepen the assumptions and interpretations that people were making. The daisy was used by group members to frame untold stories from prior episodes. As the story of an episode was shared, others would add petals to the daisy that were pertinent to their interpretation at the time, and since.

The hierarchy model highlights how meaning is context dependent. Episodes or speech acts are always embedded in multiple contexts. These contexts include, but are not limited to how we see ourselves, our relationships with others, our identification with a particular group, the rules we construe for the particular episode, the culture, life scripts, and so on. Using the hierarchy model in a group reflection helps to identify how the contextualizing of the episode at different levels can make dissonance. More than one story was told about a time when someone from one’s own identity group told a story as representing the group that another member of that group did not contextualize in the same way. These stories became stories of dissonance that people had chosen to ignore. The reflection process provided an opportunity to return to these episodes and make new, shared meaning.

Findings, Surprises and Implications

There were five key findings. The first was that reflection in relationship, as distinguished from individual reflection, fostered a transformative learning process. While the intent of the study had been to explore transformative dialogic moments that the group had already experienced, the reflection process itself produced transformative dialogic moments. The opening question was expected to invite memories of dialogic moments that had been a shared experience. Instead, the initial response of many of the group members was, “I don’t think we have had one”. Within seconds, a story was told. In some instances the story was not one of a transformative dialogic moments. Rather it was a moment of dissonance. While this initially was seen to be a departure to the focus of the research, it became a significant and consequential outcome. Moments that had been disorienting dilemmas or moments of dissonance, once revisited and explored, created transformative dialogic moments. The reflection process helped people stay engaged with moments of dissonance to discover new, shared meaning. This supports the notion that the process of transformative learning rests in one’s opportunity to stay connected with dissonance and discomfort to notice how one knows, and explore alternatives (Brookfield, 1987). This study extends that notion from the individual to relational learning.

The second finding was that the use of storytelling was consequential in shifting the form of relating from monological, or an individual focus, to dialogical or a relational focus. The design of the interview process involved asking people to reflect back and retell the story of a defining moment rather than to tell about what they learned from the group experience. Storytelling moved the position of the storytellers from being the story, or the first person position, to looking at the story with others, or the third person position. The stories provided a focal point for members to focus on and to share their different perspectives and construed meanings. The shared experience of holding the first and third person perspectives, side-by-side highlighted how the stories we live do not happen to us; nor are they events that we use our minds to understand. Rather we are continually making stories together in the process of relating. We enter into patterns of activity and create shared meaning based on our actions in coordination with each other. With intention, we can create new, shared stories. Storytelling created empathy in the relationships or mutual empathy (Surrey, Kaplan, & Jordan, 1990).

The third finding was that transformative dialogic moments are produced in waves of dissonance and resonance. Martin Buber describes dialogic moments as fleeting, as disappearing in the moment of their appearance, and as nonverbal (Buber, 1959; Kenneth N. Cissna & Anderson, 2002). The recursive and reflective process of interviewing and reflection expanded the frame of a dialogic moment from fleeting to pulsating. The stories told in the individual and group interviews were of moments of resonance for some and dissonance for others. The opportunity for shared storytelling from different perspectives formed more of a pulsating wave with moments of harmonic resonance of new meaning that, in turn, deepened meaning for what happened next.
The fourth finding was that people in conversations follow rules, sometimes explicit, more often they are implicit. Sometimes they are shared principles of engagement. Often they are not. When rules or principles are shared, people are more likely to feel in rhythm with each other, or, on the same wavelength. When the rules of engagement are different, some rules are authorized over others. While the intent of this study was to identify discursive processes that made transformative dialogic moments possible, it became clear early in the process, that there was much to learn about both. In one example, the pain of being different due to one’s sexual orientation, despite being a White man, was muted by another’s assertion that majority culture status still trumped. Steinberg and Bar-On described a similar emergence in their research with Palestinians and Jews in Israel (unpublished):

While being in the same room, each group [seemed] to be self-absorbed. There [was] no turning to the other as a separate and unique entity. Each party assumed that it knew who the other was (Gurevitch, 1989). This assumption of “knowing” based on stereotypic definitions contributed to conducting two monologues that did not meet (p.17).

The rules of this group implicitly suggested that there is a something or an answer to discover and know, and a way of knowing. Transformative dialogic moments emerge in the space of inquiry, the pursuit of curiosity, and the place of not knowing. The other group talked about how their trepidations about being impolite inhibited their connection and the depth of their conversations. The mere process of talking about how they talked shifted how they talked. They began to ask different kinds of questions and found a way to challenge each other, and remaining respectful. In another instance, the rules of engagement truncated what might have been a transformative dialogic moment. In the turns of the conversations there were instances where a potential connection, of knowing another through a story, a painful self-disclosure, was truncated by monological form of engagement.

Other discursive processes were found to catalyze dialogic moments and transformative learning. Curiosity and engaging from a place of inquiry were essential for transformative learning in relationships. Taking time for intentional reflection using storytelling and circular questions for mutual sense making both identified and created dialogic moments. This enhanced emotional connecting and empathy with another’s story and objectivity in relationship with one’s own story (Yorks & Kasl, 2002).

Finally, the study thus expands transformative learning theory from shifts in habits of mind to shifts in habits of relating. Discursive processes that foster transformative dialogic moments, particularly in situations where there are deeply held historical narratives, were identified. Taking a communication perspective in collecting, and analyzing data, on transformative dialogic moments in the engagement of social group identities that have a history of deeply embedded differences provided examples of how social identity, empathy and transformative learning are construed in the process of relating.

Summary
Transformative dialogic moments happen in the engagement of the stories we tell each other, in the engagement of our hearts. They are a bifurcation point -- the meeting of meanings to create new meanings. While we may not be able to plan or predict those special moments when we are forever changed in the engagement of another, we can be intentional about fostering the conditions to do so. With focused, intentional reflection, using reflective tools that enable us to stand together on the boundaries of our shared encounters, transformative learning is triggered by reformulating what came before, reshaping our stories of what was and what is, to a new imagining of how one sees the potential in what comes next. This study also contributed to theorizing concepts such as social identity, empathy and transformative learning, generally defined from the individual psychological or cognitive perspective, by illuminating the relational perspective.

References


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Disorienting Disorientation: Conversations and Dialogic Moments
Between an American Jewish Woman and a Palestinian Greek Woman

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Abstract: As researchers and practitioners, often we are writing about others. In this article, two scholar practitioners write about their own experience exploring challenging themes in their own lives, the deeply embedded historical conflict that exists between their respective core identity groups. The content, process and reflection on this ongoing conversation is discussed from a multidisciplinary theoretical orientation: transformative learning, relational development and communication theory, (The Coordinated Management of Meaning). The value of sustaining emotional discomfort for transformative learning is addressed.

Overview
Amidst historical narratives of deeply embedded mistrust and betrayal between and among ethnic, religious and other social groups live people with names and faces who desire to understand, break through and explore new forms of relating. Thus is the story of our peoples and of our personal desires. Through the echoes of an ongoing conversation between us, a Greek Palestinian and an American Jew, this paper introduces the conditions, the complex affective phenomena and the personal vulnerability of staying connected through dissonance and disorientation in the desire to transform stories of ourselves in relationship with each other.

Theoretical Framework
The experience of significant and profound differences between people, particularly at the level of group or ethnic identity can be both disorienting and an opportunity for growth and development. Such relationships are the nexus of interpersonal, group and cultural dynamics. Recent theorists in human development have described learning and growth in relationships (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Surrey, 1987, 1991). Social construction theorists, locating meaning making as occurring in social encounters (Gergen, 1994, 1999) talk about the transformative potential of dialogue in the engagement of social identity narratives particularly those that have a history of conflict (Gergen, 2001; Wasserman, 2004) Communication theorists who see communication acts as making and doing, rather than as things people talk about, see meaning making as emerging in communication processes (Pearce & Pearce, 2003). The opportunity for making the meeting of historical narratives that have profound differences transformative is first in noticing such encounters as an opportunity and secondly, sustaining the willingness to stay engaged in what are sometimes painful, sometimes unpleasant emotions.

Transformative learning, as first articulated by Mezirow (1997; Mezirow, 2003; Mezirow & Associates, 1991, 2000), and further developed by others (Taylor, 1997, 2000, 2003), suggests that disorientation or having an experience that challenges one’s way of knowing can seed transformative learning particularly when one engages in critical self reflection. Transformative learning refers to the process by which our taken for granted frames of reference become more discriminating, inclusive, permeable and integrative (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Critical self-reflection fosters new perspectives that in turn are tested for validity through rational discourse and dialogue. Mezirow suggests that a disorienting dilemma is a moment of choice in the dissonance: to stay present to the experience despite discomfort, or avoid, deny, or disconnect. The process of transformative learning rests in one’s ability and choice to stay connected to the discomfort long enough to notice how one’s knows, and explore alternatives (Brookfield, 1987).

A recent study on transformation in the engagement of deeply embedded historical narratives looked transformative learning through the lens of communication theory, specifically the Coordinated Management of Meaning Model (CMM) (Wasserman, 2004). People who were meeting in conversations specifically for the purpose of exploring social identity group differences were engaged in a critical reflection on transformative dialogic moments. Choosing to stay engaged in moments of dissonance was consequential to transformative learning. Intentional reflection, particularly with another or others who we were connected with the dissonance, fostered transformative learning (p. 205). Discursive processes that created the capacity to stay engaged in moments of
dissonance such that people came to know their own perspective and that of another in a different way were identified (p. 206). This paper builds on that study weaving to explore disorientation and dissonance in the intentional engagement of core identity group narratives as a path to and growth, development and new possibilities of knowing.

The meeting of our stories and our analysis is the focal point of this paper. We define our core identity group narrative is that part of our inherited story that is a significant lens in how we construe meaning in the world, how we engage with others, and how we source the values and principles that guide our daily choices. We begin with a brief description CMM and the heuristics we used to facilitate our conversations as well as our critical reflection and analysis. We then demonstrate how we used the CMM model as a way of stepping back from our conversations and exploring shared meaning. We summarize with reflections of what we learned from our personal engagement about how transformative learning can be fostered, particularly in the most challenging encounters.

The Coordinated Management of Meaning: A Practical Theory and Reflective Tools

CMM is both a systemic communication model and a set of practical heuristics that provide tools for people to talk about how they create shared meaning in the turns and processes of communicating. The model has been used in a variety of settings including public dialogue, with work teams addressing project planning and team issues, and with dialogue groups exploring deeply embedded historical differences, and diversity. CMM is based on the belief that we are continuously making meaning in the processes of communication. How we make meaning at each turn is influenced by our unique sets of experiences and influences as well as interpretations and assumptions. Our experiences directly affect the stories we tell about ourselves, about others and about our organizations as well as how we interpret what we hear. Different perspectives add value particularly when there is some understanding of what they mean to the other person or persons. As we all tell different stories, we also learn from the sharing of stories from others. Stories can wreak havoc when they create dissonance without the mechanisms to stay engaged and explore those feelings and experiences. Perhaps now, more than ever, we need tools and processes that efficiently and effectively which create not necessarily agreement, but shared meaning.

The core concepts of CMM are coordination, coherence and mystery. The concept of coordination is best understood by the sense of being in harmony with another; when you say something and the response builds on the meaning you intended and so on. Coherence is the process of aligning our engagement with prior stories we have made. We are always making choices about the stories we make, stories we tell and the stories we live by. We make sense of each new encounter we have based on how we relate it to the stories we live by and the value they bring to enrich our lives. We build our stories of each other and ourselves in each of our encounters in relationships. In each encounter, we cannot know all there is to know; there is mystery. When we bring a sense of curiosity and an expectation of perpetual discovery to all in which we engage we are more likely to be open to new frames, new perspectives. Staying open to the possibility of new meanings creates the curiosity we need to incorporate new stories and new meanings

The tools of the CMM model make the concepts of coordination, coherence and mystery available with four distinct and easy to apply tools. These are the Serpentine Model, the Daisy Model, the LUUUTT Model, and the Hierarchy Model. The daisy model depicts the many conversations or influencing factors that influence the sense making regarding the focus is represented by the center of the daisy or the speech act. Considering the daisy as a metaphor, the top layer of petals are those that more strongly influence the conversation, while the petals underneath the top layer are secondary. At any time, the content of the petals can change or move into positions of more or less prominence.

The serpentine model depicts how meaning is emerging in the context of what precedes and follows a speech act. Every exchange consists of one person saying something or doing something and the other person responding. A particular episode is determined by the boundaries we place on an interaction. As meaning is made by what precedes and what follows, we can see create influence with others and with the stories we create together in how we respond at any juncture.

The LUUUTT model is an acronym for the many forms stories take in constructing meaning. The LUUUTT model guides us in exploring stories lived, stories unknown, unheard, untold stories, stories told and the process or tone of our storytelling.

All stories are in the context of other stories. The hierarchy model identifies the different ways we contextualize meaning, what we foreground in making sense of our encounters and how we do that. The labels or different layers of context may also change depending upon the unique factors in a given situation. We can experience dissonance or connection with another, in part, depending how each of us is contextualizing a communication act, or an episode. This model offers a shared language and frame of reference for exploring that in shared reflection.
Our Reflective Process

We used the CMM model as a way to reflect on our conversations; to explore areas of coordination, coherence and mystery that penetrate our encounters and the encounters of our peoples. Our initial encounter was in the context of an academic conference: the Transformative Learning Conference. We pursued further conversations with each other specifically to learn about the stories of each other. We did so with full recognition of the conflict, dilemmas, contradictions and uneasiness that such a conversation might create for an American Jewish woman and a Palestinian Greek woman. At the same time we acknowledged the luxury of having our encounters in a part of the world and a context where it is relatively safe to have such conversations. Neither of us felt at risk of any threat, physical or otherwise, from our respective communities for the conversations we were pursuing. We continued to pursue these conversations despite living in different cities and the different demands on our personal and professional time. The impact of our conversations has been a weaving of dissonance and resonance as our stories of ourselves and of our peoples are affirmed, challenged, contradicted and shifted. Further, the stories we learn from each other echo for each of us as we encounter these issues with other people in our social, and professional milieu.

The CMM model has provided a meta-framework for us to explore the meaning we make in the way our stories unfold between each other and outside of our immediate conversation. The petals of the daisy model depicts the many factors we bring to our conversations that influence our sense making: our inherited stories, our own versions of those stories, our hopes our assumptions, our principles and our conflicts. Each petal holds a potent story amplified by our experiences, beliefs and conditioning that make it challenging to maintaining connection. Yet we came together with a shared expectation to explore discrepancies in our familiar stories, rather than the desire to convince the other that our version was the one truth. Those petals are also influencing the central focus of our purpose in coming together. We shared a common set of rules of engagement, dialogic communication. Pearce described dialogic communication as:

The defining characteristic of dialogic communication is that all of these speech acts are done in ways that hold one’s own position but allow others space to hold theirs, and are profoundly open to hearing others’ positions without needing to oppose or assimilate them. When communicating dialogically, participants often have important agendas and purposes, but make them inseparable from their relationship in the moment with others who have equally strong but perhaps conflicting agendas and purposes (Pearce, 2001b p.11).

The willingness to challenge our inherited narratives of our peoples is intimidating. More often we are loyal to the stories we inherit as our taken-for-granted history; our moral order. We tell our story with a sense of self-righteousness and pride. Our version of history is certain. If your story contradicts mine or invalidates mine, I am likely to strengthen my commitment to my own moral order and the supporting narratives. Yet our shared commitment to learn with each other acts as a cushion for us to both expose and explore old and new meaning. Our conversations keep us attuned to the mystery of the emerging meaning of our conversation. The condition is liberating (Torbert, 2003), and cannot be predetermined, labeled or compartmentalized. We listen with the expectation of dissonance, discord, disorientation, staying present to the other while holding our own story and seeking resonance.

The serpentine model calls attention to the process of emerging meaning from one speech act to another. The serpent is a visual metaphor of how the meaning of a particular moment is made by what preceded it and what follows, and by the way people define the boundaries of a particular episode. People in conversations with identity group differences that have histories of conflict often have different temporal boundaries that define and shape their group’s narratives. We used this model to look at how the story of the relationship among our groups varies significantly depending on where we place the boundary of the episode of relationship. A shift in events tomorrow can reconstruct how we tell the history of 50 years ago, and 500 years ago.

Though our conversation began as an inquiry about what it means to be Palestinian Greek and an American Jew in relationship, as we navigated our encounter and our parallel encounters with others, we experienced the ebb and flow between dissonance and resonance. There was dissonance, for example when we would identify a discrepancy in how we understood a particular issue in the present or the past. At that point, we each would make a choice: to engage the dissonance or avoid it. Engaging the dissonance from with a full commitment to the relationship helped us move from dissonance to resonance (Wasserman, 2004). Yet in the next moment, either with each other, or in related conversations with others, that resonance could move to a new level of dissonance. The turns and the flow of communication events, including our conversations, other conversations, experiences, the news, all in the context of amplifying this reflective process enhanced the development of our conversation. The curiosity that drew us toward each other also initiated a process of deeper questioning.
Using the serpentine model also enhanced our perspectives as to how our conversations became petals on the daisies of similar engagements with other people. The comfort we felt with each other influenced the level of risk we took with other encounters such as news reports and other conversations. Our conversations were catalysts for interactions with other Jews and Palestinians. Yet the conditions that encouraged exploration in our conversation were not always present with others. The conditions of radical trust, authentic sharing, transparency and comfort were essential and proven to be necessary in our interpersonal communication. Other encounters revealed to us just how important these usually taken for granted conditions are in furthering the conversation and managing the ebb and flow of dissonance and resonance. Often, the dissonance with others was less related to the content and more related to the different set of rules the engagement created. The absence of enabling conditions in other encounters amplified how important these conditions are for this continued dynamic process of transformation. In bringing to our conversation experiences from other interactions our process of ebb and flow between dissonance and resonance continues to provoke us to challenge our assumptions. In so doing we create new meaning.

At each point in the flow of our process, the daisy, the LUUUTT or the hierarchy model were useful tools for pause and reflection. We used the daisy model to identify additional influences or new conversations coming to bear. We used the LUUUTT model to explore unheard and unknown stories, and to identify how the way or process of storytelling was maintaining the undesirable repeating patterns or, as Pearce would say, a strange loop (1994). The language of storytelling invited our imagination of new ways of telling the story, new versions for the future, or a charmed loop. We used the hierarchy model to identify the levels of context others and we used to create meaning in the current situation. For some, the lead context was personal safety. The story of what makes safety also varies for each person. For others, it was land. The story of what entitles one to the land is another source of stories and assumptions. For others it was interpersonal relationships. Each of these models could be parked on a juncture of the serpentine model further enhancing meaning and emerging narratives.

Having encounters related to the focus of our conversation with others highlighted the difference between engaging to convince the other or debate, and being dialogic. Martin Buber describes a dialogic moment as a fleeting moment when “each ‘turn toward’ the other and both mutually perceive the impact of each other’s turning (Buber, 1958). Pearce and Littlejohn extend Buber’s description defining a transformative dialogic moment as “meaning emerging in the context of the relationships, when one was willing to acknowledge and engage the other, and when there were emergent unanticipated consequences. The dialogic moment was identified as being transformative when there was an apparent willingness to be changed, influenced or to put one’s story at risk of change (1997). This is not necessarily to come to an understanding. Conversely it may be to come to an acknowledgement of not understanding.

As we explore what it means to be in conversation and to stay committed to our emerging stories, our relationships offers a container to explore what is possible when people are willing to both feel and speak. Wasserman (2004) identifies five conditions for fostering transformative dialogic moments in the engagement of social identity group differences with histories of conflicts, in conversations. These were: curiosity and openness, emotional engagement through story telling, intentional reflection and mutual sense-making, to see the other for more than their identity that is essentialized, and perhaps ossified by the difference, and a commitment to remain connected despite the disorientation along with a willingness to challenge one’s habits of mind. These five conditions represent help people stay present to the disorientation rather than move away in the discomfort of the moment. They promote an experience of mutual empathy, a simultaneous holding of the perspective of the other and one own such that one almost holds the dissonance in suspension. (Jordan, 1991a, 1991b, 1997; Kegan, 1994). Other factors help to sustain these moments such as relational knowing or connecting to a larger milieu that supports transformative learning in relationship (Yorks & Kasl, 2002).

In this paper we bring together different theoretical traditions, communication theory through the CMM model, transformative learning and adult learning and development to make sense of our experience. We also use our experience to integrate these theoretical positions. Both our ongoing conversations and the others that are inspired because of our own persistence, continues a tradition that both our ancestors have lived through thousands of years of history. That tradition is to remain in the struggle, the muck of what makes no sense, the find new meaning as we relate reflect on today and imagine tomorrow That tradition is also to use stories as the vehicle for shared sense making and community building. We would like to imagine our conversations as the catalyst for others to explore similar such opportunities and/or challenges in their lives. Toward that end, we have told the story of how we used reflective tools from a communication model (CMM) to guide intentional, respectful, and full engagement. What stands out in our conversations, as a process of exploring and exposing the conditions for transformative learning is the courage that has grown between us to let what emerges to emerge. Staying present to the dissonance and the vulnerable feeling of being is critical to how we maintain the tension between the dissonance and resonance in each communication act in each encounter. In pursuing this conversation, in looking to see what allows it to emerge with
meaning that brings us closer, that challenges our frames of reference and that influences other conversations, inspires trust that we can do some work on behalf of our peoples without any expectation and yet with hope. Our safety net is shared structure of meaning making: similar theoretical traditions that provide a common language to bridge our worlds in a common discourse. Our hope is to leverage the opportunity we created for deep exploration to transforming individual and collective perceptions about what is possible between our two peoples and to encourage and foster similar opportunities for others.

References
Learning Through Soul: The Poetry of Human Experience

Shelley Weinberger

Abstract: Our lives are comprised of a playful blend of trial and error, energy and activity, learning and mystery, and universal connectedness. In this paper I will explore the importance of adult play in our lives and suggest theories of why play exists. I will discuss the dynamic nature of health and how the realms of body, mind, and spirit weave together to foster our state of balance. When we integrate play and creativity into our lives we can begin to heal by opening, evolving, and becoming who we truly are. Transformation is an essential aspect of healing and involves nurturing the process that is forever flowing. I outline four steps that a person experiences when transformation takes place. I invite you to embrace your unique creativity and allow it to lead you on the path of transformation. Through transformation, healing can occur and through personal healing, planetary healing is possible. Namaste.

We do not stop playing because we grow old. We grow old because we stop playing.

~ Benjamin Franklin

The human experience is a multidimensional tapestry. Within each person’s tapestry there is creativity and playfulness. Unfortunately over time, adults have learned to dismiss this sacred aspect and often perceive play as illogical, irrational, and creativity as belonging to someone else. Creativity and play help us to engage and connect with parts of ourselves that are dormant, and sometimes inaccessible by other more “logical” ways. Through play we are free to break out of constraining molds. When we honor who we truly are and nurture this part of our spirit, we discover in our self a wondrous empowerment. This is our fuel for moving forward and making our dreams our reality. Through a process that involves opening, deepening, appreciating, and integrating, individuals can remove the fears and blocks that hold them back and step fully into their being. By doing this we ultimately affirm ourselves and extend our boundaries saying “yes” to the life we choose to create.

Theories of why play exists often describe how play can foster and integrate learning. Two theoretical perspectives of adult play, that of holistic integrative play and that of brain functioning, both support the idea of the need for lifelong play as a means of continuing transformation.

Play therapy is based on the premise that the body, mind, and spirit are interrelated. It is a powerful process and can take us back to the way we originally experienced the world, as well as allow us to experience the past, present, and future. As a result, adult play cuts across many familiar and cultural taboos as it activates the deep, primordial integrative forces of the psyche. Indigenous people recognize that personal power, learning, and thinking are expressed through doing (Cajete, 2004, p. 31). Play and creativity are acts of doing, acts of expressing personal power. We learn through our bodies and spirits as much as through our minds. Our creative play journey takes us directly to our Soul, our Spirit, our Ancestors, our Self, our Family, and our Community.

Humans are social species and life long learners, two characteristics that enable us to engage in play therapy. Play allows us the opportunity to engage in social learning within the safety net of a fun environment. The idea that adults work and children play is often the perception of our society. Most researchers report that adults play much less than children. However, when adults play, this seems to function as a protective mechanism against the cost of work, such as acting as a buffer against stress, a support during life transitions, a means of forming bonds and alliances, and a jump start for creativity and problem solving (Caldwell, 2003, p. 304). Carl Jung learned that the key to unlocking his creative potential was to engage in the constructive play he had enjoyed as a child (Ward-Wimmer, 2003, p. 2). Children’s play is largely freestanding and observable as a separate entity in time and space. In adults, play becomes imbedded in our daily lives. Adults are more able to engage in play-like activities while doing daily tasks, such as dancing while house cleaning or singing while driving. As well, many behaviors that adults engage in are not seen as play, such as making love, making art, or making dinner. As adults we can have the best of both worlds. We can make time for freestanding, uninhibited play, as well as integrate play into our daily tasks. When these activities are done with spirit they are play at its best.

Another powerful function of adult play is that it facilitates embodiment. Embodiment is the process by which a person locates himself or herself in their body, in the present moment. One enters a deep immersion in the present moment that many psychologists call a state of flow. This natural state of flow can support adult development,

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creativity, healthy well-being, and a heightened sense of awareness. Ward-Wimmer (2003) describes play as a holistic experience that involves both hemispheres of our brain. Research has shown that trauma causes the emotional defense centers in the brain to heat up with high levels of activity while the rational centers of the brain remain switched off (Caldwell, 2003, p. 304). This traps the person in an emotionally flooded state where he or she cannot think or act effectively. Play and other creative activities that engage the whole brain cause it to operate in a very efficient way which allows a person to have more choice about what he or she thinks and feels. One study of a group of murderers revealed that normal play behavior was absent throughout their lifetime and that adult play was disturbed or absent (Caldwell, 2003, p. 304). This finding helps bring to light the possible effects of disturbed or absent play and raises questions about the positive, healing effects of healthy play both in children and adults.

The word heal comes from the Anglo-Saxon huelan, which means to be or become whole. When we put love into our work and play, we are healed by it, we become whole. Thus health is more than an absence of physical illness. Health is the integration of all parts of oneself in a way that allows each part to exist and grow as well as foster the existence and growth of the others. When I speak of health I am referring to how the realms of our body, mind, and spirit weave together and find their state of balance. Health is not static; it is not a state to be reached. It is dynamic, forever changing, and therefore a part of our everyday living. There are as many different paths to health as there are individual stories. Discovering one’s own path to health is part of life’s goal. We all have the potential to aid healing for ourselves and those around us. Healing is about opening, evolving, and becoming. It is about awareness, acceptance, letting go, and putting into action. Transformation is an essential aspect of our being if we are to heal.

If healing is integrating all the parts of self, then one must unearth these parts. Creative play can be a powerful tool to do this. Creative play is any activity that engages the physical, the emotional, and the spiritual on a conscious as well as unconscious level. It is a holistic experience in that it invites our total being into the process. Creative play speaks to us through metaphorical language. Whether it be painting, drawing, writing, dancing, or another form of self-expression, it is the telling of our individual story, of who we are in that moment. The act of creative play allows us to be present in the moment and give name to who we are. It helps us to find the parts of self that may have been hidden from consciousness and add those parts to our story. Creative play is the experiencing of our personal story in a new and unique way. Sharing our experiences can offer others an opportunity for growth.

Cultivating Kendall’s (2003) notion of the inherent power and beauty of play itself – play can be a healing force. Through creative play we can learn, heal, and transform. Transformative learning is the process by which an individual becomes aware of holding a particular view of the world, through some kind of an event, be it traumatic or ordinary. If the individual critically examines, opens herself to an alternate view, and ultimately changes the way she sees the world, she has transformed some part of how she makes meaning of her world. Transformation occurs in so far as each person is willing to engage in both the conscious and unconscious, and in so far as each person is willing to be changed through that involvement (Clements, Etting, Jenett, & Shields, 1998). Personal transformation is the on-going process of becoming fully oneself and sharing that with others. Although there are no methods or pathways that will guarantee transformative learning, there are strategies that one can be aware of that will ‘set the stage’ for learning and engaging in the transformative process.

Healing, growth and transformation seem to occur in phases. Cajete (1994) supports this concept saying that learning requires letting go, growing, and integrating at successively higher levels of understanding. We can see this in physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual healing. This often includes an involvement or recovery of creative play. The process (adapted from Caldwell’s The Moving Cycle Model, 2003) is spiral, with no arriving, only nurturing states of flow, involving opening, deepening, appreciating and integrating.

Opening commences with bringing one’s attention to things that were not previously acknowledged. It may be intellectual, emotional, or spiritual. Conscious attention in and of itself is one of the primary components of healing and transformation. Play is a very powerful means of calling ones attention. It has a way of breaking through entrenched patterns, exposing our frames of reference. Allowing oneself to engage in play and creativity can create an awareness that wasn’t previously held.

When we use creative play to descend or ascend out of the patterns of relating that which we are used to, thus altering our consciousness, we deepen our awareness. In owning the experience we take a deep personal responsibility for ourselves. This involves a shift in our intention. We make a commitment to the emerging moment and make it more important than the old pattern.

To continue with growth and healing one must appreciate, hold, and welcome this new-found relatedness. Spending some time with this wholeness involves appreciating oneself and that which has occurred. This brings us back to a shift of attention, and what we pay attention to will grow.
One must finally take the learning, healing, and awareness that occurred and integrate it into daily life. New awareness, intention, and appreciation must find a place in the outside environment for transformation to take place. Inviting our creativity and playfulness to be part of our daily life allows this process to occur freely.

Coming into the presence of our selves, our life, and our universe, we can learn to embrace the creative play of our spirit. As we experience the integrity, wholeness, and wisdom that result from such play, we become more rooted in ourselves and more interested in living in community with one another and the earth. Through this personal healing, planetary healing can become possible. I invite you to live a playful life, create your poetry, and uncover your soul path.

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Creating Change: A Collage of Knowing Regarding Transformation Through the Arts

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Abstract: This study examines emancipatory learning discourses, including transformative learning and aesthetic theories. It views roles of art in emancipation as challenging validity and authority of everyday reality. While critical pedagogy potentially fosters intense aesthetic experiences, bringing about liberating rupture with present day reality, transformative learning seeks, through imagination, to open learners to new worlds to experience perceptually, affectively and cognitively in order to break through inertia of habit and give credence to alternative perspectives.

Art is heightened experience. It can simultaneously engage our senses, emotions, and our intellect. It has an ability to make us feel alive, enabling us to see what we had never noticed before, or discover what we didn’t know we really knew (Childs, 2003).

Emancipatory potential of arts and roles of aesthetics in transformative learning have been established (Greene, 1990, 1995; Brookfield, 2002; Newman, 1999; Marcuse, 1978; Loughlin, 1994; Barone, 2001; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Slattery, 1996); and the importance of imagination has been clarified (Greene, 1995; Sloan, 1983; Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002; Arneheim, 1969; Langer, 1964; Dirix, 1998; Slattery, 1996). Yet, roles played by creative insight in transformative learning are largely unexplored. This paper presents an analysis of what we know so far, themes emerging from analysis, and implications for practice for those engaged in fostering transformative learning in communities, organizations, and institutions with groups and individuals. We conducted the research through arts-based inquiry, content analysis, and autobiographical methods as we collage contributions of the literature, past Transformative Learning Conferences, and our professional experiences.

The goal of emancipatory learning is to free learners from forces that limit options and control lives, in order to move to action that will bring about personal, social and political change (Cranton, 1994; Inglis, 1997). Threads of adult education discourse recognize roles art and aesthetic experience play in cultivating emancipation. This study analyzes dimensions, ideas and theories regarding liberation of learners at intersections of art and emancipation.

Methodology: Collaging Arts-Based Inquiry, Content Analysis, and Autobiographical Methods

Appreciating the best of what is and envisioning what could be: this paper collages our understanding around transformative learning through the arts and the transformative potential of the aesthetic, while clarifying areas still ripe for exploration. This collage is comprised of materials drawn from three areas. We began by collecting our own thoughts and experiences with collage and by discussing the medium of collage with a budding collage artist. Next we layered themes and perspectives found through literature review related to aesthetic theory, and transformative and emancipatory learning theories. We identified eight themes related to this work. Twenty-five papers from two Transformative Learning Conferences comprise the next layering, focused on connections between transformation and art. We displayed their colors and textures by doing a content analysis of their contributions to this topic. Then we combined those separate analyses into an overview of shared themes discovered. Adding our insights to the emerging design, elements of our own perspectives and experiences provide additional touches and strokes, extending the project by integrating our research experiences in social change resulting from and leading to artistic engagement. We shared images important to us, or influential on us, from aesthetic perspectives. Engaging in that process helped us understand elements that contributed to development of our individual perspectives.

We felt it was inauthentic to talk about aesthetic experiences and their role in transformative learning by using an entirely cognitive methodology or process. We wanted to create an image, or set of images that represents our individual and combined perspectives on this topic. We did not want to create the aesthetic only as a representation of a cognitive process; we wanted to authentically create what we came to know through the aesthetic experience itself, reflecting the content of what we are researching, transformation and the arts. The collages became part of our methodology, while also creating visual images of our findings. During this research we experienced constant processes of negotiation related to divergent working and thinking styles, experiences, perspectives and skill areas.

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Rather than detracting from our work, this asynchrony fueled broadened thinking and deepened inquiry. While Sandra figures out relationships between ideas in her head, Colleen externalizes ideas to figure out interrelationships graphically. Colleen jumps right in to create; Sandra plans where she is going ahead of time. Colleen contributes experience using arts in teaching, organizational change and in educational and spiritual contexts. Arts were a focus of her dissertation and she has a lifelong avocation for fiber arts. Sandra is a visual designer with degrees in art history and graphic design. Her aesthetic experiences with her own art and with that of others have been deeply transformative, leading to her dissertation work related to intersections of art and emancipation (Newville, 2006).

To do our work, we collected elements representing the epistemology of our individual thinking on aesthetics and creativity, as well as elements that represent our current professional perspectives. We brought the elements together and told each other stories about our images and interviewed each other about our stories. We collaged words and images in person and also emailed scraps and pieces back and forth to each other.

Findings: Identifying the Elements of the Collage

The findings reflect three areas: the literature search and analysis we conducted, analysis of Transformative Learning Conference Proceedings, and narratives of our journeys to our current understanding of art and transformation. We focus on two areas of the literature, the transformative power of art and transformative and emancipatory adult education.

The Transformative Power of Art

The current adult education approach to the arts is to view art as a toolbox of techniques rather than recognize it as an expanded view of reality. The essence and value of art are not in artifacts but in the “dynamic and developing experiential activity through which they are created and perceived” (Shusterman, 1997, p. 4). The import of art is “the whole vast phenomenon of felt life,” stretching from the elementary forces of existence to “the furthest reaches of the mind” (Langer, 1964, p. 391).

Dewey (1934) describes art as the evidence of human use of the materials and energies of nature with the intent of expanding one’s own life. “Art throws off the covers that hide the expressiveness of experienced things; it quickens us from the slackness of routine and enables us to forget ourselves by finding ourselves in the delight of experiencing the world about us in its varied qualities and forms. It intercepts every shade of expressiveness found in objects and orders them in a new experience of life” (p. 104). Art is the fundamental means of human orientation for understanding oneself and the world in which one lives (Arnheim, 1969). It is the result of the creative urge of life consciousness, the graphics of ideas, the result of a creative impulse derived out of a consciousness of life (Sloan, 1983). “The truth of art lies in this: that the world really is as it appears in the work of art” (Marcuse, 1978, p. xii).

The raison d’etre for the existence of works of art is the emancipation from false consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990). “A truly critical adult education would be concerned not just with locating itself within existing social movements but also with creating intense aesthetic experiences that trigger a rupture with present-day reality” (Brookfield, 2002, p. 266).

Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education

Current practices in emancipatory education which cut across feminist, critical and poststructural theories, focus on the power relationship between instructor and student in the classroom. These relationships are seen as complex, not understood through universal theories about structures of power and oppression (Ellsworth, 1989). The world views of instructor and learner impact emancipatory learning and reveal effects of positionality of the student (Tisdell, 1998). The positionality of instructors also comes into play in authority exercised in differentiation made between experiences learners bring into classrooms and whose approaches are valued. This differentiation impacts student voices; who speaks and who is not heard. (Durie, 1996).

In a major review of theoretical and empirical literature on transformative learning, Taylor (1998) synthesized major theoretical critiques and empirical studies on transformative learning since 1981. He identifies seven areas of contention emerging from literature: individual versus social change; decontextualized view of learning; universal model of adult learning; nature of adult development; an emphasis on rationality; other ways of knowing; and perspective transformation model. He concludes, “There has been a redundancy of research, an insufficiency of in-depth exploration in the nature of particular components of perspective transformation and a reification of transformative learning theory as we presently know it, whereby its basic premises about learning have become accepted practice in adult education” (Taylor, 2000, p. 286). This critique opens the door to aesthetic perspectives.
Transformative Learning Conference Proceedings

Our study included an analysis of 25 papers from the Third and Fifth International Transformative Learning Conferences and focus on transformation through the arts. They describe a rich tapestry of media, methodologies, and activities that illustrate the transformative power of the arts in the practice of adult education. Through an aesthetic lens, learners’ lived experiences were explored, examined and transformed. The following definition of transformative learning from the Transformative Learning Center at the University of Toronto, one of the contributors to this sample, characterizes this perspective and cannot be achieved without the arts:

Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body-awareness; our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy.

Most papers focused on fostering mini or ongoing transformations rather than full-blown disorienting dilemmas (Kies, 2003; Dirkx, 2000; Flannery & Widoff, 2003). Issues addressed in the papers included new ways of knowing (Paxton, Van Stralen, & Zweig, 2003), body-mind connection (Lennard, Thompson, & Booth, 2003; Clay, 2003; Ragland, 2003; O’Neill, 2003), new meaning perspectives (Hermann, 2003; Kies, 2003), other voices (Williams, 2003), teacher learner relationships (Vacarr, 2000; Periale, 2000) and community transformation (Fleming, 2003; Loper, 2000). These issues mirror many of the issues identified in the critical theory and transformative learning discourse, but these papers go beyond the traditional rational or cognitive approaches to explore the artistic and aesthetic dimensions (Morrell & O’Connor, 2000; Welsh & Gillam, 2000; Childs, 2003). Media included storytelling, photography, drama, quilt-making, dance, and collage.

Methodologies included narrative inquiry, phenomenology, hermeneutics, ethno-autobiography, synergistic inquiry, and collaborative inquiry. Activities included workshops, exhibits, dance and storytelling performances and community action. Two threads weaving through papers are experience and imagination. Experience refers to direct, lived experience, experience as process and encounter (Pyle & Wiessner, 2000; Paxton, Van Stralen, & Zweig, 2003); and imagination as the “chrysalis” and “generative spark” at the heart of transformation (Clark, 2000).

We present the themes we discovered through a word collage based on the collective works.

Aesthetics move us beyond the rational, the cognitive.

We believe that there is a power within the experience of the visual and the use of imagery that can affect some people more than a verbal form of communication can…We believe that actual experience through the use of visual imagery can evoke those deep powerful emotions, providing a powerful potential for mini transformations (Flannery & Widoff, 2003).

Experience takes center stage.

Art is heightened experience. It can simultaneously engage our senses, emotions, and our intellect. It has an ability to make us feel alive, enabling us to see what we had never noticed before, or discover what we didn’t know we really knew (Childs, 2003).

Imagination comes to dance.

Imagination is at once the chrysalis nurturing transformation and the generative spark bringing transformation into being (Clark, 2000).

Meaning making emerges.

The arts provide a way to disturb our received memories and enable us to construct new meaning (Hermann, 2003).

Body and mind connect.

The term “mind-body,” the unit of the body and the mind refers here to the interface between the inner world and the outer world. Engaging by means of the body-mind in the continuous reciprocal action between the inner and outer worlds requires the ability to stay open to sensory stimuli (Lennard, Thompson, & Booth, 2003).

Self-knowledge blossoms.

Coming to really know and understand [what] we are studying – making sense of the learning experience –involves developing and maintaining a dialogue with the images evoked by the content or process of formal learning. Through this process, both content and ourselves are potentially transformed. We begin to consciously participate in our own individuation. We experience heightened self-awareness or self-knowledge (Dirkx, 2000).
Student and teacher relationships incorporate new dimensions. My experience with Shelly confirmed for me the power of our stories to connect us more deeply and more compassionately with ourselves, with each other and with the universe we share (Vacarr, 2000). Silenced or whispered voices are heard in community. Forum Theatre is a rehearsal for life; people try out strategies to issues that have real meaning in their lives in a forum that is relatively safe. The community gains greater insight into the issues as well as greater awareness of the options and choices available (Williams, 2003).

And meaning perspectives transform. Chormmunity is liberatory pedagogy; it invites meaning schemes and meaning perspectives to be wrought and aligned via community, creativity, and the body (Loper, 2000).

Our Experiences, Journeys and Current Perspectives

As part of our research, we wrote narratives of experiences and insights leading to our current perspectives on art and transformation. Although very separate and somewhat different journeys, they led us toward the same understanding of the power of aesthetics to create change. Space does not allow inclusion of those narratives. They concluded with the following statements.

Sandra: In my practice, I draw on my experience in three disciplines: art history, and aesthetic interaction of the visual, emotional and rational; graphic design, and aesthetic analysis of the construction of levels of meaning in visual presentations and communications; and emancipatory learning, and aesthetic experience that cultivates an expectation and openness to liberating, unmediated meaning and rebellious subjectivity (Marcuse, 1978). A central theme of my research is the relationship between the rational and aesthetic, and that the emancipatory dimensions of human consciousness that art opens, dimensions that go beyond the limitations of reason, remains relatively unexplored in academic discourse. My dissertation work is built on three basic areas where learning, experience, aesthetics and art intersect. These intersections include (1) adult education, emancipatory learning and aesthetic experience; (2) art and aesthetic experience; and (3) the artist and the production of art for aesthetic experience.

Colleen: I identify my current work in this area as critical creativity. Critical creativity is process oriented and consciously employs strategies to foster creative insight that can lead to new thinking and acting; new knowledge creation and social action. Critical creativity includes but does not focus on the artistically gifted. In my teaching and program planning, I incorporate activities that draw on multiple intelligences, affective dimensions, and artistic expression of participants. Again, the focus is not on an end product; rather the process is the key to insight, learning and knowledge creation. I employ storytelling, metaphor transformation, weaving, and other media to engage learners in experiences that have potential to foster learning that could lead to perspective transformation.

Both: We arrived at our first research session from completely different places. Colleen had a pile of paper scraps at the ready, Sandra carried with her complex collages melding text, image, space, shape and other elements into exquisite expressions. We came face to face with an important differences in our practices related to aesthetic transformation. As we talked and told our stories to each other, we discovered further similarities and differences brought us to a shared understanding of the potential for aesthetic experience to lead to social change. Experienced separately, we share a love of the art of Vassily Kandinsky and a significant experience with Michaelangelo’s “David” and “The Captives” in Florence, Italy. We both grew up in Michigan and picked cherries for 50 cents a lug, while being aware of the difficult lives of the seasonal workers, young and old, we worked beside. We are both spiritually oriented and feel a sense of mission or calling about what we do in our work. We both loved climbing trees and were the child in our family that spent the most time with grandparents. Feeling we were not smart, we both did the majority of our learning outside of school. Both sensitized at early ages to oppression and injustice, we grew up, and have spent our lives, seeing the ideal in opposition to what seems to be real.

Discussion: Retracing Transformative Learning Theory’s Aesthetic Journey

Originally a strong critique of transformative learning theory, inclusion of aesthetic perspectives has grown over the span of transformative learning conferences, events intended to expand the theory of transformative learning (Wiessner & Mezirow, 2000; Wiessner, 2004). Arts and transformation served as topics of presentations and papers, as well as approaches to learning in the conferences. The first conference featured a keynote presentation by Maxine Greene, acclaimed for her papers at the three conferences held at Teachers College. An evening arts celebration focused on Paulo Freire’s life and work to commemorate his death. Affirming and embodying multiple ways of knowing, was a goal of the second Transformative Learning Conference; again, both in content and process. Ten conference papers focused on transformation and the arts at the third conference. Arts totally infused the fourth conference, held at OISE, University of Toronto. First Nations and indigenous artists recreated the rain forest and welcomed participants into ancient rituals. Students of transformative learning displayed art depicting their
transformative experiences. At the fifth conference, we invited artistic representations of transformative learning as one category for proposals to affirm multiple ways of knowing that contribute to transformation. Several were submitted, in addition to fifteen conference papers in either the innovative presentation or research study categories. The conference ended with Taicho drumming, a riveting experience. Artistic experiences are planned for the sixth conference and aesthetic approaches comprise both content and process of numerous papers.

**Implications and Recommendations: Adding to the Collage of Transformation and Arts**

By nature, collages allow for additional layers, textures, and materials. There are aspects of this overall collage we consider incomplete and we look forward to future elements we and others will add to this work in progress. This study provides a baseline for our current knowledge and a picture of ways art and transformation have been part of the transformative learning conferences and proceedings to date. We hope we provided a jumping off point.

This paper displays the importance of the arts in moving beyond the limitations of reason, a challenge faced in transformative learning theory building. It is not possible to solve complicated social issues of contemporary society by reason alone. We cannot afford to ignore the rich possibilities for transformation inherent in artistic approaches to teaching and learning. Additionally, as we experienced, arts-based inquiry has much to teach us about arts and transformation, as well as transformative learning and perspective transformation as a whole. We created our own methods for exploring our work on aesthetic levels. We encourage others to do the same.

Colleen’s next step is to lay elements of creative processes next to the papers we analyzed in order to identify parallels and implications for both theory and practice. Sandra’s next step is to find parallels between theoretical constructs in aesthetics and how they are being played out in practice. We have employed valuable resources in researching and constructing this paper: aesthetic theory, transformative learning theory, aesthetic activities, autobiographical narratives, and the body of literature generated on transformation and art through the transformative learning conferences. We have shared some of the collages we are creating out of these elements and look forward to seeing and experiencing the collages you will construct from these and other materials for your practices and for future conferences.

**Conclusion: Layering a Final Collage of Words and Perspectives**

We conclude with a final brief collage of phrases that became important to us as we researched and layered our experiences and perspectives, literature, and conference proceedings.

The distinctive feature of the emancipatory power of art as experience (the aesthetic experience) is achievement of wholeness, the sense of personal integration and self-expansion.

It is the resolution of the tension of internal and external; an understanding integrated from disparate parts, arrived at through making connections and analyzing the relatedness of things.

A subjective activity, it reconciles the objective with the subjective. It is an intuitive sense of peace, understanding. Requiring humility, imagination, self-reflection, analysis. Bringing with it a sense of confidence, assurance, freedom, self-awareness, new ways of knowing, perspectives of self-worth, personal empowerment.

It exposes false appearances; freeing from compliance with oppressive systems and leading to self-government.

Emancipation through the arts requires both reason and aesthetics, not just reason alone, not just aesthetics alone; rather intelligent intuition, analytical imagination, critical creativity, and rebellious subjectivity.
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Dialogue Meetings as Non-Formal Adult Education in a Municipal Context

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to discuss the prospects of fostering dialogue competent behaviour, an important ingredient for supporting learning in discourse. The theory of transformative learning is the theoretical departure. A qualitative approach was used; individual interviews and field experiments with dialogue meetings were the main data collection methods. Several conditions and processes were identified as important for learning possibilities in small group communication: participant perspectives, dialogue competence, discursive power, gender conversational styles and perspective change.

Introduction

Organized group communication emphasizing a dialogical quality has been of importance in a number of current models of organizational development (see for instance Isaacs 1999, Senge 1990, Toulmin & Gustavsen 1996). Also in the field of transformative learning the possibilities of group communication is seen as vital and as a means for transformative learning. Mezirow (2003b) emphasizes the importance of small groups of learners, who share each other’s narratives, as a means of fostering critical self-reflection. In this way they “are able to compare their ways of interpreting common experience with the ways of others and to identify and critically assess their own taken-for-granted frame of reference” (ibid:74). King and Wright (2003) found in a study of adult education, that group projects “can be powerful experiences for learning about the perspective of the other and a basis for reflecting on personal beliefs, values, and assumptions”, and in this way “gain an increasingly pluralistic view” (ibid: 119). O’Hara (2003) departs from a psychological perspective and points at the possibility of using integral groups as a pedagogy for transformational learning. Important key attitudes are, according to O’Hara, empathy, openness, attention here-and-now and trust. McGregor (2004) has a broader focus and discusses the possibility of discursive citizenship, with the adult educator acting as a catalyst for transformative learning, and narrative techniques are used as tools for enhancing a pedagogy of citizenship. She points at the centrality of emotion, care and connectedness as a means for creating a more just, inclusive and democratic society. All of the above imply a growing need for investigating the phenomenon labelled dialogue, or discourse, in transformation theory (Mezirow 1991, 2000, 2003a), in order to better understand how to use it as a pedagogical tool in non-formal adult education. It is e.g. important to examine what actually happens in the communicative context, and the purpose of this paper is to discuss, in a municipal context, the prospects of fostering a dialogue competent behaviour that can support learning in discourse. Discourse analysis can detect working ingredients in small group communication that will either enhance or prevent learning through reflections on various points of view.

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical departure is the theory of transformative learning (Mezirow 1978, 1991, 2000). Transformative learning is a movement in thinking that brings tacit assumptions and expectations into awareness and critically assesses them; new insights are gained which guide action (Mezirow 2003b). Through the main theoretical concepts group communication can be analyzed and understood as processes of learning. Two such main concepts are “habits of mind” and “points of view” (Mezirow 2000:17). Taken together, these constitute the selective “frame of reference” through which perceptions are filtered. A frame of reference consists both of cultural paradigms and idiosyncrasies from the personal history. Habits of mind and points of view are developed in tune with the social, historical and cultural currents in society, according to the theory. Learning within existing frames of reference means developing meaning structures since long taken for granted; it is an assimilative process. Critical reflection is needed for a person to become aware of her/his distorted assumptions. But to free oneself from personal or cultural limitations in one’s world-view, it is also necessary to develop an ability for critical self-reflection. To do this, one needs to see through constraints that have become part of ones self-perception, i.e. assumptions that have become obstacles for one’s development as a responsible adult in a democratic society. The theory of transformative learning claims that perspective transformation leads to a revised frame of reference, and a willingness to act on the new perspective. A new way of acting is in its turn the clearest indication that a transformation has occurred. A transformation may be sudden and dramatic as well as cumulative over a long period of time. The theory speaks of

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ten phases of transformation, during which meaning constructs becomes clarified. Disorienting dilemmas, which create a state of disequilibrium concerning assumptions earlier taken for granted is the trigger of perspective transformation.

Research Method

The research was conducted in co-operation with the childcare authority in a municipality in Sweden. A qualitative approach was used where individual interviews and field experiments with dialogue meetings were the main data collection methods. Interested parties, such as parents, politicians, staff, administrators and managers, were invited to participate in the dialogue meetings concerning their own experiences\(^1\) of the municipal childcare activities. Each meeting consisted of 20 to 60 people; some of them participated in several meetings and others only in one meeting. The participants were placed in small groups consisting of 5-6 persons, with a mix of people not knowing each other. All groups were gathered in one large room. The aim was to diminish mutual interdependencies and create opportunities for free and open communication among people with different perspectives on the subject. The researcher led the session (but did not participate in the groups), asked the participants to speak and listen an equal amount of time, introduced the topic and told the participants to seek agreement. The researcher also acted as timekeeper. Apparently basic questions (Gallie 1956) were used as topics for discussion, that is, topics with a potential to open up for dilemmas and complex issues (Kitchener & King 1990), such as e.g. “What, in your opinion, signifies good child care?”\(^2\)

Interviews were made before and after group talk sessions. In one of the dialogue meetings, with 21 participants divided into four groups\(^3\), group communication was audio-taped, transcribed and closely analyzed; discourse threads (Korolija & Linell 1996) were followed, the amount of words were counted, an initiative-response analysis on interactional dominance (Linnel, Gustavsson, & Juvonen 1988) was made and learning possibilities were interpreted. These four group talks make up the core data used for this paper.

Learning Conditions

Several conditions and processes were identified as important for learning possibilities in small group communication, such as: participant perspectives, dialogue competence, discursive power, gender conversational styles and perspective change (Wilhelmson 1998, 2002). These findings have consequences for learning processes, which in their turn, are vital for transformative learning.

Participant Perspectives

An individual’s societal role(s) with regard to a certain (municipal) undertaking is decisive for the kind of experience the individual has of such an activity. The participants’ societal roles provided them with different perspectives of the childcare system that they brought with them in the dialogue meetings. These different perspectives were articulated as voices of intent, raised in the interaction. For instance, local politicians carried a superior and outsider perspective\(^4\) in relation to the local childcare authority, and their intention was to carry through political visions by contributing to the management. Managers, responsible for the local childcare activities, carried a superior and insider perspective, wanting to manage “their” authority without interference. Parents carried a subordinate and outsider perspective, wanting more resources and fewer restrictions on how to use the childcare facilities. Pre-school teachers, working with the children in the day-care centers, had a subordinate and insider perspective. The teachers wanted more information and wanted to influence their working conditions mainly through influencing politicians to provide more resources. In this way, different perspectives carried by the participants in the dialogue meetings revealed different aspects of one and the same reality, the municipal childcare system.

Dialogue Competence

The results show that interaction quality was dependent on the dialogue competence of the participants, as they co-constructed their communicative context. This competence included the ability to speak with assertion from one’s own perspective and yet listen closely to aspects of the reality as revealed by others. Also, the ability for

\(^{1}\) I.e. narratives that “permit alternative perspectives to be recognized and explored as a means of coming to understand the contextual and social situatedness of what is often considered a ‘truth’” (McGregor 2004:103).

\(^{2}\) All in all, data was gathered comprising 74 individual interviews, four group interviews with altogether 29 persons, one questionnaire, four dialogue meetings with altogether 144 participants - partly different people at different occasions. The empirical study lasted from 1993 to 1995.

\(^{3}\) Those four groups were gender homogeneous; three female groups and one male group.
critical self-reflection (i.e. for a moment look upon one’s truth as if it was one’s preconceptions), as well as critical reflection on statements made by others, was important. This indicates that there are four kinds of dialogue competence necessary for participants in group communication to be able to collectively create a dialogical quality between them in discourse:

- Closeness to the individual perspective; talking and contributing out of one’s own experience
- Closeness to the perspective of others; listening with curiosity to the narratives of others
- Distance to the individual perspective; critical self-reflection on assumptions earlier taken for granted
- Distance to the perspective of others: critical reflection on statements, asking for clarification and elaboration

Taken together, these abilities, when performed, created an integrating as well as a differentiating quality in discourse. Integration was created through listening and critical self-reflection, by having distance to the individual perspective and closeness to the perspective of others. Differentiation was created through talking and critical reflection, by closeness to the individual perspective and distance to the perspective of others. Dialogue competence often seemed difficult to practice, the participants were more than once trapped in communicative habits of power-relationships and gender conversational styles.

Discursive Power and Gender Conversational Styles

Communicative habits of power-relationships and gender conversational styles were either hindering or supporting dialogue competence and learning possibilities. Asymmetric conversations (one-sided dominance) recreated the social positions of superiority and subordination among the participants. Dominance was established when the participants locked each other up in asymmetric communicative patterns. This can be labelled a “communicative vice”. Superiors were close to their own perspective but distanced themselves from the notions of others; they strove to have their own way. Subordinates demonstrated their closeness to superiors and refrained from asserting their own experiences. Asymmetric communication was thus related to “illusory learning” (I own the truth!) for those who dominated, and “negative learning” (I am not knowledgeable enough!) for those who were dominated. Symmetric conversations (balanced with regard to dominance), on the other hand, did not recreate superiority and subordination, regardless of the participant’s hierarchical positions. In symmetric group communication a “communicative weaving” took place, which was quite the opposite of the vice. Both superiors and subordinates focused first on the subordinates’ perspectives. The superiors made an effort to come close to the perspectives of the others and encouraged them to speak out. To some extent the superiors also refrained from asserting their own perspective. A manager makes the following reflection in a follow-up interview, after her second session in a dialogue meeting where she contributed to a weaving quality:

Now at first, I start to get it. We obediently went round the table, everyone talked. This is important, because otherwise not everyone will talk. You have to practice, do it a couple of times to get the meaning of it, to get more out of it and broaden my understanding of a mixed group. … The difficulty is to hold back. Need to think so I don’t influence too much. Maybe they don’t say it all because I sit there. My own thought: I hope I don’t say too much now and make them afraid to oppose me. I have that thought in my head all the time. … Power is taken into consideration. Those that have power may not want it to matter, but others consider it and treat those in power in a certain way. (Manager Group 2)

In symmetric groups the subordinates had space to formulate a voice of their own and courage to question what others said. The condition for this was the critically self-reflecting attitude from superior persons (e.g. as expressed by the manager in the citation above). The weaving encompassed many voices and created a dynamic interaction. Symmetric communication contributed to developmental learning for superiors as well as for subordinates.

The female conversational style was symmetrically or asymmetrically co-operative whereas the male conversational style was symmetrically or asymmetrically competitive. In female group conversations, differences in experiences and opinions were rather vague and disagreements remained hidden. Female groups were co-operatively relation-oriented, both with regard to the discussion as such and with regard to content. In male group conversations, differences in experiences and opinions were openly displayed. Men’s way of speaking had the character of a monologue, it was more individualistic and competitive, and it discussed childcare on a societal level. In the gender homogeneous groups women’s conversational style contributed to integration while men’s conversational style
contributed to differentiation. These differences could be seen as following from the social construction of gender. It is not surprising that women’s conversational style is subordinate and men’s superior in character, since it mirrors the traditional gender-power relations in our society (Hirdman 1987).

**Discourse Types and Prospects for Learning**

The combination of symmetric/asymmetric and co-operative/competitive characters in conversations is labelled discourse types by Linell (1990, 1996). The study showed that the combination of these types provided four different prospects for learning. The symmetric/co-operative discourse type implied that all participants learned from each other’s different perspectives. Subordinates learned that they were able to speak freely in group communication and to be self confident in their ability to participate in future group meetings. Superiors learned to be competent in dialogue talk when they critically reflected on their own (powerful) role in the group communication. The symmetric/competitive discourse type implied that each participant learned to argue his or her own opinion. The participants practiced the ability to hold on to their own assumptions in communicative situations and to differentiate themselves from other group members. They learned to unfold an opinion of their own and to be clear about what they think. They also learned to keep a distance to those they disagreed with. The asymmetric/co-operative discourse type implied that all participants learned the perspective of the most dominant person(s). The dominating person was further supported in his/her knowledge and experience and learned to be even more dominant. Those who adjusted themselves learned to comply with authority and to practice subordination. The asymmetric/competitive discourse type, finally, implied that the participants learned to fight for their own opinions and to either win or lose. The superior learned to actively dominate others in communicative situations. The subordinate learned that his or her ability to argue was insufficient and found him/herself trapped in silent opposition.

The ability to create new mutual learning in discourse demanded a balancing act on part of the participants; they needed to be symmetric, co-operative and to some degree also competitive in nature – all at the same time. When this was done, the participants took steps in the direction of transformative learning. Using Mezirow’s (2000:22) terminology, disorienting dilemmas, self-examination and critical assessment of assumptions started to emerge, new courses of action were planned and new roles were tried out among some of the participants.

**Perspective Change**

Three modes of perspective change were found: the broadening, shifting and transcending of perspectives. Broadening within a perspective meant that no change of perspective occurred, individual participants confirmed each other’s statements or just ignored deviant statements. This can be seen as an assimilative process. Shifting between perspectives meant that a discussion occurred where different opinions met. This dissonance created a state of disequilibrium, which sometimes opened up for perspective transcendence and sometimes meant that the participants got stuck in a debate. The transcending of perspectives created possibilities for a mutual and qualitatively new understanding. Instead of being embedded in their own individual perspectives the participants started to look at their own individual perspectives as perspectives. This can be seen as an accommodative collective learning process. Collective learning in this respect comprised and digested different perspectives into a new alloy of knowledge. The driving force was the existence of problems that sometimes developed into dilemmas, seen by the participants as meaningful and vital to better understand and sometimes to solve. To reach the transcending of perspectives, feelings of safety and disequilibrium had to be present at the same time, combined with the necessity to reach a common understanding. Perspective transcendence seemed necessary for the participants to create a new collective perspective within which new ways of understanding could be developed. In other words, each individual participant transcended her/his own perspective in a direction that was more shared.

An illustration of perspective change is an incident that occurred in one of the female groups. The group primarily talked about parent responsibility. Mostly in an asymmetric/co-operative way, dominated by the superior and insider perspective of the manager. In the end of the session the group addressed the question: Are there any obstacles to the changes you have agreed upon? The dilemma between the insider and outsider perspectives on parent responsibility now became visible. The manager said:

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1 This is also found in sociolinguistic studies (Edelsky 1981, Coates 1996, 1997, Tannen 1998).
2 The group consisted of one manager who talked 47% of all words, one administrator who talked 22% of all words, one pre-school teacher who talked 17% of all words, one local politician who talked 7% of all words and one parent who talked 7% of all words. The total amount of counted words in this group was 10.376.
Because if parents are to take more responsibility, if that is a change we want, how shall we, I mean we offer less, we tell them: You have to! And we put guilt on them. How on earth shall they be able to, they will be yet more filled with guilt because they feel that they do not, … that you do not! Now I say they and here you are! That is, I have to apologise!” (Manager Group 1)

For the first time the manager seemed to discover the parent as a subject in her own right, and not as an object to handle. In the very last minutes of the conversation a perspective shift came about as the manager suddenly discovered the deviant perspective of the parent. Because of this she also discovered her own position as a position, possible to critically reflect on and apologise about. In the following exchange the group accepted and tried to understand the complexity of the dilemma that had become obvious. The manager said with laughter: “Maybe we don’t need to solve it.” The administrator answered: “No, maybe we cannot solve it. Actually, I believe you can reach really far through inf… read a lot, inform yourself a lot more. That you get hold of such things also, to see possibilities in another way.” Thus, the group went on trying to find new solutions. If parents get enough information, maybe they can decide for themselves how to best use the municipal childcare service that is offered. Although this is still a solution mostly from an insider perspective, it is qualitatively different from simply demanding parents to adjust, and thus at last attention was paid to different perspectives. The group began to transcend the differences to arrive at a new understanding which was more multifaceted and problematic than when the issue was seen from the superior insider perspective only. A more complex picture was developed, a picture that could only be developed out of a collective effort of differentiation (to talk and be critically reflective) and integration (to listen and be critically self-reflective).

**Individual and Collective Transformative Learning**

The findings reported above have implications for both individual and collective transformative learning. Each participant made a learning journey specific for that person, which is significant for *individual transformative learning*. The consequences of perspective change in a communicative setting cause the individual to transform her or his “points of view”. When those new points of view affect new courses of action this can also be interpreted as a transformation of “habits of mind”. An illustration of this is the pre-school teacher who changed her way of working. In a follow-up interview, three months after the dialogue meeting, she said that she had kept thinking about the meeting afterwards. At the time of the meeting, she had had a problem; earlier two persons had been responsible for the activities at her workplace but due to reduced resources she had to work on her own in the future:

> We meet many parents from the outside in the open day care center. I took it upon myself to get the parents to take a larger responsibility. Also because I have to, I am on my own. Got some strength from the dialogue meeting, where the others thought that parents ought to take more responsibility. … I have changed my way of being. Now I want ideas and thoughts from the parents, I have become more open. The discussions we had in the group gave me a lot, and to hear what the other groups had arrived at. (Pre-school teacher Group 1)

In this way, single individuals could, through their own reflections *in* as well as *on* (Schön 1983) their experiences from group conversation, develop personal transformative learning, especially if it corresponded to a felt personal need to solve a problem. But, communicative habits of subordination and domination could restrict critical self-reflection and hinder perspective change to occur and thus be an obstacle to transformative learning on the individual level.

The mutual transcending of perspectives could develop into *collective transformative learning* if the participants in a group conversation developed a new, more mutual understanding and pluralistic view, grounded in multiple voices being heard and accepted. When the manager, in Group 1, opened up for the outsider perspective this was the key to a process that had the potential of leading to collective transformative learning. Disequilibrium occurred as a dilemma between different perspectives and a beginning of a transcending of perspectives could be seen. As long as the insider perspective dominated this was not possible. If the group had asserted and listened with equal respect to all perspectives from the beginning, maybe they could have reached further in a mutual understanding of the dilemma. Collective transformative learning is in this way seen as an active and explicit transformation that comprises and digests several different perspectives into a new alloy of knowledge. Together a group can go beyond the separate individuals’ capacity for understanding a complex societal phenomenon. To do this an interactive process is needed where the learning individual revises a former assumption in order to contribute to a collective understanding. This comes about in a process of mutual adaptation that creates a synergy effect and it is this very process that is the working ingredient in collective transformative learning. A group of people, with the
intention of collectively making sense of an issue they are interested in and have experienced, can, through the process of perspective change, develop a qualitatively new understanding of a complex societal issue; an understanding that is new to them all. A vital presupposition is that people agree to disagree, i.e. that all perspectives are equally seriously listened to as real and true.

Conclusions

Persons who have a superior or a subordinate position in social life may face various difficulties when they try to go beyond their own perspective. The superior, according to the study, needs to develop a capacity for critical self-reflection and listening, whereas the subordinate needs to develop the capacity for critical reflection and assertive talking, to acquire dialogue competence. To get to this, they have to become involved in a both demanding and transformative learning process, which leads to an awareness of how the communicative interaction is collectively built and in what ways the self is contributing. With some training in dialogue competence individuals may come closer to experiencing transformative learning, as an individual and as a group. O’Hara (2003) and McGregor (2004) points at the importance of integrating qualities in discourse. This study reveals that also differentiating qualities are needed for transformative learning to develop in group communication.

It is hierarchical organizational structures that display themselves in attitudes of superiority and subordination, as well as in conversational styles among the participants in the micro-context. If aware of this, adult educators can support symmetrical communication in non-formal adult education, where speaking, listening and critical self-reflection is nurtured. In such a supporting environment people seem to be able to overcome individual shortcomings. In other words, the problem addressed by Merriam (2004) and Mezirow (2004), i.e. that transformation requires a high level of cognitive functioning, might to some degree be dealt with in a communicative context where participants promote each other to develop dialogue competence. Dialogue meetings can develop into a greenhouse where dialogue competent behaviour is practiced and fostered, and act as a learning environment for a combination of staff, politicians and citizens in the municipality. In this way political democracy can be supported by a knowledge constructing democracy, at the local level.

References


Japanese Students’ Experiences in a United States Study Abroad Program

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Abstract: This paper discusses the transformational learning process of a group of Japanese college-level female students living and studying together in a study-abroad program in the United States of America. The paper examines the process of the students’ changing perspectives in the program, with specific attention to their intra-cultural and intercultural communication issues, and offers insights and new perspectives of evaluating the Japanese students learning in the program.

Introduction

Each year, hundreds of Japanese students enter the United States (U.S.) under various study-abroad programs to further develop their English proficiency and understanding of American culture. Living in the U.S. is a potentially transformative experience for Japanese students. Scholars who have examined study-abroad experiences among U.S. students note they enhance students' worldview (Carlson & Widman, 1988), increasing reflective thought, self-reliance, self-confidence, and personal well being (Kuh & Kaufman, 1984). The research on the experience among Japanese students is, however, limited to a focus on their English proficiency and their understanding of American culture. There is scant attention paid to the potentially emotional and life-changing experiences they face when they try to navigate U.S. culture through their Japanese cultural lens. An examination of these experiences can offer insights and new perspectives for evaluating Japanese students’ learning and help adult and higher education providers learn how to appropriately support them. This paper will therefore examine the ways in which the Japanese students make sense of the cultural differences they face in study-abroad programs.

Rationale and Theoretical Framework

Every year in March, a group of ten to forty young Japanese women come to a Pacific Northwest regional university (hereafter referred as PNRU) from a Japanese Women’s college (hereafter referred as JWC). In spring 2001, eleven students participated in the program. They spent six months at PNRU studying English and U.S. American culture. Unlike many other international students who live and study on their own, these students lived in the same apartment complex forming a miniature Japanese community in the U.S.

To function in U.S. society and gain the benefits of improved English proficiency and American cultural understanding, the Japanese students may need to transform or reframe (Kegan, 1982; 1994) core aspects of their cultural identity. In Japanese society, which is described as “collectivist” (Hofstede, 1991; Samovar & Porter, 1997), Japanese students are expected to place group needs over their individual needs and desires. It is, therefore, culturally unacceptable to draw attention to the “self” in social settings such as the classroom. A Japanese saying, “the nail that sticks up gets pounded down,” reflects the important Japanese cultural concept of group harmony. The U.S. culture, on the other hand, is described as “individualistic” (Hofstede, 1991; Samovar & Porter, 1997) and rewards behavior that draws attention to the self, such as asserting individual rights and needs over group needs within social settings such as a formal college classroom. This cultural tendency is exemplified in a U.S. proverb which says that “the squeaky wheel gets the grease.” The Japanese students may therefore face the need to honor the individualistic aspects of U.S. society by drawing attention to the “self” so they can blend in, but in doing so they participate in behavior that is not only culturally unacceptable in their native Japanese society, but also creates conditions that cause the students and their families to “lose face”; that is, to be disgraced.

Constructive-developmental theory (Kegan, 1982; 1994) helps to highlight the feelings of uncertainty and dilemma the Japanese study-abroad students face. The need to operate in such different cultures brings potentially emotionally unsatisfactory results and may create an “evolutionary truce” or disequilibrium between the Japanese cultural norms that guide behavior and the cultural demands placed upon the Japanese students to adopt U.S. cultural ways of being. Theoretically, this disequilibrium is so strong that the Japanese learners may be forced to re-examine their strict adherence to Japanese rules, which serves as their meaning-making structures, and re-frame the rules in ways that meet the new demands of being Japanese in a U.S. setting. In Kegan’s (2000) words, transformative

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learning puts the form (i.e., meaning-making structures) at risk of change. Using a transformative learning lens, the Japanese students can transform their taken-for-granted frames of reference to make their meaning-making structures more inclusive, discriminating, and emotionally capable of change, so that they may generate new ways of being that can better guide their actions. Theoretically, if the Japanese students are able to take the cultural norms as objects, reflect upon them, and organize the cultural norms so they are no longer subject to them, then they can move out of their emotional dilemma. That is they may be able to preserve core values from their Japanese culture and also change those aspects that help them to move freely between the two cultures. Yet, the literature on these potentially transformative processes remains virtually silent.

This study examines this dilemma by asking: 1) What cultural issues, if any, do Japanese study-abroad students describe while living in the United States; and 2) how do the Japanese students describe the ways that they resolve these issues?

Methodology
This qualitative research study utilized a phenomenological (Moustakas, 1994) perspective to explore the experiences of Japanese female students in a Japanese college study-abroad program in the U.S. Using a phenomenological approach allowed the researcher to focus on the conscious experiences of the students as they related to their real world experiences as students in a Japanese study-abroad program in the U.S. The research data included in-depth interviews of eleven Japanese students and their resident coordinator and two participant observations in fall 2001. Data analysis included “open coding” (Seidman, 1998) and “pattern-matching” (Yin, 1994). To interpret the categories derived from the analysis, Luborsky’s (1994) “thematic analysis” and Yin’s “relying on theoretical propositions” were used.

Findings and Discussion
The participants faced a number of cultural issues during their original placement, as they attempted to live with non-family members for the first time, and during their interactions with the university culture. To resolve the cultural issues, the students began to move away from their Japanese cultural norms to adjust to their new environment. The following sections describe the cultural issues and the strategies used to resolve the issues.

Cultural Issues the Japanese Students Faced
The Japanese students faced a number of cultural issues, including: the need to form a miniature community, sharing living spaces, interactions at the university, and unhealthy competition. The participants indicated that that the Japanese miniature community was very important for them since it was the only emotional support available at the beginning of the program; they didn’t know anybody except their group members and the program coordinators. They needed to figure out how to communicate with their Japanese colleagues in their strong Japanese cultural norms as well as how to communicate with their American teachers and friends. They did not receive any pre-departure intercultural communication training on how to go about living in two cultures while in the program before they arrived in the U.S. Yayoi, a program participant, described her first experience living in the U.S.: “At the beginning, we were so nervous and stiff. Even just walking on street, it was scary!” A student, Eriko, also shared her experience of being with the JWC group members: “JWC program provides many activities, and I don’t want to be excluded or isolated from the group members, so I tried very hard to go along with them.” Emi also disclosed her feelings of obligation to the group: “I wanted to make friends with people outside of JWC group, but I could not to do that because if I go out with them, my roommate will be left alone.” According to Dirkx (1997), experiential forms of learning are marked by high levels of uncertainty, ambiguity, contradiction, and paradox. This was especially true for these Japanese students who lived in the same apartment complex forming a miniature Japanese community within U.S. culture.

The students shared living space with other group members. None of the students had lived with roommates in Japan. Non-family members do not share living spaces in Japan as often as Americans do. In most Japanese colleges, students live alone in studio apartments or dormitories where they have their own privacy. A student, Mako, said that it was impossible to put the Japanese group in a U.S. style arrangement of shared living. Kathy, the resident coordinator supported Mako’s comment. Kathy said, “I think the roommate problems that they are having are caused by putting the students in an American situation. But they are still Japanese.” The students inhibited their inner feelings in order to avoid confrontation and maintain harmony within the group because they had to stay together for at least six months. Kathy witnessed the students’ trying to be nice to each other at the beginning, trying to put up with problems in their group, and exploding later. The Japanese students’ relationships were based on
interdependency (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Nishida, 1996), which may have enhanced their conflict avoidance. Kathy commented that there was a “Japanese style kind of patience,” but this patience did not last long. The Japanese students would often talk to a third person to release the frustration and anger; the conversation may then spread as gossip. Emi said: “I am jaded with people’s gossiping about me behind my back. Once I told my personal issue to my roommate, all of my group members know about it next day. I cannot trust anybody in my group.”

Another cultural issue the Japanese students faced was interaction with the university culture. Weaver (1993) discusses that collectivistic cultures such as Japan tend to be tightly integrated and homogenous so that people may more easily infer from behavior what is appropriate for others, even from vague and indirect messages. In such a homogeneous group, if one behaves inappropriately or differently from others in the group, (s)he tends to be perceived negatively by other members of the group. The primary goal of all students in the study-abroad program was to develop their English speaking skills and enhance their understanding of American culture, yet when the students sought to become more assertive and independent from their Japanese peers, the miniature community would accuse the participants of becoming too pushy or aggressive.

The students explained that they felt tied down by their cultural norms, especially the norm of restricted expression; specifically, do not draw too much attention to the self in the classroom. This Japanese cultural norm is problematic with respect to speaking up in the classroom. Yuko suggested that the students focused more on this Japanese cultural norm rather than on interacting with their teacher in class. She mentioned that she could not speak out in class even if she wanted to because of the presence of others from her group. She also said with a hesitant smile: “Nobody spoke out in JWC class even if they knew answers. If someone speak out in class here in the U.S. who never spoke out in class in Japan, I would think, WHAT? She is so AGGRESSIVE!” However, this cultural norm is not recognized by American instructors and U.S. peers, and the Japanese students’ behavior is interpreted negatively. American instructors often felt frustration with the Japanese students’ attitudes and behaviors, describing the students as being too quiet, while their group oriented behaviors are ridiculed as “groupie” by their U.S. peers. In personal conversation, one of the instructors told me that it was hard to know if students understood or if they agreed or disagreed with what she was saying. In addition, the resident coordinator, Kathy, said: “The students are always together. I told them that their apartment is just to sleep in. They don’t have to spend all their time together, but they don’t think that way.” Thus, no matter what action each participant took, it brought unwanted attention to the self and the resultant ridicule from peers.

In addition, unhealthy competition resulted from too much proximity since the students lived and studied together. In terms of competitiveness, Hofstede (1991) notes that in masculine countries such as Japan, children of both sexes learn to be ambitious and competitive. For many of the students, competitiveness meant not being open and active, but being surreptitious when pursuing individual goals and sometimes being passiveaggressive. In a homogenous culture and environment (e.g. same age or status), the similarities between people in terms of goals and interests often lead to competitive behavior, especially when they had common interests such as making new friends outside of the group and improving their English skills. For example, Aya, a Japanese student, said that when she saw that her Japanese peer made a friend with an American student and began to speak English well, she became very nervous because she regarded her Japanese peers as rivals, but she did not feel like that with non-Japanese students. She said: “I compare myself with my Japanese peers in my group because we are from the same college, all Japanese, we are the same age, and we are all girls, so there is a competitive atmosphere in our group.” Feelings of discontent that the students experienced may have encouraged them to find strategies to resolve their cultural issues. The next section describes their strategies.

**Strategies to Resolve Their Cultural Issues**

In the beginning the miniature community was the only source of support for the participants. Over time, however, the participants found that the miniature community was too suffocating as they sought to be assertive and blend-in with their U.S. peers, as well as their peers from other international groups. By interacting with their American friends, the students were shocked by the cultural differences. Over time they began to blend the uniqueness of their own culture with U.S. cultural norms. Rumi, a Japanese student, shared an experience that she had with her American friend, Anna, about their project in drama class. During the class, Rumi and Anna did not agree with each other’s ideas about planning their acting. Anna yelled at Rumi, who was shocked because she never expected that would happen. Rumi yelled back at Anna. Rumi said: “It was funny that I felt it was O.K. to yell back to Anna at the moment because Anna confronted me very straight, so I yelled back at her, too.” Rumi also said that she felt good after she released her anger to Anna and talked with her rather than suppressing her feelings to avoid conflict. Other students shared their strategies to resolve their cultural dilemmas. Sayo mentioned: “Do not be
an American in our Japanese group. It will be awkward and break relationships.” She also added: “To be independent is the best way to live together, but help one another when needed.” To overcome the problems with the miniature community in the future, Miwako suggested that the next cohort of students should not expect to be best friends with their roommates, but listen to their opinions. Namiko also said, “Have a talk with your roommates and make ground rules for your apartment.”

In the process of cultural transition for the students, their movement into an individualistic culture would enhance any individualistic tendency the students had, but at the same time, their living arrangements in and with a collectivistic environment may not have easily allowed them to be individualistic. In other words, the students were encouraged to be independent and express their opinions in the U.S. classroom setting and in their interactions with American students, but if they did so, it would be seen as showing off, bragging or being aggressive by their Japanese peers. By the end of the program, they gained different perspectives and they started to incorporate more U.S. cultural norms as a part of their meaning-making structure. They began to attend social functions without the Japanese community, speak up in the classroom, and also to retain their connections to their Japanese culture.

This finding suggests that the Japanese students began to change from their strict obedience to their cultural norms and therefore began to make a transformative shift in their ways of being (Kegan, 1982; 1994). The transformation process is seen in the ways that they took the norms as objects. Rather than being controlled by the norms, they were able to begin to rethink the norms in such a way that they were no longer subject to them. Kegan (2000) contends that part of the self-authorizing process is the ability to be controlled by internal forces (those things which we have made objects) rather than by external forces (unexamined cultural norms) that we obey without conscious thought. Akemi, a Japanese participant, said that she learned that there are many different types of people in the program, so she began to observe people first and then chose how to communicate with the person depending on contexts. Akemi commented: “I became able to change my communication style easily depending on contexts.”

Implications

The findings add to our understanding of transformative learning theory by demonstrating that constructive-developmental theory (Kegan, 1982; 1994) is useful in helping to understand the experiences of the Japanese-study abroad program as potentially transformative for students. Adult education practitioners can foster the use of the miniature community as a reflective environment to better support the emotional issues rather than allow it to maintain strict gate keeping functions.

References


Conditions for Transformative Learning in Adult Education Institutions: A Case Study

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Abstract: This paper describes an inquiry into the ways in which a very small, career-focused college for adult learners creates institutional conditions which promote transformative learning among its students and faculty. Several conditions giving rise to transformative learning at Woodbury College are identified, suggesting that such institutional conditions can be created and that this aspect of transformative learning theory warrants further study.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore Woodbury College as a case study of conditions for transformative learning in one adult education institution. Woodbury was founded in 1975 as a paralegal school, and is still led by its co-founding president, Lawrence Mandell. The College offers associate’s and bachelor’s degrees in Legal and Paralegal Studies, Prevention and Community Development, and Interdisciplinary Studies, along with a certificate program in Mediation and Conflict Management as well as a newly-added master’s degree in Mediation and Applied Conflict Studies to begin in fall, 2005. The College is located on eight largely wooded acres, about a mile and a half from the center of Montpelier (population: 8,800), the capitol of Vermont. Formerly the old Montpelier “Poor Farm” barn, the light and airy renovated College building has ten classrooms, a library, faculty and administrative offices for its thirty employees, and a spacious kitchen that serves as one of the school’s main meeting spaces. The student body is very small, at between 120 and 170 students during any given term, and will be discussed in further detail below.

A review of the literature reveals numerous sources that explore the conditions necessary for fostering transformative learning in the teaching-learning encounter and that offer teaching strategies for creating these conditions (Cranton, 2002; Cranton, 1994; Taylor, 2000; Daloz, 1999; Belenky & Stanton, 2000). Several authors also focus on transformative learning at the group and organizational levels (Kasl & Elias, 2000; Yorks & Marsick, 2000). However, while Belenky and Stanton speak to feminist organizations modeling “connected knowing” through their operations, the specific ways that conditions for transformative learning are created throughout an institution of adult education have not been identified in the literature.

Studies show that while transformative learning can occur as a sudden event, most of the time the fundamental shift in meaning perspective experienced by learners - and the readiness for this shift - is influenced by contextual, relational, cultural and other factors beyond the classroom or teaching-learning event (Taylor, 2000). By focusing solely on formal curricular encounters, many opportunities to foster transformative learning throughout the organization may be missed. When individual instructors committed to transformative learning move on or the instructional format changes, for instance from face-to-face to on-line, the practice of transformative learning in the organization may be compromised. An institutional culture of reflective practice regarding the conditions that promote transformative learning offers promise for sustained practice and ongoing development. What are the conditions conducive to transformative learning that institutions of adult education, and not just individual teachers of adults, create? This question framed our study at Woodbury College.

Methodology

As a part of its planning process to create new educational formats, the college has been engaged in an inquiry into the unique culture, philosophy and practices of teaching and learning at Woodbury, referred to mythically as the “Woodbury Way.” The College describes its educational philosophy as assuming that “students learn best in an atmosphere of acceptance, support, and trust, and that the best education encourages equally knowledge of the world and knowledge of oneself” (Woodbury College 2004 Self-Study). In preliminary discussions among the core faculty in 2004, transformative learning emerged as a theme for describing Woodbury’s culture and practice. During the months of March through May of 2005, the College hosted a series of five appreciative storytelling events that explored the Woodbury Way and which served as data sources for this project: Core Faculty Teaching meeting on March 15, Faculty Dinner on April 19, Spring Staff Retreat on April 7, Board of Trustees meeting on March 14, and Student Promotional Interviews (videotaped) on May 13. Existing materials from a 2004 re-
accreditation self-study process were also identified as sources of data for the inquiry: notes from three Student Focus Groups (March 4-6), notes from the Come Dream With Us community meeting on January 13, the Woodbury College 2004 Self-Study, and excerpts from the Instructor Handbook. As transformative learning theory per se is not an official lens through which the institutional inquiry into the Woodbury Way has been viewed thus far, one or both of the authors attended each storytelling event and analyzed the self-study data independently, listening with an appreciative ear and watching with an appreciative eye for elements of stories and data that revealed institutional conditions and practices that foster transformative learning.

These stories and data were like the spokes of the wheel of our case study. The hub of our case study “wheel” was a three-hour workshop on “Transformative Learning and the Woodbury Way,” co-facilitated by the authors (who are members of the core faculty as well as academic program directors) on May 5, 2005 and attended by three students, nine faculty (including the two authors), one staff member and one community partner. The definition of transformative learning used was: a process by which we become aware of and question the values, beliefs and assumptions that we have unconsciously taken in from our experience, so that our perspectives become more open, inclusive and better validated. Participants discussed transformative learning theory, received directions regarding telling stories and analyzing their themes through the Appreciative Inquiry process, and then told stories of their experiences with transformative learning at Woodbury College. For each story, participants sought to discover what is was about the storyteller, the others involved in the situation, and the situation itself that contributed to the transformative experience. Toward the end of the workshop, the facilitators engaged participants in identifying themes from the stories and discussions.

The entire workshop was videotaped by Woodbury’s librarian, and the VHS tapes and DVD were viewed and analyzed by the authors a week later. The authors color-coded their notes using three categories: green for institutional conditions for which there seemed to be a clear relationship to transformative learning; pink for institutional conditions whose relationship to transformative learning was not clear; and orange for elements of transformative learning that were not identified with the institution. The notes from the Woodbury Way inquiry (storytelling events and self-study documents) were then analyzed using the tri-color categories, serving largely to elaborate on, validate and cross check the workshop analysis. In the midst of this process, the authors began to identify overarching themes regarding those institutional conditions or elements of the Woodbury Way which increase the possibility that transformative learning will occur. Throughout the process of analysis, the authors engaged in philosophical and critical discussion about the data and what it says to us about our experiences as Woodbury staff.2

An important limitation to this case study was that it assumes that transformative learning takes place at Woodbury; only in the workshop did we take student and faculty stories of transformative learning, informed by a definition of that term, and trace them to institutional conditions. While analysis of these stories provided the framework and informed all further analysis, for the remaining data the authors - and not the storytellers or data itself - determined the connection to transformative learning and to institutional conditions promoting it.

Results and Conclusions

The case study inquiry resulted in eight categories, or eight institutional conditions that seem to give rise to transformative learning among students and faculty at Woodbury College: student population, scale, community environment, competencies and self-evaluations, institutional emphasis on critical thinking, general education curriculum, teaching methods, and student-instructor relationships. Each are discussed in detail below.

Student Population

Demographically, 75% of Woodbury students are female, 60% are parents, 80% are working, and about 96% live in Vermont. Woodbury students range in age from 18 to 70, with an average age of 35. While confirming statistics are not available, participants at the Come Dream With Us community meeting perceived that a uniqueness of the College is that it provides access to higher education for low-income and first-generation students. At the Transformative Learning Workshop, Core Faculty Teaching meeting and Faculty Dinner, instructors identified the

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1 The authors would like to thank Patricia Cranton, whose workshop outlines and advice helped shape the agenda for the workshop.
2 All employees at Woodbury College refer to themselves and each other as “staff,” regardless of role group. This reflects a democratic style of governance at the College, which emerged as a theme during this inquiry. Although theorizing about this theme was beyond the scope of the present study, the authors believe that a non-hierarchical, participatory working environment may indeed be a condition for transformative learning and warrants further study.
resulting developmental stages of the student population as a condition that promotes transformative learning. An adjunct faculty member well-versed in adult education and development put it this way in a follow-up communication:

The nature of Woodbury’s students is a major part of the “Woodbury Way” partly because of the age range and also because they are at “teachable moments” in their lives. Most students I have had in my classes at Woodbury choose Woodbury because of very pragmatic reasons – getting a good job or changing careers. But, below the surface of that pragmatism often lurks a self-reflective process driven by life circumstances (divorce, etc.) or the natural self-questioning that comes in the thirties and forties (and now I guess in the late twenties). Am I happy with “Who I am”? Am I satisfied with my life and the choices I have made?...One aspect of this teachable moment stuff is that so many of Woodbury’s students are “subjective/multiplistic knowers” (Belenky et. al. and Perry) and poised to become “procedural/relativistic knowers.” (D. Eisele, personal communication, April 22, 2005)

Faculty often commented that women are more able to collaborate in their learning and express themselves deeply in a safe environment than would be the case if there were more men in the classes. While Woodbury does not advocate for a female majority, this characteristic of our student population seems related to many of the transformative learning experiences shared during this study. In the words of the same adjunct quoted above:

As Gail Sheehy and many others have found...women who either had to or willingly took the nurturing and caregiving route in early adulthood...get to the thirties and feel the pull of an inner self that wants to assert other potentials that have been latent or neglected. (D. Eisele, personal communication, April 22, 2005)

At least one good example of this kind of transformation being experienced by an instructor as well as her students surfaced at the Transformative Learning Workshop conducted by the authors. The instructor of a “Learning Strategies” workshop (which covers study, organizational and time management skills) identified that she and the eight students were all adult women in their forties, in similar stages of life and struggling to balance care of others versus care of self. Through dialogue, they collectively transformed their assumptions about what the instructor referred to as the “ethics of motherhood” and internal expectations regarding this balance. The instructor decided to go back to school for an MFA in creative writing as a result of the workshop. It seems possible, if not probable, that the sex and the stage of adult development of the typical Woodbury student affects the likelihood of transformative learning experiences to occur for students and – at times – faculty.

Scale

Woodbury prides itself on its small size. There are a total of about 30 staff including 9 full- and part-time core faculty at Woodbury, and the student population was around 120 in Spring Term 2005. Courses and workshops are mostly limited to 15 participants, and indeed the classrooms barely hold that many. The small scale at Woodbury sets the stage for the community environment, described below. The transformative learning literature speaks to maximizing authenticity, learner empowerment, and support for critical self-reflection as factors that promote transformative learning (Cranton, 1994). All of these factors are more easily accomplished through close, personal relationships between students and faculty in this very intimate setting. The small size of classes and of the school as a whole was noted as significant by faculty and students in various stories and data sources during this inquiry.

Community Environment

Most of our meetings and materials document the experience of Woodbury as a trusting and open learning community that is respectful, collaborative and engages the whole self. These descriptors were shared by students, faculty, staff, administration and community members alike. In Student Focus Groups and Promotional Interviews, students commented that they experience this community environment starting with the recruitment process, and that it is intentionally cultivated throughout their career at Woodbury, both in and out of the classroom.

At several meetings faculty noted that this sense of community develops trust and creates a safe atmosphere for learning, opening the discussion to potentially risky topics where real change can occur. Faculty observed that in this environment students can “live through the discomfort of inquiry and disagreement to discover [something new]” (Core Faculty Teaching). They also commented on the importance of this community environment in supporting adult students through challenging, developmental transitions. In a student’s words, students are “pushed to take risks, but the environment is supportive and empowering to take the risks” (Come Dream With Us community meeting). Students experience Woodbury as “a safe space to challenge self-assumptions” and as “a new door

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opening…a gateway to life-changing experiences” (Come Dream With Us community meeting). At the Transformative Learning Workshop, an instructor who teaches business workshops in which both Woodbury students and community members participate observed that the Woodbury students expect and help create an engaging learning community for everyone in the classroom.

Daloz1 (1986) highlights the importance of balancing support for learners with challenge. At Woodbury, the supportive community environment opens the door for critical reflection on assumptions and beliefs. The institutional emphasis on critical thinking, described below, further illustrates the “challenge” part of the balance.

**Competencies and Self-Evaluations**

Academically, this open and trusting learning community is reflected in the institutional practices of organizing learning around core and course competencies, using a self-evaluation process rather than tests, and replacing grades with a narrative instructor response to these self-evaluations. The core and course competencies create an explicit framework of learning goals and expectations, and a direction for teaching and learning, that are shared between students and instructors. In syllabi, mid-term and final self- and instructor evaluation processes, and throughout the course, these competencies are referenced for mutual instructor-student reflection and accountability. Participants in the Transformative Learning Workshop noted that the student self-evaluation and instructor response process provides shared dialogue, decision-making and judgment of student progress. Students in the Focus Groups observed that this evaluation process in lieu of grades removes fear and judgment, promotes teachers being present to student learning, promotes a collaborative and non-competitive learning atmosphere, and provides insight and self-direction. In the Student Promotional Interviews, one student said, “the process of self-evaluation is so enriching to oneself, to the extent that when you write your self-evaluation…you realize where your weaknesses and strengths are, and you end up working towards what you think your weaknesses are because you have seen them yourself.”

In describing ways that educators can empower students in order to promote transformative learning, Cranton (1994) notes the importance of learner participation in decision-making and the evaluation process, and of instructors making expectations and decisions explicit. Through its competency framework and shared, narrative evaluation process, Woodbury has institutionalized these practices.

**Institutional Emphasis on Critical Thinking**

One of Woodbury’s foundational courses in the associate’s-level general education curriculum focuses entirely on one of seven core competencies, which is practiced and evaluated in every single course across the curriculum at Woodbury: critical thinking. This core competency, referenced in almost all course and workshop syllabi at Woodbury, is defined in these terms:

> Students can state a judgment and support it with concrete evidence. They can analyze arguments to find the main and supporting points, and can identify unsupported claims and assumptions. They can pose relevant questions, distinguish factual statements from value judgments, identify bias, and constructively challenge their own thinking. They can give open-minded consideration to a diversity of opinions.

(Instructor Handbook)

The typical syllabus for the “Critical Thinking” course explicitly states that the successful student will be able to demonstrate, among others, the two following course competencies: “intentionally examine one’s own thought process and identify inferences, assumptions and conclusions” and “identify one’s own unconscious assumptions and examine their relationship to value judgments and stereotypes.” In the Transformative Learning Workshop, an instructor who teaches “Critical Thinking” stated that the course is about students “giving themselves permission to think about how they think, to think about the world in a different way, and think about themselves in a different way…That’s what the class is – it’s all transformative.”

Brookfield (1990) and others highlight the importance of building the capacity for critical thinking in students and instructors in all adult education endeavors. Through its “Critical Thinking” course and core competency, Woodbury has institutionalized this practice.

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1 The authors think it worthy of note that Laurent Daloz is a former member Woodbury’s Board of Trustees. We wonder if his advisory role in the development of the College influenced the creation of some of the conditions that foster transformative learning identified in this paper.
**General Education Curriculum**

The “Critical Thinking” course is arguably the cornerstone of the entire general education curriculum, which in turn provides the foundation for all undergraduate career programs. Another foundational course in the associate’s-level curriculum, “Democratic Process,” engages students as citizens in making connections to their home communities through an “action learning” assignment. The College’s accreditation agreement requires that students engage in up to three hours per week of action learning activities in which students apply the theories and concepts of the course to contexts outside of the classroom. According to one student:

Woodbury gave me my voice. I used to be very quiet. I’m stepping out more now. In “Democratic Process” I had to be involved in the community. I watched other students; I was encouraged by other students and the instructor. Recently I wrote a letter to legislators, unrelated to school. And now, I’m seen as a resource at work with state agencies and non-profits. (Student Focus Group, March 6)

Our notes indicate that another student, referring to the general education curriculum and naming the “Democratic Process” and “Critical Thinking” courses specifically, observed that these two courses make students look at themselves, their communities and careers, and take this learning bring back to their communities. “Woodbury has us model what they want to see in us when we’ve graduated.” And indeed this is an accurate perception, as Woodbury has an outcome-based definition of the “educated person” which guides the general education portion of its bachelor’s program, and which may also be seen as an expression of many of the core values of the institution. This definition describes the educated person, in part, as one who “can evaluate [her] own thinking and change it. This openness enriches [her] relations with people from a variety of backgrounds, and helps [her] meet the challenges of new times and new environments” (Instructor Handbook).

Woodbury’s general education curriculum supports its institutional practices of building a challenging learning community that specifically promotes critical thinking and active engagement in the world, thereby creating conditions that are conducive to transformative learning experiences.

**Applied Learning Activities and Classroom Teaching Methods**

Cranton (1994) recommends engaging students in real-world experiences and in critical reflection on those experiences as ways to stimulate critical self-reflection and promote transformative learning. Woodbury stresses hands-on, experiential learning activities that are designed to replicate the skills and knowledge that students will be using in their personal, civic and professional lives.

Identifying experiential learning most conducive to transformation, Cranton notes that “experiences can be selected to maximize the potential discrepancy between learners’ views or values and the experience. The more learners are… doing rather than observing, the more likely they are to be influenced by the experience” (Cranton, 1994, p.182). One of the academic programs at Woodbury embraces service-learning, through which students and faculty partner with community organizations to apply content and test theories by responding to a need in the community. A key component of service-learning that relates to transformative learning is the practice of critical reflection on the action in the community; best practice in service-learning, which is adhered to at Woodbury, asks students to reflect on their own beliefs and assumptions, the theory being tested, and the impact of the event on community well-being. Moreover, at Woodbury every student is expected to complete at least one internship, typically of six credits, which provides further opportunity for students to explore and critically reflect on who they are and how the skills work in a real-life context. At the Core Faculty Teaching meeting, instructors told a story of mediation students bringing their internship experience with facilitating a conflict over how a region of the state could share technical education resources and responsibilities into the next day’s seminar. They expressed how that experience provided a rich case study, supporting critical self-reflection for the interns as well as critical reflection on practice for all students in the class.

As for classroom teaching methods and pedagogy that promote opportunities for transformative learning, one instructor observed that “Woodbury’s small discussion-based classes provide the ideal setting for...intellectual growth” and that it is “through exposure, discussion, dialog and engagement with new information and ideas” that many Woodbury students make the developmental transition to become “procedural/relativistic knowers” (D. Eisele, personal communication, April 22, 2005). Instructors at the Transformative Learning Workshop identified engaging students as subjects and creators of knowledge and letting them take responsibility for their own learning as conditions that give rise to transformative learning. Our notes from the March 5 Student Focus Group say that “instructors stretch your mind, help you learn new things, deal with uncomfortable and new stuff, challenging your perspective and what you know.” Instructors at the Transformative Learning Workshop told stories of using
challenging class dynamics as teaching/learning opportunities in the moment, and of being explicit about the little crises that can be intentionally created in an overall safe environment.

At Woodbury, the institutional practices of critical reflection on real-world action and of dynamic classroom teaching promote the opportunity for students to transform their meaning perspectives.

**Student-Instructor Relationships**

Students and instructors characterized their relationship as one of co-learners. As referenced earlier, they share decision-making about course content and evaluation, and many engage together in real-world experience. As one student expressed it at the Transformative Learning Workshop, “we are all here and we can experience this and we can learn this together.” Also at the Transformative Learning Workshop, two instructors told stories of themselves experiencing significant changes in their identities and self-perceptions. In addition to the aforementioned “Learning Strategies” workshop instructor who experienced a re-ordering of priorities, another instructor found his students’ transformative learning contagious; by modeling going for their goals, the students made the instructor critically question his habit of moving “laterally through life” and ask himself “where am I going, what path am I on?”

**Conclusions**

We have identified eight institutional conditions at one adult college that give rise to opportunities for transformative learning. It is the hope of the authors that this case study will contribute to a new conversation in the literature regarding strategies for institutionalizing transformative learning in adult education settings.

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