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October 24-26, 2007
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Transformative Learning:
Issues of Difference and Diversity

Sponsors:
University of New Mexico College of Education
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Albuquerque, New Mexico

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Sept. 19, 2007

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HOW DO AGE AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT AFFECT TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING?

SHARON L. WALSH, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO
Papers Presented

Seventh International Transformative Learning Conference
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Beyond the Heterogeneity of Critique in Education: Researchers' Experiences of Antagonisms and Limits as Transformative Learning Opportunities

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Abstract: This paper explores how dealing with diversity in educational research appears as both an epistemic process of knowledge construction, and a human experience involving collective and personal antagonisms. Considering the notion of "antagonism" and "limit" to describe the double binds inherent to scientific practices, this reflection proposes a framework describing researcher's strategies to manage diversity.

Diversity and Complexity

The meaning of “diversity” is generally associated with the condition or the quality of being diverse, different, or varied; it is then synonymous to difference or unlikeness. It can also be used to evocate the idea of variety. From a linguistic point of view, the word comes from the Old French “diversité,” derivated from the Latin expression “diversitas.” Stressing these origins allows one to highlight the ideas of “oddness,” “wickedness,” “perversity,” but also “contrariety,” “disagreement,” “divergence” or “contradiction,” associated from an etymological point of view to the meaning of “diversity” and contributing to connote its contemporary uses (Rey, 2000). Dealing with diversity fundamentally implies dealing with the ambivalence carried by the expression. On one hand, it carries the possibility to be enriched by what is different from oneself; it supposes the capacity to embrace a variety of characteristics and the potentiality of taking advantage of their complementarities. On the other hand, dealing with diversity supposes confrontation to an “otherness” (altérité), which may be perceived as a challenge to our standards, a source of negative feelings, involving the experience of conflicts and antagonisms. Respecting such ambivalence may bring one to conceive the possibility of learning to deal with diversity as a double process: learning to recognize and articulate a heterogeneity of points of view; and learning to recognize and manage antagonisms and contradictions inherent in the confrontation with otherness (Ardoino, 2000). The paradox is that such processes of learning can be perceived and defined following various experiential and theoretical paths. How then are we dealing with the diversity of ways to conceive “diversity” in education?

Dealing with Diversity as a Complex Phenomenon

Following a complex way of thinking (Alhadeff-Jones, in press; Morin & Le Moigne, 1999), the position adopted in this paper recognizes the need to consider not only the complementarities and antagonisms associated with the idea of diversity, but also the ways they emerge – as a meaning attribution – in the thought of those who conceived them. The position adopted in this paper is based on the assumption that in order to critically understand what involves the idea of “diversity” in the field of transformative learning theories (Mezirow & al., 2000), one has to take in consideration the ways practitioners and researchers are learning to recognize and cope with the heterogeneity of points of view they are confronted with; both at an experiential level (e.g. in their daily life) and at an epistemological level (e.g. epistemologies, theories, and methodologies privileged to legitimate their work). In such a perspective, practitioners and researchers are perceived as adult learners whose practices carry a potential of
transformation for others (e.g. students) as well as for themselves, based on their way of coping with diversity.

The Heterogeneity of Critique in Educational Research

The context of emergence of the reflection developed in this paper is associated with the writing of a PhD dissertation (Alhadeff-Jones, 2007b) that examined the diversity of conceptions developed in Educational sciences around the idea of “critique” as complex phenomena. Following a constructivist and multireferential position (Ardoino, 2000; Le Moigne, 2001), this research investigated a model of critique allowing one to conceive and represent, without reducing them, the complementarities and antagonisms characterizing the heterogeneity of educational approaches to critical reflection (including Mezirow’s one). Beyond the conceptual model proposed, the second part of this research introduces a case study based on a reinterpretation of the experience lived by the researcher (myself), conceived as an adult learner confronted both to a process of knowledge transformation (dealing with the diversity of critiques in Educational sciences) and personal transformation (dealing with the complementarities and antagonisms experienced on a daily basis, through the process of research). Grounded both in an autobiographical narrative and a research diary, this second part invites then to consider the multiplicity of antagonisms (including disorienting dilemmas) experienced as origins and / or consequences of such a process of research. The reflection proposed in this paper is directly grounded in the latter.

Diversity in Educational Research

Considering the way the idea of "critique" has been developed in Educational sciences, at least three sets of variables unfold the diversity of its interpretations (Alhadeff, 2004). The first one is constituted by the various justifications and principles used to legitimize "critical" educational research. Often considered as taken for granted, these arguments are grounded in grand narratives (emancipation of citizens, social justice, individual or collective development, Human Rights, economical development, etc.) organizing a heterogeneous set of values potentially in conflict with each other. Beyond the ideological and moral anchorage of research, a second set of variables defines its grounds. Here the diversity exists on three levels: (a) epistemological and theoretical (e.g. critical pedagogies and educational critiques may be inspired by humanism, Marxism, feminism, pragmatism, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, multiculturalism, post-structuralism, informal logic, etc.); (b) disciplinary (the way to understand criticism is most of the time compartmentalized following academic disciplines – philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, political and economical sciences, literature, etc.); and (c) pragmatic (critical practices and theories in education varies following their context of use – with children, adults, at work, in school, etc.). Finally, considering the diversity of educational research invites us to consider the resources mobilized. Here again, three levels can be identified: (a) the evolution of societal environment (educational critiques have evolved following various paths depending on the specific history of the countries in which they have been developed – the difference being obvious between the US and France, for instance); (b) the evolution of academic environments (the history of universities reveals the various ways critical theories have been developed in education); and finally (c) the evolution of informational environments (among others, considering the linguistic and cultural specificities of the Internet and the publishing standards around the world allows us to understand the differences in the way specific critical theories have been disseminated).
From the Representation of Diversity to the Experience of Antagonisms

Beyond a modern interpretation reducing "diversity" to the study of a phenomenon which could be ordered and a postmodern interpretation reducing it to disorder and fragmentation, an explicitly complex approach invites us to understand it as a phenomenon, both ordered and disordered, organized through complementarities and antagonisms.

Antagonism

For Morin, the notion of "antagonism" appears at the core of a theory of organization: "[...] Organizational equilibriums are equilibriums of antagonistic forces. Thus, every organizational relationships, and then every system, comprises and produces antagonism and in the same time complementarity." (Morin, 1977/1980, p.118, my translation). Behind the apparent solidarity of a system (individual, group, institution, theory), existing antagonisms carry a potentiality of disorganization and disintegration. Such a phenomenon is constitutive of what Morin describes as a principle of "systemic antagonism": "the complex unity of a system both creates and represses antagonism" (p.119-120). The organization of every active system, as long as it carries diversity and differences, suggests the creation and the repression of antagonisms, which appear through the active play of interactions and feedbacks. The main characteristic of antagonism appears through its disorganizing potentialities. It has then to be linked with the idea of disorder. As it is the case with physical systems or living organisms, antagonisms perpetuate, as well as they are perpetuated by, potential crisis. As Morin formulates it: "Every crisis, whatever its origin is, appears as a failure in the regulation and the control of antagonisms. Antagonisms appear when there is a crisis; they constitute a crisis when they are erupting[...]. More the organizational complexity is rich, more there are possibilities and risks of crisis, more also the system is able to solve its own crisis, or to take advantage of them for its own growth." (Morin, 1977/1980, p.122, my translation). Antagonisms can be observed at every level of organization (physical, biological, psychological, social, cultural, political and noological (ideas)). On a human level, the phenomenology of antagonisms appears through oppositions, contradictions, dilemmas, dissonances, conflicts, tensions, struggles, or crisis, etc. as they can be experienced or observed. Such an assumption allows one to reconsider the epistemic as well as the experiential development of scientific activity. Following this perspective, scientists' as well as science's development can be interpreted as the product of antagonisms experienced following heterogeneous paths (Alhadeff-Jones, 2007a).

Between Growth and Risk of Disintegration: Working at the Edge of One’s own Limits

My own experience of working on my doctoral dissertation in Educational sciences, from 2001 to 2007, brought me to elaborate a reflection on the role played by antagonisms before and during the process of writing my thesis (Alhadeff, 2005; Alhadeff-Jones, 2007b). It allowed me to question the way I experienced the limits of knowledge produced in my field of study, as well as my own limits in the process of producing knowledge. Doing so, I progressively came to reflect on the functions of what I identified as "working at the edge of one's own limits" (travail aux limites). It progressively appears relevant to assume that working at the edge of one's own limits represents a strategy adopted to cope with the various antagonisms, characterizing knowledge production, my self-development, my environment's own evolution, as well as their interrelations. Following this perspective, the idea of limit refers to the critical border, between order and disorder, experienced when being confronted to the diversity of knowledge and experiences constitutive of scientific activity.
As it has been suggested above, the presence of antagonisms represents both a catalyst of growth as well as a threat for the development of an organized system. Because they involve the potentiality of a crisis, which may be fatal for the system itself, antagonisms have to be regulated and controlled. In the same time, because they allow us to grasp the fundamental diversity characterizing the scientific system at every level (conceptual, epistemological, practical, institutional, political, cultural, interpersonal, personal, etc.) their recognition constitutes a crucial step in order to develop a complex and critical understanding of the process of knowledge production itself. Acknowledging diversity supposes then to go beyond the limits of oneself (biological, psychological, social, cultural, etc.) and those of the scientific and cultural environments framing the research (epistemologies, research team, academic institution, organizational and societal cultures, etc.), to challenge these limits and to experience the antagonisms, conflicts and dilemmas raised by their recognition. At the same time, the experience of diversity requires the conservation of a feeling of order and safety grounding, and grounded in, the identity characterizing the scientist – as an adult learner – as well as scientific institutions – as learning organizations. In order to understand the stakes involved by the double bind (Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974) of working at the edge of one’s own limits, the next section proposes to explore the benefits and limitations of strategies of mastery used to control antagonistic forces shaping individual as well as collective scientific development.

Working to (not) Control: Locating Scientists’ Strategies to Cope with Diversity and Complexity

Every conception allowing the representation of the emergence of a specific form of antagonism also carries – explicitly or not – a specific representation of the way to master its opposite and complementary forces, including the risks of crisis associated to them. Such an idea of mastery has to be understood broadly, as the faculty to dominate, to control, to rule, or to be skilled enough in order to be able to cope with the experience of antagonistic forces. Depending of the nature of the antagonism, such a mastery could involve rational or irrational, conscious or unconscious, individual or collective, free or compulsory, soft or hard, legitimate or illegitimate strategies or skills allowing to dominate, control, or rule antagonistic and complementary forces. Questioning the strategies of mastery developed to cope with the antagonisms involved by scientific activity allows us to reinterpret the experience of doing research and the level of diversity and complexity tolerated. From this angle, the work of a scientist can be understood as the result of a combination of strategies of mastery allowing us to manage the conflicts, dilemmas and contradictions which can be encountered at every level of the research process. At a personal level, strategies of mastery depends on personality, cognitive styles as well as gender, social or cultural belonging. At a collective level, the development of science depends on assumptions and principles carrying specific strategies of mastery, including social and epistemic rules legitimizing how knowledge production and scientists' interactions should be controlled. From this point of view, every research is the expression of a combination of strategies of mastery developed by both, the scientific field as a whole and the scientists involved themselves.

Face to the double binds raised by the need to keep both a feeling of mastery as well as the ability to work through the critical dimension of antagonisms, it appeared interesting to consider the development of various strategies aiming to reduce the discomfort experienced by the researcher. My personal experience, the observation of some colleagues and my understanding of the scientific field brought me to consider at least four kinds of prototypical strategies to cope with the double binds inherent to the diversity of scientific activity. Such strategies can be located through the combination of two dimensions: (a) the way to experience
limits; (b) the way to experience mastery. Each of these two axes is polarized from a minimal experience to a maximal one. Four kinds of strategies can then be defined by the crossing of these two axes: (1) avoiding systematically to be confronted with the limits raised by antagonisms and the risks of crisis; (2) confronting systematically the limits raised by antagonisms and promoting crisis; (3) experiencing a high level of mastery in the way to manage antagonisms; or at the opposite (4) experiencing a low level of mastery. In spite of its simple construction, such a schematic representation allows to locate various kinds of strategies, which can be adopted to reduce the perception – and even the experience – of the double binds characterizing the scientific activity. Thus, avoiding confronting oneself with the limits experienced at an individual, interpersonal, or institutional level, from an epistemic or relational point of view, constitutes a strategy reducing the discomfort generated by conflictual, dissonant positions or dilemmas. Because it avoids the recognition of the possibility to experience a crisis, such a strategy appears as a non-critical one. At the opposite, confronting systematically some of the forces shaping the process of knowledge production, challenging their legitimacy without considering their complementarities, also constitutes a strategy of denial. The latter appears as hyper-critical, because it privileges the play of antagonisms through the experience of a crisis instead of experiencing the tensions inherent to the simultaneous presence of antagonisms and complementarities. From the point of view of mastery, the discomfort of the researcher can be managed thanks to a position of hyper-mastery bringing to adopt behaviours characterized by a high level of control of the process of knowledge production. Among others, such strategies would include methodologies of research favouring fragmentation and isolation of the object of study, privileging the repetition of conditions of experimentation and the avoidance of specific topics. At the opposite, a position of low mastery would privilege eclectic and touch-and-go approaches, whose superficiality would contribute to reduce the discomfort experienced, thanks to the dispersion of the knowledge or the methodology used. Obviously, such strategies do not exist in such a prototypical way. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to think that every scientist has learned to develop combinations of strategies allowing to cope with the various risk of crisis inherent to the experience of the antagonistic and complementary forces shaping the diversity of scientific activity.

**Beyond Diversity in Educational Research: Considering Scientists’ Experience**

Through this paper, I have tried to illustrate how educational research appears as being not only a process of knowledge construction, but also a human process involving organizational and personal dimensions, as well as epistemic and experiential ones, whose recognition does not happen automatically. What do we know about the way researchers and practitioners in education learn to recognize and manage diversity? This paper shows that because the experience of diversity supposes both a challenge and the respect of one’s own epistemic and psycho-sociologic identity and strategies of control (as part of a process of self-definition), its experience involves double binds which can be managed by following various patterns of action. Considering that such strategies are developed through the individual and collective history, their recognition should invite one to consider the ways one deals with diversity as a learning process anchored in one's own biography. Because the experience of antagonisms constitutes a first step towards a complex way of thinking, and because the recognition of the potential crisis they carry constitutes a first step towards the elaboration of a critical position in regard of scientific diversity, it appeared particularly relevant to question the learning developed by scientists to work at the edge of their own limits. Considering the lack of literature related to the relationship
between knowledge production and scientists' self-development (Alhadeff-Jones, 2007a, 2007b), it seems particularly relevant from a pedagogical perspective to question and to explore scientific activity as a lifelong learning process, punctuated by transformational opportunities. This last proposition locates the use of methodologies, such as biographical approaches in Adult education (West, Alheit, Andersen & Merrill, 2007) and Educational Biography in particular (Dominicé, 2000), as privileged methodologies to explore and develop the capacity to recognize and self-reflect on the assumptions framing our understanding of "diversity" and the way one has learned to deal with the complementarities and antagonisms shaping its experience.

References
From Adversity to Wisdom: How People Experience Transformative Learning to Redeem Adversity and Serve a Greater Good

Eileen Therese Allison
Allison Alliance Inc. Wisdom Out

Abstract: Through an interview process, within a constructivist paradigm, this study links wisdom to transformative learning by reporting on 42 individuals who were nominated as being wise. In addition, these participants experienced a redemptive sequence leading to a greater good at the end of the transformative learning cycle.

Introduction

The present study derives from the author’s 2006 doctoral dissertation research at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. In that study, wisdom and its relationship to loss and adversity were explored in the lives of fifteen nurses who were nominated as being wise. That qualitative study, which employed methods of interview and narrative analysis, revealed some insights about the nature of transformational learning and the path these nurses took to wisdom. Most interesting, the nurses in the 2006 study found meaning in the losses and adversities they encountered in their lives, and these acted as the disorienting dilemma in the transformational cycle that ensued. Uniquely however, the transformational cycle leading to wisdom for these nurses included an additional experience that might be called a “redemptive sequence” (Tadeschi & Calhoun1995; Lauritzen & Jaegar 1997; Turner & Cox 2004.). This term comes from the field of physical rehabilitation and refers to a change in perspective that comes directly from finding meaning in the initiating suffering. In addition, the redemptive sequence as part of the transformational process, led these nurses to the discovery of and commitment to what they perceive as their purpose on earth, often leading to a greater good. This is consistent with Mezirows (2000) assertion that, “A new way of seeing has to lead to some kind of action” (p.335).

The present study continues the 2006 research, extending it to people all over the United States who are nominated as being wise by someone who knows them. The relationship between adversity and wisdom and the presence of the transformational learning process with a redemptive sequence continues to appear as a prevalent theme.

Theoretical Frame

The present study is part of a research project in process called Wisdom Out. The title, Wisdom Out, is meant to convey the idea that wisdom is a potential in all people that may in fact be activated by the transformative change process initiated by a disorienting dilemma. It draws on transformative learning theory, explicit and folk views of wisdom, and redemptive sequence.

Much of the wisdom literature either directly or tacitly, comes around to mention loss, adversity, suffering, and even despair as being linked to wisdom (Bleyl, 2000; Randall & Kenyon, 2001; Birren & Fisher, 1990; Bridges, 1980; Chandler & Holliday, 1990). Randall and Kenyon (2001) claim, “…ordinary wisdom involves, paradoxically, growth through diminishment and gain through loss. It involves finding meaning and even peace through suffering” (p.100). Shedding some light on why some people crumble in the face of loss and others hold fast and even grow, Viktor Frankl (1992) says despair is suffering without meaning. This can be expressed in a formula that reveals the idea that the difference between suffering and
despair has to do with the outcome. That is, \( D = S - M \): Despair is suffering without meaning. Suffering with meaning can lead to something other than despair. For Viktor Frankl, it led to a life worth living.

Bleyl (2000) also found adversity to be a common element in the lives of the twenty adults representing several different cultures who participated in her study of wisdom. In spite of adverse and non-supportive conditions often beginning in childhood for many of her participants, many possessed “an attitude of life formed in response to adversity” (p. 372). Writing about “ordinary wisdom,” Randall and Kenyon (2001) say, “…wisdom is about finding meaning in life and suffering” (p. 13). Holliday and Chandler (1986) cite Brent and Watson from a presentation they gave at a 1980 meeting of the Gerontology Association as describing a “developmental motivation for becoming wise which incorporates the idea that personal suffering plays an essential role in the attainment of wisdom (p. 28).” They suggest that suffering and pain that results from exposure to long-term arbitrary injustices, can certainly break a person. But for those who do not break, these same factors can “precipitate the achievement of a new and more complex equilibrium which they regard as the hallmark of wisdom” (p. 28). Norman (1996) seems to agree with the perspective that the wise ones experience loss pointing out that the wise ones might know the same things that we all know in our rational mind, but they go a step further and also seem able to call it up and apply it in context of real life challenges.

The redemptive sequence, as referenced in this study, refers to a narrative that is emotionally negative followed by a narrative that is emotionally positive and contains a positive outcome, which redeems and provides meaning for the negative events that precede it (McAdams & Bowman 2001).

Sternberg (2000) offers what he calls the “balance theory” of wisdom that claims that wisdom involves a balance of personal interests and responses, which are mediated by values, to the context of the environment to achieve a common good. In the balance theory, wisdom is revealed in the appropriateness of the solution to the situation, and is in service of a common and even greater good.

Methods

The present study is hermeneutic and constructivist, within the qualitative tradition. Through autobiographical narratives, it attempts to draw meaning from the actions the participants depict in the stories they tell about themselves.

Primarily through word of mouth, people from all over the United States nominated the participants for the present study. A nomination form, found on the Wisdom Out website offered a convenient way to collect these nominations. At present, 42 people have been interviewed. Interviews will total 100 at the close of the project. One person of the 42 requested anonymity.

Nominators were not provided with an "official" definition of wisdom. Instead, they use their own good judgment, drawing on their internal theory of wisdom. This works because curiously enough and in spite of a scholarly lack of consensus about what wisdom is, Holliday and Chandler found in their 1986 study that groups of young, middle aged and older persons agreed on how they characterized wisdom. In other words, most people seem to know wisdom when they see it. It could be surmised that most of us, probably using our own lives as examples, can distinguish between foolishness and wisdom and can painfully recall occasions when we acted the fool. Sternberg (2000) writes, “Foolishness is an extreme failure of wisdom” (p. 236).
Through the personal long interview, the 42 wise people in the present study told important stories about their lives. Each participant was asked to respond to this question: What are the events and experiences in your life that have made you who you are today?

Each of the interviews were recorded with permission, transcribed, analyzed and interpreted. Through constant comparative analysis, themes emerged and were labeled for discussion. Stories offer a narrative approach to understanding the world, and for this study, in understanding wisdom, loss and responses to loss as told by the participants. The narrative offers a structure familiar to readers of literature. There may be a plot, characters, conflict and resolution (Lauritzen and Jaegar, 1997). Yet, it is what Randall and Kenyon (2001) call “the inside story” which can be an amalgamation of memories, fantasies, thoughts, or feelings.

Findings

Thirty-nine of the 42 wise people interviewed for the *Wisdom Out* project told a personal story that could be coded as a redemptive sequence. That is, stories beginning with an event that could be described as having a negative charge, but ended with a positively charged legacy or “greater good.” Within these stories, participants described a process of growth that could be seen as the transformative learning process, beginning with the negative event (disorienting dilemma). Examples of the redemptive sequence within the stories of the participants reveal evidence of a greater good – a characteristic of wisdom as described by Sternberg and others. These examples can be seen in Table 1 below. Notice that the legacy of the greater good often directly redeems the original disorienting dilemma.

Table 1
*Samples of the Redemptive Sequence in Wisdom Out Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Disorienting Dilemma</th>
<th>Redemptive Legacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Char Teters</td>
<td>Her children’s distress due to racism</td>
<td>Removing American Indian mascots from schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spokane, WA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boo Thomas</td>
<td>Feeling blame for her parents addictions</td>
<td>Helping people recover from Hurricane Katrina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baton Rouge, LA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallace Howard</td>
<td>His own dyslexia and difficulties in school</td>
<td>Designed a reading program for special needs kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte, NC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Rastovski</td>
<td>Grew up in poverty and almost did not go to college as a result</td>
<td>Became superintendent of schools in a struggling community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wahoo, NE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Cerney</td>
<td>His dear childhood caretaker died while he was out of town. Mark was never notified</td>
<td>Created the Next of Kin Register, a worldwide service helping people find loved ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia, SC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Sperling</td>
<td>Saddened and frustrated by his inability to reach his HS students</td>
<td>Started the I Care program to inspire HS students to become involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torrance, CA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Miguel Alvarez</td>
<td>Fled Chile in 1973 during the coup that led to the reign of Pinochet, leaving his medical practice and elderly mother behind</td>
<td>Became a psychiatrist in the United States working with elderly people in nursing homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenport, NY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christina Baldwin</td>
<td>As a child, felt unnoticed and</td>
<td>Today, Christina works as a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a child, felt unnoticed and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We see wisdom in the ways people respond to adversity and in how difficult matters of life turn out. We see it in the words and actions of a person in the midst of a challenge or dilemma. We see it in the decisions made and the effect of those decisions on the lives of those impacted. The 42 participants in this study are all remarkable human beings living meaningful lives. But are they wise? The participants in the Wisdom Out study are thought to be wise by someone who knows them. As subjective as this might appear at first, researchers have indeed observed that people agree about wisdom in others when they see it.

It is interesting to note that even without a definition of “wisdom,” 39 out of 42 of the nominated participants tell a transformative learning story that includes a redemptive sequence of the original disorienting dilemma, resulting in a greater good. Although not conclusive, this common theme points to an inextricable relationship between transformative learning, the redemptive sequence, and the development of wisdom. In addition we see that loss and adversity is essential to the redemptive sequence for the participants in this study. This suggests that a person who is experiencing loss and adversity may possess a greater opportunity for wisdom to grow, as opposed to a person whose life is relatively free from loss and adversity. The present study suggests that those who are thought to be wise undergo the transformative learning process as described by Mezirow (2000), but with the addition of a redemptive sequence that leads to a greater good.

Consider Gwen who watched her alcoholic dad bleed to death under the unfortunate care of doctors who, steeped in their own assumptions about alcoholism, did not value his life. Thirty years later Gwen found herself teaching women in addiction recovery programs how to write. Not only did she teach them, she also oversaw the publication of a book of their essays and poems. Gwen could have become bitter, angry, firmly entrenched in thoughts of revenge. But she chose not to. Gwen chose to treat these women with dignity – in the same way that her father was not. This is the redemptive sequence in action. As Pema Chodron (1997) says, “It surprises us that darkness is the source of inspiration.”

Because each participant in this study knew that it had “something to do with wisdom and loss,” and that they were nominated because someone who knew them thought they were
“wise,” one might reasonably assume that the stories told were selected and framed by the individual according to that person’s personal and implicit theory of wisdom. As such, this research might even identify participant views of the type of life events they associate with becoming wise. This creates somewhat of a three-way link between these individual’s personal theories of wisdom, the events that made them wise, and the individual’s responses to important and challenging matter of life, such as loss or adversity. It is important to note however, that the participants themselves did not make these links explicit. None of them said, “This is why I am wise today.” Rather, the nature and format of the present study elicited narrative stories from the participants, which the researcher made visible through the qualitative constructivist paradigm through which the stories could be understood.

References


Transformative Potential of Learning in a Health Education Group Context

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Abstract: Interviews with ten clients, following their participation in arthritis education groups, provided valuable insights into meaningful group experiences, process of change in meaning perspectives and the use of groups as a tool to enable change that can lead to health behaviors and desired health outcomes.

It is widely accepted that meaningful experiences can lead to a sense of well being and life satisfaction and that in order for health care interventions to be therapeutic, they must be perceived as meaningful by the client (Law, 1998; Persson, Erlandsson, Eklund & Iwarsson, 2001; Townsend, 1997). Interest in arthritis health education program outcomes stems from a projected increase in people diagnosed with arthritis in Canada by the year 2031 (Badley & Wang, 1998). Increased costs related to increased numbers of individuals with arthritis have led to the promotion and evaluation of outcomes following arthritis health education interventions. The purpose of this study was to explore client experiences in arthritis health education groups and how these experiences affect change leading to desired health outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

Transformative learning theory with its humanistic, constructivist underpinnings provides a lens to view health interventions and the client’s involvement in constructing meaning from experience to affect change within health education. Mezirow defined learning as “the process of making new or revised interpretation of the meaning of experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action” (Mezirow, 1990, p.1). Dubouloz, Chevrier and Savoie-Zajc (2001) referred to the growing recognition of how a client’s meaning perspectives impact health related behaviors and the process of change in meaning perspectives that may be required to manage chronic health related conditions such as arthritis. Dubouloz, Laporte, Hall, Ashe and Smith (2004) found the transformative learning process involved a deconstruction and reconstruction of meaning perspectives for clients with rheumatoid arthritis. The deconstruction of meaning perspectives occurred when the illness context created a conflict with the client’s previous meaning perspectives related to self-definition such as independence and self-respect. Reconstruction of meaning perspectives occurred through rehabilitation as learned behaviors and knowledge helped the client transform meaning perspectives that could reestablish occupational balance (Dubouloz et al., 2004).

Method

A qualitative framework with an inductive, descriptive, phenomenological method guided the study. Using the conceptual lens of transformative learning theory, the main research question was: What are the experiences of clients in arthritis education groups and how do they transform knowledge and skills provided in the group sessions into desired health outcomes? Three supporting questions were identified: 1) What are the client’s understandings of the knowledge and skills presented?; 2) What are meaningful group experiences to the client in his
or her learning process towards change in health behaviors?; and 3) Are there common experiences or patterns of experience among clients participating in two different health education groups?

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Ten participants with rheumatoid or inflammatory arthritis were purposefully sampled from two different arthritis education groups. Five participants were selected from each group. There were 2 males and 8 females. Ages ranged from 40 – 69. Disease duration ranged from 1 year to 30 years. The language of choice in everyday living for all participants was English. All participants had attended one or the other arthritis education group within one year of the study. No participant had attended both education groups.

Data collection procedures involved participant observation fieldwork, individual and focus group interviews. Interviews were open-ended, semi-structured and lasted forty-five minutes to one hour. A focus group was scheduled for a one and a half hour session following completion of all initial interviews. Patterns that emerged from the data were presented with supporting data from the interviews with the intent of gathering opinion and further thoughts from participants.

Data analysis occurred in two phases guided by phenomenological methods (Creswell, 1994; Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). In the first phase, phrases and statements relating to group experiences were recorded from all interviews and repeated ones combined. Meanings were formulated from significant phrases and statements but remained close to the participant’s descriptions. The second phase involved applying concepts found in transformative learning theory such as individual process, meaning from experience and empowerment, to provide a more in-depth analysis and interpretation of the data that emerged from the individual and focus group interviews.

Trustworthiness and internal validity of the data were established by consistent use of methods of questioning. Transcribed interviews were returned to participants. Additions and deletions of content by the participant were included in the revised transcription. Any clarifying comments by participants were noted. In addition, participants in the focus group had the opportunity to review, discuss, clarify and expand upon the findings from the individual interviews.

Data triangulation was used to provide a more complete picture of the findings and to provide dimension to the participants’ described experiences in arthritis education groups (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). Data were collected at more than one site, in two different types of arthritis education groups and through various methods such as participant observation, individual and focus group interviews to provide more depth to this inquiry.

**Findings**

The findings represent the analysis and interpretation of voiced group experiences of 10 study participants who shared their struggle for disease management on a personal and a clinical level. Three themes evolved from significant statements and subsequent formulated meanings: validation through connection, restructuring illness identity, perceptions of self and disease symptoms.
Validation through Connection

This theme involved the experiences of participants with health care professionals, participant’s attitudes, expectations and seeking validation and legitimacy. The catalyst for this theme was the inner discomfort with arthritis as a chronic disease. Previously healthy participants described not being able to function as they did before. One participant described the moment she could no longer cope: “A year ago I became very tired and one day I broke down in the office, I couldn’t stop crying and I became hysterical. The arthritis was in a flare up big time. I had never missed a day of work because of my arthritis. I fought it and went to work but this time, I couldn’t fight it anymore.” Expectations and beliefs about getting help to alleviate arthritis symptoms were also challenged. One participant described her frustration: “I’d go one week (to my doctor) and she’d say oh you are puffy, did you read this paper. Well I knew that stuff. I didn’t want a paper on arthritis. I wanted help for … I wanted her to do something about the problem.” Participants’ disease symptoms disrupted daily function and led them to seek help in order to make sense of what was happening. Many participants recounted initial interactions with the health system that led to management strategies that were in conflict with their expectations. All participants identified the knowledgeable group facilitator as an important resource for arthritis information and symptom validation. One participant stated: “She (facilitator) was the first person I could really talk to about my arthritis who really believed me that I wasn’t just putting on a show about the pain, that the pain was real.” Participants felt that connecting with others and knowing they were not alone, validated their symptoms. They expressed that at times the loneliness to deal with disease symptoms was gripping. Factors such as not feeling understood, doubting the legitimacy of symptoms, mixed with hoping the disease would “just go away” if only the right medication was given, all contributed to expressed loneliness. Participants identified the importance of the group in relieving these feelings.

Restructuring Illness Identity

This second theme involved restructuring beliefs about self and disease, helping others and comparing self to others. The motivation for gaining an understanding of arthritis in relation to self began with validation. Arthritis education group experiences challenged preconceived notions of illness and identity by providing opportunities for participants to reflect and make decisions on how they would restructure their own illness identity. One participant believed that only the elderly developed arthritis. Prior to the group, she felt depressed and so unlucky to have it. Being a part of a group of similarly aged members “opened my mind to well you’re not the only one being sick at that age. So take it, accept it.” In both health education groups participants judged their level of illness by comparing themselves to others. All participants felt the most meaningful group experiences, at least initially, were seeing others “worse off” with the disease. One participant bluntly stated: “It makes you feel good to know that you’re not as bad as that guy.” Participants expressed feelings that gaining perspective on their disease symptoms in relation to others in the group provided an element of hope that they could “still do something” to prevent the symptoms from getting worse. Participants in both groups identified behavior of “whiners and complainers” as a benchmark for their own perceived level of coping. Participants’ compared their own skill development, self-confidence and actions as normal coping while the actions of “whiners and complainers” was considered unproductive disease coping. “Feeling useful” by helping others in the group was meaningful to all participants. One participant described disease management as a journey “and when you help someone have an easier journey than you’ve had, it makes you feel good inside.” There was an importance placed on the ability
and need to help others with the disease. All participants shared their experiences of helping someone else in the group in small ways such as assisting someone to understand an exercise, and in larger ways such as starting up an additional support group as one participant did. Awareness and sensitivity to others and being able to contribute to someone’s understanding also led to an improved image of the self as managing the disease on some level.

Perceptions of Self and Disease Symptoms

This final theme was characterized by participant descriptions of living with pain, feelings of power through disease knowledge, and reflections for action or inaction. The presentation of new skills and strategies for disease management within the groups provided opportunities for participants to utilize and give voice to changing disease perspectives. Participants all stated that although pain with arthritis was not acceptable to them, it was constant to varying degrees. They had to learn to live with a certain level of pain. As one participant said: “What choice do you have if you want to live, you want to do things and get some enjoyment out of life, you’ve got to keep going.” Participants cited isolation as a strategy that allowed more personal control during peak periods of pain with arthritis. One participant admitted that by isolating herself it helped to decrease expectations others would have of her because she would not be expected to socialize or participate in activities. Another participant stated that “when you’ve got pain it’s the only thing that sticks in your head. That’s the only thing that matters.” She also stated that participation in education groups would not be possible with a level of pain that was totally consuming. Knowing about and having access to strong medication when the pain became unmanageable was important to most participants as a way to feel more in control of disease symptoms. For one participant, this meant maintaining a very close relationship with her physician through regular visits. Another participant felt strongly that he did not wish to return to his physician whenever he was in extreme pain. He knew which medications were the most powerful in managing his pain and he kept a small amount available for when he felt he needed it. He stated he felt more at ease knowing he was in control. Two participants in the focus group with 15 and 18 years of experience with arthritis expressed how learning of new medications in education groups gave hope that there was “still something that could be tried” during extreme periods of pain. Participants of one education group described the importance of medication presentations but admitted that their observations and perceptions of other group members’ approach to symptom management led to reflection on personal coping. One participant observed that a woman her own age was living with the disease and appeared happy. “I thought that was more the thing I would emulate, that I would try to do and that was more the way I initially planned on handling the disease. That’s still the way I’d like to handle it,” she said. One participant stated that she still wanted to find a medication that could rid her of arthritis symptoms as it had done it the past and felt discussions on exercise for symptom management were “unmotivating.” Another participant stated that she only began a regular exercise routine when her body could not handle the arthritis medications. She realized through group experiences that her disease was long term. She stated: “I got very discouraged when I heard somebody say oh I’ve been coming (to the group) for 6 years and I’ve been coming for 8 years because I thought in my mind when I started oh this will be for 2 to 3 months. You know, I didn’t realize it looks like I’m going to be doing that for the rest of my life.”
Discussion

Listening to participants’ describe their personal struggle with a chronic disease was both humbling and enlightening. Participant descriptions, when brought together under the lens of transformative learning theory, provided valuable insights to the process of change that can occur within the group context leading to desired health outcomes.

The contribution of validation experiences to changes in disease perspectives could be seen through the concept of empowerment found in transformative learning theory. Naming the symptoms and recognizing the legitimacy of them provided participants with a sense of empowerment and control in seeing the disease as separate from self and the symptoms as problems that could be worked on. Mezirow (1991) suggests that problem identification is an important stage that leads to openness for new learning.

In transformative learning theory, practicing new ways of being has been cited as an important element of change in meaning perspectives that can lead to motivation to engage in health behaviors (Sinnott, 1994). Group experiences challenged preconceived notions of illness and identity by providing opportunities to reflect and make decisions on how illness identity would be restructured. Study participants described changes in how they saw themselves and their disease as they compared themselves to others in the group through disease severity, coping behaviors, and ability to share knowledge. Participants described group experiences that helped them to utilize, question and reflect on new knowledge about arthritis management within changing disease perspectives.

Participants described pain, fatigue and fear of incapacity as a prime motivator to explore symptom management strategies. They also described action versus inaction behaviors. Motivation or desire to incorporate strategies for symptom management related to the participant’s expectations and experiences with medications that decreased pain and inflammation. All participants described discussions on medications and sharing of information with others as a meaningful group experience. These discussions provided a sense of hope that there could still be a medication to try that would relieve symptoms. Assumptions that the client’s own ability to relieve pain to improve function (through exercise and joint protection strategies) will lead to desired health outcomes are the basis of many arthritis self-management programs and self efficacy theories (Linton & Skevington, 1999). Participants in this study, however, described a change in their perception of help available from medications as a motivating factor in considering alternative strategies for disease management.

This study exposed the client’s complex reality of adjusting and living with a chronic disease. Arthritis education groups were linked to desired health outcomes through a process of change in meaning perspectives about self and disease management. One of the most significant learning outcomes from group experiences occurred when meaningful experiences defined new directions and understandings that encouraged participant reflections on coping strategies that could lead to a more acceptable and livable relationship with disease symptoms. The contributions of the group context did not lie in the measure of health outcomes but in the movement towards them.
References
Learning to Recover from Bulimia: Voices of transformation
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Abstract: This is a qualitative research study that identifies the types of learning that 24 adult bulimic women report as being significant to their recovery. Changes in the meaning of bulimia in the women’s lives and disorienting dilemmas were at the core of the experience of learning to recover from bulimia.

More than five million Americans suffer from eating disorders (College Health, 1998). Anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa are the two primary eating disorders with bulimia being at least three times as common as anorexia. Bulimia affects more than three hundred thousand women nation wide.

Merriam and Caffarella (1999) suggest, that most definitions of learning “include the concepts of behavioral change and experience” (p. 249). Many studies from the health care field document the need for changes in thinking or behavior to assist patients in managing or recovering from such illnesses as alcoholism, rheumatoid arthritis, HIV infection, diabetes mellitus, and cancer (Hough, 1995; Hunter, 1980; Kurtz, 1996; Rorty, Yager & Rosotto, 1993; Rosotto, Rorty-Grenfield & Yager, 1996; Williams, 1989). A better understanding of the learning reported by bulimic patients themselves as necessary for recovery to take place may shed light on the treatment of adult women in recovery from this debilitating and life threatening illness.

The unique focus of this study is that it comes from the field of adult education and adds, for the first time, the perspective of adult learning theory to the understanding of recovery from bulimia. Existing literature on bulimia is essentially descriptive in nature. There are few reports of participant perceptions of recovery, and no reports of participant learning which may correspondingly contribute to recovery. There is little discussion in the literature of the factors which are reported to facilitate or to impede changes in thinking and/or behavior related to recovery from bulimia. This study attempts to address this gap in the literature.

Methodology

The three research questions addressed in this study were: (1) What learning must take place in order for an adult woman to recover from bulimia? (2) How does learning that precipitates new ways of thinking and/or behaving happen in recovery from bulimia? and (3) What experiences do adult bulimic women report as having precipitated changes in thinking and/or behaving that contributed to or impeded their recovery?

A “hallmark of qualitative research today is the deep involvement in issues of gender, culture, and marginalized groups” (Creswell, 1998, p.19). This qualitative research design allows the recovering women not only to speak about their understanding of their experiences of recovery from bulimia, but also to make meaning of these experiences while they speak about them. To capture this qualitative aspect of recovery from bulimia, the researcher has focused attention on both behavioral and perceptual data collection. To gather this information, three methods were planned; in-depth participant interviews including an oral critical incident report, and two surveys. In-depth interviews with the participants about their experience of recovery was the primary data collection method in this study. A record of bulimic symptoms for each of the participants was accomplished through use of the Eating Disorders Inventory (EDI), a widely
used self-report measure of symptoms commonly associated with anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa that can also provide valuable information about clinical status and response to treatment (Garner, 1991). Each of the participants also completed a demographic survey that supplied the information for an informed general description of the study population.

The study sample consisted of two groups of 24 normal-weight, improving, adult, bulimic women ages eighteen [18] to fifty-eight [58] years. These women met the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders [DSM-IV] (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) criteria for a diagnosis of bulimia and were a cross-section of patients at the Wilkins Center for Eating and Weight Disorders in Greenwich, Connecticut. Each consecutive bulimic woman who fit the criteria for the study entering the Wilkins Center for treatment during a three month period was considered for the study. An information packet about the study was given to every interested patient. Patients self-selected after reviewing the information.

The two groups were those active in their recovery and receiving treatment for at least three months, and those recovered and symptom-free for at least six months. The time frame of at least three months of continuous treatment was used to define the group designated as 'in recovery'. The 15 women in this Recovering Case Group were (by pseudonym); Stella, Monica, Elena, Karla, Eloise, Darcie, *Pauline, Angela, Sophia, *Selena, Rose, Marian, Allegra, Lara and *Sonya. The data from the demographic survey and EDI for all these women were reported and analyzed. The asterisk* indicates those who did not participate in the in-depth interview.

The nine women in the Recovered Case Group were; *Lela, June, Mona, Keri, Tilda, Mabel, Lois, Sharon and Crystal. The EDI and demographic survey information from all nine of these women is included in the findings, only one (indicated by asterisk*) did not participate in the in-depth interview. A six month symptom-free definition of recovery is consistent with criteria in the literature and was chosen to allow for adequate comparison, analysis, and synthesis of data between the two groups. The data was thematically coded and analyzed. The triangulation of results has added to the validity of the findings.

Findings

There were four findings as a result of this study.

Finding 1: Learning from experience was found to be central to recovery from bulimia for the women in this study. Recovery was found to involve a succession of experiences, which when reflected upon, often in connection with others, stimulated learning.

Finding 2: Changes in the meaning of bulimia in the patient’s life and disorienting dilemmas were at the core of the experience of learning to recover from bulimia. The choice to recover is an example of a change in how individuals made meaning of their bulimia. This choice was the primary change in meaning-making necessary for recovery to take place. In making this choice, the bulimic woman perceived for the first time that bulimia was no longer helpful, but actually hurtful to her. Changes in meaning-making often resulted from disorienting dilemmas. “Hitting bottom” and relapse were reported as the most significant disorienting dilemmas because they triggered the choice to recover and the motivation to continue the recovery process.

Finding 3: Reflective thinking, affiliation with others, and the development of one’s voice were found to facilitate learning to recover from bulimia. The ability to think reflectively, especially when accompanied by a positive, supportive, and trusting relationship with others was found to be a major facilitator of learning to recover from bulimia.
Finding 4: Internal and external barriers to reflection impeded learning to recover from bulimia. These barriers inhibited reflection and resulted in non-learning. The internal barriers were reported as non-reflective thinking and negative emotional states; the external barriers most frequently reported came from an unsupportive environment and survival issues such as lack of money and/or no medical insurance. These barriers to reflection help to explain why some individuals recover while others do not and why some individuals recover more quickly than others. Figure 1 below, presents a graphic overview of these findings.

Model for Learning in Recovery from Bulimia

Discussion

Transformational learning, as explained by Hayes and Flannery (2000), “is learning that leads to some type of fundamental change in the learner’s sense of themselves, their worldviews, their understanding of their pasts, and their orientation to the future” (p. 140). According to Mezirow (1998) critical reflection and rational discourse have been found “to work better in more circumstances than have other options” (p.187) to produce changes in meaning schemes and result in perspective transformation. Critical self reflection on assumptions is the process involved in psychotherapy precipitating major transformations in perspective (Mezirow, 1998). This is congruent with Mickley’s (1988) findings that individual psychotherapy for a year or more positively correlated with success in recovery from eating disorders.

Eighteen of the twenty women who were interviewed perceived some learning as a result of their experience of recovery from bulimia. All eight women in the recovered group (June, Mona, Tilda, Mabel, Keri, Sharon, Crystal, and Lois), and, ten of the twelve women in the recovering group (Stella, Monica, Elena, Karla, Darcie, Angela, Rose, Marian, Allegra, and Lara), reported that their thinking and/or behavior had changed as a result of their experience of
recovery. Sophia, articulated how therapeutic discourse in a positive relationship and, finding her voice precipitated changes in her behavior:

- Going to …[my therapist] and talking about …why certain things are bothering me, that has helped. I’ve noticed that the nights I go to…[my therapist], I’ll go home and I’ll eat dinner and I won’t throw up and that’s really, really big! That’s something I wish, that I could go and see her every day…and talk about what it is that I’m feeling exactly, and then how to deal with those feelings in a different way.

The effect of critical reflection is what the women in this study reportedly experienced when they entered the process of discourse to justify their problematic belief that bulimia served a meaningful purpose in their lives. Such discourse with others caused these women to critically examine the origin of their belief in its historical and cultural contexts, potentially causing their understanding of the validity of their belief to be transformed. As Sophia further explained:

- So many years have gone by where I never really talked about anything having to do with an eating disorder….years went by and I didn’t talk about it, and now… I want to talk about it.

Darcie responded similarly:

- Keeping everything inside for so long and only sharing it with myself…is very contaminating….Everything I needed to get out I didn’t and it was bubbling forever…talking to anyone who is going to listen helps. You may not want to explain everything or spell everything out in one sitting, but just relieving the pressure, a bit at a time, you can feel it definitely helps.

It may be suggested that the resulting transformation of perspective had a significant impact on future experiences and helped maintain the positive cycle of transformation in recovery. Marian put it this way:

- I had to learn that bulimia was bad. Bulimia was killing me. Bulimia was striping my identity, striping all the fun and experience of life from me. And I really had to learn that bulimia was the enemy, nothing I should hold on to. There was nothing good about it, and I think for a while, it was everything. I thought it was great, it was great! I thought I was really doing well, and then I really finally learned that bulimia is just such an awful, awful thing.

Mona reported similarly and with great excitement:

- Oh God! I’m a different person, I’m a new woman….I look at life in a different way. I’m much more positive….I appreciate things more….I’m just all around more positive, responsible and happy, definitely happy and confident.

This description of critical reflection on assumptions “as involving the active construction of knowledge” (Mezirow, 1998, p.189) is what helps in understanding how the learning dynamic of childhood differs from that of adulthood. When a child is made aware that their assumptions about knowing or behaving are no longer helpful in getting them what they want, their change in behavior may involve “the mindless response to social pressure, to please parents, teacher, or one’s peers . . . . a choice is made to move to the way of thinking or behaving deemed more functional or acceptable (Mezirow, 1998, p.189). This form of behavior is not limited to childhood and might help explain why some adults recover from bulimia quickly and others recover more slowly or not at all. Adults can also move toward a way of thinking or behaving deemed more appropriate or conforming. This is what Mezirow calls “assimilative learning” (Mezirow, 1998). In other words, a person may go through the motions of recovery in an attempt to conform to the way of thinking or behaving deemed to be more conforming to their...
peers, parents, or culture, but until the person critically reflects on her assumptions she does not really choose recovery and does not have a vested interest in the outcome of the process. Marian explained it this way:

I really don’t feel like I was being recovered until the last two years of my life when I realized that I wanted to get better, because I never did [before]. It was a fake thing [before]. I would tell my roommates I was going to counseling every week, I’m doing it, I’m really working towards stopping it. That was the biggest lie, because I wasn’t doing anything to stop it. I was letting it ruin my life.

Merriam and Clark (1991) observed that though “more learning happens in periods that people perceive as good versus bad times….learning that is more likely to be transformative occurred in the bad times” (Merriam and Cafarella, 1999, p.107). Analysis of data from this study support the notion that the more difficult the “transition is perceived to be by learners, the more potential this transition may have for learning, and especially for changing how learners see themselves and their worlds” (Merriam & Cafarella, 1999, p.108). This study found that the motivation and decision to recover was often a result of the experience of hitting bottom or relapse in the recovery process. This experience of total dispair as part of making the choice to recover was reported over and over by the women in this study. June explained it this way:

I hit my all point low. I felt like I had nothing to loose anymore…I was at rock bottom…and I had to do something. It [became] like a fight for me. I think it is almost necessary to get to the bottom before you can go back up.

As Darcie so compelling described:

I threw up blood one day, and that freaked me out, and I was really embarrassed….so embarressed I wanted to crawl under a table and never come out again …. that was kind of a slap in the face, get up, get it together.

Stella gave further insight into the disorienting dilemma caused by relapse and how it triggered change for her:

…when I relapsed…the disgust I had…the way that I felt, really changed me. I mean the disgust I have when I even have the urge to purge now, [it] makes me realize that my healthy brain is working. That I’m feeling disgusted about it and knowing that it is bad then obviously something is going right.

Clearly, even those experiences that may not seem optimal for learning, have given the women in this study “opportunities to create new knowledge, question old beliefs, and engage in personal and social change.”(Hayes & Flannery, 2000, p. 52).

Sharon Morgenthaler (1996) in her reflections on what she has learned about recovering substance abusers shared similar findings. She explained that the newly recovered “has been knocked off his block” (Morgenthaler, 1996, p.7) and is no longer on familiar ground with regard to coping mechanisms. Those who are recovering usually lack the skills necessary for adapting to new and varied situations and people (Morgenthaler, 1996). In addition, their experiences have been limited by the restrictions of their addictive illness. This suggests that recovery, in and of itself, may be a disorienting dilemma for those immersed in a recovery process. The women in this study reported that their negative emotional state interfered with the ability to reflect on their experiences and hindered their recovery. In addition, their bulimic symptoms often supported non-reflective thinking. As Lara put it:

I didn’t have to think about anything when I was bulimic. If I break up with a boyfriend and he rips my heart out, I don’t have to think about it. I eat a bag of cookies and I puke it up and that’s it.
Non-reflective thinking, or the inability to reflect was the most frequently reported barrier to learning to recover from bulimia for the women in this study.

References


I am Michelangelo: Exploring the role of transformational figures in the lives of others

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Abstract: A narrative exploration of the role of others in transformation. Four participants share narratives identifying epochal transformational experience as a result of an interpersonal encounter with a transformational figure. These transformational experiences occurred twenty-five to forty-seven years ago and still remain a poignant part of each participant’s life narrative.

Introduction

In our research of transformative learning theory and perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991), we have become increasingly aware that people experience transformation as a result of interpersonal encounters. Participants of this study were chosen because they publicly shared transformational stories in class, a forum, a seminar, or an internet blog. These narratives were not solicited; we simply had the good fortune of being in attendance while they shared their stories of change. One participant was chosen when he voluntarily shared his transformational experience as we casually discussed the power of interpersonal relationships in perspective transformation.

While listening to these transformational experiences, we began to ask ourselves: Why was Good Buffalo Eagle’s encounter with Mr. Marxum so transformative that he asserts, “In that moment I am no longer a migrant worker; I am Michelangelo.”

Why was John’s experience with a social worker so influential that he describes the change in his life as “A new awakening; I went in a victim, and came out the master of my own destiny”.  

Tom, another participant who overcame anger and resentment at the death of his father, states “I’m blessed that I had Mr. Barton come along at the right time for me or I would have no idea where I would be. I don’t think, well, the visions aren’t pretty.”

Why did Mike proclaim at Ellen’s retirement, “I went in and just said ‘Ellen, I wanted you to know that if I am ever a success as a teacher it is because of what you did to build me’… I would lay any accomplishments that I have probably at Ellen’s door.”

Theoretical Sensitivity

Framed within Mezirow’s (1991) transformative learning theory and following recommendations from Taylor (2007) we hope to better understand how transformative relationships foster transformation in others. We anticipate the shared narratives in this study will help us better understand how transformative relationships help facilitate perspective transformation. We hope to determine if transformational figures assist the transformed to rejoice and embrace the transformative process, rather than endure the presumed shame and guilt normally associated with disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow, 1991).

Transformation can be dramatic or developmental (Moore, 2005), evolutionary or revolutionary, intentional or imposed (Boverie & Kroth, 2001). It is the process of “change brought about by critical reflection” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Moore (2005) contends that
change can be “self change, or guided, assisted change” (p. 409). Change or “Discovery should be a joyous process” (Boverie & Kroth, 2001, p. 98).

Some researchers question the “assumed importance” of transformational relationships (Mezirow, 1991, p. 176). Others see them as critical in our transformative journey (Southern, 2005). Daloz (1986) states in reference to mentors, “They are suffused with magic and play a key part in our transformation. Their purpose…is to remind us that we can, indeed survive the terror of the coming journey and undergo the transformation by moving through, not around, our fear” (p. 17). Palmer (1998) suggests, ‘live encounters’ are a catalyst to change: “Otherness, taken seriously, always invites transformation” (p. 38).

Methodology

Utilizing Merriam’s (1988) qualitative research methods as a guide we focus on the “rich, thick description” of participants’ transformational narratives. In addition to notes from participants who shared public presentations, we conducted one hour recorded interviews with the four participants. Each of the four men chosen was selected because he publicly identified an epochal transformational experiences and the influence of another person in that change.

Good Buffalo Eagle migrated to the U.S as a small boy and entered high school at the age of nineteen. Language barriers landed him in detention where he would draw pictures of other students. Mr. Marxum discovered the drawings and invited him to take art classes. Good Buffalo credits his relationship with Mr. Marxum as a turning point in his life that eventually led to his co-founding a therapy program for struggling youth.

John was an abused teenager who attributes his transformative experience to an encounter with a social worker during his sophomore year in high school. The excitement of his new way of thinking still sounds in his voice. This brief encounter helped transform John’s thinking to the point that he said he was never abused again.

As a child, Tom struggled after the death of his father in 1961. Depressed and angry, the only thing he wanted was to play football. He recalls how his coach helped transform his life. Now as the director of a youth activities organization, Tom speaks publicly attempting to persuade others to recognize potential in all people.

Mike, a young teacher, decided not to return to the classroom the next year because of the struggle he endured during his first teaching year. Unable to secure another job he returned to teaching only to discover a transformational relationship waiting for him. Emotion fills his voice on numerous occasions as he describes how Ellen, a colleague, helped him discover his passion in life; teaching.

During the interviews each participant began by sharing in detail his transformational experience. The rest of the interview consisted of semi-structured questions exploring more deeply the transformative relationship with their transformational figure.

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed, attempting to discover emerging themes of transformational relationships. All interviews were converted to mp3 files so they could be reviewed and analyzed multiple times. Listening to the participants’ voices helped us gain a greater insight into their emotions and experiences.

Findings and Discussion

As we analyzed the data five themes emerged concerning the participant’s transformative relationship with his or her transformational figure. The final theme addresses the question of experiencing shame and guilt after their disorienting dilemma.
Kindness and Compassion

The first emerging theme identified the kindness of transformational figures. Good Buffalo recalls: “Mr. Marxum was very kind. He took me under his wing. He would give me some of the media, and say take this home, like oils or pastel and say go home and do me a drawing. The next day I would bring one to him and he would say ‘Are you sure you haven’t taken art classes?’ and I knew he was just flattering me.”

In reference to Coach Barton, Tom replied, “Well, umm empathy, kindness, compassion, good memory for names, good sense of humor. Great at remembering names, quick to smile, quick to praise, wasn’t afraid to come and pat you on the back. He probably patted me on the rear end a time or two, but it was nothing but “Hey, good job.” And just a real genuine care for all, I believe, all the kids who were in his care.”

Mike remembered his colleague Ellen as a kind person as well. He says, “Umm, she’s a very kind person, she’s a very, very professional person.”

Value and Potential

Transformational figures are more than kind, they see potential in others. Each participant expressed how he felt highly esteemed or valued. Good Buffalo recalls the power of being seen with potential:

He [Mr. Marxum] was interested in all his students. To be able to see the good in someone, and wait patiently for that seed to sprout and grow, in a sense they became the Gardeners in my life. They watered and pruned and helped me develop along the way. But the reason I tell my story about them is because of where I came from, you know, being a migrant worker, being a wetback, once I showed interest, they kept with me. Encouraging me, standing by me… They saw my potential; they sowed that seed of greatness.

John explained that being seen as a person of value helped change his way of thinking: It’s almost, I wouldn’t say it’s impossible, but it is extremely difficult to gain that perspective by yourself, you know, if you don’t have any other frame of reference. It's just that, sometimes someone will come and introduce an idea that is so revolutionary and so new it’s just so amazing to me, and it’s amazing to me today that I had never considered that I had the right to say no. This was such a, [pause] a new concept to me; I had the right to say ‘No you can’t do that’.

This theme of potential also resonates in the experience of Tom as he remembers:

From the very first day I met him [Coach Barton] he knew my name, he found occasion at every single practice to come up several times call me by name, pat me on the back and find something that I had done right. You know at the time I actually thought that I was a pretty good football player. He had me believing that I was an important part of the team. I do tend to think in my own mind I felt a little special and I think he knew of my situation and he took a little special interest in me to make sure that I felt special…. He was a guy who looked for the goodness and potential in people.

Mike discussed how being seen as a person of value helped “save” him from his potential failure and ultimately led to a life of fulfillment. Mike told his principal at the end of his first year of teaching at the Junior High School, “I can get more enjoyment out of digging ditches than I got out of teaching this year. If I can find another job, I probably won’t be back.” He continues by sharing how his transformational relationship with his colleague Ellen allowed him to do what he loves today. He states, “I cannot feature myself doing anything but teaching.
Being a teacher is who I am, and if it were not for Ellen, I would not be who I am. I would not have this source of satisfaction that has been a joy to me for 30 years; it would not be part of my life.”

It was Ellen who saw his potential and intervened:
Well, Ellen had seen me go in and she saw the look on my face when I went in, after you have the kind of year that I had, and she followed me in. I didn’t find this out until the following year but she said to the principle, ‘this is a very talented young man, who has great potential as a teacher and if you let him go it will be a loss to education and it will be your fault.’

Success Experiences
Another theme that emerged demonstrated that transformational figures did more than passively interact with the transformed. They act as guides along the journey, as defined by Daloz (1986), providing opportunities for those who follow to have success along the way. Good Buffalo recognized that Mr. Marxum was creating success experience for him during his transformation as well:
I noticed also that sometimes he [Mr. Marxum] would say “Can I keep this” and I would say sure and his wife would pack us a lunch, and we would go and draw all day. In watercolors and oils and he would help me, how to learn to blend colors and stuff like that. I was delighted and honored that because of all the students he could have taken, he took me and that was quite an experience for me.
When Good Buffalo graduated he was surprisingly awarded an art scholarship to a University. He realized after the announcement Mr. Marxum’s role:
What was happening, was Mr. Marxum, my art teacher, whenever he saw something he liked of my work, he would ask me if he could keep it, now I know he was making a portfolio so he could send it to the University. Between Mr. Marxum and Mr. Roller, they were the catalysts that got me to the University.
Mike also acknowledged the active role of Ellen as she modified his classroom and class list before the coming year, thus providing him with a success experience:
I came back the next year to the different classroom. It wasn’t a fancy classroom it was just a normal classroom, but it was almost a square (Laughing). When I looked at my class list I saw that my list of students was markedly different than it had been a year before. This time I had, umm students who had been …… handpicked in a way. What happened was Ellen had gone in and had selected my students. She had not given me all the students who were not problem students, but what she had done was that she checked my class loads and made sure that the problem students were equally distributed among my classes. She was so gentle with that, that I hardly even knew that I was being mentored.

Interpersonal Linkage
During public presentations, each participant spoke of a single transformational figure in his life. During the interview they revealed additional people who helped them along the way. Perhaps transformational figures make it easier to recognize the importance of relationships in transformation.
Good Buffalo mentioned Mr. Roller and later Mr. LaDean as powerful influences in his transformation.
John describes how after his transformational encounter he began to seek out potential transformative relationships:

The interesting thing after that was that I began to seek out adults, I did not have relationships with kids my own age, but I did have relationships with adults those people I thought I could trust from that point on. But it was always adults. I mean I had a couple of friends, but I couldn't, for some reason, they did not seem to have the….the capacity, the maturity to understand where I was, and what I was going through.

Tom included Ms. Naismith as a transformational figure in his academics. He remembers, “In terms of my academics, she was the one who got me turned around there. She had a different style but the message was still the same, you’ve got potential.”

Mike also acknowledged another transformative relationship in his life.

No Shame or Guilt

The concluding theme challenges the notion that one must feel shame or guilt during perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991). Each participant described a positive emotion as he worked through his disorienting dilemma. Good Buffalo explains, “Silently, deeply inside I had wanted to do something with my life, and I already had a little talent in art. I wanted to, but I didn’t know how that was ever going to open up. So obviously when I walked into that room and smelled the linseed oil and the turpentine, I was home. I just felt right at home.”

John states:

I don't know how it happened that afternoon, but I do know that I left that morning a victim crouching in a corner with my hand above my head, and I came back that night as a champion of my own destiny. Yeah, that takes a lot of time to overcome deep rooted ideas and philosophies that had been ingrained in my head over extended periods, but that day was such a significant turning point in that process that I’ve got it marked in my mentality.

When asked about shame and guilt, Tom recalls “Not shame and guilt, the only shame and guilt I have is that I should have gone back and thanked Mr. Martin, but more of a relief and a discovery of ‘Wow here’s what I am supposed to do’.”

Mike concludes, “There wasn’t so much a feeling of shame or guilt it was a feeling of expansion. I could see myself expanding to fit this challenge that I thought was insurmountable. I think that the feelings that I felt were a calm growing satisfaction until suddenly I came to the conclusion that I was capable.

The participants of this study experienced profound transformative change because of an encounter with a transformational figure. Each participant helped illuminate the importance of transformative relationship in perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991). The results of this study, although very preliminary, challenge the notion that disorienting dilemma must be accompanied by shame and guilt.

We need to acknowledge, as did Taylor (2007), that there is a need for further research regarding transformational relationships. We need to discover if the themes of kindness and compassion, value and potential, success experiences and interpersonal linkage will assist others in experiencing a guilt free perspective transformation. We anticipate other qualities and characteristics will emerge as a result of continued research concerning transformative relationships.

We realize that we are embarking upon the exploration of the roles of others in transformational relationships. We acknowledge that there is a great need to seek out others who
have had epochal transformational experiences to determine similar qualities of character for transformational figures.

O’ Sullivan and Taylor (2004) argue that “Educators are those who enable our learning – colleagues, friends, neighbors, parents, children, organizational leaders, spiritual leaders, artists, researchers, teachers, mentors – especially those who enabled us to learn as we live and work and inspire us to a life of inquiry – openness and discernment” (p. 22). Perhaps a greater understanding of transformative relationships will assist educators in fostering and enabling potential transformation.

References
Heteronormativity as a Factor in the Transformative Learning of Midlife Gay Men

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Abstract: This paper uses transformative learning as a lens to explore how self-identified gay men experience and learn to negotiate midlife within a heteronormative society.

Introduction

Adult learning and adult development are inextricably intertwined as Clark and Caffarella (1999) have noted: “many aspects of our thinking about adult learners and the learning process are shaped by our knowledge of how adults change and develop across the life span” (p.1). Mezirow goes even further and sees adult development as paralleling the process of a perspective transformation, based on the assumption that a transformation reflects developmental movement through a series of steps and phases by an individual away from a concrete egocentric, context free, and non-reflective view of the world toward a more progressive and discriminating meaning perspective. Despite efforts to explore the relationship between adult learning and adult development, related research both about development and learning—including transformative learning—has been almost exclusively heterosexual (Bettinger, 2007; Kimmel & Sang, 1995, Taylor, 2007). As a result, traditional notions of adult development and learning may not be applicable to those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified or transgender, queer (LGBTQ; also referred to as sexual minorities), as they fail to take into account the history, social contexts, and lived experiences of such individuals (D’Augelli & Patterson, 1995; Kertzner, 2001). This inattention to sexual minorities in research is rooted in heteronormativity, the deeply ensconced and taken-for-granted societal norm of heterosexuality.

Heteronormativity serves to denigrate, oppress, and marginalize those who are not heterosexual; and has contributed not only to the longstanding lack of consideration of sexual identity as a developmental component; but to its relevance to adult learning and meaning making being overlooked as well. As sexual minorities have become more visible in society, their lived experiences have begun to receive greater research attention. However, research related to sexual minorities at midlife remains sparse; and understanding how they learn to negotiate midlife in a heteronormative society remains largely unexplored. Several questions are in need of exploration, such as what developmental challenges has heteronormativity imposed on sexual minorities? What learning approaches are exhibited in response to a heteronormative society? What insights about the mid-life transition of sexual minorities might inform the present understanding of transformative learning as a model of development?

Irrespective of sexual identity, gender is an important consideration in the exploration of lived experiences (Caffarella & Olson, 1993). Indeed, the worlds of lesbians and gay men can be radically divergent involving different issues, situations, and historical moments (Nimmons, 2002). Although the lived experiences of lesbians are as deeply important and richly complex as those of gay men, they are so distinct that conflating them would “blur profound differences and do injustice to those in both groups” (p. 223). It could be reasonably assumed that the same holds true for bisexuals, trans-identified or transgender persons, and those who self-identify as queer. To both acknowledge and respect these differences, this research focused on gay men.
Using a transformative learning lens, the purpose of this study was to explore how self-identified gay men experience and learn to negotiate midlife within a heteronormative society.

**Conceptual Framework**

For the purposes of this study, adult development is conceptualized within Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning, which provides insight into how self-identified gay men negotiate midlife. Transformative learning attempts to explain how our expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions directly influence the meaning we derive from our experiences (Mezirow & Associates, 2000). Transformative learning reflects a 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. Other transformative theorists in addition to Mezirow also help make sense of the developmental experiences of gay men. Central to a psycho-developmental view of transformation is epistemological change, not just change in behavioral repertoire or quantity of knowledge; but also including change in our meanings and meaning form, where “we change the very form by which we are making our meaning” (Kegan, 2000, p. 53). Daloz (1986) moves beyond Mezirow’s emphasis on critical reflection, and considers an appreciation for other ways of knowing (holistic) beyond the rational. Such a perspective introduces the essentiality of relationships and contextual influences in the learning process. Similarly, McDonald, Cervero, and Courtenay (1999) found that transformative learning does not adequately account for the enormous interpersonal and socio-cultural challenges associated with confronting the effects of power. Such factors may hold particular relevance to major themes of understanding that sexual minorities hold at various times during their developmental journeys (King, 2003; King & Biro, 2006).

**Research Methodology**

This qualitative narrative inquiry, described by Chase (2005) as “an amalgam of analytical lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches…revolving around an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them” (p. 651), utilized purposeful sampling in recruiting thirteen self-identified gay men between the ages of 40 and 60 to explore how they negotiate midlife in a heteronormative society. Through their own words and stories the participants related lived experiences which explicate ways in which they both adhere to and resist societal and cultural expectations and understandings as to what it means to be an aging gay man. Semi-structured interviews served as the primary method of data collection. The data was analyzed using constant comparative techniques (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As an additional data source, each participant provided one or more photographs, pieces of art, prose, or other cultural artifacts of personal significance. Discussion of these items afforded a deeper exploration into their relevance and significance at this stage of the participants’ lives.

**Findings and Discussion**

The narratives of the study participants reveal that heteronormativity has imposed hurdles in their developmental pathways. Importantly, however, the processes by which these men came to self-acceptance reflect widely disparate lived experiences and contextual considerations. Most of the men expressed feeling “different” even as a very young child, and several reported coming to understand and regard themselves as gay while a youngster or as a teenager. Others reached
this point much later such as Ray who considered himself heterosexual until the age of 32 at which time an unplanned sexual encounter with a former male colleague made him realize “Good god—I’ve been barking up the wrong tree!” Another participant, George, came to self-identify as gay after having considering himself bisexual during his 27 years of heterosexual marriage. In either case—coming to self-acceptance when very young or much later in life—some of the men report having experienced some degree of angst and inner turmoil while others did not. Yet regardless of the age at which he “came out,” at midlife none expressed any sense of an ongoing inner struggle with being gay. In fact, these men are living decidedly content and happy lives. Most participants commented that at this point in their lives they are less concerned about others “finding out,” and less likely to use pretenses to hide their sexuality.

While this suggests these men have undergone considerable learning and transformation by or during midlife, it is less clear that transformative learning has been continuous and incremental process. Resolution of any internal struggle, for example, is recalled as “not a big deal” and not based on any catalytic or precipitating event for many of the men; whereas a few spoke of such incidents in vivid detail and with great enthusiasm. Mike, now 49, provides one such example in recalling when at the age of 21, an older friend pulled him aside and kissed him. He describes this as “a moment of revelation, a threshold for me…that’s as clear today as it was when it happened.” There was no denying it anymore, and “the door was flung open…because I had had the fireworks” that were missing in previous sexual experiences with women. Likewise, after decades of being closeted, during the past year Ben faced what he calls “the biggest decision of my life.” He summoned the courage to come out to his family and some very important friends, and regales in the subsequent transformation in his life as he relates that at age 52: “Now I’m very free to be gay. It’s just a non issue for me.” Such examples attest to the role of heteronormativity as a driver of transformative learning—not only in socialization and developmental processes; but also in cultivating the resilience to persevere in the trying circumstances that are so routine in the men’s lives. As Jeremy relates, “it’s made me develop a backbone.” These men have learned ways to adapt to and resist the dehumanization and multiple layers and forms of discrimination inherent in a heteronormative society. In turn, this helps to restore meaning and wholeness which heteronormativity has robbed from their lives. Scott’s growing interest in LGBTQ history offers a salient example. He watches a lot of Logo TV (a U.S. television channel which targets programming to sexual minorities) to learn about “my own community, my own history [and] to see things from somebody in my community’s perspective. Although the community is very diverse, still, it’s from a perspective that I can relate to, usually more than some straight person’s perspective.” Even in an activity as seemingly mundane as watching television, Scott is engaged in an ongoing process of transformation and resisting heteronormative practices that have long sought to deny or erase the history of sexual minorities so as to render them silent and invisible.

These examples are not to infer that heteronormativity no longer exerts considerable influence on ongoing development and learning even at midlife. Indeed, their stories are replete with examples of how pervasive and inescapable a factor heteronormativity remains in their daily lives through heterosexist expectations for heterosexual dating and marriage; strained family relationships; stigma and homophobia in the workplace; and tension engendered by non-affirmative religious affiliation. Nonetheless, these men have adapted well to their surroundings including the demands and hassles of heteronormativity. They are happy with their lives and their stories are infused with a sense of fulfillment and purpose in life. This holds true even for those men who are living somewhat compartmentalized lives; and supports the findings of
previous studies (Adelman, 1991; Berger & Kelly, 2001; Brown, Alley, Sarosy, Quarto, & Cook, 2001) in which gay men at midlife were found to be psychologically well-adjusted, self-accepting, and comfortable with whom they are. Furthermore, they bolster theoretical concepts that suggest that having experienced the coming out process and dealing with the stigma accompanying a non-heterosexual orientation engenders a resilience that may better prepare one to better adapt to the aging process (Friend, 1991). For these men, midlife entails balancing a tension between full self-expression and the heteronormative demand for invisibility. In striving for this balance, these men have partnered in, and continually negotiate a shaky and uneasy truce with heteronormativity. As part of this truce, they tend to disregard homophobia, and actively resist it only when risks or other factors so dictate. For some, increasing a personal sense of well-being entails overlooking or minimizing social inequities engendered by heteronormativity, and ignoring the ways in which they quietly reconcile aspects of themselves with the broader cultural and societal expectations and norms. Others are more aware of such issues but see them as “just the way things are” and beyond their control. They are content to leave such matters relatively unexplored and unchallenged so as not to disrupt what they perceive as happy and fulfilling lives; yet at a potential cost of foregoing or limiting further or more profound transformation in the process.

Even though heteronormativity was a catalyst for transformative learning, the narratives also provide testimony to the limits of such transformation. Furthermore, there was little evidence in this study that such transformations (coming to self-acceptance and resolution of internal struggles) and associated learning were engendered by—or even accompanied by—a critically reflective stance. Despite ample examples of cultural and social exclusion such as the military’s policy of “Don’t ask, don’t tell,” and few positive roles models in popular media, these men tend not to perceive such events personally as any sort of social alienation or estrangement from the larger community or society; nor do they have a deep sense of having lived diminished lives as a result of being gay. The majority do not see heterosexism, stigma, or other byproducts of heteronormativity as having precluded or impeded full realization of their individual potential; or as having impacted key life decisions such as occupational choice although their narratives at times reveal otherwise. Similarly, the prevalence of homophobia—both subtle and explicit—to which they are exposed is largely accepted as “just the way things are” or “reality.” They disavow notions of “activism,” and seek to avoid conflict or controversies related to their sexual orientation. None make a concerted effort to challenge homophobia, but most will challenge it if pushed or depending on the circumstances. The lives of these men routinely entail compromises and contradictions, such as deciding whether or not to come out, or to challenge homophobia in a given situation. However, with the exception of a consistent view of that rights and benefits afforded to same sex couples should be the same as those of their heterosexual peers (an issue which is becoming increasingly important to these men at midlife), most seem not to be very concerned with the unequal opportunity that results from such exclusion or the structural causes of such inequity. In the process of establishing and maintaining balance in their lives (that is, the truce with heteronormativity), they are pressed to accept a plateaued level of transformation—one in which blatant assaults to their every day lives are resisted, but more insidious structural issues are largely ignored.

Mezirow’s foregrounding of an individualized transformative learning as a consequence of critical reflection does not account for the apparent contradictory nature of transformation demonstrated by these men. Rather, the construct of a nonunitary self in which one can hold many contradictory perspectives (Kilgore & Bloom, 2002) seems more appropriate. On one
hand, these men resist heteronormative expectations in some regards, reformulating and transforming their identities and selves to live happy and satisfying lives; however, they also accede to its demands and tacitly agree to abridge further transformative possibilities in other life dimensions thereby putting at risk continued development towards their full potential. This phenomenon might be better understood through an expanded appreciation of the enormous impact of socio-cultural influences on transformative learning to include heteronormativity (King, 2003; King & Biro, 2006), and consideration of the effects of power in which one is never free of the dominant ideology (McDonald, Cervero, & Courtenay, 1999).

Conclusion

Sexual minorities are saddled with the added dimension and daily life hassles of heteronormativity. While this presents impediments for transformative learning, it can be a catalyst for some degree of learning and transformation as the hurdles of heteronormatively-induced trauma and stigma are traversed on one’s journey of identity development and in the discovery of one’s life purpose. While it is instructive and useful to consider such impacts on the learning and development of LGBTQ individuals, perhaps it is more compelling to consider even broader implications. King and Biro’s (2006) comment that “each of us has the opportunity to come to new understandings and insights regarding ourselves, those like us, and those different from ourselves” (p. 26) serves as an invitation to ask if heteronormativity has so cogently influenced these men, what impact has it had on each or us whether sexual minority or otherwise? A related question is how might heteronormative educational policies and practices limit transformational possibilities, not only in discrete educational activities, but in broader societal life as well? Exploring heteronormativity’s role in transformative learning can challenge complex, intertwined webs of feelings, politics, societal practices, and notions of “other” that—wittingly or otherwise--result in the exclusion of some groups from full access to social and cultural participation. Dialogic conversations of such issues can transform lives, relationships, and communities. Being open to and welcoming these new understandings and insights will both facilitate one’s own continued growth and allow one to better support others in their idiosyncratic transformational journeys.

References


Pedagogy of the Terminally Ill: Exploring Meaning-Making among Hospice Patients through Transformative Learning Theory
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Abstract: This essay explores problematic frames of reference in the context of terminal illness, and case study research geared toward capturing the processes by which meaning is shaped and reshaped in hospice through the lens of Transformative Learning Theory.

Introduction
Throughout adulthood we are met with numerous lessons regarding the thoughts, feelings, and actions of successful living. Yet little if any curricular attention is spent on helping individuals learn how to die. At broad brush this notion may seem counterintuitive, until we consider how terminally ill patients, left to their own devices, often fall prey to a number of maladaptive coping behaviors such as drug abuse and suicidal ideation (Larson & Tobin, 2000; Von Gunten et al., 2000). If the field of adult education is to fully engage the overarching mission of life long learning, it must strategically address the singular and inevitable pedagogy of the terminally ill. While there has been significant research on psychological perspectives adopted by the dying, research is needed to uncover how individuals form and transform meaning around their final days. According to Mezirow (2000), meaning-making is a learning process that entails “becoming critically aware of one’s own tacit assumptions and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation.” Substantial shifts in meaning among the terminally ill have been observed in hospice but not yet researched as a learning process. Marylin Webb (1997) describes transformations among the terminally ill in The Good Death, “It’s as if something inexplicable happens to transform them… there is an elusive coming alive from within.” The Dalai Lama adds that consultation around patient transformations with “nurses, especially at hospices…would be fruitful” (Lama & Hopkins, 2002).

I chose hospice as a setting to operationalize this premise, because it is the principal comfort intervention chosen by individuals facing imminent death (Beresford, 1993). In a 2007 pilot study investigating the legitimacy and feasibility of transformative learning research in hospice, administrators indicated that for every caseload at approximately five percent of patients experience an observable transformation, which alters their behavior and facilitates a more meaningful death. It is my hope that qualitative research, informed in part by this essay, may uncover insightful cases of personal growth and transcendence, and reveal answers to the central research question: How do terminally ill patients form and transform meaning around dying in hospice? Close and consistent discourse between nurse and patient is the heart of the research setting proposed in this essay. Some might argue that such research should focus on interaction of a social worker rather than nurse, due to the more conventional, psychological aspects of dying. However, I have chosen primary nurses, as they tend to serve the greatest extent of social interaction with the dying patient. Primary nurses make eye contact with patients, ask open-ended questions, respond to patient affect, and demonstrate empathy (Morrison & Meier, 2004). In fact, discourse serves as an integral step toward transformative learning, and requires such empathy as a precondition (Mezirow, 2000). In this way, primary nurses are in a unique position to validate how patients make meaning, whether meaning perspectives shift, and perhaps even the triggers of such transformations.
Meaning-Making

Evidence suggests that the physical and psychological well-being of a dying patient resides primarily in their ability to make meaning of death and dying. Meaning-making is empirically supported as a leading attribute of a good death (Webb, 1997; Daaleman & Vandercreek, 2000; Quill, 2000; Lynn, 2001; Block, 2001) even over the desire to reduce pain in certain instances (Brady, 1999). Evidence also suggests that the frequency with which terminal patients request assisted suicide is strongly related to a loss of meaning (Meier, 1998). Perhaps this is why, studies also suggest that the centrality of faith accompanying so many who face death, does not have the same impact on “spiritual well being” as an enhanced sense of meaning (Rosenfeld, et. al, 2007). In an increasingly multicultural society, it is also helpful to recognize that the need to enhance meaning spans cultures, including Japanese patients whose lack of meaning was positively correlated with “existential distress” in one study (Morita, 2000). Hospice may be thought of as a physical and sentient environment in which frames of reference or “mindsets of assumptions” (Mezirow, 2000) shape the dying experience may be influenced, reinforced, challenged and modified. Therefore it is helpful to begin with a review of common, problematic frames of reference in this setting.

Three concentrations of meaning around dying have emerged throughout history like a common thread since the time of Heraclitus, and have been well codified in an empirical approach by Bernard Lonergan (1972). Neither sequential nor mutually exclusive, the dying have been observed to refer to the “historic triad” of faith, hope and charity as modes of meaning. According to Lonergan (1972), faith is described as a “yielding to the pull toward beauty, intelligibility, truth, value, and company without restriction;” hope is “a desire rendered by this faith…a yearning, not a possession”; and charity “releases us from the prisons of our unchallenged opinions by exposing us to the viewpoints of others” (as referenced by Baird & Rosenbaum, 2003). For scholars in the field of adult learning, the concept of charity may seem somewhat similar to the tenets of transformative learning discussed later, as it incorporates a sense of critical reflection, permeability toward alternate worldviews, and liberation. Central themes such as charity arise concretely through subsequent studies, reinforcing the link between observed meaning perspectives among the dying and Transformative Learning Theory.

Existential suffering also has a deep impact on meaning made by the terminally ill as it is incorporated into the intrinsic experience of essential being. Studies have shown that suffering is characteristically perceived in the following ways: “(1) Suffering in itself is evil; (2) it is good; (3) in some situations it is evil, while in others it is good; (4) it is neither good nor evil” (Baird & Rosenbaum, 2003). These perspectives, among others discussed in this article may shift due to certain triggers, and may further manifest as critical incidents, or “activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made by the person performing the act” (Flanagan, 1957). In fact, there is a push for concrete observations indicating “The meaning of the pain within one’s larger life context” (Magid, 2000). This push stems from the biopsychosocial movement (Ray, 2004), wherein multiple studies indicate that “finding a sense of meaning or transcendence ameliorates the experience of suffering” (Block, 2001). Patients who examine the underlying assumptions of pain may be capable of actively shedding associated self-hatred or guilt. In contrast, these attributions may in themselves become obstacles for critical reflection. Interview questions focusing on critical incidents observed by patients and nurses may help discern such processes.

An individual’s religion also plays a powerful role. Quoting Robert Fulton (1986), “… a recent directive from the Catholic Church… reasserted the right, if not the spiritual desirability,
of patients experiencing unrelieved death agonies in emulation of Christ’” (Baird & Rosenbaum, 2003). The dying process is enveloped by strong connotations for those who subscribe consciously or subconsciously to this perspective. This perspective also shapes the meaning of pain relief, a cornerstone of hospice care, as it indirectly draws a negative connotation around painkillers that alter conscious states, in this declaration from Roman Catholic Church “he or she also has to prepare himself or herself with full consciousness for meeting Christ” (Baird & Rosenbaum, 2003). The extent to which such beliefs are formed and possibly transformed will be carefully observed for in this study, by developing a portion of interview questions on religion and its influence.

Some individuals frame death through stage theory, popularized by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (1969), renowned for her groundbreaking study on stages of dying: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. While this study has profoundly sensitized the public and fueled early years of the hospice movement, it has been greatly criticized for flaws in methodology, cultural specificity, and the observation that these forms of attitude are more likely to be non-sequential phases rather than stages (Bee & Bjorklund, 2003). Criticisms instruct similar research to provide adequate descriptions of: frequency of interaction, period of assessment, ages of patients, and focus on a more generalizable age representation of the terminally ill (Bee & Bjorklund, 2003). Nevertheless, Kubler-Ross’s stage theory is easy to grasp, and as a result may resonate with terminal patients, who may knowingly or unknowingly incorporate Kubler-Ross’s stages as they frame the dying process. This potential phenomenon will be carefully scrutinized in this study, by asking participants if they are familiar with stage theory.

Kalish (1985) first suggested that adults refer to four behavioral “meaning systems.” Death was suggested to be an organizer of time, form of punishment, transition, or loss (Bee & Bjorklund, 2003). However, a more exhaustive study conducted by Steven Greer and colleagues (Greer, 1991), focuses on a group of 62 women diagnosed with early stages of breast cancer. Behavioral reactions were categorized into five groups: Positive Avoidance of Evidence; Fighting Spirit; Stoic Acceptance; Helplessness or Hopelessness; and Anxious Preoccupation. It seems an oversimplification in this setting to relegate individuals to one of five categories rather than investigate more fluid processes such as learning. However, exhaustive measures such as focus group validation are the strength of Greer’s study and will be duly emulated by this author. Those who interact regularly with the dying have identified additional motivations separately in the literature, concentrating on “tasks and landmarks” including: life review, saying farewell, legacy actions, and leave-taking (Byock, 1997). I culled two questions from behaviorist studies, which may prove valuable in determining how learning takes place over time, including “What would be left undone if I died today?” and “How can I live most fully in whatever time is left” (Byock, 1997)?

The word spirituality, while often thought of as interchangeable with religion actually encompasses religion itself as just one of several forms of meaning making. In terms of the spiritual, Dunne (2001) argues that we are speaking not just of meaning, but of “ultimate meaning”, defined as “all the ways we are drawn toward a ‘beyond’ throughout our lives, despite the fact that we never fully understand it” (Baird & Rosenbaum, 2003). Three components to the spiritual dimension of meaning include: Expression that one relates to a “larger whole, be it God, a higher power, the human family”; Source of “meaning and understanding about the significance of being human”; and Containment of “habits, rituals, gestures, and symbols”, which help the individual interpret existence (Baird & Rosenbaum, 2003). Subsequently, a team
leading physicians concurred that a comprehensive assessment of palliative care should include “spiritual and existential issues” (Baird & Rosenbaum, 2003). While there have been several explanations of spirituality, Dalleman & Vanderkreek (2000) suggest that “constructs of meaning or a sense of life’s purpose” are the main components. In most cases, engaging the spiritual evokes a sense of connectedness. Daloz suggests that the process of discourse is successful when, quoting Rothman (1996), participants are able “to articulate their own voices clearly and to recognize each other’s voices as valid” (Mezirow, 2000).

This section concludes with a more recent frame of reference called the “Good Death,” identified in a study by Steinhauser, et al. (2000) as: Pain and Symptom Management; Clear Decision Making; Preparation for Death; Spirituality; Contributing to others; and Affirmation of the Whole Person. According to Marylin Webb (1997), good deaths grant patients “as much decision making power as they want.” The strength of this study is that it uncovers and validates aspects of the historic triad, lending it classic appeal. It also reallocates agency or decision making power with the dying patient. However, a critique of the “Good Death” rejects its underlying premise, as it is too prescriptive. Byock contends, “The phrase good death tends to blur the distinction between death – the state of non living – and the preceding time of living” (Byock, 1997). Indeed, deeper processes, such as revisiting and reshaping meaning around spirituality, are not adequately explored.

Case Study Research

The goal of case study research is to uncover rich cases of learning in which the terminally ill become “critically aware” of their tacit assumptions and relevance for interpretations (Mezirow, 2000) through narrative or storied accounts, in order to help primary hospice nurses understand the: (1) Process in which meaning is formed and transformed in hospice patients; and (2) Role of narratives elicited by primary nurses in terms of enabling learning and even transformation among terminal patients. In this manner, research will be geared toward answering two questions, including: (1) How do terminal patients form and transform meaning about dying upon entering hospice? (2) What role does elicitation and reflection on narrative play in facilitating learning among terminal patients? In accord with the epistemic foundation of Transformative Learning Theory, Baird and Rosenbaum (1991) confirm that in hospice “…sufferings are so complex and so interwoven with the unique personality, history, and circumstances of the individual involved that little success can be expected to be achieved by using generalizations about groups of people’s experience.” Transformative Learning Theory is built on the precondition that “there are no fixed truths or totally definitive knowledge” (Mezirow, 2000). The ontological nature of this study is also fitting as it suggests a possibility for transforming from “the phenomenal worldly ‘I’ to transcendent subjectivity” (Husserl, 1967). Case studies are an optimal way to uncover shifts in unique, personal meaning, as qualitative research “focuses on the meaning of participants” (Creswell, 1998), and is germane to Transformative Learning Theory, which centers on the “participant perspective in the meaning-making process” (Cuddapah, 2005). According to Mezirow’s theory (2000), in order for learning to be transformational, a problematic frame of reference, such as those discussed previously, is transformed to make it more dependable by “generating opinions and interpretations that are more justified.” Disorienting dilemmas typically draw attention to a problematic meaning perspective, warranting critical reflection and open-minded discourse with others, which in turn may result in action planning based on “reified structures of meaning”
(Mezirow, 2000). This process has been codified into three necessary phases: critical reflection, reflective discourse, and action (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

The uniqueness of the patient experience points to the phenomenological tradition informing the use of case studies in that “universal truths” do not exist, but many truths exist simultaneously and must be examined as such. Creswell (1998) describes an approach to studying patient-nurse interaction that this author will emulate, in which “meanings” are essentially clustered into “common themes from which the author provides two narrative descriptions.” Additionally, meaning-making, especially with regard to the terminally ill, is intimately bound (Mezirow, 2000) and stimulated by the dimension of affect. The narrative collected and presented through case study analysis should be the most effective means for capturing the affect or felt encounter necessary for various readers including primary nurses, patients, family members, physicians, and adult educators to unpack, or ‘download’ powerful concepts, and relate them to their own unique experiences. Information gathered for each case will be combined, much like the case study presented in Creswell (1998), into one “overarching perspective”, that of Transformative Learning Theory. Case studies will present whether patients move through the stages prescribed by this theory, and unearth rich information that interviews alone could not uncover. Patient interviews will attempt to identify initial, intermediate and conclusive points of view, or expressed “expectations, beliefs, feelings” and concept mapping will be used to determine originating habits of mind, or “assumptions… that act as a filter for interpreting the meaning of experience” (Mezirow, 2000). Nurse interviews will gather observations of dialogue and critical incidents to validate learning. Process mapping will be facilitated with each nurse to identify elements of reflective discourse, or outside triggers, which enable transformative learning. Additionally, probing questions in each inquiry cycle will be informed by key elements in this article to better analyze findings, including: overlapping learning contexts, research implications and limitations; predominant meaning perspectives; conscious retrieval of subconscious symbols and feelings; phases of transformative learning; and aspects of patient and nurse dialogue.

References


Transformative Learning and Constructive-Developmental Theory
Intersections: Expanding Diversity beyond Race, Class and Gender to Cultures of Mind
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Abstract: A constructive-developmental approach to transformative learning builds on the conceptualization of diversity in the classroom to include adult learner meaning making systems. The narratives of six marginalized women enrolled in an adult education program at a homeless shelter highlights how they describe and understand their learning experiences.

Introduction
The current study draws from The Adult Development Research Group at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (Kegan, Broderick, Drago-Severson, Helsing, Popp & Portnow, 2001), hereafter referred to as The Research Group. They asked “How do the systematic ways adults are making meaning when they enter their programs affect how they will best learn in them, and what they will most need from them?” Drago-Severson (2004) describes how that research “empirically explored how a person’s way of knowing constitutes a lens through which Adult Basic Education/English for Speakers of Other Languages (ABE/ESOL) learning and teaching experiences are filtered and how that way of knowing can change and become more complex over time given developmentally appropriate supports and challenges” (p. 5). Their study was the first to apply constructive-developmental theory with less privileged ABE/ESOL learners. Among their findings was “In experiencing transformational change, some of the learners not only made gains in what they know but modified the shape of how they know – that is, they grew to demonstrate new and more complex ways of knowing” (Drago-Severson, 2004, p. 13).

The current study takes up consideration of the intersection between transformative learning theory and constructive-developmental theory (Drago-Severson, 2004; Kegan, 1982, 1994; Mezirow & Associates, 2000; Taylor, 2000) with the ultimate goal of advancing emancipatory learning among a diverse population that has not previously been the primary focus of study. A constructive-developmental model is used because it has been shown to incorporate other models of development that consider domains such as gender, age or life span separately. It recognizes differences among learners who may have similar skill levels but quite different ways of taking in, organizing, and understanding information. Such differences may be accounted for beyond fixed sources such as race, gender, culture, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or learning style (Helsing, Drago-Severson & Kegan, 2004, p 158). They maintain that “Because constructive-developmental theories focus not only on changes within the individual but also on the context in which the individual is situated, they can accommodate theories that look at the ways that race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation can influence development” (p. 162).

Therefore, a constructive-developmental lens was chosen to more accurately pinpoint transformation in ways of knowing and to better support the developmental needs of women marginalized by race, class and gender. The narratives of six Black women enrolled in an adult basic education program housed in a shelter are used to illuminate how they describe and understand their learning experiences.
Methods

Three research questions guided this inquiry: (1) How do lower SES Black women ABE learners describe and understand teaching and their roles as learners? (2) In what ways, if any, do lower SES Black women ABE learners describe and understand teaching and their roles as learners from a developmental perspective? (3) How does developmental level shape the way lower SES Black women ABE learners make meaning of their adult roles especially as learners?

Data Collection and Analysis

Participants for this study were drawn from a site that is located in one of Boston’s most economically depressed neighborhoods. It represents best practice as a “holding environment” (Kegan, 1994) that challenges and supports development by attending to needs of the whole person. A purposeful sampling technique was used in this qualitative design to obtain in-depth information-rich cases (Maxwell, 2005).

The study reports findings from three rounds of interviews that assess change over one year from program entry in 2004. Subject-Object Interviews measured how developmental level shaped the way subjects make meaning of their experiences as learners. Experience of Learning Interviews utilizing developmental questions captured change in perspective over time. Non-Completer Participant Interviews assessed reasons for leaving the program. Staff Interviews with administrators, counselors and teachers provided information about program operations.

Data collection and analysis reported emergent themes from preliminary and substantive phases. Emergent themes were analyzed at two levels. The content level elicited participant perspectives based on their learning experiences in the program. The context level elaborated on growth as it occurred in a holding environment that supports and challenges the learning process, facilitates transformation of meaning systems and the context for developing competence (Popp and Boes, 2001).

Credibility of responses was addressed in several ways including the following three: (1) Respondents were assured anonymity and confidentiality in written agreements. (2) The longitudinal data collection plan permitted monitoring for consistency in responses over time. (3) Triangulation or multiple data sources reduced the risk of chance associations and systematic biases (Maxwell, 2005).

Findings

At the end of data collection, of the six participants, three were still enrolled and completed all three rounds of interviews (Toni, Margaret and Tamika). Patrice left the program after the second interview but agreed to a non-completer interview that made it possible to measure for change at the end of the year. Cheryl left the program after the first interview and Donna left after the second interview. Two of the three women (Margaret and Toni) who completed three interviews demonstrated an increased capacity for more complex meaning making. Tamika completed three interviews but demonstrated no developmental change over the year. Margaret started the program with a dominant instrumental way of knowing and an emerging socializing structure. At the end of the year, her socializing structure was dominant. Toni began as a fully formed instrumental knower but showed an evolving structure toward a socializing knower by the end of the year. Donna and Cheryl had more fully formed transitioning instrumental and socializing structures at the beginning of the year compared to the other women. Neither completed the year. I will first present examples of narratives of the two women (Margaret and Toni) who completed three interviews (and who also experienced
Margaret’s predominant way of making meaning at the beginning of the year was in transition from instrumental to an evolving socializing knower. In our first interview, her tendency to construct knowledge in concrete terms and preference for having it come from an external authority was consistent with an instrumental way of making meaning “By having it in front of me. More than listening and or seeing what’s on the board. I like to have it right in front of me and it has to be explained to me” (Interview 1). However, by the end of the year, Margaret’s growth to a more dominant socializing system was evident in the way she described why support and encouragement were important to her “Because sometimes you need a little pat on the back, you need that push…that person will tell you, ‘Don’t give up, you can do that, I see so much in you,’ and you hear that from a lot of teachers and staff” (Interview 3).

Toni’s idea of what makes a really good teacher reflects developmental growth over the year from an instrumental knower to an evolving socializing knower “…a teacher has to have patience because some people learn fast, some people learn slow. That’s why you have to be patient…so everybody can understand” (Interview 3). Her expectations of a good teacher were beyond an authority that would be available to correct right and wrong responses to concrete instruction on a one-to-one basis. Rather, Toni began to express abstract notions of different learning styles and her perception of a good teacher as one who recognized and attended to not only her own needs but to those of her classmates who represented valued others.

Patrice, like Toni, began the program making meaning as a fully formed instrumental knower. Though exhibiting hints of a socializing meaning structure when speaking of the importance of her children in her life, unlike Toni, Patrice, who left the program two months before the last round of interviews, was decidedly more oriented toward purposes and goals motivated by fulfilling self-interests and concrete needs. Strong indication that her developmental capacity had not evolved beyond the instrumental level was evidenced by her inability to conceptualize a broader interpretation of her program experience beyond getting the GED. She could recall no instance in which being in the program made things better or harder for her or her family responding “It [her participation in the program] didn’t do nothing…How is being in the program going to make my life any easier? Unless I pass my GED…” She held firmly to the contention that being in the program had not helped or changed her in any way. The only observation she made regarding change in our third interview was a very concrete one “I’m used to getting up early, so nothing.”

Donna revealed a transitioning instrumental/socializing structure where the socializing system was dominant. The significant others may be people as well as ideas such as religious, political or philosophical ideologies (Drago-Severson, 2004; Kegan et al., 2001). This was expressed in her belief system. When asked about her best learning experience she replied…”It would be God….Just knowing that there was somebody greater than me…” This response also reveals the ability to express abstract concepts as a socializing knower would be able to do. Similarly, she refers to her faith as a powerful learning experience “That I was able to…that I can get on my knees and pray and know that He hears me. And I ask for things to help others or my family and it comes to pass.” Finally, Donna’s dominant socializing structure revealed a capacity to make generalizations evidenced in describing what it means to be a virtuous woman;
“A person who is a humble, respectful, honorable woman that does not bring chaos…A woman that lives righteous that has respect for herself.”

**Discussion**

For this sample of six women, constructive-developmental theory appears to offer a powerful tool for understanding how marginalized ABE learners make meaning of learning experiences from a multi-dimensional domain where race, class and gender intersect. In normal life circumstances we would not expect to see measurable qualitative development in the complexity of ways of knowing over the course of only one year. However, with a supportive environment, adult learners can often demonstrate measurable increases in the complexity of their meaning making within one year’s time (Kegan et al. 2001). Two of the six Black women in this study showed developmental growth from September to June.

Popp and Portnow (2001) emphasized the complexity in one’s ability to make meaning is not tied to age, life phase or gender. They explained that our meaning system evolves through interaction with our environment. This reasoning could be operating within this small sample in relation to grade equivalency. The program placement test grade equivalency scores of the six ranged from level one (2-3.9) to level three (6-8.9). It is interesting to note that two of the three women who left the program scored highest of the six on the grade level placement test. Patrice and Cheryl tested at Pre GED II (grade equivalency 6-8.9) and Donna tested lowest of the six at ABE II (2-3.9 grade equivalency). Donna, whose grade equivalency score was the lowest of the six, and Cheryl, whose grade equivalency score was among the highest, had the same constructive-developmental (SOI) score that showed they were both making meaning at a level of complexity that was higher than the other women in the study. Both had transitional instrumental/socializing SOI scores. In fact, Donna, whose grade equivalency (2-3.9) was the lowest of the group had the highest SOI score range of the six women. Cheryl and Donna left the program and could not be reached for a non-completer interview. Their early departure poses intriguing questions for future study such as whether the supports provided by this best practices program are better received by women with less complex developmental structures. If this is so, then how might such an exemplary program better serve diverse learners with more complex developmental capacities?

However, important insights were gained that substantiated the need for creating environments that more appropriately support and challenge learners at different developmental stages toward more complex ways of knowing that could support feminist and critical theory empowerment goals. For example, all learners welcome support that meets them where they are in relation to their existing developmental capacity. In order to support and challenge developmental growth instrumental knowers, like Toni and Patrice at the beginning of the program, would appreciate instruction that provides step-by-step rules for achieving concrete goals. However, this comfort level should be gently challenged using instructional techniques such as goal setting that would encourage the conceptualization of concrete goals in more abstract ways as a socializing structure would employ. Similarly, those at transitional stages of instrumental/socializing knowers like the other women in this study would benefit from instructional challenges that encourage growth toward more fully formed socializing knowers and ultimately moving toward self-authoring structures with capacity to independently create goals for themselves. None of the women in this sample exhibited capacity for making meaning of their experiences at the level of a self-authoring knower.
The findings expand the use of constructive-developmental theory as a framework for understanding how marginalized adult learners make meaning of learning experiences as transformational. Specifically, this study is the first to present perspectives of transformational learning using a constructive-developmental lens to focus on less privileged Black women ABE learners as the primary focus of inquiry. It suggests a means for more effectively supporting and challenging developmental growth toward more complex meaning making structures and ultimately toward empowerment goals especially among individuals who represent multi-dimensional domains of race, class and gender.

References


Abstract. Every culture has developed a cache of stories, aphorisms and proverbs—short, pithy “stories” with a moral guiding imperative. These often function as universal “triggers” to transformational learning and facilitate the development of wisdom in individuals. The significance of this phenomenon is illustrated by examples from five distinct cultures over time.

Introduction

“Hear ye! Hear ye! Hear ye!” cries the transformational leader standing on the soapbox at the city square. “Come one. Come all. Come transform your lives!” Of course, transformational learning and change doesn’t happen that way. We are not called, street preacher fashion, to transform our lives. Rather, motivation comes from within ourselves. Our personal experiences transform our way of seeing the world. So does the “call of story”—the poems, stories, and proverbial sayings we hear or read throughout our lifetimes. Indeed, most of us can cite a proverb, the message of a book, or even a ritual we’ve experienced that changed our world-view. Stories are powerful mechanisms that call us to reflect on the human condition.

Culture to culture, proverbs (often called wisdom literature) bare an uncanny resemblance to one another. Most proverbs reflect the lessons learned by those who lived long before us. Perry (1993) describes them as follows:

Like bottles sculpted in bygone eras and cast upon the seas, proverbs survive the damages of time and carry messages of hidden treasure. . . . Strange enough, we long to drink from these time-capsules, as if their antiquated shapes and colors could magically transform our sour experiences into the sweet liqueur of wisdom. (p. xi)

Throughout time, many cultures have contributed to the existing literature—with prescriptions for life and change—in the form of parables, fables, proverbs, anecdotes and short stories that “epitomize principles of correct living, embody moral pronouncements, and contain crucial information about their society” (Holliday & Chandler, 1986, p. 11). These oral and literary rhetorical “vehicles” can challenge our assumptions, cause us to critically reflect on our behaviors, transform our thinking, and, perhaps, help us become wiser as we come to more fully understand the human condition. They serve as powerful learning vehicles for critical reflection, personal growth and increased understanding—i.e., transformational learning. These “triggers” encourage personal reflection. If there is a final goal for transformational learning, it should be that each person increases in understanding and wisdom, eventually reaching his or her potential.

This paper discusses the commonality across culture and time of story in transforming individuals toward wisdom, the pinnacle of human development. It begins with an example of the importance of story in Kenya, then presents the role of proverbs in ancient Egypt. The role of the Greek sophron in Cyprus follows, then the connection of proverb and story to the educational process of the Chagga of Africa, and finally the link between place and story to wisdom among the Cibecue Apache peoples of Arizona.
Bethwell Kiplagat, Kenyan Wise Man

Over the past few years, it has been my privilege to interview many wise individuals. Among them was Bethwell Kiplagat, an incredible Kenyan man. He is a former diplomat, Special Envoy to the Somali Peace Talks, and a highly respected peacemaker. I talked with him about his life experiences and his views on wisdom. Kiplagat explained how he interacts with others in groups, whether at the United Nations, in tribal disputes, or within various government organizations. He illustrated nearly every experience through a story. Some were African stories, and others were entertaining stories he created at the moment to illustrate his point. I still vividly remember his stories, but I usually have to refer to my field notes for the other details of our conversations.

An eloquent speaker, Kiplagat taught me many things about what wisdom meant to him. None of them were as revealing as the concept that all people deserve a voice in their own communities. He encourages people to be altruistic and to understand the common good. Showing individuals that they have a stake in their own problems, he often persuades them of their own responsibility to act. He does this not through lecture or scolding, but through a metaphor or a story. One of the stories Kiplagat related to me dealt with people’s propensity to focus on the past as the best of times, rather than on the present or the future. He explained:

I put it in a story . . . about the past and the future. I tell people the story of a man driving a car at night on a narrow road. Because there are no lights in our rural areas, it was very dark. As this man was driving at night, another car came from behind with its full beam headlights on. The lights reflected in the man’s rear-view mirror and this reflection hit his eyes, blinding him. He could not see his way ahead. He tried to drive in this strong beam. But, what he had to do, in order to avoid an accident, was to stop and ask the person in the car behind to dim the lights. And when the lights were dimmed, there was no reflection on his eyes from the rear-view mirror. In fact, the dimmed lights of the car driving from behind strengthened his own lights, and he was able to see the way forward even better. So, part of my own teaching is that the past is good, but if you put your past on full beam, it will blind you from seeing the future. But you need the past, to enlighten and strengthen the light that you then can use to see where you are going . . . You don't negate the past, but you allow it to light your way into the future.

Kiplagat’s story is an example of the wisdom of age-old proverbs and time-tested stories. They provide value to our present condition and can lead us to transform our lives in positive moral directions. In my interviews with wise individuals, I observed that the stories they heard in their youth were influential in cultivating their understanding of themselves and others.

Ancient Egypt

Living in Egypt nearly 5,000 years ago, Ptahhotep was the “Chief Justice and Vizier” during the reign of Djedkare-Isesi toward the end of the Fifth Dynasty (2450-2300 BCE). Ptahhotep set forth a collection of proverbial wisdom writings called The Instruction of Ptahhotep, which many claim to be the oldest book in the world (Jaco, 2006). The book begins with an explanation of why Ptahhotep wrote this treatise: at age 110 he was getting old and feeble and he wanted to retire from his job. Writing the book for his son, whom he hoped would take over his position as King Isesi’s advisor, Ptahhotep explained, “That I may say to the words of the judges, the counsel of those from ancient times, heard from the gods . . . teach him what was uttered formerly, then he can set a good example. . . . No one is born wise” (Lichtheim, 1973).
Ptahhotep’s wise advice represents the lessons learned by an experienced old man over his lifetime. We do not know how Ptahhotep interacted or mentored his son. We do know that maxims, proverbs, and other pithy sayings challenge people’s assumptions, causing them to reflect on their lives and transform their thoughts and behaviors. Ptahhotep’s maxims deal primarily with human relationships and virtues, such as self-control, moderation, kindness, truthfulness, and justice—virtues considered essential for an advisor to the King, but that clearly apply to all of us. For example, a few of the sayings from *The Instruction of Ptahhotep* are:

- Take counsel with the ignorant as with the knowing.
- Guard against the vice of greed: A grievous sickness without cure.
- Be generous as long as you live. . . .
- Kindness is a man’s memorial.
- Wise words are rarer than precious stones and yet may come even from slave-girls grinding the corn.
- Do not boast at your neighbors’ side. One has great respect for the silent man.

Ptahhotep’s maxims make it clear that human nature has not changed over the millennia.

**The Village of Alona on Cyprus**

Early Egypt was not the only place where wisdom was a topic of conversation. Moving closer to the present day, Peristiany (1992) studied the Greek village of Alona, in the highlands of Cyprus, between the years of 1954 and 1983. Representing remnants of an ancient Greek culture, Alona is an inclusive community; it has not changed much over the centuries. In this simple village, the leaders of the community are the schoolteacher, the priest, the heads of the wealthiest families and an individual who is neither elected nor appointed—the *sophron*.

The *sophron*’s job description is similar to that of an ideal transformational educator. He (the *sophron* is always a man) is the sage or wise man of the village. Functioning as a mediator, a facilitator, and a guide, the *sophron* arbitrates for the people of Alona how to live in reality while striving to live an ideal. “The *sophron*’s wisdom consists of applying general principles to particular cases in such a manner that the general is not seen to bend so as to serve practical ends. . . . What distinguishes the wise from the merely knowledgeable is that the wise man knows not only the rules but also how to apply them for the common good” (Peristiany, 1992, p. 105). Peristiany describes the typical *sophron*, including the following characteristics:

- The *sophron* “can neither order nor decide, he can only advise” (p. 105)
- The *sophron* “uses received wisdom more than he contributes to it” (p. 105)
- The *sophron* is the “servant of the community and the mouthpiece of wisdom” (p. 105)
- The *sophron* is not trained for or appointed to his position in the village. “[He has] the image of a selfless and judicious man who applies these qualities to the welfare of his community” (p. 114)
- The *sophron* “is of old age”; and “his everyday actions . . . are those of a sensible average man” (p. 116).

The most important action of the *sophron*, for this analysis, is that the *sophron* gives advice to anyone seeking his wisdom by relating well-known parables and aphorisms, and allowing the person to apply the principles contained therein to his or her own situation. His parables, proverbs, and aphorisms are like “master keys” to problems that occur in the actual lives of villagers.
The Chagga of Tanzania

The Chagga are an indigenous people, residing in Tanzania in East Africa, who live their lives holistically and believe that life, from birth to death, involves a process of formation, reformation, and transformation. Their educational process is called *ipvunda*. *Ipvunda* means “to mold, to form, to raise up a person in all aspects: physical, intellectual, and moral, with special emphasis on the moral aspect. It is forming a person so comprehensively that he or she will be prepared to face life and the world successfully throughout life” (Mosha, 2000, p. 16). What are considered the important things to learn from this process? The dispositions of reverence, respect, self-control, generosity, and honesty underlie other values. These are taught through stories (exclusively to those under 14), rituals, and proverbs.

The Chagga cherish their proverbs and stories. “Proverbs are, for the Chagga people, one of their four treasured possessions: land, cattle, water, and proverbs. Land, cattle, and water nourish their economy and bodies, whereas proverbs (wisdom, enlightenment, inspiration) nourish their moral integrity” (Mosha, 2000, p. 56). The proverb is an efficient tool in the *ipvunda* process. It is efficient because it is short, usually witty, pleasant to listen to, and thus easy to remember. Moreover, it contains the wisdom of the past. It causes a person to reflect and then motivates him or her to act in a moral way. Thus, proverbs are quoted on all occasions. They are “powerful, effective, sharp-like arrows that penetrate into a person’s deepest core” (Mosha, 2000, p. 57).

Storytelling is an art among the Chagga. The skill of telling stories in a way that transforms others is developed in many ways, among them giftedness, age, practice and experience. Transformational learning practitioners have much to learn from the Chagga, who use the linguistic skills of metaphor, imagery, and similitude in motivating and challenging their listeners to remember and imagine all sorts of possibilities for their lives.

People are all ears during storytelling, ready not only to be entertained but also to get a “lesson” for life. Similarly when the family is seated around the fire in the normally chilly evenings of northern Tanzania, they are ready to hear a word of wisdom from parents and grandparents. The presence of elders also is a teachable moment. The presence of elders evokes reverence, confidence, and a hunger for “a word from the wise.” All these are teachable moments, and indigenous parents and elders are aware of their formative potential. (Mosha, 2000, p. 20)

Through reflection on their stories and treasured proverbs, Chagga individuals grow to know themselves and their potentialities.

The Cibecue Apache

The indigenous Native American tribe of Cibecue Apaches in Arizona uses story attached to a location, or place. Keith Basso, an anthropologist, has spent years among this people. He found that Western Apache believe that “wisdom sits in places” and that remembering the stories associated with specific places will assist one in becoming wise. His book, *Wisdom Sits in Places* (1996) discusses aspects of Western Apache life in Cibecue, Arizona, including their concept of wisdom. Basso relates that story and ritual are used to help individuals reflect on their behaviors.

Place is paramount. Stories of past events and the “voices” of the ancestors are attached to specific places on their lands, and nearby. These stories describe important principles and values, which will allow a person to live a good life and avoid problems. When someone commits an infraction, instead of confronting the perpetrator directly, the name of a place is
merely mentioned by others, stirring the memory of the wrongdoer to recall the moral lesson of the story associated with that particular place. Other chastisements are usually unnecessary. Every time the person passes by the place, or hears its name uttered, he or she is reminded of the story. As one Apache man related:

This is what we know about our stories. They go to work on your mind and make you think about your life. Maybe you’ve not been acting right. Maybe you’ve been stingy. Maybe you’ve been chasing after women. Maybe you’ve been trying to act like a whiteman. People don’t like it! So someone goes hunting for you—maybe your grandmother, your grandfather, your uncle. It doesn’t matter. Anyone can do it. . . . So someone stalks you and tells a story about what happened long ago. It doesn’t matter if other people are around—you’re going to know he’s aiming that story at you. All of a sudden it hits you! It’s like an arrow, they say. . . . No one says anything to you, only that story is all, but now you know that people have been watching you and talking about you. They don’t like how you’ve been acting. So you have to think about your life. . . . That story is changing you now, making you want to live right. That story is making you want to . . . live better. . . . The names of all these places are good. They make you remember how to live right. (Basso, 1996, p. 58-59)

Discussion

One commonality of all people is that story—proverbs, ritual, histories, spiritual creation—assists us in questioning, reflecting upon and transforming our worldviews through principles well known to transformational learning scholars. The principles of transformative learning do not function differently across diverse cultures. Yet, finding the path to positively changing one’s worldview still remains an individual endeavor.

Just what is it about proverb and story that changes lives and transforms thoughts? Proverbs present a unique viewpoint. They enlarge our horizons of the possible. They transform our view of the world—even if slightly. Stories and proverbs serve as “triggers” to bring about critical self-reflection. Through stories, models of admirable lives are held up to inspection, with contemptible lives seen in opposition. People learn through others’ examples and life stories without having to personally experience everything themselves.

Stories told at the feet of a trusted adult mentor can help the hearer become wiser, especially if listeners are led to think critically about the story. Most of us living in contemporary western cultures no longer gather each evening around the family “fire” to hear the wise stories and parables of our heritage. Instead, often alone, we sit by the bluish glow of a television set or computer screen. Television, Internet, movies, CD and DVD recordings, and the like, are the current methods for delivering cultural messages. But do these stories promote our healthy growth as human beings? Do such stories challenge our incorrect assumptions—or present us with more? Do they inspire us to transform our lives? Do they lead us toward wisdom? Do they use the “light” we have inherited—the parables and stories of the past—to guide our actions and thoughts toward a successful future?

We need more time-honored stories and parables in our lives—just as we need more wisdom. The story is the basic form of human cognition—it speaks to both parts of our mind, our reason and our emotion. The most influential stories tell us who we are, where we come from, and what is going to happen to us. No matter what our culture, proverbs and stories “occupy” us, to use Wayne Booth’s (1988) term, and they have the capacity to transform our world-views and assist us in becoming better and wiser human beings.
References


9/11 Transformative Learning Experiences
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Abstract: The September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. Questions were developed to get volunteer’s feedback on terrorism before 9/11, at the time of 9/11, during the three months following 9/11, and currently (five years after 9/11). The purpose of this study is to describe the results of the participant’s psychological and behavioral reactions to 9/11.

Introduction
Not since the bombing at Pearl Harbor has the United States been subjected to a direct attack of the magnitude of 9/11. Like many other natural and unnatural disasters, almost everyone in the United States was affected in some way. Of course, those near the attack sites or those losing family or friends were the most affected. But most everyone felt some kind of reaction towards the event. In this study we examined the long-term effects of 9/11. The research question, “To what extent have individuals encountered transformative learning experiences as a result of the 9/11 events?” was studied using the following hypotheses: 1) The events associated with 9/11 caused immediate and long-term changes in emotions of individuals, 2) The events associated with 9/11 caused immediate and long-term changes in assumptions/beliefs of individuals, 3) The events associated with 9/11 caused immediate and long-term changes in behavior of individuals, and 4) Demographic factors such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, years of formal education, occupation, religious affiliation, and personal connection to the events affect the extent to which individuals experienced emotional, belief, and behavioral changes as a result of 9/11.

Review of the Literature
Based on a literature review, many studies focused on how 9/11 provided an opportunity for inner reflection and questioning of beliefs and values. Agosin (2002) quotes from her compilation of interviews: (1) “9/11 has given the country a new focus. As we try to heal, we have an opportunity for inner reflection. It has forced me to question my treatment of others and has heightened my social consciousness of injustices within and outside our county’s borders”. (2) “Someone else’s inhumanity made us more humane. We reached out to each other. In addition to appreciating the relationships in life, two other priorities came to the forefront in the days after September 11th. More than ever, I felt grateful for having a calling – a job – what is inside of you in service to others. The last priority is the importance of giving it back, passing it on- service”. There is a growing consciousness of service and generosity. (22-23). (3) Our diversity suddenly came down to our common denominator, ground zero, one nation, suffering together…I’ve been surprised at how many Americans are thinking much more globally now (24). (4) “September 11th impacted each of us differently, in large part due to our own particular backgrounds and experiences (140).” (5) “Many other Americans have taken their lives and safety for granted, whereas I have never felt invincible or completely safe. I now have a renewed sense of the unpredictability of how long each of us may live and under what circumstances we each may die. For me, the lesson from these tragic premature endings is to place more
importance on the present, on our living in the moment and not putting off special words or events to share with those closest to us (141).”

Coates (2003) summarized the reactions from people: fear of a nuclear attack/feeling unsafe; a conviction that the “end was near”; wanting to protect their most important possessions; a hatred for people of Middle Eastern decent (or other cultures); repeated memories of the burning visions they saw in the event; and radical shifts in political views and beliefs. A number of studies have been conducted to examine the degree to which 9/11 had psychological impacts on individuals such as trauma and stress and resulting changes in behavior. Precin and Diamond (2003) found reactions to this trauma included sleep disturbances, crying easily, angry outbursts, greater family conflicts, higher activity levels with lower productivity, withdrawal and isolation manifested by reluctance to leave home, an avoidance of reminders, increase use of drugs, alcohol, sugar, nicotine, and caffeine. Physical reactions were feelings of fatigue and exhaustion, stomach and digestive problems, headaches, pains, colds and flu symptoms, and a worsening of health problems. Cognitive reactions were repetitive worries and thoughts; difficulty concentrating; difficulty making plans and decisions; limited attention span; memory problems; and feelings of hopeless, helplessness, anxiousness, anger, and guilt.

Shuster (2001) concluded that catastrophes can have a pronounced effect on adults who are not physically present. The effect may be greatest when a loved one or acquaintance is harmed, but others who may personalize the event themselves as potential victims can also have stress symptoms. Of the U.S. adults surveyed, 44% reported at least one of five substantial stress symptoms since 9/11; 68% experienced at least one symptom “moderately,” and 90% experienced at least one symptom “a little bit.” Many felt upset when something reminded them of what happened. They also had repeated, disturbing memories, thoughts, or dreams about what happened, difficulty concentrating and/or trouble or falling asleep (Schuster, 2001).

Additionally, Schuster found that many individuals (75%) turned to religion and also to one another for social support (87%). They checked on the immediate family members and friend’s safety (75%), talked about their feelings, and participated in activities such as vigils, which can provide a sense of community. They also made donations (36%). This was a way to take constructive action in a time of uncertainty and helplessness (Schuster, 2001). People surveyed who were closest to New York had the highest rate of substantial stress reactions, however, others throughout the country, also reported substantial stress reactions.

Silver (2002) contends that the psychological effects of a major national trauma are not limited to those who experience it directly, and the degree of response is not predicted simply by objective measures exposure to or loss from the trauma. Instead, use of specific coping strategies shortly after an event is associated with symptoms over time. In particular, disengaging from coping efforts can signal the likelihood of psychological difficulties up to six (6) months after a trauma.

**Methodology**

This study looks at the transformative effects of 9/11 five years later, utilizing a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis. Phase one consisted of a focus group interview with adults from the local community to obtain feedback for refining and developing an on-line survey instrument. The second phase was a survey consisting of 143 primary questions related to emotions, assumptions/beliefs, and behaviors of individuals before and immediately after 9/11, as well as their current status in each of these areas. The answers to the primary survey questions was scored using a five-point Likert scale where 5 was “very high” and
1 “very low” in terms of levels of emotions, extent of agreement on specified assumptions (or beliefs), and degrees of involvement in specified behaviors. The survey also contained 14 secondary questions pertaining to demographics and open-ended. The survey was available online beginning May 10, 2007 using a website address (link). This link provided an “Invitation and Consent Form” for the participant to read and “agree to” before accessing and completing the survey. Data was collected until July 31, 2007. The study group used a “snowball” convenience sample technique.

Respondents completed a total of 369 surveys. The independent variables were demographic groups by age, gender, marital status, and connection. The dependent variables consisted of eight emotional responses at three different points in time (before, during, and current) and one additional emotional response at the time 9/11 occurred. Additional dependent variables included 17 assumption/belief responses and 17 behavior responses at three different points in time (before, during, and current). Using a sample size (N) of 368, the research team conducted principal components analysis (PCA) to reduce the number of variables for analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) (Stevens, 2002). Repeated measures ANOVA and MANOVA were used to look at changes in groups on all dependent variables over time. Reliably of the data was measured using Cronbach’s alpha and a variety of tests were applied to check that appropriate assumptions were met for PCA, ANOVA, and MANOVA.

Qualitative data was collected through four open ended questions. Qualitative question number 1: What other personal emotions, if any, were affected by 9/11? had 168 respondents. Qualitative question number 2: What other personal behaviors, if any, changed after 9/11? had 177 respondents. Qualitative question number 3: What other personal beliefs and assumptions, if any, changed after 9/11? had 194 respondents. Qualitative question number 4: What has been the greatest change in your life, if any, after 9/11 and why? had 223 respondents. To analyze the data, we used inductive reasoning, and collaborative coding and categorization. The data was reviewed several times to ensure the emerging category and themes were supported.

Results

The results of the study identify the type and magnitude of psychological and behavioral changes that occurred since 9/11 and will relate these changes to transformative learning theory and to the results of other studies.

Since PCA identified only one factor for the emotions dependent variables, the data on all emotions questions was composed into a single variable for ANOVA. For assumptions/beliefs, PCA produced four factors yielding four dependent variables for MANOVA: awareness; considering self and others; America having control over terrorism; and having a positive outlook on life. For behaviors, PCA produced 4 factors yielding 4 dependent variables for MANOVA: socializing; learning; paying attention to the news, politics, and neighbors; and security planning. ANOVA and MANOVA were used to identify significant differences in groups on the dependent variables at given points. The results that follow address each of the four research hypotheses.

The events associated with 9/11 caused immediate and long-term changes in emotions of individuals.

Repeated measures MANOVA revealed there were significant changes in emotions from an unspecified point in time before 9/11 occurred until the present time. Generally, emotional levels
were rated as a “2” (“somewhat low”) on the average before 9/11 and spiked at the time of 9/11 with an average rating of “4” (“somewhat high”). From the time 9/11 occurred, the level of emotions has gradually decreased, but remains at a level of approximately “3” (“moderate”) on the average. These results indicate a longer term effect on emotions.

The events associated with 9/11 caused immediate and long-term changes in assumptions/beliefs of individuals.

For the assumptions/beliefs variables, repeated measures MANOVA indicated there were significant differences in each of the four dependent variables over time. In terms of level of awareness of factors such as terrorism and world events, there was a large increase at the time of 9/11 (from moderate to somewhat high). As opposed to the relative decline in emotional levels, the level of awareness has remained relatively high, indicating a longer-term change. Looking at the area of being considering one’s own beliefs and those of others, there was a significant decline from the time prior to 9/11 (average ratings of somewhat high) to the period of 3 months immediately following 9/11 (average ratings of moderate). From the time immediately following 9/11 until the current date, there appears to be minimal change in the area of consideration, indicating that the respondent’s longer-term change has been towards being less considerate of their beliefs and those of others. With regard to America having control over the situation in terms of the rights and capabilities to defend against terrorism and carry out justice, there was a significant decrease from before 9/11 to the time immediately following 9/11 with the decline from the time immediately following until the current time is much less pronounced. The trend associated with American control signifies a longer-term decline in this area. Finally, with respect to having a positive outlook that people are basically good and America is a good place to live, there was a significant decrease (from somewhat high) from before 9/11 to the time immediately following 9/11 (moderate). From the time immediately following 9/11 until the current time, there was a marked increase in positive outlook, but the level remains below that of the time before 9/11. Based on this trend, it is inconclusive that 9/11 has caused a significant long-term change in positive outlook.

The events associated with 9/11 caused immediate and long-term changes in behavior of individuals.

For the behavior variables, repeated measures MANOVA indicated there were significant differences in each of the four dependent variables over time. With regard to socializing with family members and others, there was a significant increase from the time before 9/11 occurred and the current time from a moderate level to a somewhat high level, respectively. The trend in socializing suggests a longer-term change. In reference to learning activities such as taking classes, studying foreign cultures and religions, and self-reflection, there was a significant increase, from before 9/11 to the time immediately following, but there was a gradual decrease from the time immediately following until the current time. The general trend in learning activities suggests that the event surrounding 9/11 stimulated additional interest in learning; however, it is inconclusive as to whether the differences represent a significant longer-term change. For the variable of paying attention to news, politics, and other people, there was significant increase from below the moderate level to the somewhat high level. Following the same general pattern of learning, there has been a gradual decrease from the peak high immediately following 9/11 through the current time; therefore it is inconclusive that changes in paying attention represent a longer-term trend. Finally, in terms of taking measures to increase
family and home security, there was a significant increase from a level of somewhat low to moderate from before 9/11 until the time immediately following 9/11, respectively. Since the level appeared to be declining gradually from the time immediately following until current, it is not evident that the change in security measures represents a longer-term trend.

Demographic factors affect the extent to which individuals’ experienced emotional, assumption/belief, and behavioral changes as a result of 9/11.

For the emotions dependent variable, there were significant differences over time or each of the age, gender, martial status, and connection groups; however, there were no significant differences within each of the four groups. For assumptions/beliefs dependent variables, there were significant differences over time for age, gender, martial status, and connection group. Additionally, there were significant differences between one or more groups within the age, gender, martial status, and connection categories on the awareness, consideration, and American control variables, but not on the positive outlook variable. The more obvious trends in assumptions/beliefs were that older people, males, and those connected with 9/11 believed it was more important to be aware of terrorism and world events; females and never married people believed it was more important to be considerate of their own beliefs and those of others; and married people believe America has more control of its destiny in terms of terrorism. With regard to behavior variables, there were significant differences over time for age, gender, martial status, and gender. There were also significant differences between on ore more groups within the age, gender, martial status, and connection categories on each of the four behavior variables (socializing, learning, paying attention, and security planning). The more obvious trends in behaviors were that younger people and females tended to socialize more; younger people, females, and those connected with 9/11 were more involved in learning activities; those connected with 9/11 took more security precautions; and younger people and those connected with 9/11 tended to pay closer attention to the news, politics, and others around them.

There were three overall common themes that developed from the qualitative analysis: Government and Foreign Policy, Security and Travel, and Cultural Differences. Activism, Terrorism and Violence, Media, Religion, Emotional Changes, Friends and Families, and Personal experiences all were themes present throughout the data. The Government and Foreign Policy comments centered on a change in personal political views to fear and sadness over decisions made by the government to go to war; “I felt out of step with my nation’s leadership” stated one participant. Another stated, “I have become more aware of what is going on in the world. Paying more attention to World politics.” There were diverse statements of support and discouragement of the United States government. Security and Travel appeared to be a major concern for many participants. “I have more anxiety attacks related to travel,” “The feeling of not being safe anywhere anytime” and “I decided never to travel to the Middle East.” There was an overwhelming sense of insecurity with one’s surroundings and a fear of flying in airplanes. Travel seemed to be a huge concern for most participants. An awareness of cultural differences was prevalent in the participant’s reflections. “I have made an effort to be more open-minded and to learn about various religious and political beliefs” stated one participant. While another participant felt “I no longer trust almost everyone as I used to. Especially those of Middle Eastern Races!” There were an overwhelming number of responses that stated a desire to learn more about different ethnicities and cultures; a desire to be more open minded.
Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, individuals who participated in the survey experienced moderate to somewhat high transformative experiences in response to the events surrounding 9/11. There was significant quantitative and qualitative evidence that individuals experienced emotional effects that led to long-term changes in assumptions/beliefs and behaviors. Additionally, there appeared to be good correlation between the literature review and results of the survey completed by over 360 respondents.

From an emotional standpoint, there was a significant increase in the level of anger, fear, distrust, and helplessness at the time of 9/11. While the quantitative analysis shows that the emotional level has decreased over the period following the events, it remains relatively high. Information from the literature review and feedback from the open-ended questions on the survey reinforce these quantitative results. The fact that the U.S. has been involved in a war since 9/11 has probably contributed to the emotional level remaining relatively high; however, this study was not designed to address that effect.

Looking at the results of the analysis on assumptions/beliefs and behaviors, there is evidence that the survey respondents significantly increased their level of reflection on the terrorism phenomenon and global events in general. Many felt that America was more vulnerable and the world has become more unpredictable, so they have taken measures to increase security in and around their homes and to formulate emergency action plans. Furthermore, in response to emotional stresses brought on by 9/11, many turned to their families, friends, and social activities for support. With regard to the effects of 9/11 based on demographic factors, sufficient data was available to analyze differences in age, gender, marital status, and connection to the event. The most significant trend was that younger people (individuals in the 18-29 year age group) appeared to have experienced more prominent and longer term changes as a result of 9/11, particularly in the areas of self reflection and increasing their knowledge of foreign cultures and religions. This was also the case for those who had a direct connection to the 9/11 events.

References


Transformative Medicine: A Dialogue between Transformative Learning and Narrative Medicine

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Abstract: Drawing from a dialogue between Transformative Learning and Narrative Medicine, Transformative Medicine seeks to expose detrimental power systems and unchallenged assumptions between physician and patient, indoctrinated through medical education, and advocate dialogue and critical reflection around a patient’s storied experience to improve the quality of medical interpretations and intervention.

Introduction

The problem of the clinical medical encounter can, in many ways, be understood as a problem of dialogue between health care provider and patient. Dialogue has been described as “a particular process and quality of communication in which the participants 'meet,' which allows for changing and being changed” (Anderson et al., 2004). However, modern medical relationships are often fraught with frustration for both providers and patients due to a lack of true dialogue - a mutuality of engagement in the communicative process that facilitates not only an exchange of information, but the potential for mutual recognition and personal transformation; the ability to acknowledge the changes to an individual’s self-story by virtue of engaging with the story of another (Butler, 2005).

A common trend among medical reformists is to blame certain modern changes in health care including shortened visit times, increased reliance on technical data, and a lack of consistent ‘medical home’ for the dissatisfactory state of health care communication. In contrast, movements including Narrative Medicine – a term coined by physician and literary scholar Rita Charon to mean “medicine practiced with the narrative competence to recognize, absorb, interpret, and be moved by the stories of illness” (Charon, 2006) – seek to place story at the center of the clinical relationship, equipping clinicians with narratological skills with which to enter into the stories of their patients. Efforts to reform the dialogic potential of the clinical encounter can only be deepened by utilizing the notion of parallel process (Shapiro, 1990) – the idea that the clinical relationship between physician and patient in many ways repeats the training relationship of medical educators to medical learners in both classrooms and apprentice-like clinical rotations.

A medical education in the U.S. offers more to waves of future physicians than the ability to diagnose and treat illness. It instills a paradigm. Kuhn’s definition of paradigm includes “the concepts, values and techniques shared by a scientific community and used by that community to define legitimate problems and solutions” (Capra, 1996). A primary characteristic of the Western medical paradigm is of course the almost exclusive focus on curing illness and prolonging life (Morrison & Meier, 2004), a characteristic that has gained even more primacy with rapid advancements in diagnostic and curative medical technologies. Education in what is commonly termed ‘communication skills’ – or narratological skills – is made quite secondary to this technology driven professional paradigm. Even when such skills are included in medical

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The witnessing of another’s suffering is not an act without emotional repercussions. From the medical trainee’s first cadaveric patient, however, traditional medical education expects nothing less than complete emotional repression as a requirement for clinical ‘objectivity.’ In a similar fashion, clinical history taking is taught to physicians as a tightly structured and emotionally deprived process of information gathering rather than narrative invitation and critical exploration. Suffering and illness are often frightening, depressing, or overwhelming, yet it is clear that medical trainees are given few skills and little space to either encourage their patients to reflect upon these experiences, or reflect upon these experiences themselves. The inability to meaningfully engage with the complex narratives of patients’ stories becomes echoed in an inability to engage with their own stories. Physicians are at risk of emerging from their education with less narratological skills and self understanding than when they entered it. While medical institutions are beginning to incorporate reflective writing and other techniques to help students construct, understand and integrate these complex emotional lessons, such efforts would only benefit from a more rigorous pedagogy aimed at fostering deeper personal learning, a practice that has gained substantial ground in the separate but related field of adult education.

A pervasive “banking” methodology (Freire, 1993) in medical education assumes that the teacher teaches, knows everything, and chooses program content while students are taught, know nothing, and adapt to program content without any direct input. Despite efforts on the part of some medical schools - most notably Harvard with its “new curriculum”- to incorporate case based interactive approaches to medical education, most medical schools continue to operate under a strictly banking model. Despite being adult learners, often with rich life histories and skill sets to draw upon, medical education has no formal mechanisms to honor and integrate the considerable insights of its students. Both formally, and as manifested informally by the ‘hidden curriculum’ (Hafferty, 1998) of medicine, students are expected to listen, learn and perform rather than challenge, teach or reflect.

The cultural manifestations of medical hierarchy are manifold. During the first two years of classroom learning medical students are stagnant for the most part, subject to long hours in traditional stadium style lecture halls, followed by even longer nights of memorization and
frequent written examinations. The second two years of apprentice style clinical clerkships are spent acting as general underdog and gopher to various hospital services – running blood tests to the lab, collecting vital signs, and gathering stool and urine specimens are considered a sort of payment in exchange for the clinical knowledge these “clerks” gain primarily on the run from the phalanx of superiors around them – interns, residents, fellows and supervisory attending physicians. This commoditization of medical knowledge, quite arguably a manifestation of the capitalist context in which Western medical education is situated, becomes quickly evident in the parallel process. In this sense, physicians learn a system of controlling all aspects of exchange including giving to, and taking away from the patient, not only with regard to information but also respect. For example, ritualized hazing such as “pimping” – the practice of senior physicians publicly humiliating trainees with a series of rapid-fire clinical questions, often accompanied by a ridiculing of incorrect answers – often becomes replicated in a lack of respect for patients’ understandings of illness that differ from the “correct” bio-medical model. (DasGupta et al., 2006).

The traditional educational paradigm becomes a threat not only to the growth and prosperity of future physicians but also to their patients and society at large because it dilutes a fuller consciousness around the “whys” of medical care, which direct ethics, values and decisions central to medical care. A fuller consciousness may only be translated into practice when medical students are directly invited to surface their unique experiences, reconstruct more suitable explanations than their current assumptions have to offer, and utilize these new frames of reference as appropriate stewards to action during complex clinical dilemmas. Physicians may utilize these competencies to not only help patients improve upon their understanding beyond complex jargon, charts and predictive statistics, but empower them in a genuinely humanizing manner, by inviting and witnessing their stories, recognizing their suffering, attending to not only their symptoms but their lives.

**Transformative Medicine**

This essay emerged from an engaged and active dialogue between the two authors, scholars in transformative learning theory (WB) and narrative medicine (SD). Through that dialogue was born a notion that we might elevate that interpersonal dialogue to suggest an interdisciplinary dialogue between our fields. We suggest that such an interdisciplinary dialogue might be called Transformative Medicine.

Transformative Medicine is a collective process of mutual investigation of the illness situation through narrative, critical reflection, dialogue, and action. Its mission is to expose power systems indoctrinated through medical education like those discussed above, and advocate dialogue and critical reflection around medical learners’ storied experience to improve the quality of their medical interpretations, treatment, and their ability to facilitate meaning with patients. Because it draws from two related but separate disciplines, it is helpful to provide an overview of each, and then suggest the composite vision.

The mission of Narrative Medicine is to equip clinicians with the concepts, values and techniques necessary to elicit, attend to, witness and interpret the narratives of their patients. Educational efforts to improve narrative competence include exposure of medical trainees to literature and methodologies of literary inquiry, incorporation of interdisciplinary humanities educators at medical institutions, and the incorporation of narrative writing to improve physicians’ self-reflective practice. Ultimately, Narrative Medicine seeks to equip clinicians
with the narratological skills to engage with and in their patients’ stories, thereby improving mutual understanding, communication and care.

The work of Narrative Medicine is further illuminated when it is seen in light of adult learning theory. By looking beyond the traditional diagnosis and cure driven medical paradigm, and focusing on physician’s and patients’ subjective meanings of illness through storied representation, Narrative Medicine can be understood as a shift in medical learning itself. Narrative Medicine essentially challenges the evidence-based assumptions of traditional medical education and suggests a new working definition of medical learning. Questioning the assumptions of traditional medical education, examining the nature of “co-intentionality” (Freire, 1993) in dialogue, and enabling both care providers and patients to engage in critical reflection is ultimately integral to transforming medicine and enabling true dialogue in both medical classroom and clinic.

Transformative Learning theory is based on the premise that adult learning is a process of meaning making. Interestingly, the origins of the field are narratological. The word ‘meaning’ originally refers to an activity of telling or saying in order to make sense of a situation, recorded first in Beowulf, ca. 725 (Barnhart, 1995). Narrative is recognized as a powerful starting point for adult learning, because telling one’s story is not only a process of meaning making, but it is often prompted by unexplored or unresolved dilemmas that lie just beyond a narrator’s ability to make sense of a situation.

Let us in turn utilize narrative and literary studies to shed further light on Transformative Learning. In Fyodor Dostoevsky’s novel The Idiot, a simple-minded youth named Myshkin is relentlessly riddled by his inability to comprehend his love’s irrational behavior. His struggle to make meaning of his experience – commonly mirrored in a struggle by the reader - only doubles as time moves on, even when Myshkin takes measures to express his narrative on paper. It seems that only through dialogue with others does he come close to understanding a world that exists beyond his innocence. Dostoyevsky’s tale here helps us make one important distinction between the premises of Narrative Medicine and Transformative Learning Theory: Narrative Medicine relies on writing, the act of narration with pen to paper as the integral meaning making process. However, Transformative Learning Theory seeks to take narrative making beyond what Rita Charon has called the ‘edifice’ (Charon, 2006) of the story-on-paper. The narrative becomes a starting point for evoking and challenging immediate reactions and point of view, followed by a more dynamic process of co-investigation through dialogue between colleagues and professors regarding underlying personal assumptions and alternative explanations, toward developing strategic actions to test new or revised interpretations.

According to Mezirow, an advanced philosophy of adult learning involves fostering the continuous improvement of the processes by which we interpret our world. In other words, adult educators must work to equip learners with the ability to grapple with complex situations like that facing Dostoevsky’s protagonist. Transformative Learning Theory is a process of critical reflection and reflective discourse reframing our subjective interpretations. It is a process prompted by disorienting dilemmas, or experiences so problematic that they only seem more distorted through a strictly personal lens. Enter narrative, which may serve learners as either a vehicle for surfacing rich personal content for reflection, or an object of reflection that provokes new insights or alternate ways of viewing the world.

Medical students will likely be riddled by dilemmas experienced in their own education, and while Narrative Medicine allows for a rigorous methodology of meaning making through narrative, Transformative Learning Theory provides a systematic and rigorous process for reflecting upon that narrative. Transformative Learning Theory, in conjunction with the
paradigm shift of Narrative Medicine, enables medical trainees to engage with narratives of training beyond the *descriptive* level of a narrative that is largely content-oriented – about what is happening, who it is happening to, how it is observed to occur, where it takes place, and potentially self-serving conclusions about why it is happening.

Our vision of an integrated approach, a Transformative Medicine, enables future physicians to utilize narratives to make meaning of their worlds, while simultaneously challenging how or why such conclusions are made. Transformative Medicine suggests that framing and reframing our descriptions alone, as one might do through narrative, does not sufficiently satisfy our ability to improve meaning and action around a complex situation. Rather, students must critically reflect, or identify and control the automatic processes by which their unique *prescriptive* and *paradigmatic* assumptions (Brookfield, 1995) shape narratives. Prescriptive assumptions include what individuals take for granted about what ‘should’ occur in order to resolve a problem, and paradigmatic assumptions involve learner’s deepest and most rigid belief systems through which they view the premise of a situation.

Our notion of Transformative Medicine takes the storied basis of Narrative Medicine to a relational, dialogic level, whereby narratives become the most useful when written, read, shared, and analyzed *in relation* to other learners, teachers, and even patients. Rita Charon has already discussed extensively (Charon, 2006) the narrative projects at her institution that enable writing in relation – namely, Narrative Medicine workshops for providers and educators, as well as writing programs for providers, patients, and families on the oncology and AIDS services. Transformative Learning Theory systematizes and gives strong theoretical basis to the educational importance of narrative-in-relation, as such situations allow for divergent narrative analyses and problems posed by others through dialogue.

A Transformative Medicine enables *transformative dialogue* in medical institutions, or ‘reflective discourse’, which refers to maintaining an open-mind exchange, with the collective purpose of identifying “a common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief” (Mezirow, 2000). Through action informed by these reflective processes, transformed meaning is actualized and tested in the real world, leading to further learning and what Mezirow (2000) refers to as “tentative best judgments.” A growing body of research focused on fostering transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000) suggests numerous tools that may be integrated with narrative medicine in order to uncover, challenge and modify problematic frames of reference that underlie the narratives of medical students as well as the medical paradigm at large. Three exercises described briefly below utilize fictional and real-life narratives as starting points for transformative exercises in critical reflection, reflective discourse and action around overlapping realities comprising the medical context.

*Critical Narrative Incident* is an exercise that adapts the Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1949), geared to enhance a medical student’s ability to recognize and critically address aspects of narrative that produce a personal sense of disorientation. After reading a passage from a classic novel or poem, students identify and describe passages that seem personally troubling, identify three personal values inherent in their descriptions, reflect on how these values were formed, and determine additional resources for interpreting the narrative in a different light. *Challenging Narrative Expectations* helps students better understand the nature and impact underlying medical expectations, including how illnesses are quickly generalized, and why self-serving models should consistently be challenged and improved through narrative. A variation on Roth’s (1990) notion of “Challenging Habits of Expectation”, students read a passage that embodies the main dilemma of a real illness narrative, but stop just short of reading
how the dilemma is resolved. Students are asked to write how they expect the narrative to be resolved, why their personal expectations exist, where they come from, and how they may be improved by incorporating others’ expectations and alternative solutions. Narrative Ideology Critique utilizes narratives provided in medical journal case studies as veritable artifacts of medical ideology, as they are steeped in paradigmatic assumptions and treated “as locked structures, dependent on more or less esoteric mastery of “establishment” codes and ways of speaking (Mezirow, 2000). Students explore whose interests are at stake, who has access to the information provided, who has the power over the article itself including sources for funding, and what the outcomes of the article will be.

Conclusion

By all estimations, there is a need to infuse traditional medical education with a pedagogy that equips future physicians with the competencies to proactively elicit, recognize and reflect upon narratives through a process of mutual engagement with others. Narrative is an irreplaceable access point to meaning shared in the parallel processes of medical education and the clinical encounter, and it is through subsequent critical reflection and dialogue that physicians may begin to transform problematic assumptions and challenge detrimental power systems, which have a profound impact on competent care.

References

Discovering the Transformative Learning Potential in the Spirituality of Midlife Women
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Abstract: The intent of this paper, based on my dissertation research, is to explore some themes of midlife women’s spirituality that indicate the potential for transformative learning. A second aim is to share my experiences of utilizing auto-photography and photo elicitation as part of the research design for the study.

Spirituality Today
There has been a significant surge of interest in spirituality in many areas, including adult education, leadership, and other contexts, in addition to religious spirituality. People are living longer and want meaningful growth opportunities that are relevant to their lives and manageable within their schedules. Hawkins (1997) tells us that leaders have a responsibility to foster “learning environments where people transform their everyday experiences into new meanings that can guide their actions and shape their personhood” (p. 51). To foster such learning environments, leaders must know as much as possible about what helps and hinders this kind of transformative learning experience. Spirituality is one way in which people construct knowledge. For many people, it is related to religion, but the two concepts differ, with spirituality encompassing a broader context than religion.

Research Purpose and Significance
While women’s spirituality and spiritual growth processes have received some attention, there is still a need for learning about women’s ways of knowing spiritually for their own self-understanding, understanding by others through the addition of more women’s voices in the literature, and to develop programs and materials. The midlife period is very important to women’s spirituality, often a turning point or a time of new beginnings or re-creation (Wink & Dillon, 2002). In short, we need to hear these women’s voices as they tell their stories of spiritual learning, meaning making, and transformation. The purpose of my doctoral dissertation research was to discover midlife women’s experiences of spirituality and processes of spiritual growth. A second aim was to learn from the women participants the impact of their spirituality on their leadership of influence. This particular study did address women’s spirituality in a religious context. The key questions the study sought to answer were:
- What meanings do the women attach to their spiritual experiences and processes?
- How do these experiences interact with their lives and leadership?

Theoretical Framework
Adult learning theory, theories of spiritual development, the general spirituality literature, women’s learning, the concept of developing voice, and particularly, the field of transformative learning, formed the theoretical framework for the study. Themes in the women’s spirituality literature vary greatly, but some of the major concepts include the importance of meaning making for spiritual growth, a focus on wholeness and authenticity of self, and the significance of relationships (Banks & Parks, 2004; Dobbie, 1991; Geertsmia & Cummings, 2004; Gordon, 2002). In addition to stage models and the concept of the heroic journey for women’s spiritual
development, there are alternative metaphors, such as the web or the quilt (Ray & McFadden, 2001), which can help express various aspects of women’s spirituality.

In transformative learning, there is often a crisis or trigger event that leads to critical reflection to understand meaning and explore new ways of thinking and behaving (Mezirow, 2000). There is the possibility of integrating new perspectives into one’s life and future processing. Spiritual growth may often involve such transformative learning. Social and cultural factors impact spiritual growth and development, and thus the transformative learning that may occur and the way it impacts one’s life work and being. Brooks (2000) defines transformative change as change in one’s sense of self, the world, or one’s past and orientation toward the future, all of which were evident in this research. The concept of “spiraling back” to one’s earlier spirituality or to earlier issues of life to fashion a new and more meaningful spirituality is a key theme in the literature (Bee, 1987; Bateson, 1990, Tisdell, 2003). Diverse outlooks on transformative learning allow us to understand it as more than a cognitive-rational approach to learning. Symbols, dreams, visions, and emotions can and often do have important impacts on the transformative learning process (Baumgartner, 2001; Taylor, 2000).

Midlife is frequently a time of transition to another fairly long and active period of life. As Gentzler and Miller report (2001), it is often a time of significant spiritual reflection and transition as well. Adults want to know that their lives have meaning and may be clarifying values and seeking new attitudes and behaviors that are consistent with those values. As women seek to reinvent themselves during this period, it is important to keep in mind that there is no one path or set of experiences. As Bateson describes, many women may be attempting to discover the “real of me” (Bateson, 2000, p. 102). Part of the role of spirituality during this time can be to help women weather the transition successfully and find one or more new directions in life. As Tisdell’s (2003) insights regarding midlife women’s spirituality indicate, the integration of inner and outer spiritual work is very important during this period.

Research Design

This particular study of midlife women’s spirituality focused on Christian women from three medium size Christian churches in one denomination, although the character of each church was quite unique. The study used a qualitative phenomenological inquiry design that included 14 in-depth personal interviews, plus a follow-up focus group. As discussed by Taylor (2003a, 2003b), auto-photography (pictures taken by the women before the interview to reflect their spirituality) and photo-elicitation (in which the pictures became a springboard for the discussion of spirituality) were part of every respondent’s participation. Women leaders in the three churches gave information about the study to women they thought might be interested in the research; these women, in turn, contacted the researcher. Half of the women were 40-49 and the other half were 50-60. Most were very interested in spiritual growth. They represented a mix of education levels & occupations, held a variety of leadership roles, and were participating in many different spiritual growth opportunities both in the religious and other arenas.

Analysis

The discussion of results emphasizes the six themes of the women’s spiritual meaning making that emerged during the interviews and how their transformative meaning making often impacted their leadership of influence. The women’s experiences in using photos as part of the research design are also discussed. They gave permission to use their first name, or another name of their choice, for reporting the results of the research.
Themes of Research Integrated with Transformative Learning

There were six themes of meaning making identified in the research. Gradually, it became clear that the major themes could form an acronym for ‘voices’, where:

V = Variety in spiritual experiences and spiritual growth
O = Others (connection and community)
I = Internal Focus (changes and reflections)
C = Creative Expression
E = External Focus, including leadership
S = Self-creation (or re-creation; identity)

V-O-I-C-E-S was not only a helpful tool for analysis, but a continuous reminder that the goals were to represent the voices of these midlife women for their own and others’ learning, and possibly to facilitate more spiritual growth in the future.

This paper specifically addresses some of the instances of spiritual growth that seemed to reflect transformative learning from within several of the themes. Sometimes transformation did begin with a disorienting dilemma and in other cases it came from reflecting on experiences and interactions that occurred over time. The variety of spiritual growth experiences cited by the research participants included both positive and negative or painful experiences. Sometimes the painful experiences also led to a change in one’s way of seeing herself or others. Gail felt that through all of her experiences, she has learned that God is always with her and loving her, so that now she tries to see and love everyone through God’s eyes. Camilla, who like many of the women viewed spirituality as both internal and external, sees spirituality as a doorway: “If you can leave the door open, you don’t understand in a way you can write down on paper, but there is an understanding that comes from acceptance.” Her growth has led to greater self-esteem and self-confidence, along with mercy for herself and others.

Other examples of changed thinking and acting include Cinda and Amanda who saw themselves as becoming more compassionate and less judgmental. Valentine became involved in small group studies, eventually resulting in her co-leadership of a study which she said further opened her eyes to difference and the call to love. In addition, her motivations in her work have changed from achievements to benefit her own career to making a difference to benefit others.

For other participants, spiritual growth means greater maturity of thought and relationships with others. This growth has come about through reading and reflecting, movement (such as yoga), and creative expression. Such experiences have helped Chloe to live in the moment using art and appreciating nature, to change some of her views, and to be more compassionate in her work. Another significant pathway for transformation were the events that provided renewal and refreshment from burnout and led to a new identity, often involving more “being” and less “doing” and greater acceptance of oneself and others. For Margie, the renewal and re-creation provided the space for her to become more aware of the “faces of poverty.” There were also instances in which participation in such an event led to life change in a different direction, involving more “doing”, due to reduction of fear, a willingness to share with others, and a desire to look for learning in every situation.

The Leadership of Influence and Transformative Learning

Most of the women did not see themselves as leaders, even when asked to think in very broad terms about leadership as influence of others in any setting. If they were not in charge of something oriented toward achievement of a particular goal or they did not have a specific position, they did not think of themselves as leaders. This phenomenon may be impacted by
societal expectations in connection with the term “leader.” They certainly influence others and many talked at length about how their spiritual growth had transformed the way they influence others in their home, with other women, and at work (thus, a “leadership of influence”). The transformation came in the form of greater tolerance, patience, or compassion and some of the women talked of moving toward a position of mutual influence with others rather than only their own influence of others.

Some women did have specific leadership roles or indicated their spirituality had led them to step up to a particular role. For example, Valentine perceives a direct role for spirituality in impacting her leadership to now be more focused on helping others than meeting her own needs.

Because I have a spiritual walk in my life, I’ve learned not to just look at the face of things [with employees], but to listen and ask questions to see if I can find out what’s truly going on in the situation and be able to help that individual be successful and help their team manager help them be successful.

Gail realized a need to take responsibility and take on more of a leadership role in reaching out to other women as part of her spiritual growth. After several experiences of loss, and doing too much, Elaine took a different direction, “retuning” her life in order to do less, and focusing on the call “to find her voice.” Lucy experienced a call and a desire to enter the profession of nursing which she related to her spirituality and spiritual growth. Susan reported deep change in her beliefs about the important aspects of life and the idea that all of life is connected. She feels that these changes within her have impacted the music she now writes in terms of the content and the way she approaches it.

Auto-Photography and Photo-Elicitation

I gave the participants a disposable camera and the guidance to take as many pictures as they wanted to visually depict some aspect of their spirituality. During the interview, I asked the participants to explain and describe, or tell a story about, a few of their favorite photos in terms of what they convey about their spirituality. This technique was most helpful in capturing spiritual experiences that may have been difficult for the participants to put into words. The pictures also served as a springboard for eliciting responses about how participants view their spiritual growth journey. Although photos can help create a metaphor for spiritual growth or learning, they are limited to capturing only a moment in time. I consciously decided not to put myself in the position of analyzing or interpreting the meaning of the photos taken by my research participants. The photos are simply meaningful because of their meaning to the participants. The photos did accomplish their stated purposes in the research and several of the women spent much time choosing photos or selecting images to capture. The photos turned out to be some of the richest data on spiritual growth and transformation in the research. Although a few of the women mentioned being uncertain about “what I was looking for,” there were more who seemed to find the process inspiring and interesting. Their detailed reflections about the photos and their discussion about their photo taking or photo selection process reflect this conclusion. A few examples follow:

Peggy put a great deal of effort into taking pictures that portray her spirituality. Her pictures represented a wide variety of events and experiences that are meaningful to her: music, Bible studies, a statue of Mary Magdalene, Celtic Christianity, the book of Psalms, a rosary collection, and various religious symbols. Describing her pictures led into a discussion of her spiritual awakening and her concern about the loss of the feminine role in the church.
Elaine provided detailed stories with each of her pictures and explained that they were “snapshots of what’s been a greater life work for me, maintaining a journal.” She then discussed journaling as not only providing her with opportunities for remembering, but as a key trigger for reflections and meaning making. Some of her other pictures depicted nature scenes, particularly in the mountains. She said that “God whispers and shouts from the mountains.” Taking the nature photographs triggered her earliest awareness of God in her life as a child on a trip with her parents. She often went off the trails by herself and built little outdoor altars. The pictures she took were reminders to her of how strong the presence of God is in nature and in the community.

**Conclusion**

The women eagerly shared their diverse spiritual lives with great openness, honesty, and reflection. They seek to continue growing spiritually in ways that impact them personally as well as how they live out their lives with and for others. Some reflected for the first time on how their spirituality impacts their leadership. One hope is that VOICES can be a reminder to continue representing the many spiritual and life voices of midlife women.

**Recommendations and Future Research**

The women reflected their learning in the telling of their stories in a variety of ways, such as by coming to a deeper awareness of the ways spirituality and leadership might intertwine. Their stories and changed ways of thinking and being reflected the integration of their spirituality into their whole lives. There is much research to document the value of listening to women’s stories in terms of discovery of voice and growth in self-awareness. Group settings for telling one’s story may enhance the ability to self-reflect, engage in dialogue, build relationships, and accept others through learning about similarities and differences. One approach to consider is formal and informal mentoring in small groups in the church or sponsored by the church. Women can invite other women to share and reflect on their stories. The group process itself may aid in the midlife transition to changed or new beginnings as group members nurture and challenge one another while dialoguing in a safe space. In developing ministries, churches need to think in terms of what else they can provide to facilitate transformative change. The needed programs may be different for women than for men and should facilitate growth in ways that engage each unique learner. Possible content is virtually endless; it could include teaching skills of reflection, sharing stories, dialogue, different learning strategies, women’s spirituality, adult development, and understanding the cultural values of others. It is possible that churches can increase their ability to enhance the integration of women’s internal spiritual growth with their external influence and work.

There are several worthwhile future research opportunities. One possibility is follow-up research with the same women to document their development and change over time and how they are using their learning to serve, lead, or work for social change. It would also be beneficial to specifically include women of different ethnicities to allow giving voice to a wider variety of stories. The use of other research designs is also worth considering. Qualitative research is invaluable for women to gain a voice through telling their stories, while quantitative designs can be used to examine and compare data for different groups of women. More focused and specific research on the impact of spirituality on leadership, attending to the social, cultural, and personal factors seems especially worthwhile. Such research may lead to the application of spiritual growth resources to support and encourage women’s leadership.
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Transformative Learning in Two Social Movement Organizations
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Abstract: Participants in two social movement organizations experienced transformative learning about the role of government in protecting public safety. However, the ability to sustain action for justice based on their new frames of reference varied, depending on participants’ perceptions of possible success and the group dynamics within the organizations.

Introduction
Transformative learning theory has evolved over time and become more complex (Mezirow, 2000). This study responds to the need to situate transformative learning theory in specific contexts to understand how the process of transformative learning is affected by those contexts (Clark & Wilson, 1991). This study describes and analyzes transformative learning that occurred among members of two grassroots groups working to remove radioactive and toxic waste from their neighborhoods.

Related Literature
Researchers have found that participants in social movement organizations experienced perspective transformation during their participation (Endresen & Von Kotze, 2005; Foley, 1999; McKnight, 1995; Scott, 1991). Sociologists Krauss (1993) and Masterson-Allen and Brown (1990) studied participation in community groups fighting to remove toxic waste and found transformation in the way people viewed government and its role in protecting public health. These studies suggest the usefulness of a rich, descriptive study of what people learn while participating in grassroots struggle and how that learning was shaped by the movement group context.

Site of the Study
This research study was conducted in two neighborhood groups who were trying to force removal of toxic and radioactive waste from a Superfund site in their neighborhood in a large, Western city. The United States Environmental Protection Agency had originally recommended removal of the waste, but, after pressure from the chemical company that owned the site, had changed its decision and only required on-site stabilization of the contamination. Working-class, mostly female residents of one neighborhood adjacent to the site immediately protested the decision and worked to get the contamination removed. Four years later, middle class, mostly male, residents of a neighborhood on the other side of the site became aware of the controversy and started their own efforts to remove the waste. Through the process of the EPA’s change in decision and repeated failed attempts by the residents to force removal of the waste, residents learned significant amounts of instrumental, communicative, and emancipatory knowledge.

Methodology
This study was a critical ethnography designed to see how the context of social movement organizations affected learning among members of those groups. Research questions focused on what people learned through participating in a social movement organization
struggle, what was the economic, political, and cultural context of the struggle, and how that context affected learning.

I was a participant-observer in twice-weekly group meetings, monthly neighborhood association meetings, political actions, meetings with public officials, and study sessions over a period of 11 months. I conducted in-depth interviews with eight participants in the two groups and some who had quit participating. I did content analysis of relevant documents such as newspaper articles, EPA documents, and participants’ writings. I conducted member checks on analysis with members of both groups.

Analysis followed Carspecken’s (1996) five-step method of critical ethnography, moving from data collection, through reconstructive analysis, through member checks, to identifying connections between the social site being studied, and connections with macrosocial theories.

Findings in Relation to Transformative Learning

Mezirow’s definition of transformative learning includes changing a frame of reference, which is made up of two dimensions: a habit of mind and resulting points of view. “A habit of mind is a set of assumptions – broad, generalized, orienting predispositions that act as a filter for interpreting the meaning of experience” (2000, p. 17, italics in original). Transformative learning may occur when learners reflect on the assumptions of others (objective reframing of a frame of reference) or on one’s own assumptions (subjective reframing). Subjective reframing involves reflection on assumptions about several types of assumptions, including “a system – economic, cultural, political, educational, communal, or other” (p. 23).

Transformative learning occurred among members of both neighborhood groups. Residents initially had the habit of mind or assumption that government agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency and the State Department of Health were going to use their power to protect the health and safety of neighborhood residents. Instead, they discovered that these agencies were using their power to protect the interests of the company that owned the site and sacrificing public health. They came to see the economic and political system was supporting capital accumulation and corporate profits rather than public safety (Habermas 1973; Krauss, 1989). They reframed dramatically their basic assumptions about the role of government agencies and the voice of citizens in a democracy.

One resident of the neighborhood expressed her trust of the EPA. She said, “But I remember [my son] was a year old, I mean you know what it's like with a new baby and it's kind of like, well, Oh good, I remember thinking, Oh good. They're gonna remove it. The Environmental Protection Agency is on the job. Great...they're gonna move the stuff and that's great and I don't have to worry about it.”

After four years in the struggle to remove the waste she said, “I think the most significant learning experience that I've had in doing this with government agencies is just finding out how really dysfunctional they really are...And it just seems like the taxpayers are paying for this whole thing and it's just such a fiasco and we're not getting what we need, which is to get this dangerous material moved out of our neighborhood.”

Another resident, when asked how he viewed the EPA before getting involved in this process, said “It says Environmental Protection Agency. I felt that the EPA was here to protect the environment and in doing so, would protect me. And that it would, its policy was to take a position to contain pollution, number one, and to remediate, number two, and to remediate situations to the best of their technological capability in the future. And to make parties
responsible for what they had done, to identify and to make responsible parties for what they had done to cause the problem.”

When asked his view after a year in the struggle, he said, “It's changed quite a bit. The EPA is another government organization that exists for its own survival and will do anything with anyone that enhances its own present and long-term future survival. It will cut any deal with anybody. It will look at any information or any data in ways that will support its position, and of course its position is to support its long-term survival. So anything that makes its statistics look good or better, they do, regardless of whether that is in the long-term and truly the right solution. It will disregard information, and discredit information, that's my feeling and my belief, that does not support whatever its current political agenda is. So I do not believe that the Environmental Protection Agency truly has a mission to protect the people of this country.”

Another said she had learned that, “agendas and goals and desires can be twisted and manipulated to accommodate the desires of a select few in opposition to the wishes of the masses. That institutions that were set up to protect us have been held up in front of us as facades. Such as the Environmental Protection Agency.” She talked about a “veil coming down” as she realized her trust in government agencies was misplaced.

One summarized an insight he had, “So we now know that despite the fact that the president gets on nationwide television and talks about cleanup of radioactive and toxic material sites, that those are hollow terms and words only. What the Chinese call it, one big paper dragon. It's all image, there's nothing behind it. Just paper.”

One person concluded, "There's a system at work. A system at work that doesn't care about the people at the bottom, not about you or you or me.” Another said, “It's supposed to be by the people, of the people and for the people. You know, it's like, well, Duh, what happened to that?”

Residents learned that in the decision-making process, the rules were set up to benefit the corporation that owned the site. One talked about the “ways the deck has been stacked against us...Governmental regulations are a playground that keeps citizens from playing.” They also identified numerous ways the corporation could use its resources to influence the EPA decision. In talking about possible solutions one talked about going all the way to the US Supreme Court, noting, “Unfortunately, you have to have money to get to the Supreme Court. So are we any different than a dictatorship in South America? Or authoritarian regime in another part of the world where money buys access? The answer is probably not.”

In conclusion, the residents believed the government agencies were going to protect public health but all transformed their frame of reference about the purpose of government agencies. They learned about who holds power in the US and changed fundamental assumptions they held about economic and political systems in the US, who benefits, and who loses.

**Findings in Relation to the Conference Theme of Issues of Difference and Diversity**

This study identified two major differences in learning among members of the groups. Class and gender affected instrumental and communicative learning among group members, but did not appear to affect transformative learning. Secondly, there were differences in the actions that participants took as a result of their transformative learning and their ability to sustain those actions over time.
Transformative Learning Not Affected by Class and Gender of Participants

The larger study of this struggle (Cain, 1998) found significant differences in the types of instrumental and communicative learning experienced by working-class women, middle-class women, and middle-class men in the two groups. This learning was closely related to the strategies each group thought would be possible and effective and what strategies each group pursued. Their knowledge of strategies was connected to the life experiences of the members and the skills and knowledge they brought to the process. Clear patterns of gender and class were found in these experiences, skills, and knowledge.

However, in terms of transformative learning, this study found all group members changed their frame of reference regardless of their gender and/or class. All indicated they had an initial trust and belief in the government agencies’ commitment to protect public health. After being involved in the struggle to remove the waste, they all said the purpose of government agencies was to protect their interests as bureaucracies and to protect the interests of corporations.

Transformative Learning Led to Participation, But Was Not Sustained for All

A second finding related to difference is whether the people who took action as a result of their transformative learning were able to sustain that action. Two different patterns of quitting were found in the two groups.

Some residents joined the original working-class neighborhood association group and participated for as many as six years, trying a variety of different methods to force removal of the waste. Others learned about the power arrayed against them in the form of the federal and state agencies and the corporation, developed cynicism, and quit the struggle. In this group, those who quit became disillusioned with the lack of success the group was having. They remained committed to their neighborhood organization, but stopped participating when they did not see their group’s power as sufficient to challenge the corporation’s power.

In the middle-class neighborhood group, a different pattern emerged. While those who became aware of the differential power took initial action, many quit the group very quickly because of the poor dynamics of the group. One of the women said, “I don’t know how many people we lost just because there was so much hostility.” Over the course of the 11 months I attended twice-weekly meetings, about four dozen people attended one or two meetings and did not return. (While these people did not experience transformational learning, their pattern of quitting suggests how bad the group dynamic was.) All the women who joined the group quit, most after one or two meetings, one after five months, and one after six months.

The meetings were dominated by three middle-class men with business backgrounds who acted unilaterally and disrespectfully, especially toward the women. The two women who participated for five and six months both indicated the meeting process was counter to their values of democracy and provoked too much physical and emotional stress for them to continue attending. One referred to the meetings as “hysterical” with “people yelling at each other.” The other gave examples such as one of the three men “...gets angry and starts telling [another of the three men] that what [this other man] has to say doesn’t matter, or whatever. So that use of anger in a way that feels dominating.” Another example was “when we as a group are working with this, we’re making a decision, we’re moving forward at our own group pace and OK, it’s not as fast as we’d like, but we are moving forward. And then all of a sudden the hat gets thrown over the wall [by one man acting on his own], spontaneously, and then as a group it’s like we have to
catalyze ourselves in order to meet this thing that um, so it’s like an indirect way of having been dominated...and so it’s the sense of being out of control and having to work with chaos.”

These findings echo others’ conclusions that people need some sense of success and supportive community to engage in processes of social action (Brookfield, 1994; Daloz, 2000; Shor and Freire, 1987). For example, Schugurensky argues, “Context is especially relevant in explaining the connections between individual and social transformation. For instance, a supportive social environment, a social reality that is susceptible of transformation (i.e., a viable collective project), and a sense of community are important elements in creating the conditions for social transformation. In the absence of these conditions, critical reflection alone is not only unlikely to lead to transformative social action, but in some cases it may even lead to the opposite situation, which is cynicism, paralysis, and a general feeling of helplessness” (2002, p. 62).

Brookfield echoes this theme, “It is important to acknowledge that critical reflection’s focus on illuminating power relationships and hegemonic assumptions can be the death of the transformative impulse, inducing an energy-sapping, radical pessimism concerning the possibility of structural change” (2000, p. 145).

Mezirow agrees, saying “But learning theory must recognize the crucial role of supportive relationships and a supportive environment in making possible a more confident, assured sense of personal efficacy, of having a self – or selves – more capable of becoming critically reflective of one’s habitual and sometimes cherished assumptions, and of having the self-confidence to take action on reflective insights” (2000, p. 25).

The ability to sustain action based on transformative learning is clearly influenced by relations of power with external actors and by contextual factors within the social movement group. Democratic and respectful processes appear to provide the support people need to confront larger structures of power by developing power within the grassroots group. When the group processes don’t provide opportunities for development and solidarity, the movement group can not be sustained (Polletta, 2002).

**Implications for Transformative Learning Theory**

The findings of this study support other authors’ assertions that transformative learning theory must be broader than an individual process of rational/cognitive change in order to be useful in explaining learning within the social movement context (Clark & Wilson, 1991; Schugurensky, 2002). This study shows that the contextual factor of relationships of power with external groups and within the two groups shaped learning in powerful ways.

An adequate theory of transformative learning in social movements will address the external or social, economic, and political contexts in which people learn about social injustices and how the power relations of those contexts shape learning. Additionally, an adequate theory will include the ways in which the context of social movement organizations themselves can support transformative learning and participation in movements for social change or thwart such learning and participation. Further research can continue this exploration of how context affects learning and what conditions are necessary for people to take and sustain action for social change.

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Delayed Transformational Learning Based on Long Past Cross-Cultural Experiences
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Abstract: Eight returned Peace Corps volunteers responded to an instrument to document long past cross-cultural experiences while volunteers in Thailand that subsequently resulted in instances of transformational learning years or decades later.

Introduction
Perhaps the most common thing returned Peace Corps volunteers say even years after serving is how much the experience changed their view of the world. The experiences most volunteers have are often unlike many other cross-cultural experiences because of the complete immersion that individuals experience over 2 or more years, often in remote settings. One of the things that is anecdotally most interesting when returned volunteers from different countries, often on the opposite of the globe, get together is the similarity of many of their experiences. But there are also many experiences that are culturally quite specific.

From its beginning in 1961 the Peace Corps mission has had three simple goals: helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women; helping promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served; and helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans. (Official Peace Corps Website, 2007). The last of these goals has sometimes been referred to as bringing back the Peace Corps experience. For many volunteers this is the most lasting value of their Peace Corps experience: the change in their worldview.

This was very true of my own experience serving in Thailand from 1971 to 1974. As with most individuals of my training group, I was newly out of college but with a degree in graphics. For 3 years I taught English to secondary students in government schools in two provincial capitals. While I would like to think that my teaching did have a positive effect on some of my students, this was certainly not as significant as the effect my experiences had on me. And like many returning volunteers when I returned I no longer felt in step with the society I had left just 3 years before. I returned to graduate school and completed a degree in adult education and shortly thereafter began teaching English and survival skills to the first wave of refugees from Southeast Asia.

Over time this evolved into curricular work in cultural diversity training and led to my doctoral research on software to help develop such training. One portion of that work with Dr. Albert Haugerud formed the basis for part of the process of this current research (Chambers, 1992). In the following years, something that recurred a number of times involved a sudden aha moment of transformational understanding that was based in an experience that had occurred years before, while a volunteer. And it seemed unlikely that the insight would have been realized without a specific experience that lay dormant for years in memory.

Referring to transformational learning, Mezirow (1990) indicates that “To make meaning means to make sense of an experience; we make an interpretation of it. When we subsequently use this interpretation to guide decision making or action, then making meaning becomes learning” (p. 1). As I have understood this, there seems in this to be an understanding that this occurs in a relatively short time frame. But some of my own instances were occurring 10, 20,
and even 30 or more years after returning from Thailand.

As far back as the end of the 19th century, Dewey (1886) defined a schema of making connections in learning: “Apperception may be defined, at the onset, as the reaction of mind by means of its organized structure upon the sensuous material presented to it. Retention is the reaction of the apperceived content upon the organized structure of the mind” (pp. 84-85). He goes on to state “When we know a thing we recognize it, but we cannot recognize anything unless we can connect it with our previous experience, and recognize it as like some of our past ideas, and unlike others” (p. 87). Perhaps the question is, how much of our past experience really lays dormant until some triggering experience occurs? In a particularly interesting turn of phrase, Dewey goes on to say “In representation the mind enlarges its grasp. It enriches its present experience by supplying the results of previous experiences” (p. 96).

Mezirow (1990) uses the following definition of transformative learning: “The process of learning through critical self-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 these insights” (p. xvi). But as Flannery and Hayes (2001) point out, it may well go beyond just thinking processes: “Theories of transformative learning must therefore extend beyond ‘rational discourses’ and intellectual ‘perspective’ transformation to include and value, the transformative nature of learning which we experience—one that may be somewhat dependent on the cognitive, but that also includes spiritual, emotional, intuitive, and other embodied dimensions” (p. 37).

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to see if other returned Peace Corps volunteers had also experienced the occurrence of ah-ha moments of transformational understanding based on experiences that were at least a decade old. In a qualitative way the intent was to use self-reported critical incidents: a few individual’s self-perceptions of these moments by way of a self-reflective process. A self-reflection instrument was provided (but not required) with the intent of stimulating memories of cross-cultural experiences from Peace Corps days, then reflecting back on how incidents may have stimulated the subsequent incidences of transformational learning. All individuals were told that they could either respond directly through the format of the instrument or by writing a simple narrative. To access returned volunteers who were willing to share their experiences, a call to participate was sent out by email to the membership of Friends of Thailand, a special interest group of the National Peace Corps Association. The original intent was to have 10 individuals participate. The instrument was sent to 14 individuals who initially responded. All were to be returned Thailand volunteers who had completed their service more than 10 years ago. Eight individuals submitted narratives about their experiences as they understood the process. No examples were provided with the instrument to avoid limiting the type of experiences that were reported. One individual who initially responded indicated that he had not been back for 10 years so did not participate. The following is a graphic from the instrument derived from my dissertation research (Chambers, 1992) that was included to help each participant reflect back on his or her past cross-cultural experiences based broadly on the four areas of self-concept, family, community and society, and view of the world:

“The ultimate goal is to consider one or two situations that at the time provided you some passive insight but which later, after your completion of service and perhaps years later formed the basis for understanding a situation differently than you might have had you not experienced it years before. One way of accomplishing this is to select influences or concepts first that you
consider to be the most significant relative to any of the four areas of concern. These influences are illustrated below with the areas of concern.

Responses

The response narratives were very broad in scope. The first response that was returned was particularly revelatory from a very early volunteer.

When I was a PCV [Peace Corps Volunteer] in Southern Thailand I worked as a teacher of business at the Technical Institute. The faculty was young and we did a lot of fun things together. One evening we had a party at one of the faculty houses. The teachers were having fun singing, joking, dancing and just having a good time. A song that I liked started and I took the arm of one of the teachers to dance. That stopped the party cold. You don’t touch members of the opposite sex. Some 20 years later I was head of a team working on health programs in Indonesia. We had a party at my house and, as before, everyone was having a good time singing, joking and dancing. I tried to grab one of my female staff to dance and she kept moving away. Then I realized I was doing it again. Do not touch. Even though my local staff was very westernized, I realized that some things are cultural taboos.

Another respondent wrote “For most of my post-PC life, I was a technical support engineer. People burn out quickly in this role, because they have to take a lot of abuse from customers and from the engineers who built the product. At some point about 20 years after Peace Corps, “mai pen rai” [a common Thai phrase/attitude that literally translated means... it doesn’t matter/it’s not important] set in – I realized there was a better way than taking things personally which were not personal issues. It probably saved me ulcers and heart attacks.”

More than one respondent referred to language as being a learning trigger.

I think for me many of my ah-ha moments come from language. Somewhere around ten years of speaking Thai I realized that if I was to really understand what I was speaking I had to learn to read, so I taught myself to read which opened up a lot of what I was missing. Language for most of us is a box which defines our thoughts and realizations. Just make the box larger and you can conceive of more ideas and look at those ideas from many different directions. Nothing better than new words to foster new concepts. One of the first words we learned in Thai was cow jai (to understand) but what is understanding?
I could at first use the word but years later I had an ah-ha to its real meaning. COW means to enter and jai is heart so understanding is really about taking it to heart or making it part of your being. One of my favorite words is rap pit chop responsibility. Rap means to receive pit means to make a mistake and chop is something you like. So responsibility is about receiving your likes and mistakes or dislikes and embracing them. Many Thai words are very descriptive of emotions and now I have ah-ha moments when I experience the words I learned to speak so many years ago.

Another response was very interesting regarding language:

Going from the Land of Smiles to the land of angry gave me one ah-ha moment. I was in class learning Hebrew, the students were making a lot of noise, and the teacher yelled the Hebrew word for “please” to quiet them down. In Hebrew, “please” is a command. It took me a while to remember the Thai words for “please” – people are so polite in their speech it was not really needed. Ah-ha – language really does shape your personality.

Some of the experiences brought back embarrassing memories, too:

As you know, volunteers are constantly asked to sing. I think that if someone had told me that before I left for Thailand, I would have never gone. I was a painfully shy person and always preferred to be in the background rather than the center of attention. I finally accepted that I would have to sing for the mayor, the police chief, for noodles, for monks and nuns, and in the classroom with or without a microphone. By the time I could understand radio reports I was able to sing every song I had ever learned from elementary school music or any game show. That new found talent melted away my shyness and I eventually because a much requested public speaker and a more successful teacher and chanteuse. I still can’t carry a tune in a bucket, but I like to try.

It is probably impossible to draw any absolute conclusions from a study such as this, yet it does indicate the likelihood that for many individuals, things that are experienced while living in another culture may not be fully learned until there is a subsequent catalyst years or even decades later. Reflecting back on long past experiences may also create opportunities to learn from them years later. One respondent supplied the following after describing a harrowing accident where he had been a passenger in a car with an inexperienced driver that nearly went off a bridge. He had caused the driver to lose face by commenting to the driver’s family that had he been driving the accident would not have happened…

At the time of the accident, I had a minor "ah-ha" moment when I realized I shouldn't be so blunt and honest about my views, especially in a culture like Thailand where more subtle ways of expressing the truth are valued. At the time I simply chalked this up to a difference in cultural values—assuming Thais valued harmony and saving face, while Americans valued honesty above all else. However, years later, after I'd returned to the United States and worked for some time here, I realized the differences weren't so clear cut. Thais did value honesty, while Americans are far more concerned about saving face than many of us realize. When one works or lives around the same people on an ongoing basis, there are things you can't say or do because it will cause people distress and anger. Now that I have a family of my own, I also understand more about why Thais can loose face through the actions of their relatives. I love my kids, but when they act up in public I feel that I am the one being shamed, not them.

Family and familial relationships are challenging issues often within a culture but these can be even greater in a cross-cultural context. One responded relayed the following:
Thai means free, and I learned during my time in Thailand that Thai women are very independent and very strong. They can be soft and gentle, but they demand respect. I always found it amusing to listen to women switch from their traditional sweet, subservient speech (their public demeanor) to their backroom screeching, loud, yelling (their private demeanor). Three years after I finished Peace Corps I met and married a Burmese woman. Burmese women are also very independent and strong. About 10 years into our marriage we started having marital problems. We got marriage counseling and, to my surprise, I realized that I was being insensitive. I was not giving my wife the respect that she expected and deserved. Something I had learned years ago had lain dormant for years. We have been married now for over 40 years, and treating her with respect has had a lot to do with that.

Several respondents cited issues related to coming to understand religious differences. During my second year, I taught an informal idiomatic English class in my house for the several translators (all Buddhists) who worked at my site. At one point they asked me to invite a pair of Mormon missionaries to talk with them, mostly so they could improve their religion-based vocabulary. They knew the Mormons spoke Thai at least as well as I did, and knew much more of the religious jargon. Part of the conversation went like this:

Thai: Why do you believe in a Creator?
Mormon: How did the universe get here? Someone or something must have created it.
Thai: But who created the creator?
Mormon: God always was, and always will be
Thai: Why couldn’t the universe ‘always was and always will be’?

Many years later, there came a time when I decided I was an atheist. I’d been raised as a religious Jew, I’d spent the six months after Peace Corps living with my sister and her family in Israel and not finding the faith she had found. That Thai translator’s question popped into my head, and was what flipped the last card over, so to speak.

And another respondent said:

I was assigned to a high school Thailand where I was asked to organize the Christmas celebration. The request shocked me as I considered the holiday time for family and not a time of gross consumerism. This is an awful confession, but I arranged to be in Bangkok to avoid the whole yuletide thing at the school. In retrospect, my head teacher really just wanted to celebrate in a fun colorful way and teach students about what she perceived to be an American tradition. The following year I was less of a grinch and organized the Christmas celebration which amounted to Santa costumes, non-Christian traditions and lots of singing. It was all over and done with in two hours in time for a huge Thai feast. The costumes were very creative. Most of the students used cotton balls for the fur trim. I was much happier un-grinched and I have found it easier to create my own traditions every year since my Thai Christmas. My traditions now include Thai elements like Loi Krathong boats and Thai food.

And there was a somewhat different response from a former volunteer who has spent much of the 30 years since completing service doing development work in several countries:

Upon returning to the States in 1976, I was with family friends cooking some Phat Thai [Thai noodles] at a gathering of their family, and the "father" asked me what I learned from being a PCV in Thailand. I told him that before going I was rather scattered, unfocused and un-thorough. Having lived in a Buddhist culture for two years, I learned to be more methodical, actually making conscience efforts no matter how small the task,
whether it was sweeping a floor or talking with someone, writing a song or teaching a lesson. It must be done with my utmost focus and energy, to give it 100% and therefore feel satisfied that I had offered up my best.

Conclusions

Whether the framework provided to the respondents actually helped trigger the responses is not clear but all of the responses fell within the areas of self-concept, family, community and society, and view of the world. In looking back at Dewey’s (1898) notions of more than a century ago, it seems that for some returned volunteers, the current and long past experiences do in fact merge to enlarge the grasp of the mind. And considering Mezirow’s (1990) sense of connecting an experience to learning, while some of these Peace Corps volunteers may have made some sense of the experiences at the time, the interpretation that guides future actions may, in fact, be delayed for many years. One conclusion that I have drawn from this is that experiences of returned volunteers from the Peace Corps service do continue to trigger transformational learning moments even decades later. It would be interesting to get responses from a broader group and perhaps from volunteers from other countries to compare the nature of the experiences. One thought that remains open is whether the few former volunteers who had negative experiences and those who, perhaps terminated early, have had the same types of transformational moments. All of these reported incidents generally have a positive aspect to them. It may be that for this other group that some more negative outcomes are possible. One thing that all respondents indicated in their communications that accompanied their responses was that their Peace Corps experience changed their lives and continues to do so as they reflect back on it many years later. Perhaps a fourth and unstated outcome of the Peace Corps may be helping those who volunteer to better understand themselves.

References


Applying Transformative Learning from the Leadership Practices by Chinese Immigrant Entrepreneurs

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Abstract: This study is to apply transformative learning through leadership practices by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in hospitality businesses in Texas, U.S. This study is interesting to discover how various changes and ways of overcoming challenges aid in transforming Chinese immigrant entrepreneur’s leadership practices.

Context of Study

Attracted by reports of great economic, religious and political freedom, immigrants came from all around the world to the United States in early 19th century, seeking opportunities and a new life. Since then immigrant issues have been widely discussed. There is no doubt that the contribution from immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.S. is economically significantly. The entrepreneurial spirit of immigrants is a well-documented phenomenon. As a demographic group, immigrants have been more likely to be self-employed than native-born residents. According to Kauffman Index of Entrepreneurial Activity National Report, the immigrant entrepreneurship rate was 35% in 2005 compared with a 28% for native-born (Fairlie, 2006). Among the most populous states, Texas (480 per 100,000 adults) has a relatively high rate of entrepreneurial activity.

Within recent decades, globalization has been widely discussed; the technology advancements have certainly played a huge role in the entire environment. The advances of the telecommunication industry, as well as the jet engine have shortened the distance between individuals. As the world becomes smaller and more accessible, people have a greater opportunity to pick and choose where they want to live and where they want to work. For various reasons, immigrants move away from their home countries and arrive in the land of freedom—the United States. For instance, the Japanese automobile giant, Toyota is building several factories in the U.S. This change on the economy has been tremendous. It not only provides job opportunities for local residents; it also increases the diverse groups of immigrants relocating in the United States. Competition has been rising from the local to the global level. Furthermore, several international political events, such as the fall of the Berlin wall, the breakup of the Soviet Union, the conflict in the Middle East, and the 911 terrorist attacks have changed the political views of the world. These events have created potential growth as well as an increase in threats, causing individuals to choose the most suitable place for them to survive.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2007), the growth rate for the Asian population from the year 2000 to 2004 was 16.2%, making it the second faster growth minority in the U.S. The highest growth rate belonged to the Hispanic population which was 17%. Asian immigrants are one of the largest groups that choose to start a new life in the United States; Chinese immigrants constitute one of the largest U.S. Asian immigrant populations.

Challenges for Chinese Immigrant Entrepreneurs

Due to the difference in cultures, the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs often experience difficulties and frustration in the Western world. In today’s business world, if the organization wishes to maintain its competitive level, without any adjustment, most organizations will likely
to have a hard time surviving. These immigrant entrepreneur faces cultural and leadership challenges everyday, adjusting the cultural barrier and the knowledge of the impact of leadership behavior on the modern organization is becoming more important ever.

The first major challenge for the immigrant entrepreneurs coming to the United States is cultural adjustment. Thousands of immigrants come from different cultures, ethnicities, and backgrounds into the United States, bringing many different values and different belief systems; in many cases the immigrants experience conflict between their own culture and with the American culture. To be able to survive in the U.S. market, the immigrant entrepreneurs have to adjust to the cultural differences in order to compete with the local residents and other immigrants.

The second major challenge for them is the human resource management. It is one of the most difficult areas to handle in the hospitality industry. Generally speaking, most of the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs are the one who has to lead the whole organization, making the decisions, running the promotion, as well as making the decision of when to lay off employees in the company, etc. These decisions will influence the organization either positively or negatively.

The third challenge for these Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs is guiding change and must lead their enterprises successfully in a more diversified environment than would be found in their home countries. An entrepreneur has to have the knowledge and leadership skills to overcome subordinates resistance to change, providing new ideas and empowerment, motivating and encouraging his employees, handing challenges in various situations.

These challenges become more serious especially in the hospitality. The hospitality business is people serving people business; the primary product that the hospitality selling is the service; either serving a worm meal at the end of the day or offering a comfortable room after a long flight, both of them require not only the food it self or the king size bed. The customers also expect a worm welcome from the waiter and a clean room that maintain by the housekeeper to stay. To create a great hospitality experience for the customer, it needs a lot of people work together and does good job to accomplish. The priority goal for the hospitality industry is the customer satisfaction, finding and leading the right people to serve is the key in the hospitality industry.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the possible relationship between leadership practices and cultural influence in hospitality businesses operated by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in Texas, U.S.

**Research Questions**

A mix of qualitative and quantitative research questions was developed to guide the study.

*Quantitative Research Questions*

1. What leadership practice do Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in hospitality industry report in State of Texas?
2. What leadership practice do Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs’ employees report in hospitality industry report in State of Texas?
3. What is the relationship between leadership practices and cultural influence in hospitality businesses operated by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in Texas?
Qualitative Research Questions

1. How does the culture background influence Chinese immigrant entrepreneur’s leadership practice in hospitality industry in state of Texas?
2. What kinds of transformative learning experience do these Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs have when they practice the leadership in the hospitality industry in state of Texas?

Significance of the Study

Leadership has been widely studied for a long period of time. Some studies have investigated the leadership style of Asian-Americans and Chinese-Americans, with most Chinese immigrant studies being done on the West and East coasts of U.S., and a very limited number of studies being performed in the State of Texas, especially for discovering the cross-cultural leadership in the hospitality industry. There are few studies focusing on the Chinese immigrant entrepreneur’s leadership practices, especially in the hospitality industry. This study will discover the possible cultural influence that affects the Chinese immigrant’s leadership practices. Furthermore, by interviewing these Chinese immigrants it not only gaining more understanding of their transformative learning experience through the cultural adjustment it also lead the researchers and the audiences to view this issue in a different perspective. As indicated by Mazirow (1991) the process of being critically aware of how and why assumptions constrain the way we perceive, feel and understand our world, can change our habitual structures and expectations in order to make possible a more inclusive, discrimination and integrative perspective allowing us to make choices and act upon new understandings.

Texas Hospitality Industry

The Office of Governor, Texas Economic Development and Tourism (2007) stated the total direct travel spending in Texas was $49.2 billion in 2005. This represents a 10.8% percent increase over the preceding year. In the lodging industry, visitors who stayed overnight in commercial lodging (hotels, motels, resorts, bed & breakfasts spent) spent $21.9 billion in 2005. This represents almost half of all visitors’ spending at destinations in the state. The revenue was increased by 15%. Occupancy average increased to 60%, which was 4% gained followed the 1% increase in 2004.

According to the National Restaurant Association (2007), in 2005, there were 32,730 places to eat and drink in Texas with total sales being more than 30 billion. One out of four restaurant owners come from a minority group, making the restaurant industry the one with the most minority owners.

Chinese Immigrants

It is necessary to clarify the definition of Chinese immigrant. There are three groups; Chinese–born American (CBA), American–Born Chinese (ABC), and Foreign-Born Chinese (FBC). Sometimes only ABCs are considered as Chinese American. However, ethnic identity is a self-defined concept, so the term Chinese American or Chinese immigrant should be more broadly defined to encompass all Chinese in America. This study focuses on adults who were born outside of United States and are over 30 with more extensive experience in dealing with issues of culture ethnicity than the young adults. Chinese immigrant definition in this study includes people who relocated to the U.S. this year as well as those who moved several decades
ago. It includes those who were born in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, or any another country who claim themselves as Chinese heritage.

**Immigrant Entrepreneurs**

This study defines a person who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business operates a hospitality business as an entrepreneur. Jenkins (1984) sees the entrepreneurial activity of minority groups as a survival strategy, his reaction model theories argue that the either formal or informal discrimination force immigrants into business because it is easier to be self-employed in a racist environment. The process of creating something new and assuming the risk in a totally different environment is certainly a great challenge. To discover how these Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs survive in this environment will helping people see things from a different prospective and gain deeper understanding.

**Theoretical Framework of the Study**

The theoretical constructs for the study are a combination of the leadership theory of Kouzes and Posner (2001) and the dimensions of cultural characteristics developed by Hofstede (2007) and the transformative learning theory by Mezirow (2002). Hofstede (2007) identifies five primary Dimensions to assist in differentiating cultures. The categories for measuring the leader’s cultural value are Power Distance (PDI), Individualism (IND), Masculinity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), and Long-Term Orientation (LTO). Since 1967 when he worked with IBM, Hofstede has used the Value Survey Module (VSM 94) research covering 74 countries to date.

According to Kouzes and Posner’s (2002) leadership challenge model, the leadership challenge is about the practices leaders use to transform values into actions, visions into realities, obstacles into innovation, separateness into solidarity, and risks into reward. It is about leadership that creates climates in which people turn challenge in which people turn challenge opportunities into remarkable successes, base on this theory, they analysis more than 4,000 of the personal-best cases and 200,000 surveys. Kouzes and Posner (2001) developed a model of leadership that consists of Five Practices: (a) Challenging the process; (b) Inspiring a shared vision; (c) Enabling others to act; (d) Modeling the way; (e) Encouraging the heart. These five practices had led them developed a quantitative instrument - the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI).

**Research Methodology**

This research uses a mixed method research approach to explore the relationship between the leadership behavior and cultural influence in small hospitality businesses by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in Texas. The Sequential Explanatory Design (Creswell, 1998) mixed method will be conducted in order to address this issue. It will provide better understanding of research problems by converging quantitative and qualitative data.

For quantitative approach, the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and Values Survey Module 94 (VSM 94) will be used to measure the relationship between leadership behavior and cultural influence. The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) is a 30 item questionnaire. Kouzes and Posner (2001) developed LPI questionnaires with thousands of managers and identified five distinct practices of behaviors that leaders engage in challenging the process, inspiring a share vision, enabling other to act, modeling the way and encouraging the heart. Value Survey Module (VSM): it is a 26 item questionnaire. Hofstede (2007) developed five primary Dimensions to
assist in differentiating cultures: Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Long-Term Orientation. It can be used to describe the culture value of various countries. A modified Chinese version and Spanish version VSM 94 will also be used in this study. The modified Chinese version and Spanish version of both instruments will be used in this research. The sample participants are the Chinese immigrant entrepreneur who owns hospitality businesses such as restaurants, hotels or motels owner. The employees of these Chinese immigrant owners also participate in this study. Three major metropolitan areas in Texas were included: the Dallas and Fort-Worth area, the San Antonio and Austin area and the Houston area. This research randomly survey 60 restaurants, hotel and motel owned by Chinese immigrants in these three areas to examine the relationship between the cultural influence and leadership behavior. Pearson correlation and regression are used to analyze the quantitative data; identify the relationship between the leadership behavior and cultural influence. Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software 13.0 for the Windows is used to generate the results and findings. For the qualitative approach this study uses the case study method to explore the topic in more detail. It provides human interest by sharing the experiences and telling stories that direct the study at a deeper level. Six Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs are interviewed, three from the restaurant and three from the hotel and motel industry. A semi-structured interview (Creswell, 2003) is used to provide completeness of data, to evaluate the quantitative results and to explore the leadership behavior. The Elite Interview Approach (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001) is used to select of well-known and successful hospitality Chinese entrepreneurs. The interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed by the researcher through inductive analysis or actual words of the interviewees.

**Transformative Learning and Cultural Adjustment**

Mezirow (1997) explains that the frame of reference is composed of two dimensions which are the habit of mind and point of view. A habit of mind is a set of assumptions; Point of view is “subject to continuing change as we reflect on either the content or process by which we solve problems and identify the need to modify assumptions”.

Changes in point of view appear whenever people try to understand some situations or actions that they are not used to it. With the intention of understanding and solving problems, people try to think differently, view the point in another way, and modify their own perceptions. This process of change is the result of ways of interpreting experience; it may be either within or outside of our awareness (Mazirow & Associates, 2002). Min (1995) pointed out that socioeconomic adjustment is the major issue and critical measure for the success for the Asian immigrants. The cultural adjustment for these Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs is not something that they can avoid to do. These Chinese immigrants are starting a new business in a new place, facing a different environment, dealing with different people, and learning the “American way” of running the business. They often face conflicts against their own beliefs, values, or culture. These Chinese entrepreneurs have to be smart enough to make some adjustments in order to survive in the competitive U.S. market and be able to compete with the domestic and other immigrant business owners. These cultural challenges change the focus of the entrepreneurs and allow them to view the world differently by reflecting their own beliefs and values. Thus, they evaluate the circumstance and adjust to the environment to allow themselves to perform their tasks way successfully. This process of adjustment is the basis of the transformative learning.

The transformative learning experience develops inner changes, such as increased self-awareness, self-efficiency, or self esteem; especially for the leaders. This study is currently on
the progress of discovering Chinese entrepreneur’s in State of Texas. Hopefully through their experiences, we will be able to find out how they integrated these changes in their mind and how they have reexamined themselves in various ways.

**References**


Fostering Parallels of Relationship and Meaning Making Towards Transformative Learning
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Abstract: This paper discusses a set of exercises used to achieve the ends of fostering transformative learning through creating peer relationships deemed significant and critical to the learning endeavor. Areas addressed and discussed include the complexities of relational joining, intimacy, and working with diversity within oneself and bridging to others.

Introduction
In striving to foster transformative learning, described first by Mezirow (1978), some of the fundamental principles are the teacher’s role in facilitating community building relationships, the participation and engagement of the learner, and the aspects of learning that work best when engaging both cognitive and affective components (Imel, 1998). This paper discusses a series of exercises used with adult learners analyzing the process and methods to achieve the ends of fostering transformative learning. The described exercises have been designed to serve as examples that address the role of the teacher, the learner, and the concurrent cognitive and affective learning that may lead to developing an environment that fosters transformative learning. The areas addressed include examples of working with diversity within oneself and bridging to others, the complexities of relational joining, resistance and intimacy.

In working with adult learners who are often tentative, uncertain, and possibly alienated from the traditional academic classroom due to previous experiences, a major concern is building in the peer relationships and commitment to engagement that are such a key to their success (Loughlin, 1993). Adult learners require ways to construct, validate, and redesign their experience in ways that are meaningful (Cranton, 1994). As the teacher, it is crucial to develop an intentional and transparent pedagogy that highlights relationships as significant and essential to the learning process (Taylor, 1998). Processing the development and maintenance of such relationships and drawing parallels to the content of the academic field is also imperative.

Specifically in the field of counselor education, beginning counseling students often seek to learn how to “do” counseling, striving to learn counseling skills and ideas to apply to others but not necessarily to themselves. Transformative learning, where students begin to perceive themselves as the tool of their chosen profession and to apply internally as well as safely externalizing, is vital to developing a counseling identity and stance that is flexible and authentic. The being of the counselor then becomes more central to the endeavor than performance as a counselor. To engage in therapeutic relationship with others, students must become adept in extending themselves while understanding the implicit boundaries, both their own as well as those of others. An essential component of such understanding is becoming as aware of the failure of good intentions to encompass all differences as it is the success of being able to build relationship from the starting point of difference rather than commonality. As Boyd and Myers (1988) suggest, within the process of discernment, the learner must first be receptive and open to alternative meanings, recognize the legitimacy of such meanings, and then proceed to let go old rigid categories and applications to allow for integration of richer meaning. For counselors, allowing in this complexity to deepen their understanding of others and themselves in relationship with others is necessarily an uncomfortable process. Activities that highlight and
serve as templates for the learners to experience, analyze, and then discern patterns that they can then process an integrate is as significant a part of transformative learning as are the offering of theoretical perspectives.

This paper highlights a set of classroom exercises that serve as exercises to engage in the process of relationship; exercises that progressively deepen trust, intimacy and risk taking, address conflict in relationship, and assess depth of relationship. Such exercises are typically often used as “icebreakers”, but then discarded once the initial goal of having students “get acquainted” seems complete. However, the peer dialogues and relationships are significant components in the triggering of transformational learning and the degree to which the student feels committed and engaged in the process. The importance of such acquaintanceship exercises is diluted if the teacher does not appear to value or engage with the relationship building. In addition, for those students who want to see the relevance of activity to the subject at hand, such exercises are devalued as simply extraneous to the task at hand of content learning.

A salient aspect of this kind of teaching is the stance of the teacher and requires some exploration. There is often a division between facilitative and directive styles of teaching, where the facilitative approach is often easily categorized as less authoritarian and more respectful of students, while the directive approach seems reminiscent of the banking-education approach criticized by Freire (1996). On the other hand, as Delpit (1996) has pointed out, facilitative approaches can often use coded communications that are accessible to those who share in the same cultural capital, but baffle and mystify students who do not. For instance, in asking students to reflect on a topic in an open-ended paper, where the depth of discussion, length and style of paper are left to the discretion of the student, those students who are comfortable with decoding the demands behind the seeming openness often produce papers that are most congruent with the instructor’s expectations. Students who cannot decode, and have not been given the tools to take on such a task, often end up producing papers that the instructor finds lacking in depth and articulateness. The question becomes one of balancing between giving adequate and honest direction that is revealing of the instructor’s evaluation schemata, while opening a space for students to be producers as opposed to simply reproducers of knowledge.

One of the ways in which I have addressed this issue is through the use of an explicit pedagogical stance that I term ‘transparent pedagogy’. In presenting students with learning activities, I explicitly acknowledge my authority to determine the structure of the activity. I go on to discuss with them my learning objectives and my pedagogical goals. At that point, I open up the discussion for ways in which students may wish to go about the learning activity to meet my pedagogical goals as well as meet their own goals. I also encourage a critique and questioning of the value of my goals in the overall learning objectives of the course. A critical component of doing more than simply facilitating “eye-opener” exercises to be is to stay present and uncertain. In other words, to be open to not being in control of the process as one is inviting the participants to give up control. Sometimes, this means noticing when participants are simply not in the right space, the optimal conditions are not available, or the mix of personalities and past histories is bringing in alternative agendas. At other times, this may mean recognizing participants as going further and deeper then one has conceptualized and thought possible and running to catch up.
Methods

Exercise: The Interview and Introduction Opener

Essentially, in this kind of opening exercise, a large group of participants who have met for the first time are asked to break into dyads and interview each other with a somewhat structured list of questions. They then have to introduce their partner to the large group, based on the information they received from the interview. The exercise usually ends there as the participants then move on to the “real” content of the course. In this endeavor to foster transformative learning, however, the group then is asked a series of further questions to explore the process of the exercise rather than simply the content. First, I make some thematic comments on how difficult it might be for strangers to meet and begin the process of knowing each other. I ask the participants for their reactions to the exercise both as interviewer and interviewee. As salient comments are made, I reflect on them and begin to make notes on the board, organizing the comments in several categories that I do not immediately label. For example, I might group comments on how easy it was to talk or how the interviewer listened, while grouping separately comments on how difficult it was to remember information and efforts to relay information accurately. Only after the first slew of comments dies down, do I then ask participants questions to explicitly make the connections between this exercise and relationship building. To start folks off, I ask them how it felt to reveal things about themselves to a stranger? What did their partner say or do anything that helped them open up? Responses to these questions move us into a discussion of vulnerability, risk, and threatening intimacy. For some, having a structured set of questions helps to focus the interview, while for others, some of the questions require a depth of disclosure difficult to sustain with a stranger. Some admit to “fluffing” an answer to avoid intimacy. I make the parallels with how clients might feel in the hot seat. Then I ask from another perspective, what participants did to make their partner more comfortable? What were they focused on? Often responses to this bring in some complaints that participants had been focusing on task accomplishment—getting responses to the questions and striving to remember them to be able to present them accurately to the large group. Few participants can point to what they actively did to enhance comfort. So, we process this and the umbrella area of expectations and assumptions about icebreaker exercises, rigid student roles as regurgitators of requested information, and discomfort of “failing” their first task as counseling students. I then ask, given our discussions, what might they do differently if they could do the exercise over? This then takes us into a fruitful new area where participants seek further opportunities to meet each other and risk, now knowing that they are learning content as well as simply breaking the ice.

Exercise: Timeline

In this common exercise, students are asked to draw a timeline of their life, from birth onwards, investing it with a historical account of the salient events that have occurred. I give them a large sheet of paper as well as a variety of colored markers. When they are done, they are paired up and asked to explain their timeline to their partner and discuss it. I give participants some time to make comments in the large group about their responses to the exercise. I then pair them into new dyads and while this new discussion still focuses on the constructed timelines, invite them to look at the timeline with a new lens and a different set of questions. In the large group reflection, I then ask participants to comment on how each pair interview differed because of the questions and focus. Often participants talk about how in the first exercise, it was an easy way to give a capsule overview of their life, with details they might never ordinarily think of
covering. On the other hand, they often report feeling far more analytical about their depictions and life narratives from the second set of questions, and far more invested in giving the time line another try with changes. In other words, the differing lens shaped the direction of the discussion, with the first discussion being far more focused on disclosure from an existing self-narrative, while the second examined the structure of that narrative. As participants have already experienced the inviting and giving disclosure in the first part of the exercise, they are able to reflect on how an analytical, process focused stance is different both as applying the analysis and receiving it. We then make the connections with the process of learning about others from their own constructed narratives versus critically analyzing the structure of their life narratives.

Exercise: Dealing with Difference

This exercise overtly asks participants to examine their current pattern of relationships in their life, with a focus on the difference they invite in, are aware of, and seek out. Students are first given a worksheet to use to map out the relationships in their life. Upon completion, they are then placed in small groups of a minimum of three and a maximum of five. The questions are then posed for them to discuss in the group, referring to their worksheets, but not necessarily needing to disclose it. Here, regardless of the student’s own status with reference to a minority group, the question is of how much they stay in their comfort zone. Issues that come up include examining gender which typically don’t follow the other social identity groups, in that most people are comfortable having close relationships across gender categories. Often students from ethnic minority groups discuss ways in which they may or may not closely know members of other groups and how much that is a function of de facto segregation as opposed to self-segregation. We make connections between struggling to find comfort in working with culturally different clients, and comfort in inviting them into our lives. Students are often surprised how the fears, threats, risks, and strategies we would use in the one case, often morph seamlessly in dealing with the other.

Exercise: Exploring the Self in Context of Learning Contracts

This kind of exercise can be used in a variety of ways to explore one’s social memberships and identities. The common aspects are posing a set of questions for students to complete that asks them to reflect on their membership and self-identification with a particular group with a learning partner(s). Often with great discomfort, students deal with the cognitive and emotional dissonance that comes from actually shifting positions rather than simply tolerating someone else’s different position. In one example, students are asked a series of questions to identify their familiarity with different kinds of disability. Depending on the developed safety in the classroom, I usually ask students to respond in informal writing as I pose each question, which they can then share from as they wish in dyads or triads. As the questions continue, the relatively easy and glib responses change to become more personal and self-reflective. Students begin to question if it is “right” to hold such views or argue for the validity of such values. The pairs or small groups begin to become quite argumentative as the discussions become less about disclosure of information and more about identification and clarification of values. Rather than reassuring, debating or moralizing, I shift the terms of the discussion to the impact their views have on their relationship with a person with disabilities. How might what they believe and feel influence how they approach and engage with a disabled Other? Students then tend to arrive at a more authentic position, sometimes leading to several
seeking out encounters outside the academic classroom to deepen their understanding. They often then use their group partners as touchstones for continuing conversations.

To explicitly encourage this ongoing peer relationship, I have students develop learning contracts with each other, where a pair explicitly lays out the conditions under which they will contact each other, challenge, remind, and affirm each other in the learning process and then signs off on it. I have multiple copies made of the contract, keeping one, while each participant also has a copy. I reference the learning contract at intervals during the course, provide opportunities for learning partners to meet with each other during class time (implicitly valuing the ongoing contact) and at the end of the course, invite feedback on the process. Over the program, I have often seen students continue to maintain the peer relationships they have developed through other courses, often explicitly crediting such relationships with their success in the program.

Discussion

Overall, I find such exercises facilitate more fertile conditions for transformative learning to occur than simply presenting students with information and hoping that they will examine and engage with it. Establishing an explicit link to the self and life of the student in the learning process is crucial for the student to develop investment. The relationships students develop with each other as they struggle through are much closer, supportive, and enriching then when they compete with each other or are isolated from each other. They find that relationships are not easy, but also that vulnerability and disclosed flaws heighten intimacy. It also seems that as the process continues, they begin to depend less and less of me as the teacher. Where they began with often asking me to instruct, guide, intercede, or mediate, lessens as they become more comfortable and self-directed with handling the complexities of the relationship.

Classroom participants represent an infinite number of what Haraway (1987) has termed “partial and situated knowledges.” While each individual’s experiences and outlooks are limited, as Haraway (1987) argues, when partial and situated knowledges are recognized and explored, better, more comprehensive accounts of the world are possible. In the courses I teach, I strive to bring in activities that engage the students in developing such comprehensive and multiple accounts. I believe the classroom is and should be a place where there is a sense of struggle in forming relationships, where there is a visible acknowledgment of the union of theory and practice, where we work together as teachers and students to overcome the estrangement and alienation that have become so much the norm in the contemporary university. Most importantly, an explicit and transparent pedagogy should engage students in a learning process that makes the world “more real than less real” (hooks 1989, p. 51). I recognize that the classroom is a political context, but also acknowledge both the possibilities and limits of my own situated knowledge and partial perspective. I try to honor the fact that I am one participant in classrooms where many other, often significantly differing knowledges and perspectives exist, while recognizing the possibilities for domination of discourse (hooks, 2003). I believe that the degree to which I recognize the sociopolitical nature of the classroom and the limits and promise of all the situated knowledges present (including my own) has a direct bearing on how successful my courses are—both in terms of learning and instilling the promise of a comprehensive worldview. Beyond expertise, transformational learning requires a greater engagement of self on the part of the teacher. The rewards of such effort are the parallel depth of relationships that students forge with each other and the material.
References
From Tradesperson to Teacher: A Transformative Journey
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Abstract: Six new teachers in trades and technology were interviewed three times each in a study of how making the transition from being a tradesperson to being a teacher is a transformative experience.

Introduction
For the past 24 years, I have facilitated an intensive summer school program the goal of which is to help tradespersons become community college instructors in their trade or technology. Participation in the program is a condition of employment for all college instructors in the province. When I began working in this program, it consisted of a one-week retreat, two four-week summer sessions, and a practicum which took place between the two summers. The four-week sessions and the practicum were held in the participants’ workplace (the colleges). After a few years, reduced government funding led a local university to take over the administration of the program. Eventually, it evolved into a typical university program with regular courses, an increased number of courses, leading to a certificate in adult education.

They arrive as mechanics, carpenters, electricians, welders, refrigeration technicians, and plumbers. They leave as teachers. Between 20 and 40 people, mostly men, with several years of experience (sometimes up to 20 or 25 years) in their trade come to the first day resentful of giving up their summer, afraid of being a student, and determined to “get through it.” They work together six hours a day, five days a week for three weeks, and often socialize in the evenings. The group becomes a powerful thing: they support each other, they play together, they learn together. It is hard to stay resentful and afraid. In this paper, I describe their transition from tradesperson to teacher as a transformative experience.

Theoretical Framework
I frame the research with transformative learning theory. The participants are exchanging a life of working with their hands and bodies to a life of working with their minds and voice. Most tradespersons scorn the “soft hands” of the “office person.” The calluses and bruises and muscles and never-quite-clean fingernails define who they are. I follow a holistic perspective on transformative learning theory, but with Mezirow’s (1991, 2000) work at its center. I maintain the centrality of critical reflection that Mezirow advocates, but I do not think that leaving critical reflection in place means that I need to exclude imagination, intuition, affect, social change goals, and the relational process of connected learning. I define transformative learning as a cognitive, intuitive, emotional and relational process by which we revise our frames of reference so that they become more open, permeable, and better justified.

Methodology
Narrative inquiry informed the overall methodology of the larger research project of which this study is a part. I had the opportunity to interview six people who were past participants in the summer program. I interviewed each person three times for approximately one hour each time over two years. There were four men and two women participants teaching electricity, aviation, plumbing, auto mechanics, and radiation technology. One participant
provides workshops and short courses on a variety of topics. Participants were in their second or third year of teaching in three different community colleges when they entered the project.

Outside of the formal research project and as a part of my teaching in the program, I have kept a teaching journal for many years. I write daily and extensively about the participants, the activities of the day, and my reflections, feelings and interpretations. In this paper I also draw on some of the material from my journal. I know the program and the people well; I rely on my experience in the writing of this paper.

Findings and Discussion

The data were analyzed in a fairly, open intuitive way. I conducted and transcribed all interviews myself, and I also worked with each participant in the intensive three-week summer program, so I felt familiar with the people and their points of view. Prior to interpreting the results, I reread all transcripts and reread my teaching journals for the previous four years. I could visualize the participants and clearly recall the events described in the teaching journals. This process yielded five themes that were common across all participants and captured the essence of their transition from tradesperson to teacher. I describe each theme and include sample quotations from interviews and from my teaching journal.

Empowerment through Engagement

The content of each summer session is based on participatory planning. We have two formal planning sessions during the three weeks, and informally we make decisions together throughout the program. Participants also evaluate their own learning. Each person whom I interviewed spoke about the influence this had on their learning, their approach to teaching, and their confidence and identity as a teacher. For example, Frank said, “it never occurred to me before that a student could decide what to learn, I thought that the teacher always decided on that, I just never thought about it that way before, but I’m going to ask my students to have some say now.”

Henri describes how it was when he tried a more interactive and participatory teaching style in his practice:

Once I started going to UNB, and I started trying out things more, and, well, I kind of had to put myself on the spot while the methods were being tried out. For example, instead of simply lecturing for 45 minutes, I would try a little more questioning approach, and if it was a classroom of people who simply expected to be lectured and didn’t feel like talking, well, it would introduce a few awkward moments until it started. And I can remember one time when my own commanding officer was in the classroom, and I would ask a question, and after awhile, he was getting annoyed, and he would count to 10, and he would say, “ok, time to talk.” (Laughter.) Yeah, and I said, “that’s ok, somebody is going to say something.” And I did it my own way anyway. In the end everybody kind of talked, and we had a good talk about everything, but I could tell some were slightly annoyed with that, and didn’t feel like sitting there and discussing things, they just wanted me to sit there and say stuff and get it over with.

I noted in my most recent journal, that the students coming to the program had come to expect the course to be participatory, something that was not the case even a few years prior to this:

The nature of this has actually changed a lot over the last few years. They expect to make the decisions about the course and to do self-evaluations. That used to be such a
struggle, encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning. No more. The college system itself has changed. Near the beginning of the class, I asked people for stories from their first year of teaching, and they told stories about encouraging their students to work independently, to make decisions, to engage in creative learning strategies.

Freedom and Flexibility

Related to the engagement theme, participants also commented on the freedom and flexibility of the learning experience. Mark noted:

One of the instructors I had, her classrooms were designed in a circle and there was no distinct desk that separated … I found that very interesting cause if you, I know if she mentioned or somebody else mentioned in the class, but it was true, if someone out of class was walking to the classroom, they just seen a normal discussion. They would have a hard time telling who the actual teacher was. And in a way they would go if they adapt, if they thought you were uncomfortable with something or had a problem with something, they would always come to you and ask you individually to ask if there was something they could do differently or if there was something you were uncomfortable with.

In my journal for the summer session in which Mark participated, I describe how the sense of freedom and flexibility made room for conversations that would not likely occurred in a more formal setting:

Our topics for the day were performance evaluation (that which takes place in shops and field settings, which most of the people do) and assessment models. We treated the evaluation topics in a very practical, how-to way, but I could see that people were still really thinking. They questioned the nature of “subjectivity” and “objectivity.” They argued that no evaluation of human learning could be “objective.” In a good natured way, everyone went through the activities related to constructing assessments, but they also questioned the underlying assumptions every step of the way. Peter asked, “why do we set time limits on evaluation when time is not a part of what we are assessing?” From that question, people began to see that having “timed tests” was just something that was “always done,” and there was no real purpose to it, unless you were working with, as Chris said, “time-sensitive tasks.” Some things do need to be done quickly for safety reasons or other reasons, and there it makes sense to include time in the assessment, but otherwise, why does this make sense? The atmosphere of critical questioning led people to places they had never been before. We went into self-evaluation as well, and Sam described how he incorporates self-evaluation into his assessment (he teaches carpentry). Don said (flatly) “I tried that, and it didn’t work.” So, everyone then questioned Don closely about what he had done, how he had introduced it, why it didn’t work. This led to Don saying that he could see it was the circumstances in which he tried to use self-evaluation and possibly the way he incorporated it; he would try it again.

Self-Awareness and Reflection

This leads me to the theme of self-awareness and reflection, both core concepts in transformative learning theory. Many of the activities we engaged in were specifically designed to increase self-awareness and encourage reflection on self and self-as-teacher. Autobiographies, critical incidents, values exercises, psychological type inventories, journal
writing, and story telling all helped people think about who they were and what teaching meant to them. Eleanor speaks about her initial reaction to these kinds of activities:

The one thing that, I’ll tell you, really surprised me in the first few courses was that I thought I was going to learn about other people, like how to deal with other people, how to deal with adult learners, and every one of them had to do with something personal! (Laughter.) And I got really irritated, I got like, “I don’t like talking about ME in that depth,” but it was a very big eye-opener because I learned more about my learning styles, which I’ve always been interested in, but not really know what it was, and how life, you know, we say that life experience plays a major role with adult learners, they bring all that, and well, by learning and remembering the real learning experiences in our lives.

In the initial interview with participants, I asked to hear the story of how they made the decision to become teachers. The very beginning of the transition to teaching appeared in some of these stories. Here are Jean-Pierre’s reflections on teaching from before he made the decision:

He had retired, or somebody else had retired, and he told me about the job. And he wanted me to take the job. I said, “no,” I was at the refinery, I was actually working away there pretty good, and I said, “nah, I don’t want to teach.” Jeez, back… I know it was only five years ago, but that was my thinking, “what do I want sitting at a desk, when I can be out here, having fun, making money, travelling across the states.” … I went away, I went down to Boston, Connecticut, and New York, and went to work, then he called me up and said, “Jeez, there’s another position still left here.” This was a year later. He said, “You should come up, you’d like this, you’d have fun.” So, anyway, I did, I came home and that’s how I started teaching.

All participants enjoyed thinking back to their first classes in the program and realizing what changes they experienced. Mark remembers how terrified he was of speaking out and of being videotaped in a microteaching exercise: “Big change. (Laughter.) I remember. That brings back, just saying that, brings back all those memories of the horror we felt when,… what do you mean I have to get up in front of the camera? (Laughter.) Doesn’t bother me at all now.” Henri reflects on how little he knew about teaching and describes the teaching persona (being a tough guy) that he initially thought was appropriate for his practice:

Like, when I took my first class at UNB, I realized how much I didn’t know. I could never consider myself to be the top notch instructor, but I was always very confident in my work, but then I started going to school and realized how much I really didn’t know. Yeah, it’s not something I’m proud of. Like, when I became an instructor, I was very demanding, and I wasn’t really putting, or leaving room for normal progression. I think I was asking too much and I was jumping on them too much. And, I don’t know why, but I thought, “this is not being nice,” and that’s before I started going to university. And then, I don’t know, I kind of changed my method and I started being nicer. But for awhile, I was… people were petrified, and then I switched it around, and then I became a very big advocate of being nice.

Support and Challenge

Self-awareness does not come in isolation from others, especially not for people who are not used to thinking about themselves in this way and who are anxious about the context they are in. All participants commented on the supportiveness of the learning environment (especially others in the group), and most simultaneously felt challenged by the questions others asked of them and the nature of the learning activities. They talked about “learning from each other,”
“having the group to catch them when they faltered,” “feeling challenged in a constructive way through listening to each other’s stories,” and “being there for each other.” My teaching journals contained extensive descriptions of this process. Here are two excerpts from different summers:

During one of our discussions about relationships with students, Peter said that he would never tell students about his bad record as a student. I said (in the group) that maybe it would be helpful to some students if he did say that he wasn’t always a “good student,” that maybe struggling students would find him a model of someone who made it through struggles. Peter said he couldn’t do that. At break I went to sit with him, and he told me his story. His parents had broken up, he started drinking heavily, he did a lot of stupid things while drunk, and so on. He thought that it would ruin his credibility and undermine the respect students would have for him if he told such a story. I said that he need not tell the details, but he could still say that he was a struggling student who liked to “party too much.” He was astonished that this could be helpful for his students. I could see how he was thinking about it and questioning himself. He said, “it’s my ego in the way, that’s what it is. I don’t want anyone to see me as less than a perfect teacher.” It was a good talk.

Sam and Blaine got into quite an argument. Today we were discussing where that “line” is in what you will do with students—things such as: Do you invite students to your home? Go to the bar with them? Join their social events? There was, as I expected, a great deal of variety in their points of view on these issues, and we used that to relate back to authenticity. Sam told a story about how a group of his students came to his house one night, very drunk. They wanted Sam to join them and go out to the bar. Sam said he wouldn’t go anywhere with them in their condition, and then his wife came to the door and said, “they can’t drive away, either,” so she invited them in and Sam took their car keys, and they stayed the night. Blaine was outraged. He said he would never “expose his wife and children to drunken students.” Their exchange became quite heated. Sam said he couldn’t let them drive, Blaine said he should have called the police or at least called a cab. And so on. They progressed into other imagined things that drunk students could do—“trash the house,” “rape the children”—it got quite wild. I let this go for awhile, then brought it back to trust and relationship and authenticity. Sam is a very caring person. His first reaction is to take care of others. Blaine is practical, logical, and it’s not that he is not caring, but he sees himself living a life separate from students. Grady said that he lived in a small town and if he could never be in the bar with students, he could never be in the bar. Crystal said that if she went into the bar and there were students of hers there, she would leave.

**Relationships with Others**

The role of support and challenge in participants’ transformative learning meant that relationships with others were integral to their experience. People in the courses formed such a close bond that they often kept in touch with each other for years after the program. Some groups hold reunions. When they grow and learn together, and when they change their lives together, they have a rare connection. What is especially interesting is that they take this valuing of relationships directly into their own practice. In the illustrations that follow, we first have Frank speaking about what he would miss if he went back to being a plumber, and then Tricia describing her relationship with her students.
Frank: I’d be back plumbing, I would say, but I guess the biggest thing—how I would feel—would be kind of left out, and not experiencing what you get from teaching, the people you meet and making a difference in how they do their work and helping the students. I really enjoy if I have a student who struggles, and work with that student, and get them through and they pass their Block exam. That was great, yep. And the relationships you build with the students you met. I don’t know if I should be doing that, but I end up becoming friends, and they come in and find me in my office even when I’m not their instructor, and tell me about the stuff from the year, and family, and new babies, and that’s great stuff. I would really miss that stuff. And I know like 25% of the people that are in plumbing in New Brunswick, so, I’d lose out on that as well.

Tricia: I don’t like to monopolize the class time, because it’s so easy to do. You have a captive audience! (laughter) Oh, let’s talk about ME, me my favourite subject! (laughter) But as far as me and my personality, I don’t think I could leave it out. I bring a joke, pretty much every day, to class. We start with a joke, or a little funny story or something. Again, with the positive learning environment, some of the stuff that we do is really technical, and with health care, it’s sad, so I always use my sense of humour as a coping mechanism, and I still sort of do that, the jokes, the stories. Yeah, I am myself in class, and I do use my experiences, positive and negative. Whether I should or shouldn’t, I don’t know, but I always…I tell them the mistakes I’ve made, and then I tell them what I learned from the mistakes, you know, and why this was a mistake, and had I been able to do it differently…you know. So, not so much, not to make it about me, but just to give them an example that, as a technologist and as a health care professional, you are going to make mistakes.

**Intertwined Themes**

Each of the themes described here are intertwined with the others. I see empowerment as being both a prerequisite for and a product of transformative learning. In this study, the initial empowerment came through participants’ involvement in the planning of the course, through their voices being heard in all discussions and decisions related to the course, and in their making choices about their learning. At the same time, this process led to a flexible learning environment in which people felt free to make suggestions, to question me, and to question their peers. Since they were, in large part, responsible for the course, they felt free to bring in their concerns, discuss topics of interest to them, and focus on the practical problems they faced in their practice. In order to engage fully and meaningfully in this kind of learning environment, they reflected on who they were as teachers, what teaching meant to them, and what they valued and believed about themselves and their work. Participants came to rely on each other, support each other, and challenge each other’s points of view. I became very much a part of the group and engaged in the same kind of supportive and challenging behaviors as they did. This meant that the relationships among members of the group were vitally important to their learning. Much of their learning, and perhaps especially their transformative learning came through their connections with each other.

**References**


The Transformative Educator as Learning Companion
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Abstract: It is our purpose in this paper to illustrate how literacy adult educators foster transformative learning through being a learning companion. Based on interviews with eight literacy educators, we explore how the educators deliberately and consciously build trust and help learners overcome their fears.

Theoretical Framework
We essentially follow Mezirow’s (1991, 2000) approach to transformative learning. That is, we define it as a process by which individuals engage in critical self-reflection that results in a deep shift in perspective toward a more open, permeable, and better justified way of seeing themselves and the world around them. However, we are also inclusive of other viewpoints since the whole person must be acknowledged in literacy education. Belenky and Stanton’s (2000) concept of connected knowing becomes fundamental when the educator establishes her relationship of trust and discovery with the learner. Individuation—differentiating one’s sense of Self from the collective of humanity and reintegrating with that same collective—is central to the literacy learner’s transformative experience, as is the role of imagination in engaging in this type of experience (Dirkx, 1997, 2001). In Daloz’s (2000) understanding of transformation and social responsibility, he describes “constructive engagement with otherness,” (p. 110) in which people develop an empathic connection with people different from themselves. We see this as a framework for the learning companion role of the literacy educator.

We use the phrase “learning companion” to mean something that is somewhat different than the more commonly used term, “mentor.” Unfortunately, “mentor” has come to have many meanings, and is often used in practice to describe the situation where one more experienced person is assigned to a new person to orient him or her to a new environment. Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) say a mentor “serves as a guide, cheerleader, challenger, and supporter during the learning process” (p. 138). Daloz (1999) sees a mentor as a guide to the holistic development of the mentee and describes the relationship as reciprocal, as do English, Fenwick, and Parsons (2003). In these conceptualizations, the mentor and the mentee are seen as nurturing each other. A learning companion encourages a shared curiosity and engages in an exchange of learning so that the perspectives of both educator and learner are enhanced.

Research Methodology
The proposed paper is based on one part of a larger study being conducted with narrative inquiry as the research methodology (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004). Narrative inquiry allows the researcher to include individual and collective stories in a study of the way humans experience the world—in our case, it is the way literacy teachers experience teaching and learning. Eight literacy educators from different Canadian geographical regions (North West Territories, British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, and New Brunswick) participated in the study. They were all women; they were all teaching in community literacy programs or more formal college ABE settings. Their learners were from a variety of backgrounds with skill levels ranging from non-readers up to and beyond GED preparation. Each educator was interviewed twice over a period
of nine months, with each interview lasting approximately one hour. In the initial interview, educators were asked to tell stories of how they came to the field and about their students and their practice. In the second interview, we worked with metaphors, images, and fantasy to describe their practice and their students in more depth. We then created narratives for each educator which were presented back to the educator for comments and discussion. From these discussions a collective narrative was constructed, but for the purpose of this paper, we focus exclusively on those aspects of the story that reflect the transformative learning experiences of the literacy students as discussed from the educators’ perspective in relation to the educators’ perceived authenticity.

Findings and Discussion

Six themes emerged from the narratives: creating a sense of safety, trust between educator and learner, developing a sense of possibility, helping learners overcome fear, discovery within the self, and acknowledging the whole person.

Creating a Sense of Safety

A transformative educator acts as a learning companion who provides a safe place of exploration and discovery, through shared trust and a sense of possibility. The educator who speaks here describes an anecdote where she was able to create a sense of safety that allowed her students to participate in a democratic process they had previously felt was denied to them. This scenario provides the potential for a transformative experience both in relation to how learners see themselves and how they see the political system they live in.

When I asked students if they were planning to vote they just looked at me like why, we’re not allowed to vote. Most of the students thought they weren’t allowed to vote because they weren’t home owners and they weren’t fully educated, I think. They didn’t even consider voting because they thought they weren’t allowed to or they weren’t welcome to or that it was just for people who they called “lived in the real world.” That was an expression they had “well Deborah, you live in the real world.” And their hope was to some day live in the real world. Right away I dropped everything and said “okay we are going to learn about this election and I’m going to show you how to vote.” And it just happened that I had a friend that was running in the election so he came to the classroom and spoke to the women and talked to them about what an election is and how it works and what his platform was and what a platform means, all these different kinds of things. So on the day of the election we went up to the United Church and we all cast our ballots for the first time and then we came back to the classroom and wrote about it. How does it feel to be able to put your name on a ballot or be able to have your voice count by marking your X on the ballot?

What was really incredible was the fellow, my friend, he actually came back to the classroom, and said “your ballot, if any of you voted for me, I’m here because of you. You made a difference because I won by only 11 votes.”

Trust between Educator and Learner

Transformative and authentic educators foster possibilities with trust until it outweighs the fear and the learners begin to experience the possibility of discovery within themselves. The following quote shows how this particular educator was able to wait and listen until trust was
developed between the learner and her. The development of trust allowed the learner realize that he could tell someone he could not read or write and that he could do something about it.

I really felt that the first thing that I had to do with any adult learner that walked in through the door was for that person to have a sense of trust with me and for me to be just myself. He was the Captain on one of the Coast Guard ships for a number of years, but they were now giving a test to everyone, which they never did before. He knew he wouldn’t be able to read what was going to be presented to him, nor respond in writing. And the poor man, I can see him now, just telling me this was the most embarrassing thing he ever had to do in his life. And I had to just listen to him, I never said a word, I just let him talk. And I could see the pain in his face and eventually he was crying. When they go to Unemployment, HRDC, often the first contact is “now we know what your problem is and we know what’s best for you”. My approach was completely the opposite. I wanted him to see and tell me what he thought was his problem, so he told me how he was labelled in school. He told me how he came from a poor family and he couldn’t go home and get any help with his homework. And he told me how when he went to school, he felt different. I did help him get over the embarrassment just by the way we talked that day and I said you know if this is important to you, you’re the one who has got to take responsibility for it and reach out to whatever is going on in your business, whatever is in your community and in whatever way we can support you. He went to one of his bosses, and told him that he didn’t know how to read and write so when he was out to sea, they got him a tutor. All he wanted from us was some books to work with. It was showing total dignity to the person. And he eventually wrote that test and did it all, because he was able to go back to the ship and talk about it and get some materials. It just means that we have to do something that encourages people to take ownership of their own learning and to feel good about themselves.

*Developing a Sense of Possibility*

As learning companions, educators believe in students before they believe in themselves. In other words they hold that sense of possibility until the learner can. Authentic practice in teaching fosters a creative approach to learning so that learners can discover parts of themselves that have been lost or hidden. An educator here describes how she believed in her student and empathized with the bullying she had experienced until an obstacle to her learning went away. Coming to see oneself from a different perspective (‘I am able to learn’) has the potential to be or lead to transformation.

One was a lady with a disability, well what she thought was a disability, I didn’t treat it as a disability. She went through school stuttering, so you can just imagine the bullying and the tormenting. So she eventually left school, and there were other factors. I remember sitting down with her, “You know, one of the reasons why you think you can’t learn is because you are so hung up on something that it’s interfering with your ability to relax and just enjoy learning.” I worked with her for six months and we worked on her stuttering by just relaxing when you read, when you write, when you speak. She went on to write her GED and she eventually got married. She never stuttered much after that, about, within a year her stuttering had gone away.
Helping Learners Overcome Fear

Not all adult students returning to educational environments are hopeful and accepting. Many are coping with life transitions or have experienced embarrassment and rejection in previous learning situations. Literacy educators often work with learners who possess significant fear of learning or trying anything new. Most of the fear related to learning comes from a learner's conscious and sometimes unconscious self-perception based on past life experience. In the quote given here, the educator helps her students overcome their fear of things associated with learning by seeing the underlying feelings of unworthiness and persistently working to help people see and articulate their strengths as human beings.

When the Social Worker gave me a list of names that I would be working with, he said 'well Deborah, these are the bottom of the barrel, so if you can do anything with these women, fine, all the more power to you.' And I thought oh my God, you know and then when I met them, I liked them so much, I thought how could anybody say that about these women who have capabilities that obviously nobody has noticed for a long time, including themselves. So, it’s always been my attitude, my approach, to, let’s see, that anything is possible, there are not limitations here, only the ones we set on ourselves. Many of the women not only didn’t feel that they could learn, that they were so discouraged about their learning, but they also didn’t believe that they were worthy of it. They had never been to the library and they had never been to the local bookstore because they thought that those were places for smart people and they weren’t smart. So I had a lot of work to do around, hey you guys, you are amazingly smart. And a lot of the women were excellent cooks and one of the women had raised eight children on her own and done an amazing job, so I tried to constantly look at all their strengths and help them see their strengths and helped them see how capable they were when they thought they weren’t. So then it took a lot of time, but it was really worth it because then the women started getting jobs without my having to do anything for job readiness. You know when they felt, when their personal lives were in order and when they felt they were capable of learning, there was no stopping them. It was just quite amazing to watch. We did a lot of writing in the process and that was only, initially because I was journaling and I really liked it so I thought well let’s give it a try and the women, of course, really hesitated with writing but once they got in to it they wrote like crazy. The social worker that had said “the women were the bottom of the barrel”, he came to me about six months later and he said ‘I don’t know what you are doing in this classroom, but keep doing it because I can’t believe the changes that I’m seeing.

Discovery within the Self

Poet and transformative educator, David Whyte (2001) says; "teaching is about asking people to remember who they are.” Developing a sense of self, or becoming authentic, can be in itself a transformative experience, and it simultaneously leads to further transformation and further authenticity in a kind of spiral of learning. The literacy educator here describes her experience with one student who uses art to foster discovery within the self.

She said one time she wanted to learn how to draw so I said, why don’t we do that? Let’s get a bunch of drawing materials and why not, how about every Friday afternoon we will have a drawing class. You know, we’ll start a drawing class and we did. I’m an artist you know, I went to Art School and I was excited, right. So we did this and then over time as we’re, I would have a lesson and we would do our stuff, we’d put it on the wall 104
and critique each others and we’d talk about what was working, what we liked, what we’d want to do differently and that. I would just sort of defer to her energy as often as I could and before you knew it, she was, I wouldn’t say lead the class because she never really wanted to. But she was taking more control of you know, being seen as the person who could direct things. When I left another instructor was put in. That instructor didn’t do art so Alvera continued to run an art class on Friday afternoon. To me that was just so exciting to see her, how she was coming alive. Obviously this woman is just an artist and just finding that language, finding those ways to visually express herself was just so exciting to see. So learning takes so many different forms for me, not just reading and writing.

Acknowledging the Whole Person

Learning companions walk the learning path beside the student making observations and asking for considerations; it’s a shared exchange. Sometimes they point out obstacles and challenge students to grow in mind and in spirit. The learning companion talks to the student’s wholeness in an authentic and respectful way. Some learners are unconsciously grieving a lost sense of self, because their spirit is so deeply hidden. We need to acknowledge the whole person when fostering transformative learning in literacy education. The educator speaking here explains why this is an integral part of her practice.

I often find in the learners that I work with, it is just so rarely about learning to read and write. It’s just hardly ever about that. It’s usually about coming to terms with some incredible hurt or some pain or some disconnect. I really acknowledge the person as an entire person and as an important, unique person. Because so many who have low literacy skills, there’s been, like I said before, there’s been some disconnect has happened. Sometimes, it family breakdowns, sometimes it abuse, neglect, whatever and the moment you start paying attention to the person, there is a whole coming alive and acknowledgement of that soul, of that person. I want to hear people’s stories, because it is all about stories and honoring people’s stories. From their stories, you build and understand people, the way people put themselves together. What experience they had to bring them to this point in their lives and all the other pieces of what is going on in their lives and what has happened in their lives, just fascinates me. I think because it fascinates me, there is not the room for judgment, like oh you know you did that, oh you got pregnant, oh, you had an abortion, that kind of stuff. It is just like WOW and you did that and then you made this choice and then that happened and now you are here, you know. That kind of thing, that kind of attitude really serves me well when I started working at the Carnagey Learning Center in the downtown east side of Vancouver, and also when I worked at the Wish drop in center with sex trade workers.

Summary

All eight literacy educators who were involved in our research project talked extensively about the nature of their relationships with their learners. They also all told powerful stories about what happened to their learners as they gained or improved their reading and writing skills. We saw those experiences as primarily or potentially transformative, and we saw a connection between the educator-learner relationship and the fostering of transformative learning. The educators were not ‘just teachers,’ in terms of focussing on techniques and skills. They became important people in their learners’ lives and their learners were important people in the
educators’ lives. Each enhanced the experience of the other. We called this role ‘being a learning companion.’

In looking for patterns on how transformative learning was fostered through being a learning companion, we found six overlapping and interdependent themes. Educators created a sense of safety for their learners, and they did this in large part through developing a sense of trust and a sense of possibility. The educators believed in their students’ ability to learn and to overcome fear. Students needed to develop a good understanding of self, and in many cases they needed to discover their self. Educators talked frequently and with passion about working with the ‘whole person.’ Their work was not about learning skills, but about a ‘whole coming alive’ as one educator said.

References
Foreign Film: Creating Cultural Awareness and Understanding
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Abstract: Foreign films are often overlooked as an avenue for cultural understanding and awareness. Foreign films can provide a sensory experience allowing individuals the opportunity to reflect, question, and understand other cultures and worldviews. Through interpretivism, a qualitative research methodology, this paper explores autobiographical experiences concerning foreign film, international travel, and cultural experiences.

Rationale
We are not nor have we ever been isolated from the influences of the outside world. However, with the advent of the internet, mass media, and nonstop flights abroad we must recognize that we belong to a global community. Exposure to other cultures occurs daily by simply turning on the television or talking to a neighbor. We teach our students literature that originated from all around the world, but we tend to forget that what often spurs the imagination is both visual and auditory. Foreign film is a facet rarely used outside the foreign language classroom. We have to ask ourselves why we neglect this rich and diverse educational tool. It is one thing to watch a Hollywood blockbuster and quite another to immerse ourselves in the world of a foreign film. Watching a film that represents the nation in which it was made tells us of the perspective, the subtle yet lasting influences of history and the depth of a culture.

Purpose of Paper
Many believe that individuals would not appreciate the richness of a foreign film or that they may simply not understand. This underestimates one’s ability to use their imagination, to become involved in the film itself, through suspension of disbelief. Transformative learning is often facilitated by examining, broadening, or changing, perspectives. Foreign films accomplish both by allowing the viewer to notice similarities and differences between cultures and by prompting inquiry about the previously viewed culture. Accordingly, this inquiry was designed to explore the benefits of foreign films. Specifically, this research explores the cultural enrichment, academic advantages, and global awareness that are afforded to individuals when exposed to foreign film. Finally, this research explores the possibilities that occur when foreign films achieve greater exposure, discussion, and access in academia.

Theoretical Perspective
The following theoretical propositions lie beneath this exploration of transformational learning through the cultural enrichment, global awareness and educational benefits of foreign films.

- Awareness occurs when experiences involving sensory exploration incite reflection and critical thought (Eisner, 2002; Greene, 1995).
- Critical thinking is a foremost facet of transformational learning and can be engaged in through reflection, inquiry, and dialogue (Mezirow, 1999).

Films function as a language and when seen with others mutual experiences are created (Monaco, 2000).
Use of films in the classroom provide a venue for inquiry and dialogue among students bringing them more into conscious awareness allowing learning to occur, insights to emerge, and perceptions to change (Roden, 2005).

Mode of Inquiry

This paper explores the benefits of foreign films to cultural enrichment, academic advantages, and global awareness to students through autobiographical and conceptual inquiry. The opportunities I have experienced to travel abroad have provided me with knowledge and insight regarding the use of foreign films and its availability to the public. Therefore, the methodology I will use with this paper draws on interpretivism, a qualitative methodology that seeks to develop an understanding of a phenomenon through inquiry and the process of meaning making (Denzin, & Lincoln, 1994).

Insight Concerning Autobiographical Experiences

I have had the opportunity to travel the world in pursuit of my academic endeavors. While traveling abroad I noticed that my fellow students and even faculty members oftentimes succumbed to what has been popularly termed culture shock. This state of shock affected their ability to appreciate and understand the new world around them. Instead of appreciating new and diverse cultures these individuals focused only the cultural differences and judged these differences, which led to feelings of isolation on their part and degradation on the part of those whose homeland we were visiting. This was not an isolated incident. I witnessed this occurrence time and again over the course of four years of international travel. After observing this behavior and its consistency among students I became aware that a lack of preliminary cultural awareness and understanding had prevented these people from becoming more aware and understanding upon their arrival.

Foreign films have played an important role in my life and education. Before I had the opportunity to travel internationally, I watched and studies foreign films. I feel that I became more globally aware throughout the process of viewing the films and discussing their impact. Some may feel that foreign films are wrought with too many barriers, such as subtitles, unfamiliar cultural and historical references, and even different senses of humor. These differences are what make foreign films that much more interesting and integral to personal growth and development. Part of experiencing a culture different from our own is the subtle cultural behaviors and nuances, like sense of humor or even table manors. In some cultures it is considered good manors to speak in hushed tones at the dinner table. From my experience viewing foreign films I was aware that table manners differed from one culture to the other; unfortunately my fellow classmates were not. They were unaware that their behavior was somewhat offensive, and when told became offended themselves. They were not understanding or accepting of the culture around them and refused to take an opportunity to become more aware. I believe that if they had been exposed to other cultures through film, the subtle differences would not have shocked them. I am not saying that they would have become totally aware of the culture being viewed in the foreign film, but rather, that they would be more accommodating having seen a people through their own cultural lens.

Foreign films provide an opportunity for transformation or can be the catalyst, which leads to a transformation after the initial experience. Viewers experience a disorienting dilemma when the film begins. The setting, language, and even cinematography can be different than what is familiar to the viewer. This is the participant’s initial opportunity to notice the cultural
similarities and differences. After viewing the film dialogue provides an opportunity for inquiry and reflection. This process has the potential to create a transformational learning experience. In my experience the transformation can be small and may even go unnoticed until the opportunity to directly interact with the previously viewed culture presents itself. When this happens the viewer may find that he/she is more comfortable with the differences than anticipated. Before traveling abroad I would often watch films from the country I was visiting. I was careful to view foreign films so that I could see them through their cultural lens. Unfortunately I knew students who chose to watch Hollywood blockbusters about the culture they were planning to visit. The Hollywood film “Crocodile Dundee” does not accurately depict contemporary Australia like the pop-culture Australian film “Garage Days.” The lens through which the culture is viewed is imperative to creating cultural awareness and understanding.

**Conclusion and Implications**

Since we live in a global society where isolation is no longer an option we must consider how to facilitate cultural awareness and understanding through transformational learning. Lack of exposure to other cultures limits understanding and tolerance. Exposure to foreign films sparks the imagination which can have far reaching effects on knowledge of customs as well as a better understanding of the similarities and differences. Foreign films also offer a plethora of opportunities for dialogue and inquiry. Exposure to foreign films also aids in the developments of cultural awareness and academic excellence. This has possible implications for the use of foreign films in teaching. Making foreign films more visible to students in education provides an avenue of increasing cultural awareness and understanding.

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Making Sense of Multiplicity: Metaphors of Self and Self-change in Transformation Theory
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Abstract. The idea of transformative learning is manifest in a diverse set of theoretical perspectives, suggesting opposing and paradoxical views of the self and self-change. Reviewing key characteristics of these views, I suggest the metaphor of the polyphonic self as a way to help us think about the aims of transformative learning within the multiplicity that is the self.

Introduction
“Tell me the truth.” These four words appear within the first few pages of Diane Setterfield’s *The Thirteenth Tale* and they recur throughout this evocative novel as a kind of biographer’s mantra. Spoken as a kind of plea by a young man interviewing Vida Winter many years earlier, these words are contained within a surprising letter written by Ms. Winter to Margaret Lea, a self-described amateur biographer and the story’s primary narrator. Ms. Winter, a famous and prolific novelist, is well known for dozens of such interviews, in which she would tell made-up stories of her life to appease her interviewers and, in the process, reveal little of her own story. Knowing that she has not long to live and haunted by the journalist’s words, Vida Winter has asked to meet with Margaret so that she can, indeed, tell her story.

Although it is not fashionable these days to talk about truth or a sense of “the good,” these notions undergird the overall aim and goal of transformative learning. Implicit in the various theoretical approaches to transformative learning (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007) are the ways in which our understandings of the self constrain our sense of freedom, self-realization, and the truth of our lives. They are like Vida Winter’s simple little stories told to those many would-be biographers. While sometimes interesting and attractive, the ideas of a limited or distorted consciousness, ideas that are at the heart of transformation theory, suggest they are not our true stories. When we authentically embrace and engage the idea of transformative learning, we enter into a journey not unlike the misty, ghostly struggle for truth reflected in *The Thirteenth Tale*. We want to know the truth about ourselves. And, as Vida Winter suggests to Margaret, this cannot be done in silence.

Notions of self (Piper, 2004) and self-work (Tennant, 2000) or self-change (Chappell, Rhodes, Solomon, Tennant, & Yates, 2003; Tennant, 2000) are embedded in the theory of transformative learning and either implicitly or explicitly inform the ways in which we design and foster transformative learning experiences. While much of the recent literature (Taylor, 2007) reflects what might be referred to as “technologies of the self” (Chappell, et. al., 2003), however, few scholars have focused on how the self is conceptualized in transformative learning theory. In this paper, I explore several views or metaphors of the self in transformation theory and argue that, taken as a whole, this literature suggests a more dialogical and paradoxical conception of the self for both theory and practice.

The Idea of the Self in Transformative Learning Theory
As Taylor (2007) suggests, the literature on transformative learning has grown from a few early, seminal works that largely focused on theory to a plethora of empirical studies and theoretical perspectives that now reflect a wide range of contexts. Thirty years ago, this literature
within the United States was largely defined by what Piper (2004) refers to as the “rational social change” approach to transformative learning. Exemplified by the social and cultural orientation of Freire (1970) and the critical self-reflective perspective of Mezirow (1991), this perspective demonstrated a commitment to personal and social change and reconstruction through critical reflection and analysis. In the articulation of their theoretical positions, however, they provide different accounts of the role of the self in the transformative process. Since then, other perspectives have further elaborated different views of the self and its social and cultural contexts, stressing the emotional, imaginative, relational, and spiritual dimensions of transformative learning (Merriam, et. al., 2007).

These major theoretical perspectives all reflect, to varying degrees, some notion of the “self-in-the-world” (Cranton, 2006a, p. 46). Consideration of the self, cutting across both personal and social orientations to transformative learning, is suggested in concepts such as critical consciousness (Freire, 1970), self reflection (Mezirow, 1991), orders of consciousness (Kegan, 2000), authenticity (Cranton, 2006b), and individuation (Boyd, 1991; Dirkx, 2001). Critical and postmodern theorists, however, charge that such a focus on the self represents a highly decontextualized, psychological and individualistic orientation to the person and social change (Cunningham, 2000). Psychologically-minded transformative learning theorists, such as Daloz (1986), Kegan (2000), Boyd (1991) and Cranton (2006a), recognize that the nature of the self is deeply intertwined with its social and cultural contexts. For example, Kegan’s theory is grounded fundamentally in object relations theory, which places emphasis on human relationships as a primary motivational force in life. Cranton (2006b) uses the phrase “self-in-the-world” (p. 46) to suggest this complex interrelationship. Sociologically-oriented theorists, such as Freire (1970), recognize the importance of self-transformation and self-formation in social change. The ecologically-oriented perspectives demonstrated by the Transformative Learning Center at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (O’Sullivan, Morrell & O’Connor, 2002) underscore the importance of understanding power, class, race, and gender in transformative learning but also stress its relational and holistic nature, “our way of being in the world” (p. xvii).

In summary, there is evidence that psychologically-oriented theories of transformative learning are relational and contextual, and that socially-oriented theories also are cognizant of the individual and its relations with others. The major theoretical perspectives on transformative learning all seem to reflect some notion of the self (Piper, 2004), self-work (Tennant, 2000), and self-change (Chappell, et. al., 2003). Examples of self-change in transformation theory include development of critical consciousness (Freire, 1970), change in meaning perspectives or ways of viewing one’s self or the world (Mezirow, 1991), a change in how one relates to one’s self or others (Kegan, 2000), individuation of the self related to others (Boyd, 1991), or a developing sense of empowerment (Taylor, 2007). Regardless of the kind of change implied, transformative learning suggests a fundamental shift in our sense of who we are or our ways in being-in-the-world, a movement towards the truth of our story.

A central tension demonstrated in discussions of the self and self-change is its inherently paradoxical nature. As Modell (1993) suggests, “The self endures through time as a sense of identity, yet consciousness of self is always changing” (p. 3). Transformative learning seeks fundamental change in our sense of self yet, through this process, we have a sense that we are the same person. How, then, do we understand a process of transformative learning in which the self is both changing and staying the same? How is the self both the knower and the known (Modell,
The various theoretical perspectives in transformative learning provide differing answers to such questions.

**Metaphors of the Self in Transformative Learning Theory**

Within present-day educational theory and practice, sociology and psychology dominate the discourse on the self. For the most part, the idea of the self in both disciplines reflects a largely conscious awareness of our sense of who we are and, in many instances, can be regarded as synonymous with the concept of identity. The notable exception to this claim is the field of depth psychology, in which several schools of thought conceptualize aspects of the self as at least partially unconscious, and identity is regarded as a conscious aspect of the self (Boyd, 1991; Dirkx, 2001; Erikson, 1963; Hillman, 1975; Modell, 1993; Moore, 1992; Watkins, 2000). In general, however, scholars informed by a psychological perspective generally subscribe to some notion of a “core” self (the specifics vary from school to school) that is present at birth and unfolds innate qualities or characteristics over time. That is, the self possesses an “essence” that defines the nature of human nature and the social and cultural contexts contribute in varying degrees to the development of this self by providing the conditions that help to shape the specific nature of the self. Erikson’s (1963) theory of ego identity and Kegan’s (2000) constructive developmentalism are well-known examples of this theoretical approach in adult and higher education.

Sociological descriptions locate sources of the self within the social and cultural contexts in which a person lives (Cunningham, 2000). Drawing on critical sociology and cultural studies, these scholars argue that the self represents a kind of socio-cultural artifact, arising within and representing the social, political, and cultural conditions in which we live. Our sense of identity and consciousness are derived from the broader social contexts and structures of which we are a part. While these accounts differ with respect to how they understand the self to emerge, in general they underscore the social and constructed nature of the individual and the learning processes in which the individual engages.

In the literature on transformative learning, these disciplinary orientations suggest several different metaphorical expressions of the self and self-change. These metaphors are not intended to be exclusive and a given theorist may reflect more than one metaphor. Because of space limitations, only brief summaries are provided.

The *evolving knowing self* represents modernity’s conception of at least the possibility of a real self that is capable of knowing the world and being known. It emphasizes the relative autonomy and agency of the individual. Exemplified by humanistic and developmental psychology (Daloz, 1986), and some aspects of psychoanalytic and Jungian thought (Boyd, 1991; Dirkx, 2001), the evolving knowing self stresses the innateness and unfolding of a core self and its essence, nurtured by environmental conditions. While most theorists here subscribe to some form of constructivism, the core self provides a kind of lattice or structure for the construction of meaning. In transformative learning, one actualizes or realizes a true, real, or authentic self. In different ways, the work of Jack Mezirow, Patricia Cranton, Robert Kegan, and Laurent Daloz reflect significant aspects of the evolving knowing self.

The *structured self* also adheres to modernist conceptions of a real self that can apprehend and know its world. In contrast to the more psychologically-oriented knowing self, however, the structured self stresses the key role that political and economic structures within society play in shaping our sense of self. Informed largely by critical social theory, transformative learning places emphasis on political and economic analyses (Cunningham, 2000).
and suggests a process of developing critical consciousness and becoming aware of hegemonic forces and how they shape a false consciousness of the world (Brookfield, 2000). An aim of critical transformative pedagogy is to foster more critical and realistic ways of knowing one’s world. In adult education, this lens is represented by the work of Paulo Freire, Phyllis Cunningham, and Stephen Brookfield.

The reflective self demonstrates postmodern and post-structural influences on our thinking about the self and self-change. This metaphor suggests that our sense of self is socially constructed, reflecting the dominant discourses in which we experience ourselves as a self, how we come to understand these experiences, and the processes of change associated with forming or transforming this self (Johnson-Bailey & Alfred, 2006). Rather than distorted or false selves that are implicit in modernist conceptions, postmodern and poststructural perspectives emphasize pluralistic conceptions of the self, and the role of positionality and power relations in how we come to understand the self and its processes of change. Scholars illustrative of this approach to transformative learning include Elizabeth Tisdell, Vanessa Sheared, and Juanita Johnson-Bailey.

The storied self suggests the various ways in which we tell the story of our lives and the different processes in which we come to understand and make sense of our experiences as an evolving narrative (Clark, 2001; Rossiter, 1999). In its reliance on language, discourse, and a decentralized notion of the self (Hermans & Kempen, 1993), this metaphorical conception of transformative learning also draws from postmodern and post-structural influences. The work of post-Jungian theorists, such as James Hillman, Thomas Moore, and Mary Watkins also rely on dialogue and story. The very act of describing aspects of our lives, whether through reflection, journaling, or simply relaying aspects of our experiences to others, is itself constitutive of self-formation (Tennant, 2000). The kinds of stories we tell about the self and its change processes reflect a multiplicity of selves, rather than a unitary sense of self implied by the knowing or structured self. The use of both self-narratives and relational narratives tend to interact to produce the storied self.

The transcendent self reflects in varying degrees the influence of transpersonal psychology and the wisdom or mystical traditions. This view suggests a developing awareness of divine influences on one’s understandings of the self and self-change. Rather than stressing the role of the individual in this process of change, scholars working within this perspective emphasize the importance of communion with this greater non-egoic dimension within one’s life. Scholars representative of primarily a transpersonal influence include Boyd (1991), Ferrer (2002), and Hart (2001). Contributions primarily reflecting the influence of wisdom traditions are represented O’Sullivan and his colleagues (O’Sullivan, et. al., 2002) and leading Buddhist scholars and practitioners. These distinctions are not mutually exclusive.

Taken as a whole, the evolving, structured, reflexive, storied, and transcendent selves that characterize current transformation theory suggest several key attributes of the self: unitary yet multiplistic; both innate and socially constructed; autonomous but also social and relational; rational and analytic but also emotional and imaginative; embodied yet beyond the material self. In the concluding section, I suggest the polyphonic self as a guiding metaphor that helps us make sense of these opposing and paradoxical characteristics.

Conclusion: The Polyphonic Self and the Place of Truth in Transformative Learning

The idea of the polyphonic self, as it is used by Herman and Kempen (1993) is derived from Bakhtin’s notion of the polyphonic novel. It also bears close similarity to Hillman’s (1975) polytheistic psychology, in which Hillman acknowledges a kind of community of little people
that populate the psyche. In the polytheistic or polyphonic self, there is not a single author or
primary narrator to one’s story but several multiple voices, “a plurality of consciousness”
(Herman & Kempen, 1993, p. 40) or voices that fully author and express their own ideas within
the context of a given life. As we struggle in transformative learning for the truth of our story,
we discover that, like Bakhtin’s novel, multiple authors with independent voices clamor to be
heard. This multiplicity of voices is characterized by dialogical relationships in which utterances
are to be understood within the context of the character making them. Here we see the
importance in transformative learning of dialogue, similar to Mezirow’s (1991) ideal speech
situation.

As we engage in or foster transformation, we learn that, like the images that arise within
our dreams, the content of these voices and their dialogues is specifically situated and needs to
be heard and understood within the particular relationships of the self in which they arise. For
example, persistent self-doubt cannot be understood as a general personality trait. Rather, it must
be heard within the life of the particular inner character through which it finds voice.

Like the imaginal dialogues described by Moore (1992) and Watkins (2000),
transformative learning provides opportunity for any given internal voice to enter into
relationship and dialogue with an imaginal other within. Through these imaginal dialogues, we
allow our inner characters to fully express and author their part of our broader story. Meaning of
an experience or utterance, so central to our current understandings of transformative learning, is
relative to the dialogical relationship in which it occurs. The meaning of a given experience
within our lives is to be understood through and within the particular voices of the self that are
giving expression to this experience. In The Thirteenth Tale, Margaret Lea discovers the truth of
Vida Winter’s story only when she repositions the same facts, characters, and timelines she has
come to know within the perspective of another character in the story, Vida’s character. Before
this, Margaret was “seeing” these facts through the wrong voice, unable to make sense of them.

So it is with the meaning we seek to construct or foster through the process of
transformative learning. In the face of our evolving, multiplistic, and relational selves, it is the
truth of our stories that confers continuity and a sense of unity or wholeness. In this sense,
transformative learning involves the elaboration of the plurality and wholeness that is the self.

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A Meta Study Method for Analysis of Primary Sources on Transformative Learning in the Context of Health Care: Preliminary Results
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Abstract: This study presents a meta-synthesis of qualitative research related to transformative learning in adults in a health/illness context.

Introduction
This paper reports on the preliminary results of a meta-synthesis of qualitative research related to transformative learning in adults in a health/illness context. The objective of this analysis is to construct a conceptual framework that explains the process of personal transformation. The meta-synthesis is being conducted in accordance with the meta-study approach of Paterson, Thorne, Canam, and Jillings (2001). Since the extensive review conducted by Taylor in 1997, based on 39 studies on transformational learning from a broad realm of contexts, many new studies have been published in the context of health. The intention of this present study is to bridge the knowledge held in the disciplines of education and health sciences.

Methodology
In this project, the meta-study research approach uses qualitative methods to yield an interpretive product (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003). It involves analysis and conceptual synthesis of existing qualitative research data to provide a critical interpretation of a phenomenon. Based on empirical contributions from various disciplines, this approach leads to the production of generalizations of phenomena. It has received considerable attention from researchers in a variety of fields, disciplines and countries, and it is widely recognized as systematic and rigorously empirically. The method consists of four phases: 1) locating, selecting and appraising primary research studies; 2) analysis of the primary research studies; 3) meta-data analysis, meta-method analysis and meta-theory analysis; and, 4) meta-synthesis of the meta-analyses. This paper reports only on the two first phases. The third and fourth phases are in progress.

Phase 1. Locating, Selecting and Appraising Primary Research Studies
We identified articles published up to January 2007 in CINHAL, ERIC, Healthstar, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, dissertation abstracts and SocINFO databases, by using pilot-tested descriptors including: rehabilitation, chronic illness, disease or disability, transformative learning, perspective transformation, meaning perspectives, meaning and change, change process, and psycho-social. Individual studies inclusion criteria were that each article was required to: (a) include components of perspective transformation, personal change or learning processes; (b) address a health condition involving a loss of function or role; (c) deal with an adult population; (d) use qualitative research; and, (e) include scientifically sound research methodology and findings supported by the primary data.
Phase 2: Analysis of the Primary Research Studies

Selected documents were appraised using an information extraction form known as the Primary Research Appraisal Tool (Paterson et al., 2001) specially designed for this study. The form was piloted on five primary research articles by each of the six team member researchers. It included fields to assess the research approach and design, theoretical framework, health context, major findings, and the overall scientific rigor and suitability of the article. Following team acceptance of the usefulness of the form, it was used to analyze the remaining studies. Excluded reports were recorded in a separate listing with a brief explanation of the weaknesses identified.

Results

Results of Phase 1

Five hundred and fifty-six abstracts were located in the identified databases. The selection of papers was done in sequences. First, two members of the team examined the 556 abstracts and selected 176 of them from a first reading according to the inclusion criteria identified. Then, three members refined the selection by sharpening the definition of two of the inclusion criteria that proved to be particularly challenging: 1) the requirement to include components of perspective transformation, personal change or learning processes; and 2) to address a health condition involving a loss of function or role.

For the first of these two criteria, we decided to choose the general descriptor of change to include all papers exploring different related concepts including: transformation (10 papers); adaptation (3 papers); coping (3 papers); shifting perspective (1 paper); transcendence (1 paper); and transition (1 paper). In addition, six papers that dealt with the contemplation of change were retained.

For the second challenging inclusion criterion, a very helpful model was drawn to assist us identify the different Contexts of Health (Figure 1). As rehabilitation was a key context of health care for this project, we placed it at the core of the model and it became a priority for retaining a paper. The Physical Health Context was also within our research intention, but Physical and Mental Health Context was at the limit of our research interest. Articles that fell in the Physical and Mental Health Context were retained for decision by the whole team. The Mental Health and Social Health contexts were excluded for the study.

Table 1: Years of publications

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</table>
In order to further define the Health Context, we distinguished between two categories of Health Condition: Chronic Illness (CI) and Disability. Our definitions are based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (WHO, 2001). Disability is a state of dysfunction that is a consequence of Bio-Psycho-Social health conditions that could include spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, amputations, birth defects, cerebral palsy, spinal bifida, post-polio, etc. Disability is a non-medical state. Chronic Illness is a medical condition from which an individual has to receive treatment on a long term basis and could include HIV/AIDS, cancer, epilepsy, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), stroke, coronary artery disease (CAD), rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, congestive heart failure (CHF), Parkinson’s disease, multiple sclerosis, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, and Crohn’s disease. We note that certain Health Conditions can be found in both categories.

The 29 selected articles were collected on line, and sent to the six members of the team via WebCT platform. The year of publication of the retained articles are presented above (Table1).

Each paper was analyzed independently by the members of a group of two researchers, after which they shared their results, with a goal of reaching agreement on the elements of their analysis. Three more papers were discarded. A research assistant placed the results of 26 papers in tables by category, and a full research team meeting was held to review the tables.

**Results of Phase Two**

This section provides a detailed profile of the analyzed articles by reporting on 1) Major Phenomenon Studied, 2) the General Research Approach (2.1: Data Collection and 2.2: Analysis), 3) Sample (populations, inclusions/exclusion criteria), 4) Health Contexts (type of medical interventions, current medical involvement during study, previous to study medical
involvements, hospitalization, community health, no intervention), and 5) Health Issues (chronic physical illness, chronic incapacity, other illness).

Results by the above categories are as follows:

1) Major Phenomenon Studied: Mezirow’s transformative learning process (10 papers), self-management and lifestyle change (6); personal change (4); meaning of life with a chronic illness (3); effective coping (2).

2) General Research Approach: grounded theory (9); qualitative methods not specified (7); phenomenological-hermeneutic approach (4); comparative study (1); life history and interpretive description (1); interactive participatory action research (1); single case study (1); personal life history (1).

2.1) Data Collection Methods: semi-structured interviews (15); mixed methodology (standardized questionnaires and semi-structured interviews) (1); semi-structured interviews and focus groups (2); in-depth interviews (4); semi-structured interviews and observation (1); life story and interviews (1); on-line community discussion (1).

2.2) Data Analysis Methods: constant comparative-method (10); content analysis with recurring themes noted (6); thematic approach (3); narrative analysis (2); phenomenological approach (2); structural analysis (1); not mentioned (1).

Results for profile categories 3) Sample; 4) Health Contexts; and 5) Health Conditions are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Results for Profile Categories 3, 4, and 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code First Authors</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Health Condition</th>
<th>Health Context</th>
<th>Intervention at the Time of Study</th>
<th>Process of Change Studied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>001 Baumgartner(2002)</td>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Physical Health</td>
<td>Medications</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>002 Carpenter(1999)</td>
<td>Breast Cancer</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Physical Health</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>003 Courtenay(1998)</td>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Physical Health</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>005 Paterson(1999)</td>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Physical Health</td>
<td>Self management</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>006 Ashe(2005)</td>
<td>Rheumatoid Arthritis</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Rehab</td>
<td>Self management</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>008 Courtenay(2000)</td>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Physical health</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>011 Dubouloz(2001)</td>
<td>Myocardial Infarction</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Rehab</td>
<td>Occupational Therapy</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>012 Dubouloz(2002)</td>
<td>Multiple Sclerosis</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Rehab</td>
<td>Occupational Therapy</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code First Authors</td>
<td>Diagnosis</td>
<td>Health Condition</td>
<td>Health Context</td>
<td>Intervention at the Time of Change Studied</td>
<td>Process of Change Studied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>019King(2003)</td>
<td>Variety of Disabilities</td>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Physical Health</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>021Kralik(2005)</td>
<td>Variety of conditions causing Fatigue</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Physical health</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>023Lempp(2006)</td>
<td>Rheumatoid Arthritis</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Rehab</td>
<td>Outpatient Clinic-multidisciplinary care</td>
<td>Adaptive Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>025Neil(2002)</td>
<td>Rheumatoid Arthritis</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>Meds</td>
<td>Transcendence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>026Nilsson(2002)</td>
<td>Gastroesophageal reflux disease</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Physical Health</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Coping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>027Nixon(2003)</td>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Social Health</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>029Persson(2006)</td>
<td>Variety of physical disabilities</td>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Physical health</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Coping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>030Reynolds(2003)</td>
<td>Multiple Sclerosis</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Physical health</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>032Sisson(1998)</td>
<td>Cerebrovascular accident</td>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Physical &amp; mental health</td>
<td>In hospital care</td>
<td>Coping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table states that the majority of papers (19/25) studied a person’s living with a Chronic Disease, specifically individuals living with Rheumatoid Arthritis being more frequently studied (6 papers over 25). Finally, 9 papers don’t identify any clinical interventions and 10 papers studied specifically the Transformation Process.

**Discussion**

Results to date are preliminary. They are setting the stage for the future construction of a Conceptual Framework on Personal Transformation that will focus specifically on the significance of different contexts of health and on the varying nature of disorienting dilemmas, whether bio-psycho-social and/or at times, spiritual. So far, the research has encouraged us to refine our questions. What is the precise nature of each health context? What are the elements of health conditions that trigger change processes, and why? What other processes exist besides meaning perspective transformation that address profound meaning change in a health context? Many health conditions change over time, how do these changes affect the transformation process? Why have certain health conditions been studied and other conditions have not? For example there are many studies about people living with rheumatoid arthritis but none for people living with asthma.
Conclusion
This study is a very first stage for the construction of a Conceptual Framework on Personal Transformation in the Context of Health. We are continuing the meta-data analysis, meta-method analysis and meta-theory analysis, to reach the stage of meta-synthesis of these very important ideas. It is hoped that this conceptual framework will be beneficial to both health care providers and educators, by providing them with a better understanding of how transformation learning occurs with people living with chronic illnesses or disabilities.

References
Abstract: This paper presents a conceptual framework based on four substantive theories explaining the meaning perspective transformation process in individuals living with different chronic illnesses, and undergoing physical rehabilitation for the management of their daily living activities. The conceptual framework is a proposition that requires exploration to validate its strengths and limits, to enable it to be used as a theoretical basis for the development clinical guidelines.

Introduction

During the course of an illness or after suffering physical trauma, one may have to learn to adapt to a subsequent disability that can take over part of one’s life. The disability can present unexpected demands on habitual ways of living. In a physical rehabilitative context where patients learn to deal with a new reality of living and cope with loss of daily functions, a process of meaning perspective transformation has been observed and studied as a core learning process. This process of meaning perspective transformation is triggered when patients are confronted with a stressful new reality and when they are compelled to gain knowledge and new skills to modify ways of functioning.

Although not every situation in the context of physical rehabilitation is a condition for transformative learning, some severe health conditions trigger a process of critical reflection that can lead to a transformation of meaning perspectives. This paper presents a schematic proposal for a conceptual framework of a transformative process. This is a first trial of a systematisation of substantives theories drawn from four independent studies of individuals suffering from four different health conditions and cared for in a physical rehabilitation context.

The health conditions studied included myocardial infarct, spinal cord injuries, multiple sclerosis, and rheumatoid arthritis. These health conditions triggered personal critical reflection, and occupational therapy treatment was aimed at finding different modes of functioning in spite of the devastating impact on the person’s customary way of living.

The transformative process was studied in a variety of conditions, and it varied with the nature of the challenges presented. For example, 1) with myocardial infarct, a very abrupt onset with an outcome of personal chaos stung participants with the new reality of how to face their future, 2) a traumatic event such as a car accident or fall from a roof had a devastating impact on some participants daily living, as such trauma led to paralysis and the life-long use of a wheelchair, 3) the confirmed diagnosis of multiple sclerosis impacted the future of a participant for years to come with the terrifying prognosis of slowly deteriorating motor and cognitive functions, and 4) the news of a degenerative illness such as rheumatoid arthritis, although sometimes well-controlled with medication, left some participants with strong obstacles to their planning routine and their previous abilities to take on activities regardless of fatigue and pain.

Methods

For all four groups, data was collected using semi-structured interviews during rehabilitation treatment. A total of 120 interviews were conducted. Participants of two groups were interviewed bi-monthly for four months; the others participants were interviewed twice.
during the course of their treatment. In a grounded theory approach, the constant comparison method to analyse data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was used. Four substantive theories that identified meaning perspectives and distortions of meaning, and the process for transformation were developed. A meta-analysis of these substantive theories using the same analytic methods has resulted in this schematic proposal for a Conceptual Framework of a Meaning Perspective Transformation process.

Results

Results are presented as a meta-Synthesis of four substantive theories (Dubouloz, Vallerand, Laporte, Ashe, Hall, in press; Dubouloz, Laporte, Hall, Ashe, & Smith, 2004; Dubouloz, Vallerand, Lachaine, Castonguay, Gingras, & Rabow, 2002; Dubouloz, Chevrier, & Savoie-Zajc, L., 2001). Results show that in a context of physical rehabilitation, participants not only had to learn new skills such as how to mobilize a wheelchair or recognize the signs of a lack of energy in order to learn strategies of energy conservation, but also had to be ready to face an existential question that led to meaning searching in their personal lives. The results show that personal self enquiries revealed key questions that became a platform for de-construction of a personal paradigm on which each group critically reflects on the meaning of their lives. Four questions were identified: What is the meaning of my life? What does getting help mean for me? Who am I as a disabled person? Am I still a good person even when disabled?

During the de-construction, personal world views are in turmoil, participants experience a process of weakening core values and beliefs through the identification of distortions provoking instability of personal paradigms, and individuals are in a temporary vacuum of personal understanding.

Each group critically reflected on one main habitual conception or a Principal or Central Meaning Perspective that was soon identified as a distortion and an obstacle to learning new skills. These habitual conceptions were in conflict with participants’ health conditions and the context of care. Examples of central meaning perspectives were “self-caring is demeaning,“ “disability makes life miserable,” and “being a physically active father is the focus of my life.”

Here is a detailed example. For the participants belonging to the cardiac group, the analysis of data revealed that the Principal Meaning Perspective barrier to change was the concept of work. According to the participants, ideas of “work” were strongly ingrained in their personal values and belief systems, and were characterized as a “vital activity,” an occupation that defined their personal identity, and guided their entire lives. Here are some of the reflections of research participants:

Just going for a few hours to work, I feel I am only visiting because my hours before being ill were 16-18 hours a day, 7 days a week.
I’ve been a worker all my life. Six hours, it's just like I'm going for a coffee... six hours is nothing, six hours is just going for lunch!

Work also provided participants with a social status, as reflected in the following quote:

Being an important person, and being an important cog in the wheel is my motivation in life.

While core personal principles were critically reflected upon as being incompatible with the context of having experienced a chronic illness or sudden health event and in conflict with personal expectations, emergent new conceptions were created and became new Guiding Meaning Perspectives, fundamental to a shift toward a new world view. These Guiding Meaning Perspectives were all related to the Self: Self-Worth, Self-Respect, and Value of Self. Feelings
about what was good, real, or sacred accompanied the Guiding Meaning Perspectives and served to validate participants’ choices for change. The context of care was also a determinant to the development of these Guiding Meanings Perspectives. A new learning brought new standards in participants’ lives built on new Supportive Meaning Perspectives such as “eating better is healthy,” or “being a father with my kid on my lap while rolling in my wheelchair is fun.” These new standards created new meaning schemes for new rules of conduct for a modified lifestyle.

Examples provided by participants living with Rheumatoid Arthritis describe the emergence of new Guiding Meaning Perspectives. During rehabilitation, particularly during occupational therapy, participants had to learn self-caring strategies to develop a new feasible rest/activity balance, including the use of an orthosis or other adaptive self-care device. Additionally, at first, self-caring was viewed as demeaning and therefore unacceptable, and this made social support strategies difficult to consider. Seeking help conflicted with the three Principal Meaning Perspectives found in the data: Independence – being consistently self-reliant; Activity – being constantly occupied; and, Altruism – responding first to the needs of others. These became a barrier to the learning of needed self-caring strategies. Witness the following statement:

Rarely will I ask for assistance. It's just my nature. So that's going to be one of the hardest lessons I'll ever have to learn if I have to become dependent. … my character make-up is providing help as opposed to asking for help.

Later in therapy, critical reflection based on new knowledge gained of the illness, appeared to be a key element of the transformation process. Critically reflecting on their new situation enabled participants to recognize self-continuity and self-acceptability in illness. This encouraged the emergence of a new Guiding Meaning Perspective of Self-Respect. The meaning of Self-Respect, i.e., accepting and valuing your Self, encouraged reorganization of participants’ personal paradigms.

For example, personal limits were acknowledged, and the meaning of self-caring strategies transformed from laziness to personal limitations, from dependence to interdependence, and from incompetence to self-responsiveness.

As a consequence of the appearance of these new personal meaning perspectives, definitions of core values were transformed. Altruism, as a commitment to helping others on demand seemed no longer a guiding principle for behaviour. What emerged was a re-focusing on valuing and satisfying personal needs. Also, the measure of the value of activity was no longer how busy the individual was. Rather, moderated activity that recognized personal health limitations took on its own value. The transformation of these two core values enabled the participants to accept self-caring strategies - in particular, pacing. Pacing became a new Supportive Meaning Perspective. It helped the person modify daily living by setting the stage for the acceptance and integration of new knowledge of self-help strategies.

From the analytic synthesis of four substantives theories, the following Conceptual Framework for a Meaning Perspective Transformation Process is suggested.

**Proposition of a Conceptual Framework of a Meaning Perspectives Transformation Process**

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A deconstruction of meanings created space for the construction of new meanings, which in turn created a new sense of coherence between feelings, thoughts and actions. Although key moments are unique to each situation, three common specific experiences occur during the period of deconstruction/construction process: 1) a meaning perspective is judged by the participant as a barrier to change due to its level of distortion relative to the current situation (in the Model, named the Principal Meaning Perspective) 2) an emerging new Meaning Perspective fills the void created by the weakening of a Principal Meaning Perspective (in the Model named New Guiding Meaning Perspective) and 3) secondary concepts become strategies that provide a sense of coherence and enable a person to achieve anticipated results (in the Model named New Supportive Meaning Perspective.) These moments are gentle realizations during this deconstruction/construction work, that permit, as a participant of this study suggested, a person to feel at peace with him/herself.

Conclusion

This transformative process shows a de-construction and a re-construction of a personal paradigm in which new values, beliefs, feelings and knowledge are integrated for actual modification of former ways of living. The Conceptual Framework could serve as a theoretical basis for more research and for the development of clinical guidelines for rehabilitation health
professionals as they develop an understanding of the process of learning for change in their clients.

References


Towards a Reexamination of White Identity Models
European American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness
Independent Scholar without Institutional Affiliation

Abstract: White racial identity models can provide insight into how to facilitate learning about race, racism and privilege. We examine assumptions inherent in these models and explore elements that we think deserve additional attention.

Introduction
A fundamental belief in students is more important than anything else. This fundamental belief is not a sentimental matter: it is a very demanding matter of realistically conceiving the student where he or she is, and at the same time never losing sight of where he or she can be. —William Perry

As William Perry’s work gave educators a model from which to understand a student’s conceptual positionality in relation to learning (Knefelkamp, 2003), so too might racial identity models offer an opportunity for us to assess the positionality of students in learning about race. Perry's empirically-based account of college-age students documents their cognitive and intellectual development as they move through different epistemic standpoints in the way they define and approach knowledge. While Perry’s model looks at cognitive development, he observes that social location, such as gender, race, culture and socioeconomic class, also influence our learning (Perry, 1999). Following Perry’s insight about the importance of social location, we examine the positionality of white students and educators in discussions about race. We ask, “Can descriptive models of white identity give insight into why one white student responds with guilt and defensiveness while another white student turns immediately to the students of color in the room for guidance, while yet another seems to feel compelled to step forward with an angry analysis of institutionalized racism?”

Increasingly, adult educators are becoming aware of their responsibilities to develop in themselves and their students a greater capacity for cultural consciousness. Identity development models are useful maps for educators who want to act skillfully in service of this responsibility. The most widely cited models of white identity—Janet Helms (1984), Rita Hardiman (1994), Joseph Ponterotto (1988) and Ruth Frankenberg (1993)—have their origins either in therapeutic fields (Helms and Ponterotto) or in raising awareness of racism (Hardiman and Frankenberg). In this paper we intend to explore the utility of white identity models for educators. The scholars who developed these models opened important doors of inquiry, leading the way in examining the previously unexamined assumptions about the hegemony of white identity. In our work on whiteness we have gradually come to recognize limits and risks in using these models. Responding to Robert Kegan’s exhortation to examine the form that must transform (Kegan, 2000), we examine the assumptions inherent in these models and explore elements that we think deserve further attention. Our purpose in exploring these issues is not so much to critique them as to provoke further inquiry and reflection.

Change the Language: Identity Development in Relationship to a Racist Society
We notice that the beginning stages of these models, both for white people and for people of color, describe how racial identity is shaped by the social context of racism, rather than by recognizing qualities of the identity group itself. For example, in her analysis of the core
processes present in racial identity development, Maurianne Adams (2001) discusses “parallel developmental tasks experienced across both dominant (agent) and subordinate (target) identity statuses” (p. 216). Adams explains her meaning by citing Helms, … “the general developmental issue for Whites is abandonment of entitlement [internalized domination], whereas the general developmental issue for people of color is surmounting internalized racism [internalized subordination] in its various manifestations” (Helms, 1995:184, [Adams] brackets…). (Adams, 2001, p. 216)

For both groups, the general arc of development includes what Adams calls transformed consciousness and redefinition.

Close examination of identity development models reveals that they refer to—and at times conflate—two different kinds of development.

The first is suggested by Helms' and Adams' analysis—the developmental task is transforming consciousness about how living in a racist society shapes one's beliefs and attitudes. In the case of white identity development, early stages generally describe a white person who is not conscious of her/himself as a racialized being, race being reserved for description of the other. Models of white identity development are built around the assumption that white people in the US are conditioned to repress awareness of racial difference. These models describe stages of increasing awareness of the racialized other as well as increasing consciousness about the relationship between race and justice.

The second kind of development described in some models is growth of racial identity separate from racism and its effects. These descriptions appear to be more about cultural or ethnic identity than they are about racialized identity. It seems significant that this kind of identity development is largely absent from models of white identity, in contrast to the models describing other racial groups. Ironically, whiteness itself is essentially an invisible element in white identity development, even as it remains central.

What these models of white identity describe, then, is not so much identity as awareness of racism and the impact of the racist society. Outside of this context, the models quickly lose meaning and coherence. The distinction is not trivial. As a group committed to creating a multicultural society in which difference is celebrated and all traditions are honored, we feel it is crucial to lay the groundwork now for an affirmative white identity.

We suggest that the way these models are named obscures this distinction between understanding one's relationship to racism and affirming one's cultural or ethnic identity. In the case of white identity development, the ambiguous labeling may be not only misleading but also counterproductive. As Paolo Friere observes in Pedagogy of the Oppressed, unauthentic words are “unable to transform reality.” “To speak a true word is to transform the world” (Friere, 1970, p. 75). We ask, “What would happen if we changed the way these models are named?” Perhaps they would be more aptly described as racist identity models, or white identity as shaped by racism.

The concepts of developmental stages and of development are also misnomers. One of the problematics in developmental models is an implicit teleology: the path can appear to be linear, singular, and the result of development can appear to be a climactic or to have a defined end. Even when this is not the author’s intention (as Perry is known to have protested) the lure of seemingly predictive models can be hard to resist. In contrast to the four stage models so far referenced, the work of Wayne Rowe and colleagues (Rowe, Bennett & Atkinson, 1994; LaFleur, Rowe & Leach, 2002) offers a descriptive model of multiple positions. Similarly, Janet Helms (1995) now describes white identity positions as statuses, not stages.
The Centrality of Whiteness

We believe that attitudes and behaviors of whites towards other whites must be more carefully examined as aspects of white identity. While all leading scholars mention this aspect of white identity, we believe that it requires additional attention and perhaps more centrality in the discourse. Consciousness about white identity as it relates to the self and other white people is described almost exclusively in terms of increased awareness of privilege vis-à-vis the people of color and of systems of oppression. In part this reflects the function for which these tools were developed. However, we fear that this way of making the person of color a focus, rather than the white person reinforces rather than challenges the general hegemony in the culture that accepts whiteness and white ways of being as the norm.

The presumed centrality of whiteness is often reinforced by the way it is presented. For example, in *Multicultural Counseling Competencies* (Sue, et al, 1998), the chapter on the Euro-American Worldview opens with the statement that culturally competent counselors, “understand their own worldview, how they are the product of their cultural conditioning, and how it may be reflected in their counseling work with racial and ethnic minorities” (p. 47). The succeeding chapter in this textbook on understanding Racial/Ethnic Minority Worldviews begins by saying that the culturally competent counselor is “one who actively attempts to understand the worldview of his or her culturally different client without negative judgment” (p. 67). While both statements seem valid on their face, the authors seem unaware that they have implied that counselors are the ones with a white worldview to explore, and that the only role accorded to a person of color in the counseling encounter is that of client. The potential significance of a counselor—either white or of color—understanding a white client’s racial identity is invisible.

Differentiations within Whiteness

The continued centrality of whiteness is often coupled with a second assumption in these models—that whiteness is an undifferentiated, if not essentialized, status. Hardiman (2001) acknowledges this limit noting that her model and Helms’ “do not acknowledge the possibility that White identity development might entail different processes for individuals raised in all- or mostly-White environments, and Whites who were raised in [a multicultural context]” (pp. 116-117). While Rowe, et al, create a more complex model of possible white positions, they do not address the variation that white individuals may bring to their development.

We believe that there is an inherent tension in examining the commonality and diversity within whiteness. In one classroom, we can easily find students who have arrived on a college campus to have their first encounter with a person of color and others who grew up in the multicultural complexity of many contemporary urban neighborhoods. A one-size-fits-all white identity model is, on its face, problematic. On the other hand, we note that as white people we frequently distance ourselves from our whiteness by centering our identities in social locations that have been historically and statistically defined as oppressed based on non-racial variables such as gender, sexual orientation, class, or religion. We find ourselves thinking, “What is being said about white people doesn’t apply to me because I am …” Any rethinking of these models needs to acknowledge both this tension and the varieties of white experience.

Centering the Individual

The centering of whiteness is also apparent in an implicit assumption in all these models: the focus on the development of the individual as distinct from the community. This
unquestioned examination of the individual as separate from the community is itself associated with white epistemology:

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2000) compares the perspectives of René Descartes (1637) “I think, therefore I am” with an African saying not attributed to any one person—Ubuntu—which means, “I am because we are” (p. 257). The former privileges the central importance of the individual mind, self-reliance and autonomy, while the latter recognizes the individual’s interrelationship and dependence upon community, group effort and harmony. (Paxton, 2003, p. 81)

In this context the very notion of individual development models can be seen as “White” in its underlying assumptions. After all, these models are created by “rationally-driven, intellectual lone wolf” academicians who work in a context deeply entrenched in white epistemology with its concomitant assumptions about individualism (Peterson & Brookfield, 2007, p. 5).

When the teleological nature of most of the models is coupled with a notion that individual development can take place without regard to the development of the community, it is perhaps understandable that the individual may feel that he or she “has arrived.” Expanding white epistemology beyond individualism and establishing a more affirmative white identity for thriving in a multicultural world suggests the need for a different kind of communication among white people.

**Communication among White People**

We think it is important that white identity development models broaden their perspective to include how white people interact with each other when they talk about race, racism, whiteness, supremacy and privilege. By examining our own development as well meaning white adult educators, we notice ways of being and behavior that impede dialogue and unconsciously perpetuate White Supremacist Consciousness.

Striving to think and act within the meaning perspective that Frankenberg calls race cognizance, we often find ourselves zealously sharing our knowledge and correcting other white people in order to show them what we believe is the proper way. That is, we proselytize, often with self-righteous fervor. Implicit in our proselytizing is felt superiority to others, who we perceive to be less aware than we are of their relationship with the racialized other (European American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness, in press 2008). In both proselytizing and disdaining we shut down dialogue while acting out our individualism and our sense of superiority, reflecting our white investment in hierarchy and competition. We have described this phenomenon elsewhere as a strong need to be seen as a “good white person” (European American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness, 2005).

While Ponterotto, *et al.*, specifically identify comparable behavior in the stage they name “Zealot-Defensive” (Ponterotto, 2006, p. 97), this phenomenon goes unnoted in all other models. From our own reflection, we are reluctant to see these behaviors as linked to any one stage or position, rather as persistent.

As a strategy for personal transformation, striving to become the “good white person” can be potent. However, belief that one IS a good white person or a better white person than others is a strategy for resisting change. We believe that it is important to better understand the behaviors of proselytizing and disdaining and their role in white identity development. Do they reflect a form of internalized self-hatred, homologous to “horizontal hostility” (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, p. 22), a form of internalized oppression in which rage is directed at the racial self rather than the other? Do they represent a stage or stages of development? Are they
behaviors that may manifest at any point in development in which the self becomes fearful or resistant to further change?

Broadening the Discussion
In examining underlying assumptions in models of white identity development and identifying factors that these models have implicitly excluded, we hope—at a minimum—to open a larger conversation on this topic. Optimally, such a conversation can lead to further research and development of more inclusive and effective models. As educators, we feel it is crucial to be able to locate our and our students’ positions regarding our identity as white, and to learn how to communicate better what we have learned without further alienating ourselves as white people from other white people—students, colleagues, and others in our lives. While learning to heal from living in a racist society, we feel it is critical that we also follow Perry’s exhortation to “never [lose] sight of where he or she can be” (Knefelkamp, 2003). We need models both for healing our racist past and for preparing for the multicultural present and future.

Note
1. The European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness fosters research and learning about the subject of White Supremacist Consciousness. The use of collective authorship under the name of the Collaborative reflects our understanding of the way in which knowledge is constructed. Members came together originally through their association with 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 about the Collaborative's work can be addressed to: collaborative@eccw.org. Find further information at our website: http://www.iconoclastic.net/eccw/

References


Transformative Learning as a Program Development Theory for Food Safety Training
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Abstract: A shift in food safety training program theory and frameworks for foodservice education may be necessary to improve effectiveness at influencing employee food safety practices. This work examines food safety education in the context of transformative learning rather than teaching-oriented outcomes.

Introduction
A common recommendation for addressing the serious issue of foodborne illness has been to train foodservice managers to handle and store foods safely (Food and Drug Administration [FDA], 2004). Typically, food safety education is considered successful when managers become certified through a food safety training and certification program targeted at adult foodservice employees. Moreover, the safety of food in foodservice establishments is typically dependent, in whole or part, on large numbers of non-supervisory employees (compared to the number of managers and supervisors) who handle, prepare, and serve the food, e.g., foodservice workers, line cooks, relief cooks and prep cooks.

An assumed impact of managers successfully completing a food safety certification program is a positive change in their own behaviors and a positive change in employees’ behaviors—people who did not receive the training. This proposed dual impact would consist of new, reinforced, or changed behaviors with respect to handling food safely by all employees. However, sustained behavior change both for the trained managerial staff as well as the non-trained employees has been limited. Current program theories have focused on problem solving and outcomes in regard to teaching, but not necessarily learning and understanding.

Food safety training programs typically include content addressing science-based concepts that form the basis of food safety regulations and codes. However, such program curricula focus more on specific rules or behaviors than science concepts. Rule-based, algorithmic learning has limitations. Learners may not easily adapt rigid, standards-oriented knowledge to situations beyond the original learning situation. The rules-based content and approach for food safety training mimics the regulatory environment in which foodservice establishments operate and inspections occur. A component of inspections is managerial personnel’s demonstration of food safety knowledge (FDA, 2001). The primary document against which this knowledge is assessed is a food code composed almost entirely of rules-based behavioral procedures.

A Revised Theoretical Perspective
Transformative learning posits that knowledge development is a progression and an evolution of beliefs rather than an accumulation of rules (Mezirow, 1990, 1995). This perspective has implications for food safety practices in that increasing employees’ knowledge, but also their evidence base of experiences, requires strategically developed curricula and instruction that address both elements. What is remarkable, given the history of transformative learning and work to improve adult learning experiences, is the scarce application of this theory to food safety training. Transformative learning theory is applied through this research to food safety training to understand the roles of affective and symbolic dimensions of prior knowledge.
in learning and behavior change. This research addressed how adults’ prior knowledge, training, and experiences related to basic science principles influenced the use or adoption of proper food handling practices on the job. Specifically, the work focused on learners’ knowledge and application of heat and thermal dynamics associated with cooling foods.

The essence of this work was using fundamental principles of transformative learning to go beyond what the learner knows. It also assessed how foodservice employees developed their knowledge of food safety; under what conditions or for what reasons they have remembered this knowledge; and what meaning this knowledge has for them. As a result, employees’ meaning schema related to food preparation, food safety, their jobs as foodservice employees, and training were defined so transformative learning experiences could be later developed.

**Adult Learners in Food Service**

The study focused on adult hospital foodservice production and management employees whose job responsibilities were related to food preparation and handling. Professional standards and training applicable to these foodservice operations, such as ServSafe®, helped these operations maintain compliance with all applicable laws, codes, and policies such as the Iowa Food Code (Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals [IDIA], 2005). The sample for this research was sought from the foodservice employee pool at two health care-based foodservice facilities that were part of an urban health care system in the Midwest. The two facilities were under the same management and differed little in training, operating procedures, administrative practices, and menus. The primary pool of participants was chosen from one facility and additional participants were chosen from a second foodservice operation as part of cross checking for selection bias.

**Methods**

A distinguishing component of the research was its use of methodologies to go beyond assessing foodservice employees’ “point-in-time” food safety knowledge and how adults perform tasks or behaviors affecting food safety. Existing literature was void of such examination. Data collection involved three methods: a semi-structured interview; naturalistic, scripted behavior observation; and use of a prop (a pot of chili) for simulation of behaviors and elicitation of knowledge and perspectives. Knowledge assessment was designed to investigate the extent to which participants knew what was right in regard to appropriate behaviors and the extent to which behaviors were correct. Prior experiences, family influence, operational procedures and policies, or cultural traditions were expected to have a greater influence than knowledge with respect to which behaviors were being performed.

Combining the three data collection methods in this research allowed for elicitation of cognitive, conceptual knowledge as well as affective aspects that included beliefs, attitudes, and emotions associated with the concepts. This feature of the methodology enabled the researcher to draw conclusions about reasons for, or barriers to, desired behaviors. The methods examined conceptual understanding beyond the cognitive artifacts of factual knowledge to elaborate the origins and relationships of these concepts. In a similar manner, the methods for examining learners’ affective elements described such elements but also elaborated on why participants had these beliefs and the meanings they held for the learner.

Data collection methods were adapted in this study to determine how foodservice employees’ conceptual knowledge and misconceptions about heat and thermal equilibrium influenced their behaviors. Data collection began with interviews with each participant at their
respective place of employment, immediately followed by the employee’s demonstration of practices for cooling a pot of chili. The demonstration provided three opportunities for data collection: direct observation of the employee; probing questions to elaborate the thought process of behaviors – similar to a think-aloud protocol; and indirect observation of other employees, equipment, practices, and behaviors in the same facility.

An element of the data collection process included introducing an idea contradictory to the employees’ current ideas, beliefs, and knowledge about food handling and heat. Employees’ responses or reactions to the conflicting conception were part of the dataset. Determining the content and extent of employees’ conceptual ecologies about heat, thermal equilibrium, and their job responsibilities illuminated the employees’ conceptual understanding of these concepts and how the employees applied them to specific tasks involved in cooling foods.

Results

A key theme from the interviews concerned identity. Identity is a set of characteristics that makes something unique or separate from the rest (Erikson, 1980). The concept of identity is considered key to adult learning. The adult learners’ life experiences are important to them and form a strong basis for their personal beliefs, defining one’s self, and the knowledge base on which new experiences and knowledge are built. These experiences also help generate adult learners’ perspectives about life’s events that include such elements as work, society, family, and self existence. The primary identity for the majority of respondents was a “cook”. As cooks, participants did not focus on post-preparation, specifically, cooling. In this instance identity underscored the personal allegiance of the participants toward the fundamental role of their job, which was to prepare and cook foods, not cooling and storing leftovers.

The fundamental views of transformative learning are formulated around the idea that knowledge is unique to individual learners. However, there is a desire in the field of education to aggregate individual learners’ knowledge to inform and structure curriculum and instruction. This desire is based on an efficiency model rather than an effectiveness model. From a transformative view of learning, understanding individual perspectives is best for developing effective instructional practices. Data collected for this research represent each individual’s knowledge, beliefs, opinions, and feelings. The interviews and observations examined each participant’s knowledge of heat, thermal equilibrium, cooling, handling practices, and so forth. Though the data represent the individual views, they were aggregated into a single concept map to illustrate knowledge about concepts of interest ubiquitous to the group (Figure 1). This concept map compiles responses, discussion, and explanations from all of the participants. While some views differed in respect to specific elements included in the concept map, the overall structure is a generalized representation of the participants’ collective knowledge.
Figure 1. Aggregated concept map of foodservice employees’ content knowledge related to heat, thermal equilibrium, and cooling.

The aggregated knowledge of participants revealed that a disconnected, dichotomous view existed between cooking and cooling, although these concepts are based on the same scientific principles of heat transfer and thermal equilibrium. The richness of concepts diminished as the participants moved from heat associated with cooking to heat associated with cooling. Participants’ abilities to synthesize new practices, techniques, or procedures were greatest for cooking. In addition, the interaction between the cognitive, culinary knowledge and
the desired affective knowledge resulted in a psychomotor response of food preparation techniques that require little, if any conscious thought.

In contrast, participants’ knowledge related to cooling was rules-based. Their conceptual knowledge for cooling was not as developed as it was for cooking. The knowledge associated with the cooling procedures, whether preferred or typical, was concrete in regard to knowing and applying the procedures. Though possibly existent on a select, individual basis, the ability or perceived need to understand cooling beyond the application level of the cognitive domain was absent. Rules-based versus principles-based knowledge is a critical distinction between participants’ disposition toward cooling compared to cooking. The use of rules-based knowledge was prominent in participants’ explanations and actions related to cooling food.

Discussion

Presenting individual data in an aggregated form such as Figure 1 limits the ability to recognize and address unique perceptions, understanding, misconceptions, and beliefs of specific participants. However, this concept map simplifies the commonalities so that one can step back and look at the common threads when considering curriculum changes. Using the common knowledgebase of participants represented in Figure 1, food safety trainers can develop instructional practices that reinforce and build upon these generally held conceptions or understandings. In turn, revised instruction will provide for more independent learners who are able to apply conceptual knowledge beyond the situation in which it was learned.

For food safety education, it has long been the consensus that heating and cooling are not only guided by the same scientific principles (which is correct), but are considered in the same manner by learners. With such simplistic assumptions about foodservice employees’ interests and abilities, little wonder exists as to why minimal headway has been made to improve food safety practices in foodservice operations. This research showed that this assumption is incorrect. The divergence between understanding of heating and cooling may be due to a multitude of influences, such as a potential disregard of foodservice workers as people who care about their jobs; an oversight of distinct identities brought to the workplace by individuals; an assumption that only formula-based, or rules-based, training is sufficient; that foodservice employees are not able to process and apply knowledge beyond a rules-based capacity; and so forth. The diversity of potential personal influences identified by this research reinforces the benefit of using transformative learning theory when examining food safety training. These barriers, previously unconsidered or unknown, now can provide valuable insight into how foodservice employees process knowledge, learn and apply training content in the workplace.

The aspect of personal identity the participants have regarding their job performance and output shows that they care about what they are doing and consider themselves to be professionals. Conducting training programs for the short-term goal of passing a certification exam helps develop professionals, but is not sufficient. A training program focusing on learning, personal and occupational development, and long-term impacts through improved behaviors and changed mindsets emphasizes the importance of professionalism in the workplace. Professionalism of food handling, not just food preparation and cooking, would indicate a personal interest in such responsibilities. As this research has indicated, personal interest can result in higher attention to detail, greater cognitive awareness of influencing factors, and more perceived control that allows for manipulating standard procedures to improve performance.
Conclusions

Knowing, on a general level, participants cannot demonstrate that they comprehend the relationship between cooking and cooling can serve as an entry point for instruction in a training program. Food safety education needs to respect, draw upon, and reinforce what learners know about heat through education by first focusing on heating concepts for cooking. Heat for cooking might be where to begin a program because it reinforces correct, existing knowledge; surfaces partial knowledge; and reinforces the preferred identity of a cook. Then, one could move to cooling processes used when producing food, perhaps by talking about how cooling techniques are used to make custards or puddings. This step creates a connection between the comfortable and familiar—cooking—and a not-so-familiar concept of cooling, which follows the core tenets of transformative learning.

Transformative learning best informs this research from the focus on affective influences on adult learning. The life experience of adult learners, a part of the prior knowledge used with transformative learning, is rooted in personal meaning generated from attitudes, perceptions, emotions, and beliefs. This research demonstrates that theories from separate disciplines can assist in answering questions. This theoretical base underscores the benefits of looking beyond traditional fields of study for theories that can help illuminate seemingly isolated problems.

References


Discourse: The Individual and the Social Interface in Transformative Learning
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Abstract: Mezirow has asserted that rational discourse is an important component of transformational learning. This paper uses sociocultural theory to explore and raise questions about the connections between individuals, communities, context, and transformative learning as they intersect in communities of practice or in discourse communities.

Introduction
Social constructivists assert that “knowledge construction is a social product … knowledge evolves through a process of negotiation with discourse communities and that the product of these activities—like those of any other human activity—are influenced by cultural and historical factors” (Prawat & Floden, 1994, p. 37). In addition to foregrounding the social context in examining human development, 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).


the related proposals for sociocultural theory represent a general agreement that individual development constitutes and is constituted by social and cultural-historical activities and practices. In the emerging sociocultural perspective, culture is not an entity that influences individuals. Instead, people contribute to the creation of cultural processes and cultural processes contribute to the creation of people. Thus, individual and cultural processes are mutually constituting rather than defined separately from each other. (p. 51)

In this exploratory paper, sociocultural theory will be used to explore current conceptualizations of Mezirow’s theory of transformational learning, focusing on discourse communities. In sociocultural theory, “… human development is a process of transformation of participation in sociocultural activities …” (Rogoff, 2003a, p. 271) and the focus of learning is on learning as social participation (Rogoff, 2003; Wenger, 1999). Wenger describing communities of practice notes,

participation . . . refers here not just to local events of engagement in certain activities with certain people, but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities. Participating in a playground clique or in a work team, for instance, is both a kind of action and a form of belonging. Such participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do. (p. 30)

Communities of practice will be used in this paper as synonymous with discourse communities. Wenger asserts that “communities of practice sprout everywhere: in the classroom and on the playground; officially or in the cracks; and in spite of curriculum, discipline, and exhortation” (p. 32). Furthermore, “the learning that is personally transformative is the learning that involves membership in these communities of practice” (p. 32).

Mezirow has asserted that transformational learning is developmental, claiming that “perspective transformation is the engine of adult development” (1994, p. 228). The focus in
transformational learning has been on individual cognitive development and learning. However, studies of transformational learning reviewed by Taylor (1998; 2000) suggest the importance of relationships and the relational nature of rational discourse as important to fostering transformational learning. In the studies reviewed by Taylor (2000), settings for rational discourse included classrooms, health care centers (HIV and kidney transplant patients), self-help groups, community organizations, etc. It is argued that these are communities of practice.

Asserting 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), Mezirow presents rational discourse with others as essential to transformational learning (2000). Rønholt (2002) describes discourse as “a practice not just of presenting the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning” (p. 28). Despite Mezirow’s recent acknowledgement (2000) that learning occurs “in the real world in complex institutional, interpersonal, and historical settings” (p. 24), little research or theory building on transformational learning has examined the learning context or the composition of discourse communities in transformative learning, the norms and culture of the discourse communities joined by learners, the marginalization of individuals in dominant discourse communities, or the various roles of the members in the discourse group.

Three facets of sociocultural theory seem particularly promising for probing the connections between individuals, communities, and the larger social context and transformative learning as they intersect in communities of practice or in discourse communities: dominant frames of reference; zones of proximal development, and Rogoff’s (2003) intent participation learning model. It should be noted that examining transformational learning against the various theoretical constructs of sociocultural theory raises more questions than it provides answers to the complicated interactions of individuals and communities in learning and development!

**Frames of Reference**

Adult learners carry multiple identities and move across multiple communities and cultures. As a result, they participate in multiple communities of practice. Shared frames of reference or the development of shared frames of reference are assumed to operate in discourse communities (Andersson & Andersson, 2005). But, as Johnson-Bailey and Alfred (2006) point out, “a community with majority members of a dominant group will take on the values and mores of the dominant group and regard these as normal” (p. 54). Thus, some learners must “put on” the dominant frame of reference to participate in some communities of practice, for example, the Eurocentric American college classroom:

You have to think a different way and you realize that immediately when you go into the classes that you have to think totally different. You have to translate what’s being said into what you think and how you are going to respond to that. . . . It’s very tiring to live two lives . . . but I saw that at a very early age how to present myself in one situation and do that and then come home and be myself. (Indigenous college student, age 52, Erickson & Hirshberg, 2006)

Work by Kilgore and Bloom (2002) demonstrates that the decision to join a community of practice more conversant with society’s tools is not always voluntary, but may result 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). How do learners negotiate and challenge the dominant frames of
reference in communities of practice? How are the dominant frames of reference in a community of practice changed and transformed to be more inclusive? Does this lead to transformational learning for all community members?

**Zones of Proximal Development**

The work of Vygotsky is described as a cultural-historical approach to understanding development and learning. “According to Vygotsky’s theory, the efforts of individuals are not separate from the kinds of activities in which they engage and the kinds of institutions of which they are a part” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 50). Of interest in expanding our understandings of the connections between the individual, community, and larger society in transformational learning is Vygotsky’s concept of zones of proximal development (ZPD). ZPDs 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 that includes individuals more experienced with the culture’s tools. A community of practice may be similar to a ZPD. Thus, 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. Andersson and Andersson (2005) describe an informal learning group created by Somali refugees in Sweden that brought together “more knowledgeable ‘masters’ belonging to the same ethnic group but with a longer period of lived practice in the Swedish culture … [to guide]…the learning process” (p. 433) of new refugees as a ZPD. Yorks and Marsick (2000) describing transformative learning in organizations cite the voluntary formation of a collaborative inquiry group formed by faculty and staff members to examine the dilemma of increasing student responsibility for learning.

To what extent do individuals constructing or making meaning of a dilemma actively create or seek a ZPD to respond to the dilemma? Are individuals joining communities of practice such as environmental studies class, self-help group, community development organization, or enrolling in a women’s college re-entry program intentionally creating a developmental ZPD to scaffold their transformational learning? To what extent do economic and social factors constrain individual options and the resources available to create or join a ZPD or community of practice? To what extent do cultural factors influence environmental resources perceived as available for joining or creating a community of practice?

**The Intent Participation Model**

As noted above, sociocultural theory posits learning and development as participation in sociocultural activities. Rogoff writes primarily of her cross cultural work exploring the organization of teaching and learning in indigenous communities in Central and North America. Her work focuses primarily on the education of children and child development, but her work has potential for understanding learning and development in adulthood and further exploring the relationship of learning and development in transformational learning.

The intent participation learning model described by Rogoff, Paradise, Arauz, Correa-Chavez, and Angelillo (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. They describe the intent participation model as a form of informal learning and contrast it to “assembly-line instruction, which is based on transmission of information, by experts, outside the context of productive, purposive activity” (p.
In assembly line education, learners work in isolation, motivation is external, and more “experienced people manage learners’ behavior and communications” (p. 187). In contrast, …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)

It is argued here that individuals join communities of practice for various reasons, including as a response to dilemmas that may lead to transformational learning, and these communities of practice may revolve around shared endeavors to understand a chronic illness, provide support to change behaviors in self-help groups, transition from home to work, create a new role in retirement, obtain a graduate degree, etc. Members of these communities of practice include individuals with varied levels of experience with the cultural tools and the constructed knowledge of the community. In the intent participation model of learning, “experienced people play a guiding role, facilitating learners’ involvement and often participating alongside learners—indeed, often learning themselves. New learners in turn take initiative in learning and contributing to shared endeavors, sometimes offering leadership in the process” (p. 187).

This model, if extended to adulthood and adult learning, would provide opportunities for the validation of one’s new transformational learning by the broad consensus of “those more informed, rational, and objective” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 76). Through intent participation in a community of practice, responsibilities for learning are shared and the knowledge each member brings contributes to the new learning created by the group. In essence, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Summary

It may seem paradoxical to utilize sociocultural theory to explore and expand Mezirow’s transformational learning theory. Mezirow presents a theory of learning that (to date) has focused on individual cognitive development and learning. As Alfred (2002) notes, “the sociocultural perspective embraces, rather than rejects, the more traditional theories that dominate the field of adult education, while opening up a discursive space for acknowledging and supporting multiple ways of knowing” (p. 12).

References


Preparing Global Leaders? The Ph.D. in Education as a Locus for Transformative Learning

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Abstract: The intent of this research is to explore perceptions of Ph.D. faculty and graduates at one university about how their program has fostered transformative learning. Using a case study design, the research provides important insights about preparing leaders as agents of transformational change.

Higher Education in the 21st Century

A wide spectrum of assumed aims for the educational endeavor exists with accompanying expectations for the educator. The educational goal for students ranges from achieving personal success to accepting a global worldview. The attendant task for the educator extends from preparing a person for the workforce to creating a planetary citizen. Wherever the educator falls within that spectrum, the educational experience is never value neutral. The position, perspective, and power of the teacher are always present in the classroom.

The shift to the postindustrial information age is creating uncertainty and anxiety for many. “If we are to be at home in this new world, the means of socialization—in particular in education—must adapt or better still, lead the way” (O’Hara, 2006, p. 105). Peat (2005) argues that the fundamental complexity and uncertainty require a new level of understanding and collective creativity to discover new abilities to hold a variety of viewpoints in creative tension. To be at home in this creative tension in the educational setting, we will need to recognize the importance of facilitating multiple ways of knowing, and champion the significance of a classroom of diverse learners. O’Hara claims, “Whole person pedagogies will have to be developed that involve experiential activities where theory can emerge from practice” (2006, p. 114).

This tension is even more obvious when addressing adult learners in a doctoral program. These students have extensive life experience, workplace competencies, and for the most part, share a keen desire to make a difference in the world. Derek Briton (1996, p115-116) calls for a “pedagogy of engagement” and challenges the adult educator to address the real problems associated with putting democratic and emancipatory ideals into practice in the classroom. Concretely, this view acknowledges that adult education is a socio-historical and political practice, not a range of techniques and instructional methodologies devoid of human interest, and demands an ethical base for one’s research and practice. Rosalyn Arnold and Maureen Ryan (2003) translate the desired outcome of educational reform to be the transformation of individuals and society. They claim that the students of the 21st century have the potential to actively create the communities in which they live and learn, rather than live on the margins of those they inherit. We find this to be true of many of our doctoral candidates.

Statement of the Problem and Research Purpose

Given the current challenge to education of a global and diverse society, it is essential to turn our attention to the preparation of educational leaders as agents of transformational change. The Transformative Learning Conference explores many issues of diversity, issues which the persons standing at the helm of educational leadership in all types of organizations and
institutions in the future will need to understand and effectively communicate about. This research explores the perceptions of Ph.D. faculty and graduates in Education, with a concentration on Organizational Leadership, as to how the doctoral program has been a locus for transformative learning in their lives. The intention of this ongoing study is to retrieve valuable qualitative data to enrich our understanding of how to prepare leaders to facilitate change as well as assist in focusing our programmatic planning for the leadership curriculum.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical structure of this research is built on two foundational stones: a) transformative learning theory, as elaborated by Jack Mezirow and other authors situated within this framework (Mezirow et al., 2000; Taylor, 2006); and b) organizational change theory as elaborated by Peter Senge and colleagues (2005).

Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning theory, according to Mezirow (2000), affirms the fundamental purpose of development in the education of adults and describes that development as “learning—movement through phases of meaning becoming clarified” (p.69). Mezirow emphasizes that the role of such education is to help “adults acquire the insight, ability and disposition to realize the capacity to engage in transformative learning” (p. 69). His theory rests primarily on the practice of critical reflection on experience. Warring and Huber (2004) describe transformative learning similarly, with the added dimensions of global and social justice awareness, understanding, and interaction.

Much has been written about the function of reflection in learning and pedagogy. To develop the complex skills and attitudes necessary for contemporary education practice, the habit of deep introspection needs to be encouraged. Introspection goes beyond reflection to influence embodied habits of mind. Introspection can transform reflection into the kind of responsiveness which can be flexible and informed by contexts of learning. Those contexts are now recognized as extremely complex and multi-faceted, requiring teachers and administrators to have broad repertoires of pedagogical practice (Schuller et al., 2002). Transformative learning theory provides a theoretical and praxis base to assist future educational and business leaders with the challenge of understanding and promoting the process of change.

Warring (2006) discusses the use of reflective self-reporting and assessment of the identity development process to determine the impact of college courses on students’ growth for social justice and global awareness. He makes the point that someone must reach a certain stage in the development models to more fully recognize and address various forms of oppression and the need for social change. The seven stage “OTAID” model (Optimal Theory Applied to Identity Development) by Cahill and Adams (1998), looks at worldview and the interaction between individual and socio-cultural environment. Warring used an instrument based on this model with students in three graduate and one undergraduate education courses. Both during the third week of class and the fifteenth week, the students were asked where they saw themselves “today” on the scale and where they thought they were on the first day of class. The findings from the 29 matched pairs of students indicated 1) students believed at the end of the course their beginning level stage was lower than where they had perceived it in the third week, reflecting a more realistic self-assessment; and 2) students believed at the end of the course that they had grown since the beginning of the course, and that they had grown from where they saw
themselves at the beginning of the course, based on a greater understanding of what it takes to be at a higher stage of development.

Organizational Change Theory

Organizational leaders today are also required to effectively facilitate institutional and systemic reform. Drawing upon the model of organization and systemic change elaborated by Senge and colleagues (2005) as noted above, this study examines the lived experience of faculty and students and explores the potential of a Ph.D. program to prepare leaders for this task. These theorists advocate the importance of developing the capacity "to avoid imposing old frameworks on new realities" (p. 84) and put forth another type of learning termed the "U Theory" (p. 87). They explicate a series of capacities, both individual and collective, necessary for leadership today to embrace the complexities of institutional change. Together, with transformative learning theory, U Theory forms an underlying theoretical base from which to analyze the experiential data gathered in the study.

Research Design and Strategies

Research Design

Case study was the research design for the study. The case setting is a private university in the southwest United States which has a relatively new and successful doctoral program, enrolling both national and international students. The program includes in its mission statement the intention of preparing graduates as scholar-practitioners for leadership in a global community, thus acknowledging the importance of cross-national and cross-cultural understanding, communication, and exchange. A significant effort is invested in integrating theory with practice, as well as fostering cross-cultural understanding in course content and activities. There is a strong emphasis on addressing the ethical and social justice challenges facing leaders in the 21st century.

It was deemed appropriate to undertake an investigation of the perceptions of students and faculty regarding the program intention and the fruit of the efforts to actualize the intention. This current research fits within a larger framework of research on the program. An earlier phase of the study (Antelo & Ettling, 2006) focused on identifying student perceptions of the value of learning in a culturally diverse environment, resulting in discovering some of the most influential variables of students’ experiences in the Ph.D. program. Insights from these qualitative interviews with students led the researchers to develop and test a survey instrument to measure some aspects of a culturally diverse learning environment. The goal of all of this research is to enhance the quality of the program toward further establishing a climate conducive to transformative learning and preparing the graduates to be agents of change.

Research Strategies

Forty graduates from 2003-2006 and 10 current faculty of the program were asked to participate in the research through an email invitation. Respondents returned a reflective questionnaire attached to the email to a third party not involved in the study to preserve the anonymity of each respondent. The purpose of the questionnaire was to qualitatively document the graduates’ experiences of the learning environment as a locus for transformative change. The faculty questionnaire documented their perceptions of what the program does and how it impacts the graduates. Seven faculty and ten graduates returned questionnaires in the first wave of this research. The invitation encouraged respondent stories of their experiences in the
program. The questions were very open ended to facilitate whatever answers were prompted. The topics of the questions included:

- The events and experiences most meaningful to graduates’ Ph.D. journeys
- How the program may have affected ways of thinking, feeling, acting, seeing oneself, or seeing the world
- Development of a global awareness
- The effect of a Ph.D. experience shared with persons of other cultures
- Impact of the program on the development of graduates’ leadership capacities
- Effect on graduates’ capacities to facilitate change in their work and community

**Analysis**

There were three primary themes that emerged from analyzing the graduate and faculty questionnaire responses. This section of the paper covers those three themes as well as the intentions of the program identified by the faculty in their responses.

**Expressions of Change and Identity Growth**

The graduates cited numerous instances of increased awareness or understanding and changes in their ways of thinking or being. The faculty mentioned the potential for such results and student reports of their occurrence. Some of these instances included greater understanding and appreciation for people from other cultures, openness to new ideas and new thought processes, development of their intellectual capacities, greater confidence and ability to reflect, and greater ability to see the “big picture” in terms of the global impacts of different actions:

- Students report they learn a great deal in this exchange of cultures and they grow in understanding and tolerance of diversity.
- I was taught to look at things more globally, to question everything.
- I quickly see the ‘bigger picture’ where I once had to struggle or did not.
- There is a potential to affect a student’s openness and their acceptance of new thought processes and ideas.

**Meaningful Experiences and Events**

The valuable or meaningful experiences included cross-cultural exchange and dialogue; opportunities to apply concepts and theory through a practicum, independent study, research, a conference, or an internship experience; scholarly and social interaction with diverse faculty and students; and exposure to a wide variety of thoughts and perspectives.

- I could learn and listen from other students’ stories, opinions, and experiences.
- It seemed apparent that people wanted to do well, work together, and support each other.
- In many ways, we became learning communities.
- The exposure to other thoughts, experiences, and perspectives from other individuals with various areas of expertise created a very conducive learning environment.
- Exposure to the international students was key to my cultural awareness. Cultural awareness played a big role in my learning to be a global thinker.

**Effecting Change**

A key theme through the interviews related to the impacts of the Ph.D. program on the graduates’ desires and competencies to promote or lead change in their work setting or the community. The graduates reported a wide variety of ways in which they were utilizing their
new leadership and change facilitation capacities from influencing individuals and groups at work, serving needs in the local and international communities, encouraging and being an example to the next generation, and utilizing research to help or benefit others.

It [the program] has helped me seek out ways to encourage the young people I work with to become their own best advocates, change agents, and leaders.

The potential to facilitate change is the main reason I chose this program. I gained the ability to help effect beneficial changes in the organizations I serve.

On the state level, I have become involved in recruitment efforts to promote inclusion of more diverse personnel.

**Faculty Expressions of Program Intentions**

The faculty participants expressed intentions for the program and examples that indicated the establishment of conditions to create the potential for transformative learning to occur. These expressions included recruiting diverse faculty and students, providing opportunities for service and research in the community, using multicultural course materials and facilitating exchange, building global awareness, preparing leaders, emphasizing ethical practice and social justice, and ongoing encouragement of self-reflection and critical thinking throughout the program.

**Conclusions and Implications**

The questionnaire responses and the analysis provided valuable insights about graduates’ learning and possible implications for teaching practice:

1) It is important to express and continue to reinforce the specific intents of the Ph.D. program among students, faculty, and administrators.

2) It seems essential to continue incorporating learning concepts and teaching practices that invite reflection and dialogue. Warring and Huber (2004) refer to the need for “culturally conscious critical reflection” (p. 4), a type of reflection that utilizes constructivist theory in the creation of positive teaching-learning environments that are both socially just and internationally inclusive. This type of reflection needs to occur among both faculty and students who impact each other through their interactions. Ongoing reflection that addresses how one’s learning affects thinking, acting, and way of being; plans for using new leadership and change facilitation capacities in the future; identification of frameworks and assumptions; and the ability to understand the views of others should continue to set the stage for transformative learning in a culturally diverse learning environment.

3) Sharing research results that reveal the realities of a Ph.D. program through the eyes of the graduates may be helpful for current and future students in the program, as well as students, faculty, and administrators in the rest of the university.

Currently, the researchers are soliciting participation in the study from 2007 graduates and planning follow up focus groups. Our intent is to continue encouraging participation in the research, and over time, tie the results into course projects, community research, and practicum experiences.
References

Quadrinity in the Balkans: An Examination of Dialogue as Transformative Practice
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Abstract: This case study supports the transformative theory of Quadrinity. “Quadrinity” names the pattern of transformative practices and experiences. This paper first defines Quadrinity, including the driving force of whole-personhood and the barriers to it. Second, this study describes the Nansen Network and its approach for reconciliation work with those from the Balkans.

Introduction
I have often heard facilitators ask one another, “what techniques do you use?” When I first encountered such a question, I considered whether the meaning was “what do you do that I can borrow?” or “is there any similarity in our approaches?” The former is potentially harmful as it assumes that what works in one situation can be replicated in another. The latter is more useful as the question is one of pattern – is there a pattern in and around transformative experiences? The idea of a pattern is of key interest to transformational facilitators and practitioners. Since the factors involved vary from case to case, it is useful to share patterns more than specific tools. This material focuses on a case study that tests my working theory of transformation known as Quadrinity (Feller, et. al. 2004).

Quadrinity
“Quadrinity” is a name for the pattern which surrounds transformative practices and experiences. The concept of Quadrinity is founded on two understandings. First, people transform knowledge of self and of others by engaging many types of learning and discovery. Second, deep learning and transformative practices occur in cycles involving four dimensions (Feller et. al. 2004). The central premise is that transformative process is expressed, described, and understood in similar ways across cultures and contexts. I have found that facilitators working within contexts such as teaching, organizational facilitation, and international conflict describe the transformative process in a similar way. The pattern which has consistently presented itself is comprised of four components, elements, pre-conditions, characteristics, etc.

Whole-personhood
As a general rule human beings are social, not solitary beings. The need to communicate is the need to share and connect with others. More specifically, one person hopes to see him or herself in another. The eternal hope is to sense that others to feel the world the way we feel it. However, this is an uncommon experience. It is more often the case that an individual senses that they are not adequately heard, seen, understood, or felt by another. So the motive to communicate continues. When this gap occurs in the extreme, tensions rise; the communication climate becomes defensive; and the need for transformative process is high. Therefore, it can be understood that the driving force of Quadrinity is the need for whole-personhood. The definition of whole-personhood can be understood in terms of Buber, Maslow, and Burke.

Buber’s I-Thou explains how a gap of whole-personhood manifests. When the “I” sees the other as “it” and not “thou” the relationship is problematic. In essence, the I-it relationship is one of objectification and even full dehumanization. The reverse also applies, “when I confront a
human being as my You and speak the basic word I-You to him, then he is no thing among things nor does he consist of things” (Kaufmann 1970, p.59). Similarly Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs illustrates that the steps of belonging and self-esteem are essential ones on the path to self-actualization (Maslow 1968).

Perhaps most relevant to whole-personhood is communication scholar Kenneth Burke. From Burke’s perspective our basic motive for communicating is this hope that one person will be fully experienced and recognized by another. Burke referred to this need as one of consubstantiation and of identification,

Substance is the general nature, fundamentals, or essence of a thing. Substances must be viewed in holistic terms…Each person is distinct, possessing separate substance…the substances of any two persons always overlap…The overlap is not perfect though, and thus prevents ideal communication… Identification is the sharing of substance. The opposite of identification is division…Communication is always more successful when identification is greater than division. (Littlejohn 1999, p.180)

Exigence

Burke’s notion of division speaks to the ongoing need for whole-personhood and for Quadrinity. It is assumed that individuals are divided from one another, that they wish for identification. It is assumed that division results in an I-It rather than an I-Thou relationship. A third assumption is that forces work, wittingly or unwittingly, to maintain the status quo and the division.

In discussing how the ideology of the status quo becomes dominant, social theorist Anthony Giddens (1979) addresses power. He refers to those with power as “sectional interests” and he observes that those with "interests” exercise power to create and maintain structures that protect and enhance their interests. The result is that power maps and classifies the world for others, which often includes creating or maintaining a sense of division.

Giddens (1979) and Mumby (1989, 1988) describe four modes that allow one ideology to become dominant over others. First, dominant interests are represented as universal – that the ideas of those in power become ingrained in the larger culture as good for all. Second, such ideas are often represented to be the natural order of existence. Third, sectional interests are also sustained and protected by denial – that any attempts to note errors in rationale are quickly dismissed. Fourth, perhaps most vital to the sustainability of sectional interests as dominant, is the role of hegemony – participation in one's own domination. If the modes of operation are successful then those not part of the sectional interests ultimately find identification of self within the values and goals of the dominant interests (Giddens 1979; Mumby 1988, 1989). Fortunately, the structures that serve sectional interests are not fixed and tangible; rather they are expressed linguistically, ideologically, symbolically, and artifactually. The process used to penetrate status quo barriers (to see them as symbolically created and not as fixed, real structures) and to experience whole-personhood depends upon the culture and context.

Origins and Examples of Quadrinity

In early 1999 I was in a cohort of transformative practitioners taking on the task of applying our knowledge to our group. By late spring of 2000 the group was engaged in reflection of what had been accomplished and how. In pursuing the meta-analysis the group felt that a four-fold process had been used. More significantly, different processes were used at various times.
Upon closer analysis, this pattern could be seen in the works of other practitioners and facilitators.

The following examples help illustrate the definition of Quadriinity as a four-fold cycle. Each contains within a piecing together of self or engaging a holistic process. The first example is that of mind-body-spirit-emotion. This is one of the most common ways of speaking about the dimensions of self. (“Emotion” is commonly collapsed with “spirit” in the vernacular, even though in applied forms the two are treated separated). A casual glance at the grocery store newsstand reveals no shortage of a market seeking balance of these dimensions.

The educational arena has increasingly worked with the concept of multiple ways of knowing and learning. Traditional education relies heavily on propositional knowledge to engage “a life of the mind”. More balanced approaches involve more aspects of self and a broader epistemology. Transformative pedagogy directly draws on idea such as Kolb’s Learning Styles Inventory and Heron’s Circuit of Fourfold Knowing. More compelling is that educators and students reporting on transformative experiences unwittingly draw on such frameworks.

Some North American aboriginal tribes codify the four directions – North, East, South, and West – as characteristics of The Journey. Indeed, our group walked a natural medicine wheel (as found in the Arizona landscape) as part of our experience. The walk was facilitated by those versed in native practices and understandings. Walking a medicine wheel or drawing on its aspects, are not unheard of in transformative practice. Similarly, cultural anthropologist, Angeles Arrien (1993) offers a four-fold process. In her work, the archetypes of Warrior, Healer, Teacher, and Visionary are used as a means of understanding self. Arrien developed a technique for deciphering one’s archetypal self to be used in the larger transformative process.

Case Study: Nansen

The Nansen Academy or Nansenskolen is located in Lillehammer, Norway. The school has been functioning since 1938 as an academy of sanctuary – a place for students needing “a break” to rejuvenate and explore alternative ways of being. In the 1990s the staff secured funds from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) to formalize the Nansen Dialogue Project. From this grew the Nansen Network and the Nansen Dialogue Centers. The project grew out of an unlikely place: the planning of the 1994 Winter Olympics held in Lillehammer. Nansen Academy staff members were on the Olympic host planning committee. To better understand the planning process the committee traveled to Sarajevo, host city of the 1984 Winter Olympics. As most Nansen members describe the experience “we were shocked to discover a war in the middle of Europe. We returned home thinking what can we, a small academy, do to help?”

As of 2007, eleven Nansen Dialogue Centers operate throughout ex-Yugoslavia. Additionally, the Academy in Lillehammer hosts more than two-dozen ten-day to two-week seminars for those from conflict areas. The Dialogue Project also funds staff members to conduct work in the Caucasus, Israel, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, and more. NDC facilitators work with communities that are divided. In essence, the I-It relationship is at work – a consequence of war and dominant ideology. NDC facilitators use dialogue to deconstruct enemy images, to build shared narratives, and to generate collaborative projects. The core of the work is to overcome division and to support identification. The goal is to improve relations and to create sustainable communities.

Dr. Steinar Bryn, project director, invited me to experience the Nansen Network. In June 2007 I first witnessed a seminar in Lillehammer where the participants were from conflict regions. I then traveled to five centers: Bujanovac, Skopje, Prishtina, South Mitrovica, and North
Mitrovica. The general purpose was to better understand the Nansen work as an example of Norway as a democracy builder. The more specific aim was to better define the NDC approach to transformative practice, especially using the concept of Quadrinity. (More information about NDC can be found at http://www.nansen-dialogue.net).

**Nansen and Quadrinity**

Prior to my visit, Dr. Bryn explained that Nansen dialogue uses physical space, social time, cultural sharing, and knowledge acquisition. Upon first hearing this description I naturally equated the Nansen approach with Quadrinity. After an intensive experience in Lillehammer and the Balkans, I became convinced that 1) the approach fits the concept of Quadrinity; 2) that Quadrinity is valid as a theory of transformation; and 3) that the modes of domination as articulated in Structuration theory are the best description of what and how division operates in opposition to identification. The focus here is on Quadrinity as related to the Nansen approach.

Understanding that the Nansen approach was emergent, rather than borrowed from elsewhere is important. In its beginnings the Nansen Academy philosophy was influenced by the teachings of Gandhi (Though he tried, Nansen himself unfortunately never met Gandhi). The Dialogue Project formally launched when the first group from the Balkans arrived in Lillehammer the fall of 1995. In an interview with former Nansen Director, Inge Eidsvåg, I learned that, “when we set out to do this work, we did not have a clear plan. We did not think so purposefully about physical space, social time, etc. it is merely what we did.” He went on to say that the initial idea of how to work with the participants was drawn from long-standing Nansen Academy philosophy. Nansen staff members are guided by Gandhi’s principle of *Swadeshi* – acknowledging and making use of what is in your native environment.

For Nansen seminars this principle includes the beauty of Norway. The landscape provides clues to Norway’s role in the world as a democracy builder. The cities are quiet, calm, and tidy. Culture in Norway centers on social time in the family home, rather than on entertainment found externally. Specific to Lillehammer participants experience Hunderfossen, a peaceful family theme park; the remnants of the Winter Olympics such as the famous ski jump; Maihaugen, Europe’s largest open-air folk life park; and postcard-perfect views, including that from Dr. Bryn’s home where seminar socials are held.

For the first group in 1995, the initial thought was also that participants needed information – knowledge about conflict, dehumanization, feminism, media bias, and more. As compared with later seminars, more emphasis was placed on knowledge and less on dialogue. This was problematic for two reasons. First, returning home with a changed understanding and without a support system proved overwhelming. Second, the real need was to tell stories and, through sharing, discover “the other” was human. Even so, a portion of every seminar is dedicated to knowledge acquisition. It could be said that the seminar is incidental to all else that happens.

In facilitating identification and a restoration of the I-You perspective, the staff create an atmosphere for sharing cultural artifacts. Every seminar allocates time to share songs, dances, poems, pictures, and food from one’s native culture. As Burke notes, substance overlaps and indeed, I have never witnessed more clearly how sharing of substance creates connection. For one, these cultures share a love of expression. Even their songs and dances are similar; and people join a dance without hesitation. Second, these cultures make little distinction between socializing and work. This is opposite to the characterization of U.S. culture, where work becomes the social sphere. Rather, business in the Balkans is the matter of social relationships.
Throughout my week in Lillehammer I saw participants develop close relationships where none existed. Students ate all meals together and shared dorm rooms. The week included one or two short lectures each day with one or two dialogues. Meals, breaks and off-campus activity were for continued socializing. The second evening featured food, drink, and dance at Dr. Bryn’s home. This set the tone for the week – one that encouraged more play and I-You experiences. The third afternoon featured a drive up to the ski jump and a walk down, during which more singing occurred. The last evening featured an on-campus pseudo talent show where each region shared something cultural. The event was scheduled to last two to three hours; it went on for at least six. The last morning was for closure, sharing how the week had impacted each participant. Each day built naturally on the last. Throughout the week there were difficult moments, and certainly when returning home, community divide would be waiting for each participant. However, this intensive week provided me with understanding of the Nansen four-fold approach.

The second week provided different sensory input, yet the pattern held. Each day brought a new location and new view of Nansen. The trek began in Belgrade, ventured off the path to Bujanovac, continued on to Skopje then crossed the border to Kosovo. There I visited the center in Prishtina as well as those in Mitrovica, one on the south side of a short bridge and one on the north side (the two centers are a ½ mile from one another). Each center has dramatically different local circumstances and division. For example, Bujanovac is a community with not only Serbian-Albanian division, but with a substantial Roma population, some are citizens and some are refugees. In contrast, Mitrovica is without question a divided city, complete with KFOR (Kosovo Forces/NATO troops) keeping the Serbian and Albanian populations apart.

NDC staff and project affiliates (such as municipal leaders, teachers, first-responders) participate in a Lillehammer seminar. I found throughout the Nansen Network that time in Lillehammer gives all a shared narrative and something to lean on when surrounded by more division than identification. For example, every Center features a group photo in front of a 60-foot troll at Hunderfossen. It seems that the sense of physical space serves as a reminder of the social time, cultural sharing, and knowledge acquisition. That small reminder seems to also guide Center project development and execution. In interviews NDC staffers described projects and I noted that each project used the four-fold approach. It is important to emphasize that the approach does not drive the project. Rather, when dialogue is used to create improved relationships, a project emerges that engages the dimensions. A notable example is a theatrical production in one village. A director worked with local youth. Together, through dialogue of their own, they wrote about their experiences. The students naturally used the four dimensions to improve their own relations as well as those in the village. Indeed, the feared empty house gave way to standing-room-only.

In short, my direct experience of Norway, the Nansen approach, and division in the Balkans has given me further insight to Quadrinity. Practitioners must be cautious in looking to what works in one setting, thinking that the same techniques will work elsewhere. As evidenced by the variation among NDC work, the means of creating improved relations in one village cannot be applied with the same results in another. For those in the Nansen Network what does cross-apply is four-dimensional dialogue.
References


The Cultural Complex and the Ecology of Transformative Learning Venues
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Abstract: An integral method for reasoning and reflection informed by the contemporary Jungian idea of the cultural complex may help reveal the invisible cultural prohibitions in transformative learning environments.

Introduction

In transformative learning, learners are encouraged to critically reflect on disorienting dilemmas and to make reasoned choices (Mezirow, 2000). What confounds learners’ abilities to reflect and reason clearly are discussed variably, for example, as unconscious material attributable to personal history (Boyd. and Myers, 1988), unawareness of power relationships and hegemonic assumptions (Brookfield, 2000) or inadequate psychological maturity to handle the given complexity of one’s life (Kegan, 1994). Given what it can consider problematic in learning and the constructivist paradigm that commonly underlies it, transformative learning justifiably promotes a pedagogy of dialogue, collaborative inquiry and critical self-reflection to deepen learners’ understanding of their lived experiences. Additionally, learners’ knowledge is often enhanced through critical social inquiry and through practices of non-rational ways of knowing. However, is the focus on individual knowledge and capacity building enough when the disorienting dilemma that arises is one provoked by the clash of unconscious collective differences? In this paper I suggest that the contemporary Jungian idea of the cultural complex may sensitize educators and learners to the unconscious factors inherent in the learning environment. These, when trespassed, can trigger overwhelming negative emotion, undermining individual ability to reflect and reason, particularly about ontological assumptions that in themselves keep at bay the very contradictions that evoke psychic chaos.

In contemporary analytical psychology, the cultural unconscious lies between the collective unconscious and the personal unconscious (Henderson, 1984). Like the collective unconscious, the cultural unconscious does not originate in an individual’s personal history. This inherited characteristic of the collective unconscious means that it has a certain autonomy; the individual is not in conscious control of its effect and cannot find its traces by simply reflecting on personal experience. While archetypes are the collective unconscious patterns of humankind that relate it to existence, the cultural unconscious refers to a people’s adaptation to existence and its specific relationship to archetypal reality. The patterns that a culture develops over millennium to endure the psychic suffering brought on by hunger, war, death and the like, are not just of the individual’s making. A people’s being is enacted through cultural values, beliefs and religious practices, through the collective meaning placed on historical events and epochs and through the uncompromising feelings about what is the “good” in the every-day, habitually-perpetuated order of things.

Complexes arising out of the unconscious, in general, are associated with conflict—something is in contradiction to the adaptive understanding of conscious life. Shock and mental agony are symptomatic of triggered complexes. “They [complexes] are vulnerable points which we don’t like to remember and still less to be reminded of by others, but which frequently come to mind unbidden and in the most unwelcome fashion” (Jung, 1933, p. 79). Complexes, whether personal or cultural, thus always evoke intense, irrational feelings and inform the inner-outer dynamics of conflict. Singer (2004) succinctly characterizes cultural complexes:
Like individual complexes, cultural complexes tend to be repetitive, autonomous, resist consciousness, and collect experience that confirms their historical point of view… Cultural complexes also tend to be bipolar, so that when they are activated the group ego becomes identified with one part of the unconscious complex, while the other part is projected out onto the suitable hook of another group… [C]ultural complexes provide a simplistic certainty about the group’s place in the world in the face of otherwise conflicting and ambiguous uncertainties. (p. 21)

In this paper I include how the Western, particularly the American, cultural complex is characterized as one with an unconscious yearning for perfection and a related propensity to proselytize its “perfection” as offered by Jungian clinician, Manish Roy. I choose to consider a Western cultural complex, as the West is the prevailing culture in which most readers are likely embedded. This cultural exploration is not meant to be definitive. Rather, its presentation is to suggest how the cultural complex can provide a perspective that supports an integral approach for reasoning and reflecting. With newly crafted lens to see how a cultural complex can haunt the field of learning environments, I close the paper with a critique of my own past pedagogical practice. It vaguely intended to honor the intense feelings, autonomy and certainty of learners. At the same time it was to awaken learners as to how deep assumptions upset intentions for an inclusive ecology that supports transformative learning, i.e., supports the deep questioning of paradigmatic assumptions.

**The Cultural Complex and an Integral Inquiry**

Roy (2004) discusses how a religious archetype can manifest as a cultural complex. Specifically, she suggests that American culture is susceptible to the particular kind of perfection it has inherited from its Puritan religious ancestry.

One needs to look at political and social decisions and actions with a psychological lens to see how the Puritan cultural complex still controls many facets of American life from behind or beneath the senses. Among many characteristic traits of Puritanism, let me mention two particularly virulent “standards:

- strict judgment of others’ sexual and ethical morality punishable by law
- the absence of any awareness of one’s power shadow. (p. 74)

In this paper I am less concerned with debating Roy’s Puritan perfectionist thesis per se and more concerned with demonstrating how the idea of the cultural complex might allow the field of transformative learning to examine its methods for reasoning and reflecting. In so doing I hope to move the conversation of transformative learning pedagogy to one that further addresses synergizing cognition-feeling, analysis-intuition and concrete-imaginal polarities towards an integral knowing. With this intention, the following inquiry begins to model an integral approach that I use to engage Roy’s account of religious archetype as cultural complex.

I enter the image of Puritan perfectionism from the naive standpoint of wonder, assuming the image to be a legitimate being that has something to say about how the archetypal realm has chosen to story itself through American culture. In doing so, I take on an objective understanding of psyche, as articulated by Jungians such as Hillman (1976). Yet, I initially use an imaginal, subjective method to begin to know it. Thus, I start with a personal amplification of the image of Puritan perfectionism to see if I am indeed unwittingly informed by it. In this way I attempt to embody what Roy is pointing to, namely the unique American unconscious expression of godliness; the culture’s underlying sense of the ultimate structure of existence.
In falling into the imaginal, the image of the stern father presents itself to me. Apparent is an unforgiving patriarch who vigilantly watches for transgressions. His charges are filled with the terror that they will forsake the covenant that entitles them to be his children no matter how hard they try to be perfect. Their birthright is not assured by their being for they live in the imperfection of humankind’s original sin. (In the spell of this image, my spirit falls as I feel the harshness of the stern father. He is very different from the memory of my own father, a heartfelt man. The stern father image also contrasts with the one imprinted by my Japanese cultural roots that establishes parental relationship through filial piety, not moral judgment. Perhaps this contrast makes me especially susceptible to the image of the stern father.)

This image that spontaneously came up for me, compels me to research associated literatures on Puritanism. In synchronistic fashion, I find myself in Monterey, California at a fine used bookstore that happens to have a collection of scholarly works on the Puritans. In these works my image of the stern father is supported, for example, by this passage about the Puritan congregational churches established in America in the 17th century (Miller, P., 1956):

Each congregation was to choose its own pastor and officers, to administrate the rites, accept or excommunicate members, while the masses—if unable to make a profession—would simply have to remain meekly outside. …It [Puritan Congregationalist doctrine] aimed to achieve those islands of democratic Christians by deliberately excluding most of the populace, who had neither the wit nor the inclination to make a profession, as presumably unregenerate and therefore probably headed for damnation. (p. 2-3)

This account suggests that Puritan perfection was believed to grace only the few and even they were susceptible to transgression and thus, to excommunication. As for the unprofessed, they were simply damned. The stern-father image metaphorically captures this relationship between perfection and excommunication and perfection and damnation.

Upon further research into Puritan history, I intuit that the cultural archetypal energy surrounding English Puritan perfection gained archetypal intensity in the New World. The perfection of stoic discipline (repressing desire; denial of the body and its yearnings) likely served to help the Puritans survive the scarcity and hostility of the wilderness and helped them to psychologically endure their daily encounter with unspeakable suffering. Of the first settlement, half died within the first winter, and of the fifty left that year only seven were well enough to tend to the community’s survival needs (Miller, 1956, p. 17). (I imagine mothers watching helplessly as their infants and children starve and die. I imagine proud fathers ravaged by disease, withering in their helplessness.)

Sources for the stern-father image that came to me so readily then, can be traced through the historical literature and are illuminated by a psychological interpretation. (Further study of the Puritan mind and its ongoing effect in American culture further illuminates the image, however, for the sake of brevity to present an approach, I do not discuss the interdisciplinary literature more fully.) In addition, there is something in the research that I did not expect: The Puritans for all of their fundamentalist theology held logic and reason in high regard: “…he [a Puritan] is exceedingly rational; he attacks with fury those misguided zealots who jump to the conclusion that religion can dispense with learning, ministers with education, saints with knowledge, or converts with the fullest possible understanding, not only of theology, but of science and philosophy” (Miller, 1967, p. 66). (I think of postmodernism and its intolerance for the oppressive dimension of rationality. However, I also sense a recalcitrant stance—whether modern or postmodern—constellating a ferocious intensity.)
The integral approach leads me next to discern effects of the image in lived life. Does the stern father indeed symbolize a potential complex that haunts the prevailing culture, and concomitantly, the American learning environment? Does this complex reduce a learner’s way of reasoning to a syllogistic, dualistic process of separating “truth” from “heresy” at the expense of the potentially transformative embrace of paradox? Before exploring that question, I first dwell briefly with Roy’s other assertion that a second “virulent standard” of Puritan perfectionism is the absence of awareness of the power shadow.

Roy notes that Puritan perfection involves the power to control desire and to control others who are imperfect in their self-control. The un-integrated reality of imperfection is projected onto an “imperfect” other. I reflect that the virulence is plausible, fueled by the saved/damned duality. Does Puritan perfectionism unexamined, close one’s heart to the other and compel an unwitting drive to overpower the other? If so, this perfectionism does not simply constitute critical observation. Rather it is virulent!

Through this integral approach, I sense that the archetype that lives through the stern-father image has to do with how to be in the face of scarcity and uncertainty. Perfectionism is associated with safety in a dualistic world of salvation or damnation. Roy wonders whether her own Asian Indian background allows easier relationship with good and evil as reflected in the pantheon of Hindu gods and goddesses that conjures the likes of Kali, a dark goddess born of the fury and anger of the ten-arm goddess, Durga. Roy, however, is not looking to make converts. She simply notes that living with any god has to do with keeping distance from its image. The complexes wrought are not untrue fantasies; rather they are objective realities that manifest as images from which one must learn to keep a respectful distance. To keep distance from the stern father requires wariness of the saved/dammed duality and of the narrow moralizing logic that lies in the cultural unconscious. Thus, we who live in American culture might foster sensitivity as to whether our social institutions, including education, are affected by the stern father and other cultural archetypes while still appreciating the psychic protection they intend.

Application of an Integral Pedagogy

The approach related above gives me insight as to how to frame discussions for a diverse cohort of learners who gather to learn from each other. I might begin with Roy’s article, ask each learner to allow a personal image to reveal itself, have them compare images amongst themselves, have them research relevant literature that their images compel and only then come to discuss collaboratively Roy’s thesis, any insights gained about the prevailing culture, their own cultural unconscious relationship to it, and what all of that portends for transformative learning. Notice that allowing personal experience through an imaginal process creates the conditions for a mutual field of engagement, one where diverse experiences and reflections are invited and where authority for feeling is kept with each learner. However, one bridge to mutual sharing across differences is the idea of a cultural unconscious that accounts for the variation in philosophical, social, religious and aesthetic attitudes (Henderson, 1984) across cultures and subcultures. With this understanding, learners can begin a discussion with awareness that the learning environment is not a neutral one. Rather it is saturated with archetypal realities that compel, for example, a kind of reasoning and reflection that is based on the prevailing culture’s unconscious relationship to existence. This relationship to the ground of its being lives in archetypal cultural images, especially ones associated with a culture’s religious ancestry. Discovery of cultural archetypal images through the imaginal and through discussion about the prevailing cultural unconscious invites learners to critically engage group manifestations of
triggered cultural complexes as well as the clash of diverse ones. This inter-subjective, integral approach to archetypal cultural reality may allow diverse learners a way to have a grounded, yet authentic discussion regarding volatile emotions triggered in a transformative learning community.

For the last several years, I’ve facilitated learning community environments in a way intended for diverse learners to discover archetypal realities for themselves. To evoke the imaginal, I used the term “cosmic hero” as a metaphor (Gozawa, 2000), but with limited success. Missing was the idea of the cultural complex and directed learning about the cultural unconscious. Learners’ reflections therefore were often based on personal psychological speculation and reasoning was limited by a logic of good/bad, right/wrong determinations even as a “conspiracy of niceness” prevailed. With a moralistic duality haunting the learning field, diverse learners, despite constructivist intentions, struggled to hold plural realities. Here is a small example common to most cohorts over several years: A group of seven students was preparing their project for their Group Demonstration of Capacity (GDOC), a culminating competency in the Transformative Learning and Change doctorate program at CIIS. The progress of the project was stalled when two students felt indignation that another member was habitually late with his contribution and perceived to be less participative than required by a formally agreed-upon process.

It might be said that the specter of the stern father railed, precluding a reasoned discussion between virulent accusers and “imperfect” offender. The other four members remained mute, perhaps ambivalent and fearful as the righteousness of the stern father had its way. (One repentant member specifically reflected later that he well could have been one of the accused but thankfully escaped scrutiny.) In the heat of meeting a deadline and meeting program requirements (a situation of scarcity), transformative learning theory and individual capacity building through reflective, experiential and meditative practices were not enough for these learners to effectively engage the combustion of negative archetypal energy. Their group project was completed on time but the group learning was not transformative. In the post-reflection phase immediately following the completion of the project, there were very few expressed paradigmatic insights. The “offender” said he would reflect about how he was perceived in a way different than his experience of himself. The accusers seemed to comment more about transgressions of others than they reflected about themselves. After reading all the reflections and submitting my reflection back to the group, members dutifully said, “the learning continues”. However, the words felt empty of conviction to me. If the group had had the stern-father or other archetypal image relevant to the group as a common reference, could they have shifted the group field? In conjuring a group-held image, inner-outer dynamics of being might have been objectified while acknowledgement of the emotional overwhelm it generated needn’t have been denied or suppressed. In this way, a safe distance might have been established, minimizing the charge of a cultural complex while respecting its reality.

**Return to Being**

“In Genesis it is suggested that the birth of the human power of imagining coincides with Adam’s transgression of God’s law” (Kearny, 1998, p. 39). The imagination in Western thought from Prometheus to Adam is often associated with humankind’s fall even as humankind’s transgression is recognized as the impetus for its capacity to reason. In the foregoing integral approach, an attempt is made to bring the image and the imaginal back from cultural ambivalence through engagement with the cultural unconscious and the cultural complex. The
polarity between the fear of a fascinated consciousness and adoration of an objectifying one is bridged in that the learners subject themselves to the imaginal yet remain a safe distance from its charged images through the idea of the cultural complex, through research into associated literature and, though not emphasized here, through engagement in a learning community.

Attempting to court the imaginal and thereby acknowledge transpersonal Being may be resisted in Western education. The stern father, wary of idolatry, may preclude educators from seriously engaging the imaginal. Yet, in the face of diversity and difference, transformative learning is challenged to develop a method through which its reason and reflection can penetrate assumptions of the prevailing cultural ontology. Underlying the integral method modeled herein, is the hope of opening to a sympathetic, interconnected field of Being (Nishitani, 1982) that transcends individual beings while at the same time locating them mutually in existence. While the “safe distance” even in this integral approach uses objectification, it is a participatory one that may allow the “Being of beings” (Heidegger, 1962) a conscious presence. In the West, imaginal and critical engagement with the realm of the cultural unconscious and its associated cultural complexes may be a way to foster an authentic rather than rarified subjectivity. With such a subjectivity informing reason, the ecology of transformative learning environments might be integrally engaged such that ontological premises can reveal themselves and deep paradigmatic questioning can then proceed.

References
Learning Transformations through Cross-Cultural E-Mentoring: Perspectives from an Online Faculty Development Forum
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Abstract: Employing qualitative research methods, this study discusses the learning transformations of e-mentors from the United States and protégés from Sri Lanka who engaged in online problem solving tasks that were part of a faculty development forum.

Context for the Study
The Government of Sri Lanka funded through a loan obtained from the Asian Development Bank, a six-year Distance Education Modernization Project (DEMP) implemented by the Ministry of Higher Education, to develop a National Online Distance Education Service (NODES). As Abeyawardena (2007), Project Director of DEMP points out, the goal of the project is to provide higher education and professional development opportunities to a large number of students who qualify for university entrance each year, but do not have the chance to enter conventional universities in Sri Lanka. The lead author worked as a consultant to this project and developed a training program for online tutors and mentors using a blended format of face-to-face (F2F) workshops and online collaborative learning activities. She invited her colleagues at the University of New Mexico, co-authors of this paper, to serve as e-mentors (relationship established through electronic communications) for each of the small groups of faculty trainees or protégés who were tasked with using an inquiry-based method online to address a current social issue. For the protégés, the goal was to learn through critical inquiry with peers and the e-mentor how to tutor, mentor, and facilitate an interactive learning format online that led to transformative learning through the interplay of diverse cultural perspectives, and problem resolution through negotiation of meaning.

Purpose, Research Questions and Methods
This paper focuses on an online mentoring experience between mentors in the United States (masters and doctoral students at the University of New Mexico) and protégés in Sri Lanka (faculty from universities and professional organizations) who engaged in an inquiry-based learning activity for three weeks using Moodle, the open source online Learning Management System. The purpose of this paper is to examine if cross-cultural online mentoring can facilitate transformative learning. The research questions for this study are: (1) What are the manifestations of transformative learning evident in cross-cultural e-mentoring relationships when online groups are tasked with a problem solving activity (presented as a disorienting dilemma) over a three-week period?, and (2) How can the unique tools of the online environment be utilized to facilitate transformative learning?

A qualitative research design was used to examine the research questions, employing (a) transcript analysis of the computer-mediated discussion where participant groups solved a social problem interacting with the international mentors who were present only online, (b) mentor reflections in a focus group panel discussion, (c) protégé journals, and (d) protégé evaluation of the e-mentor online activity in the final course evaluation using open ended questions. Results are discussed both from the perspectives of e-mentors and protégés. Transcript analysis, a form
of content analysis using the computer-mediated discussion as data, was the method used to
discover if and how the problems served as disorienting dilemmas and what transformations took
place both for mentors and protégés. An explanation of why the problems were found to be
disorienting can be found in statements that indicate the participants never considered the
problems before or felt empathy toward those directly touched by the issues. Transformations are
indications that participants changed their perspectives as a result of group discussions.

Definitions and Conceptual Framework

We use the definition of mentoring developed by Daloz (1999). A mentor is responsible
for supporting the development of a protégé. This includes helping the protégé gain the
necessary skills and knowledge to function effectively in a particular environment. Protégés are
lesser skilled or less experienced individuals. In the process of mentoring, mentors and protégés
learn from each other and benefit from a worthwhile relationship for both parties.

While many definitions of transformative learning exist, for this study, we selected
Mezirow’s (2000) cognitive approach that defines transformative learning as a problem solving
process that relies upon cognitive processing to induce transformative learning. In this approach,
the protégé is outwardly looking, actively learning about the external world through dialog with
others, generating and evaluating multiple solutions, and imagining new environments that can
be created through actions (Mayer, 2001).

The cognitive approach to transformative learning begins with a disorienting dilemma,
which leads to critical reflection and acknowledgment of the need to look outward for dialog
with others. Disorienting dilemmas, prompt individuals to question their current frame of
reference and search for another potential frame of reference. The problems posed to the
participants of this study presented disorienting dilemmas that led to questioning familiar frames
of reference. Based on LaPointe’s (2006) discussion of how transformational learning can occur
online, we also examined the role of online tools such as forums and wikis that could support
and facilitate transformative learning.

The design of the online tutor mentor development workshop used a community building
approach based on the online instructional design model, WisCom, developed by Gunawardena,
Ortegano-Layne, Carabajal, Frechette, Lindemann, and Jennings (2006) for building online
wisdom communities. Based on socio-constructivist and sociocultural learning philosophies and
distance education principles, the WisCom model aims to facilitate transformational learning by
fostering the development of a wisdom community, knowledge innovation, mentoring and
learner support in an online learning environment, based on a “Cycle of Inquiry” module design.
The community building approach used a blended format of F2F workshops and online training
on Moodle, the open-source learning management system used for delivery of courses.

The learners participated in an online group activity to solve a complex social problem in
the capital city: garbage disposal, traffic congestion, street children—all problems common to
many developing countries. A mentor was assigned to a group of 10-12 protégés from diverse
professional backgrounds who were tasked with solving one problem either using a problem
solving approach, a role play or a case-based reasoning format. There were a total of 59 protégés
and 7 mentors. The mentor used his or her expertise in conducting interactive learning activities
online to help organize the task, move the group toward the goal, share resources and
perspectives from a different cultural context, and ask questions that helped to frame and reframe
the problem. The protégés, who had first-hand knowledge of the problem, shared their diverse
perspectives on it and responded to the mentors' questions to organize the group activity and negotiate meaning to arrive at a solution.

The groups were informed that the process of arriving at a solution was as important as the product, and the activity received a group grade. Two unique tools of the online environment were used to facilitate transformative learning: (a) the asynchronous, small-group discussion forums and (b) small-group wikis in Moodle. The course design offered a safe environment where protégés and mentors from two cultures were not afraid to share ideas and experiences and learn through conversation and the exchange of information.

Results

Research Question 1 asked: What are the manifestations of transformative learning evident in cross-cultural e-mentoring relationships when online groups are tasked with problem solving activity (presented as a disorienting dilemma) over a three-week period?

Transformative learning occurred at two levels. First, participants indicated that their perspectives of online learning changed. Second, participants reported that their attitudes toward the large societal issues changed. Most of the protégés initially met the requirement of using online technology with doubt and apprehension, as reported in their journals and answers to the open-ended questions from the final course evaluation. One protégé said, “I thought online learning is an inefficient one. (But now I feel that it is very much better than the F2F learning.)” Another protégé thought that only "IT (Information Technology) people" could create discussions online. “I didn't expect that we gain any knowledge through e-learning.” However, after engaging in a few online activities themselves, the protégés felt that sharing knowledge with people from diverse backgrounds was easy/easier in online forums. The informal online forums, in particular, provided a place to introduce themselves and tell about their hobbies, interests, personal philosophies, even share funny stories. This helped create social presence and set the stage for building a community.

Protégés welcomed the support, information, resources, and dialogue offered by the mentors, which they found motivating and helped them progress through the discomfort experienced by the disorienting dilemmas. One protégé wrote in the course evaluation, “They (the mentors) gave lots of new information relevant to the topic (web links etc.).” Another protégé said, “The e-mentors gave a different perspective in different context, which is really important.” Protégés motivated mentors to frequently check in with the course so that they could keep up with the postings. This was then extremely motivating for some protégés: “I was really motivated if he has posted something and tried to continue/move forward from what he has asked us to do. When he has addressed me with my name, I was felt like flying!!!”

As in a typical mentor/protégé relationship, the mentors learned a great deal from the experience. One mentor’s greatest sense of disorientation was in the cultural differences he experienced. For example the protégés frequently referenced Sri Lankan politics and history, and although he was researching those topics in his spare time, he was not able to communicate at the same level. This was a consistent theme for a majority of the mentors. It was difficult to be considered a ‘mentor’ for protégés in another country when the knowledge of the customs and traditions of the country were limited to basic research conducted as the interaction began.

After the problem solutions were presented, participants reported reframing their original perspectives about online learning. One protégé wrote in the final course evaluation, “I feel that online learning is a very versatile activity which can move beyond borders of learning and help the community also.” Online collaboration also taught the protégés how to resolve differences
online and make group decisions. One protégé said “I never believe we could do such things online.” With time, protégés became comfortable and even creative with their online interaction. A clever approach by the protégés was highlighted in the transcripts. One protégé was assigned to be the Minister of Transportation, but s/he never participated in the discussion forum. So another protégé responded to the group with a clever message stating, “Our Transport Minister is out of the country,” and then offered an alternative role to lead the meeting.

Participants also reported reframing their original perspectives about the societal problem posed. One protégé wrote in the final course evaluation, “Actually we see street children every day and sometimes regard them as ‘nuisance.’ When we were assigned to do this as a group activity, I was thinking what to write! After discussing the topic for one week, I think all of us got interested and see the real picture of street children and really wanted to do something for them by actually doing! ... I think all of us will see them differently when we meet them next time. As a result of this learning issue let us get together and try to help them not only online but in a real situation.” Because learners were provided with such a real-world problem, they were able to easily transfer the material to a more personal context.

Research Question 2 asked: How can the unique tools of the online environment be utilized to facilitate transformative learning?

Mentors were curious to find out what asynchronous conversations would be like when participants are located on opposite sides of the world. Would there be time/space to establish social presence? The protégés felt that the chat forum was effective for brainstorming sessions as long as the "communication protocols are followed." These included no questioning and no criticizing during the sessions, and the groups were small enough that it was relatively easy to keep track of all the ideas presented. The use of the Wiki was referred to by a protégé as like an "online writing pad," and many felt it was an excellent tool for collaboration because it enabled students to achieve group goals and to work towards a common vision. One protégé even suggested that technology facilitated participation from students who otherwise may be reluctant to contribute during a F2F class.

After working with the platform, one mentor, who works as an online course developer, described Moodle as being relatively less structured than other environments she was accustomed to. She had to “reprogram” herself in order to navigate this environment. In fact, another mentor mentioned he wanted more synchronous communication to “close the gap” in the dialogue. During the focus group, one of the mentors described how she used outside tools, such as Yahoo! Messenger to synchronously communicate with learners. She felt this minimized the virtual distance in the group. In fact, she still communicates with some of the protégés even after the learning experience. Another mentor mentioned that she used email, as did most other mentors, to communicate with the protégés. These additional communications have lasted past the problem solving task they were engaged in. In fact, one of her protégés may even visit one of the mentors in Albuquerque. Likewise, one mentor took advantage of the contacts she had established and planned a trip to Sri Lanka, where she had the opportunity to meet several of the protégés.

Even with this additional contact through external sources, many of the protégés feared feeling isolated from the mentors and wanted to have more interaction with them. Some hinted that it was possible to misread or miscommunicate ideas in text, which made them realize the importance of being in constant contact with their online students. Feedback received from the tutors and online mentors were welcomed and helped reduce their feelings of isolation. One
protégé, who was also a tutor by profession, commented, “Now I know what my students feel when they get feedback from me!”

All of the mentors mentioned the helpfulness of the user profiles in increasing the social presence of the group. The user profiles included a description of each person, with an image, which could not be a picture of the person. One mentor mentioned that she often reread the profile of the protégés so that she could better understand their background. It was suggested by one mentor that photographs of all participants be included, instead of using images. On the other hand, by not using photographs, learners and mentors alike did not have to be prejudged based on their outward appearance. Instead, they could only be judged on the information they shared with the group.

Mentors discussed the difficulties and disorientation of guiding a group of learners from an unfamiliar culture through a problem uniquely based within that culture. While mentors were experts in interactive learning formats, protégés held the cultural expertise to find a solution to the problem assigned. One mentor felt that this duality of expertise enabled mentors and learners to ask questions and be experts within the discussion forum. This, he felt, contributed to a sense of community within the group. Despite different cultures & different 'first' languages, protégés and e-mentors, who had never spoken by phone or F2F, were able to communicate effectively in this online environment.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

Transformative learning occurred in a variety of ways for the mentors and protégés and was supported by the online tools used. The complex, real world problems posed to the participants of this study presented disorienting dilemmas for the protégés. Working together online with mentors in the United States under a short timeframe led to critical reflection and acknowledgment of the need to look outward for dialog with others. In the midst of activities, some mentors and protégés expressed anxiety. The need for dialog with others matched the design of the cross-cultural exchange, enabling protégés to bring cultural expertise to the learning task, while mentors brought theoretical and instructional design expertise to the collaboration and problem solving process. This balance was one of the strengths of this cross cultural mentoring exchange, and the exchange supported the growth and intellectual development of both the mentors and protégés.

Overall, the protégés expressed having a positive learning experience from this course. They felt that working with the online mentors kept them on track with their tasks and that they provided quick responses, feedback, and guidance to help them achieve their goal. Participants have new insights concerning a) the value of well-designed online learning, b) themselves (self-images) as being able to learn online, and c) the people directly impacted by the societal problems. One protégé commented that the solutions proposed would not have been possible F2F as the online forum alleviated space and time constraints of F2F problem solving. Participants' new insights were accompanied by changes in feelings and increased caring toward the problems and people involved. Participants have begun to see themselves as part of the solution. A protégé's transformative learning could be captured in the following statement: “Regarding street children's issue I had no idea of this issue earlier. But when I went through this discussion, I felt like actually we have to do something to help these street children and to eradicate this problem. I felt more concern on them even when I am walking along the streets what actually they are doing, and felt sympathetic over them.”
More research must be conducted on the transformative experience of using significant learning scenarios in cross-cultural online learning environments in which participants become aware of global issues, are mentored to explore diverse perspectives, devise and evaluate solutions, and then take action.

References

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Dialogue Education: A Response to Working with Diverse Perspectives in the Post-secondary Classroom

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Abstract: This paper introduces generative dialogue as a means for exploring beyond the horizons of conventional modes of academic discourse, with a commitment to bringing forth classroom dialogue through three key processes: building the container, suspension and empathic listening.

Introduction

“As we began this article, we were still deeply entrenched in the fragmentation of the various perspectives. We argued about and could not seem to see how the rational view of transformative learning could ever exist side-by-side with the depth psychology understanding of individuation, for example. But as we worked through each position, we could no longer see the contradictions” (Cranton and Roy, 2005, p.11)

Revisiting Cranton and Roy’s brief reflection on their process of working through competing perspectives of transformative learning (TL) theory, they note a shift in their way of seeing, allowing for the possibility of previously contradictory approaches to TL to coexist. Though they do not comment further on what led to a shift in their perspective, as a dialogue educator I am reminded of the fragmentary norms and practices of argument culture which tend to keep students locked into advocating or defending their views, in turn preventing the emergence of key reflective and generative dialogue processes. In this paper, I explore the notion of how fostering the conditions for dialogue can help shift classroom norms of how we examine our positions, frames of reference and values with our students. Given the increasingly complex nature of academic issues of difference and diversity that characterize our time, not to mention conceptual issues that arise when attempting to frame or understand such differences, this paper explores how Scharmer’s framework of generative dialogue (Figure 1) might shed new light on how we work with these challenges in the postsecondary classroom.

![Four Fields of Conversation in Generative Dialogue](attachment:image)

Figure 1: The Four Fields of Conversation in Generative Dialogue (Scharmer, 2003a)
Figure 1 outlines four field-stages of group conversation beginning counter clockwise from conventional discussion (talking nice) to debate (talking tough), through reflective dialogue, and finally into sensing and unfolding new knowledge in the group with the field of generative dialogue\(^1\). As this paper will explore, facilitating a shift in classroom discussions from the field of debate (i.e. talking tough) to the field of reflective inquiry (i.e. reflective dialogue) offers a constructive alternative to either a) reverting back to polite discussion where differences are put under wraps and avoided or b) debating further into the splitting of diverse perspectives and in some instances, the relationships of students or educators.

**Shifting How We Collectively Examine Our Diverse Beliefs, Values and Frames of Reference**

Most of us, despite our best intentions, tend to spend our conversational time waiting for the first opportunity to offer our own comments or opinions. And when things heat up, the pace of our conversations resembles a gunfight on Main Street: "You're wrong!" "That's crazy!" The points go to the one who can draw the fastest or who can hold his ground the longest. As one person I know recently joked, "People do not listen, they reload." When televised sessions of the United States Congress or the British Parliament show the leaders of our society advocating, catcalling, booing, and shouting over one another in the name of reasoned discourse, we sense that something is deeply wrong. They sense the same thing, but seem powerless to do anything about it (Isaacs, 1999).

To a similar extent, traditional academic norms of conversation have been shaped by argumentative discussion and debate. Like the above quote suggests, the approach of striving to advocate one’s partial perspective against others and their partial perspectives with the interest of “winning” is no longer either the most appropriate or helpful way of working with diverse and competing perspectives. Nevertheless, argumentative discussion can inspire insight and further inquiry, with the strengths of debate including surfacing the hidden array of positions and perspectives and challenging learners to give adequate reasons for their beliefs. As an ideal of discourse, debate strengthens our ability to analyze and reflect critically on issues, make reasonable inferences and arguments, and foster an overall willingness to accept the best judgment in the absence of empirical evidence. In addition to these virtues, debate is often helpful in dispelling forms of groupthink (Janis, 1972) that may happen in polite conversation. Groupthink becomes a concern when critical perspectives are overlooked or suppressed, largely because individuals may not feel safe in sharing their perspectives for various and often legitimate reasons. Other symptoms of groupthink are a general deterioration of mental acuity and reality testing.

**Building the Container**

In spite of the strengths of debate, it can easily degenerate into the caricature Scharmer (2000) describes as “talking tough.” As we have all experienced, highly polarized debate is prone to unraveling into personal, political and academic turf wars, where criticism risks becoming personalized and the pressure to advocate one’s position so strong that revising one’s assumptions or changing one’s mind is viewed as a sign of personal defeat. To transform the

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\(^1\) For the purposes of this paper, I focus primarily on the transition of moving between the field of debate and the field of reflective dialogue, as this transition is most pertinent in working with academic issues of difference and diversity.
problematic elements of a debate orientation to classroom conversations requires among other conditions, a strong enough container to hold the polarization that builds in the field-stage of talking tough. Focusing attention on the environment that “holds” the conversation helps students to better see the proverbial water in which they have been swimming or in some cases, drowning:

Strong containers are needed in the world of today. Strong containers to hold chaos and turmoil, to hold the complexity of today’s world, to give shelter to the members to express love and to be vulnerable. First of all we need individuals who are strong containers. That means people who take responsibility for their emotions, their bodily energy fields, their thoughts, their own wills. People who are containers for themselves. Individuals who can witness all this, even when the charge is high, very high. In a group we need the same: strong group fields that can hold, can contain strong energies. The available energy in a group reflects the collective potential of the group. But with higher potential there is more at stake, so emotions can get very charged. Therefore, groups with a strong vision and a high potential need to invest in building strong, yet very flexible containers (Scharmer, 2003b).

With a strong container, differences that might otherwise lead to polarization and talking tough in debate can be met and respectfully held with the intent of broadening and deepening our collective understanding of one another and the subject through reflective inquiry. By developing the personal and class container with our students over the term, we are changing how we approach and interact with both contentious issues and one another in the process. Building the class container provides an alternative to enacting the problematic elements of debate culture by nurturing our felt sense and I-Thou (Buber, 1958) connection with other students and the class as a whole (particularly in moments where we are provoked or challenged) through empathic listening as Scharmer (2003a) points out:

You have a different gesture. You are partly inside the other. You are present with the other, but at the same time you are consciously witnessing. You develop that inner observer that allows you to reflect on yourself while you engage in the conversation with other viewpoints and perspectives. In this switch of the conversational field one becomes an observer as well as a participant. In a reflective dialogue, participants develop the capacity to adopt each other's viewpoints and thus to see the larger pattern or picture. So the norm is to suspend. Then I'm able to observe myself observing myself, and study my own judgments and perceptions a little bit before reacting. (p.3)

Suspension

Connected with developing a strong personal and class container, the practice of suspension (Bohm, 1996) plays a key role in shifting conversations from debate to reflective dialogue. Suspension is a subtle in-the-moment practice (Bohm, 1996; Gunnlaugsson, 2005), which involves redirecting our attention from thinking to simultaneously becoming meta-aware of our thinking in the moment as we think. Suspension helps open up a gap to engage reflective and contemplative ways of being and knowing, which can help those caught in advocacy or a mode of challenge move towards more open inquiry (Isaacs, 1999). In turn, suspension can help shift the field dynamics of the conversation towards inquiry by bringing to surface tacit assumptions (as revealed in moments of resistance and difference) that inform the foundations of varied perspectives. The practice of suspension helps us become more aware of our underlying habits of mind, helping cultivate a different basis of relationship to our thoughts and emotional processes as well as how we come to know these processes in conversation with others.
Suspending our thought processes when encountering moments of difference, dissonance or judgment in class discussion helps build the group container, modeling the importance of giving space to feel into, intuit, imagine or explore new insights into a given issue or subject matter. Given the potential of multiple ways of knowing to prompt reflective dialogue, suspension offers a portal to accessing the feelings, emotions, intuitive promptings, kinesthetic shifts that are integral to transformative learning and personal development processes. Suspension as such, enables students to practice building bridges across diverse opinions, assumptions, backgrounds and ideas by opening up creative possibilities for thinking and learning together, where individual and collective presuppositions, ideas, beliefs, and feelings that might otherwise subtly control our interactions in debate, can now be respectfully explored in dialogue.

**Empathic Listening**

To the extent that the reflective dialogue processes of building the container and practicing suspension help model a willingness to embrace contradictory systems of thought, we are also developing a core capacity for what Wilber (1995) describes as vision logic:

As rationality continues its quest for a truly universal or global or planetary outlook, non-coercive in nature, it eventually gives way to a type of cognition I call vision-logic. Vision-Logic can hold in mind contradictions, it can unify opposites, it is dialectical and non-linear, and it weaves together what otherwise appear to be incompatible notions. (p. 185)

Rather than privilege a particular perspective, vision-logic strives to grasp different systems and pluralistic contexts in the attempt to discover a new basis to integrate them or at least understand how they interrelate. To grasp different systems, we often need to suspend our own interpretive system in order to think, feel and sense what lies outside it. Vision logic can be strengthened by practicing empathic listening (mentioned above), where we are not only invested in how diverging perspectives and views of others might enrich our partial understandings (an intellectual objective), but are also committed to validating our student’s interiority and patterns of meaning (an emotional objective). Scharmer (2003a) details this form of listening as characteristic of the third field of reflective dialogue. It is important to note that a key objective of empathic listening is to understand where others are coming from and to develop a felt-sense of the deeper assumptions that inform their views and concerns from their perspective, not only our own. Empathic listening (Figure 2), when informed by vision-logic capacities of cognition—helps move conversations towards greater creative complexity and compassion. In other words, empathic listening provides a trust bridge to connecting with one another’s interiority, which helps students diminish “othering” and tendencies to split off or reactively disassociate from one another emotionally when facing challenging moments of difference—a characteristic feature of interactions within the field of debate.
Closing Remarks

It is certainly speculative to infer that dialogue processes enabled Cranton and Roy to see beyond the contradictions of competing TL approaches. Nevertheless, I have highlighted this particular junction point to spark further awareness and inquiry into the significance of the conversational processes post-secondary educators engage in with their students. Given the limitations of polite discussion and debate when exploring academic issues of difference and diversity, I close with the question of how might opening up new horizons of dialogue as outlined in the recommendations of this paper help us more effectively work with diversity as a catalyst for engaging in collective transformative learning processes in our classrooms?

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Voice and Transformative Learning  
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Abstract: A discussion of the relationship between a woman’s epistemology and transformative learning as experienced by women who successfully have made the transition from welfare to economic self-sufficiency.

Introduction  
The purpose of this paper is to report the results of my study (Hamp, 2006) that was designed to describe the essence of the lived experience of transformative learning for women who have successfully made the transformation from economic dependency to economic self-sufficiency. The study also sought to explore the relationship between the woman’s epistemology and the steps in the process defined as critical self reflection and rational discourse by Mezirow’s (1991) transformative learning theory. The women’s stories brought richness and many times a soulful account to the experience. Their lived experience reflects a determination to survive in the world that goes deep into the woman’s heart as well as her thoughts.

Theoretical Framework  
The conceptual frame for the study was Mezirow’s (1991) theory of transformative learning and Belenky et al.’s (1986) theory of women’s epistemology. A core premise of Mezirow’s theory is that critical reflection and rational discourse are important in the process of a transformative learning experience. The theory of Belenky et al. (1986) sets out five categories of women’s epistemology. Through the study I sought to gain more understanding as to the relationship between these two theories and how they are experienced, specifically by women, as they engage in a transformative learning experience. My particular focus was to understand how the theory of woman’s epistemology (Belenky et al., 1986) related to the constructs of critical reflection and rational discourse as defined by Mezirow (1991, 2000).

I discuss how the findings of my study support the premise that critical reflection and rational discourse are central to the transformative learning experience and how the findings do suggest that the experience of critical reflection and rational discourse is not a universally consistent experience. The findings suggest that the women in this study did experience these activities differently depending on their epistemology.

Methodology  
The tradition of phenomenology is the basis for the research conducted during this study. In the end the stories told by fifteen women who had made the transition from welfare to work were analyzed. There was representation for each of the epistemological categories with the exception of silence. As with all qualitative studies, this study’s findings are not meant to be generalizable to a larger population. The findings in this study represent the experiences of these specific participants who are women with a particular background or experience of poverty and under privilege.

Findings and Discussion  
The women in this study all experienced a transformative learning experience. They changed the way in which they perceived who they are and how they live in the world. As the
women recount their lived experience there are clear signposts as defined by Mezirow (1986) that point to all the elements that are laid out as part of the process for transformative learning to occur. Critical self reflection and rational discourse are important constructs in the theory of transformative learning.

The women in all categories engage in critical self-reflection to examine their basic beliefs. The experience of reflection is experienced differently depending upon the epistemology of the woman. The received knower looks to others to tell her what is important and relevant enough to reflect upon; the subjective knower takes in all information equally and will reflect on the information to decide what concept she will take into the world to test for validity; the procedural knower has a systematic approach to reflection which she will follow consistently; and the constructed knower, who is much more aware of her feelings takes reflection to a much deeper level. These findings add to the literature by bringing more understanding to how women experience reflection within the transformative learning experience. It supports the literature that expands Mezirow’s (1991) theory to be inclusive of the ideas associated with the impact of emotions and feelings on the reflective process.

The women in this study learned to use discourse as way to make sense of the world over a period of time. The women engaged in discourse only after they developed the ability to trust others in the give and take of exchanging ideas. The way that they engage in the process was influenced by their epistemology. The received knower listen to learn and accepts others ideas as their own; the subjective knower is more apt to take an adversarial stand and leave the experience with their original premise still in tact but will change later; the procedural knower systematically reviews the data and looks to prove validity in all new ideas before accepting a new idea; and the constructed knower engages in the give and take of ideas in a free flowing and spontaneous manner and will easily integrate new ideas into her belief system. These findings add to the understanding of the importance of relational learning to transformative learning.

The Impact of Epistemology on a Woman’s Disposition to Action

The result of a change in meaning perspective is that the individual will make a change in how she relates to the world. The women’s epistemology impacts a woman’s disposition toward taking action as a result of her new meaning perspective. There are two dispositions that surface in this study. The woman was either motivated to change from an external source or from an internal source.

The women in the received knower and subjective knower categories were motivated from external sources and focused on incremental changes. They had short-term goals and were inclined to take things, “one step at a time.” They also had goals that were practical and focused on material and pragmatic changes. They did not articulate long-term visions for their own future. They approached their goal making in terms of how completion of the goal would serve others. Primarily in this category, the women were concerned with making improvements for their children’s future. Although they were unable to have long-term self-actualizing goals for themselves, it was exactly this type of goal and vision that they had for their children, which motivated them to make changes in how they were living in the moment.

This group sets goals with input from others in their life. They seek to create goals and aim for accomplishments that will result in their getting the approval of authorities or others that are important in their lives. They do not have a “big picture” plan for their lives so they tend to live out the hopes and dreams that others have for them. They also believe in the idea that fate
and destiny are important in determining their future and sometimes resist the idea that anyone can determine their future simply by making the right choices.

The procedural knower and the constructed knower are motivated to change due to an internal vision that they have for themselves. They form these visions at a young age and they keep these dreams and visions even when circumstances place obstacles to achievement in their path. They have long-term goals and are capable of planning short-term goals that will link to their greater vision for themselves. This group is aware of others’ needs and can make the connection between their personal goals and the goals of others. They believe in personal power and the ability to make your life your own by making the right choices.

Varela (1999) states that at the root of action are emotions, he posits that it is the underlying emotion that triggers the action or a “shift in transparency” (p. 132). Whether the woman was motivated from external or internal influences there is also an emotional component to their disposition to action. The women wanted to shed the feelings of shame and guilt and be able to live in the feelings of pride and confidence. In general the women speak often of the importance of feeling determined and committed to making the changes. It is being able to stay in touch with these feelings that keeps the women on course and able to resist temptation that could take them off course. This study adds to the understanding of how emotions influence action by women as they experience transformational learning.

Mezirow (1991) speaks of planning a course of action as an important part of the transformative learning experience. In his later work (2000) he describes it this way “Taking action on reflective insights often involves overcoming situational, emotional, and informational constraints that may require new learning experiences to move forward” (p. 24). He goes on to discuss that this change is not just a change in thinking but a change in acting. In other words, “life is not seen from a new perspective, it is lived from that perspective” (p. 24). This study shows that although the women did not experience reflection and rational discourse as Mezirow (1991) defined the process, each of them achieved a transformative learning experience in terms of the action and results.

**The Importance of Critical Thinking Skills to Transformative Learning**

The women in this study recount stories of life events that are fraught with drama and extreme emotional distress. They lived in a world where violence was a normal occurrence, where abuse was acceptable and poverty was the normal condition for these women and their children. Their day-to-day life was chaotic and turbulent and the only thought was to survive. The rules are different in this environment, the driving force for decision making is survival and the idea of having choices is a foreign concept. It is reasonable to conclude that rational thought and critical thinking processes do not naturally evolve in this atmosphere of chaos and non-rationality.

One of the things that kept the women oppressed and under the control of others was their inability to consider alternatives. The women did not have the skills necessary to think about their situation and envision that they could make another choice. The women did not have the cognitive strategies to think in terms of cause and effect. In order for transformative learning to take place the women had to be taught how to think critically.

The women developed at least one trusted relationship with a mentor that assisted the women in learning how to develop cognitive strategies that would help them to assess their beliefs and assumptions which was the first step in changing how they lived their lives.
Relationships were important in their old lives and they would continue to be important in their new lives.

The development of critical thinking skills allowed the women to sort through the chaos of their lives. They were able to create some structure to their thoughts and feelings so that alternatives and choices became clearer. They could now be aware of their feelings and better control how they reacted to what they were feeling.

Critical thinking skills made it possible to make plans and set goals. Planning and setting goals enabled the women to envision a future. The ability to envision a future opened up new possibilities and the hope of a better life for themselves and their children. One of the foundations for Mezirow’s (1991) transformative learning theory was Habermas’ (1971) theory of instrumental learning and communicative learning. Habermas (1971) defines instrumental learning as involving determining cause–effect relationships and learning through task oriented problem solving. This study presents evidence that the women in this study needed to be taught how to identify cause-effect relationships, consequences of choices and the ability to consider alternatives when problem solving. This study adds to the understanding that the skills associated with instrumental learning are an important foundation for fostering critical reflection. The women could not become aware of their beliefs and values until they had tools so that they could control and cope with the non rationality of their lives.

The Importance of Relationships to Transformative Learning

Each of these women point to an individual who was integral to her learning the skills that would ultimately allow her to see herself differently. These relationships happen early in the process and stay intact for the long term. It is through these individuals that the women learn that it is okay to express their feelings and to have thoughts of their own without fear of reprisal.

The guide or mentor teaches the woman the process of critical thinking and helps them to develop problem solving skills. It is through these mentors that the women understand that they have alternatives and can make choices. The women also learn the importance of having structure and organization in their lives. They learn that discipline is important to changing behavior. They embrace routines and work as a means to gaining control over their own lives. They learn that daily routines that give them a purpose for each day is the first step to being self-governing and self-supporting.

These findings support the literature (Belenky, et al 1986, 1991, Gilligan 1982, Chodorow 1974, Hayes & Flannery 2000) that discusses the importance of relationships to how women learn. Gilligan (1982) states that relationships are central to a woman’s formation of self identity. Hayes and Flannery (2000) in Women as Learners present essays that discuss that women learn best when in a community of learners that are most like themselves, learning through mentoring is an effective method for women to grow and develop and that relational learning is a important aspect of developing effective feminist pedagogies.

This study also supports the findings of studies (Morgan, 1987; Vannostrand, 1992; Holt, 1994; Taylor, 1994; Egan, 1985; Gehrels, 1984; Saavedra, 1995; Hunter, 1980) that concluded relationships are an important aspect of transformational learning. I believe these findings add to this body of literature and present evidence that trust in the relationship is necessary for deep and meaningful conversations to take place. Mezirow (1991) indicates that for rational discourse to take place the environment must be free of coercion both internal and external. This study supports that premise by emphasizing the importance of trust.
These findings lead to the construction of a conceptual framework as depicted in Figure 1 which describes the interaction between the woman’s epistemology and the transformative learning process. The women’s stories indicate that they had existed in silence prior to the transformative learning experience. A trigger event which had an emotional component precipitated a decision to change their lives. The women were “taught” to use critical reflection and rational discourse by a trusted mentor or guide. The manner in which they engaged in these processes was influenced by the woman’s epistemology. The woman’s disposition toward action was also influenced by her epistemology.

Figure 1. The Interaction between Women’s Epistemology and Transformative Learning

Summary

This study contributes to the body of literature addressing the theory of transformative learning, specifically the theory introduced by Jack Mezirow (1986). The powerful and dynamic stories of the participants challenge some of the premises that surround the nature of critical reflection and rational discourse by demonstrating that not all women experience these processes in the same way. The evidence demonstrates that a women’s epistemology (Belenky et al., 1986) has an influence on how a woman will engage in the act of reflection and rational discourse. The woman’s epistemology also influences how the woman chooses to act upon her new learning. The findings add to the evidence that there is a relationship between emotions and rational
thought. The evidence displays the importance of rational and critical thought in the management of emotions. The findings support the idea that relationships are important to a woman’s learning experience and that trust is essential when engaging in discourse. These conclusions emphasize the importance of transformative learning to the success strategies of women who have successfully made the transition from welfare dependency to economic self-sufficiency.

References
The Contemplative Facilitator: Opening Space for Learning
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Abstract: Eighteen facilitators at the Shambhala Institute for Authentic Leadership were surveyed and interviewed about their work with groups and the role of contemplation in creating transformative learning spaces.

Introduction
Ring the bells that still can ring.
Forget your perfect offering.
There is a crack in everything.
That’s how the light gets in.
~ Leonard Cohen (1992)

In 2001, I was working as biologist with the federal government. Steeped in a positivist tradition, learning for me was a highly cognitive activity. That was, until I found myself at the first summer program of the Shambhala Institute for Authentic Leadership. I still remember the wobble in my stomach and a weakness in my knees, when I had a sudden realization about my personal leadership style. While the realization was important, what was more interesting is that the epiphany came though an unlikely learning experience for me – surprisingly, I found myself attempting to influence a group of twenty people in a contemplative movement exercise. With direct and unspoken feedback from the group, I immediately understood a long-standing personal struggle. During that week, in addition to experiencing contemplative arts in groups, I studied my own mind, while sitting on the meditation cushion. I realized that my thinking was not as solid or stable as I wanted to believe; a hairline fracture of uncertainty was forming in my mind. This experience with contemplative practices piqued my interest in finding other ways of knowing and engaging in learning.

For the past seven years, the Shambhala Institute has held a one-week summer program in the month of June in Halifax, Nova Scotia. In 1998, the concept of the Institute was born when practitioners of the Shambhala meditation community began a dialogue with pioneering leaders in the field of organizational and social change such as Peter Senge, Margaret Wheatley, Juanita Brown and Art Kleiner. The group was interested in fostering a new model of leadership development that could build on the Shambhala wisdom training and whole-system change. Since 2001, 250-300 people annually attend from around the world though largely from Canada and United States.

The annual summer program is unique as a learning environment on several levels. First, many of instructors at the Shambhala Institute are long-term practitioners of Buddhism and many of them studied directly with Chögyam Trungpa, one of the first Tibetan Buddhists to teach in North America. Second, the program integrates contemplative arts and meditation practices based on the Shambhala tradition created by Chögyam Trungpa. Third, while transformation may happen at an individual level, all of the instruction at the Institute takes place within groups. The Shambhala Institute offers an interesting opportunity to investigate how informal educators create a dynamic learning environment with eastern philosophical underpinnings.
Methodology

Grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used as the methodology as it is a systematic and inductive approach to examining qualitative data with the purpose of developing theory. It is noted for the constant comparative method through which theory emerges directly from the data rather than the testing of theories or hypothesis. There were four phases to this study: interviews at the 2006 summer program; in-depth interviews six to eight months following the 2006 summer program; an on-line survey two weeks prior to the 2007 summer program; and interviews at the 2007 summer program. As the Institute is a place of informal adult education, I use the descriptor of facilitator rather than educator or instructor. This paper was developed on data from the first three phases and included 18 research participants (9 males and 9 females). All participants were involved in creating the learning environment and facilitating sessions at the Institute. Currently, I am analyzing 162 interviews from thirty-one participants, collected in the final phase of this study.

Interviews at the summer program were held with facilitators immediately following their sessions and lasted approximately 15 minutes. The follow-up interviews were held over the telephone and lasted approximately one hour. Survey Monkey was used to conduct the on-line survey. I personally conducted, transcribed and analyzed all the interviews. A constant comparative method was used to analyze the data. The following section describes common themes and includes sample quotations to illustrate the themes. In the following sections, pseudonyms are used in association with quotations from the interviews.

Findings and Discussion

There are two major themes emerging from the first three phases of this research: the role of contemplation for cultivating internal awareness and the creation of an external environment that fosters collective learning.

Contemplation and the Cultivation of the Facilitator’s Internal Space

As a starting point for this research, I was interested in definitions of contemplation. A useful working definition comes from Gimian (2005), a scholar who uses a contemplative approach to examine Sun Tzu’s classic text, “The Art of War:”

By contemplative, we are referring to the simple human faculty of holding open a space to see things clearly. It is a state of mind that arises naturally in human beings, and with time and attention it can be cultivated. (Gimian, 2005)

In recent years, there has been increased interest in contemplation within the educational field. The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society describes contemplative practices as activities that “quiet the mind in order to cultivate a personal capacity for deep concentration and insight” (2007, n.p.). The Center believes that contemplative practices are not only practical, but they are also transformative. These practices are critical to developing compassion and awareness about life's interconnectivity.

Naropa University (n.d.), founded by Chögyam Trungpa, provides a helpful definition of “contemplative education:”

Learning infused with the experience of awareness, insight and compassion for oneself and others, honed through the practice of sitting meditation and other contemplative disciplines. The rigor of these disciplined practices prepares the mind to process information in new and perhaps unexpected ways. Contemplative practice unlocks the
power of deep inward observation, enabling the learner to tap into a wellspring of knowledge about the nature of mind, self and other that has been largely overlooked by traditional, Western-oriented liberal education.

The term contemplation is often used at the Shambhala Institute and I was interested to learn participants’ personal definitions. From their definitions, two common themes emerged: taking time for oneself and enhanced awareness. It is important to note approximately one-third of the facilitators at the Institute are not formally part of the Shambhala community.

In regards to the first theme, contemplation involves actively creating a calm, open space in the day, as indicated by the following definitions:

Quiet time, with limited sensory information passing through the filters. A deliberate "time out" for body and mind. (Angela)
Taking time out of one's busy schedule, remaining in a still and easy posture (sitting, lying, even walking slowly) and reflecting about a particular issue, problem, person or just about life in general. Staying with this and not trying to solve or resolve anything. (Yolanda)
Opening up a space for things to come in. (Daniel)
Creating space in my own mind, slowing down, and attempting to understand reality more completely. (Wanda)

The second theme of enhanced awareness involves an increased sense of wakefulness, openness and connectivity and is evident in the following definitions:

Looking out and looking in at the same time; noticing both fields of view with more acceptance, less separation than usual. In terms of a specific contemplation, letting the subject come back to mind over and over again until you are resting in it. (Evan)
A state of being in surrender to the now of life itself in consciousness resting in a peaceful feeling of awareness - being at home with myself and the world. (Kevin)
Connecting to peace within me - connecting to my integrity - which is connecting to everything. It is the point in me that is connected to everything. (Mark)

Sitting meditation practice was the contemplative practice most commonly practiced by the research participants. The majority of the research participants (88%) have a daily sitting meditation practice. Only one research participant did not have a regular contemplative practice. Other contemplative practices mentioned included: running meditation, tonglen, reading or reciting text, calligraphy, journaling, experiential focusing, aikido and non-violent communication.

At the Institute, each day starts and ends with meditation and instruction in a large group setting. For many Institute participants, this is their first time experiencing silent sitting meditation. While many other participants are familiar with meditation and have their own practices, they are encouraged to try the Shambhala technique in order to have a common group experience. The act of meditation becomes a silent group activity that fosters aspects of authentic leadership: “as a community-building activity, group meditation helps establish a culture of listening, learning, and spontaneity” (Shambhala Institute for Authentic Leadership, n.d.). Michael Chender, the Founding Chair of the Institute, describes the relationship between meditation and cultivating authenticity:

Meditation is about how to open to our own authenticity by relaxing into awareness. This is quite different than the way we usually think about relaxation. It is a profound
relaxation, but it demands, as any profound accomplishment does, rigorous discipline and energy. (Shambhala Institute for Authentic Leadership, n.d.)

In the interviews, several participants spoke about the importance of meditation in strengthening their work as facilitators. Meditation practice provides facilitators a means to loosen the grip of their minds and in order to see the situation more clearly:

I really aspire to work in a way that is complete responding to the group and not plowing ahead with my agenda. And to be able to really tune in and do that well, I need to be really centered, grounded and present. Almost the ability to channel what is needed in the moment. When I am doing hosting work, I really try to practice at least a half-hour or hour in the evening or if it is a really important thing, do a retreat before and also in the moment in a spontaneous level, remember some of these things I have to ground and be present. (Amy)

Sometimes when we think, we get into our heads and we get stuck – we are not coming from a deeper place. For me meditation, part of that is letting go of your thoughts. Becoming aware of them and letting them continue to part…not attaching yourself to one or more of them. I find that especially when I meditate in the afternoons, after a full day…I feel like it is a mental bath. I really feel the difference from when I don’t do it and the days that I do, do it. It enables me to just let it go. I feel a lot clearer afterwards. (Sofia)

Opening External Space for Collective Learning

In addition to a personal commitment to cultivating a strong internal awareness, facilitators give significant attention to creating a robust external learning environment. Julia describes the delicate balance involved in creating a suitable learning environment at the Institute:

We are always trying to work with this balance of structure, openness and spontaneity to create the most potent space that has a most definite shape and boundary to it but also has room for emergence within it, in the middle of all that.

Commonly, facilitators at the Institute referred to the learning environment as a container. A small hosting team is tasked with developing the larger container for the Institute. As Amy explains, some of the inspiration for this container concept is based in the teachings of Chögyam Trungpa:

Trungpa Rinpoche talked a lot about the idea of a container and for me that is basically there is some time of holding environment which welcomes in what needs to come in and kind of repels what isn’t helpful. What is happening inside it can really cook and transformation can take place or whatever the goal is. (Amy)

Sofia also describes the act of holding as well as the importance of a clear intent and openness in designing the container:

There is almost this thing of holding…it is like, in your preparations, you become quite clear in what it is your purpose, what is your intention and where you are serving. Whatever the group it is that you are facilitating. That intention is alive in you. You are holding that space open. You are stepping in with that.

Over the years, more attention has been given to who holds the container as well as expanding this responsibility to a larger group. In preparing for the 2006 summer program, a retreat was held with the hosting team and key people to develop a common intent for the program:
There was more attention given to how do we create a strong and coherent container that was held by more people. One strategy for that was to have a retreat before the program where there was some time for the hosting team and other people in key roles to come together and to spend time together and get into the frame of mind or the space of the Institute. (Julia)

I think was a shift in the whole Institute’s way of being was that we started talking about widening the circle that was holding the container instead of just having all the elements that make up the core hosts…the artists, meditation teacher and Shambhala Institute staff all working separately and then coming in. (Amy)

It became richer and more alive through the conversations the few days before the Institute. I guess the grounding effect to me was we were opening the field and there were more people holding it with us. As people arrived, they were stepping into something that was beginning to cook. (Sofía)

While great attention is given to creating the container, the facilitators are very careful to respect the integrity of the space and not to direct participant’s experiences. Matthew highlights the importance of not anticipating or manipulating people’s experience:

I want to say something else, just to bookmark about the hosting process and the process for how we work with people’s experiences. I think what we attempt to do - this is subtle but both important and not that usual - is we really attempt not to manipulate people’s experience. And I think manipulation is a very subtle thinking and a lot is in the sense of experiencing something positive. I think it is very easy to fall into that bias. You’d like people to have a positive experience and it is very easy to use language in such a way that you don’t even realize that you are telling people what they are experiencing or what you want them to experience…or what is permissible to experience.

As Sofía suggests, if people feel manipulated, there may be a direct impact on the learning space within the container:

Someone has just said we all feel this way. They are telling me how I feel and I have to either go along with it or push against it, but the space is closed. The space of novelty and the space of being in the moment closed as soon as someone is defining it for you.

Sofía goes on to describe a preference for fostering a learning environment that can be shared by all participants:

I think if we are doing our work well it creates a space or we create a culture or state of awareness that gives the feedback. It’s not that there is a police at the door saying this is genuine and this is not. If everyone is sharing a certain kind of ground, it just becomes obvious. And then you have room for making mistakes. I think that is the ideal space for us.

Many of the facilitators remarked about when the group shifts to a collective awareness. When asked about memorable learning experiences, a common theme was an experience of deep collective awareness within the group:

One thing that I noticed (and continue to use) is that I became much more open to learning from all directions after having taken advantage of the morning meditation sittings. By "learning from all directions" I mean from people and from circumstances and from my surroundings. It seems that sitting (meditation) really helps me to open up and to take inputs and create new and useful connections for myself (and others) in fresh, creative ways. (Daniel)
The silent and spacious satisfaction of a group observing one member, enact a solo event on stage. (Evan)
When the full circle, one-by-one walked to the center of the circle, did a sword cut, made a brush stroke and spoke 3 words of appreciation from the heart. 2 hours sitting in the nowness of consciousness - alone and together. (Kelvin)
Seeing all the generations together standing in a circle and hearing their gifts - the amazing potential that lies in healing fragmentation across our generations. (Mark)
The Shambhala Institute provided a fertile ground to explore the potential for contemplation within individual educators and group learning experiences. Ancient contemplative practices offer informal educators a contemporary avenue for increasing self-awareness and opening up space for group learning.

References
Reflections in the Rear View Mirror: The Perspective Transformation of the Researcher
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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of studying perspective transformation on the researcher who must listen closely to stories often punctuated by intense emotional responses. This paper describes the effects of two research projects on their investigators. Implications for researchers and adult educators are identified.

Introduction
Many of the research studies of Mezirow’s theory of perspective transformation involve “semistructured interviews of participants who reflected on their previous transformative learning experiences” (Taylor, 2000, p. 316). The interview questions often spark the sharing of deeply personal information. The interviewer is allowed to witness and to document intense feelings that may include sadness, shame, outrage, helplessness, wonder, and joyfulness. It is an honor, a privilege, and a responsibility to be entrusted with this knowledge. Thus, it is important to understand the impact on the researcher in order to better prepare graduate students and to further our own professional and personal development as adult educators. In this paper two researchers who have explored the process of perspective transformation through interviews will identify lessons learned, describe personal and professional shifts in meaning perspectives, and discuss the impact on their practice as adult educators.

Both researchers, in independent projects, explored the attitudes and beliefs of participants from two cultures that have been in conflict with each other. Participants in Herbers’ study (1998) were African American and White preservice teachers studying the impact of the Civil Rights Movement in the context of a course at an urban college in the southern United States. Participants in Kimmel’s study were women in Palestine and Israel whose lives were affected by the Occupation, the Intifada, and the split between the two cultures. Both found that we were changed, personally and professionally, by our experiences.

Transformative learning…purports the perspective of adult education as a deeply engaged process” (Etting, 2006, p. 63). So, too, research of perspective transformation requires deep engagement. It is our premise that the researcher in this area must be vigilant in questioning personal assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs. This type of research necessitates movement back and forth between self and others.

The Study of the Struggle for Civil Rights in the United States
The city of Memphis even today is embroiled in conflicts in government and threats by the state to take over failing schools. The issues of racism and educational inequities are deep wounds that continue to fester and cause pain. The National Civil Rights Museum, located in Memphis, depicts the struggles that African Americans faced in trying to achieve educational equity. Interactive exhibits recreate the words, images and activism of the movement between 1954 and 1968. The questions guiding a research study by Herbers (1998) were: If students experienced and saw the sacrifices made by thousands of people, would it reduce the distance, would it lead to a broader perspective of educational equity? Would a tour of the museum serve...
as a disorienting dilemma and precipitate a perspective transformation for teachers in a foundation level course in urban education?

Eighteen students participated in the study. The participants included eleven women and seven men, their ages ranged from late teens to mid forties. Six were African American, nine were White, and three were self described as Mixed. The researcher was a participant observer who was present for all class sessions, including the museum tour. A pretest and posttest assessed knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement. Students’ experiences in the course were examined at several different points and through a variety of methods. The students participated in focus groups after touring the National Civil Rights Museum and wrote a reflective paper. At the end of the course students wrote a reflective paper about the course experience and seventeen of the eighteen participated in interviews with the researcher to explore reactions to the museum and to the course. Herbers found that in these one-to-one interviews some participants (Black and White) were more willing to share painful experiences with discrimination and oppression and more open to reflecting on interpersonal dynamics with other students in the class. The result was a revelation of how the change process (or the lack of change) of one student can precipitate change in another.

**Voices of Hope: Women’s Experiences in Palestine and Israel**

In 2001, Kimmel began research into the voices of women in Israel and Palestine whose lives are affected by the Occupation, the Intifadas, and the split between the two cultures since 1948. Women’s groups such as Women in Black, the Israeli Women for Peace, the Arab Women’s Union, and the Machsom Watch have provided extraordinary information and narratives in the interviews. Photographs, artifacts, and personal experiences with women from both sides of the Wall were collected and thematically analyzed for this project.

Research was conducted in Israel and Palestine in May and June of 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, and most recently in 2007. In August of 2005, Kimmel returned to Jerusalem for three weeks for the International Conference of Women in Black, attended by over 800 women from 41 countries.

The research experiences have included interviewing over tea with Palestinian women who have wept, sitting in Bethlehem University with women professors in the sciences who came to talk between classes, talking with university students at both Bethlehem and Bir Zeit universities, standing on the street corner in downtown Jerusalem with women who came from all over Israel to stand and hold signs that merely said, “Stop the Occupation,” and waiting in the interminable lines of non-Israelis at the checkpoints to submit passports to visit the other side of the Wall.

A total of over 50 interviews have been conducted, focusing on the stories from both sides of the Wall that share common hurts, injustices, fears, and family histories. As many qualitative researchers find, Kimmel was both pleased and overwhelmed at the number of women who wished to tell their story. This project has opened doors for personal growth and change, not only in the researcher, but in the women whose stories found voice to an interested woman from an outside culture.

**The Perspective Transformation of the Researcher**

Both researches have reflected on their experience and have discussed findings with other professionals through presentations, writings, and dialogues. This has generated a spiral of experience, reflection, and discussion that continues.
Herbers

I had taught at the college level for a decade before I began this research study. It has now been another ten years since I conducted the interviews. The inside view of what happened to individual students in this one course changed my perspective as a college teacher. I was moved by the intense feelings, the painful experiences and the sweet interactions behind the scenes of the classroom. I gained greater appreciation for the interconnections and the subtleties. The major lesson learned was to put more trust in the process. There are moments in classes when I may sense negative reactions from students. I may experience frustration that students are not “getting” it when I present what I consider meaningful material. I may want them to grapple with difficult issues, to see through the eyes of others for a moment. Most days I am able to exercise patience with letting events unfold and creating space for student engagement. It is when I try to control the direction of change of a particular student or group that I meet resistance. I continue to deepen my understanding of the role of students as agents of change. I may never know the ways that students have been moved by encounters outside the classroom as they work with diverse groups of people on projects. What I do know is that I need to provide concrete experiences that will provide ample opportunities for reflection and discussion. I must layer learning experiences so that one issue is viewed from multiple perspectives and in diverse ways.

Through this study I witnessed the dance of the participants. I saw how the perceptions and actions of one student impacted another student. For example, I saw one student’s perception that Dr. King’s dream had been realized prompt a disorienting dilemma for a pregnant student who questioned how others (teachers who could potentially work with her own child some day) could be oblivious to discrimination and inequities in the educational system. I observed how her gentle but firm challenging created small fissures in the vocal student’s defense of the system. Later in the course, the reading of a children’s novel (Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry) dealt an emotional blow which prompted that student to reexamine his assumptions. Another participant, a middle aged African American male, informed me that he was invited to the home of White student to work on a group project. This was a first for him. I listened as yet another participant who did not exhibit any evidence of change reflected on her experience as a White student in a minority position for the first time at a newly integrated high school. She described episodes of physical aggression and verbal harassment. These painful experiences created a barrier to learning about the oppression of African Americans.

One class cannot heal deep wounds. As an adult educator who is a former therapist, I value the right of the student to decide when and how to reflect and discuss. My responsibility is to create a safe space that invites reflection and open discussion. I continue to grapple with the ethical issues of generating discomfort versus failing to confront the prejudices, especially of classroom teachers. I have been involved with national organizations, such as Facing History and Ourselves, which work with educators to confront sexism, racism, and other manifestations of religious or ethnic intolerance in the classroom in order to support my professional development and that of my students.

Kimmel

My first journey to Israel and Palestine was in May, 2001, three months prior to 9/11. I went to interview Palestinian and Israeli women working in the movement to End the Occupation. This began my own transformational learning journey through the morass of political, social, historical, and religious aspects of this 60 year old boundary problem between
two peoples in what we Westerners call “The Holy Land.” I thought this could be a reasonably short qualitative research project that would be of interest to adult educators concerned with issues of community learning, women learning from other women, social learning, and the issues of telling women’s stories concerning a political problem that had become a violent life course for many on both sides.

After the first visit, I learned the first lesson of work in The Holy Land: there are no obvious answers; the problems are so complex, interwoven with the history of the place that I must return to gather information and face my own prior assumptions. To put it bluntly, I was hit squarely with Mezirow’s stage of confrontation with anger, guilt, and fear (Mezirow, 2000, p.22). So I read, studied, corresponded with, talked to, and interviewed Americans about their feelings, tried to write. Alas, like a good academic, I was driven to look for answers, to analyze the problem to death. All the observations and interviews with the women of Palestine and Israel only pushed forward more questions and many doubts. I had traveled with a professor of theology who is a Roman Catholic Sister in my university’s order. She provided much support to my questioning, my quest to resolve the contradictory nature of both sides in the Occupation issue, and to hear my frustration with an inability to come to an action decision—actually, to any decision.

I made several presentations, using my photographs of those extraordinary women, fighting for justice and peace in the region. I devoured books, articles, research studies, history (including recent “revisionist history”) of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since 1948. And then, in 2003, I returned for a month-long visit and more research. Likewise, I returned again in 2004, and twice in 2005. In August of 2005, I was invited to be an integral part of the Women in Black Conference, attending planning meetings, viewing the inner workings of the women’s organizations and their constant negotiations with both governments; it was an eye-opening experience and one that lead to a better concept of the intricacies of international boundaries and the nationalistic pride factors involved in getting people together just to talk. In 2007, I returned again. I gathered more information, research, and interviews during these trips.

Each travel event proffered reflection, reflection, and more reflection. I gleaned support for my concerns from other researchers, political activists, and religious organizations. And I talked…to other interested academics, to family, friends, colleagues, some with disastrous results that threw me back into myself to reexamine what I thought I knew, what I thought I had heard. The experience of dialoging with others helped to hone my own feelings and thoughts into something more focused. I found many other sympathetic and concerned US citizens. This was a turning point: to discover the uselessness of my own anger and frustration and to focus on the huge number of people who did care, did know, did understand the need for international dialog and political and social action to push forward the peace process.

In the weeks of July, 2007, after my return from seven weeks in the Middle East, the news reports have brought very encouraging notes on an Israeli proposal to abide by earlier boundaries set between the two areas, to agree to the conditions for peace set by earlier peace proposals, to admit the need for a two-state solution, and to sit down to begin again to address the problem of the Occupation. This time, Tony Blair, Condoleezza Rice, and EU representatives will be with the Israeli and Palestinian representatives to work on a possible solution. I was astounded, humbled, and optimistic, all at one time. I guess I can say that I have been integrating the experience of the past seven years all this time, but today I am a different person, a different kind of researcher, and a much more able teacher because of this seven year
experience. My own naïve view of not worrying about “troubles across the world” has been put away for good.

**Common Themes**

As we discussed our experiences, common themes emerged. Both researchers were touched by the intense affective responses of participants. The study of the Civil Rights Movement generated a range of emotions from sadness to anger, confusion, and resentment. Some participants (Black, White, and Mixed) shared family and personal histories of profound loss attributed to prejudice. Kimmel heard stories of common hurts, injustices, and family perspectives in a dramatically different context. Only faith in her fellow “sisters” sustained her during the emotional pummeling of learning the many truths of life for these women. Both researchers were humbled by the resilience and courage of participants in their studies.

The research supports that emotions play a pivotal role in the process of perspective transformation. Lucas (1994) noted “negative emotions also motivated change, because individuals attempted to change the situation (or themselves or their beliefs) in order to resolve painful, frightening emotions” (p. 270) More support for the role of emotions comes from Sveinunggaard (1993) who found that “Learning how to identify, explore, validate and express affect was a predominant component of transformative learning for participants” (p. 238). The researcher must have the ability to listen closely to emotional content and the skills to resolve or release residual feelings.

King (2004) found that “Adult educators’ learning and critical reflection about adult education can facilitate moving them toward new perspectives of a fundamental and inclusive character” (p. 169). Both researchers were challenged to examine assumptions brought to the table, to dig deeply into the factors and fences that keep humans apart, and to critically reflect on the impact of the cultural context. As a result of this examination of assumptions, both educators guide students to research and share their own histories, stories, concerns and conflicts. Both bring the lessons of human history into every class. Both invest in finding ways to move from reflection and discussion to action for resolution of cultural/national/personal conflicts. Like participants in King’s (2004) study both researchers “gained greater depth in what they thought they already knew” (p. 163).

**Implications**

The lived experiences of Herbers and Kimmel suggest that researchers studying the process of perspective transformation must be capable of dealing with intense emotions, open to questioning basic assumptions, and willing to engage in reflective practice. Boucher and Smyth (2004) found that as supervisors of research candidates some methods required rigorous reflection on professional practice. They warn that some research questions and contexts require “vigilant attention to relationship matters with all of their emotional and psychological ‘hooks’ for the researcher, the researched and the supervisor for that matter” (p. 347). Supervisors must understand what might happen psychologically to students and to themselves. The challenge is to find ways to prepare students for possible disorienting dilemmas and to continue to support these researchers as they navigate the process of change.
References


Abstract: When a habit of mind transforms, existing context-specific points of view do not automatically and immediately change. This discussion explores implications of this proposed phenomenon in anti-racism education.

Introduction

Just because a person experiences a perspective transformation regarding racism – or anything else, for that matter – does not necessarily mean that all of his or her attitudes, habits and worldview generalizations immediately and automatically change. In Mezirow’s (2000) terms, a transformed habit of mind does not automatically change all of a person’s points of view. The learning that a person experiences in one context may not necessarily translate immediately into all possible contexts. Mezirow touched on this when he emphasized “contextual understanding.” “The justification for much of what we know and believe, our values and our feelings, depends on the context – biographical, historical, cultural – in which they are embedded” (p. 3).

The framework for this discussion focuses on the importance of context and asserts that people have myriad points of view tied to the many contexts in which they live. When a habit of mind transforms, context-specific points of view that were formed under the previous habit of mind are already in place. The transformed habit of mind does not automatically change all of those points of view. Rather, it creates the possibility for reexamining those points of view in light of the new habit of mind. This roundtable discussion is designed to explore implications of this proposed phenomenon in anti-racism education.

A Working Definition of Anti-Racism Education

For the purposes of this discussion, I am defining anti-racism education very broadly. It can range from efforts designed to move “privileged elites toward active participation in social justice” (van Gorder, 2007, p. 9) to emancipatory, Freirian-style educational efforts (Freire, 1996). Anti-racism education can take such institutional forms as the Initiatives in Educational Transformation (Hicks, Berger, & Generett, 2005) or multicultural teacher education (Jennings & Smith, 2002). It can be found in the work of multiracial educational organizations, prison activist organizations, or multiracial churches actively striving to challenge racism in their communities (Manglitz, Johnson-Bailey, & Cervero, 2005). It can also take individual forms as members of the racial majority seek to identify and overcome the specific ways in which they remain complicit in maintaining systems of racism (Manglitz et al., 2005; McIntosh, 1988).

The purpose in defining anti-racism education so broadly is that this discussion is not intended to focus on a particular method or model of education, as it is to explore ways in which they all must accommodate the powerful role that context plays in maintaining racist systems of thought and behavior.
Theoretical Framework

This discussion is based on the assertion that just because a person experiences a perspective transformation does not necessarily mean that all of his or her attitudes, habits and worldview generalizations immediately and automatically change. Even when huge, epochal transformations are experienced, incremental transformations still occur and indeed are necessary for the transformation to permeate the various aspects and contexts of a person’s life. Integral to this assertion is that a person’s attitudes, habits and worldview generalizations are not necessarily consistent across all contexts. Context plays an important role in how a person thinks, acts and experiences the world (Clark & Wilson, 1991; Ellsworth, 1989).

By way of illustration on an anecdotal level, I have noticed that my children act one way at home and then act differently when with a friend – and they act differently with different friends. Wondering if I manifest similar tendencies, I notice that I seem to think and act differently when at home with my wife and children than I do when I am with my parents and siblings; I am different in a university classroom setting than when I am relaxing with friends; I am different when in a leadership position in an organization than I am when in a relatively powerless position. This is not to suggest that I am schizophrenic based on my context or that I lack integrity because I do not have a way of thinking and acting that is perfectly consistent across all contexts. Rather, I interpret this to mean that context plays a powerful role in forming how we think and act. Consistency across contexts usually comes only after a concentrated effort – after a purposeful reflection on one’s way of thinking and acting in a particular context.

Theoretical Justification

This assertion is especially justified from perspectives such as poststructuralism and postmodernism in which a person’s “self” is not unified, consistent and stable, but formed by the various sociocultural contexts which played and continue to play such an important role in the shaping and forming of us (Clark & Wilson, 1991; Weedon, 1987).

Further, the cognitive development approaches to transformative learning commonly use models asserting that the development of thinking structures do not immediately encompass every aspect of a person’s life, but rather that people can exhibit various levels of complexity in their thinking in different contexts and situations (Kegan, 1982).

More important to this discussion, educators acknowledge that seemingly transformational learning experiences that occur in a classroom setting are consistent and lasting as long as the learner is in the classroom, but that learners often revert to previous ways of thinking and acting when they return to their work context (Sleeter, 1992). Similarly, Jennings & Smith noted, “multicultural teacher education courses can plant the seeds for personal and professional transformation, but teachers need to be supported beyond any given course in implementing, reflecting on, and revising their practices (Jennings & Smith, 2002).”

The difficulty in applying one’s learning from the classroom environment to one’s teaching practice is reminiscent of Lave’s (1988) theory of situated cognition, albeit in reverse form. Lave observed housewives who could perform certain math computations when comparison shopping, but could not perform the same calculations in a classroom environment – outside of the context within which they learned and continued to use these math skills. Similarly, it seems, even transformational learning is context-dependent unless and until learners make the effort to examine and reflect upon their thinking and behavior that has been habitual in different contexts.
This is not to imply that transformative learning experiences are not powerful or lasting. It is precisely because of the compelling nature of transformative experiences that learning from one context causes a person to reexamine other contexts of their lives from the new perspective. Hicks et al. (2005) noted,

Perhaps the most powerful learning … is the enduring quality of a transformative experience, that is, an experience that represents a constant flow of new beginnings as opposed to a nice and neat ‘lesson learned.’ A transformative experience, one might argue strongly, is coming into a new worldview, new ways of being and doing that one cannot resist. (p. 69)

Perhaps an effective way to look at transformative learning is that a profound perspective transformation that occurs in one context can open the door for further examination of one’s thinking and behavior in other contexts. It is not a nice, clean, demarcated event that suddenly changes a person’s thinking and behavior in all contexts. Rather, it is a series of learnings that have reached a critical mass in one or more contexts such that the learner identifies with and feels a commitment to the new perspective. The habits of thinking and acting associated with other contexts are likely to feel inconsistent and therefore may prompt the learner to examine and reflect upon them. Nevertheless, as our thinking is context dependent (Clark & Wilson, 1991; Ellsworth, 1989) so our reflections have to address multiple contexts. Transformation thus becomes much more of an ongoing process than a single learning experience.

Discussion Framework

Because the racial majority in the United States have learned to be blind to systemic racism, a myth of meritocracy has developed in this country (McIntosh, 1988). In this myth, individuals are the creators of their own fate; one’s innate skills, abilities and tenacity determine one’s success. In this myth, a “level playing field” exists because we are “a free country.” Because this myth is so deeply engrained in the collective thought of white Americans, the great epiphany for many people is simply that racism actually exists in comprehensive and pervasive ways, not just in individual acts of discrimination or meanness; that such a thing as White Privilege exists (Jennings & Smith, 2002; Manglitz et al., 2005; McIntosh, 1988).

Speaking from the perspective of a member of the racial majority, the difficulty in overcoming the effects of living and learning in a racist society is that I am blind to the ways in which I have learned to think and act as a racist. It is hard to see what has always been unseen. Although it is relatively easy to admit that racism exists in the United States, it is more difficult to comprehend that such as thing as “whiteness” as a cultural identity exists because the attitudes, habits and worldview generalizations pervasive among white Americans is accepted as being normal rather than idiosyncratic.

For example, even devoted anti-racism activist educators admit to still having “deep-seated and unknown biases” (Manglitz et al., 2005, p. 1269) within themselves regarding People of Color that they have to continuously reveal, examine and address. Similarly, they recognize the necessity of ongoing small transformations in talking about their own deeply embedded feelings of “internalized superiority” (p. 1269) over People of Color. They discuss finding ways in which this superiority is manifested within themselves and work to overcome it, only to find that different contexts reveal that the same underlying feelings are still present in different forms.
Questions

What are examples of context-specific habits of mind, points of view, or behavior that help to maintain a system of racism despite self-professed anti-racism transformative experiences? What are ways in which this theory is consistent with research or participants’ experiences? What are ways in which it is inconsistent? What are other possible explanations for this phenomenon? In other words, apart from the theory proposed in this presentation, how is it that despite a profound perspective transformation, other context-specific habits of mind or points of view can remain unchanged? What are some implications for educators trying to promote transformative learning?

References

Picturing Change: The Use of Visual Data in the Study of Transformative Learning
Barbara Hooper
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Abstract: Educators in a graduate professional program created drawings of their personal teaching models. The drawings helped access educators’ meaning perspectives related to teaching and illumined concepts not present in the interview data.

Introduction
Research exploring transformative learning has relied heavily on traditional qualitative research methods such as interviews, observations, journaling, written stories, and questionnaires. These methods have been utilized in primarily narrative and phenomenological frameworks to explore the experiences of individuals who have had transformative experiences and who invite transformation through teaching (Carusetta & Cranton, 2005; Kovan & Dirkx, 2003; Lin & Cranton, 2005).

Thus, the predominant research methods and types of data collected in transformative learning have been text-based, relying on what some have called “cognitive-rationale” means, such as reflection, to explore transformation. Notably, some qualitative interviews have followed in a tradition of using images to prompt reflection (Ah Nee-Benham, & Cooper, 1998; Hooper, in press). But few studies have collected visual images as data to explore transformation. This is somewhat ironic. As some argue, the foremost critical debate within the transformative learning field has been an over emphasis of the cognitive-rationale in accessing assumptions, beliefs, values, feelings, and identities that undergo deep change. Scholars have called for more recognition of the role of the non-rational, such as ways of knowing that are more imaginal and emotional, in accessing intrapersonal features subject to transformation (Dirkx, 2001a, 2001b; Scott, 1997; Taylor, 2000a; Yorks & Kasl, 2002). Taylor (2000a) argued that “there is a need for research designs beyond the phenomenological approach, so that other paradigms are utilized…in exploration of transformative learning.” The purpose of this paper is to present the use of visual data to study faculty perceptions of teaching and learning in a graduate professional program and discuss how transformation was portrayed in the drawings. I discuss how the visual data supplemented the interview data.

Theoretical Framework
Transformative learning theory is the conceptual framework most relevant to the methods, data and findings presented here (Kegan, 2000; Mezirow, 1997; Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2000a). From the perspective of transformative learning, individuals embody through their actions particular taken for granted meaning perspectives, or understandings about the nature of reality in given interactions and experiences. Because individual meaning perspectives are often tacit, studying them is particularly challenging. To date, scholars believe there are two key avenues through which meaning perspectives can be accessed. One is through self-reflection (Mezirow, 2000) and the other through means that tap the imagination, such as images, metaphor, fantasy, emotion, and mindfulness of the steady stream of thoughts and feelings that continually arise in awareness (Dirkx, 2001a, 2001b; Kovan & Dirkx, 2003). Thus, I collected data using both self-reflection and imaginative avenues. I asked educators to reflect on teaching
and what happened in particular class sessions. I also utilized metaphors, photo-elicitation techniques, and faculty drawings.

**Methods**

The drawings presented here constitute one data set from a larger case study designed to describe the beliefs, perspectives and practices among a group of nine faculty members teaching in a subject-centered curriculum. The study took place in a graduate occupational therapy program at a large, research university in the United States. The case was selected using intensity sampling (Stake, 2000). The curriculum was recognized by colleagues in occupational therapy as exemplar. The curriculum had also undergone both written and conference peer-review processes. I observed and interviewed nine faculty members, all women, on a daily basis over 8 weeks during a fall semester.

The data I present here were collected during the final interview of the study. In that interview, each faculty reflected on researcher-selected video segments of her teaching. Afterwards, I provided several 11x14 sheets of paper along with colored markers and asked each participant to, “sketch a model that represents your teaching.” After completing the drawing, I asked the educator to describe the drawing. An audio taped conversation then occurred around the contents of the drawing.

Seven faculty drawings were analyzed using a combination of content analysis and visual and social semiotic approaches (Banks, 2001; Prosser, 1998). I first studied the drawings as a collective and then individually, making detailed notes describing the content of each drawing (Collier, 2001). I subsequently analyzed the drawings according to the following questions: What is unique or distinctive about the drawing? What about the drawing is shared with the other drawings in the set? How is the profession represented in the drawing? What do the visual data reveal that the interviews did not? Descriptive documents that answered these questions were created for each drawing. The final stage of analysis was guided by two questions, What do the images represent and how? What ideas and values do the things represented in the image stand for? I used the interviews in which faculty described their drawings as a form of member-checking.

**Findings**

The theme of transformation was prominent across the set of drawings. Yet, findings from the visual data helped illustrate that members of the same faculty group targeted different transformations among students. Also, rather than representing complex ways of knowing solely as the ends of transformation, these faculty drew complex ways of knowing as the means by which transformation was most often elicited. They drew graduate content as the transformative meeting space where various transformations were elicited and where complex ways of knowing were practiced. For the sake of space, I offer Patsy’s drawing to illustrate these themes (Figure 1). More drawings will be reviewed during the oral paper.

**Transformations Targeted**

Across the drawings, three areas were targeted by faculty for transformation—students’ ways of knowing, growth and integration of the student’s self, and transformation of the profession as whole. In the drawing by Patsy, students enter the program (right side of the drawing) with particular past experiences—education, role models, and other life and professional experiences. And thus they enter the “immediate context of the division” with pre-
established ideas about and skills in content, communication, organization, relationships, creativity and values. As they progress through the curriculum, represented in the drawing as content, they engage with the instructor and with each other in an exchange of information, ideas, values, and beliefs. They also engage in complex thinking and reflection such as analysis, synthesis, application and evaluation. Through these engagements, students’ skills, ways of knowing and their standards are reformulated. Such reformulations cycle back to be integrated with, or to transform, their former understandings, experiences and ways of being, that is, their sense of self. In addition, the very dynamic process of joining with students in the central content meeting space in order to reformulate ways of thinking and self-integration, finally funnels down to changing practice contexts and changing the profession. Patsy’s drawing reflected the strong statement pertaining to creating a new future for occupational therapy that was contained in the program’s published vision statement.

**Mechanisms for Transformation**

Like Patsy’s drawing, many of the drawings represented analysis, synthesis, application, evaluation, critique and complexity as the mechanisms by which the self, ways of knowing and the profession are transformed. This stands in contrast to how complex ways of knowing are often portrayed—as end transformations, or that which will change as a result of teaching. In these drawings, complex thinking was portrayed not solely as the ends but also as the means of change. Patsy drew complex ways of knowing as the catalysts of reformulation, as the mechanisms by which ways of thinking, acting, and doing are transformed. Notably, in her drawing, this is a transformation that occurs for both the instructor and the students. In addition, analysis, synthesis, application, evaluation, critique and complexity are represented as critical catalysts for changing the profession.

**Content as Transformative Meeting Space**

In Patsy’s drawing, content is not portrayed as the raison d’être of teaching. Content is represented more as place, or a space wherein the selves of the students, the self of the instructor, and the information, ideas, values and beliefs of the profession all meet. In this sense, content acts like a crucible in which these raw materials are blended and reformulated. Like complex ways of knowing, content is represented not only as an end in teaching and learning, but also as a means, a place for coming together in processes of change that are both personal and social.

**Discussion**

In this study, educators’ drawings of their personal teaching models served as one way to access their meaning perspectives, or the ways in which they made sense of their task as educators. Further, the drawings illuminated two concepts that had not been explicit or easily detected in the interviews. First, complex ways of knowing were represented as the means for transformation, not merely as the ends of a transformative process. Constructive-developmental scholars describe the development of fourth-order (Kegan, 1994), contextual (Baxter Magolda, 1999), and constructed ways of knowing (Belenky, M.F., Clenchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J.M., 1996), and the development of reflective judgment (King & Kitchener, 1994) as what happens as a result of carefully choreographed pedagogical processes and other life experiences. That is, the predominant understanding of complex ways of knowing is that they are products of transformation. They are not generally explicitly described as a transformative force. In these drawings that equation seems to be reversed. Engaging in complex ways of knowing is
portrayed as the starting point. That engagement serves as a catalyst for other transformations such as changing the profession at large, or reformulation of values and relationships. Thus, a common meaning perspective portrayed in the drawings was that, students exercising complex ways of knowing, important social transformations occur. This meaning perspective in turn changes one’s view of complex ways of knowing from a developmental task to an expectation.

Second, content was portrayed as a lab, if you will, a place where people come together to practice complex ways of knowing as it relates to the ideas and skills of the profession. This stands in contrast to what sometimes happens in professional education. Attending to the demands of accreditation standards, educators may become so focused on covering the content that other transformative process that can occur through the content are overlooked. When that happens, content is represented more as the ends of teaching. In these drawings, however, content was a means. It served as a space where other transformational ends could be pursued.

**Summary**

Systematic collection and analysis of visual data, along with self-interpretations of the data by study participants, provided a way to access and describe meaning perspectives held by faculty on teaching and learning. Findings suggest that the commonly held assumptions that complex ways of knowing or critical reasoning abilities constitute the end, or goal, of transformative education may be misleading or perhaps incomplete. Along a similar vein, findings also suggest that academic content may provide a place wherein core ideas about the self and a profession (whether as educator or student) can be transformed. These findings pertaining to critical reasoning and academic content may be especially true for educators whose meaning perspectives entail an aim for social transformation of their profession and its impact on society as a whole. Lastly, the study offers evidence that visual data may produce insights that transcend those which can be generated relying solely on text-based data.
Figure 1  Patsy’s Drawing
References


Transformative Learning in the Educational Technology Program

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Abstract: A survey conducted among K-12 teachers who participated in an Educational Technology Certificate Program studies whether their learning experience in the program transforms their beliefs about teaching and learning.

Introduction
Technology has changed the nature of the ways people do daily activities (Yelland, 2006), including teaching and learning. Teachers have been engulfed in a wave to develop their capacity to utilize technology in their classrooms (Thornburg, 1999). Educational Technology Programs become popular in educational institutions and serve as an important channel for teachers to learn educational technology systematically. However, little attention has been paid to teachers’ learning experience in these programs. Since technology has shaped traditional classrooms and forces educators to reconsider the teaching and learning theories (Burbules, 2004), Educational Technology Programs should not only deliver skills in using technology but also transform educators’ perspectives.

This research conducts a single case study of an Educational Technology Certificate Program (ETC Program) provided by a university in a Northern state for K-12 teachers from 50 nearby school districts. The research has two potential audiences, educators who design educational technology programs and those who participate in the program. The research intends to provide planners of educational technology programs with a new approach to evaluate learners’ learning outcomes and enable participants in the program to be aware of the potential transformation in their understanding of teaching and learning in order to control the learning process and adopt technology innovation in teaching purposefully.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework
The concept of the term, educational technology, displays variety in different studies. A research on educators’ perceptions related to this term, conducted among 71 professionals from 12 universities in six countries, indicates that widely accepted definitions by professionals include both development and utilization of technological products in educational settings (Simsek, 2005). Since subjects in this research are mainly K-12 teachers who seek to improve their proficiency in using technology in teaching, educational technology in this study only refers to the utilization of educational products in classrooms.

Teaching philosophy is another key term to be defined in this research. A teaching philosophy is a comprehensive record of one’s belief about different aspects of teaching and learning including definitions of teaching and learning, aims for teaching, selection of teaching strategies, and reasons for choosing them (Apps, 1991). Teaching philosophy mentioned in this research focuses on two interrelated questions: 1) what do teachers hope to accomplish when they adopt technology innovation in teaching? 2) what do their aims tell about their descriptions of teaching and learning?

The research adopts Bruce and Levin’s (1997) taxonomy to further conceptualize learning and establish a criterion for evaluation. John Dewey categorized human inclination that motivates learning activities into inquiry, communication, construction, and expression. Based on this classification, Bruce and Levin (1997) divided the forms of educational technology use, which
have pedagogical potential, into four groups: media for inquiry, media for communication, media for construction, and media for expression (I.C.C.E Taxonomy). This taxonomy links specific technology use with different focuses of learning-inquiry, communication, construction, and expression, making it possible to measure participants’ learning experiences in the ETC Program by investigating the types of technological products they have learned in the program. The corresponding transformation in their aims in teaching suggests a potential causal relationship between the technological products and learning. For instance, a confirmation of the hypothesis addressed by the research can be that teachers who learn technological products, which support communication, tend to change their understanding of their relationship with students in learning activities.

Method

Based on the concepts and theories mentioned above, a further formulation of the research question can be whether different focuses on learning the technological products lead to corresponding transformation in participants’ aims in teaching. The research adopts a quantitative research method, which involves inferential data that allows the generalization of the sample, in order to make predictions about the extent to which the hypothesis works in the population studied (Thomas, 2005).

The independent variable in this study is participants’ focus on learning technological products in the ETC Program. The dependent variable is changes in their aims in teaching. Subject’s prior knowledge and experience in using technology is considered as a potential confounding variable since learners’ prior knowledge and experiences influenced the learning process and learning outcomes (Caffarella & Merriam, 1999).

Data Collection

An online survey was administered to a sample of 500 accessible participants who have taken the ETC Program since 2005 with anonymity and confidentiality assured. The researcher discussed the survey questions with coordinators of the ETC Program to ensure the language used in the survey was familiar and comprehensible to sample participants. Examples were given in the survey to explain terminologies. The researcher used the quantitative research tool SurveyMonkey (http://www.surveymonkey.com/) to create survey and manage data. The survey collects five types of information: 1) background of the subjects, 2) subjects’ prior knowledge and experience in using technology, 3) their learning experience in the ETC Program, 4) their intention to increase the technology use in four areas (I.C.C.E) resulting from the program and 5) self-report changes in teaching philosophy. Survey questions include multiple choices, rating scale, matrix, and open questions.

Data Analysis

The background information is presented in the number of frequency and percentage. Respondents used 5-point Likert type scales to indicate the extent to which they used educational technology in four areas - inquiry, communication, construction, and expression respectively in the past, learned these four ways of using educational technology in the ETC Program, and apply them in practice. The Pearsonian Correlation Test was used to examine the relationship among variables. Descriptive analysis was conducted to summarize the answers to the open question by identifying common key words.
Findings

Of the teachers approached, 50 out of 500 participants completed and submitted the survey, a response rate of 10%. All the respondents completed the first nine choice questions and 39 responded the open-ended question.

Factual Information

The respondents were of all age groups (20-29: 43%; 30-39: 20%; 40-49: 20%; 50-59: 17%). Respondents’ years of teaching ranged from less than 2 years to 21-30 years and those who had 2-5 years teaching experience constituted the majority (less than 2 years: 9%; 2-5 years: 37%; 6-10 years: 17%; 11-20 years: 24%; 21-30 years: 13%). Female respondents comprised 81% of the sample population. Subjects taught by respondents included English, mathematics, science, and social sciences, which were evenly distributed among respondents.

Among the respondents, 59% reported that they learned technology very quickly and 39% reported their capacity in learning technology as normal. The responds on their motivation to participate in the program showed that being interested in learning and using technology was a reason shared by the majority (72%). Next to this reason was their belief that technology could effectively help implement the existing teaching philosophy, shared by 70% of the total respondents. 57% of the total respondents selected the reason that they thought technology might enable them to develop the current teaching philosophy and make it more effective. The respondents, who chose both of these two beliefs, made up 46% of the total respondents. Financial support from their schools and external factors that force them to participate were chosen by about 25% of the respondents respectively. Three respondents indicated the courses were degree requirements.

Prior Experience and Learning Experience in the Program

The subjects rated respectively the frequency they used technology in the classroom before their participation in the ETC Program in the following ways: inquiry, communication, construction, and expression, from 5 (Frequently) to 1 (Never). In order, means (with standard deviations in parentheses) for four ways of technological use, inquiry, communication, construction, and expression were 4.18 (1.17), 4.38(1.21), 2.82(1.42)), and 3.1(1.51). Data concerning subjects’ learning experience in the ETC Program shows that respondents felt they learned technology for communication (M =3.98 (0.85)) the most, followed by inquiry (M=3.81(0.99)), expression (M =3.18 (1.33)), and construction (M=2.53 (1.27)).

Change in Teaching Philosophy

Respondents rated the extents to which they intended to increase technology use in teaching resulting from the Program. In order, means (with standard deviations in parentheses) for four ways of technological use - inquiry, communication, construction, and expression are 4.04 (1.00), 4 (1.16), 3 (1.41), and 3.48 (1.37).

Among the 39 respondents who answered the open-ended question about the changes in their understanding of teaching and learning resulting from the ETC Program, 16 (41%) acknowledged that their perspectives had changed. The researcher summarized their responds by identifying the key words that were related with inquiry, communication, construction, and expression. The summary showed that 6 out of 15 (15%) indicated their changed perceptions on the relationship between teachers and students. They stated that because of the program, they reduced control over the classroom, helped students learn independently, allowed more
diversified learning styles, or exchanged information with students in new ways. Four (10%) of the respondents showed a changed perspective on inquiry. They showed that after their learning in the ETC Program, they changed their ways of searching for data, began to explore further educational issues, and became more aware of problem-based learning. Only one respondent mentioned that the teacher began to let students personalize web pages (a constructing process), and blog writings, and use Podcasting, (a new way of expressing ideas).

The researcher also tried to identify the commonalities among reasons provided by 19 respondents who did not think their teaching philosophy had changed. The responds mainly fell into two categories. Seven (18%) mentioned that the teaching philosophy indicated by the ETC Program was in consistent with and further confirmed their own pedagogical beliefs. Ten (26%) said that technology exposed them to more options to implement what they had already believed and increased the chance for them to carry out their existing teaching philosophies. Twenty-eight respondents reported at the beginning of the survey that before participating in the ETC Program, they thought technology helped development their current teaching philosophy. Twelve of them indicated in the final open question that their teaching philosophy had changed resulting from the ETC Program and gave specific explanations. Ten said their teaching philosophies had not changed. As a summative evaluation of learners’ transformative learning experience in the program, this research lacks information to explain the disagreement between these ten respondents’ pre and post perspectives. An in-depth formative evaluation may provide insight into this issue so that program planners and implementers can adopt appropriate strategy to improve the current program.

In the current study, learning technology as a media for construction and expression (independent variable) shows moderate correlation with subjects’ intention to change their teaching strategy by increasing relevant forms of technology use in the classroom (dependent variable) (See Table 1). However, the confounding variable, teachers’ previous knowledge, and the dependent variable, their changed teaching strategy, show even stronger correlation in these two categories of the I.C.C.E taxonomy. Current study does not identify significant correlations between variables in the other two categories of the I.C.C.E taxonomy – Inquiry and Communication.

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**Discussion**

This research may end up having raised more questions than it intended to answer. While investigating the hypothesis and identifying new issues from the data, one begins to challenge the taken-for-granted understanding of the role and the functions of the educational technology as well as the notions of teaching and learning in a technology-based classroom. Each issue serves as a starting point for further investigation. At least two issues that emerged from the study are worth considering.
First, participants in this study showed that technology is frequently used for inquiry and communication, but significantly less in expression and seldom in construction. Similarly, they reported having learned to use technology for inquiry and communication more than to use it for expression and construction. Their intention to incorporate these different forms of technology use in teaching shows the same trend. Educational technology program planners may need to know whether there are barriers discouraging teachers from learning or using certain technology. If this is the case, program planners and implementers can make effort to remove the barrier in order to provide participants with a comprehensive view of educational technology.

In addition, various understandings of the role of technology in the classroom exist. Respondents to this survey described technology in various ways. Some of them interpreted it as an “option for implementing educational beliefs”; some of them thought that technology was a “challenge to the status quo”; some saw it as an “inevitable trend that must be integrated into students’ lives”. Different interpretations of technology lead to different learning experience. Respondents to the survey who said that their teaching philosophies had changed all indicated more or less the revolutionary nature of technology instead of see it simply as an addition to the traditional classroom.

The corroboration of the current research relies on a better access to the sample population, diversified sources of information, and better control of the data collection process. If it is true that learning certain technology use leads to teachers’ corresponding transformation in teaching philosophy, this indicates that changes will occur even if teachers have no chance to utilize the technological products they have learned in the program. Educational program planners may need to incorporate into their programs discussions of technology-based teaching philosophy. In this way, teachers lead technology to innovate the classroom rather than being led by technology to achieve innovation. If later studies disapprove the hypothesis raised in this study, a question to be asked is what will be the changes resulting from an Educational Technology Program. One teacher stated in the survey that she was unable to apply the technology she had learned in the program because the facilities were too expensive for the school to purchase. If owing the equipment is the premise for a teacher to bring the learning outcomes from an Educational Technology Program to educational practices, the program may reconsider the population it can serve and should serve. Failure to take into account these issues may result in increasingly prominent digital divide as an impact of the program on the community that it serves.

References


Circles of Hope: A Process for Personal and Community Transformation
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Abstract: This paper introduces the Circles of Hope, a change process developed by low-income African American women as a tool to educate themselves about the issues affecting their lives, create support systems that encourage personal development and community engagement and provide a means of lending their voices to important issues affecting their community. Outcomes of participation in the process have been transformative to the women and their communities.

The Circles of Hope is a gender-based process for creating personal change and change in the community. It is a cross-cultural participatory meeting method that engages participants in an exploration of topics affecting their own growth and development. Circles of Hope was developed by a group of African American women who live and work at the base of the community in a high-risk environment. WomanSpirit is the name of the organization. WomanSpirit is a not-for-profit, 501 (c)(3), founded in 1993. They are 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 their own development and developed the Circles of Hope as a tool for personal growth and community development. It is a community-based learning process designed to help women find and use their voices to speak to the issues that have the greatest impact on their lives, develop plans for addressing those issues and provide a support system for women that facilitates the kind of action that makes growth and development possible.

Early in the development of the organization WomanSpirit found it difficult to participate in public efforts to improve their community because the processes that were used in the public sphere were not reflective of the values and norms important to them as African-American women living in an economically stressed environment. This is not unusual, the public sphere has historically had a difficult time recognizing the work of women because the public sphere has typically been dominated by men and culturally is reflective of the roles men play in the public (Stall & Stoecker, 1998). Because they were not able to effectively participate in public decision-making WomanSpirit began looking for ways to effectively lend their voice to the broader development issues affecting their community.

Circles of Hope is a result of a variety of different influences that included exploring the best practices available to them, developing an understanding of their own needs and what it took to be successful, and becoming active participants in networks of women engaged in issues of development regionally, nationally, and internationally. Through these efforts they were able to find models of education, planning, and development that better reflected their own notions of appropriate development and reflected their values and sensibilities as women. These models were participatory in nature and focused on engaging women in their own development. These models tended to differ from traditional models of development in that they were gendered, focusing on the sensibilities of women and they reflected a notion of public participation that emphasized extending the values they found in their private spheres such as family and church into their public life. The work of women has historically been confined to the private sphere of...
the home and neighborhood, which is often idealized as a safe haven. However, many women of marginalized communities such as African Americans, Latinas and Asians, were often excluded from the ideal of the private sphere as a haven from the cruelties of public life and often extended the private sphere beyond the home and neighborhood into broader community networks as a survival strategy (Stall & Stoecker). Many community-based education efforts of women engaged in addressing issues of development reflect a private sphere orientation. The women do not call attention to themselves, preferring to work within their own groups and networks.

Some of these gender-based efforts are reflected in successful community-based organizations in many parts of the world linked together through International networks that facilitate the exchange of best practices and ideas (Jaeckel & Laux, 2001; Purushtothaman, 1998). The networks serve to broaden the scope of the local by connecting their local issues to larger societal issues such as housing, health care, violence and unemployment. They provide a vehicle for these groups who are often locally focused, operated, and managed to give voice to larger issues. The German Mothers Center in Stuttgart, Germany is a good example of a grassroots women’s organization that is active in their neighborhood addressing the specific needs of their community and connecting their issues to larger societal issues (Laux & Kolinska). They are part of a network of Mothers Centers called MIME that includes 500 centers in Germany and 800 worldwide. Locally they have a strong voice and collectively they are able to share their perspectives nationally and internationally. The Stuttgart Mothers Center is engaged internationally through MIME. MIME is a member of GROOTS International (Grass Roots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood). It was through GROOTS that WomanSpirit became engaged with the Stuttgart Mothers Center and began exchanging best practices. WomanSpirit was able to share the *Circles of Hope* process and the Mothers Center was able to share their concept of public space for women. It is through these encounters with others in the network that the *Circles of Hope* process was shared with other groups of women and was refined through interaction and feedback. Over time elements of the *Circles of Hope* have been incorporated into a number of international meetings and events.

The influence of groups like WomanSpirit and the Stuttgart Mothers Center has grown in ways that many people do not recognize because they only know them as small groups of women going about their business in their communities. Most people they encounter do not see the vast networks and systems of support they have created to support each others work and connect to broader national and international agendas for community and societal change. The *Circles of Hope* is both a product of these associations and a means of furthering their development.

**The Process**

The *Circles of Hope* is both a process for addressing personal issues and extending those efforts to the broader community lending their voices and experiences to the public debate on a range of issues such as education, health care and housing. For example, one long-time participant in a *Circle* had a strong desire to pursue higher education. She really wanted to go to college but everyone around her discouraged her from attempting to go to school including her family, the men in her life, and the educational system itself (Jeanetta, 2006). It was not until later in life, once she became involved with WomanSpirit, that she realized college was a dream she could pursue. In the *Circle* she learned about the role that education could play in her life, she developed a plan to go to school and received the support and encouragement from the *Circle* necessary to actually enroll and pursue her educational objectives. The process had such a
profound transformative effect that she became involved in promoting education in a variety of ways including offering courses through WomanSpirit to share what she was learning in her courses with others in the community and she established a program through her church that provides information and support to those not normally considered college material (Jeanetta). The Circles of Hope process was instrumental in helping her find her passion, facilitating her personal transformation and supporting her engagement in the broader community around an issue that she was very important to her.

The process originates from a number of places including the Leadership Support Process (LSP) developed by the National Congress of Neighborhood Women (NCNW). WomanSpirit joined NCNW in 1996 and learned the LSP process through this association. The use of vision questions and basic agreements are key inputs from LSP to the Circles of Hope process. The Circles of Hope was also influenced by the work of Anne Hope and Sally Timmel. They wrote a series of workbooks called Training for transformation: A handbook for community workers, volumes 1-4 (1995) that introduced WomanSpirit to a number of methodologies and provided a theoretical framework for the work they wanted to do. Hope and Timmels’ work was heavily influenced by the work of Paulo Freire. The third primary influence on the Circles of Hope was the work of Jane Vella. The book Learning to listen, learning to teach: The power of dialogue in educating adults (1994) connected the work of WomanSpirit to principles of adult education and popular education methodologies. In 1997, members of WomanSpirit were able to participate in a training provided by Vella at the Jubilee Institute. The principle resource from that training Jubilee Popular Education Center: Master trainer course (1997) has served as a guide to their work and is reflected in the Circles of Hope process.

The Circles of Hope has proven helpful to women in high risk communities because it creates a safe place for learning and reflection, facilitates exploration of the issues and dilemmas participants are facing, explores how their value systems are impacted, and develops alternative responses and strategies to address the issues and grow as people and communities (Jeanetta, 2006). The Circles of Hope process has three principle elements. They include social support, education for action and organizing for change. Each time a Circle is convened all three elements are present and can be combined in different ways to reflect the values and sensibilities of the participants present in the Circle. One of the keys to the success of the program is the combination of support, education, and action in a peer-learning environment conducive to the exploration of difficult issues.

A variety of small group interactions in the personal support section help to create a safe environment and ensure all will get to participate equally. Basic agreements are the ground rules governing how the participants in a Circle will participate in the process and are based on values and vision. The Circle sets the standards and participants carry the values and vision into the community representing the Circle (Payne, 1996). The basic agreements are the codes of behavior that help participants develop a culture of acting. They provide a set of ground rules tied to the collective values of the participants in a The aim of basic agreements is to find the simplest and clearest ways to remind ourselves of our mission, our values, our hopes, our goals, our standards of behavior, and our time limitations. With basic agreements we don’t have to reinvent a safe and thoughtful way of having a meeting every time. We always start from our standards, from what we believe in. (NCNW, 1993, p.39)
Basic agreements used by the *Circles of Hope* include things like respectful listening, no speaking a second time until everyone has had an opportunity to speak once, time limits, to name a few. Basic agreements help participants develop expectations about their own behavior and that of the rest of the group that enhance the development of trust within the group.

The *Circle* always starts with personal support. Using music, stories and a “go-round” technique participants work through the personal support questions: “What is going well?”; “What is challenging?”; and, “What support will make a difference?” The personal support questions tend to equalize participants by creating an environment that ensures all will get to participate equally. “What is going well?” is always first. Exploring strengths is important to people with a lot of stress in their lives. It gives them an opportunity to think about what they have that they can work with. It is important to start with what is going well because often people are preoccupied with the challenges they face and often they forget there are things that are working for them and tempers the discussion about challenges. “What is challenging?” provides participants an opportunity to share their concerns in a safe and supportive environment. Many of these women are fairly isolated in their daily lives so they relish the opportunity to share their concerns and obstacles with other women who may have similar issues and experiences. “What support will make a difference?” begins the process of empowering participants to create their own change. It is an opportunity for the women to suggest their own solutions to the issues that confront them.

Education for action is the second element of the *Circles of Hope* process and includes exploring the issues that brought the women together in a *Circle*. *Circles* are formed around for different purposes and lengths of time. Some *Circles* are ongoing and may meet regularly for several years. Sometimes a *Circle* is constructed around an issue such as health care, housing, employment or education. Other times a *Circle* is created to create a mutual support system of women with similar issues. One such group that met for a number of years was called Wise Women. Wise Women was a very diverse group of women who met regularly for a number of years to provide support to one another in their various roles as women and thus benefit from each other’s experiences. When a *Circle* is convened around a specific issue then the “education for action” section will focus on exploring the specific issue that brought the women together. If the *Circle* is not issue specific then an agenda for this section will need to be agreed upon either ahead of time or early in the process.

Education for action is guided by an animator, someone who both facilitates the process and acts as a member of the *Circle*. Animators use probing questions that make it possible for the group to effectively define the issue in ways they can understand and respond to effectively. The questions “What?”; “So what?” and, “Now what?” are used by the animators to provide a framework for exploring the issues relevant to the *Circle*.

“What?” questions consider what is happening and its affect on the *Circle* and or the broader community. What is the issue? What does this issue look like to the members of the *Circle*? For instance, and issue like health care can look very differently to someone on a fixed income, no insurance, and limited access to health care facilities than it does to someone with an education, insurance, and access to a wide range of facilities. The *Circle* may conduct some of its own research, invite speakers, watch videos, and participate in wide ranging discussions about the issue. Once they feel they understand most of the dynamics of the issue they then begin to explore the impact of the issue on their own lives and communities. “So what?” questions help define the impact of the issue on the participants as individuals and as a community. How does an increased understanding of this issue change things? What does the closing of health clinics in
the neighborhood mean for the residents who live there? "Now what” questions take the group forward. What actions should be taken in response to this new understanding? What are the implications if nothing is changed? Who are potential allies and partners? What can be done to ensure access to health care services given that the local clinic is closing?

Education for action is a process of connecting the dots. It is where understanding begins to take shape and ideas are formed that can be acted on by individuals in the Circle or by the whole group. The Circle connects larger community issues to the personal experiences of the group and connects the personal experiences of the group to changes happening in the broader community. This is important because often the issues that are most affecting the lives people in marginalized communities are issues that have some connection to changes happening outside the community. For example, a plant closing is often related to changes in the broader market and not to the quality of work a person did on the job. The assumption is that once a person better understands the circumstances around the issue affecting them the most they will be better able to see their role in that issue and can begin to think about changes that can be made that begin to address the issue. Stories and case examples are used to explore what an issue means to the individual members of the Circle and to the broader community.

Organizing for change in the Circles of Hope is the use of vision questions to chart a way forward that the participants in the Circle can implement on their own or collectively. This is driven by the vision of the Circle and the capacities of those in the Circle. Vision questions are open-ended questions that help participants begin to explore their experiences in ways that help them think about what they want for the future. What do they value about themselves and their potential? What would they like to see differently in the future? It is a way for women to begin to think about what is important to them and how they might go about putting things in place to begin to create that vision for themselves (NCNW, 1993). Vision also considers how communities begin to build collective identities around what they share in common. Linking vision to values helps people find common ground. Values are a reflection of what is important to them now both in terms of the things they want for themselves as well as the things they like about who they are that they want to preserve and respect.

Values are important to most people but groups that are marginalized by the broader society often prefer to learn with others that share similar values and views about the broader society (DeArrudah, 1995). The views and perspectives of the participants in a Circle and the values they represent often emerge as they discuss their vision for what they want for themselves. Their work together typically focuses on those values they share in common. When a group starts with values and vision they are building a foundation for establishing common ground amongst each other; this will support them as part of the group when they venture into the broader community (NCNW, 1993, Payne, 1998).

Personal and Community Change

Circles of Hope is a community-based learning process. Community-based learning is an educational process with roots in community theory and community development. The purpose of community-based learning is to meet the needs of the community served, implying a development function and a role in creating change (Moore & Brooks, 1996). The Circles of Hope process was developed to specifically address the needs of women locally by placing themselves in the broader world, understanding how that world impacts their lives and creating strategies to ensure their voice was part of the public dialogue on issues such as housing, healthcare, education, and economic opportunity. Circles of Hope embodies the process of
consciousness-raising as articulated by Paulo Friere in Pedagogies of the Oppressed (1971). Freire believed that when people develop an understanding of the issues that oppress them they will feel almost compelled to work towards change (Freire). The Circles of Hope is a change process. The founder of the group has often stated, “we change people and people change communities” (Jeanetta, 2006, p.27). In a study of the Circles of Hope process several of the women who had been part of a Circle for a number of years described the changes they experienced in the Circle and how those changes literally compelled them to become more engaged in their communities (Jeanetta). The Circles of Hope is a tool one community of women developed to address the changes in the world affecting them and in the process they transformed their lives and communities.

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The Neuroscience of Transformative Learning
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Abstract: This paper discusses the social cognitive neuroscience behind critical thinking. The role of: emotions in learning, dialogue and affective attunement, creating a psychological space or secure holding environment and support/encouragement in the process of critical thinking is addressed by grounding adult educational theory in social cognitive neuroscience.

Introduction
The National Science Foundations is giving monies to major universities for the exploration of the science of learning. For example, funded by the National Science Foundation, The Center for Cognitive and Educational Neuroscience at Dartmouth College has brought together a multidisciplinary team that includes researchers from cognitive neuroscience, psychology, and education to explore how the brain learns (National Science Foundation, 2005). Cognitive Neuroscience in not only researching individual brains in terms of cognitive growth, but cognitive neuroscientists are now doing research on the cognitive growth that happens when two or more brains are interacting. Indeed, our brains have evolved and developed physical mechanisms that enable us to learn by social interaction. These physical mechanisms have evolved in order for us to be able to acquire the knowledge we need and keep us emotionally and physically safe (Stern, 2004). They enable us to (1) engage in affective attunement or empathic interactions and language, (2) consider the intentions of the other, (3) try to understand what another mind is thinking, and (4) think about how we want to interact (Stern, 2004). These four developmental abilities are not only the underpinnings for reflective social interaction, but they provide learners with the evolutionary ability to think critically. As we look at these four developmental abilities, we find that they are similar to Kolb’s Learning Cycle: (1) we engage in obtaining information as we consider the intentions of others (a task of the primitive brain is to consider the intention of the other for survival purposes), (2) we reflect upon the information, (4) we then think about our thinking and create our own abstractions or ideas, (5) we can then can make a decision to test or, in other words, interact with the other.

Interestingly, it is this critical reflective process that promotes brain growth and, according to Ross (2006), provides a brain self-reparative process by bringing the learner into the higher regions of the brain where reflection happens.

In this paper, I present some of the findings that have come about through the dialogue of social cognitive neuroscientists, psychologists, neurobiologists, and educators that relate to the process of critical thinking.

Critical Thinking
Critical reflection entails the need to challenge psychological and cultural assumptions. Through critical reflection, the neuronal structure of the brain is restructured, we obtain a new belief system or a new “Self,” and a transformation or a deeper understanding of what we know happens.

I believe that these evolutionary processes of the brain, that give us the capacity of critical thinking, keep evolving through the use of the same process of critical thinking that Mezirow (1990) has outlined; the process of challenging cultural and psychological assumptions. Indeed,
critical thinking is the tool by which we evolve or sharpen our ability to empathize, (understand others), our ability to understand what we know, and the ability to transform our knowledge into new ideas or in other words, recreate our neuronal structures. However, there are barriers to challenging our cultural and psychological assumptions.

According to Brookfield (1987) the “self” feels threatened when challenging psychological and cultural assumptions and the learner may become depressed and/or anxious. Perry (1968/1999) has also examined the emotions involved during the process of critical thinking. Perry (1989) believed that each transitional stage involved not only the joy of realization, but also a loss of certainty and an altered sense of self (Perry, 1989, as cited in Kloss, 1994). Perry (1968/1999) looked at the developmental aspects of critical thinking by researching the learner’s transitions from (1) only believing what authorities say to (2) recognizing that authorities clash and may not always have the answers to (3) recognizing that each truth has “its own context, meaning, connections that rest on certain assumptions and contain their own inner logic” (Daloz, 1999, p. 75) to (4) shifting into contextual relativism, where “our view of the world is transformed” (p.75). According to Zull (2002), this transformation means we have moved beyond reflection, into the abstract phase of the learning cycle, creativity. Our brain has formed new neuronal patterns of thinking. Kolb (1984) calls the process of changing data into knowing “transformation of experience” (Kolb, 1983, as cited by Zull, 2002, p. 33). However, as Daloz (1999) points out, when learners start to question authority, they face uncertainty and fear of tribal abandonment (I am not like you and therefore you will reject me). As learners continue on toward multiplicity, they may feel overwhelmed by varying viewpoints and by the “uncertainty of not being right” Learners may be afraid, and therefore anxious, as they face the risk of rejection when they begin to voice their own opinions. According to Zull (2002), when approaching abstract thinking, learners are afraid that their abstract ideas may generate conflict. “There will be trouble if we all have different ideas” (p. 179). By bringing together the fields of adult education, psychology, and cognitive neuroscience, we can look at best practices in assisting adult learners as they move through the critical thinking process and encounter the accompanying emotions of that process. Within this interdisciplinary effort, there are four areas to discuss: (1) the role of emotions in learning, (2) the need for affective attunement, (3) a safe holding environment for dialogue and, (4) the place of encouragement in adult learning.

**Emotions in Learning**

When discussing the role of emotions in adult learning, there are three important concepts to remember: (1) success in learning is emotional success (Zull, 202, p. 222), (2) reflection is literally searching for connections from the past and the present (these connections include emotions from both past and present), and, (3) the brain probably learns more from emotions than sensory information (Zull, 202). From these three statements, we can understand that emotions are a key element of cognition. Therefore let’s examine the neurobiological connection between emotions and learning. Because our limbic brain or the emotional brain (where fearful memories are stored) is connected to the neocortex (the reflective brain), and all information is first reviewed by the primitive brain, emotions affect every stage of the learning cycle. However, because thinking, according to Zull (2002), is mostly unconscious, we may not always be connected intellectually to the past, but emotions such as anxiety, depression, fear, may be present as we become attuned to the emotional content of the neuronal structures of our belief systems. This is an important concept to understand when we realize that approximately 1/3 of all adult learners who come back to school have incurred severe enough trauma that the
traumatized brain can negatively impact their learning (and we are not even counting those who have had negative learning experiences or what is called educational trauma) (Perry, 2006). As traumatized learners navigate the rough waters of critical thinking, they may feel that they are “drowning” in the uncertainly and stress that accompanies the process of critical thinking.

Mezirow (1990) discussed the problem of submerged subconscious emotions that inhibit learning. He called these emotions sociocultural and psychological distortions from the past that cause “unwarranted anxiety that impedes taking action” (p. 16) Mezirow (1990) utilizing Gould’s theory of adult development (1978, 1988), stated that this impediment to confronting and taking risks results in lost functioning that “must be fully regained if one is to become a fully functioning adult” (p.16). In other words, cultural and psychological distortions may cause us to have self-defeating behaviors, based on subconscious emotions that keep us from actually questioning and taking the risks necessary to confront our psychological and cultural assumptions and form our own opinions.

**Dialogue and Affective Attunement**

As every psychological clinician knows, our belief systems can be well formed and, according to Brookfield (1978), adult educators need to be demolition experts that take into account the depression and anxiety adult learners encounter when challenging their belief systems. A tool used in this process that moves the learner toward, what Brookfield (1978) calls integration, (which is an appropriate term given this process is an integration of old belief systems and new data), is reflective dialogue. Through dialogue, the mentor/teacher can attempt to understand the learner’s thinking and raise questions that can stimulate the neuronal process of reflection. According to Ross (2006), researchers in neuroscience have proved that the reflective dialogue between therapist and client actually changes brain structure. This change happens because it is through reflective dialogue, that connections are strengthened between the primitive brain, or limbic system, and the reflective brain. These connections are called orbitofrontal-limbic connections (Cozolino, 2002). Their task is to integrate the primitive emotions into the reasoning process and bring about repair of the traumatized brain. Does this same process of self-repair happen when educators join in a reflective dialogue process with the learner? This research still needs to be done. But the point is reflective dialogue allows students to move into the higher regions of their brain, while overcoming their emotional distress. Cozolino (2002) states that this social interaction of reflective dialogue is one of two powerful processes that involve the mentor or teacher contributing to the “the evolution and sculpting of the brain” (p. 213) by “stimulating the brain to grow, organize and integrate” (p. 213). The second process is affective attunement.

The notion of affective attunement harkens back to Dewey’s (1938,1997) observations that an educator needs to “have that sympathetic understanding of individuals which gives him an idea of what is actually going on in the minds of those who are learning” (p. 39). According to social cognitive neuroscience, the brain actually needs to seek out and affectively attune to the other if it is to learn. Caring and encouragement from trusted others promote changes in neuronal networks. According to Zull (2002) this change happens because the brain is plastic, “in the sense [that] it can be remodeled or physically molded” (p. 116). According to Schore (1994) this caring or trusting relationship, results in a “cascade of biochemical process, stimulating and enhancing the growth and connectivity of neural networks throughout the brain” (Schore, 1994, as cited in Cozolino, 2002, p. 191). Cozolino (2002) further states that during the process of social interaction with a trusted other, the learner’s neurotransmitters that power brain plasticity (dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine) are stimulated leading to greater brain plasticity and
hence more neuronal networking and meaningful learning. In other words, dialogue between a trusted, affectively attuned mentor/teacher and a learner creates the holding environment that assists the learner in moving his or her emotions from the limbic area to the higher regions of the brain, where the “voice of reason” is found and the learner can self-modulate her emotions.

Creating a Psychological Space or Secure Learning Environment

Daloz (1986) calls this holding environment between a mentor and a learner, a space where the learner feels uniquely seen by the mentor, valued and safe. This type of relationship creates “a kind of two-person hothouse” (p. 221).

Within its walls, the student can reveal herself in ways that she could not to others for there is an understood quality of trust about it. The relationship becomes a special culture in which certain kinds of growth are encouraged and discouraged. To an extent, the outside world is sealed off, as it must be if this ‘inside world” is to offer special opportunities not available under ordinary circumstance. Because the experience of being closely listened to is so rare for many people, it can also be just the needed catalyst for the cautious emergence of a new sense of self. By listening, the mentor can give that new self an audience, often for the first time, an ear to hear the first tentative affirmations of a position the student knows to be on her leading edge, ideas too risky to entertain outside the safety of this space [italics are mine], a still tender voice speaking itself into being. (p. 221)

Social cognitive neuroscience provides insight into the effects in the brain of what Daloz has called the “space” where the “outside world is sealed off.”

Because our first relationships are with our caregivers, cognitive neuroscientists turned to developmental psychology to research the infant-caregiver relationship. They identified profound implications for our future attachment relationships (Stern, 2004). Gallese believes that an infant and caregiver enter an “intersubjective space” (Frith & Wolpert, 2003). This space is created by the infant and caregiver through the process of emotional resonance (Schore, 2002), or affective attunement. It is in this space that the emotional support of the caregiver brings an infant relief from the intense anxiety and fears that originate from the primitive survival mechanisms in the limbic system. The child cannot do this for her self, which is why children are born with evolutionary physical brain mechanisms that enable them to seek out such attachment and receive support. These brain processes continue to develop across our life span because we continually seek out attachment figures with whom we can engage (Stern, 2004). In other words, this same process of creating an “intersubjective space,” by affective attunement, happens across the lifespan.

It is interesting to note that a particular type of neuron, a mirror neuron, contributes to affective attunement because it enables us to know empathically what another person is feeling (Stern, 2004). When the learner feels her mentor’s/teacher’s care and support, her fears start to subside. If she looks into her mentor’s teacher’s eyes and sees reflected what she can become, she will borrow (take in) that confidence until she can produce her own. In other words, mirror neurons will enable her to feel the confidence that her mentor/teacher has in her and to join in that confidence.

Although Daloz (1986) discussed being a mirror for the learner—that is, reflecting back her potential—as a metaphor, literally looking into the eyes of the affectively attuned other is another significant form of social interaction that can assist in promoting development. Schore (1994) noted that the orbitofrontal cortex, or higher regions of the brain, can actually be
stimulated through eye contact because specific cells are particularly responsive to facial expression and eye gaze. Caring social signals activate this higher region of the brain of the brain and promote learners to feel secure. While this does not explain the phenomenon of effective long-distance mentoring relationships in which eye contact cannot physically be made, it can illuminate how the brain functions when trust and a safe environment are established.

**Support and Encouragement**

In this holding environment created by a trusted, affectively attuned mentor/teacher, where the learner can modulate her emotions while integrating the old belief systems with new data, she moves into the next stage of Kolb’s learning cycle, abstract thinking. During this creative process she may experience pleasure chemicals from the basal structure in the front of the brain that produce a reward that motivates the learner to continue to move along this developmental path (Zull, 2002). However, as previously stated, abstract thinking “can be frightening” (Zull, 2002) as learners may be afraid that their ideas could be wrong or that their ideas will generate conflict. Encouragement from the mentor/teacher is vital. Daloz (1986) believes that “calling the student’s voice to emerge is of central importance, for clearly we do not learn to speak unless encouraged to do so, or think without practice” (p. 225). With the emergence of her own voice she can now contribute through the action of her unique ideas and, best of all, feel the power of her creative spirit, understand the evolvement of that creativity, and perhaps eventually assist another in their evolving journey.

Recent discoveries in social cognitive neuroscience, along with the understanding of the evolutionary processes of critical thinking, can give adult educators the reasons why learners, who are moving through the critical thinking process, produce emotional reactions to challenging cultural and psychological assumptions. Social cognitive neuroscience supports the transformative learning concepts of: (1) the role of emotions in learning, (2) the need for dialogue and affective attunement, (3) the creation of a safe space or holding environment, and (3) the learner’s need for encouragement. I believe that with these new research findings in social cognitive neuroscience that apply to adult education, adult educators who adhere to the learning theory of developmental transformative learning, now have neurobiological evidence of the effectiveness of their theoretical concepts.

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Flags, Friends and Foes: Managing the Risks of Critical Self-Reflection
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Abstract: This ethnographic case study investigates the experiences of Protestant and Catholic students participating in a cross-cultural contact program in Northern Ireland. It examines the effectiveness of instructional strategies aimed at fostering dialogue and critical self-reflection as a means for promoting personal transformation and societal reconciliation.

Introduction
Nineteen students sit on the floor grouped in circles of five or six. Drawn from across Northern Ireland, these students have chosen to spend one weekend a month for four consecutive months “learning more about each other and about the issues, experiences and influences that have shaped who they are” (Corrymeela, 2003). For many, it is their first opportunity to spend significant time with members from the “other” community.

Now in their third weekend, students have entered a room where the walls are draped with various flags: the British Union Jack, the Irish Tricolor and the flag of Northern Ireland. After discussing their interpretation and reaction to the symbols found on each, they are invited to move about the room and ultimately “take a stand,” indicating with their physical proximity how closely they identify with each flag. Fourteen students stand clustered around the Irish Tricolor, five by the Union Jack and none by the flag of Northern Ireland or anywhere in between.

Reflecting upon the moment afterwards, Niamh, a fifteen year-old Catholic from outside Belfast, recalled “I felt really bad because we were all going to the Tricolor. I started thinking that maybe we should be going to the actual Northern Irish flag and I thought ‘Why aren’t we standing over there?’ I guess it’s sort of like you need to prove to people what your views on nationalism and unionism are because if we if we had stood by the Northern Irish flag then people wouldn’t have known which view we had. But I felt really bad because my friends were standing over there alone.” Alin, Catholic also, related “I did feel at one point that I should be standing at another flag because the Irish flag wasn’t that good at representing who I am. I just thought that I feel more Northern Irish—not British, not Irish, just Northern Irish.”

Transformation, Reflection and Risk
Critical self-reflection plays a pivotal role in the process of transformative learning. Without the provocation provided by situations that differ from what we expect or desire, it proves all too easy to fall prey to the tyranny of hidden prejudices (Gadamer, 1991) and remain comfortably ensconced in current patterns of thought and behavior. It is in confronting experiences, claims or perspectives that are contrary to our own that the limited or distorted nature of our assumptions is made apparent. When accompanied by a willingness to consider the validity of alternative viewpoints, this confrontation may instigate a period of introspection in which we come to examine the sources of our current assumptions and reassess their continued viability in light of new evidence (Cranton, 2002). Because such a process holds within it the very real risk that prior assumptions, beliefs, or practices will be revealed as inaccurate, inadequate or even illegitimate, it is an experience likely to be perceived as difficult and dangerous. Where the beliefs in question are weakly held or of peripheral significance, such a
risk may be borne easily (Scheffler, 1991). However, where they deal with issues integral to our sense of personal or group identity (Brandhorst, 2004), the erstwhile opportunity for learning and growth may instead engender resistance and an entrenchment of existing prejudices and misconceptions.

Methodology
This project employed an ethnographic case study approach to investigate the actions and interactions of program participants as well as the meanings they themselves ascribed to their experiences. Acting as a participant-observer, I served as one of three volunteer staff members helping to facilitate small group activities and providing general support to the students and the professional youth worker leading the program. Throughout the program I recorded field notes, conducted semi-structured interviews with students and staff, and collected curriculum artifacts used during program activities. All data were analyzed according to a constant comparative process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and a participant feedback procedure (Bibace, et al, 1999) was used in order to enhance the accuracy and representativeness of my interpretations.

Findings and Discussion
For the students participating in the Close Encounters Program, the risks associated with discussing questions of national and cultural identity were substantial. In Northern Ireland, “facts” regarding one’s own community, that of the other, and the conflict between the two are learned at an early age and generally reinforced by daily experience lived within the confines of neighborhoods and schools that are, to this day, largely segregated along religious lines.

Acknowledging the challenges posed by asking students to confront their differences, Close Encounters staff proceeded in a careful and deliberate manner. Before launching into potentially controversial discussions, students and staff devoted over sixty hours to developing a climate of mutual trust, respect, and friendship through such activities as team building exercises, sharing their personal hobbies, accomplishments, and aspirations, and spending long hours in informal conversation and play.

Only after helping students get to know and trust one another as individuals did program staff present students with opportunities to share representations of their cultural backgrounds, to explain their understanding of and attachment to these symbols, and to discuss their reactions to one another’s stories. Constructing an identity poster out of culturally inscribed symbols, fashioning an art spiral illustrating their communities and hopes for the future, forming body sculptures depicting their community traditions—each of these sessions invited students to confront the conflicts that existed between them and the social identity groups to which they belonged. The objective for doing so, according to the program facilitator, was to instigate dialogue that might lead students to reflect upon and, perhaps, re-assess their prior assumptions: “What we’re doing here is asking students to engage with some issues so that maybe they’ll start asking some hard questions, and by asking those questions of themselves, what they’re really doing is asking them of their family and their community in a way that might ruffle some feathers” (personal communication).

Evading Risk, Preserving the Self
Some students seized these opportunities to share their feelings and experiences concerning highly controversial matters: Roan described how his school was being terrorized by bat-wielding students from the neighboring Protestant school; three boys from Antrim depicted a
scene in which someone was being beaten for wearing the jersey of a particular soccer team; and Declan revealed his republican sentiments by drawing a picture in which Northern Ireland was shaded the colors of the Irish flag.

Other students, however, proved more reticent about presenting images that might provoke disapproval or disagreement among their peers. During the identity posters, for example, while many students listed St. Patrick’s Day as among the special holidays celebrated by their families, not a single student mentioned the 12th of July despite its being the most widely and passionately celebrated holiday within the Protestant community. Later, during the body sculpture session in which the Antrim boys portrayed violent scenes of sectarian conflict, a group of girls from Portrush elected to depict a more benign image of their community as a place where people relax, sun-bathe, and “nothing bad ever happens.”

For many students, the desire to preserve the interpersonal friendships that had been formed during the early parts of the program caused them to resist efforts to engage one another’s group identifications. One student expressed her fear that “if we were to sit down and talk about our problems with the other side, I would find it extremely awkward. I mean, it does have to be talked about at some time but I think I’d end up not taking part because I wouldn’t want to hurt other people’s feelings.” Another explained that “it’s just irrelevant what religion you are. When the sessions stop, we stop talking about that sort of thing.”

Even when certain students did elect to present stories and images might have proved controversial, other students frequently failed to respond to their more contentious implications by denigrating them as inaccurate, irrelevant, or insignificant. In the case of Roan’s story about being chased home from school each day by boys carrying bats and hammers, Nuala, herself a Protestant attending an exclusive and segregated grammar school in the same town, questioned the credibility of his account: I thought it was a bit over the top. We don’t get on in our town, but it’s not as bad as all that.” Other students granted the accuracy of the story but denied that it had any relevance to their own situations. Evelyn, a Catholic living in different town, suggested that the story was a product of a unique context that bore no relation to her own experience: “It wouldn’t really impact me at all; there’s not that much trouble where I live. In Newry, there’s mostly Catholics and only a few Protestants, so it’s not really an issue. I know all about it, the news really fills you in on what’s important, but its really just Belfast that they’re showing you.” Evelyn’s father had been killed in a paramilitary attack four years earlier.

Even when students did engage with questions of national or cultural identity, many consistently sought to minimize the wider implications of controversial statements by interpreting them in interpersonal rather than inter-group terms. For Alice, even such a provocative statement as Declan asserting his hope for a United Ireland failed to provoke her own Unionist commitments because she viewed it as stating a personal preference rather than professing of a political position: “Aye, that’s just Declan. I didn’t have a reaction to it because that’s just what he’s like, he’s just proud to be Catholic.”

Through such mental maneuverings, students managed to preserve the perceived viability of their current understandings by covering over apparent inconsistencies and disassociating themselves from troubling aspects of their own identifications. Despite the programmatic intent of using these opportunities to begin developing the ability to resolve conflicts peacefully, students employed a variety of response strategies through which they consistently minimized the controversial nature of claims and questions presented them. Their motivations for doing so were complex and varied: protecting budding friendships, disassociating from troubling or painful memories, or projecting a self-image of complacent superiority. In each case, however,
the effect was to circumvent opportunities for critical self-reflection by failing to engage with situations in which the claims or perspectives of others stood in opposition to their own.

Managing Risk, Confronting the Need for Change

In light of the frequency with which students employed such strategies to evade social, emotional or cognitive discord, the rare moments of critical self-reflection that did occur were noteworthy. That Niamh and Alin were able to question their actions and affiliations during the flag exercise described in the opening vignette is, no doubt, attributable, in part, to personal predispositions. It is instructive, however, that their later recollections of their thoughts and feelings during these moments reflect strategies consciously employed by program staff. The programmatic emphasis upon building trusting relationships was designed not only to enhance students’ willingness to take the risk of sharing personal information, but also to provide the motivation to enter into and understand other’s perspectives. Such a dynamic is evident in Niamh’s discussion of feeling bad for her newfound friends whom she casually left behind in order to stand by the Tricolor. Having earlier been disparaging of students who uncritically espouse their parents’ political positions, she acknowledged that she had exhibited a similarly unreflective stance in moving towards the Irish flag. Empathizing with the hurt and exclusion evident in her friends standing clustered, arms akimbo in the face of the Catholic majority standing by the Tricolor, she “felt bad for them” and came to see herself implicated in sectarian dynamics she had earlier distanced herself from.

Niamh’s ability to enter into other perspectives reflects a process Noddings (1992) describes as occurring naturally once individuals come to care for another. For newly encountered information to be allowed to disrupt students’ conventional thinking, students must choose to attend to those perspectives that challenge their current understandings rather than simply ignoring or discounting them. According to Noddings, this is precisely what happens when one come to care for another—they exhibit an “open, non-selective receptivity to the cared-for” (p.15) through which they are drawn out of a narrow preoccupation with their own projects and perspectives in order to take up another’s as their own. By caring for others, students attain a cognitive state of engrossment in which they “really hear, see, or feel what the other tries to convey” (p.16).

Other students, likewise, indicated instances in which the relationships they had formed with fellow participants yielded information that caused them to reconsider prior impressions conveyed by friends, family, or media. For Reilly, a Catholic whose prior impression of Protestants derived from “people saying they don’t like them,” Close Encounters was an opportunity to find out that “it’s not like they say it is.” Similarly, Alin recalled having recently viewed news reports of Protestant crowds demonstrating against the opening of a Catholic school in their neighborhood and forming the impression that Protestants “were all bitter and angry.” After getting to know Protestant students who deviated from this image, Alin surmised that “it’s just a minority” who are like that.

Simply by assembling a diverse group, the Close Encounters program provided students access to first-hand knowledge about fellow participants that conflicted with their stereotypes regarding the communities to which those individuals belonged. In some cases, the interpersonal friendships cultivated early in the program also provided the motivation to allow this discrepant information to disrupt and modify those preconceptions. As previously noted, however, there were also instances in which these burgeoning relationships served to impede the sharing of controversial information because students feared doing so might cause others to feel discomfort.
or take offense. Where such motivations prevailed, a second strategy employed by program staff proved more effective: decreasing perceived risks by constructing ways for students to approach divisive questions through examining issues in which they were less personally invested.

In an afternoon session on the final weekend, students were shown a short documentary in which immigrant youth described personal experiences of discrimination in Northern Ireland. Afterwards, students were asked to brainstorm all the various actions by which peers, parents, schools or police could discriminate against racial minorities. Hoping the session would draw upon students’ experiences with sectarianism, program staff were nonetheless cautious about making the connection too explicit:

All those things that they come up with aren’t just from their imagination—they’re sitting in there somewhere. The thing is, I know if I would’ve done that exercise using Protestants and Catholics that would have been a very difficult exercise for those young people to do because they’re a part of that. Hopefully people go away from that weekend and say ‘Okay, we did that work on racism’ and maybe somewhere along the way the penny will drop and they say ‘Okay, so what’s happening there to the Chinese community is what has happened to the Protestant community there or the Catholic community there’ (personal communication).

Asked to reflect upon the relevance of the session to their own lives, some students continued to frame the issue strictly in terms of racism: “the thing about discrimination was eye opening because I didn’t know racism was such a big problem here”. For others such as Leila, however, the connection between the two forms of prejudice became apparent: “Sure there were parallels. When we were watching the video and the girl was saying stuff about people writing Wogs on her wall, well, they spray stuff like that for sectarianism all over the place. So yeah, they are connected”. According to Kieran, thinking about how the Travelers are perceived and discriminated against proved a particularly effective point of comparison. Considering how Travelers are often scapegoated and targeted for abuse brought to mind a number of similarities to how Catholics are treated in the North: “yesterday at the discrimination session I brought up about the Travelers because they get blamed for a lot of the stuff that happens down there. Some of the stuff they talked about would have to do with the Catholics too, like the negative graffiti and all, you see a lot of that around Derry.” The decision to refrain from directly referring to sectarianism throughout the session enabled some students never to do so but also allowed those such as Leila and Kieran to draw connections without feeling personally exposed or attacked.

**Implications**

Intergroup contact and dialogue may initiate a process of critical self-reflection because it provides participants access to information beyond that associated with their own social or cultural positioning. Granting the validity of such information, however, often entails substantial social, emotional, cognitive and even spiritual risk. The case of Close Encounters reveals a range of strategies through which students attempt to evade such risks and how these, in turn, serve to preclude opportunities for growth and learning. It also reveals two options whereby educators can support students’ ability to engage with divergent perspectives in order to learn from and with one another: by reducing the perceived risks of questioning current assumptions and practices or by increasing the motivation for doing so.

To what extent is the need for and effectiveness of such instructional supports unique to the Northern Irish context in which Close Encounters is set? Certainly, both the salience of
antagonisms and the functionality of evading potential discord are elevated in a fractured society still struggling to emerge from the Troubles. However, specific evasion strategies reported here evoke comparisons to behaviors found operant in other contexts. The tendency to disavow collective culpability by framing issues and interactions in interpersonal rather than intergroup terms, for example, parallels that of pre-service teachers in the United States to couch explanations of the achievement gap in terms of personal motivation while paying scant attention to structural factors (Boyle-Baise, 1998). So, too, might we wonder whether and how the tendency of students at Close Encounters denigrate the accuracy or relevance of others’ perspectives serves to preclude opportunities for self-reflection in a manner similar to when students or teachers in the United States depict their own cultural or political group as more enlightened, rational or morally just than another.

Confronting experiences, claims and perspectives different from our own is a necessary but insufficient condition of transformative learning. The potential risks borne by the learner in such situations are multiple and sometimes powerful. Learning to attend to these risks and recognize the behaviors they may evoke is critical for educators concerned with supporting students through the process of acknowledging the limits of their own perspectives in order to learn from and with those who differ.

References


I Come, I Learn, and I Conquer: International Students’ Transformative Journeys in the USA

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Abstract: Confronting linguistic and cultural differences eighteen international students undergo a process of transformative learning while studying at U.S. universities. Not only must they conquer the external challenges of living in a foreign land, but they also overcome their inner fears of change, failure, and loneliness while transforming their assumptions.

Introduction

Like a stranger living in a strange land, international students engage in a process of transforming their identities and perspectives (Coward, 2003; Grabove, 1997). They must constantly examine, re-examine and adjust as well as re-adjust their prior assumptions, values, and belief systems in order to learn and communicate through the host country’s language. In the course of their adjustment, they face a multitude of disorienting dilemmas that strain their capacity to fit in with American culture, the education system, and the living environment. Hence, crossing borders and customs not only challenges international students’ courage, confidence, and intelligence, but it also requires these students to make changes and transform their assumptions in order to function effectively in the United States. This aspect of their adaptation is described by Mezirow (1991, 2000) as learning that is not only for acquiring knowledge or skills, but also for enhancing one’s self-awareness, extending worldviews, and shaping attitudes and perspectives.

This study explored 18 international students’ transformative journeys while working on advanced degrees at U.S. universities. It uncovered the way in which these participants reflect upon their learning experiences and how they utilize these experiences to facilitate their changes and growths, especially transform their taken-for-granted assumptions while studying in the United States. The research questions of this study include: What learning experiences do international students have while studying in the United States? How do they understand, manage, and integrate their experiences enabling them to shape the way they view themselves and the world?

Theoretical Framework

This study draws upon transformative learning theory (Mezirow & Associates, 2000) and adult learning and development theory (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Mezirow (2000) suggests that as human beings, we have a need to understand the meaning of our experience and to learn how to make our own interpretations and become autonomous thinkers. Indeed, Mezirow (2000) views adulthood as a transformative process that can be portrayed as “a praxis, a dialectic in which understanding and action interact to produce an altered state of being” (p. xii). The individual may undergo a perspective transformation through sudden insights gained from a crisis in his or her life or through a “long cumulating process” of transforming his or her meaning schema (Taylor, 2000, p. 20). Undergoing a process of perspective transformation not only promotes change, but also impacts the way people see themselves and their world (Clark, 1993; Kegan, 2000; Mezirow, 2000; Karpiak, 1997, 1999). In light of Mezirow’s transformative
learning theory, studying in the United States requires international students to transform their frames of reference and habits of mind in order to adapt to the new life circumstances. This process also allows them to discover different aspects of themselves in order to better connect themselves with others and the living environment as a whole.

**Mode of Inquiry**

The methodology for this study was qualitative drawing on the guidelines of interpretivism (Denzin, 2001; Moustakas, 1994). This study was conducted at a university located in the Midwestern United States. It used the purposive sampling method and snowball technique. The research participants consisted of 18 international students (5 males and 13 females) who had been studying at American universities for two to thirteen years, including one who was under H1 visa. In-depth interviews were used for data collection, the initial interview consisting of both a non-directive ‘clustering’ (Karpiak, 1996) exercise and an interview guide. The second interview was conducted at least two weeks after the initial interview to allow for a respondent check. During the second interview, participants were asked to review the identified themes with opportunities to clarify, expand, or amend. Analysis was done through the lens of transformative learning theory.

**Findings and Discussion**

The research findings revealed that these 18 international students came to the United States for advanced degrees to pursue a better life and career for their future. In the course of their sojourn, they confronted differences and disequilibrium including linguistic hindrance, cultural differences, isolation and loneliness, financial burden, and heavy workloads both at school and in their daily lives. They also underwent various novel experiences such as attending American cultural events, working on and off campus as graduate assistants or for internship, participating in professional conferences, and enjoying after-school activites on and off campus. Meanwhile, encountering problems and difficulties also challenged these participants’ competence and confidence of achieving their desired learning goals. It further required them to navigate between both home and host cultures during the sojourn.

For instance, using English to learn and communicate both on and off campus often frustrated these participants because they did not learn the language in the context of American culture. In addition, lacking of background knowledge of American educational system and social norm made these participants had difficulty to understand and be understood effectively both on and off campus. As a result, linguistic hindrance and cultural differences not only challenged these participants’ confidence, but also discouraged them from speaking up and standing up for themselves. In this regard, Michelle’s story can better illustrate the impact caused by linguistic and cultural differences. In the voice of Michelle:

Two years ago, I was very young, kind of shrink a little bit because of my lack of English ability and lack of the culture knowledge. . . . I just listen . . . I mainly listen. I could not [be] involve[d] in the discussions actively.

As stated, not knowing the culture plus unable to speak English proficiently made Michelle withdraw herself from participating in classroom discussion. Automatically, she became an outsider of the class. Loneliness and isolation soon followed.

Furthermore, most participants came from the culture that to listen and obey the instructors without questioning their teaching was a way to show their respect to the instructors. However, what worked in their home countries did not necessary apply to U.S. academia. For
instance, Yumiko mentioned that “[in] my culture, I never speak up, so I am kind of quiet in the class.” Therefore, when the instructor asked her to share her ideas in front of the class, Yumiko found herself having difficulty to do so. When she tried to speak up her opinions or share her experiences in class, Yumiko felt ignored by her American counterparts. Yumiko reported:

If I addressed some issues or some opinions, a lot of time they did not value. . . . I think maybe they view me as I don’t understand English . . . They don’t really try to understand [me]. Maybe they shut down their ears right away if they see me talking.

Yumiko’s story speaks the fact that without a proper frame of reference while studying and living in the United States, these participants feel inferior, insecure, and uncertain. Those feelings then led them to question themselves regarding issues such as “Am I doing what is right? Am I doing enough? Am I talking with correct English in the right manner?” In order to survive and succeed in U.S. academia and society, these participants had to transform their ways of learning, thinking, and responding to their new life circumstances. As a result, their transformative learning experiences included (1) mindfully observing and examining themselves and their surroundings, (2) carefully reflecting upon their feelings and actions, (3) constantly engaging in dialogues with themselves and others to challenge and assess their beliefs and assumptions, (4) openly networking with the Americans and other international students for intellectual and cultural exchanges, (5) critically thinking through their decisions and integrating their experiences, and (6) consciously modifying or transforming their frames of reference and habits of mind while coping with changes in the U.S. academia and culture. Depending on the individual difference, some participants might be in favor of observing and examining Furthermore, any given challenge or challenges (problem or problems) these participants confronted intertwined with their learning, development, and transformation and also reoccurred spirally. To illustrate, a given challenge or problem might force them to undergo a process of learning and development, in the course of which they would extend or modify their frames of reference and habits of mind, in order to regain a balance or a stable state. Once their pre-existing frames of reference and habits of mind could not manage the given challenge or problem, they had to transform their frames of reference and habits of mind in order to persist and continue the journey. This process reoccurred spirally each time when they encountered a new challenge or challenges. Furthermore, for some participants (e.g., Paul), their perspective transformations were a long, cumulative process. For others (e.g., Maya), it was evoked by one specific event or incident. These participants’ process of learning and development is better portrayed by the attentive schema learning, development, and transformation.

In other words, change, challenge, learning, and transformative when these participant noticed that their pre-existing frames of reference and habits of mind could not manage the given challenge or problem in the States, they had to transform themselves in order to continue the journey. This process reoccurred spirally each time when they encountered a new challenge or challenges. Furthermore, for some participants (e.g., Paul), their perspective transformations were a long, cumulative process. For others (e.g., Maya), it was evoked by one specific event or incident. These participants’ process of learning and development is better portrayed by the attentive schema learning, development, and transformation (see Figure 1). In this regard, Paul, and Maya’s cases served as examples to better illustrate this phenomenon as follows.
New Challenge or Challenges

A Challenge or Challenges

Transformation or Transformative Learning

Learning & Development

Transformative Learning

Figure 1: The Schema of Learning, Development, and Transformation

Hence, the journey of studying in the United States, indeed, facilitates these participants to develop an active and positive attitude toward their lives and learning, to enhance their self-knowledge and professional competence, to recognize the need to serve others and give back to the world, and to be proud of themselves as international students in the United States. Thus, the journey of studying in the United States enables these 18 international students to not only overcome the external difficulties of linguistic barriers, culture differences, financial burden, isolation and loneliness, but also conquer their inner fears of being an outsider in the U.S., feeling inferior to their American peers, and failing to honor their families and home countries.

**Implications and Conclusion**

The value of studying at U.S. universities for these 18 participants goes beyond the gaining of advanced degrees and receiving a quality education to having reframed and integrated their life experiences, past and present. These participants emerge from this experience with greater confidence in their accomplishments, greater commitment to their vocation, and a greater sense of authenticity and self-worth.

The knowledge gained from this study reveals the need for educators and institutions of higher education to provide cultural training programs and transformative learning course to help international students manage their cross-cultural transitions more effectively. Concerning future research, additional inquiry is needed regarding how institutions of higher education can better provide international students with needed resources and services to be successful at American universities personally and academically. Reversely, it would be advantageous to investigate how to prepare American students, who would study abroad, to enhance their ability to cope with the changes and challenges studying in different societies, so that they could utilize their experiences abroad to enlarge their growths and transformations.
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What is Restorative Learning?:
A Hidden Pedagogical Companion to Transformative Learning
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Abstract: There is a hidden companion to transformative learning - restorative learning - that enables and deepens transformation. This paper describes restorative learning and its companionate connection to transformation learning, extrapolated from the findings of an empirical longitudinal qualitative study.

Introduction
My initial empirical qualitative study Living Transformation: Beyond Midlife Crisis to Restoring Ethical Space (Lange, 2001) explored the potential of critical transformative learning for revitalizing citizen action, particularly action toward a sustainable society. This study uncovered a phenomena called restorative learning and found that a dialectical relationship between transformative and restorative learning was operative. A second research phase was initiated for the purpose of further describing the phenomena of restorative learning and theorizing the relationship to transformative learning. This paper recounts these findings by describing the three facets of restorative learning - recovery of core values, sense of relatedness, and space for reflectivity - and theorizing its companionate connection to transformative learning. I argue that, especially for the purposes of sustainability education, restorative and transformative learning are reciprocally constitutive.

Theoretical Framework
Both phases of this study are situated in the critical scholarly tradition in adult education drawing inspiration from critical pedagogy, Mezirowean transformative learning, and Freirean liberatory pedagogy. A political economic critique and a vision for social justice lie at the heart of this tradition. The intent of this approach to adult education is not just personal transformation in terms of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991) but also societal transformation so that individuals together can be creative producers of self and society (Freire, 1970; Allman, 1999). In particular, critical transformative learning attempts to foster an individual’s consciousness of him/herself as situated within larger political and economic forces and as conscious actors within these relations (Cunningham, 1992). This study utilized a dialectical rather than mechanical understanding transformation. In this view, the tensions between personal and social contradictions generate energy for transformation. As individuals come to recognize the contradictory beliefs and practices operating within themselves and in society, this learning often creates an imperative for personal and social change.

Study Design
The first phase utilized participatory action research to explore the complex intersection between personal and social change and how understanding develops in the midst of bringing about change (McTaggart, 1997). The natural affinity between action research and a transformative pedagogy is exemplified by common principles and a common praxis. Importantly, this study not only examines belief change – an epistemological facet - but how the participants position themselves differently in their world and act upon these beliefs – an ontological facet. Carson and Sumara (1992) suggest that through action research is living
practice where new ways of understanding the world co-evolve with new ways of being in the world and “who one is becomes completely caught up with what one knows and does” (p. xvii).

The first study in 1998-1999 involved creating a university extension course “Transforming Working and Living” to assist 14 self-selected participants in to rethinking ways of living and working that would promote personal, community, and environmental sustainability. The participants represented a spectrum of ages, types of work and household income, educational background, and sexual orientation, however, three-quarters of the participants were women and of European descent. They were fully apprised of the research process prior to the pre-, mid-, and post-interviews. Many of interviews, course dialogues, journals and various artefacts from the course were transcribed and analyzed using phenomenological description (first stage), thematic analysis (second stage), and critical hermeneutic analysis (third stage).

In this second phase of the study from 2000-2004, the course was offered through the Faculty of Extension four more times involving 38 participants, for a total of 52 participants. The participants all submitted journals and artefacts from course activities and many of the group dialogues were audio-taped and transcribed. Finally, all of these 52 participants were invited to a residential research retreat in the fall of 2006. Seventeen of the participants responded and engaged in small group dialogues guided by a questionnaire developed by the instructor-researcher. They facilitated their own dialogues and spontaneously queried each other, collaboratively searching for themes and meanings in their experiences over the past 5-8 years. Near the end of the retreat, in plenary, they analyzed the findings from the first research phase. All these group dialogues were tape-recorded and fully transcribed. They also completed a written survey, which was then mailed to the remaining course participants who did not attend, 17 of whom responded. Data analysis included thematic analysis then interpretive content analysis and finally critical hermeneutic analysis drawing from the theory.

Findings
In 1998, most participants expressed that they reconnected to their most basic values within the context of the course. This reconnection appeared to provide a vital touchstone needed for the experience of transformative change, as it enabled them to withstand the upheavals required to navigate a very different life course. Many of the original participants clearly stated that their ethics of honesty, integrity, fairness, respect, loyalty, and community service did not require transformation but a restoration to a rightful place in their lives (Lange, 2004). This stability aspect of the learning was termed “restorative learning’ and it appeared to aid a deeper transformation in both individual understanding as well as socially responsible community involvement (Lange, 2004). This aspect of the learning process was not anticipated.

Restorative Learning
In 2006, the participants strongly verified the reality of restorative learning and were emphatic that it had been vital to their overall transformation process. From their rich descriptions, three facets of restorative learning were identified – recovery, relatedness, and reflectiveness.

Recovery
In the data from both the original research group and subsequent groups, it was clear that a key component of the learning process was a recovery to core values.

I think it didn’t change my way of thinking. I think the reason the course was so powerful for me was because it’s in line with my way of thinking…That I share a lot of the same values…
course talks about, but you get off track or you go down a different path…so it’s being brought back to what truly matters to you…it brought me back to what I was intended to do but you don’t know what that is because you get fully burdened. (Katherine\textsuperscript{2}, GD03A-06, ll. 274-293) Many participants echoed this sentiment that life is overwhelming, making it easy to lose sight of what some called their “inner compass” or Dan called “my bedrock, my foundation” (2004: 130). The course provided the space for articulating these values and realigning aspects of their lives. [O]ur values didn’t change, it’s just they brought them to the surface so we could…move forward. Just put the little jog of the memory about OK, here’s the path we’re on…we just have articulated them now and maybe proceeded in a different way because of the journey that we’re on since the course. (Joy, GD03A-06, ll. 826-838)

Recognizing these core values created a foundation from which to broaden them or manifest them in a different way. It also enabled the participants to analyze the dominant societal messages from this restored vantage point. As Kate explains, for her the importance of family [was] affirmed; need to “give” to the community; returned to some submerged values although they weren’t submerged far – rather got permission to go against common society expectations of work and consumerism (Kate, IS98-07, p. 3)

This process of reconnecting with foundational values also transported individuals back to a number of childhood reconnections.

The one area that the course really helped to awaken in me is my connection to creation. I know that I spent large amounts of time outdoors as a child. I loved to lay in the grass and watch clouds, or make dandelion necklaces and play in the forest. I had lost this when we moved to the city and especially when I was living in an apartment. I found that the course helped me get reacquainted with the natural world. I never want to lose that connection as it is very life-giving for me. Therefore, I make a concerted effort to spend time outdoors throughout my days and weeks! (Deanna, IS01-07, p. 4)

This reminder of the importance of the natural world enabled a natural bridge to be built to the concept of sustainability, even though few participants knew of the word or could define it.

\textit{Relatedness}

As the participants experienced this restoration, they had a profound experience of relatedness not only to the natural world but to themselves and others, a return to their “inner self,” as Sally originally described it (2004: 130) that enriched other relationships.

I realized that the reason I was so drawn to the course was because it really was the real me. (Madgie, GD98/00-06, ll. 434-435)

I did become more conscious of what my inner voice was saying…I tried to pay attention to what I did during a day, which is one of the things that we learned in the class…to be more aware of the fact that what we do shows who we are. (Rosa, GD03A-06, ll. 7-14).

Some of the participants explained that they had a sense that all life forms are connected and that they are in relationship with self, others and the Earth, but explained that they become “more aware of living in the moment than I have been in the past”(Anna, GD01-06, ll. 475-530). In some, it increased the ability to love, to accept others and live with more peace.

For me because I was thrown away by my biological family I never felt as if I belonged anywhere…I told myself I was not belongable you know…I’ve really become so much closer to my old friends and…I have allowed myself to fall in love with [a friend’s] kids…(Rosa, GD03A-06, ll. 336-350).

\textsuperscript{2} All the names are pseudo-names, largely chosen by the participants themselves.
I am more at peace with myself. I love my wife as much or more than ever. I try to change what I can and accept what I can’t. (Roy, IS01-07, p. 2)
I’m more positive and more open and hopefully more accepting of other people (Lee, GD01-06, ll. 423-426).
I have become less judgmental and more empathic toward people. (Daisy, IS03-07, p. 6)

Reflectiveness
As illustrated above, the course restored sufficient space and time for reflection and self- and group-generated insights, which became transformative itself.
Angie: It’s almost like it shook the very foundation of who we were at some level, some of us deeper, and that’s why I think at the end it just it was… an emotional time.
Madgie: How many times do you sit down and really put yourself through the wringer and think through things on a conscious level? You know, we run through life and we don’t, so [the instructor] offered us that opportunity. (GD98/00-06, ll. 1961-1981)
Thus, the course itself modelled a different way of being, a reflective way of being that affirmed what participants intuitively understood to be healthy and a necessary life activity.
…like before I lived my life, and I thought [it] was an honest, authentic, respectful life… but now I understand better why I do – did it. There’s an intrinsic value to the way I was raised as to why I act the way I do but I think it’s important for somebody to have time and reflection to go back and say, this is why I do what I do. Part of it is because I was raised that way. Part of it because I believed it myself. (Dan, GD98-06, ll. 389-397)
Interestingly, reflectiveness also created a sense of openness needed for exploring new content, in this case sustainability, often presented in an experiential way. In this delightful selection below, Anna helped her husband, Bob, reflect on their experience in the course.
Bob: [I have] willingness to try new things, yeah, but within limits…
Anna: …you’re doing new things, you’re drawing yourself out…
Bob: I don’t know - that the idea of being more open to trying different experiences – yeah - but within – still within pretty strict limitations, so I’m not gonna go dance naked in the moonlight or things like that, so… (GD01-06, ll. 441-469)
Another important finding was that restorative learning released the necessary energy for change. In some cases, energy was released by simplifying and downsizing material goods. In other cases, energy was released by seeing new possibilities for living and working. The change was so subtle, however, that they often indicated that they had not realized there had been a change. In sum, restorative learning foregrounds what is most important to participants, giving them a platform of stability needed when faced with disorienting ideas (sustainability) or experiences. This study revolved around the creation of a course meant to be a testable model of sustainability education. Sustainability was defined as:

\[
\textit{where needs are satisfied without diminishing the prospects of health and well-being for self, other peoples, future generations, or the environment}.
\]
Sustainability was presented as the web of connections between one's personal and family well-being, local and global community well-being, and ecological well-being. To be sustainable means restoring what is already life-enhancing and transforming what is life-depleting at all these levels.

Transformed Way of Thinking
Many of the participants were sceptical about the concept of sustainability initially, but as Katherine suggests, they realized it was a frame of reference useful for critiquing their dissatisfaction with their work/living as well as providing a set of principles for changing this. [T]he course, I mean it’s dramatically changed my life. I felt that I was at a really ...internally quite an unhappy place in life...thinking that...working really hard would bring success and that from that success would come happiness but that’s not the way it always works...I had to look for another frame of reference for my whole life...it helped me to become a much more um rounded person and realizing too that when you think of the whole planet and the whole earth that um that there’s a lot of happiness from trying to make the world a better place, rather than just doing things for yourself. (GD03A, ll. 17-33)

The participants described that the perceptual shift they experienced was subtle but profound in moving them toward a relational way of thinking. Daisy explains that “my way of thinking has changed because of becoming more mindful of the connectedness of issues.” She says that this now is a permanent perception informing most of her daily decisions in terms of consumption, use of money and time, relationships, the environment, other people on the planet, and use of life energy. Angie and Anne concurred that it is never far from their minds. Anne says, “Our whole perception has changed.” (GD98-06, ll: 1273-1446) Many participants indicated how this framework of sustainability connects to their core values by expanding and broadening them.

I have always tried to live honestly and fairly and to with respect to other people. What I learned from the course is how what I do impacts on people across the world who producor grow the products I consume. (Daisy, IS03-07, p. 3)

Transformed Way of Being

Another significant aspect of the study was their changed way of being. One element was a different view of control in their lives and the paradox that letting go was a new form of control.

Wow, has my being changed? Absolutely…it’s gone 180 degrees… I feel so calm and at peace… I stopped...stressing and needing to control...because now I can let things happen…things have happened as they will…(Joy, GD03A-06, ll. 35-49, 165-177)

Katherine hypothesizes that she can “let go” because she feels a connection the universe or a higher power and that once you set the course for your life, “things, they’ll be delivered.” (GD03A-06, ll. 179-197) Setting intentionality for their lives also changed the rhythm of living, enabling time for reflection, time to just “be”, to listen, feel connected, and experience joy.

I stay much more connected to that which is greater than myself...[I] feel more a part of the natural world as opposed to separate from it... I do have spiritual practices that foster connection. Nature speaks...if we take the time to listen. (Deanna, IS01-07, p. 2, 8)

Given the changed sense of control, several individuals indicated that they feel they have moved toward feeling more like a participant in life. Deanna elaborates that her life feels “more interactive,” like she is “a participant in something so much larger. I always have a sense that my actions affect the larger whole in ways I cannot always see at this moment. This makes my ‘being’ seem more purposeful than it used to.” (Deanna, IS01-07, p. 2, 8) Several participants felt that they “had arrived” in being able to control their busyness or their future, that they were living integrated lives, or in small steps, moving toward a lifestyle that is more life-giving.

Analysis and Significance of Restorative and Transformative Learning

Insights from New Science and living systems theory are instructive for transformative change processes. Critical points of instability, called bifurcation points, are forks that suddenly
appear when a system may branch off in a new direction. When bifurcation points appear, both order and disorder are created simultaneously. Some order or stability is required to survive disorder and as a platform out of which new order emerges. As well, new energy needs to be available for change to occur (Capra, 1996: 136, 176, 189). The process of restorative learning provides this order and stability by providing individuals with something solid to adhere to that can ground and guide the change process. Articulating their values and sense of relatedness, restored through the provision of a reflective space that is rare in society, tills the ground for broadening and deepening these values and sensibilities. Core values provide solidity, but they themselves can be transformed by bridging into a broader ethic, in this case an ethic of human and ecological sustainability. For example, the value of respect was broadened from face-to-face interpersonal respect to respect for relations embedded in consumer products or relations with the natural world. These values were also broadened into an epistemic and ontological shift toward relational thinking/being, also known as ecological thinking and embodiment of learning. In a reciprocally constitutive way, transformative and restorative learning processes strengthen and enrich each other, in this case stimulating transformative lifestyle change toward sustainability that was evident through re-patterned rhythms of living and a shifted mode of engagement from spectator to participant with a different locus of control and more energy for citizen engagement.

It is clear from these findings that restorative learning is a distinct phenomena but that it is also a vital companion to transformative learning. Adult educators need to be cognizant of and deliberately provide a pedagogy that recognizes this facet of the learning process, opening and enriching the possibility and depth of transformation learning. Of course, what is restorative and what is transformative will be variable, depending on the purpose, content and process of the learning. For sustainability education, restoring the adult education space as an ethical sanctuary and for rediscovering radical relatedness beyond immediate personal relationships can develop the personal and citizenship values needed for individuals that have lost a sense of purpose, for a society that is listing ethically, and for a democracy that is in atrophy. In this way, restorative learning enables a transformed way of thinking and being co-evolving toward sustainability

References
The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Transformative Learning: An Online Story
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Abstract: This paper considers how emotional intelligence is embedded in transformative learning theory and how it affects faculty transitions from traditional to online classrooms, influencing their learning and decision making, and potentially contributing to transformation in relation to their beliefs, feelings and attitudes as it relates to teaching and learning.

Introduction
This paper focuses on transformative learning (TL) in context of higher education, centering on the transition of faculty from face-to-face to online teaching. It identifies the role of emotional intelligence as central to TL and perspective transformation. Further, it contributes to our understanding of the role of emotion in TL. The quotes noted from faculty, colleagues and students are part of interviews conducted for my research.

As supported by Howell et al. (2003), roles of traditional faculty members are shifting as they transition from traditional to online classrooms. With faculty members teaching in traditional formats and using classrooms as their primary sites, transition to virtual environments is inevitable (Glenn, 2001). In addition to traditional roles of faculty members, not only do they now play the role of a facilitator, teacher, organizer, assessor, mentor, role model, coach, supervisor, and problem solver, but also provide technical support and be aware of design and development issues in an online environment (Riffee, 2003; Roberson, 2002; Scagnoli, 2001).

In transitioning from traditional to online classrooms, faculty members may experience many transformations (Lari & Wiessner, 2005). Richardson and Placier (2001) state faculty members change in terms of their learning, development, socialization, growth, and cognition. Mezirow (1991) suggests individuals can experience a process of perspective transformation. This TL can be initiated by disorienting dilemmas - a situations that do not fit one's preconceived notions - such as how teaching and learning occurs. These dilemmas can lead to critical reflection, new ways of interpreting experiences and, ultimately, new way of thinking, acting and feeling.

Elder (1997) states faculty must focus on teaching by thinking through content they want their students to learn. She believes by reflecting on our teaching, “we handle the intellectual deficiencies that students bring to the classroom” (p. 40) and notes that in teaching, faculty members must take into consideration the emotional intelligence of students. Based on my study of transition of faculty members from face-to-face to online classrooms, I have noted not only does emotional intelligence play a role in students’ learning processes, but also a significant role in the transitioning faculty’s learning and teaching experiences.

Emotions and Transformative Learning
As described by Mezirow (1991), TL occurs when individuals change their frames of reference by reflecting critically on their assumptions and beliefs and make plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds and, therefore, transform their perspectives. Mezirow believes in order for learners to change their meaning schemes, such as specific beliefs, attitudes,
and emotional reactions, they must engage in critical reflection on their experiences which can in turn lead to perspective transformation.

Cranton (2003) looks at how individuals with different psychological types might engage in TL differently. She states that Mezirow focuses heavily on cognitive process and therefore, those people inclined to sensing, intuition, and feeling might have a different experience. Cranton (2000) explains that individuals see their own transformation through the lens of their psychological make-up. She states that in Jungian perspective, in order to become conscious of our experience, we must examine the unexamined and move beneath the surface of life through introspection and reflection to delve into our emotions and imagination (Cranton, 2003).

Brookfield (2000) states we can learn about the emotional dimensions of our lives by investigating the extent to which our feelings and emotional responses to certain situations are socially learned. These emotions may be individual and emerge as outrage or hysteria, or they can be a social phenomenon (Brookfield, 2000). Kathleen Taylor (2000) explains that even though developmental growth may be experienced as energizing, it may also be experienced as traumatic and overwhelming. She explains that changing ways individuals recognize risks, changes the way they know everything including personal and professional relationships, ideas, goals, and values. Wiessner and Mezirow (2000) recognize that a common critique of TL theory is its challenge to address emotions properly.

**Emotion and Learning**

Recent research on learning processes concentrates more on exploring affective, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of adult learning, development, and transformation (Dirkx, 2000, 2001; Fenwick, 2003; Heron, 1992; Kegan, 2000; Palmer, 1993; Taylor 2001). Dirkx (2006) states that affective, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of adult learning, development, and transformation assist us in understanding roles emotions play in revealing how learners perceive reality. Dirkx (1998a; 1998b) emphasizes that an important concept in TL is the imaginative process mediated through images, emotions and deep reflection in adult lives. Dirkx mytho-poetic concept suggests meaning in TL is understood through symbols and images and places stress on emotion in learning processes (Kritskaya & Dirkx, 2000).

In the process of TL, emotions play two major roles (Dirkx, 2006). The first is in the process of critical reflection where it calls into questions how one experiences and views the world. He states that it is based on their perceptions and assumptions that learners show different emotions such as guilt, anger or shame. In transitioning from face-to-face to online environments, one faculty member stated that “I am an emotional wreck. I have all of the emotions, so I was nervous, I was excited, I was challenged, I was frustrated, I was sometimes – sometimes I felt good about it. It [teaching online] was on my mind a whole lot”. The second role emotions play in process of TL is their unconscious emotional response to various aspects of their learning experience which is unique to each individual or as Cranton (2003) calls it “individuation,” the journey in which we become conscious and develop self-knowledge. In making experiences their own, one student describes her teacher’s experience saying, “I think because it was her dissertation was in that [online discussion] and she – you could just tell – ...she just got really excited…You could just tell based on her typing that she was really excited about it”. In their transition, faculty members use their previous experiences to make sense of their new experiences, hence, bringing all sorts of visible emotions to their online class.
Emotional Intelligence and Transformative Learning

Emotional intelligence refers to ability to recognize meaning of emotions and their relationships and to reason and problem-solve on these bases (Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey, 2000). Emotional intelligence is involved in capacity to perceive emotions, assimilate emotion-related feelings, understand information of those emotions and manage them (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). It is created by high quality thinking which leads to high quality emotions (Elder, 1997). One faculty member demonstrated this fact by stating that “being interested in tools as your area of research and bringing different tools into these courses gives me a chance to try them out so it’s exciting for me to teach online”.

To best explain the concept of emotional intelligence, Elder (1997) defines intelligence as “the ability to learn or understand from experience or to respond successfully to new experiences” (Webster's New World Dictionary) and defines emotion as “a state of consciousness having to do with the arousal of feelings” (Webster's New World Dictionary). She describes emotional intelligence as “a measure of the degree to which a person successfully or unsuccessfully applies sound judgment and reasoning to situations in the process of determining an emotional or feeling response to those situations” (p. 40). Elder (1997) believes critical thinking is the link between intelligence and emotions and it is through critical thinking that we can understand how our reasoning works and how we can take command of the way we think, feel and desire.

Methodology

For the purposes of this study, a qualitative methodology is used because the research deals with human actions, thoughts and behaviors, which are influenced by the environment in which they take place. The population of interest are five graduate faculty members in a research university that have transitioned from teaching in a face-to-face classroom to online environments, and a colleague and a student that have insight to their transition, forming five triad interview groups for triangulation purposes. The data was collected through interviews but teaching artifacts were also reviewed. Interviews ranged between one to one and a half hour. Each interview was fully transcribed and coded using the Atlas.ti software.

Identifiers of Emotional Intelligence in Research

I have conducted a series of interviews with faculty members, a colleague and a student of theirs who have insight to their transition from traditional to online classrooms. The following story is constructed from a series of quotes from these interviews which shows role of emotional intelligence as it relates to faculty members’ transition from face-to-face to online environments and their students. As seen in the interviews, emotional intelligence plays a role in interaction between students and faculty. One student said that “in the online environment emotions play an important role because you can’t see the person but by listening to the person and listening to what they are excited about, it makes the student excited too.” Another student noted that “it was very important that he [faculty] showed emotions through voice and I guess when he was upset or something was not working we could feel the same vibes too.” In their interviews, faculty members talked about their course development and it can be seen that emotion plays a vital role in this process for them. One faculty member stated that “I was excited about this because I got to teach a graduate course that I created and nervous that I wasn’t sure if I did it right”. Another faculty member noted the process as “I was definitely nervous in the beginning and I felt – I definitely felt some guilt for my first group of students because I did not want to jeopardize their
learning because it was my first online course and I didn’t have any training in teaching online.” Role of emotion could be viewed in faculty members’ professional development process during their transition by stating “I was excited though because it was an opportunity to learn new things.” The faculty were nervous about the use of technology as one faculty stated “there definitely is a little nervousness because you’re trying to make it a good experience but I think you realize as an instructor you don’t know everything about these tools.” Course preparation time was also a major issue in their transition and one colleague had this to say “At times overwhelming because a lot of it was preparation and how much detail he puts into it.” In their transition, faculty face many emotions and without having emotional intelligence they would not understand their emotions as they should and not be able to problem solve with the emotions they face which will help them go through this process and have a transformative experience.

**Discussion**

Based on my research on faculty transitions from traditional to online classrooms (Lari & Wiessner, 2005), I have noticed that faculty engage in a process of reflecting on their emotions and use them to supplement cognition. This process is what Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004) call emotional intelligence. They define emotional intelligence as “the capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth”. I see this process closely related to what Mezirow refers to as critical reflection. In their transition, the faculty members not only deal with technical issues but also an emotional dimension which they must guide into a thoughtful, critical thinking process in order to proceed with their transition and be a success at it. Without critical thinking, the transition with emotion will likely not lead to TL.

Nelson, Low and Nelson (2005) believe emotional intelligence is a learned ability which allows a person to identify, understand, experience and express their emotions. They state that expressed emotions and feeling and behaviors that are shown are very individualized and no two people are alike. In my study of faculty members making the transition from face-to-face to online classrooms (Lari & Wiessner, 2005), as noted by Nelson, Low and Nelson, faculty members showed different emotions to similar situations. In regard to transition process, one faculty member’s colleague stated that their colleague “as far as the transition from face-to-face, I think [he sensed] relief. Relief and excitement.” While another faculty said “I think it’s a little bit harder when you try to transition. There definitely is a little nervousness because you’re trying to make it a good experience but I think you realize as an instructor you don’t know everything about these tools. You’re not exactly sure what you’re doing.”

In their transition from face-to-face to online environment, faculty members encounter many new situations and experience different obstacles (Lari & Wiessner, 2005). In each case, faculty members try to make sense of the situation and try to make meaning of circumstances surrounding them. This is what Mezirow (1990, 1996) defines learning as a “meaning making activity”. He describes meaning making as a broad, generalized, and orienting disposition. It is a frame of reference or a set of expectations based on past experiences (Cranton, 1994; Mezirow, 1997; Rossiter, 1999). Mezirow (1991) believes in order for learners to change their meaning schemes, by which he means specific beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions, they must engage in critical reflection on their experiences that can lead to a perspective transformation.
Conclusion and Recommendation

The intention of this paper has been to establish and note the role and relationship between emotional intelligence and TL. As stated earlier, the role of emotion in TL is a fairly new concept and a less researched area in the field. But as seen in this paper, we can see the role emotion plays in transition of faculty members from traditional to online classrooms and how it affects their decision making, judgment and critical thinking. Faculty members must learn to perceive and convey emotions in an online environment which lacks any visual signals using their emotional intelligence. Emotions also affect student behavior, faculty’s attitude towards students and the environment and also their dealing with technological aspects of teaching.

References


Abstract: When teaching and training on the topic of diversity and multicultural awareness within a non-profit/ human service arena, it is important to move beyond the early level of learning, which focuses on the acquisition of factual awareness. This type of training and teaching leads to the practice of compliance which still allows the barriers to effective collaboration to stand. Using activities where experiential learning create moments of encountering the ‘other’ followed by time for reflection and dialogue allow the learners an opportunity to examine their assumptions and beliefs and to change or transform them into a more inclusive perspective. This paper examines the use of Reader’s Theater as a transformative learning tool within the area of teaching and training of human diversity and the development of multi-cultural competence.

Introduction

Social work educators and agency administrators have a responsibility for preparing students for and supporting the development of workers to offer competent practice in an increasingly diverse society and to develop both students and workers who will move towards “transforming unjust and oppressive social, economic, and political institutions into just and non-oppressive alternatives” (Gil, 1998, p. 1). This dual requirement places a great deal of pressure on all concerned; worker, student, social service administrator and professor. On the “intrapersonal level, conflict can arise as students [and workers] are confronted with internal conflicts between their unexamined perspectives and knowledge, and the experiences they encounter in class [and the field] that challenge these perspectives” (Van Soest et. al., 2001, p. 3). Conflicts on the interpersonal level can also develop as students and workers come into contact with others who hold differing values, beliefs and world perspectives. The pressure of navigating these internal and external conflicts can be profound for the agency administrator or the professor. It is not unusual then that students and workers develop a resistance to this type of training and course work and that both agency administrators and college professors are looking for tools that can facilitate the learning process.

Reader’s Theater

Reader’s Theater has been used within the elementary and middle-school classrooms for some time as a teaching tool with children. The students are able to explore literature and history by doing research on a topic and then creating a presentation. This model has been carried over to adult learning in both the classroom and training room. Reader’s Theater asks people to read from a script using appropriate voice tones and facial expressions which express the meaning of the quote that they present. There is no stage, no scenery or no memorization involved. The class professor or agency administrator or the group of learners create the script through interviews, internet research, or other sources that contain quotes which express various view points of an issue. As Cindy, one of the paper’s authors states “I used Reader’s Theatre as a
training tool in a non-profit child care agency. As immigrants from Brazil, Mexico and Guatemala arrived in the community, and immigration issues surfaced in the United States, staff relied on preconceived notions and beliefs of immigration and immigrants to guide them in the workplace. Though the community has always had a history of immigration, this new wave of immigrants reflected a more impoverished population. Staff was courteous and respectful of the families they served, though there was an underlying current which questioned what was just and fair for the undocumented or illegal immigrants who had entered the community.” Within the agency, it was difficult to create space for a discussion on this topic; however workers’ assumptions and beliefs about the undocumented immigrants affected the way services were offered. It became clear that a vehicle to stimulate an agency wide conversation on the topic needed to be found.

Cindy asked staff, clients and colleagues to share their own experiences as or about immigrants with whom they had known or worked. She also interviewed immigrant families about their experiences in the United States. During this time, the immigration issue within the U.S. became a focal point on the evening news and was a topic of discussion within the agency where each side tried to convince the other of the ‘correctness’ of their argument. People shared their thoughts in the workplace and, with their permission; some of those thoughts became part of the script. The script was comprised of quotes from immigrants both documented and undocumented, staff and colleagues as well as statements from political organizations and politicians found online. It is important to collect quotes, written statements or thoughts from sources that reflect the thinking from all sides of the issue. The creator(s) of the script need to assure that all voices are clearly and correctly reflected. When creating the script after quotes are collected it is useful to balance the views and to place them in a juxtaposed order.

The next step was to recruit readers. Both authors have had no trouble finding volunteers and often times were not able to include all who were interested in participating. Most of the readers do not know about Reader’s Theatre but they support the effort and want to learn and take part in a discussion about the topic. The readers met twice and made decisions about formatting and presentation. Quotes are both chosen and assigned. Some of the readers chose to read quotes reflecting a different opinion from their own. This was true both within the training and classroom presentations.

In Cindy’s example the Reader’s Theatre was presented during an agency meeting of approximately 110 staff members, which included everyone from the maintenance personnel to the CEO. The readers had decided that they wanted to sit among the crowd and, after a brief introduction; they began reading their parts individually as they rose from their seat and stood wherever they happened to be. Since no one really knew who the readers were, people sitting alongside the readers were taken by surprise. Cindy states that “this emphasized the possibility that anyone among us could have had the experience portrayed. It had quite a powerful impact as they read to their peers and co-workers. The mental pictures they created evoked emotional responses from the group and perhaps a better understanding of a human situation.”

The readers were able to reflect on their personal experience while performing. As readers, they created what Ratliff (1999) refers to as a “dramatic visualization.” They connected emotionally with the person quoted and conveyed that visually. This had a powerful impact on many of the readers and helped to expand their understanding; especially for readers with differing opinions and led to a deeper transformative learning experience. Within the training example Cindy found that throughout the audience there were statements such as; “I never knew,” “I feel,” “I always assumed,” “It really made me think,” “I understand more.” The
experience also silenced many as they reflected on the drama and processed their personal feelings.

In the classroom the experience was similar. According to Mary, who teaches social work at North Carolina A&T State University, which is a historically Black University, “I used the Reader’s Theater script on immigration as a tool in two classes (both undergraduate social work courses) to begin a discussion around students’ response to diversity. This exercise was offered as a way to introduce how our assumptions and learned values affect the way we make sense of events and how what we assume maybe different then what is. It was an affective tool to encourage discussion on an issue that generates conflict; whether to offer human services to undocumented immigrates and how to deal with undocumented parents of U.S. born children. In both cases the experienced opened the door to a rousing discussion and provided much teaching material.” Reader’s Theater will also be used as a group presentation model in a course on Human Diversity.

Both authors have found that it was important to allow time for both the participants and the audience to reflect on their experience. The training group and the class broke into small discussion groups. Questions which were explored in these groups ranged from what was the impact of either seeing or presenting the script? What were the thoughts that each person considered? What were the personal assumptions prior to the presentation? Were these assumptions challenged? Did this provide a different point of view? What was learned? After the small group discussed these questions they formed new small groups in order to add diversity to the thinking, and responded to the question; how has what you learned impacted your thinking and might impact your actions? These thoughts were shared in the large group.

Connection with Supporting Theory

Reader’s Theater followed by a period of reflection and discussion is a tool that lends itself to transformative learning. Transformative learning is about altering our underlying assumptions and beliefs. It is also about possibly changing our habits of mind and “points of view” that make up our frames of reference. The purpose of transformative learning is to expand one’s point of view, to be more open, and to be more inclusive of differing perspectives. It is important “to assist learners in assessing their current perspectives and approaches to life and through education to provide an opportunity to change these perspectives and approaches” (Mezirow, 1991)” (Christopher et al., 2001, p. 134). There is an underlying assumption that learners’ current perspectives, assumptions, and beliefs are based on their experiences. When the learners’ assumptions are confronted in either a gradual manner or through an impactful event, called a “disorientating dilemma” by Mezirow, the gateway to a transformative learning moment has been opened. The reflection time and discussion process provide the learners the ability to explore their current assumptions and how the event or additional information has impacted and possibly alter those views and assumptions.

According to Brookfield (1987) “an esthetic experience or artistic enterprise particularly when we are unused to such activities can be a powerful stimulus to imagining alternatives. [They] can help us break through habitual, supposedly rational structures of reasoning. After being involved in an act of artistic creation we view the world differently” (p.125). Reader’s Theater can provide this type of event or disorientating dilemma. The processes of reflection and discussion provide time and space to explore the resulting questions and thoughts.

Such transformative learning events “helps the individual become a more autonomous thinker by learning to negotiate his or her own values, meanings and purposes rather than to
uncritically act on those of others” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 11). Developing critical thinking skills in both students of and workers within the field of social work is important and necessary to adequately provide ethically appropriate practice. Critical thinking as defined by Brookfield (1987) “involves calling into question the assumptions underlying our customary, habitual ways of thinking and acting and then being ready to think and act differently on the basis of this critical questioning.” (p. 1) The National Association of Social Workers’ code of ethics is based on the values of; service, social justice, dignity and worth of the individual, importance of human relationships, integrity and competency. In order to shape our practice of social work through the guidance of the above stated values both students and workers in the field must develop the skills of self-awareness and critical thinking, which include reflection and dialogue.

The practices of critical thinking and transformative learning support the developmental process of becoming a cultural competent worker. Milton Bennett (1993), the co-founder of the Intercultural Communication Institute states that expanding our understanding and relationships with difference is a process of “changing our ‘natural behavior’…We [are asked to] transcend the traditional ethnocentrism and to explore new relationships across boundaries”. (p.21) Bennett created a complex model of intercultural development which examines the “affective, cognitive, and behavioral construal of, as well as response to, cultural difference. [He] conceptualizes six stages along a continuum of intercultural development of which three are ethnocentric (Denial, Defense, Minimization) and three are ethnorelative (Acceptance, Adaptation, Integration)” (Paige et. al., p. 469).

The first step in the process of moving through ethnocentric phases is to become more aware of our own assumptions, cultural values and beliefs. This is supported by “Pinderhughes's (1989) premise that social workers with a positive ethnic/racial/social identity are better able to value their clients' identities.” (Van Soest et.al, 2001, p. 6) Learning, which is transformative enables the development of this type of awareness. According to Mezirow (1991) we internalize information through the process of socialization that then becomes the underlying assumptions and beliefs that create the lens through which we view and make sense of the world around us. Learning in general and specifically multi-cultural learning asks us to engage in a process “of construing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience as a guide to awareness, feeling and action” (p. 35) when we encounter the ‘other’. Each step of Bennett’s development process involves transformative learning.

Reader’s theatre provides a context in which students and workers can learn from real life situations and challenge current beliefs. In this paper Cindy needed to delve deeper into issues of diversity and on the particular concern of the immigration experience within her human service agency. She has found the long term effects to include; (1) staff becoming more careful about communication and the need for translating materials for immigrant clients and families (2) there is more interest in knowing the immigrants' stories, (3) the staff are asking more questions about cultural background and circumstances of those served and (4) Overall there seems to be more empathy for immigrant families. According to Mary, it is too early to tell the long term results for the classroom setting. Methods of follow-up have been created and are set in place for the end of the semester.

**Conclusion**

Reader’s theatre can be used to challenge learners toward deeper levels of understanding in both a workplace training or a classroom setting. Comparable to the transformative power of drama therapy, Reader’s Theatre expands our personal experiences and has the power to affect
and possibly change our points of view. Cognitive development theories in adult learning stress helping adults to develop critical thinking skills (Brookfield, 1986). For both the performer and the audience Reader’s Theatre challenges assumptions and through reflection and dialogue encourages a higher level of critical thinking. “Critical thinking requires [learners] to challenge assumptions that guide their lives, which also require a higher level of cognitive development to recognize that there are multiple “correct” ways to live” (Knowles, 1998, p. 177). As performers are challenged to present real and authentic stories from a point of view different from their own, they begin to feel and experience diverse ways of thinking and living. As differing points of view are dramatically read, both the participant and audience may begin to identify and alter underlying assumptions and beliefs. Assuring that a facilitated conversation occurs allows both performers and the audience time to reflect on the experience and then to share their thoughts, feelings and areas of changed awareness with others. Reader’s Theatre was used as a vehicle to question underlying assumptions and beliefs about immigration, and undocumented immigrants in both the workplace and undergraduate classroom. As a dramatic oral reading tool, it offered an opportunity for staff and students to be open to the experiences of others and provided for a better understanding of immigration issues on a logical, ethical, social, cultural, economic, political and spiritual plane.

References

Transformative Learning Strategies for Developing Cultural Competence in Leaders
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Abstract: This paper explores the potential in applying transformative learning theory and related strategies for guiding diversity practitioners in constructing and facilitating targeted interventions for individuals, groups and organizations as they move through various stages of intercultural sensitivity in route to cultural competence.

Purpose Statement
Over the past thirty years, we have noticed a marked shift in how we approach others. Once described in linear terms along one dimension, frameworks for development as well as intelligences are expanding with each new naming inviting the naming of the next. For many, encountering another who is different from them in a significant way can stimulate a disorienting dilemma. Developing a capacity to leverage diversity is an essential requirement for 21st century leadership given the reality of globalization, changing workforce demographics and increasingly diverse consumer markets. The literature on transformative learning theory and cultural dimensions of diversity each include developmental frameworks. Our intention is to make a connection between these frameworks, to explore how each informs the other, and to identify implications for practice in the areas of adult learning, development and diversity.

Context and Methodology
The co-authors conducted a preliminary review of selected literature on transformative learning and cultural diversity to explore how each might relate or inform the other. Cultural diversity as a form of engaging differences was further explored through the use of the key words: cultural competency development and cultural intelligence. The insight emerging from these literatures were used to inform the design and conduct of The Summer Principal Academy’s (SPA) year long Leadership Seminar. SPA is a Master’s of Arts Program designed to prepare high-performing teachers for making the transition to a variety of administrative roles.

The Leadership Seminar’s focus during the first summer is social emotional learning, with each student receiving individualized feedback and group coaching based on their multi-rater Emotional Competence Inventory – v.2 results (Wolff 2006). The feedback and coaching is supplemented by a series of three hour emotional competency development workshops over a period of six consecutive Fridays. Development areas include emotional self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, and relationship management. We conduct six, three hour sessions focused on cultural competence for The Leadership Seminar during the second summer. Prior to the workshop, each student completes The Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory (IDI), a statistically reliable, cross-culturally valid measure of intercultural competence based on Bennett’s (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS).

Since the program’s inception in 2005, two cohorts have completed the IDI, resulting in a population of 86 respondents (41 Cohort I & 45 Cohort II). While a majority of the cohorts members hale from North America, the groups are diverse along the dimensions of age (46% are between the ages of 22 & 30; 45% - 31 & 40; 7% - 41 & 50; 2% -61 and over), race (48% White
& 52% People of Color including Black, Hispanic, Native American, Asian and Bi-racial), and amount of previous experience living in another culture (nearly 19% have never lived in “another culture,” while 34% have spent less than a year; 25% spent between 1 & 5 years; 5% more than 5 and less than 10 years; and 17% spent 10 years or more living in another culture.

After reviewing course evaluations and reflecting on our first time teaching this segment of the seminar during the summer of 2006, the co-authors decided to use transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000) as a guide for helping students explore the gap that often exists between their “overall perceived intercultural sensitivity” (or their “ideal self”) and the “overall developmental intercultural sensitivity” (or their “real self”) as measured by the IDI.

**Selected Literature: Transformative Learning Theory**

In reviewing the literature on transformative learning theory, we can distinguish three areas of emphasis: descriptive, (what it is), processural (how it goes) and developmental, (identifying one’s capacity at a particular stage of development). There is general agreement in the literature about transformative learning being a foundational shift in how one knows. Mezirow (2000), building on Freire’s emancipatory learning process, defined transformative learning in adulthood 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, 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).

Many have built on Mezirow’s model of transformative learning describing the phases one cycles through to move from a disruption or disorientation in ones’ experience to a change in how one engages the world as a consequence. Cranton (1994, 2003), places an emphasis on the intuitive, emotional and relational aspects of the process. Brookfield’s description is more action oriented using words like challenging one’s assumptions, and imagining and exploring alternatives with reflective skepticism. Despite different areas of emphasis, Friere, Mezirow, Brookfield and identify similar steps in the process (as noted in Henderson, 2002 p. 203):

1. A disruption that challenges how one views the world
2. Critical reflection on beliefs, assumptions, and values
3. The formulation of a new perspective to deal with the discrepancies
4. The integration of the new perspective into one’s life

For our work with a recent SPA cohort, we employed these insights to guide our inquiry into the question: In what ways can the process of perspective transformation be used to influence a shift from one developmental stage of intercultural development to another? Mezirow (2000) notes that the process of perspective transformation involves a structural change in the way we see ourselves and our relationships, which seems relevant to the work of developing intercultural competence, in this case a shift in how one see’s themselves and others in cultural terms.

**Selected Literature: Engaging Diversity and Cultural Development**

Until recently, diversity and intercultural competence have been largely two distinct conversations. There are practitioner and scholars who talk about fostering diversity in organizations and those who talk about intercultural development or cultural intelligence. Among those who talk about diversity, some focus primarily on the culture of organizations and what they can do to foster diversity and inclusion (Chesler 1994; Jackson & Hardiman; Sands, Holvino et al. 2000), and those who talk about skill development to help people work with others
who are different from them (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Diversity is also framed in terms of various individual and organizational responses to others, for example, Affirmative Action, valuing diversity. More recently, the idea of cultural intelligence has been added to the mix and is defined as “a person’s capability for successful adaptation to new cultural contexts” (Earley & Ang, 2003, p. 59) and includes cognitive, motivational and behavioral elements.

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) is one framework that has emerged to operationalize cultural competence (J. M. Bennett & Bennett, 2004; M. J. Bennett, 1998). DMIS describes the change people experience in the quality of their engagements with others who are “different” along a number of dimensions of diversity (for example, race, gender, age and national origins) as they become more interculturally competent. Practitioners and researchers have recently used the DMIS as a framework and set of processes to understand the emergence of global diversity in organizations. The model is designed along a continuum from ethnocentric to ethnorelative. There are six kinds of experiences that are spread across the continuum that constitute the stages of intercultural development. At the ethnocentric end of the continuum, one’s experience is characterized by avoiding cultural differences through denying, defending, or minimizing its importance. At the ethnorelative end of the continuum, people seek out cultural difference by accepting, adapting, or integrating difference into one’s own identity.

**Description of Developmentally Sequenced Interventions**

The two assessments (ECI & IDI) provided the instructional team with significant data to inform both the design of the overall workshop and “in-the-moment” interventions. In this section we summarize the results and insights gained from the two assessments as a platform of devising learning interventions to target intercultural development.

The ECI Cohort Audit report provides a summary interpretation for the composite multi-rater feedback generated for Cohort II based on the Emotional Intelligence Competence Model and provides a profile of potential group behavioral patterns (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). The 18 competencies and related developmental scales are presented in three broad color-coded categories: (1) Green signifies the percentage of the group achieving a target level of demonstrated behavior has been met or exceeded, (2) Yellow signifies the percentage of individuals within one level of meeting the target, and (3) Red signifies the percentage not meeting the target criteria and by extension represents a developmental challenge. Overall, 23% of the group met or exceeded the criteria for the combination of competencies needed for each cluster of the Emotional Intelligence (i.e., the “green” zone), 49% total composite profile was in the “yellow” zone, and 28% in the “red” zone.

Further, at one extreme, five distinct competencies emerged as strengths at the group level including optimism with 98% of the group at or exceeding the target level; transparency, achievement orientation, and inspirational leadership each with 95% at target level; and 93% of the group at the target level for influence. At the other extreme only 7% of the cohort met or exceeded the target level for negotiating and resolving conflict, both essential for navigating differences embedded in diverse groups. Also, only 42% of the group met or exceeded the target for empathy, a critical capability when one considers the importance of sensing and appropriating responding to other’s feelings during intercultural interactions. Lastly, only 16% percent of the group met or exceeded the target for initiative, while 30% of the group members were within the “green” zone for adaptability. These results suggested the process of perspective transformation focused on cultural sensitivity was an important developmental task for many SPA participants.
IDI Results and Description of Workshop

We used Merizow’s (2000) concept of perspective transformation to help individuals, project teams and the entire cohort productively examine a number of taken-for-granted assumptions about culturally different others, using the IDI results as a platform. Figure I displays the difference between the Cohort II’s “ideal self” (or at mid-stage acceptance on the DMIS continuum) and it’s “real self” (or approaching mid-stage minimization) as measured by the IDI. This gap of 24 points between the two “scores” served to trigger a disorienting dilemma for many in the cohort, particularly when placed in the context of a “gap” of 8 points being viewed as significant. A developmental score of 99.19 is just about at the 50th percentile of the overview IDI database and similar to Cohort I.

Figure 1. SPA Cohort II – 2007 IDI Profile

The six session workshop focused on combining 7 of Mezirow’s 10 phases of perspective transformation with the IDI interpretive criteria and stage appropriate developmental tasks. Our intention was to first help the 9 individuals at the denial and defense end of the continuum (or 20%) move toward minimization, the stage required to engage in productive intercultural interactions, while helping the critical mass of individuals at various stages of minimization (or 64%) move toward acceptance with the balance of the cohort (or 16%). The distribution of developmental stages along the continuum required an early focus on differentiated instruction.

Prior to sharing the cohort-level results, identity and stage-based groups were formed for those at minimization of below, plus the 7 at the acceptance stage were divided into a group of 3 and 4 with as much demographic variety as possible. After reading detailed descriptions and receiving an overview of the six DMIS stage descriptions, their task was to sort 24 statements representing cultural scripts into their appropriate stage, and then share their results with the entire Cohort.

While individuals were unaware of the rationale for their group assignments, the two groups at the “acceptance stage” out performed the others during the first round, yet after an additional reading assignment and two experiential learning activities designed to enhance one’s ability to gather appropriate information about culture and explore cultural-general dimensions (individualist and collectivist), the performance of all group improved when repeating the task for another set of cultural scripts.

Participants were then asked to form groups based on their primary identity (the most salient) and to discuss the experience of the program through that identity group lens and again report out to the group. All of these activities were both stage appropriate based on the
developmental task for those at or below minimization (or 84% of Cohort) and included: a focus on recognizing cultural differences, maintaining personal control and increased tolerance in the face of differences, enhancing knowledge about one’s own culture, and learning to listen and perceive others accurately. Near the last hour of session 2, the IDI cohort overall profile and five worldview development scales (i.e., denial and defense; reversal, minimization; acceptance and adaptation; and encapsulated marginality) were presented. As expected a disorienting dilemma was triggered by the overall results associated with clear evidence that a range of emotions were present including fear, anger, guilt, rejection, surprise, shock, and a few indicators of curiosity.

During session 3 and 4 the participants returned to their assigned groups and engaged in a series of developmentally sequenced activities that moved progressively from working with the relatively directly observable, “objective” data largely externally focused (reflecting and noticing demographic patterns of individuals they decided to share their cultural stories with during a prior session, to the IDI cohort report) to working with reflective data largely internally focused (discuss various reactions to “objective” data and shared prior experiences with cultural difference), to interpretative data (make sense of objective and reflective data by examining values and assumptions and identifying themes and patterns grounded in specific contexts) and finally decisional data (expressing commitments to experiment and take informed based on emerging insights). The first past through the ORID cycle (i.e., objective, reflective, interpretative and decisional – Hogan 2003) was characterized by resistance and challenging the “validity” of both the instrument and the process.

For the 2nd pass of the ORID cycle each group received a composite of their responses to the IDI’s contextual questions. They were asked to identity keys themes and share the results with the rest of the cohort. Sample contextual questions included: What is your background around cultural differences? Where and how long have you lived in a different culture? After the group report outs we introduced the group to the idea content, process and premise reflection and each group used the framework to review their group and class experience. Participants commented both during the session and in their journals about the value of working individually and in their identity groups to make meaning of both the qualitative data as reflected in the IDI contextual questions and the “observable” generated in class, and the “quantitative” data based on cohort, project groups, and individual IDI profiles. These observations affirmed the importance of creating conditions for people to realize that their reactions were shared by others. In the final two sessions, mixed identity groups began to have very important conversations about race, gender and other forms of systematic creating a “new school proposal” that integrated their commitments to the urban schools they would like to be apart of and lead. In the final session, participants shared their action plans, new cultural knowledge and skills they acquired, and their plan for trying out and transferring these insights.

Our Reflections

As practitioner-researchers a number of important insights emerged. The first is the value of organizing identity and developmental stage-based groups to foster team learning and safety in the context of difficult personal, interpersonal, social interactions with culturally different others. Bennett’s DMIS and its measure the IDI, provides a comprehensive and reliable framework bias in schools and to explore new roles by for helping others navigate intercultural worldview structures holistically with cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions; explicit stage based developmental tasks to focus learning interventions and to assist in monitoring the process; and stage appropriate intercultural competencies. This combined with the recognition that this work
often involves a predictable pattern of perspective transformation, in this case, how one comes to understand themselves as a culturally diverse individual, and the constructive nature of our growing multicultural reality.

References


Abstract: The narratives of an interracial couple, an African American woman and white man, describe how the marriage was a catalyst for transformative learning relative to race, racial identity, and racism. Critical race and racial identity development theory provide frameworks for understanding their experiences.

Introduction

We cannot write about how our 16-year interracial marriage acted as a catalyst for perspective transformation without acknowledging the importance the United States places on race. Anti-miscegenation laws prohibited marriage between whites and blacks throughout much of the country’s history. It was 1967 when the United States Supreme Court, in *Loving v. the State of Virginia*, overturned the last of these laws that for the first time marriage between blacks and whites became legal in every state (Sollors, 2000).

Theoretical Frameworks

Critical race theory (CRT) and racial identity development theory are appropriate frameworks from which to situate our transformative learning experiences within our black-white marriage. Critical race theory was initially developed by legal scholars and activists in the 1970s to address issues of race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). One of the key tenets of the movement is that racism is an ordinary occurrence in this country, and most people of color experience it every day. Along with this assertion is that the systemic nature of racism in the U.S. operates to advantage whites, both materially and psychologically. Racial identity development theorists support the CRT claim of the commonness of racism by further asserting that the racial identity development of whites and blacks is influenced by white racism (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992). Racial identity is more than which racial group an individual identifies with. According to racial identity development theorists, “Racial identity describes how racism affects the development of a sense of group identity by examining the increasingly conscious attention both whites and people of color experience as they struggle with racism” (Hardiman & Jackson, p. 23). How whites and people of color think about racism and their racial identities can transform over time (Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991). In this paper we describe how our marriage transformed our perspectives about our racial identities and racism.

A Black Woman’s Perspective Transformations

Learning can occur through a transformation of point of view, and that includes the beliefs, feelings, and judgments that shape how we interpret life experiences (Mezirow, 2000). Throughout my 16 year marriage to a white man, I have learned to live with contradictions. I have two separate yet interrelated identities: my racial identity as an African American and my racial identity as an exogamous African American woman. An exogamous African American is an individual who is married to someone from another racial group. I use the term *exogamous black identity* to describe the convergence of my personal racial identity with my extended
couple identity that results from being married to a white man. A trip to Africa transformed my point of view about black identity. Eight years into my marriage, I traveled to Senegal with my husband and stepson for a Black History Month pilgrimage tour that was organized by an African American owned tour group. By this point in my marriage, I had learned that when Carlo joined me for black sponsored events to speak with the organizers beforehand. I did this because sometimes when African Americans plan public events we hope to be in a “black space,” a place where there are no whites. We can just be ourselves. We do not explicitly exclude whites, but when they do show up sometimes we are disappointed or frustrated because we have few opportunities to be in an all black space.

Before booking the trip to Africa, I spoke with the tour operator and he assured me whites were welcomed on the tours and had been on previous trips. He failed to mention there weren’t any going on this particular tour. Arriving at the airport, I discovered there were 248 African Americans and 2 whites going on the trip, my husband and stepson. I noticed the annoyed looks directed our way. A ticketing error prevented me from sitting with my husband and stepson, which at the time I thought was a good thing. At least I could pretend that I wasn’t with them and I could be like the other black people on the plane. Critically reflecting on this experience now, I realized the reason I went to Africa was because I had a need to surround myself with everything black.

**Racial Identity Transformations**

I had recently graduated from a master’s degree program in social justice and spent two years studying racism and its impact on African Americans. My meaning construct for defining blackness was narrow. From my point of view, there were two kinds of blacks: those who knew our history, rejected white culture, vehemently spoke out against racism, and those who didn’t. In fact, I told Carlo if I had met him while I held this point of view I would never have dated him, let alone marry him. For months preceding the trip I had become very judgmental of blacks who didn’t meet my standard of true blackness. I didn’t realize it then, but I had entered the Active Resistance stage of black identity (Jackson, 1976).

The Active Resistance stage is filled with deep emotions about racism. There is an intense reflection of one’s life to uncover how the consciousness has been undermined by racism. This stage includes feelings of anger and the denigration of all that is white while glorifying all that is black. Blacks in this stage may write off other blacks they believe collude with the white system (Jackson, 1976). Ironically, many of the people on the trip appeared to me to be in this stage as well. Because of where I was in my identity development, I needed to connect with my African American sisters and brothers. However, I soon found out that because of where many of them were in their black identity, the presence of a white man attached to me made it difficult for them to connect with me.

**My Disorienting Dilemma**

Shortly after we arrived in Senegal, the tour guide told me some people requested that I leave my husband and stepson at the hotel if I wanted to go with the group to Goree Island. Goree is off the coast of Senegal and is the site of an old slave trader’s house. It is now a historical museum. Whites imprisoned Africans here before they forced them onto slave ships bound for the Americas. We consider it a sacred place, and when blacks visit the slave trader’s dungeons we offer ceremonial libations and prayers to our ancestors. The curator temporarily closes off the house to the general public so we can perform the libation ceremony alone,
without the presence of whites. Carlo and I knew about this before arriving in Senegal and agreed if I chose to do the ceremony with the group he and my stepson would stay at the hotel. He completely understood why I would want to do this. However, my choice to leave him behind was one thing; being told to leave him behind by others was something else. I did not want others telling me what I should do.

I was disoriented by the Goree Island dilemma because it forced me to question my previous assumptions about my racial group membership. The painful piece of this was that my black identity was in complete agreement with them, but my exogamous black identity was not. I wanted to be with my people, but I was angry with them for rejecting my husband and indirectly rejecting me. I had no meaning schemes for this experience from which to draw on. For much of my life, I had been familiar with feeling like an outsider when in a mostly white setting. But it wasn’t until I married a white man that I began to experience those feelings within mostly black settings. This was the most significant time that I felt this way. I did not belong in the black world. I felt quasi-black or raceless because of Carlo. There were other black women on the trip with their husbands, but they were different. Their husbands were black; they were really black.

I felt that people were making assumptions about Carlo’s racial awareness, but I understood completely why they did not want him to go with the group. I imagined they thought he could never know what it felt like for us to stand in that slave house dungeon where our ancestors once stood in shackles and chains. But I wanted them to know that he was an active anti-racist ally, and he never backed down from an opportunity to challenge racism. Instead, all they saw when they looked at him was just another white man. When in Active Resistance, it is hard not to see whiteness. There are no degrees of whiteness.

Critical Reflection on Racial Group Membership

We went to Goree Island, but we did not go alone. There were two African American men, who after being made aware of my situation, decided to join us. They said that they wanted me to have the Goree experience with at least one or two African Americans. Their willingness to do this taught me that expressions of black identity are varied and complex, not as narrow as I had previously conceptualized them to be.

My experience at Goree forced me to develop new frames of reference. It made me aware of how I had previously judged others by deciding if they were black enough. I realized that what I was so upset at the people on that trip for doing to Carlo and me, I had previously done to many whites and people of color. I learned that no matter how much I thought of my husband as a white ally, there will be times when that will not matter. For some, his whiteness will matter more than his role as a white ally. Whiteness is always going to matter, one way or another. Blackness is always going to matter, one way or another. Race will always matter.

A More Nuanced Perspective: My Role as an Educator

I believe that transformative learning can occur by developing a more nuanced understanding of an existing frame of reference or point of view. As I critically reflect on the Goree Island incident and my marriage in general, I realize that my perspectives on race and racial group membership have been deepened. I am extremely conscious of how much racial identity can overlap and conflict with other identities. In my case, how it conflicts with marital identity. I understand the difficulty in attempting to compartmentalize identities and separate them into mutually exclusive pieces.
More importantly, this deeper perspective has had a significant impact on my actions as a social justice educator. I am more aware of the multiple identities each student brings to the learning environment. I am much more cognizant of assumptions I make about my students. As soon as I begin to think that I know what “type” of white person a student is or what “type” of person of color a student is, I am immediately reminded of my experience in Senegal. My marriage has taught me to challenge the conventional constructs of race and racial identity.

**A White Man’s Perspective Transformations**

I didn’t know how much I didn’t know about racism until I dated and later married a black woman. It was naive of me to think that because I lived in Massachusetts, allegedly the most liberal state, no one would notice her darker skin color. I thought that racism was over. My marriage forced me to critically assess my previous assumptions about racism.

**My Disorienting Dilemma**

I was a high school teacher in an urban school, and she arrived there in September on a one-year contract as a building substitute teacher. The school had a 50% minority student population, but the faculty was completely white. Joyce, my wife for the last 16 years, was the only teacher of color on the faculty. The faculty members were very friendly to her until she and I started dating. When it became known that we were “an item,” their response was decidedly cooler. One woman actually told me she didn’t believe in “race-mixing.” Another accused me of trying to call attention to myself by this “shocking behavior.”

This news was heard throughout the school system’s grapevine, and I received calls from teachers at other schools. One friend whom I’d known 25 years told me that everybody was talking about me and that I was “ruining my life.” He cautioned me to think about my 11-year-old son. What would he think about what I was doing if he found out? In fact, my son liked Joyce immensely. When my parents found out, they were shocked at first, then furious. My father asked me if I were trying to “change my luck” with women. My mother lamented the fact that I was the first in the family to graduate from college, the first to get divorced, and now the first to “go with a black.” When I told her Joyce’s father owned a business and that her family was from a higher socioeconomic class than ours, she assumed his business was dealing drugs. I handled this situation with my family by not mentioning it again. Up to this point in my life, I had no awareness that so many whites held such racist views.

In July of the following year, Joyce and I got married by a justice of the peace. Only her parents and my son witnessed this event. When we returned from our honeymoon, my mother invited us to lunch. When we arrived there I could feel the tension in the air, but my mother carried it off so that Joyce was unaware of their feelings. My parents were in their seventies, and this was the first time a black person had ever crossed their threshold. I never realized this before. After lunch I followed my father to the back yard. “Why did you do it,” he hissed. “Was it sex? All you think about is sex!” It was apparent they both had stereotypical viewpoints regarding black people. Joyce’s father must be a drug dealer, and I was only with her because she was a sexual object. What I had learned to this point was that the people in the Northeast were no better than the people in the South when it came to the issue of race, and that it didn’t matter how educated or what socioeconomic class either group came from. What I thought would be easily accepted, a relationship with someone of a different race, was instead viewed as a major act of social defiance, perhaps even deviance. But my education was just beginning.
Incremental learning

My transformative learning was triggered by my marriage, but the learning has been incremental. Over the past 16 years, I experienced many situations that contributed to my perspective transformations. We live in Sutton, a small town outside the city of Worcester. Even though the city, which was only ten miles away, had a high population of people of color, the suburban towns were mostly white. People stared at us as if they didn’t believe what they were seeing. We were even more unusual because we were a white male-black female pairing; most black-white couples are black male-white female pairings (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). We’d go to the supermarket and empty the cart simultaneously at the checkout, talking to each other as we did so. Still the cashier would invariably say, “Are these together?” We took my son to an amusement park. I’m afraid of heights, so Joyce accompanied Michael on the rides. While waiting in line, she got into a friendly conversation with the woman behind her. After a few minutes, the woman looked at Michael and said to Joyce, “Are you his nanny?” One time I went to the hospital for a minor operation, and Joyce was with me in the pre-op room. A nurse came in, looked at her, and said, “Are you his medical case worker?”

While these incidents were somewhat comical, others were decidedly not. Joyce went to a large hardware store in our area and was accosted by a security guard while she was inside the store. He asked her if she intended to pay for an item she had just put in her cart. Then he disappeared, but when she went to the checkout counter he materialized again. He’d been following her around the store. When she loudly accused him and the store of racial profiling, they denied it. I wrote to the president of the company and outlined what had occurred, and I suggested that they might do better with people of color as customers if they’d hire people of color to work in their all-white employee establishment. I talked to other people of color I knew, both black and Latino, and found that the store had a history of this type of behavior. One Latino man told me security would follow him from the time he got out of his car in the parking lot.

Critical Reflection

Because of my relationship with Joyce, I discovered many things about which I was totally unaware. Some black people with whom I now associate told me about being pulled over by the police for “DWB,” or driving while black. One day we were shopping at Sam’s Club, and I asked Joyce why we shopped there rather than at a similar store much closer to home. She said it was because Sam’s Club hired a lot of black people. I looked around the store and realized that was another thing about which I had been totally oblivious. People of color are aware of businesses that hire them, and many prefer to spend their money in establishments where the employees resemble them. I became conscious of the lack of diversity with regard to employees in both the public and private sector, and I’d notice whether there were people of color in the audience at entertainment venues and sporting events. For the first time in my life I realized I was white, and that I had a great amount of unearned privilege because of the color of my skin. I was angry with myself for not seeing this before. Anger often results from the self examination one makes during the transformative learning process (Mezirow, 2000).

I retired early from teaching, and we began spending our winters in Mississippi. Both of Joyce’s parents grew up there, and they were the only members of their large families to migrate to the Northeast. In Mississippi I became extremely conscious of my whiteness because more often than not I was the only white person present at family gatherings and other events. Her black family was much more accepting of me than my white family was of her. In fact, one Sunday morning we dropped in at the Missionary Baptist Church to hear her Uncle Johnny, the
church’s pastor, preach. When we walked in, he looked down from the pulpit and said, “Well, my niece and my nephew are here visiting from Massachusetts.” The all-black congregation looked at me, trying to figure things out. Things had come full circle. I had visited the Deep South as a teen-ager and gotten a glimpse of segregation. Thirty years later I had a second home in Mississippi and was related, through marriage, to people who had lived for years under Jim Crow. I learned of the courage and determination black people need in order to obtain what white people simply take for granted.

A New Role

I agree with (2000) Brookfield that learning is transformative only if it involves a fundamental questioning and reordering of how one thinks and acts. My new perspectives about race and racism have become integrated into my life. I have assumed a new role as a white ally, or a white person who speaks out against racism and supports people of color. This has dismayed many of my friends, family members, and colleagues. I’ve been judged a “traitor” to my race for the public stands I’ve taken. One time my mother pinched the skin on my hand, and said, “Did you forget that you’re white?” I’ve written many editorials decrying racial profiling and supporting affirmative action that so outraged white people I had to get an unlisted phone number.

Part of the transformative learning process is recognizing that there are others who may have had similar transformations (Mezirow, 2000). I have lost white friends because of my new perspective, but I have gained new ones. I have white friends in my life now who have gone through their own transformative experiences about racism and are now white allies.

References


Improvising Learning Space: 
Making Room for Difference and Transformation 
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Abstract: Eight adult undergraduates participated in a 10-week creativity course where they learned improvisation. Throughout the course and in interviews conducted after its conclusion, the participant co-researchers reflected on their experiences of the learning space they co-created with their colleagues and the room they made for transformation.

Introduction

Improvational games and creative dramatics have a long history of use in the classroom. Educators have used these strategies and other theater-in-education models to engage learners, enliven subject matter, and develop collaboration and communication competencies. Most of these strategies were originally developed for K-12 students (Spolin, 1986) and much of the research on the use of improvisation in learning has also focused on K-12 populations and is outcome-based. The few studies that do exist on improvisation in adult learning settings are also outcome-based. Missing from the literature are studies and practices that highlight the process of learning improvisation, and the dimensions of learning space that support transformation.

My own interest in the relationship between adults’ experiences learning improvisation and transformative learning grew out of my years using improvisation, first as a theatre director during rehearsals, and later as a practitioner in organizational and educational settings. Over the years I began to see anecdotal evidence of transformative learning in a wide range of individuals who, as they were learning to improvise, began to experience and express themselves in ways that challenged and eventually shifted their self-beliefs (Bandura, 1977), and ways of thinking and being.

What, I wondered, were adults experiencing as they learned to improvise that gave them the room to venture beyond their comfort zones, and first become aware of, then accept and appreciate the differences emerging in themselves and their colleagues? This curiosity was the seed of my research. In this paper I will present some of my most significant findings and their implications for making room for difference in learning space.

Framework and Methodology

To explore my question, I conducted a phenomenological study of adults’ experiences learning improvisation over a ten-week quarter in an adult undergraduate program. The eight class participants were invited to join the study as co-researchers and share their immediate post-improvisation in-class reflections, weekly reflective journal entries, and additional reflections on their learning experience during an individual interview three months after the last class. I then analyzed these findings for individual and amplified (shared) themes, as well as for the themes of co-researchers’ lived experiences of improvisation, and a final category that emerged during the data analysis, the intersubjective3 and relational dimensions of learning improvisation.

3 The phenomenological term “intersubjectivity” is used here in alignment with Wilson’s conception that we experience the world “with and through others” (2002, p. 3). For readability I sometimes substitute the term “relationality.”
Learning space was not the original focus of my research. I thought I was studying individual experiences of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000), though soon discovered I was responding to Taylor and others’ call for methodologies that study other ways of knowing and the intersubjective dimension of transformational learning (Johnston & Usher, 1997; Taylor, 2006). During my data analysis, it soon became clear that I could not separate individual’s descriptions of transformation from the relational dimensions of the learning space. Before I expand on this, I will briefly provide some context for the concept of learning space.

**Learning Space**

One of the oldest descriptions of learning space can be found in the Japanese concept of “Ba,” described by Nonaka and Konno as “a shared space for emerging relationships ... [that] provides a platform for advancing individual and/or collective knowledge.” They describe good ba as “superior relational situations where everyone brings energy to the others, enhancing creativity and supporting dynamic positive exchanges” (1998, pp. 40-1). Ba shifts the focus from individual learning and transformation to the shared relational experience. Yorks and Kasl (2002) highlight the intersubjectivity nature of learning space with their conception of “learning-within-relationship, a process in which persons strive to become engaged with both their own whole-person knowing and the whole-person knowing of their fellow learners” (2002, p. 185). Much of collaborative inquiry theory and practice also foregrounds the learning space and the relational learning it fosters.

Palmer describes learning space as a place where paradoxes can be held because “teaching and learning require a higher degree of awareness than we ordinarily possess—and awareness is always heightened when we are caught in a creative tension. Paradox is another name for that tension, a way of holding opposites together that creates an electric charge that keeps us awake” (1998, p. 74). More recently, Kolb and Kolb highlight “learning space” in experiential learning theory (ELT). The learning space of ELT “emphasizes that learning is not one universal process but a map of learning territories, a frame of reference within which many different ways of learning can flourish and interrelate” (2005, p. 200). Findings from my study complement these descriptions of learning space, and centralize its social, relational and intersubjective dimensions. These dimensions made room for co-researchers to accept and appreciate their differences and, over time, experience significant transformation.

**Making Room for Difference**

Co-researchers described embodied awareness, acceptance and appreciation as key dimensions of their learning experience. Using a number of improvisation games and experiential learning exercises informed by Yorks and Kasl’s whole person learning, and their extension of Mezirow’s “habits of mind” to “habits of being” (2002), co-researchers first became more aware of their embodied experience of themselves, and increasingly accepting of themselves and their colleagues. In the non-judgmental learning space they consciously co-created, participants’ acceptance was often accompanied by appreciation of themselves and their colleagues, leading to increased comfort and confidence in the learning space and new lived experiences of themselves. These experiences often challenged the self-beliefs co-researchers named at the start of the quarter. For example, Elizabeth began learning improvisation with her identity clearly informed by the self-belief “I don’t consider myself that creative.” She was armed with evidence from painful early childhood memories of being told she was too heavy to perform in a dance concert and that she would embarrass the family. She continued to develop
this identity into adulthood. Over time, these self-beliefs became a self-fulfilling prophecy. She enacted this self-belief, in part, by avoiding situations that would put her in a position to be creative or spontaneous.

Elizabeth was well into middle age by the time she arrived for the first night of a class with the unsettling words “creativity” and “improvisation” in the title. She was not going to suddenly express creativity simply because I or anyone else told her she was creative or introduced her to improvisation concepts and research findings; Elizabeth needed to experience herself as creative, and this took time, the freedom to be herself, and a slowly emerging trust and appreciation of herself and her learning colleagues. Elizabeth was not alone; co-researchers made meaning of the classroom and their experience learning improvisation in terms of their own life experience (current and historical), and in terms of what was already meaningful to them.

Intersubjective/Relational Learning

The experience of learning improvisation is well suited to an exploration of both other ways of learning and the learning space itself. The highly intersubjective, relational nature of learning improvisation and the immediate and public feedback that accompany it are central to the experience of learning improvisation. Much of the literature on adult and transformative learning places the individual at the center (Johnston & Usher, 1997; Taylor, 2006). As co-researchers reflected on their experience it became increasingly clear that their descriptions of transformation were dynamically related to the highly intersubjective nature of the learning space.

As co-researchers situated themselves within the learning space, they learned in relation to and with others as they directly experienced each other in improvised games and scenes, and as they connected outside of the classroom while sharing rides home, after-class drinks, and outside activities. The whole-person and relational dimensions of their learning experience where inseparable from their descriptions of transformative learning. The relational nature of the learning space, and the embodied awareness, and acceptance co-researchers experienced from each other also made room for the emergence and appreciation of individual differences. Within this space, three themes were amplified in co-researchers’ descriptions, Freedom from Judgment, Permission-giving, -taking, and –getting, and a shift from “self-consciousness” to “self- and other-awareness.”

Freedom from Judgment. The concept that “there are no rules in improvisation” was central to co-researchers experience of the learning space, complemented by descriptions of “freedom from judgment.” Improvising free from others’ or their own judgment was significant and seemed, for some, to facilitate the emergence of a new authorship of self. When we met for our interview, Lisa described an additional dimension of the “no rules” theme:

Sometimes I thought, “Oh, I don't know how I'm gonna…how is this gonna work?” And just kind of go with it, and all of a sudden it's working. And it's like, oh, cool. You know, “Oh, there's no right or wrong, so okay!” It's just, you know, such a wonderful feeling.

The transition from “how is this gonna work?” to “just kind of go with it, and all of a sudden it's working” was a distinct shift from a tentative, cognitive, planning-orientation to action, to confident and spontaneous action. Starshine described a similar experience when she made a conscious choice:

not be intimidated, not be afraid to you know, take a step forward. To do whatever exercises you ask us to do. It's like okay, what the hell? I'm going to go do it. I'm going to
do it, the hell with it. You know? And afterwards I felt good about myself, like okay, see it wasn't that bad.

Jason’s experience of “no rules” extended to other dimensions of the class. He reflected on the diversity in the class and his appreciation for the wide range of viewpoints and experiences people shared:

There was so, you know, open table, like round table discussion wise, I mean, at no time were we not allowed to go, “Hey, what about this? What about that.” And in fact it was so free form like that, even while we’re talking about something, that communication between everybody and all, like the melding of everyone’s different viewpoints and perceptions, that was key. Just because it reminds you that not everyone thinks the same way you do. And people just see things in a way you would never even think of. And it's refreshing to know that, you know, it doesn't have to be seen in one light, you know? It doesn't have to be taken just like that. So that's why I was excited just to see what is somebody gonna say next. You know?

As co-researchers extended “there are no rules in improvisation” to other dimensions of the learning space, they experienced more freedom from judgment. This space enabled them to became increasingly aware and accepting of their differences, and to appreciate the individual contributions each brought to the learning experience.

Permission-giving, -taking, and –getting. Co-researchers also described various incidents of permission-giving, -taking, and –getting that facilitated their growing comfort and confidence in learning improvisation. It was not enough for me, as their instructor, to remind them that “there are no rules” in improvisation; co-researchers needed to see this demonstrated by their colleagues and to observe and experience positive feedback for exploring beyond their comfort zones.

One of the unique aspects of the experience of learning improvisation is that the feedback is often immediate and public. Many co-researchers described breakthroughs or memorable experiences when they heard their classmates laughing or applauding in appreciation of their improvisation. As a group of improvisers returned to their seats, I often observed encouraging pats on the back and continued shared giggles or commentary. These experiences seemed to build as co-researchers became more attuned to each other’s experiences and less concerned with judgment. As participants became more comfortable in the shared learning space, they moved from an almost exclusive focus on their own success or failure to an interest and appreciation in the group’s success. This shift was particularly facilitative for some co-researchers. Starshine, who rarely spoke in class the first several weeks and had described herself as “shy” and declared “I get nervous in front of people” had a transformative experience improvising a scene halfway into the course. She reflected in her journal,

Improvisation was great! I have never done this sort of show before. I was pretty amazed how I completely came out of my shell for once. I was physically and mentally open for anything to come my way. I have to say I was pretty astonished with myself. The class enjoyed it and I felt that I wasn't judged by them at all. In my honest opinion, I believe that this night was a defining night for me. I felt it as I was leaving the class. It was a feeling of sureness, freedom, and being optimistic about me.

Starshine’s description highlights another dimension of intersubjectivity; when co-researchers first became aware of what they were experiencing or expressing, and then realized they were not being judged for those experiences or expressions, they appeared to accept and appreciate themselves more fully. They also embraced the experiences and expressions of their fellow co-
researchers. This intersubjective experience of awareness and acceptance appeared to be essential for those who described transformation.

*From self-consciousness” to “self- and other-awareness.”* This third theme describes an important shift that also made room for transformation. During our interview I asked Lisa, who had earlier described her experience as like “being let out of a cage,” if she could tell me what else stood out for her as she reflected her learning experience she traversed almost the entire class, appreciating the growth and connection she felt with each individual and the group as a whole:

I don't know, I was just amazed at how everyone…Erik just blew me out of the water. He's just amazing. His sense of humor and playfulness was refreshing and was hidden from us during our first class together. I get excited to witness such growth in a person. And then, well, Starshine, she joined Toastmasters. And she was like Miss Shy of the Universe, and she forced herself to come to your class, to get out of her shell. Now she's in Toastmasters. She's going to be an officer. I mean, it's just the transformations, you know. … It's just amazing. I just loved it. I just loved it. And Christina, too. She is no longer the shy, reticent little girl. She's now speaking up at work, and, oh yes, she has really developed. ‘Cause we'll drive together if we have class, and then I'll drive her home. It's on my way home. So I still see her— And she has, like it's still working. She keeps blossoming. She keeps going, “Okay, what did we do in class?” And she uses it when she's gotta do something that's out…that she wants to hide in the corner. Instead, “No, I'm gonna do this.” And she'll think about, you know, how to get out of her shell. “If I did it in class, I can do this.” And she's been successful, you know. Everyone's in a different spot, you know.

Lisa’s descriptions of the changes in her colleagues and the group as a whole represent a significant shift from her relatively singular focus on her own success at the beginning of the course. This shift from initial self-consciousness to an appreciative awareness of herself and others was shared by many of the co-researchers and appeared to contribute to the safety and trust they enjoyed. It also made room for co-researchers to experiment outside of their comfort zone, giving them permission to experience themselves enacting new capacities, for which they also received positive feedback from the group. This set in motion a cycle that increased their confidence and reinforced their willingness to take risks in the learning space.

**Implications for Practice and Theory**

As with all of the emergent themes from co-researchers’ experiences, it would be a mistake to translate their descriptions of learning and transformation into prescriptions. Much of the value of the learning experience emerged because the co-researchers and I did not privilege certain experiences over others. Shifting the focus from learning improvisation to using improvisation for transformation would very likely constrain the meanings co-researchers made and experiences they had in the learning space. Such a shift would also orient learners to external referents of success, rather than to an attunement to the experience itself. Co-researchers’ internal referents, descriptions of experience, and the meaning they assigned to their experiences constituted an essential dimension of the learning space.

This study makes a case for an additional research focus on the meaning individual adults make within the learning space, understanding the complexity of their experiences within the web of their own and others’ learning space, and the intersubjective reality they construct. The findings also suggest that, while there are many ways to use improvisation in educational
settings, educators can allow participants to gain greater value if they create space for learning and attune to the themes that were amplified through co-researchers’ descriptions in this study.

The intersubjective and public nature of improvisation experiences was not so much a dimension of the learning experience as it was how people learned. Inviting adults to attune to the group process and their experience within the group supports an inclusive, relational approach. Individuals did not develop their improvisation skills, conceptual understanding, comfort and confidence, or have transformative experiences separately from their co-researchers, but did so “with and through” them (Wilson, 2002, p. 3).

Based on my findings I would extend Yorks and Kasl’s conception of “learning-within-relationship” (2002) to Kolb and Kolb’s (2005) description of learning space and suggest that it is not only a “map of learning territories, a frame of reference within which many different ways of learning can flourish and interrelate” (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 200), but a fundamentally relational space in which adults engage with each other and co-construct their experiences and meanings. The relational character of the learning space is inclusive and by its very nature makes room for difference. When all participants in the learning space attune to its relational dimensions they make room for the whole-person experience, learning, and transformation of the individual.

References
Transformation on the Way to Social Change: Individual Experiences of Support Group Members Involved in Photovoice Research

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Abstract: Photovoice, a participatory action research methodology aimed at social change, has potential to promote individual transformation in members of a vulnerable population. Careful research design can create an environment where the aesthetic and presentational effects of the art of photography may be realized.

Introduction

In recent years, community-based research has moved from the model of researcher-subject to researcher-co-researcher. This model of research, called participatory action research (PAR), combines social science and social activism, involving community members in the research process from beginning to end (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). Photovoice is a particular type of PAR that puts cameras in the hands of co-researchers to document community issues, with the end goal of influencing social change. It differs from many other types and uses of photography in that the people affected by whatever problem or issue is of concern, are the ones who both take and interpret the photographs. Despite the more collaborative model of research offered by Photovoice as a PAR strategy, those of us interested in social change must still be aware that the research participants are individuals who will be affected by the process, either positively or negatively, regardless of the overall research outcome.

Since the Photovoice process was first described by Wang and Burris (1997), it has been used in a variety of settings with many different population groups, both in the United States and internationally. Research involving Photovoice was originally conceived as a way to identify community issues, create dialogue and reflection on those issues, and represent those issues to policy-makers. The theoretical underpinnings of Photovoice initially described by Wang and Burris (1994) are empowerment education, feminist theory and documentary photography.

The overall structure of a Photovoice project generally includes initial training on the philosophy and mechanics of taking photographs, selection of representative photographs to discuss in depth, describing the meaning of the photographs in context, and codifying issues and developing themes (Wang & Burris, 1997). Although this structure was described initially for use with participatory needs assessment, it has been used and adapted for a variety of other participatory endeavors. In working with members of a vulnerable population with a chronic health condition, for example, the co-researchers might mutually agree upon their first topic of concern as “access and barriers.” Then they would each receive a disposable camera to take pictures of access and barrier issues in their respective lives. After returning the cameras for development of photographs, the group would meet again to discuss the photographs, selecting one or more representative photographs to discuss in depth, and finally begin to develop codes and themes that emerged from the discussion. The group would then agree upon the next topic to photograph and repeat the process, so that at the end of the project there would be several topics that had been photographed, discussed and analyzed by the co-researchers. The project would then culminate in a presentation to community leaders about the issues and concerns that this vulnerable population had identified and documented.
Individual Effects of Research for Social Change

One aspect of the Photovoice research process that has received little attention is the effect of such research on the individuals who participate in it. Being involved in the cause of social change cannot avoid individual effects, which become even more significant when the co-researchers are members of a vulnerable population with a chronic health condition. Since Photovoice is a strategy involving individuals in the social change process, even if a project affects policy makers to the point of implementing social change, there still remains the question of the individual transformative learning potentially experienced by those who created the project. In an instance of negative impact resulting from individual change, Carlson, Engebretson and Chamberlain (2005), found that empowerment had unforeseen consequences, leading some “transformed” people to become more dominating and controlling over others. This became a key factor in the group’s resultant inability to facilitate cooperative community action, the exact opposite effect of the goal of Photovoice. Thus, although the prevailing attitude may be that empowerment is “good” and “marginalization” is bad, greater consideration of the impact of individual change that may occur during the implementation of a Photovoice project seems warranted.

In the early years of the development of transformative learning theory, Mezirow (1991) warned that educators interested in fostering transformative learning needed to be concerned about ethical issues. Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007), echo the same concern, noting that ethical issues such as tampering with the “worldview” of the learner and the invasiveness of studying adults in the transformation process have still been minimally addressed. How we conduct research on topics related to transformative learning has been a concern of the Transformative Learning Conference since its inception (Wiessner & Mezirow, 2000). Taylor’s proposed future directions in research about transformative learning include “new and varied research designs and data collection techniques, including longitudinal research, observer participation, collaborative inquiry, action research, and quantitative studies” (as cited in Cranton, 2006, p. 53).

This concern about individual effects becomes increasingly important as the use of Photovoice expands beyond its original boundaries and researchers. In the years since its original inception, Photovoice has been combined with grounded theory to explore quality of life concerns of African American breast cancer survivors (Lopez, Eng, Randall-David & Robinson, 2005), used in a mixed methods study of childhood obesity, which included Photovoice, focus groups and community mapping (Darbyshire, MacDougall & Schiller, 2005) and utilized by at risk middle school students to facilitate better teacher understanding and school connections (Kroeger, Burton, Comarata, Combs, Hamm, Hopkins & Kouche, 2004). This widening of usage highlights not only the range of possible applications of Photovoice but also the many opportunities to study its effects. It also raises the question of whether or not the original conceptual underpinnings of empowerment education, feminist theory and documentary photography (Wang & Burris, 1994) are still appropriate as Photovoice becomes used for more individual and interpersonal purposes (LeClerc, Wells, Craig & Wilson, 2002; Lopez et al., 2005).

Aesthetic Effects of Photovoice Research

A second aspect of interest is that while photographs may be used as documentary evidence, photography is also a visual art, and as such, has potential impact in other ways. As an art form, photography can have an aesthetic effect that moves people in some intangible way, reaching deep inside to touch their heart or spirit. In looking at individual experiences of
Photovoice research participants, it is thus also important to consider possible effects of taking and viewing photographs from the artistic point of view as opposed to a purely documentary purpose. Viewing photography as art with the potential to transform, engender presentational knowing, and play a role in healing opens up new ways of viewing the individual experience of Photovoice participation. From the perspective of transformative learning, Mezirow’s initial conceptualization, which focused on a rational process involving dialogue and critical reflection, later allowed for more emotional or intuitive experiences, such as viewing a painting, to have the potential of leading to transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000). Of the many authors who have critiqued and expanded upon Mezirow’s work, I have particular interest in the mytho-poetic view of transformative learning proposed by Dirkx (1998), since it describes a way of knowing through images rather than rationality. This kind of knowing is called presentational knowing (Heron & Reason, n.d.) or expressive ways of knowing (Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks, & Kasl, 2006) and is specifically related to experiential knowing that derives from the aesthetic aspects of the various art forms. Lightfoot-Lawrence and Davis (1997, p. 35) note that “making and finding meaning through art is a transformative experience. Once we have encountered seeing and thinking in the aesthetic realm, our ability to think and see more generally is altered.” Since the Photovoice process involves the selection and creation of images through photography, this seems to be a logical connection between art and potential transformation. In addition, the therapeutic healing potential of art, although beyond the scope of this paper, is also worthy of consideration.

Questions and a Research Problem

Some of the questions that arise from these two issues of the changing use of Photovoice and its aesthetic aspects are: How are individuals affected by participation in the Photovoice research process itself? Are the effects always positive? Are there additional issues related to vulnerable populations that need to be taken into account in the planning of such research? How does involvement in the artistic process of taking and interpreting photographs affect these individuals? What happens to the individual on the way to social change? Additionally, we must consider: What would be effective approaches for researching these questions? How can we employ Photovoice methods to study the individual transformation aspects of Photovoice research?

Photovoice for Vulnerable Populations with a Non-Visible Handicap

My particular interest is in support groups comprised of persons with non-visible handicaps who have participated or are participating in Photovoice research projects aimed at social change. Although the research outcomes of Photovoice projects are important in themselves, my focus is on the individual effects of research participation. According to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, handicaps can be visible or non-visible but must substantially limit one or more major life activities (Summary of Federal Equal Opportunity Laws, 2005). Asthma, diabetes and epilepsy are among conditions considered non-visible handicaps. Having begun my professional career working with persons with asthma and having spent the past three years working with people with epilepsy, I am aware of the particular societal barriers and misperceptions that people with non-visible handicaps experience due to the fact that they have verifiable limitations that are not readily apparent to those around them. Because of what I have observed and experienced in prior work on three Photovoice projects, one of them with an epilepsy support group, I have become very interested in the individual effects of Photovoice
participation that occur in addition to the intended social change effects. My observations include the creative use of photography to illustrate personal metaphors, increased communication fostered by having photographs as prompts and enhanced reflectivity and expression of personal stories.

Epilepsy support group members represent not only a marginalized population due to issues of stigma and access, but also a vulnerable population because of possible cognitive impairment due to the condition and associated medications (Human Research Tutorial, 1998-2000). Regardless of which type of vulnerable population is involved, vulnerable population status necessitates additional cautions and protections in the formulation of research protocols. In considering the use of Photovoice with vulnerable populations, clarifying both the negative and positive transforming potential of such research participation becomes especially important. While a certain amount of self-selection may be involved in the choice to participate in a support group, one should not assume that support group participation means a commitment to full self-disclosure or involvement in social change efforts. In Photovoice research, the participants, in this case, members of an already formed group, choose the topics or issues to photograph and later gather together to discuss and analyze the photographs taken. A topic such as family support might eventually lead to recommendations for families to improve support toward affected family members. However, the process of discussing and documenting family support can be highly emotional for those support group members without it. Photographs taken to illustrate lack of social support can also have powerful effects on the viewers. Using Photovoice with a support group can significantly change group dynamics while also affecting the depth of relationships and interactions due to the way that such use of photography can enhance sharing and communication.

Support groups offer the opportunity for persons with non-visible handicaps such as epilepsy to help each other through sharing of knowledge and experiences. As with many chronic conditions, much of the daily management of epilepsy and its effects resides in the person with the condition, from taking medications to dealing with side effects of both medications and repeated seizures to avoiding known triggers to finding employment and arranging transportation if driving is no longer an option. Photovoice provides an additional strategy that can enhance the cooperative nature of support groups by promoting individual reflection and group interaction through the sharing and analysis of photographic images. While support group members may choose to be involved with Photovoice research in order to combat the stigma and marginalization they experience in society, they also have the opportunity for personally transforming experiences as they both create and interpret the photographs that comprise the research process. Aside from the documentary aspect of the research, its artistic aspects can lead to personal transformation through new ways of knowing and exposure to the transformative potential and possible healing power of art.

**Cautions and Potential for Photovoice Research with Epilepsy Support Group Members**

While conducting a Photovoice research project with a vulnerable population may involve additional considerations and safeguards in the planning and conduct of the research, it also offers great potential for both individual and societal change to people who are often ignored, maligned and set aside by society-at-large. Epilepsy is a highly stigmatized condition, often displayed disparagingly in the media. Persons with epilepsy can be isolated by seizures so frequent that venturing out in public becomes a rare event. Triggers to seizures such as fluorescent lights can keep a person with epilepsy out of most public settings, from shopping
malls to offices. Misperceptions about epilepsy and seizures are deeply ingrained in some people who hold a variety of views of epilepsy from mental defectiveness to spiritual affliction. Photovoice has potential not only as a tool to combat social stigma and discrimination for persons with epilepsy but also as a means of individual empowerment and transformation through the process of choosing, creating and sharing images, perceptions and experiences. Taylor (as cited in Cranton, 2006) suggested several areas for future transformative learning research, including observer participation, collaborative inquiry and action research, each of which has potential to be addressed using Photovoice in a carefully designed manner.

References


Bodymindfulness as Integrative Transformative Learning
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Abstract: Bodymindfulness is a practice particularly suitable for integrative transformative learning because it focuses us at a deep, prereflective level where we can begin to understand the sources of our perceptions, interpretations, and behavior. Student reflections confirm that bodymindfulness offers a starting point for cultivating self-reflexivity and promotes ongoing transformative learning.

Bodymindfulness

Although bodymindfulness is only a small part of what I teach in my graduate communication courses in English in Japan, one third of my recent students noted in their final course evaluations that it was what they would remember most about the class. This pedagogical study examines the concept and practice of bodymindfulness and analyzes the effects students reported experiencing when they used it. This paper gives an overview of bodymindfulness and self-reflexivity prior to discussing the students’ experiences.

Bodymindfulness is a word I coined for an approach to becoming aware of and adjusting our inner state (Nagata, 2002). The term bodymind emphasizes the systemic, integral nature of lived experience, and mindfulness is a Buddhist concept and practice of cultivating awareness. Bodymindfulness is the process of attending to all aspects of the bodymind—body, emotion/feeling, mind, and spirit—in order to grasp the holistic personal meaning of an internal event and to use the resultant understanding to communicate skillfully (Nagata, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2007). The Bodymindfulness Practice is a seemingly simple exercise for self-attunement that clears a space for turning attention inward and making contact with our own energy. It promotes development of awareness of our bodymindset—the existing pattern of being in our bodymind (Nagata, 2002)—and offers a means of shifting it using our breathing so that our presence is more poised and effective in conveying a desired message congruently.

Integrative Transformative Learning for Interculturalists

In calling for a reconceptualization of the transformative learning process, Taylor (1997) emphasizes the significance of whole person learning by quoting the following: “awareness and use of all the functions we have available for knowing, including our cognitive, affective, somatic, intuitive, and spiritual dimensions” (The Group for Collaborative Inquiry cited by Taylor, p. 49). Following Lennox’s (2005) usage of integrative, I am calling this approach integrative transformative education, rather than integral, because it promotes integrating the bodymind’s various ways of knowing and cultivating a higher state.

Most of my graduate students, who are mainly Japanese but also include men and women with varied cultural backgrounds and nationalities, are working adults in their 20s to 50s who are seeking a catalyst for change in their lives; and the others are usually preparing themselves for working in ways that contribute to effective communication with people of diverse cultures. Usually they talk first about their professional aspirations but later reveal their more personal motivations. They are knowledge workers whose professional work depends on their skillful use of self. The work that they are currently engaged in or that they aspire to typically ranges across
education; interpreting and translating; consulting, coaching, and facilitating; business; law; and NGOs, both domestic and international.

My conviction as an intercultural communication educator is that our studies should have a positive impact on our life and work. To prepare my students to use themselves skillfully in culturally complex and dynamic work settings, my pedagogical approach emphasizes the development of self-reflexivity, the ability to have an ongoing conversation with your whole self about what you are experiencing as you are experiencing it. The link between theory and practice in our intercultural studies is self-reflexivity, a type of self-awareness which I conceive of as an accelerated form of hermeneutic reflection that has been ingrained by ongoing effort (Nagata, 2005).

Although the intrapersonal effort or inner work is similar, self-reflection is after the fact; self-reflexivity is in the moment; and feeling is likely to have more immediacy so it may be easier to grasp its role (Fisher-Yoshida & Nagata, 2002). To be reflective is to sit and think about what took place after it is completed: our role in it, others’ reactions, and our responses to them. This can be done through thinking, writing, or speaking with another person.

Since intercultural communication is typically practiced in the moment face-to-face, self-reflexivity can be even more valuable than self-reflection. Cultivating the ability to be self-aware of feeling and its impact on thinking or vice versa, then adjusting what we are doing and saying right at that time, may confer immediate benefits. If we can defer acting when confused and upset or dogmatically insisting on our own point of view, it may be possible to use our inner resources skillfully and to find an effective approach to communicating on the spot.

Three components have been incorporated into promoting self-reflexivity in my teaching: bodymindfulness, metacommunication, and communicative flexibility (Nagata, 2005). Because of time and space limitations, bodymindfulness is the sole focus in this paper.

Methodology

The analysis of this study is based on the reflections of 21 recent students in answer to the question, “While using bodymindfulness and paying attention to your breathing during or outside class, have you observed anything new about your inner state and how it affects your communication?” Data was collected from short reflective reports that are required after each class, student presentations, and final reflective papers. Content analysis (Creswell, 2003) was used to identify the themes described below that reveal the overall structure and flow of the students’ experiences.

Student Experiences of Bodymindfulness

Students’ observations focused on 1) attending to their inner states and 2) using the resulting awareness to attune themselves and to do the inner processing necessary to 3) align their actions with their intentions to communicate in more appropriate, effective, and satisfying ways. The quotations below reveal these inner moves that may also shift how they interact.

Attending to Inner States

Experiencing uncomfortable bodily sensations and unpleasant emotions and feelings were frequently noted and sometimes explicitly related to other aspects of being a bodymind. Brief class exercises led the students toward making these connections, particularly concerning how they were communicating as a result of their inner states.

4 Students are identified by name or initials unless they chose to be anonymous.
Students reported using bodymindfulness outside class when when tired, confused, or upset, when hurrying, when waiting in line or riding a rush hour train, when arguing with someone or listening to troubled friends, when anxious while making a presentation, when struggling to concentrate, and so forth. They also used it to relax, to calm themselves down, and to promote sleep. One student, Mihoko Yoshioka, used it to do her research on bodymindful listening in intercultural dialogues. The following observation shows how a student understood common physical symptoms in relation to an overall self-evaluation, a metacommunication on self and interactions with others.

A few weeks ago I caught a cold, and although the cold has more or less gone away, I am still cursed with a cough which I find has held me back in communicating with other people. If I talk for long, my throat becomes dry and I start to cough, and so I am talking less frequently. The significance of this is that my physical state is having an effect on my self-esteem, which in turn is affecting the way I communicate with other people. (Philip Shek)

These insights can support skillful self-management when feeling unwell and discouraged as an alternative to contagiously spreading personal distress in relationships with other people. As the following quotations illustrate, students varied in whether they were more aware of their bodily condition and how it influenced other aspects of themselves, especially their minds, or how mental states affected their bodies and feelings.

I have noticed that my mental condition is directly and immediately influenced very much by my body state. Whenever I breathe deeply and regularly, I become calm and at the same time keen towards many subtle things around and inside myself. I feel more positive and brimming with hope about the outer world as well as the inner world, both other people as well as myself. I feel myself more lively in this space and harmonious with people and the environment. (MT)

Through understanding bodymindfulness, I have realized that I am such a bodymind, which means that the state of my mind is immediately represented/inscribed onto my body, which sometimes I do not like that much. (Keitaro Morita)

Recognizing which aspect of ourselves is likely to take precedence in our awareness can alert us to other areas that have been neglected and need to be cultivated so that they become more readily available inner resources. Attuning With Awareness Using bodymindfulness to attend to breathing is the first step to becoming aware of inner states and their relation to behavior and outer contexts. Then bodymindful breathing can be used to attune to and to shift those states as desired. The following discoveries by Hiroyo Asano took place over several weeks and represent a typical emphasis on becoming calm and making choices regarding communication.

I think, owing to bodymindfulness, I calm down in communicating with people, even when I am worried about something or was rushing just before that. I come to pay attention to my own breathing, not only during using bodymindfulness but also during communication. . . . By using bodymindfulness, I learned to recognize where I am now and what I have to do now. This is because it helps me associate yesterday’s self with today’s and my present one. . . . Above all, I have come to recognize my current condition by using bodymindfulness, so that I can fit myself to each particular situation as much as I can. Even if I cannot do so, knowing my current condition may help me notice the reason. . . . I believe that such a practice is really useful not only to myself but also to others that I am communicating with. I feel that it has a kind of unlimited possibility for communication.
When considering the class topic of conflict, we practiced tuning into our *inner aura*—Gendlin’s term for the felt sense of another person, object, situation, or idea (1981, pp. 53-54)—of different people that we imagined relating to. We noted changes in our inner states related to communicating with people who are *uppers* (Wood, 2004, p. 82), whom we experience as positive about us, in contrast to *downers*, people who seem negative about us. One student wrote:

In the last class, we learned to think about people who affect our inner state while breathing. When I thought about a person who was an upper for me, I felt something warm in my body. When I started to think about a different person who was a downer for me, my body felt coldness inside. Usually, I try not to think about the downer person, but while doing bodymindfulness, I could think about the person calmly, at least more calmly than usual. And, I could think why the person was a downer for me, or how I could have better communication with the person. I did not run away from the person in my mind. I think that I always lose calmness when I communicate with the downer person, and that might have a bad effect on my utterances and behavior.

This exercise also resulted in insights about how she evaluated another person and how that evaluation might change. There is a suggestion here of accessing new inner resources for improving communication. Knowing how to shift negative anticipation about communicating with someone is a critical skill for professional people. Mihoko Yoshioka described how bodymindfulness influenced her inner states and helped her to become neutral in outlook.

I wonder if bodymindfulness is a meta process of imaging nature for me because I seem to be accessing the state I associate with visualizing a lake whenever I want to know my condition, which is usually when I feel I am not neutral. I am feeling back on form after trying bodymindfulness. Inhaling, I feel as if I am charging my energy to be in a better state, and exhaling, I sense that my aspects of feelings, emotions, and body are calming down and becoming a state of zero. The exhaling process reminded me of my imagination of a process of clearing the muddy water of a lake. I wait for the muddy water to become transparent and its wave motion to be quiet on the surface. I guess my lake might be a kind of a metaphor of a mirror through which I interpret and see the outer world.

Her use of bodymindfulness has evolved into a way to metacommunicate and to shift her inner state.

**Aligned Action**

Some of the students emphasized how bodymindfulness gave them a new sense of being as shown above, and others focused more on new ways of doing. In both cases, the result was usually improved communication skills. Students often noted how their state influenced the way they communicated, particularly in the relationships that were most important to them.

The relationship between mood and my communication style is very strong. When I am in some extreme emotion, like excited or angry, the urge to talk will become uncontrolled. Sometimes I quarreled with my girlfriend not really because of the stuff that we debated, but because of the tone, too loud a voice, or some inappropriate, harsh term I used. Controlling my breathing could help to eliminate the influence of mood and lower the possibility of misunderstanding or even a quarrel. Paying attention to my breathing by counting always makes me calm, and then I could really start to reflect before talking. (JL)

As the result of learning bodymindfulness, Masaki Taniguchi, who works as a facilitator, realized the importance of preparing himself differently for his work.
I tried bodymindfulness at the office before meetings. It is interesting that I plan to design the meeting place, the attendants’ circumstance and the control of it as a facilitator without paying attention to my self. Whereas the place is for all the attendants including the facilitator her/himself, it happens easily that I ignore myself—a particularly influential member. After acknowledging it, I try to consider the position or the meaning of myself at the meeting and to control my attitude toward the meeting members by managing my condition using bodymindfulness.

Arturo Urena Hamelitz, who has a young family and a growing business as well as being a fulltime student, wrote, “Mindful breathing really has become part of my life. It really helps me in starting the day right and in dealing with potentially stressful situations.” He uses it to set his intention for the day by making a conscious choice on how to approach whatever the day will bring as well as using it as things unfold. He feels it is becoming a way of life for him.

Toshiyuki Shimano has also found that bodymindfulness has permeated his life. He did his master’s thesis about the successful NGO project on blind migration and human trafficking in Cambodia where he did an internship (2006a). Bodymindfulness was particularly important because his ability to speak Khmer was limited, and he had to use interpreters when interviewing Cambodian people. In a presentation reflecting on his studies (Shimano, 2006b), he described his transformative learning experience that prepared him to do the complex development communication work he aspires to at the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), where he is now employed.

What I learned most through my experience in the courses I took is bodymindfulness. Studying about intercultural communication is much easier than putting it into practice. My NGO experience in Cambodia was tough at first. Even though I could understand that there were differences, it was difficult for me to comprehend and to adopt them. The bodymindfulness practice and theories that I learned were really helpful in giving me an inner sense of myself and in noticing resonance in relationships that helped us to understand each other more. Using them, everyday I continue to learn something even though I experience the same things. . . . As I utilized bodymindfulness by keeping a journal and diary and realizing my inner sense, . . . What I learned is to realize the tacit knowledge and invisible information, to suspend myself when I have some difficulties, to keep a journal and reflect on it after a while, and to be flexible to see the situation from a broader point of view. . . . The most fundamental realization gained through experience during my studies and internship is that there is no single answer to being an interculturalist. For me, each day is a journey to be a better interculturalist—to communicate well using bodymindfulness within myself intrapersonally, interpersonally with others, and interculturally wherever I find myself.

These reflections about his three years of study and work reveal the connection between shifting state of being and the resulting change in what it is possible to do in the world.

**Conclusion**

Student reflections on their experiences of learning and applying bodymindfulness reveal how they responded to this holistic educational opportunity with enhanced self-awareness, improved communication skills, and new ways of being and doing. Their responses confirm that bodymindfulness offers a starting point for cultivating self-reflexivity and promotes an ongoing process of integrative transformative learning. Bodymindfulness is a practice particularly suitable for integrative transformative learning because it focuses us at a deep, prereflective level.
where we can begin to understand the sources of our perceptions, interpretations, and behavior. Bodymindfulness offers us private ways to recognize and to shift our inner states whenever and wherever needed as we lay down our paths while journeying through life.

References
The Artist Educator: A Framework for Transforming Teaching and Learning
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Abstract: This paper explores the experiences and frameworks of six artists who create works of art that foster the emancipation of viewers in order to provide insights for educators who desire to design learning experiences that foster the emancipation of students.

Introduction
Emancipatory learning “frees people from personal, institutional, or environmental forces that prevent them from seeing new directions, from gaining control of their lives, their society and their world” (Apps, 1985, p. 151). Within the last decade, a connection between art and emancipation of learners has been made in the discourse (Brookfield, 2002). This paper explores what that connection means to emancipatory adult educators reflecting on their practice. It suggests that the work of emancipatory education is creating a learning experience out of the educators’ knowledge and experience that liberates the learner. The classroom is the canvas on which the educator’s skill and intellect are applied in mixing and integrating the “colors” of the students’ experiences in grand patterns of diversity and harmony, interacting with each other and creating shifts and new patterns as a unified whole emerges.

Theoretical Framework
I frame the research with transformative learning theory in which the educator’s task is to empower learners to perceive critically and to engage the student’s attention in an intense personal involvement with the subject matter that is achieved through feelings of personal wholeness, a sense of discovery, human connectedness and liberation (Dirkx, 2003; Cranton, 2005; Taylor, 1998; Tisdell, 1998). Dewey (1934) explains that art, like reason, is a form of intelligent thinking; but art’s realm of influence is the whole of conscious experience. According to Marcuse (1978), thinking fostered by artistic intelligence functions to break open dimensions of thought inaccessible to reason. It considers new possibilities that inspire a systematic discernment of alienating social forces, cultivates rebellious subjectivity, and creates the intense aesthetic experiences that Brookfield (2002) said a truly critical adult education would be concerned with.

Methods
This study involved a phenomenological investigation of six local artists in a series of three in-depth interviews. The artist participants included two women and four men whose paintings met my criteria for emancipatory works of art. There was one still life painter, Anthony Ulinski; one landscape painter, Gayle Stott Lowry; two figurative painters, Richard Garrison and Philip Levine; and two abstract painters, Jason Craighead and Gerry Lynch. Each chose to allow me to use their real names in this paper.

The interviews probed what art means to them. The first focused on the painter with discussion points including why they became artists, what it is like to be an artist, and what they strive for in their art. The second focused on their paintings, preparation and processes with discussion points including how they learned to paint, why they chose their genre, how they
practice painting, and what they think about before and while they are painting. The third was designed to go deeper into their personal philosophies and get to the heart of their passion and focused on how they would guide me to get to where they are as artists.

At the same time I was struggling to uncover the threads that would weave their individual accounts into some overarching patterns, I had occasion to give my sister a lesson in perspective drawing. She was an adult learner pursuing a second bachelor’s degree in interior design and was concerned about being able to meet the artistic requirements of the program. After she had produced a successful drawing, which her teacher called a breakthrough, I reflected on how I had approached the design of this learning experience.

My objective was to liberate and transform the learner, to help her to have a victory and gain confidence in herself and her ability to produce many drawings, and feel free to be successful in her program. I looked first to my own liberating experiences for guidance in designing hers. Many of my courses in perspective drawing left me confused, trying to reconcile the geometry of perspective with the intuitive sense of what looks right. I was most successful when given the logic of the task and then allowed to find my own way to resolution, rather than being required to do it a certain way. Through this awareness I felt confident about “entering the classroom” without a definite plan, ready to respond to the learner’s needs as they arose. I have used the same approach with larger classes and different topics and had good results.

I realized throughout this reflective process that I was finding many parallels with what the artists had told me. By using my process as an educator as the organizing structure for analyzing the artists’ stories I began to see connections among the artists’ processes.

**Findings**

Just as the liberation and transformation of the learner was the objective for my teaching, “keeping the painting alive” was the objective for the artists with their art. Painting is a constant interaction between painter and the painting. It is easy to overwork a painting and “kill it.” When they approach a painting they have intentions about what they want it to look like, but they do not visualize a finished piece. They want the freedom to change their minds as they go along. They may do preliminary drawings to explore their ideas, but they set those aside when they approach the canvas. Then they “get some paint on the canvas” to “cover up the white” and let the colors “bump up against each other,” giving them something to react to in order to “get a conversation going with the work.” Throughout the process they have to be open to “letting something happen” that could take the painting to a deeper level than what they could have planned, enabling them to connect with their viewers on emotional as well as intellectual levels and share with them, through the finished painting, the excitement they felt when they painted it.

I began to recognize the overarching themes, the kinds of thinking that make the artists’ process possible regardless of genre or style. “Knowing and Feeling” explores thinking behind the rebellious attitudes and the actions that create the conditions for emancipatory living and working. “Thinking beyond Reason” reveals the complexity of artistic thinking and how skillful feeling is a fundamental prerequisite. “Trusting the Process” provides insight into the process of art-making with particular emphasis on the necessity to release control.

**Knowing and Feeling**

The artists are all very aware of what they feel and how to use what they feel in their work. It is not unthinking, erratic emotion, but an analytical, honed ability to access understanding and awareness beyond the object world of reason. It is the intelligence of the
internal or subjective aspects of consciousness. They analyze, explore, and respond to what they feel and think and bring this whole-person consciousness to bear on everything they do. Being self-aware is knowing why they feel the way they do. Gayle, a landscape painter, knows that she is a realist, not an abstract thinker, and that she cannot make things up and paint them. She physically goes to a place to experience it firsthand before she paints it. Turbulence she has experienced in her life has given her a visual vocabulary to work with in her paintings – more choices, a bigger range, more depth, more layers and deeper feelings.

Anthony knows himself on the level of his preferences, of what makes him feel what he wants to feel. He desires to observe life, to have a quiet, low-impact existence and to celebrate beauty in what he sees. As a still life painter, he enjoys repetition and can look at the same object day after day and find new beauty in it each time. In contrast, if Gerry painted three apples once, she would leave them and go on to something else. As an abstract expressionist, she wants each new painting to be totally different from the previous one. Her whole process allows her to be responsive to the feeling of the moment, to be free to take new paths, explore new dimensions, and to be surprised.

When artists paint to say something, not just to sell the painting, they need to put themselves into it, they need to find their own voice and say something that means something to them. This is not a matter of skill level or technical ability, but a matter of honesty, an honest desire to capture or interpret a scene or idea. Jason arrived at a point in his career where it was painful to do commissions from the gallery where he was working rather than pursue his own work. The first five paintings he did after quitting his job to become a full-time painter meant more to him than anything he had done in years because “they were honest.” He wants an honest life, to be able to be honest about what he is doing or he feels he is not growing.

Thinking beyond Reason

Thinking “right brain,” as they called it, is about looking for possibilities, seizing them and going with them instead of having everything worked out in advance. It is not about solving things the way they did before. It is about going down a different path in order to reach a different conclusion. It is the idea of taking a leap and not knowing for sure if they have a solid place to land. That is where they said they need to be for anything to happen. It is only when they are in that position that they are going to do valuable creative work.

They also share a vision that goes beyond what is in front of them. That vision includes what they see beyond the surface image, such as color or shape as well as what they understand, what they feel, how they make sense of what is before them such as why is it there, where did it come from, why does it look like that. Anthony sees the world broken down into color fields and compositional forms. On his drive home after a day of painting, he does not see stop signs as a demand or some kind of restriction, but as blocks of red with some white on them.

It is a vision that seeks out and considers the meaning that is behind what they see and that involves a continuous examination, analysis, and reshaping of their world. Jason talks about this vision in terms of how his brain goes beyond what he sees with his eyes in order to understand it. He says this kind of thinking is non-linear. It is “abstract thinking” where “you can flow and go around it,” where you challenge assumptions rather than just follow them. It is the process of understanding the “logic” behind what he sees and feels that enables him to be in touch with it and relay it through his art. He describes it as going “beyond all this and look[ing] back at it and then pick[ing] it apart and then figur[ing] out where it all landed.”
T rusting the Process

The artists have to be open to “letting something happen,” to “releasing control” at the canvas – and in life. Richard said he can carry a painting to a deeper level by doing something to it that will lead him in a different direction. He needs to get into the “right brain” mode so the unhindered creative process can take place. Jason wants to let the paintings “do what they are going to do,” because then something is taking over. That way, he is just the “catalyst,” and that is the best he can ever be. He said “it is great to not know what is going to happen.” There were times when he wanted to know, when “ego” was involved. Now he sees that the painting is not about him, it is about painting, the activity of painting. Gayle tries to let go and do whatever occurs to her and not analyze it too much. If she can release control, the painting will take on a life of its own and she just goes with what needs to happen next.

Sometimes Gerry gets an idea for a whole piece that she wants to try, but she never knows what it will end up looking like until she actually makes it. Anthony has an image in mind of what he wants the painting to look like. He knows the object he wants to paint, as well as the feel, the look, and the colors; but it is not until he starts working that he hits on something and “things start to happen.” Philip starts with one object and then lets it evolve into other things. He works on the background and foreground at the same time and he may change it several times before he gets it the way he wants it in context with the rest of the painting.

Richard looks for parts in his paintings that he is really excited about, and builds out from there. He tries to pull everything else up to that level, but said that process cannot be forced. It just has to happen by applying “small nudges,” making small changes over the whole canvas. At some point the painting starts to take on a life of its own. He has to be willing at all times during the process to question the validity of what he is looking at, to see it as objectively as possible until he is satisfied with leaving it alone.

Discussion and Implications for Adult Education Practice

Throughout this study, connections between the artists and educators became apparent, giving me new ways of looking at myself, my teaching and my purpose. Talking with the artists, I discovered new contexts and language to understand familiar as well as emerging shared concepts in my teaching practice; and my experience as an educator gave the artists new perspectives on the potential impact of their work. The following discussion invites adult educators to reflect on their practice through the artist’s lens.

Knowing and Feeling – Authenticity

For the artists, feeling is an ability they use to access understanding and awareness beyond thinking, a skill they develop, an intelligence of the internal or subjective aspect of consciousness and it is what they use to measure of the success of their work. How does what you feel impact your teaching, how you teach as well as how you relate to your students? How does it affect your self-evaluation?

The artists know why they feel the way they do and how their feelings impact their art. Anthony wants to live a quiet, low-impact existence and finds beauty in repetition in his work as a still life painter; while abstract expressionist Gerry wants to be free to take new paths and explore new dimensions, and wants each painting to be totally different than the one she painted before. How does your whole being connect with your teaching? Is it important to you that it does?
Their paintings reflect their experiences, their deep struggles as well as victories. They find their own voices and paint what has meaning to them, capturing and interpreting what they see and feel. Is being honest about yourself important to you in regard to your interactions with students and colleagues? Why or why not? What are the conditions you have found that inhibit honest exchanges? In your “painting,” do the dynamic colors of your learner’s experiences require the participation of your authentic self? If so, why is your participation a necessary part of the wholeness of the learner’s learning experience?

Thinking beyond Reason – Continuous Critical Reflection

The artists share a vision that goes beyond the surface of things, that involves a continuous examination, analysis and reshaping of their world. When teaching, how do your experience and world view help you see beyond the surface of the words and actions going on in the classroom? How deeply do you want your learners to be engaged with the teaching? Do you think the deep engagement of learners means the same thing to you as the deep engagement of viewers means to an artist?

They are always open to possibilities, to going down different paths to reach different conclusions, ready to take a leap without being sure they have a solid place to land. In order to get the results you are looking for, how do you prepare to teach a class? Do you feel that you take risky leaps when engaging students and wonder why you do? Are you able to rationally plan for each and every dynamic that occurs in your classroom or do you feel that they move beyond the rational as they happen? Do you feel ready for those dynamics? What prepares you for those leaps?

The artists are always evolving, looking out from where they have been to see what else they can explore in a natural progression, where one thing emerges from another. How do you keep growing in your practice? How do you build on your teaching experiences so that your time in the classroom becomes more productive and meaningful? Are your new approaches to teaching the result of holistic growth that goes beyond the rational and affects your entire approach, making each teaching/learning experience a new creation?

Trusting the Process – Experimentation and Risk

Rather than adhere to a strict design, the artists “allow things to happen” as they paint, and rely on their past experiences, reflections, and intentions to guide them – their whole person. In this way their paintings take on a life of their own and reach a deeper level. How do you view control in your classroom? How much control over yourself do you feel you have, or want, when you are teaching? Do your reactions to students come from rationally carrying out the objectives of the course or do they come out of your whole being?

None of the artists visualize a finished piece. All of them have some idea to start with but know they have the freedom, when they start painting, to change their mind as they go along, to let the painting show them what it needs. Do you feel you need to rigidly adhere to covering certain topics? Or do you open yourself to the unplanned using design and preparation that encourage freedom and creativity? Do emancipatory teaching and learning require unplanned responses?

For these artists, their paintings evolve through a process of problem solving, of putting things in and leaving things out until the painting holds together as an organic whole. What types of thought processes guide your actions in the classroom? Does your process change shape and
form as the colors of your students’ experiences are revealed? Do these new shapes and forms change the outcomes in ways that go beyond rational course objectives?

**Conclusion**

My exposure to the lives of these artists has opened exciting new dimensions to my teaching and my life. Their words continually ring in my thought as I go about my daily activities, lifting me to the consideration of higher goals and greater possibilities. I set out to understand how art could be revolutionary and feel I am living out the answer.

With solid footing in reason, artists have been venturing out beyond reason for centuries, learning how to manage their feelings, allowing them their proper and critical role in holistic being, and enabling them to resolve complexity into elegant solutions. They reach beyond themselves for clearer vision and measure the truth of their work against the authenticity of the feelings they provoke. For them, the “balance” achieved in their art is just as valid and significant as the “balance” measured by the engineer. They are scientists of the soul, developing methods, honing their skills, crafting their visions in making meaning for the ages.

My next steps are to talk with “artist” adult educators about their teaching practices; and to go back to the artists to see what they learned from participation in this research. Although this study is intended to speak to all educators, those who want to liberate their students will hear it first. The example of the artists can enable educators to gain some understanding of how to stand before the classroom—as an artist stands before the canvas—and be empowered to feel, to create, and to liberate; to let their emancipated selves come out in their teaching so that their students can learn their own freedom.

**References**


http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/theses/available/etd-03222007-131147/


Abstract: I present the results of a qualitative study of twelve graduate international students’ struggle to adapt to new multicultural and academic environments. Results focus on how they dealt with diversity while struggling to succeed academically and how, although experiencing numerous disorienting dilemmas, students did not critically reflect on their meaning making processes.

Introduction

Knowledge of how international students make meaning of new cultural and academic experiences is important to adult learning educators as it may help them create safe learning environments where students can feel free to express divergent points of view in multicultural settings and thus facilitate transformative learning. As Mezirow asserts, feelings of disorientation are great opportunities for reflecting on unquestioned assimilated values and beliefs and thus become opportunities for transformative learning. New multicultural and academic environments are contexts in which feelings of disorientation occur when divergent points of view are shared. Having observed, over a three-year period, how graduate international students struggled to adjust to their new multicultural and academic environments, I perceived potential for transformative learning based on challenges they were experiencing. Study participants differed in age and country of origin, thus cultural background.

Conceptual Framework

Based on previous experiences and through socialization, Mezirow (1991) argues, adults construct a meaning making system that allows them to give meaning to new experiences and provides them with a compass to guide future action. An attempt by international students to adjust to new cultural and academic environments may result in a feeling of disorientation since their meaning making compass cannot guide their action in a new cultural context. International adult students in American institutions of higher education bring with them their own system of experience interpretation or guiding compass that, in most instances, diverges from that of the host country’s cultural context and academic setting. Divergence of frame of reference in new cultural and academic contexts and how this divergence is dealt with, I argue, is at the center of how successful the adaptation process of international students is in an American university, their academic success, and offers great opportunities for transformative learning to occur.

While there are numerous studies related to American students’ experiences abroad, the number of studies related to international students’ experiences in American universities is sparse. Lysgaard’s “U-Curve” and Zajonc’s “Stranger” hypotheses (as cited in Klonenberg and Hull, 1979) both look at adjustment processes of international students, from an adaptability perspective to foreign environments in the former and social adjustment in the latter. U-Curve poses that an attempt by international students to adapt to a foreign environment triggers a feeling of adjustment at the beginning of their stay, followed by a period of difficulty and a return to a feeling of being adjusted to the new environment after a period of time. Under Zajonc’s “stranger” hypothesis, in a new cultural environment, one need to follow the host culture’s rules and this may produce a feeling of discomfort. Both hypotheses supported my assumption that in a new multicultural environment international students would experience
disorienting dilemmas and thus opportunities for reflection on unquestioned assimilated values and beliefs.

Premised on Bee’s definition of “stage” in developmental theories as an unchanging progression of experiences or happenings in one’s lifespan and each stage being a complete component of a whole (1992); study participants’ process of adaptation to new cultural and academic environments was assumed to be developmental. This assumption was based on the premise that processes of adaptation to new cultural and academic environments and of making meaning of new experiences with a divergent cultural frame of reference had potential to move individuals into more accepting and inclusive stages. Laubscher (1994) recognizes adjustment to a new culture as a developmental process by stating that Bennett’s Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) could explain an individual’s adaptability stages to a new culture. In the DMIS an individual moves from an ethnocentric stage to an ethnorelativism. Laubscher perceives studying abroad as a first step for moving from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. In order to move from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism an individual must revise his/her frame of reference to make it more inclusive of new cultural concepts. This process of making meaning of new experiences, with a divergent cultural frame of reference, I assumed had potential to move international students into more accepting and inclusive stages, a higher level of knowledge and maturity, and thus potential for transformative learning.

Methodology

For a three year period I kept a journal of my personal observation of international students’ efforts to adjust to a new multicultural environment. I also developed a mentorship program where American students worked with international students for a semester and maintained a weekly journal. These collected data led to the study’s design. Study’s participants were selected based on age (21 years or older), full time international student status, English as second or third language, socialization process divergent from that of their American counterparts, and different countries of origin. These characteristics ensured that, as adults, they would be capable of critically reflecting on their meaning making processes.

Two in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted. Questions for the first interview were designed to generate data that would allow me to develop follow up questions for the second interview. Thus, while the first interview questions were the same for all participants the majority of second interview questions were unique to each participant. I conducted and transcribed all interviews. Data collected from the in-depth interview process and my deep affective involvement with the study – based on my personal involvement with nine of the twelve participants - led me to develop a rich detailed portrait of each participant. Portraiture allowed me to give each participant a voice to express their experiences and their visions. Portraits, Lawrence-Lightfoot (as cited in Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997) asserts “Seek to record and interpret the perspectives and experience of the people they are studying, documenting their voices and their visions” (p. xv).

Findings and Discussion

The study’s multicultural context was a significant part of its conceptual framework; I perceived culture to be at the core of an expected transformative learning process in participants. I anticipated that difficulty in making meaning of new experiences in a culturally diverse and divergent host context would result in critical reflection of that meaning making process and thus the cultural context that shaped it. Each participant experienced disorienting dilemmas, some
more than others, and reacted to them with feelings of fear and/or anger, but none critically assessed their assumptions.

Challenges perceived by participants, and those shared with me during the interviewing process, were categorized as being cultural, academic, and social in nature. These challenges were identified as being disoriented dilemmas. Mezirow (1991) states that in order to move from merely perceiving an experience to validating it, this experience must be reflected upon by the individual, he further states that language is what makes dialogue possible. That it is through dialogue that we determine if an idea is true or valid. These two concepts were of great importance in this study because for eleven of the twelve participants, English was a second or third language and thus dialogue to validate truthfulness of new learning experiences occurred in a language other than the one in which they had been socialized. Six of the twelve participants expressed difficulty understanding or expressing themselves in English, hence dialogue in classroom settings or with fellow students who did not share their language was not possible. The dialogue required for transformative learning to occur seldom took place.

Need for rational discourse in order for transformative learning to take place was a contextual element in this study; participants view of power held by educators prevented rational discourse, even if educators would have promoted it. One participant from Taiwan stated that in Taiwan “teachers are powerful,” a Japanese participant stated that in Japan professors had “highest position,” and a participant from China stated that in China the professor “dominates the class.” This relationship of power may have hindered rational discourse for the majority of study’s participants.

From a developmental perspective Mezirow (1991) states that transformation of meaning perspectives is irreversible, understanding fully the transformation is very hard, and that it is not uncommon for individuals to draw back before the transformation process is completed. Data collected for this study led me to believe participants drew back when they perceived their values and beliefs were challenged. This action was not an unwillingness to revise their frames of reference but rather a result of knowing that they were returning to a cultural context where their future actions could not be guided by a new meaning making process.

By finding his cultural context to be lacking - considering its homogeneity a fault - one of the Japanese participants experienced a degree of meaning making expansion. A participant from Korea expressed the value of diversity and by so doing, I believe, expanded a sociolinguistic meaning scheme. Two participants (from Taiwan and Ecuador), who by experiencing discrimination learned the meaning of discrimination, also expanded to some degree their meaning making processes. None of these participants could have allowed their expanded meaning making processes to guide their actions in their own cultural context.

While critical reflection of meaning making processes was not perceived during participants’ stay in the United States or prior to their return to their acculturation environment, it may have occurred once they were in their cultural milieu. Academic pressure while studying in the United States may not have allowed participants to critically reflect on their frames of reference. It must be noted also that participants had chosen to study in the United States and thus were “voluntary” immigrants; they had a choice of returning to their respective countries or staying in the United States for one more year, this choice may have impeded critical reflection on their frames of reference. Having a choice to return to their countries or staying in the United States may have made academic success their priority. A sample of “non-voluntary” immigrants, who do not have a choice of returning to their countries or staying in the United States, may be more inclined to critically reflect on their frames of reference. If, as Taylor (1998) states, less
emphasis were to be given to the role critical reflection plays in transformative learning, then perhaps it could be stated that some of this study’s participants did experience a degree of transformative learning.

Data collected for this study support Taylor’s (1998) call for a higher degree of recognition of the role context plays in transformation of meaning making processes. This study participants’ life histories provided them with a framework for interpretation of new experiences in a thoroughly different cultural context from that in which their interpretative frameworks had been developed. Participants’ frameworks for meaning making of new experiences were totally dependent on context – for source of interpretation as well as in which new experiences occurred.

The six participants who stated awareness of faultiness in their cultural life histories acknowledged that upon their return to their cultural context they would abide by the context’s cultural norms. These participants acknowledged faults in their meaning making processes as a result of reflection. In a more inclusive transformative learning theory context, acknowledging these faults in the context that shaped their perceptions of new experiences would have allowed me to assert that they experienced a degree of transformative learning. Lack of rational discourse, not following set steps of transformative learning, and not achieving a more inclusive frame of reference that was going to guide their future action upon return to their acculturation environment, did not allow me to make that assertion.

**References**


The Impact of Contemplative Practices on Transformative Learning

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Abstract. This paper explores an application of transformative learning and presents an example of on-going research to evaluate the impact of specific practices that may lead to transformative learning among university students.

Overview

Many university students report their personal lives have little relationship to their learning process. Their personal engagement with what they learn is limited. They may be encouraged to develop problem-solving skills and critical thinking skills at university, but many survive simply by reiterating information.

Transformative learning is the process by which we question taken for granted frames of references (habits of mind or mindsets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating and open, so that our frames of reference may more accurately reflect our situation and guide us to action for the common good. Transformative learning is about awakening learners and getting them engaged. This paper explores an application of transformative learning and presents an example of on-going research to evaluate the impact of specific practices that may lead to transformative learning.

What Is Transformative Learning?

Transformative learning relates to education of the whole person and includes the development of insight as much as knowledge. It is based on personal experience, but it can draw inspiration and guidance from many quarters, including ancient wisdom traditions, philosophy, social sciences and the arts. Mezirow (1991) describes cognitive and behavioral changes that characterize transformative learning:

- When one experiences an enhanced level of awareness of the context of one’s beliefs and feelings
- When one can critique one’s own assumptions and particular premises
- When one performs an assessment of alternative perspectives
- When one makes a decision to negate an old perspective in favour of a new one or when one makes synthesis of old and new
- When one takes action based on new perspective
- When one cultivates a desire to fit the new perspective into the broader context of one’s life

Taken together, these characteristics enable students to feel fully engaged and highly motivated to learn. Mezirow’s work began over two decades ago and many related descriptions of transformative learning now encircle Mezirow’s primary characteristics:

- Transforming our epistemologies, liberating ourselves from that in which we are embedded, this is the most powerful way I know to conceptualize the growth of the mind. (Kegan, 2002)
- Experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and action…a shift of consciousness. (O’Sullivan, 1999)

There are multiple definitions of transformative learning – what is common to all is the theme of experienced-based learning. Yet transformational learning moves beyond John Dewey’s notions...
of learning through doing and discovery. Transformative learning gives students inspiration and confidence to explore their individuality and their connectedness to others and the world. It can bring new meaning to virtually any subject area. The intended outcome of transformational learning is to clarify the broader meaning and purpose of what students are learning. For some it helps overcome difficulties in sustaining authenticity and a sense of personal identity. And for others “the language of spirit, of spirituality, of spiritual growth, which provokes dead silence and frowns in many contexts, captures the essence” of the outcome (Chickering, 2002).

Research Objectives
With the support of an Instructional Development Grant from Saint Mary’s University, the author set out to explore methods that would:

- enhance reflective awareness and the capacity to include the spiritual dimension in multiple areas of study;
- cultivate recognition of interdependence in the natural and social world; and
- develop ethical and moral sensibility.

Further, it became important to develop ways to measure the impact of reflective and contemplative practice on transformative learning.

What is meant above by the term “spiritual dimension” is captured in the quote:

Being religious connotes belonging to and practicing a religious tradition. Being spiritual suggests a personal commitment to a process of inner development that engages us in our totality. Religion, of course, is one way many people are spiritual. Often, when authentic faith embodies an individual’s spirituality the religious and spiritual will coincide. Still, not every religious person is spiritual (although they ought to be) and not every spiritual person is religious. Spirituality is a way of life that affects and includes every moment of existence. It is at once a contemplative attitude, a disposition to a life of depth, and the search for ultimate meaning, direction, and belonging. The spiritual person is committed to growth as an essential ongoing life goal. To be spiritual requires us to stand on our own two feet while being nurtured and supported by our tradition, if we are fortunate enough to have one. (Teasdale, 1999)

Transformative Learning across Institutions of Higher Education
The early part of this research led to participation in a conference at Amherst College, Massachusetts, where the first Survey of Transformative and Spiritual Dimensions of Higher Education (2003) was presented. The survey was aimed at documenting programs in colleges and universities that include transformative and/or spiritual elements. It was prepared for the Fetzer Institute (www.fetzer.org) by a team of researchers working with the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society (www.comtemplativemind.org), based in Northampton, Massachusetts. One hundred and seventeen respondents (including two from outside North America) reported using some form of transformative and spiritual elements either in their classrooms or throughout their academic programs. “…[While] there is great interest in bringing transformative/spiritual elements into higher education, this movement still exists primarily among individual faculty within classrooms rather than as a department or institutional strategy” (Zajonc, 2003).

This survey made no special attempt to engage universities with explicit religious affiliations. The focus of the Survey questionnaire and interviews was on transformative
learning rather than religious frameworks per se. Respondents came from all geographic regions, public and private institutions, and a small number with explicit religious affiliation. It did not include the growing number of professional development and continuing education programs aimed at transformative learning, but offered outside degree granting undergraduate and graduate university programs.

According to the survey, the three most commonly used teaching methodologies for transformative learning are collaborative learning, experiential pedagogy and contemplative practices. With respect to evaluation, faculty described student projects, oral presentations, and journaling as the primary methods. Based on survey responses, the study concluded “that it is important to think of these transformative and spiritual elements as the foundation of education rather than as an ‘add on.’”

**Contemplative Practice and Transformative Learning**

The author began exploring pedagogical methods to cultivate transformative learning for students in his classes in 2000. Although the subject was Buddhism, a ready-made subject to apply contemplative practices, the intention was to explore methods that are transportable to virtually any subject area. The value of these methods in other subject areas was confirmed to some degree by faculty at the Amherst conference and documented in the Survey of Transformative and Spiritual Dimensions of Higher Education (2003). In this study, the term “contemplative practice” is used as an umbrella term for a variety of reflective practices that were intended to cultivate or enhance transformative learning. Over six terms, approximately 225 students were introduced to methods including formless meditation practice, contemplation with form, personal journals, journal reading in small groups, active listening and inquiry techniques, and facilitated class discussions.

**Formless Meditation**

An increasingly common approach to transformative learning begins with some form of basic meditation in class (Zajonc, 2003). Meditation in this context is not particularly a religious practice. Meditation is training one’s attention to be focused on the present and open. It is a complement to discursive analysis, an unbiased investigation of experience -- qualities, images, feelings, thoughts -- without rejecting, grasping or creating a storyline. The intention is be a curious, but unbiased observer, without internal judgment. The purpose is to recognize the field in which experience arises, clear space, and equally important, to recognize and become familiar with how mind functions. Although basic instruction was given a few times in class and applied to short meditation periods (five minutes), students were encouraged to try the practice on their own, on a daily basis, for fifteen minutes.

In this meditation practice students inevitably experienced thoughts, feelings, etc., that form the filter of ordinary consciousness. They noticed the memories, habitual patterns, assumptions, hopes and fears that color experience. However, all this was unprovoked, there was no intended form or object to meditate on. The “practice” is merely to notice whatever arises in consciousness and return attention to the breath, which is always present and always changing. Exactly what one notices in meditation practice, and the particular insights that may arise during and after meditation practice, are not predictable and are unique to every individual. Amongst those who practiced regularly during the term, learners in this class commonly reported at least some of the cognitive and behavioral changes associated with transformative learning.
Contemplation with Form

In general, the benefits of meditation are becoming well known: stress reduction, calmness, perspective, insight. (Stein, 2003) Yet the motivation and discipline to practice meditation regularly are hard to come by for many students. For some, contemplation with form, with specific content to focus attention, is more engaging than formless meditation.

Contemplation with form has been a favored practice for great thinkers in all cultures and throughout history. Contemplation includes an aspect of openness and receptivity rather than structured analysis. Sometimes the experience of insight from contemplation is likened to a light bulb going, an “ah ha” experience, or the “eureka experience.”

Every scientific discovery from Galileo to Einstein can trace its origin to the eureka experience in which a phenomenon becomes transparent to the ideal, and an idea is seen. From this exhilarating moment, the scientist works to translate his or her insight into words and symbols. Arthur Zajonc, Catching the Light, the Entwined History of Light and Mind

While meditation has no “object” and is open, contemplation can focus on a particular thought or object. In his physics class at Amherst College, Massachusetts Arthur Zajonc makes reference to the “eureka experience.” His students are encouraged to contemplate light as a wave and light as a quantum. Wherever there is complexity or depth of meaning, contemplation takes the student past information and dogmatic acceptance to a level of personal engagement.

Here are simple instructions used when instructing students in a contemplative exercise:

1. Calm the mind by resting in the breathing.
2. When you feel ready, bring up a certain thought or intention in the form of words. (The content is predetermined as a weekly assignment. For example, what is compassion?)
3. In order to help rouse the heartfelt experience of their meaning, think about the words. Use these words as the object of meditation, continually returning to them as distractions arise. Do this for at least five minutes.
4. Pay close attention, but not just to your mental chatter. Let your attention include what is happening in your whole being, including your body.
5. As the meaning of the words begins to penetrate, let the words drop away, and rest in that meaning. Become familiar with that meaning as it penetrates.
6. Write in your journal what comes to you from this experience.

Journals

Students are encouraged to make short journal entries (a page or less) each time they try contemplation with form. They are encouraged to include questions, paradoxes, or images – whatever comes from their own experience. Although the journals are handed in as part of class participation, they are not graded. The point here is to train the mind to greater observation in the present moment, encourage inquiry, and allow genuine insights to emerge, rather than fall back on habitual patterns of response. Grading would reinforce student concerns with getting the “right” answer, when the exercise is really more concerned with articulating authenticity, inquiry, and insight. The process of journal writing is a discipline in itself. As part of this project additional research is being done on a practice formally called focusing that has been used by writers, therapists, and other professionals exploring authenticity in communication.
Journal Reading in Small Groups

In class, students read their journals to each other in groups of 4 or 6. In most instances, the discussion that ensues within the small group has been left completely open. However, we have also experimented with more structured approaches, including active listening and inquiry techniques. In both cases, short periods seemed more beneficial than longer periods because the students wanted to move into free form discussion.

Active listening requires the students to pair off. The student listening to a journal reading then paraphrases what he or she has just heard. Both the reader and the listener often find it instructive to discover how much was retained and understood, and how much projection and “filling in” can go on. The students then trade roles so that each has the experience of reading, listening, and paraphrasing.

Inquiry techniques require the listener to become more aware of their assumptions and projections as they listen. They then confirm their understanding of the reader’s work only through questions about the content and its meaning. This technique tends to ensure depth of understanding, however it is a more difficult discipline than simply paraphrasing.

Facilitated Class Discussions

After the small groups have finished, a spokesperson in each group summarizes their responses to the contemplation so that the whole class can benefit from the diversity and/or common themes discovered. The instructor captures highlights of these verbal summaries on the whiteboard and then leads a discussion using the words and insights of the students. The instructor encourages the students to explore their own language further by inquiry.

The purpose of facilitated class discussion is to engage the fresh language contributed by the students to explore the meaning and implications of the subject matter. This approach tends to engage students readily, since their own contributions are being respected, shared, explored, and put in the context of the learning objectives.

Evaluating the Impact of Contemplative Practices

Evaluating the impact of these contemplative practices on learning is a work in progress. Informal indications that students were engaged in transformative learning appear in the comments field of the university course evaluation forms over six terms. Yet comments such as, “This was the first time I had to think since I started university!” and “This course has changed my life” are inspiring for the instructor, but don’t actually demonstrate Mezirow’s characteristics of transformative learning. Evaluation has also been attempted through a questionnaire aimed at obtaining student perspectives on the various pedagogical features of the course: assigned readings, meditation practice, journal writing, small group journal reading in class, summaries and discussion of small group work in class, lecture by the instructor, regular class discussion during and after lecture, term paper, e-mail contact with instructor, and personal meetings or phone calls with the instructor.

The questions asked were: What helped you learn the most? What were the greatest challenges? and What did you enjoy the most? More rigorously, with the help of two researchers who are course graduates, we are analyzing a sample of the journals submitted by students over several of the terms that these contemplative practices were introduced. The question that intrigues us is, what affects do contemplative practices have on transformative learning? Each journal is scored on Likert scales for some of the characteristics associated with transformative learning:
1. The student explored implications of the course material, as opposed to simply reiterating information presented in class or in texts.
2. The student explored their own values, belief, or theories.
3. The student recognized the interdependence of causes and conditions, as opposed to reasoning only from proximate cause.

Since students wrote 10 or 11 journals per term, we are looking for trends over time. From the earliest journals to the later journals, is there an increase in these characteristics of transformative learning? To improve reliability the researchers score the journals independently. Only if their scores are the same or close do we consider this method reliable enough to look for trends that would indicate an increase or not in characteristics of transformative learning. What would be more reliable ways to trace a transformative journey through contemplation and personal journals?

Preliminary Indications
While it is too early to draw any conclusions, the questionnaires indicate that the small group readings of the contemplations and facilitated discussions appear to be what helped students learn the most, followed by the readings and the lectures. A significant minority chose meditation and the individual contemplation exercise itself as what helped them learn the most. Preliminary review of the journals indicates that a clear majority of the students increasingly show characteristics associated with transformative learning as they move through the term. If our measures are reliable, then it would seem the next step would be to try contemplative practices in other subject areas and with other instructors. Ultimately, we would like to trace the impact of learning through self-awareness on transformative learning in all subject areas.

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A Crucible for Transformation: The Alchemy of Student-Centered Education for Adults at Mid-life

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Abstract: This paper draws on a research study on adult development and transformative learning through student-centered doctoral study, and on Kegan’s concept of holding environments that support developmental change, to present a model for transformative graduate education for adult learners at mid-life.

Introduction

Countless times during my twenty plus years of experience as a faculty member in student-centered low-residency degree programs for adult learners, I have heard students talk of how they were transformed by the experience. Their testimonials at graduations, in which each student gets to address the audience, so often include impassioned speeches about how Goddard or Fielding, as the case may be, “changed my life.” I have often wondered and speculated on the question: “What is it about such programs that catalyzes such transformations?”

This paper begins to answer that question by bringing together insights gleaned from three sources: the initial findings of a research project on adult development and transformative learning through student-centered graduate education, my experience and practice in progressive education programs for adults at Fielding Graduate University and at Goddard College, and the broad literature on transformative education. From these sources, I distill a set of principles and practices for a model of transformative graduate education for adult learners: a crucible for transformation.

This crucible serves as a container that holds learners in a safe space and provides a boundary for their learning experience; that turns up the heat and the fire, providing various forms of contradiction and disorientation that “unfreezes” people and melts their rigid frames of reference and ways of knowing, opening them to the possibility of change; adds new ingredients to the mix in the form of new paradigms, perspectives and ways of learning; and provides continuing support as learners “cool down” to solidify a new sense of self as scholar-practitioners, re-integrate themselves into their work, community, and family contexts.

The developmental challenges of mid-life (from cognitive-structural, Jungian, and Freirian perspectives) provide a way of understanding the possibilities and paths for transformation that this crucible can catalyze and support. From the cognitive-structural perspective, this includes possible movement, in Kegan’s (1994) terms, from the 3rd (interpersonal) to the 4th (institutional), to the 5th (inter-institutional) orders of consciousness; from the Jungian perspective (Dirkx 2000; Hollis 1993), greater individuation and wholeness as we integrate our shadow side; and from a Freirian perspective (Freire 1970), a confrontation with the limit-situations that block our potential of becoming more fully human, leading to the possibility of the development of a more critical consciousness.

Recent research on Fielding University doctoral graduates provides evidence of adult development and transformative learning. Schapiro, Mclintock and Stevens-Long (2005a) explored the relationship between adult development and student-centered doctoral education. Findings indicated a wide array of changes in regard to students’ cognitive, personal (ego and emotional) and behavioral development. In these changes are evidence of various kinds of transformative learning, including the cognitive rational approach to changes in meaning.
perspectives; the depth psychology approach to Jungian individuation; the structural developmental approach to epistemological change through the life-span; and the social emancipatory approach to education for critical consciousness and social change.

In a subsequent paper (Schapiro et al. 2005b), the data were 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. The key influencing factors were analyzed in regard to each of four facets of an educational experience: curriculum content and structure; learning process; interpersonal relationships; and organizational structure and process.

The model presented here in this paper uses Kegan’s (2006, 1994) concept of cultures of embeddedness and the “confirming, contradicting, and continuing functions” of holding environments that support growth, development, and transformation; adds a fourth function – “creation”, which I argue must follow contradiction if change is to occur; and draws on these four functions to provide a framework for the transformative education process.

**Confirming Environment**

A holding environment that provides support and affirmation, a platform from which learners can leap into the unknown, and a safety net that they can catch them if they fall, are some of the elements provided by a confirming environment.

Feeling known, heard, and respected by a caring and attentive faculty mentor is an invaluable element in a confirming environment for adult learners, just as it is for an infant and her caretaker or a third grader and his teacher. Within the safety and affirmation of such a relationship, students can open themselves to challenge and vulnerability, knowing that they have that support to fall back on. If that relationship is to encourage transformation, and not simply an affirmation of the status quo, it must also be characterized by authenticity and mutuality, as we call forth the authentic and growing self of the student. As bell hooks has said, “empowerment can not happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging others to do so” (hooks 1994, p. 21).

While supportive relationships with faculty are important, it is also crucial to provide opportunities for students to create close bonds and connections with one another, so that the learning experience is not just a transaction between faculty and student but a more circular transaction among a group, in which everyone is learning from and with everyone else.

Critical reflection on our selves and the contexts in which we embedded can be deepened and facilitated by taking time away from our regular lives. This sort of distance from our day to day responsibilities and relationships is one of the functions provided by residential retreats as part of the adult learning experience. (Fleming 1998) If we do not provide such opportunities, then adult learners immersed in busy work and family lives, treat their adult learning experiences as another consumer event where they are shopping and getting something and not engaging with their full selves and do not detach enough from their regular life settings in order to get more perspective on them. To immerse ourselves instead in a new community of support provides an opportunity for distance, reflection and growth.

**A Contradicting Environment**

Affirmation without challenge can be an empty form of support. We grow in response to challenge and contradiction, which can come both from within and without, from parts of ourselves seeking expression and fulfillment, and from the demands of our environment. While
we confront many challenges and disorienting dilemmas through the natural course of living, a transformative educational environment can both hasten and heighten these contradictions and dilemmas, leading us, in concert with a confirming environment, into the sort of disequilibrium that can lead to change.

The Challenges of Self-Directed Learning (sdl)

Asking students to take responsibility for articulating what they want to learn and how they want to learn it can be a challenging and disorienting experience for those who are used to being passive learners in a traditional educational environment. In terms of Kegan’s developmental model, as described above, the demands of sdl can call for and catalyze movement to the self-authoring mind of his 4th order of consciousness. As students co-construct their own learning relationships and learning environments, they also experience themselves not as objects of someone else’s educational or institutional agenda, but as agents and subjects, as co-constructors of their of their own education, their own social reality, and their own lives.

The Paradigm Busting Curriculum of Areas such as Systems Theory, Epistemology, Social Constructionism, Human Development Theory, and Critical Theory

While various fields of study will have their own particular content, asking students to grapple with concepts, paradigms and epistemologies which challenge their current ways of knowing and of conceptualizing themselves and their world is a key element in creating the sorts of contradictions and disequilibrium that can lead to transformation. For instance, the study of epistemology helps students to question how we know what we know; critical theory can lead to the capacity for ideology critique and the ability to critique our current forms of political and economic life; systems theory and social constructionism challenge our sense of how we understand our selves and our social context. While Kegan suggests that the challenges of post-modern thinking may be beyond the capacity of many adult students to fully comprehend, for those already at the self-authoring mind of the 4th order, these may be just the sort of challenge and stimulus needed to begin to move toward the self-transforming mind of the 5th order.

The Diverse and Challenging Viewpoints Expressed in Discussion and Dialogue

By engaging in reading, thinking and writing by ourselves, in isolation, we can come to new insights and understandings, and perhaps even transform our points of view, but often it is testing our ideas our in conversation with others, hearing our ideas challenged, and considering and learning from others’ perspectives, that we engage in the sort of reflective discourse which Mezirow, for one, sees as a key element in the transformative learning process and that Freire sees as central to the dialogical and collective construction of knowledge. It is through such dialogue that learners can also engage in what Belenky and Stanton (2000) have described as the “connected knowing” through which learners can transform by trying to empathize with and understand the views of others. (Cranton 2006). This is a different transformative process, and one which women may be more inclined to experience, than “separate knowing”, through which we engage in critical analysis and debate. And if the learning community includes people of diverse racial, ethnic or other identities of difference, other opportunities for contradiction and potential transformation arise in what Daloz (2000) calls the “constructive engagement with otherness.”
A Creating Environment

A contradicting environment can lead to disequilibrium and disorienting dilemmas, but unless people are able to discover or articulate new ways of knowing, doing, and being, they can often resolve their discomfort by retreating to their prior state of equilibrium. If they are to move ahead and not backwards, they need a “creating environment”, that can be provided by:

Opportunities for Ongoing Reflection and Meaning Making

If students are asked to continually reflect on their experiences – both past and present; to examine their own process, to make meaning of their experience and to articulate their learning, they can construct new knowledge and change their habits of mind and habits of being. This is the constructed knowing that Belenky et al describe in *Women’s Ways of Knowing*. As Dewey said many years ago, we do not learn by experience, we learn from experience as we reflect on it and reconstruct it. In the same sense, learners need an opportunity to go through all of the phases of Kolb’s learning cycle: including not only the abstract conceptualization and of the traditional academy, but also the experimentation and action of more active learning. Such reflection and meaning-making can be supported by asking students to articulate their learnings from each of their learning experiences and courses of study, and to periodically reflect on and make meaning of their graduate learning experience as a whole.

Learning Through Praxis - Engagement, Action and Reflection on Real-life Problems

If learning can begin with a quest to understand and address issues and problems that we are facing in our own personal, family, organizational or community lives, then it will naturally be relevant and meaningful to the learner. And if the learning process can involve not just reading, thinking and writing, but also some form of doing – some action to address those issues, followed by reflection on that action - then the learner will be changed in the process. This is what Freire meant by praxis – the cycle of reflection, action, and reflection. We reach new insights and understandings – we transform our selves – as we try to transform the world.

Taking a Stand and Finding one’s Voice

By asking students to not only summarize and critique others’ work, but also state their own position on the controversial issues in a field, and to go on to construct their own new knowledge and to articulate that knowledge, we can help students to find their own authentic scholarly voices. This process is most clear in the writing of the dissertation, In this respect, academic study at the graduate and particularly the PhD level, can be a naturally transformative process. As students become PhDs, one of the transitions they experience is to move from being consumers of knowledge to becoming producers and constructors of knowledge. A student-centered learning process, like that in Fielding, is uniquely well suited to facilitate such an outcome. From the beginning of that experience, learners gradually experience a shift from seeing knowledge as something that exists outside of themselves and that faculty will impart to them, to seeing it as something that they too have the authority to construct for themselves; from thinking of themselves as passive recipients of others’ learning, to thinking of themselves as active agents in their learning.

Learning that Includes the Whole Person

When we give students the opportunity to bring all of themselves to the learning process,
and to engage their hearts and bodies, as well as their minds, we open the door to more routes to transformation. We also increase the likelihood that the transformations that do occur will be integrated and lasting. We are whole people, and change in one dimension of our being must eventually involve changes in those other dimensions as well. As Cranton has explained (1994, 2006), using the Meyers-Briggs typology, learners entry point to experience may depend on how they experience the world; for some, change begins with reflection, for others with experience, and for others with intuition. And as Kasl and Yorks (2006) argue, when we include expressive ways of knowing, “those ways of knowing that engage a learner’s imaginal and intuitive processes,” in the learning experience, we open the door to other routes to transformation.

A Continuing Environment

Change and transformation that come about through extraordinary learning and life experiences often do not last if we cannot integrate our new habits of mind and being into our “real lives.” Many of us have experienced the awakening and new sense of self and possibilities in various learning and growth retreats, travel in other cultures, or through psychotherapy, only to slide back into our old ways when our changing self threatens the status quo in our various relationships and contexts. If these changes and transformations are to last, we need somewhere in our lives a holding environment that is there for us through our change process, and does not need to change along with us but can provide us some stability and support. That “continuing” environment can be provided in graduate adult education through such means as:

Ongoing Relationships with Mentors and Peers, Both During the Program and After.

Having at least one close connection with a faculty mentor, from the beginning of the program to the end, can provide some of the support that students need. When such a relationship transcends the time limits of a particular course or learning experience, students have someone they can use as a sounding board to hear their developing thinking, a shoulder to cry on or lean on, and a platform to jump off from. It is important that such relationships do not always involve evaluation and grading, but provide a context from which it is safe to venture out and make mistakes, and then come back to and lick one’s wounds or celebrate one’s successes. When such bonds are established during the academic experience, they can continue afterward as needed, as the connection established is between two people, not simply between a teacher and a student. Similarly, when students can connect with one another as fellow travelers on their journey, and not as competitors for a scarce resource of high grades, continuing supportive relationships become possible.

The Continuing Integration of Life and Learning

When we base the academic learning experience on students life experience, and when their own questions drive the learning process, then students develop their capacity to be lifelong learners, and the sharp distinction between learning in school and learning our of school disappears. The transition to post graduate life is thus much less jarring. In some respects, the only difference is that one is no longer paying tuition or earning academic credit, but the scholar practitioner’s integrated quest for knowledge can continue unabated.

The Inclusion of Alumni in an Ongoing Community of Learners, Both in Person and On-line

When alumni can continue to feel a part of a community of learners, they never need to feel that they have left that nurturing and challenging context in which they were transformed.
At Fielding, for instance, alumni are invited to attend the bi-annual conference-like gatherings of students and faculty called national sessions, both attending workshops and seminars, and leading them. Continued access to the intra-net – the internal Fielding electronic environment - which includes various discussion groups and forums, as well as use of the electronic library databases, provides other means through which students can stay connected. Since these national sessions and electronic networks were the primary means of being connected while enrolled, the transition to post-graduate status once again does not have to be so severe.

Provision of all the components of the confirming, contradicting, creating, and continuing environments described above does not guarantee that students will experience transformation. That is up to them. Transformative learning is not something we do to other people, it is something that people do for themselves. All that we can do is to provide the opportunity and the stimulus, the container and the heat. If all of the ingredients are there, if the learner is ready to change and engages the process with his or her full self, then the alchemy of transformation will take care of the rest.

References
A Teacher’s Transformation: Understanding and Learning from Ethnically Diverse Student Teachers
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Abstract: This “good” classroom teacher became disconcerted upon reviewing findings of a co-authored study in which we interviewed ethnically diverse student teachers about how they constructed their teaching identities. My journey of perspective transformation is explored relative to the ways I was unknowingly neglecting the unique needs of this population. Implications for teaching ethnically diverse students complete this journey.

In the beginning . . .

How do ethnically diverse student teachers create their academic teaching identities? This was the research question which grounded our qualitative research study (Shaw & Upham, 2006). Having experienced a variety of classroom interactions with several ethnically diverse students in our predominantly white, middle-class area and then conversing with them during their student teaching placements, we became aware that this population of students had unique needs that were not always being met, either in our classrooms or in the classrooms in which they were teaching.

Our study sample was small (n = 4), but we were fortunate in garnering the participation of four women from ethnically diverse backgrounds: Lucia from South America, Sophia from southern Europe, Rama from India, and Pyia from Laos. All women were non-traditional students and were mothers with at least one child. Two of the participants, Lucia and Sophia, already held degrees in disciplines other than education. Their ages ranged from mid-twenties to early forties.

Data collection consisted of a series of individual face-to-face interviews which were audio-taped and subsequently transcribed. Each participant was given a copy of her respective transcript to check for accuracy. Only one participant, Sophia, made substantial changes to her transcript because she felt it did not accurately capture her words. Although data collection has been completed, to date the study has not been published. However, the data yielded some significant findings about the needs of this particular group of ethnically diverse student teachers and which are relevant to my own perspective transformation. While we do not feel the findings may be generalized to large groups of similar student teachers, our findings have been supported by the research of Kauchak and Burbank (2003), the study which provided a general model for our own research.

What we learned . . .

All four of the study participants felt, in some way, that their ethnic differences, including physical appearance, traditional dress, non-verbal behaviors, and English language skills may have been barriers to them in one form or another in their student teaching. For example, Pyia explained that many teachers in the school in which she was placed believed she was the new English as a Second Language (ESL) aide. It was only after student teaching for a month in her placement that her colleagues came to realize Pyia was finishing her bachelor’s degree in education and that she was actually a student teacher! As another example, Rama wore the traditional headscarf of her culture during her student teaching. After encountering questions
(and “questioning looks”), she explained the reason she still chooses to wear her headscarf. Subsequently, Rama felt her attire was no longer an issue for her students and her colleagues. The most difficult challenges relative to English speaking skills and non-verbal behavior commonly accepted in their native countries were faced by Lucia and Sophia. For example, Lucia has a good command of English; however, she speaks rapidly and with a pronounced accent. Further, she would often touch students on their shoulders or stand close to them. She felt she was perceived as “invading their personal spaces.”

Lucia was also very diligent about respect and discipline in the classroom, believing that students should behave as they are expected to do in her native country. Her rigor about discipline once resulted in a heated discussion with the school administrator who had been confronted by an angry parent about Lucia’s behavior toward a student. Lucia was adamant that the student in question was disrespectful to her and his behavior was “out of line.” The administrator felt Lucia was being insubordinate to him. Although Lucia “passed” her student teacher and was certified to teach at the grade level in which she practiced, she was ultimately denied a second placement which would have certified her to teach at additional grade levels. Sophia’s issues with English skills were somewhat similar to Lucia’s. Although having a good command of English in speech and writing, Sophia spoke exceedingly fast and with a pronounced accent. Further, it was not uncommon for Sophia to interrupt others, a practice that is widely accepted in her country of origin. She would tell her students to ask her to repeat words and phrases they did not understand. In one incident during her placement:

I was going over the lesson, and when I said the word “wood”. One child (first grade) stood up and said, ‘What did you say? I cannot understand you’, in a very disrespectful way. I said that word again, and then the other kids basically “translated” for him. Even when the child understood the word, he kept going on about how he doesn’t understand me, and my cooperating-teacher started laughing at that. I was embarrassed and disappointed, but I repeated to the students what I told all of them when I first introduced myself to the class: ‘I have an accent, and if you do not understand what I say, that’s perfectly fine, just ask me to repeat it. Even people who are Americans have an accent, and that’s because people come from different parts of the world.’ I always try to make them feel comfortable about asking me to repeat things, but they need to be polite and respectful. When I told that student that he hadn’t been polite toward me, my cooperating teacher finally called him on the side and reprimanded him.

Sophia talked about several similar incidents including this one:

When I started my student teaching in second grade, we had a unit meeting, and when (my cooperating teacher) introduced me to the other teachers, and I said, ‘I am from (birth country), I have an accent. It usually takes two weeks to get used to my accent, after that you should be okay...’ and so forth, my cooperating teacher stood up and said: ‘Well, then don’t be surprised when my students go to third grade and talk weird.’

It was stories such as these, along with the suggestions offered by the women during our interviews that led me to examine the ways in which I was – or was not – meeting their needs in my own classroom.

**Personal Perspective Transformation**

According to Mezirow (1990), “perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world” (p. 14). Through the intersection of my life and
teaching with ethnically diverse student teachers, I came to realize that this “good” teacher was far less knowledgeable about the tensions these future teachers faced in their higher education learning experiences, their presuppositions about what teaching and learning should look like, and, most importantly, the ways in which many of these students struggle to survive in the academic and social cultures of our (in this case, predominantly white, middle class) K-12 schools.

During my six years of university teaching, I have received quite positive evaluations from both my students and my colleagues. All of the women in the study had been in one or more of my classes and I believe, although evaluations are submitted anonymously, that they, too, may have rated me quite favorably. However, while conducting the aforementioned research study, I became quite disconcerted and increasingly concerned about how these women, and other ethnically diverse students would fare in the world of teaching, especially in our predominantly white, middle class, geographic area. What I had little understanding of at the outset of this study was the even more profound impact the student-to-teacher transformation had on ethnically diverse student teachers for whom English was their second language.

My assumptions about the needs of pre-service teachers were universal and without discernment between the traditional-aged, Caucasian student teacher and the non-traditional women of ethnically diverse backgrounds who participated in the study. Of particular note was the need for attention to differences in language – both verbal and non-verbal – between the dominant and ethnically diverse cultures. The lenses of my privileged white, middle-class eyes proved to be barriers in my understanding of and teaching to ethnically diverse student teachers. Like Jane Tompkins (1996), I “tumbled to the notion that it’s necessary to know, on a given day, how the students [were] feeling, where they [were] in their thinking, whether they [had] desires or discontents that [weren't being addressed, concerns they need(ed) a chance to air” (p. 94). My belief about these future teachers needed to move away from my “ideal” perspective to one which “instead consist[ed] of a more complex shifting in and among co-existing perspectives” as these women engaged “in a continual process of negotiating multiple identities” (Flannery & Hayes, 2001, p. 35).

Although I had been sensitive to the impact of oral language on and of this population, I realized the need to raise the awareness of these women as to the ways in which their native language accents may have an effect on others’ perceptions about their abilities to teach. While not wanting these women to sacrifice their self-identities to become like the “white status quo,” I understood that others may tend to react negatively if the future teachers’ verbal English skills were difficult to comprehend or if their non-verbal behaviors were negatively interpreted by students, colleagues, parents, and administrators. The understanding of “teacher norms” among these women seemed, in some cases, naïve despite having spent over 200 hours in the classroom prior to student teaching. This naiveté manifested itself in varying degrees by the understanding, or lack thereof, as to the ways in which they could potentially have internalized the modeling and social norms which they observed in K-12 classroom settings.

Further, the awareness of the clash between the behavioral expectations of their students and the behavior they may encounter in the classroom needed to be raised. Student behavior in the schools in which these women carried out their student teaching assignments clashed with the behavioral expectations these future teachers anticipated and which grounded their own experiences as students in their homelands. I needed to offer more instructional opportunities to observe, document, and analyze both student and teacher behavior in the classroom.
Finally, I became acutely aware of the need to educate cooperating or mentor teachers with whom our ethnically diverse student teachers would work and whose behavior the student teachers may come to emulate. Cooperating teachers’ and mentors’ sensitivity to and understanding of the roles cultural and ethnic diversity and social needs of diverse student teachers play in self-identity, including teaching identity, needed to be heightened. Mentor teachers are role models for their students and for future teachers, and as such, need to demonstrate the willingness to educate about and embrace diversity as an asset to the educational experiences of their students.

**Changes: An Evolutionary Process**

I continue to evolve as a teacher who has come to the realization that I, along with my teaching colleagues both in and outside of the university setting, need to advocate for ethically diverse future teachers while making changes in our own practices.

The interviews we conducted with our study participants, along with initiatives directed toward addressing diversity in academic courses in the university in which I work have compelled me to reflect on my teaching practice.

First, I have included at least one objective in each of my course syllabi that specifically addresses issues of diversity. For example, my diversity objective for *Educational Psychology* is: “Students will recognize and appreciate the many forms of diversity they will encounter in the classroom” (Shaw, 2007). In my Teaching the Early Adolescent course, the diversity objective includes this statement: “There is an explicit emphasis on developing awareness and skill in working with diverse populations” (Shaw, 2007).

These objectives are very global, however, so I both explain and model how future teachers recognize, appreciate, and develop skills in working with diverse populations as well as diverse ability levels, interests, etc. I ask students of various cultures to speak, in a smaller group setting, about personal experiences (as opposed to speaking for their culture or their people) in their lives where they may have encountered discrimination as well as accommodation. One of my goals is for all students to understand that discrimination can be implicit, if not covert. We must be as acutely mindful of what we are not saying and/or doing as what we consciously say and do!

Several of the participants of our study suggested that some direct instruction be provided about the cultural and societal norms in which they will be practicing as teachers. For example, in her interview, Lucia indicated she was not aware that her (appropriate) physical touch of a student would be interpreted as offensive. Nor did she believe her insistence in stating her position with the school administrator could have been viewed as anything but passion about her belief that students should respect their teachers. As her instructor, I could have (should have) discussed the ways in which her behavior may be perceived negatively by people of cultures other than her own. We could have role-played potential scenarios and ways to address issues that would have been more positively received by those with whom she worked.

In Sophia’s culture, interrupting others while they are talking is perfectly permissible. In the school in which she taught, Sophia’s behavior was considered rude and “pushy”. Again, talking with Sophia privately about the ways in which her interruptions may have been negatively perceived by her colleagues might have prevented some of the animosity Sophia felt from the other teachers with whom she interacted.

As a professor, I am now much more mindful of the ways in which culture-specific behaviors may or may not be interpreted in the predominantly white, middle-class schools in our
geographic area and will continue to address these issues as they arise through private conversations, direct instruction, and role-playing.

Hall (1959, in Battle, 2002), said, “Culture is communication. Communication is culture.” As such, it is imperative that speakers and listeners are aware and respectful of each others’ cultures to avoid tensions resulting from faulty assumptions or inaccurate judgments. Since conducting my research, I have learned about the Foreign Accent Reduction (FAR) program offered by our Communicative Disorders department. This program is designed to teach those students for whom English is a second language how to slow their rates of speech, improve their pronunciation of words in English and, in doing so, enhance their competence and confidence with the English language. As a professor of future teachers from different cultures and for who English is their second language, I now have another resource which I can recommend (if necessary) and which will provide a means of furthering ensuring successful classroom experiences of this population.

Finally, and perhaps most important, I will continue to be an advocate for ethnically diverse student teachers and promote understanding of them, their cultures, the ways in which they communicate, and the benefits of instilling an appreciation for and acceptance of diversity. Recently, and in the past, I have participated as a guest speaker for the “Supervision of Instruction” course which is required of all teachers who supervise student teachers through our university (St. Maurice, 2007). My role has been to discuss best supervisory practices of student teachers. Omitted from my previous presentations was a discussion for cooperating/mentor teachers to be both mindful and accepting of the differences – and many benefits - brought to the classroom by ethnically diverse student teachers. That is not an omission I will make again!

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The Role of Meaning in Work: A Study of the Transformational Power of Meaningful Work
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Introduction
Organizations are faced with an increasingly competitive and rapidly changing environment. In this era of leaner and meaner, organizational success depends on continually improving performance by reducing costs, improving and creating new products, refining processes, enhancing quality and productivity, and increasing speed from conception to market. In this new era several other factors have become important to the workplace as well. These include the rise of spirituality related to business, dealing with individuals as knowledge workers rather than simply hired hands, and understanding the factors that make work meaningful for individuals.

One way organizations can successfully navigate these challenges and capitalize on their intellectual capital is to foster employee engagement. Employee engagement is what happens when employees bring their discretionary effort to work (in the form of brainpower and energy); they connect with their work by involving and expressing themselves cognitively, emotionally, and physically. Each employee has direct and unilateral control over the amount of discretionary effort he or she chose to make available to the organization (Catlette & Hadden, 2001).

Meaningful work may be one way to enhance employee engagement. Meaningful work is the value of a work goal in relation to an employee’s own ideals or standards. Meaningful work is significant to employees’ ability to feel passionate about their work. Passion is emotional energy that stimulates life and energizes individuals to work toward goals (Boverie & Kroth, 2001). Anyone examining the relationship of work to individual satisfaction has made the point that finding work that is meaningful and enjoyable leads to mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional health. In addition, an element of the value proposition of an organization for an employee is the meaningfulness of the work (Boverie & Kroth, 2001).

There is evidence to suggest that engaged employees are more productive and produce high quality work; thus providing benefits to their employers. Understanding the role strategic alignment and meaningful work play in cultivating employee engagement can help organizations develop culture, policies, and practices to recruit and retain productive employees and facilitate employee engagement and thus contribute to the viability of the organization.

Literature Review
Boverie and Kroth’s research on passion in the workplace inspired this study and influenced the assumptions of this study. Boverie and Kroth (2001) studied passion in the workplace, in which meaningful work is intertwined. Boverie and Kroth asked over 300 working adults to share critical incidents regarding their experiences with passion and work. From this research they uncovered a three stage process for creating passionate work.

The first stage is “Discovering” which involves finding the kind of work that a person can be fervent about. Four interrelated enablers facilitate the discovering process: self-awareness, experimentation and change, meditating and reflecting, and imagining (Kroth & Boverie, 2003). The best leaders help their employees link their self-discoveries to the goals of the company, and to make an emotional commitment to their work. Making sure that an employee’s work is
meaningful not only to the organization but also to the employee is an important part in creating passionate work environments (Kroth & Boverie, 2003).

The second stage is the “Designing” process where the organization’s goal is to create an environment that helps employees achieve passion in their work. For employees, having a passionate workplace means being able to do meaningful work, doing work that is fun and enjoyable, and working in a nurturing environment (Kroth & Boverie, 2003). All employees want to feel that what they do at work is important and that their employer values their contributions. Great leaders help people see how what they do is important by explaining the significance of their work in a larger context. For example, “they show the baggage handler that he is fighting a rival airline for customers and striving to meet a target for on-time departures,” so that he understands how his work supports the organization’s success (Kroth & Boverie, 2003, p. 47).

The third stage is “Development” which helps employees put passionate work into action and then sustain it. Development involves risking, learning, and building self-efficacy. “As we risk, we learn; as we learn, we gain more confidence; as we gain more confidence we take bigger risks” (Kroth & Boverie, 2003, p. 49).

May, Gilson, and Harter’s (2004) research provided a foundation for the critical assumptions in this study, provided the definition of engagement and meaningfulness, tested the relationship between meaningfulness and engagement, provided the scale items for engagement and meaningfulness, and concluded that meaningfulness has a significant impact on engagement. May et al. built on Kahn’s (1990) ethnographic research with their filed study where they explored the determinants and mediating effects of three psychological conditions – meaningfulness, safety, and availability – on employees’ engagement in their work. Results from the theoretical framework revealed that all three psychological conditions exhibited positive relations with engagement. Meaningfulness displayed the strongest relation. Job enrichment and work role fit were positively linked to psychological meaningfulness. Rewarding co-worker and supportive supervisor relations were positively associated with psychological safety, whereas adherence to co-worker norms and self-consciousness were negatively associated. Psychological availability was positively related to resources available and negatively related to participation in outside activities. Finally, the relations of job enrichment and work role fit with engagement were both fully mediated by the psychological condition of meaningfulness. The association between adherence to co-worker norms and engagement was partially mediated by psychological safety (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004).

Engagement

One way organizations can maintain a competitive advantage in this challenging environment is by fostering employee engagement. There is part of the human being which seeks fulfillment through self-expression at work (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004). For humans to thrive at work, they must be able to completely immerse themselves in their work. They must be able to engage the cognitive, emotional, and physical dimensions of themselves in their work (May, Gilson, and Harter, 2004).

Engagement at work was conceptualized by Kahn (1990) as the harnessing of organizational members’ selves to their work roles. When engaged, employees employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances (Kahn, 1990). Employees experience dimensions of personal engagement during daily task performances. Engagement occurs when one is cognitively vigilant and or emotionally connected
to others. For example, employees who know what is expected of them, who form strong relationships with coworkers and managers, or who in other ways experience meaning in their work, are engaged. Alternatively, disengagement is the decoupling of the self from the work role and involves employees withdrawing and defending themselves during work performance (Kahn, 1990).

**Engagement and Productivity**

Organizations have traditionally relied upon financial measures or hard numbers to evaluate their performance, value, and health; however, human oriented measures such as employee attitudes, traits, and perceptions are also now being recognized as important predictors of employee behavior and performance (Pfeffer, 1998). Employee engagement has been tied to business financial performance and organizational performance. Bates (2004) demonstrated employee engagement is linked to customer’s willingness to make repeat purchases and recommend the store to friends. Flade (2003) estimates the cost of actively disengaged employees on Singapore’s economy varies from 4.9 to 6.7 billion dollars annually. Bill Catelette and Richard Hadden (2001) developed a hypothesis that to the extent that the organization is at all labor dependent, the principal requirement for the organization to create satisfied, loyal customers to ensure their financial security is the creation of a satisfied, fully engaged workforce.

**Research Methods and Approach**

In this study three variables were examined to explore the relationship of going from alignment to productivity. It was based on the premise that good strategic alignment, coupled with meaningful work, could lead to more engaged employees. Our research question looked at whether strategic alignment and meaningful work interact to predict employee engagement and which of these variables will better predict engagement.

This was quantitative study that used regression analysis to determine the predictive relation of the three variables. Three instruments, each designed to measure the three variables were administered to 160 employed. A convenience sample was used and criteria for participation were the subjects must have been currently employed by their organizations and have worked for that organization for at least two years.

**Results**

There was a significant relationship found between strategic alignment and meaningful work. Employee’s strategic alignment scores predicted their meaningfulness scores. Strategic alignment and meaningfulness together have a stronger relationship to engagement than they do individually. Strategic alignment and meaningfulness predict employee engagement, but not much more than meaningfulness alone predicts engagement. Meaningfulness turned out to be the intervening variable that lead to stronger employee engagement. Strategic alignment predicts meaningfulness and meaningfulness predicts engagement, however without meaningfulness, the strength of the relationship between alignment and engagement was weaker.

The results of this study support the work on passion in the workplace conducted by Boverie and Kroth (2001) and the research on engaging the human spirit at work conducted by May, Gilson, and Harter (2004). Boverie and Kroth’s work was based on the premise that transformational learning is related to building a passionate work environment. Effective leaders are those who create passionate work environments by helping employee’s understand how their work is meaningful to the organization. This study provides an initial exploration of trying to
quantify the strength and predictive nature of alignment to both meaningful work and engaged employees.

**Implications and Discussion**

The value of this research is in understanding how consultants, employees, managers, leaders, and organizations can apply the findings in order to enhance employee engagement. Engaged employees promote the organization’s success, but when employees are disengaged, the organization suffers.

**Consultants**

The results are applicable to consultants who work with employees, business units, departments, or organizations. Consultants are called upon to provide recommendations to solve problems in organizations. When the problems involve disengagement among employees, a lack of strategic alignment, or an absence of meaningfulness, then consultants should consider the results of this study before developing recommendations for the client. When consultants are called upon to do any work relating to strategic planning and implementation, they should consider that strategic alignment by itself will only slightly enhance employee engagement, but if coupled with meaningfulness it will promote employee engagement. Even though it is a substantial effort to communicate the organization’s strategy and objectives to employees across all levels of the organization, help each business unit understand its goals, and make sure all employees understand their role in achieving their individual, business unit, and organizational objectives, it’s not enough to inspire employee engagement. Consultants should help their clients understand that by helping employees understand not only what they need to do, but also the importance of what they do, employees will become more engaged in their work.

**Employees**

Since many employees spend a large portion of their day at work, they can greatly improve their quality of life by enjoying and being engaged in their work. Employees can enhance their degree of engagement by searching for the meaning in their work. Once individuals understand the impact of their work on others, they will be more engaged in their work. If an employee does not see the value of her organization’s product or service, it is unlikely that the employee will be engaged in her work; therefore, if the employee’s goal is to be engaged, the employee should first determine whether he or she finds the work of the organization meaningful.

**Managers**

By understanding that strategic alignment predicts meaningfulness and meaningfulness, in turn, predicts engagement, managers can increase their employees’ understanding of their role in the organization. Managers can clearly articulate goals and strategies to their employees so that every employee understands his or her role in executing the strategies and achieving the goals. This strategic alignment will influence the meaningfulness of the work for employees. A simple task can be viewed as an isolated event, but if a manager shows how that one task influences the customer or other workers, then it can be viewed as important and relevant. When employees view their work as important and relevant, they will be more engaged and show more passion and excitement toward their work.
Leaders

By making sure that the organization’s strategy, goals, and productivity measures are communicated throughout the organization, leaders can deepen their employees’ understanding of why their jobs are important. When leaders explain how the organization and each job function within the organization impacts both internal and external customers, employees see the meaning in their jobs. By developing this sense of meaningful work, leaders can enhance employees’ engagement. Engagement is about feeling alive and excited about one’s work and enjoying oneself while doing work. Individuals benefit from being engaged because their work becomes more enjoyable, rather than something that has to be done. Organizations, and therefore leaders, benefit by having excited employees that are productive and energetic.

Organizations

There is evidence to suggest that engaged employees are more productive and produce high quality work; thus providing benefits to their employers. Understanding the role strategic alignment and meaningful work play in cultivating employee engagement can help organizations develop culture, policies, and practices to recruit and retain productive employees and facilitate employee engagement and thus contribute to the viability of the organization. Since strategic alignment is correlated to and predicts meaningful work, then organizations can increase their employees’ engagement by placing high importance on helping employees understand how their work contributes to the purpose and direction of the organization. Because meaningful work is correlated to and predicts engagement, then organizations can cultivate engagement by helping their employees see how what they do is important.

References

Critical Media Literacy and Transformative Learning: Drawing on Pop Culture and Entertainment Media in Adult Education Practice in Teaching for Diversity
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Abstract: This paper discusses three studies of the role of entertainment media in adult education, and the implications the studies have for teaching for critical media literacy and transformative learning around diversity and equity issues.

Introduction
Media and popular culture have an enormous influence on all of us. According to the A.C. Nielsen Company, the average person in the US watches about four hours of television per day, which amounts to about two months of nonstop TV-watching each year (Herr, 2001). In addition, watching movies either via television, DVD, or at the theater is a large source of entertainment for many people worldwide. Hence, it is clear that entertainment media (as well as news media and advertisements) have an enormous impact in its constant presence in our lives. Thus, whether in the genre of television sitcom or drama, or fictional stories in popular film, the entertainment media “teach” us something about ourselves as we map new meaning onto our own experience based on what we see and relate to; it also “teaches” us a lot about others through fictional means. As many critical media education scholars argue (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Giroux, 2002; Yosso, 2003), it has the power both to educate when people critically reflect on the messages they are getting through the media, and to “mis-educate” when viewers are passive consumers who don’t think much about the images they see or the messages that they are receiving through media.

While there has been much discussion of the role of popular culture in education among critical media literacy scholars in K-12 education, there has been relatively little among adult education scholars. This is beginning to change, and there’s now more consideration of popular culture and media in adult education at recent conferences and publications by myself and others (Armstrong, 2005; Guy, 2004; Jarvis, 2005; Sandlin, 2005; Tisdell & Thompson, 2007; Tisdell, Thompson, & Stuckey, 2007; Wright, 2006). At this juncture, it’s important to consider its relationship to transformative learning, particularly around diversity and equity issues. Thus, the primary purpose of this paper, is to explore theoretically and practically (based on the findings of three studies conducted by the author and other researchers), how and to what extent, adult educators can draw on popular culture and entertainment media to facilitate transformative learning around diversity and equity issues, primarily in adult higher education classroom based settings. In this sense, transformative learning” refers both to the way that Mezirow describes transformative learning, with his emphasis on the importance of critical reflection on assumptions of individuals (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2000), as well as the way those more specifically concerned with social transformation around structural factors of race, gender, class, sexual orientation that is based more in the work of critical, feminist and antiracist adult educators (Brookfield, 2005; Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Guy, 1999; Sheared & Sissel, 2001).

Background Literature and Theoretical Framework
The influence of entertainment media and popular culture is ubiquitous. While most people are consumers of entertainment media for pleasure, it can also sometimes affect debate about social issues not just in subtle ways, but also in very obvious ways. For example, Dan

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Quayle, in the early 1990s, offered a critique of the single motherhood of the fictional lead character of *Murphy Brown* in arguing his “family values” agenda. Another example, from the later 1990s is the stir about sexual orientation, caused by the coming out of the lead character of the fictional show, *Ellen* played by Ellen DeGeneres (who also came out publicly around the same time). These characters are fictional, yet they become real in our own individual and collective experience of them. This blurring of the real and unreal of the fictional entertainment media world is what media scholar, Arthur Berger (1998) discusses as the “postmodern presence”, referring to the real presence of these fictional (or unreal) characters in our lives, and of what they stand for in relation to our constructions of our own and others’ identity. Indeed, the entertainment media has a role, not only in reflecting what’s happening in our culture but also a role in beginning to shape it as it raises viewers’ consciousness about issues (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000). It can also affect our beliefs about both ourselves as well as those from race, class, gender and sexual orientation groups.

I have conducted three different research studies (that build on each other) of critical media literacy in teaching for diversity in the past two years. The theoretical framework of each of these studies is grounded largely in the insights of the critical media literacy scholars cited above: that media is a source of pleasure that affects learning; that the media can both reinforce and resist the ideology of the dominant culture, and that it’s important to teach critical media literacy (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000).

Yosso (2002) summarizes the assumptions that critical media scholars make about media in teaching critical media literacy: that 1) the media are controlled and driven by money; 2) media images are constructions—both of directors, actors, and other media makers; 3) media makers bring their own experience with them in their construction of characters, including their perceptions of race, gender, class, etc.; 4) consumers of media construct their own meaning of media portrayals in light of their own background experience, and gender, race, class, sexual orientation; 5) unlike print media, entertainment media such as movies and television, are a combination of moving visuals, sounds, and words that combine in facilitating meaning; 6) it is possible to acquire multiple literacies in becoming media literate. In sum then, critical media education scholars are coming from a social constructionist perspective in analyzing entertainment media, in the belief that viewers are constructing further meaning in light of their past experience and in dialogue with the images and sounds they see and hear on the screen. Further, critical media scholars argue that one can easily draw on media to teach about diversity and equity. It is implied that doing so can facilitate transformative learning.

**purposes and methodologies of the studies**

The methodology of all three studies was informed by a social constructivist paradigm of research in that it is grounded in the assumption that human beings do not “find” knowledge, but rather constructed it. The first study was a large mixed methods study with a quantitative component, which included a likert scale survey of 215 adult educators, and interviews exploring U.S. adult educators’ consumption of entertainment media, how it affects their thinking about group identities, and qualitative interviews. The second study focused specifically on what adult educators and adult learners “learn” about themselves and others based on portrayals of characters in film and television more generally, paying particular attention to the recent Paul Haggis film *Crash’s* influence on society through individual interviews, focus groups, and online conversations. The third study was a qualitative action research study (Kemmis &McTaggert) of critical media literacy teaching for diversity of fictional entertainment media (movies and
television) in teaching a graduate class of 18 entitled “Popular Culture as Pedagogy: Teaching for Critical Consciousness and Critical Media Literacy”. Data from this study included daily open-ended about each class session online, several online conversations, and three sets of student papers analyzing movies, television shows, and e-mail communications with participants.

Cross Study Findings
Given space limitations, the remainder of the discussion will focus on the qualitative findings of the study related to diversity, critical medial literacy, and transformative learning.

Pleasure as Both Facilitator and Deterrent of Critical Media Literacy
People generally watch TV or movies for pleasure, so it’s generally easy to engage discussion about movies and television shows they enjoy. While pleasure can potentially be a facilitator of critical media literacy and transformative learning, it can also be a deterrent. Kristin was one student in the critical medial literacy class who found being required to analyze movies or television in the context of a class paper facilitated her critical media literacy awareness. She notes: “Until I took this class, I rarely questioned motivations or other agendas that may have influenced what I was watching. This course encouraged me to look beyond the surface to examine the social, political or financial implications that impact what is shared on the screen.” She did an excellent job of analyzing one of her favorite movies, The Way We Were in light of particular guidelines laid out for the paper, and explained that in her prior viewing, she focused only on the love story, but in light of the assignment, she researched the historical context of the McCarthy era. She learned about that in the pilot viewing, the audience was more into the love story than the political context of the era. She wrote that Barbra Streisand, “fought strongly to keep the political scenes in the movie, but ultimately the studio had the financial power to decide the final version.” Given that one of the points of the class was to analyze issues of power and privilege, she learned on her own how money, power, and politics plays a large hand in how a message is portrayed. She noted, “Analyzing all these things helped me to develop my own critical media awareness.” This reflection on assumptions is transformative learning.

Kristin’s analysis of her favorite movie The Way We Were (which was the initial assignment in the class) is one example of how we drew on students’ sense of pleasure to build critical media literacy and lead to transformative learning. Sometimes, however students’ sense of pleasure, or the fact that they relate very strongly to a film or television show, seems to interfere with the ability to critically analyze it beyond a certain point. For example, one black male student did an analysis of the movie Coach Carter, and did quite a good job of analyzing this show as a positive portrayal of African Americans in the media, but did not note that it also played on many racialized stereotypes of urban life. Thus, pleasure can serve as a two-edged sword: both as a facilitator of analysis and a barrier to it.

Finding Alternative Narratives
Nearly all the participants discussed the role of media that they choose to watch as a helping them see alternative narratives in their own lives on a personal level, or presenting to the public alternate narratives. Some specifically discussed the effect that some entertainment media has had in helping them see or make new choices. Hannah, a white professor in her early 40s, discussed relating to the lead character in the movie Iris (based on the life of British novelist and university professor Iris Murdoch), and that she is particularly engaged when movies ‘can deal
with gender in being a woman in real and complex ways…I want to be able to relate to that character as somebody who is struggling with a condition in the world.’ This particular movie provided that, and she explained that it led to a transforming life decision in her involvement with someone who became her life partner. In a similar vein, lesbian and bisexual women in the study discussed particularly relating to the show The L Word, a television drama on Showtime about a lesbian community. Barbara, discussed relating to a particular character, and also noted how the show brings up issues that she discusses with her partner and other lesbian friends so they explore new choices.

Several participants discussed the issue of representation of people of color suggested that while they are often portrayed negatively as criminals and drug dealers, there’s also more portrayals of profession black characters in positive roles, both in comedy and drama that creates potential role models. Elaine, an African American woman, specifically referred to the positive roles of some of the African Americans on the drama series, CSI. The single show that was mentioned most often by the 36 African American participants who filled out the survey as among their favorites was The Cosby Show. Three of the African American participants interviewed specifically discussed The Cosby Show. Janice contrasted the difference between Cosby and when it began in the ‘80s and earlier comedy:

Finally somebody has some money and they weren’t mad at white people all the time and they actually get along with other races and other people. They were comfortable with who they are. So that’s what Cosby was for me. Good Times was funny and yes I watched it regularly; I laughed. But at some point it registered that they never were going to be allowed to get out of the project. Every time they got close something would happen. I’m not comfortable with that…. So if you are going to put an image out there, it might as well be something good and hopeful.

Elaine also discussed the significance of Cosby as the portrayal of a professional family, and when it first came out in the ‘80s. ‘The plus was that it gave to us visibility …it showed that blacks had families and issues that were very similar to issues that everyone faced. It was an opportunity for people to see a side of black life that wasn’t always the pimps and prostitutes.’

Expanded Thinking about ‘Others’

Many of the participants discussed the role of television or film in helping them expand their understanding of those who were different from them based on race, gender, class, or sexual orientation, and in some instances of looking at their own prejudices. Todd, for example, discussed the power of seeing the movie Philadelphia in effecting a change in attitude about sexual orientation issues. Others discussed the role of the media, not so much in completely changing their view of issues surrounding a marginalized group in society, but rather in understanding the complexity of what living as a marginalized “other” is like. Greg, for example, considers himself quite liberal on race, gender, and sexual orientation issues, but discussed the role the HBO show Six Feet Under, which is about the layered lives of the adult family members who own a funeral home, played in his understanding of the complexity of issues that gay or lesbian people face, and noted “:it makes me think about things from a different angle.

There were many participants that also discussed the role of the movie Crash that made them think about race relations in the U.S. in even more complex ways. Many of the white participants noted that the film called them to look inward at themselves in different ways, and to
look at some of their own prejudices. Anna, a white woman, shared this sense of being disturbed by the film in dealing with her own prejudices and noted:

There were so many times in this movie when I would gasp because I couldn't believe they said something so racial, although I probably have thought it at least once in my life. It also made me think of all the times I've nonverbally stereotyped a different culture or race, all the while believing that I was being politically correct.

In essence what all these participants were getting at was the power of the media to catch them off guard, and to think about issues in new ways, that makes them think about both their own views and their attitudes toward others. This potentially leads to the “disorienting dilemma.”

Stimulating Interaction and Further Social and Media Analysis

Virtually all of the participants discussed the way the media stimulated interaction, both in their personal lives and in their workplaces or teaching practices, but it was the teaching practices of developing critical media literacy where groups challenge each other to analyze media in new ways that were seen as the most beneficial that help learners to explore diversity issues. We see some evidence of this in the above comment on the movie *Crash* of the fact that students examined some of their own internalized racism as a result of the discussion. But it is the interaction about such issues provoked initially by entertainment media that can potentially facilitate the process of transformative learning. Elaine described an incident in a social issues class, where three white women and an African American male participated in an online discussion of *Hotel Rwanda* that helped them understand a global context and the forces of hegemony in new ways. The white women initially discussed how the movie led to a greater understanding of the situation between the Hutus and the Tutsis. But then Elaine explained that their discussion took a deeper turn when the African American male brought up the issue of politics, race, civil war, and how there was a lot more going on there than genocide in the sense of one race trying to eliminate another. She emphasized that it is the discussion of issues raised in movies that can lead to greater understanding. In essence, she noted that the movie, and the discussion around it led to a deeper understanding of not only the situation among groups such as the Hutus and the Tutsis, but to the complexity of the intersection of politics, self-interest, and national and group identity. It wasn’t simply the movie; it was the movie and the discussion of it that lead to this greater understanding, and potentially to transformative learning.

Conclusions

It is clear that entertainment media can be used to facilitate transformative thinking about diversity issues. It is generally not entertainment media themselves, but the fact that they create a forum for engagement and discussion of the social issues television shows and movie have the power to raise consciousness leading to transformative learning. While more research is needed, this paper offers a beginning look at how educators might draw on the pleasure and the possibility of entertainment media to engage in transformed thinking about social issues.

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Transformation Through Collaboration
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Abstract: This report summarizes a collaborative learning partnership and analyzes what makes such a concept possible. The authors’ collaboration continues as they integrate literature from adult education, psychiatry and management, concluding that beyond shared traits and the possession of certain skills, what creates collaboration rather than just cooperative project is something within the synergistic process that happens between two people.

Introduction
As two doctoral students working on a project for a class, we formed a collaborative partnership which ended up being an incredible transformative learning experience for us, one that we decided to share with others in the hopes that they will be inspired to search for a similar experience. If we know that collaborative partnerships “have the power to transform ordinary learning experiences into dynamic relationships, resulting in a synergistic process of accomplishment” (Saltiel, 1998); and that collaborative partners help each other achieve what they never could have done on their own, which is synergy; and that the process of collaborative learning creates new knowledge; then why don’t collaborative partnerships exist more frequently (p. 5)? While many professionals partner to conduct research and to write, the partnering is often cooperative, that which is necessary to get the job done, rather than a collaboration which seeks to make use of each others talents and achieve a greater whole than would be possible individually (Wildavsky, 1986). What distinguishes collaborative relationships is that the relationship is as important as the knowledge being sought (Saltiel, 1998).

Perhaps many of us are too task focused and don’t think we have time to develop a relationship. Or perhaps the outcome is considered most important and relationship simply isn’t valued. It is certainly simpler to structure a task and assign the duties than to take a leap into the darkness of synergy, where it is unknown what the outcome will be. This requires faith and trust and willingness to jump into the sandbox for playtime, not to build a better widget.

Here’s where transformative learning comes into being. If collaborative learning is all about relationship, then it is in the relationship that transformation has to occur. If ‘partners’ remain isolated within the habits of mind which they bring to the project, there will be no synergy. Collaborative creation requires stepping beyond the self and one’s prior assumptions and dropping boundaries so that the two are seeing as one. It is the spirit of inquiry that is at the root of this creative process. Each partner must be willing to question not only the other partner’s thinking and observations, but their own (Garmston, 2007). This does not mean that partners always see the same scene. Like two eyes working together, their view is separate and different, but integrally connected. To achieve this requires raised self awareness and awareness of others. What results is increased authenticity along the lines of the process described by Cranton and Carusetta (2004).

While Mezirow’s (1991) steps to transformation do not address partnerships or collaborative learning, there are points of similarity. The habits of mind as expanded by Mezirow in 2000 to include: epistemic, sociolinguistic, psychological, moral-ethical, philosophical, and aesthetic are the arenas in which transformation occurs. It seems that this is where collaborative relationship negotiation would need to happen. This paper will present a case study of one
collaborative writing partnership in which this was exactly what resulted. This transformation through collaboration was not fostered by an epochal event, as originally described by Mezirow (1991) but was a gradual evolution as the relationship developed (Taylor, 2000).

When we embarked upon a joint writing project, we didn’t really know what collaborative learning meant. We didn’t have an algorithm. In a class with Patricia Cranton, she suggested one of many assignment alternatives would be a collaborative project. It was in the doing that we became collaborators and it took Patricia to identify this fact for us. Later we found Saltiel’s (1998) paper on collaborative partnership was like reading the story of our venture.

Saltiel and Sgroi (1996) list the elements of relationship between partners in learning as: shared goal or purpose; trust, respect and loyalty; personality traits and qualities that are complementary; respect for each other; synergy between partners; a valued relationship. These are consistent with Mezirow’s (2000) discussion of habits of mind, which are not independent categories but rather overlap and influence each other. We found examples of each of these elements throughout our collaborative project.

**Shared Goal or Purpose**

Our goal was to produce and publish an academic paper on the topic of organizational transformation. We shared the view that organizations are capable of transforming because of our very different previous experiences with organizations.

**Trust and Loyalty**

While we were members of the same ADTED cohort program, we only knew each other from one semester of class. We had not worked together and had no outside relationship. So the decision to work together was intuitive. As opposed to beginning work on our assignment or task, we spent our first meetings together getting to know each other. Our past experiences and strengths began to emerge from this process. The elements of trust, respect and loyalty developed over time.

**Personality Traits and Qualities that are Complementary**

We realized immediately that our learning styles and study habits were different. Both of us are global learners who appreciate creativity and playing with ideas but one needs to percolate ideas for lengthy periods of time while the other likes to structure in multiple ways as they go along. Using Jungian language, both are intuitive and thinking, but one is more extraverted and needs to bring closure while the other operates in a more open-ended way. We learned quickly that both partners had valuable experiences to contribute, that we both worked hard although differently and valued high quality work. Our initial presentations highlight the differences, but in coming to know each other we discovered overlapping experiences, interests, and traits. We learned to leverage the differences to create something interesting.

**Respect for Each Other**

Like trust and loyalty, respect grew over time. We had some awareness of each other’s abilities from class, but working together we came to respect the person as well as her talents. Part of getting to know each other was learning about our families, sharing those trials and challenges, both past and present, and benefiting from each others’ strength.
Synergy between Partners

This is where the most surprise occurred, in the creating of something that could not be done alone. We fed this process by continuously exploring the topic from our own perspective, bringing back our latest reading and sharing it, then reading what the other person had provided, always sifting through the ideas in conversation that drew upon our own past and current experiences. As we began to try to structure ideas, the process became very visual. One of us made meaning and communicated through film, one brought order through diagrams, colors, and shapes, all of it simply offered up as possibility for the other to respond to. These fits of creation were punctuated by inspired task orientation so that it just became clear who needed to be talking or writing or typing or editing or researching a missed detail. This approach differs greatly from the cooperative one of dividing different parts of a project among partners.

A Valued Relationship

When the task is over it is the energy source relationship that continues, evidenced by this paper and presentation and our continued looking for excuses to work together. We have been told that true collaborative learning is rare, hence the focus of most transformative learning literature is focused on the individual. Our goal is to provide an example of how this kind of rewarding relationship can evolve into a transformational experience, inspiring others to experiment with collaboration and suggesting a topic for future research.

As a result, we have found a few themes written about in the literature proved to be true for us. In addition, to those described above by Saltiel and Sgroi (1996), the concepts developed by Marsick and Watkins (1992) around informal and incidental learning seem to apply. Foremost, we agree that much of what has taken place between us is unplanned. For example, task is always ultimately important to us but secondary in our process. Prior to the task accomplishment is always a discussion of the topic. From this discussion emerges the broad philosophy and eventually the details. This method produces “new knowledge.” It is this reflection process that is likely to create the synergistic effect of our partnership. This fact makes our experience somewhat difficult to replicate. It is also impossible to predict the task outcome.

Perhaps some of this can be explained by developmental history and skills learning. Harry Stack Sullivan (1953), who gave us the concept of significant other, also gave us an understanding of the individual as a self system, created by its embeddedness in a network of relationships. Anxiety results only from social interaction, personality develops through adaptation to threat, and cultural forces bear a large responsibility for mental illness. Rigid patterns can come to dominate adult thinking patterns so that reaction is to the world as seen, not the world as it is. People and situations are evaluated based on the assumptions and patterns of previous experiences. So childhood experiences largely determine adult personality through cognitive representations, developed by passing through epochs, the timing of which is dictated by our social environment. This is a stage model which does not posit a linear process. Sullivan saw development of the self continuing throughout adulthood, moving forward and spiraling back to past experiences, always in a cultured and gendered context. Key periods present our first great opportunities for learning interpersonal skills.

A key period for learning collaboration comes during pre-adolescence, ages 9-12, and builds on the development of healthy socialization with playmates learned during the first years in school. Experiences of bullying resulting in ostracism and loneliness interrupt this process. But if the task is accomplished, grounds have been laid for building a chumship, a close relationship with a same sexed peer. In the midst of the competitive relationships emerging
during this era, the chumship develops as a collaboration, thereby laying the groundwork for future intimate relationships. The collaborative chums validate all components of each others self worth. In pursuit of increasingly identical satisfactions, they learn to see through each others eyes, and teach each other in a relative and pragmatic sense what is rational and appropriate for the culture and for their significant others.

The skills of cooperation and self-assertion form the basis of the theory of conflict management styles (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). In their model, five styles of handling conflict (competing, avoiding, compromising, collaborating, and accommodating) differ in the relative amounts of assertiveness and cooperation used. Style use is usually based upon skill level with different situations suited to each style. Skills are acquired through experience but can also be taught. Avoidance exercises little of either skill in an attempt to delay. Competition and accommodation make heavy use of one skill over the other in order to win or yield. Compromise is a middle ground, overuse of which can lead to cynicism and a lack of firm values. Collaboration aims to satisfy both sides, as does a good chumship. Aiming for a win/win it requires the challenging exercise of high levels of both assertion and cooperation.

The reward of collaboration is learning, merging perspectives, gaining commitment, improving relationships, and integrative solutions. Equal distribution of work, open discussion of issues, brainstorming and creativity are its hallmarks. If collaboration has a weakness it would be the time and commitment required of all parties. The necessary skills are a complex set: powerful listening, non-threatening problem confrontation, analyses of input, and looking beyond the superficial to deeper layers and concerns. These skills would seem to require a certain amount of life experience, although not necessarily age, and won’t become manifest without intention.

Overcoming the inevitable differences between two people constitutes a form of conflict management. Doing this collaboratively is reflected in Palmer’s (1998) writing about paradox as a guide to selfhood’s complexities and potentials and the creation of learning space which it shapes. Paradox is creative tension, “a way of holding opposites together that creates an electric charge that keeps us awake “(Palmer, 1998, p. 74). In collaborative learning, the interpersonal relationship is learning space and also paradoxical context. If, in collaborative learning, we are both teacher and learner, and collaboration is the most creative style of negotiating personal differences, the presence of paradox, creative tension, is at its height. It will “require a higher degree of awareness than we ordinarily possess” (Palmer, 1998, p.73) The paradox feeds creation by being simultaneously both bounded and open, hospitable and charged, hearing the individual and the emergent, co-evolving voice. In honoring both the little stories of students and the big stories of the disciplines, collaborative learning process is a dynamic story creation that mixes memories of past experiences, new personal triumphs and concerns with academic discoveries and abstract flights into space.

We also think that a certain part of our experience remains difficult or even impossible to explain through the literature. These unexplainable items tend to be more focused on the relationship that we have developed as a result of working together. In retrospect, we sense that an overlap in values such as work ethic might be important. The goal of collaboration from the outset, and the skills to begin the process, are critical. At the same time, however, we think that differences in content knowledge and experience play an important role in the reciprocal respect and mutual sharing. Moreover, we move into alignment with the concept of collaborative inquiry (Yorks & Kasl, 2002) outlined in their article, Learning from the inquiries: Lessons for using collaborative inquiry as an adult learning strategy, in which are discussed other ways of
knowing, the power of emotions, storytelling, as well as the value of past experiences. We intently believe that it is a combination of all of these that begin to identify and explain collaboration. Out of interaction, new stories emerge, “conceived in the Here-and-Now co-presence of social communicative intercourse of narrative-memory prisons ready to capture and translate emergence” (Boje, 2007, retrieved online). Stories negotiate with their tellers to choose the right time and place to emerge. Like the co-creation of a story (Tyler, 2006) the collaborative process draws on not only the content of the topic but the interplay of the partners… Magic as described by Saltiel (1998). Maybe.

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Transformative Learning, Political Savvy, and Emotion Management in the Workplace
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Abstract: We present a conceptual framework for understanding the relationship among transformative learning, political savvy, and emotion management in the workplace. We posit that this framework is relevant to workers across professional contexts and organizational levels and holds implications for adult education, HRD, executive coaching, career counseling, management education, and wellness.

Introduction
This paper extends the literature on transformative learning, situating it within the context of the workplace. It points to questions about genuine respect for diversity as workers attempt to leverage power and influence despite organizational pressures to conform. Herein, we present our conceptual framework for understanding the relationship among transformative learning, political savvy, and emotion management for workers wishing to retain their job or seek advancement. We posit that this framework is relevant to workers across professional contexts and organizational levels should they find they are dependent on others for successfully accomplishing their goals. It is our hope that this paper will spark constructive feedback, guiding refinement of our framework for an intended in-depth systematic exploration of this topic. This paper holds important implications for the scholarship and practice of adult educators working in academia or other professional organizations, executive coaches responsible for leadership development, career counselors, management educators, wellness professionals, and workers overall. We first discuss the relevant literatures of transformative learning, political savvy in the workplace, and emotion management as they each pertain to the framework we propose. Second, we pull all three together into an explanation of the conceptual framework that for us so readily emerged. Finally, we close this paper with some implications for future scholarship and practice across disciplinary considerations.

Transformative Learning
The foundational principle of Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning is that an individual will undergo drastic change as a result of a personally meaningful experience. “The transforming process can be stimulated by people, events, or changes in context, which challenge the learner’s basic assumptions” (Cranton, 1992, p. 48). The theory posits many phases of transformation, and the outcome of the process is unpredictable. It is important to note that “Not all learning experiences become transformative, nor should they be expected to, but the opportunity should exist” (Pilling-Cormick, 1997, p. 2)

Mezirow and Associates (2000) claim that for many transformative learning experiences, a disorienting dilemma will take place. When assumptions informing ideas and behaviors are questioned and then changed, one’s behavior should change, too. Identifying existing assumptions signals an early stage of the transformative learning process. Associating meaning to the assumptions is more complex. Mezirow and Associates (2000) borrow from Bruner to list his four modes of making meaning: “1. Establishing, shaping, and maintaining intersubjectivity;
2. relating events, utterances and behavior to the action taken; 3. construing of particulars in a normative context; 4. making propositions…” (p. 4). Mezirow and Associates (2000) add a fifth step in associating meaning: “Becoming critically aware of one’s own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation” (p. 4). During this stage, an individual could experience feelings of isolation, shame, guilt, and helplessness. This is when the individual looks critically at him- or herself to scrutinize any false or influencing assumptions. Associating meaning to experiences and assumptions is a highly individual process. The final product cannot by synthesized by someone else because meaning informs, and is derived from, how humans navigate through life.

Mezirow and Associates (2000) explain that the second step in the transformative learning process is discourse. Discourse takes place when conversation is exchanged in a safe environment free of judgment, prejudice, and personal agendas. Members engaged in discourse should feel comfortable with listening to others as well as speaking of their experiences, changed perceptions, and different or contradicting perspectives. Sometimes individuals need to talk through transformational changes because the intensity of what is going on internally may be overwhelming. Changes in behavior, frame of reference, and attitude are necessary for transformative learning to be complete.

In Mezirow’s theory, action is the third and final phase of the transformative process. Without action or change, the process is incomplete, and all of the inner strife that comes about from a disorienting dilemma and discourse are in vain. The change resulting from transformative learning can be subtle and only noticeable by the individual, or it could be drastic and widely recognized by associates, family, and friends of the individual. Mezirow theorizes that sometimes transformation occurs gradually and quietly over time as opposed to through immersion in a sense-making process triggered by a personally pivotal event (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). As one explores how transformative learning comes about in the workplace, it becomes easier to cite examples of such gradual and subconscious transformation processes. In constructing our framework, we used the theory of transformative learning to more clearly understand how workers might experience a disorienting dilemma; engage in emotion management in response to the dissonance that ensues; bounded by issues of power and other pressures in the workplace, utilize political skills to act as credibly as possible; and over a period of time find that they are no longer whom they thought they were.

**Political Savvy in the Workplace**

Successful people in the workplace who have mastered a cluster of interpersonal attitudes, skills, and behaviors are said to be politically savvy. Most books about political savvy are directed toward leadership and management development, although many admit that workers across all organizational levels must develop and appropriately use this competence (DeLuca, 1999). Political savvy is of paramount importance because of the ubiquitous “and inevitable” presence of office politics (Truty, 2006, p. 1). Although political savvy may hold a negative connotation for some, “everybody does it…no one is comfortable discussing exactly what they do” (McIntyre, 2005, p.3). To behave in a manner that is politically savvy, one must be cognizant of one’s own power and influence relative to others’ whose support is needed toward personal, professional, and organizational ends. Because office politics are rarely discussed, the politically savvy individual must rely on noting, accurately interpreting, and appropriately responding to cues (McIntyre, 2005). DuBrin (1990) contends that “…avoiding blunders in an
era of downsizing is very important because managerial and professional workers are often squeezed out for minor reasons” (p. 215). A key to political savvy is often adaptation.

In summary, office politics has become a tainted phrase, but it is a known phenomenon in the workplace. The collection of interpersonal skills, attitudes and perspectives that are necessary for career retention, employability, and advancement is called political savvy. Though this skill set for addressing office politics is rarely spoken about openly, it is critical to ensure one’s success in the workplace. The extent to which one is willing and/or able to engage in such behaviors suggests the level of emotion management that one may need to invoke. A key to political savvy is adaptation. For purposes of our conceptual framework, we look at repeated instances of adaptive response over time, particularly in the area of impression management, and posit that with an appropriate triggering event one may question just who he or she has become.

Emotion Management

The connections between emotion, feelings, and behaviors have been well documented. For example, Solomon (1993) theorizes that “emotions are judgments” (p. viii). They are not the same as feelings or behaviors, but they are related (Brown, 2003). Brown cautions that particularly strong emotions can lead to premature and inadequately considered responses and/or behaviors: “More often than not, in an organizational situation, it creates problems and leaves one wondering, ‘What did I do that for?’” (p. 124).

Hochschild (1979) believes that one is frequently required to manage one’s feelings and emotions to produce “appropriate” behaviors for a given situation. She explains the connection between emotion management and feeling rules: “Feeling rules are seen as the side of ideology that deals with emotion and feeling. Emotion management is the type of work it takes to cope with feeling rules” (p. 551). When workers are required to display prescribed emotions as part of performing their job, they are engaging in emotional labor.

To credibly perform emotional labor, Hochschild (1979) believes that one must first conduct emotion work. She explains that,

“Emotion work” refers more broadly to the act of evoking or shaping, as well as suppressing, feeling in oneself… [There are] two broad types of emotion work: evocation, in which the cognitive focus is on a desired feeling which is initially absent, and suppression, in which the cognitive focus is on an undesired feeling which is initially present ….There are various techniques of emotion work. One is cognitive: the attempt to change images, ideas, or thoughts in the service of changing the feelings associated with them. A second is bodily: the attempt to change somatic or other physical symptoms of emotion (e.g., trying to breathe slower, trying not to shake). Third, there is expressive emotion work: trying to change expressive gestures in the service of changing inner feeling (e.g., trying to smile, or to cry). This differs from simple display in that it is directed toward change in feeling. It differs from bodily emotion work in that the individual tries to alter or shape one or another of the classic public channels for the expression of feeling (p. 561, p. 562). According to Brotheridge and Grandey (2002), In surface acting, employees modify and control their emotional expressions. For example, employees may enhance or fake a smile when in a bad mood or interacting with a difficult customer. The inauthenticity of this surface-level process, showing expressions discrepant from feelings, is related to stress outcomes due to the internal tension and the physiological effort of suppressing true feelings (p. 22).
The authors emphasize Hochschild’s (1983) warning that when regularly repeated over time, surface level acting separates one’s display of emotions from one’s true feelings and those of others, resulting in “depersonalization” (p. 22). Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) explain Hochschild’s (1979, 1983) belief that emotion work is a coping mechanism for dealing with tension resulting from acting one way while feeling another. They claim that “emotions involve physiological arousal and cognitions, and deep acting works on modifying arousal or cognitions through a variety of techniques….Deep acting might not relate to emotional exhaustion because it minimizes the tension of dissonance” (p. 22).

**Our Conceptual Framework**

Political savvy is required to effectively leverage power and influence and to create and maintain a positive impression of oneself by influential others, and it demands an unwavering orientation toward framing needs as benefits from the other’s perspective. It also necessitates continuous self-monitoring and control to create the desired impression. Norms and demands for creating desired impressions and otherwise behaving in a politically savvy manner are embedded over time within organizational culture and transmitted via power and influence. Rewards are in place for those who conform; and punishments are imposed on those who do not. The concepts of emotion management can be expanded to workplace behavior when attempting to navigate the political terrain. Organizational culture and powerful people communicate (often covertly) expectations for appropriate attitudes and behaviors that enhance the likelihood of job retention and career success. Through multiple learning processes, workers are socialized into organizational norms and interpret the need to conform. Well-honed political skill is required to quickly and accurately read important unspoken cultural and interpersonal cues for attaining personal and professional goals. Recognizing those rules, some reflect on who they are and who they are becoming vis-à-vis the behavior that is required of them. This is a critical juncture in one’s career where workers will conform or resist. Some who resist may exit the organization in search of another that is more closely aligned with their values and ways of being and performing. Others may stay for various personal and/or professional reasons. For these workers, display rules that are imposed are not perceived as being so shrill as to cause immense discomfort. They may challenge certain behavioral requirements but not so aggressively as to elicit intolerable retaliatory or punitive consequences. It could be that these people are sociable enough to have some powerful or influential friends in the organization or possess some expertise that the organization needs. These workers do not see the need to feign compliance, so they do not and are able to act according to their preferences—within reason, of course. Some workers, on the other hand, may consciously or subconsciously conform. Of these workers, some may find conformity to display rules more challenging than others. Those who find conformity least challenging are likely to be those for whom required behaviors closely approximate preferences for a “natural” way of acting in similar situations, guided by their own feelings, thoughts, values, and beliefs that happen to match their workplace situation. Others who choose to conform may find the efforts challenging, leading to perceived cognitive and/or emotional dissonance, because organizational display rules for certain situations do not match their preferred ways of acting. Nevertheless, for personal and/or professional reasons, they feel they must conform. Tension results from two simultaneous demands: 1) the worker’s preference for a “natural” way of behaving, guided by one’s feelings and thoughts; and 2) the worker’s actual behavior, in compliance with embedded organizational “rules.” To a greater or lesser degree, depending on the worker’s personal and/or professional goals, political skill is needed to
successfully navigate behavioral display rules of the situation. Political savvy can be enacted on surface and deep acting levels. Depending on personal and situational differences (Faison Hewlin, 2003), some might be able to go along for an extended period of time, exhibiting expected politically savvy behavior without allowing the tension to become intolerably shrill and destructive; whereas others reach a threshold of discomfort when a need for integration and wholeness demand that a decision be made. Here again, the worker encounters a critical juncture. One may leave the organization—among other options. Another accommodation is to engage in a different kind of emotion work at this time; that is, if one can no longer act in a way that matches external demands when one’s preferences differ, one can reframe preferred ways of acting so that they are the same as the required displays. Thus, the worker has closed the gap between preferred and required ways of acting by transitioning from surface level to deep acting. The worker has done all the work in this process—the display rules themselves have never changed. Politically savvy behavior now continues with renewed fervor and commitment, and over time it is internalized so that the worker responds “appropriately” without even thinking about it. Without consciously planning for it, the decision to transition to deep acting leads to perspective transformation. Repeated practice, the concomitant rewards, perhaps even some positive self-talk, and the passage of time propel and support the transformation. Transformative learning has brought about fundamental change in perspective and dissonance has been reduced or eliminated, but this, too, might be temporary. Perhaps, a future something occurs that flashes a mirror on this worker, persistently prompting the questions, who are you, and who have you become?

In an anecdotal conversation with a colleague, it was revealed that the seemingly content and hard working employee can go through severe inner struggles as one experiences the transformation. It was clear that his transformation is one that has taken place over the course of 15 years. Recently, this employee had come to a time in his work life when he was pushing forward in major projects with no thought to his personal or family life. A few weeks before the conversation, the employee was beginning to feel unfamiliar emotions of fear, uncertainty, anger, and unrest. He applied these feelings to increased motivation to stay at the office even longer and push through rough projects. It was the feeling of dissonance that sparked our conversation. The employee felt as if he hit a road block and didn’t know why he was making the decisions that he was. Terminating members of his team to make his budget look better and missing his child’s baseball games to hob knob with executives over drinks after dinner were not behaviors with which he had been accustomed. He was incredibly successful in his career, but could not live with himself any more. This employee spent many weeks struggling with his emotions, and he tried usual management techniques such as vacationing, exercise, and spending time with friends to find inner peace. After our conversation and a promise to change aspects of his professional life, this employee took leave to spend time with and reconnect with his family. He came full circle and experienced all three steps of the transformative process, and only time will tell what is next for this employee.

**Implications**

This paper holds important implications for the scholarship and practice of management learning, leadership development, career management and development, and the teaching of political savvy in formal educational settings. Ethical questions emerge, such as, should the educator advocate development of, and teach for, political savvy in the workplace? Is the teaching of political savvy in the workplace truly emancipatory for workers who otherwise might
not know how to negotiate behavioral and emotional display rules to maintain a needed job? Embedded within discussions of disorienting dilemmas, dissonance, display rules, political savvy, and emotion management, is concern for authenticity and a respect for access and diversity versus a blurring of difference for purposes of conformity. How can teaching for political savvy in the workplace be used for challenging requirements for conformity in favor of a more inclusive and vitalizing workplace context? When is teaching political savvy enslaving instead of liberating? Finally, we look forward to refining our conceptual framework through collegial discourse that we invite and using it to guide more in-depth systematic study into the relationship among transformative learning, political savvy, and emotion management in the workplace.

References
The Transformative Experience of Successful Dyslexics
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Abstract: This paper presents a phenomenological study of the transformative experience of 11 successful dyslexics as they transitioned from adolescence to the world of work. The participants were asked to describe their struggles with dyslexia, significant life transitions that led to their success and how their unique cognitive style impacted their journey. The study found that the participants were less likely to utilize rational dialogue and critical reflection and that discernment was at the heart of their transformative experience.

Introduction

Before my son entered school he was filled with confidence and enthusiastic about the future. Once while he was in daycare, during an affirming activity, the teachers asked the children to share what they were good. Mike was very talkative so the teacher decided he would be a good person to get things started. After about fifteen minutes she had to stop him so the other kids could get a chance to speak. This behavior characterized Mike before the first grade and before the demon of dyslexia grabbed hold of him. The school system handled it poorly. It was not equipped to properly remediate his condition. School became Mike’s nightmare. Years later, out of desperation, we started looking at private schools that might help him. I remember sitting in an interview with Mike and a representative of one of the schools. The interviewer asked Mike, “So, what are you good at?” Mike shrugged his shoulders, looked at the ground and said, “I don’t know.” I hurt for his pain and the loss of the bright, confident, and enthusiastic child that once had a very long answer to that question. Imagine today the 10% of the children in school who are formulating their answers to the same question. And imagine that an equal percentage of adults may also be still struggling with that question. This was my inspiration for this study.

This study examined the structure of the experience of transformational learning for successful dyslexics. Specifically, it explored how dyslexic learners, with their unique cognitive style, reframe or reinterpret their learning disabilities experience from something dysfunctional to something functional as they transition from adolescence to the world of work. The conceptual framework for this study focused on three interrelated constructs: dyslexia, learning and transitions.

Dyslexia

Dyslexics do not readily identify with the term learning disabled. It is not that they are not able to learn, it is that they tend to learn differently than the supposed uniform way the rest of us do. Dyslexia is a condition that is characterized by left hemispheric cognitive impairments in language processing and analytical thinking. Compensating for those impairments in language processing are strengths in visual-spatial and holistic thinking. Their brains are designed for a different approach to problem-solving that requires creativity, innovation, and intuition. This cognitive profile is in opposition to the one most prevalent in society and upon which the educational system is founded. The participants in this study described their K-12 education as a time of crisis and intense emotional turmoil. The bright eyed, hopeful children who entered
school typically leave with a diminished self concept and a profound sense of grief. To some degree they had all experienced losses; loss of hope and self worth expressed in limited expectations; loss of connection experienced as isolation; and the loss of voice as they retreated into silence.

Learning

Learning is a core process central to our existence as human beings. Our ability to learn, to grow, and to adapt is crucial to our ability to survive and thrive over time. While learning has been defined in many ways, the common denominator is behavioral change and experience (Merriam & Cafferella, 1991). Behavioral change, or the enhanced potential for change, is commonly accepted as the end result of the learning process. Experience is viewed as the fuel of the learning process. Within the construct of learning the study focused on the experience of transformational learning through the phenomenological lens suggested by Yorks and Kasl (2002b). This alternative perspective provides a means of balancing a perceived over-reliance on rationality in transformational learning theory by establishing the foundational role of affect and other ways of knowing. This phenomenological perspective was based on the theoretical work of John Heron (1992) who outlined a theory of the human psyche that integrates other ways of knowing (with the rational) to provide a more holistic view of learning.

Transitions

To further contextualize the study I used a framework of transitions (Bridges, 2004; Schlossberg, 1981). Transitions refer to the pattern of ending one phase or condition of life and entering another. Transitions will typically involve changes in roles, relationships, routines and assumptions about ourselves and the world we live in. In this study the focus was on the transition from adolescence to the world of work, from dependence to independence.

Rational discourse and critical reflection on experience are the cornerstones of the existing view of transformational learning (Mezirow & Associates, 2000). They are also the target of much of the critiques of the theory – specifically, that it is overly focused on rationality and does not give adequate attention to other ways of knowing. Approaching transformational learning from a phenomenological perspective provides the opportunity to integrate other ways of knowing into the lens through which we examine the transformational learning experience (Yorks & Kasl, 2002b). The focus on the transformative experiences of dyslexics, subjects who learn differently, provides an opportunity to examine how distinctly different ways of knowing work together to liberate the individual from constraining meaning perspectives or habits of mind. The core research question that guided the study and set the context in a significant life transition was, “What is the structure of the experience of transformational learning for successful dyslexics as they transition from adolescence to the world of work?”

Methods

This study employed phenomenology to gain an understanding of the life experiences of eleven successful dyslexics. Phenomenology seeks to reach the essence of one’s experience, in this case, the application of multiple ways of knowing in the transformational learning process. Essence means “that which is common or universal, the condition or quality without which a thing would not be what it is” (Moustakis, 1994, p.100). The population was successful dyslexics. Success was defined by three criteria established by Reiff, Gerber, and Ginsberg (1997) in their study of successful adults with learning disabilities: education level, prominence
in one’s field, and job satisfaction. To further define success, there were two other criteria: job stability and time after graduation. Job stability demonstrates that the person had established a stable life structure that works. Time after graduation of 4 to 5 years indicates that the individual had been working at their chosen profession for a significant enough period of time to be able to achieve some career success. Data collection consisted of two in-depth interviews with each of the ten participants. The qualitative data collected from the interviews and personal reflections were analyzed using Moustakis’ (1994) methods for phenomenological research. A third session was used to review the emerging themes and the participant’s story to assure the trustworthiness and credibility of the data. A total of 33 interviews, averaging 90 minutes each were conducted, recorded, and transcribed for analysis. I immersed myself in the interviewee’s narratives, reviewing them over and over again while remaining open to whatever insights or clues arose. The process was repetitive: look at the data and describe it. Step back and see if it matched everyone’s experience or was it my own projection. Go back and look again and describe it again. Check it again. This process continued until I felt the description of the experience was truly a description of what was there and not a projection of my own bias.

Findings

The aim of this study was to examine the interaction of dyslexic cognitive impairments and capabilities and their impact on the experience of transformational learning. In examining the experiences of the participants there were four core themes that emerged that specifically address the research question: (1) Rarity of Rational Discourse and Critical Reflection; (2) The Silencing and Rediscovery of Voice; (3) The Role of Affect; (4) Preference for Experiential/Presentational Knowing and Extrarational Reflective Practices.

Rarity of Rational Discourse and Critical Reflection

The rarity of rational discourse was very striking in these stories of transformation. It was very common to hear comments such as: “Talking head therapy just doesn’t do it for me;” “People just don’t seem to get the way I think so talking to other people just didn’t make sense;” “I got where I am not by following the advice of other people. I had to figure it out on my own.” Critical reflection is construed as a rational process through which one’s perspective or assumptive world view is surfaced, critically analyzed and transformed. This description did not match the experience of the participants in this study. A college professor who wrote her Master’s thesis on critical reflection commented that the more rational view of critical reflection never really matched her own experience which she characterized as being more imaginative and intuitive. “To me it’s more that stuff happens – there’s a burst of insight or intuition” that arises from you continued effort of engagement with life.

The Silencing and Rediscovery of Voice

Participants described a common difficulty in following verbal instructions or learning experiences that were mediated by language only. It was also common for them to describe difficulties in demonstrating what they knew through language either in written or oral communication. Fear of being exposed caused them to retreat into silence. “I would do anything to avoid any situation that would require me to speak up, read or write in front of the class. It was too risky.” The rediscovery of voice typically is triggered by the discovery of a passionate aspiration that drove learning. Participants tended to totally immerse themselves in learning related to this aspiration in order to develop a strong, systemic understanding of the field. Having
an understanding of the whole seemed important to enable processes for pattern recognition, memory, and tacit forms of problem-solving which were very common in this group. Aspiration typically arose out of some sort of currency that the participant discovered they had in sufficient quantity to be effective. As they invested in that area through instrumental learning and life experience, they accumulated even greater currency and a willingness to become more fully engaged. Voice is seen here as not just speaking but as the ability to express what is inside through multiple channels and finding the world is willing to hear what you have to say and respond to it. One participant, an artist, suggested that finding art, “gave me a medium that I could express myself in articulately.”

**The Role of Affect**

Heron (1992) describes affect as being made up of two modes: emotion and feeling. Emotion is defined as the localized affect that centers on the fulfillment or frustration of individual needs. Participants in this study described their K-12 experience as one that was filled with profound negative emotions of shame, frustration, fear, anxiety, anger, humiliation, and grief. One participant summarized this time in his life in two words, “God awful.” The need to resolve these intense feelings and emotions became the fuel that drove them forward. “When you are going through hell – keep going. You can’t just sit down in the road and give up. You have to find a path that works for you because the regular paths don’t.” Feeling refers to the capacity of the psyche to participate in wider unities of being, to become resonant, a sense of attunement with the world beyond the self. In the discovery of their aspiration each participant described an experience of resonance and connection. “As soon as I saw the computer I knew inside of me that this was important to me. This was what I had to do.” One participant remembers having an “expansive feeling” when he read his first book on molecular biology. Another felt immediately that the graduate school she found was the place where she could prosper and prove herself. Each of the participants described similar experiences of resonance at the discovery of their passionate aspiration or path.

**Preference for Experiential/Presentational Knowing and Extrarational Reflective Practices.**

It was common for participants to describe their most effective learning mode as being “hand-on” or experiential. “We don’t read the manuals – we just load the software and figure it out on our own.” Rather than analyzing problematic situations it was easier to conduct experiments and see what actions moved you forward and which one’s didn’t. Presentational knowing was also very common. While they struggled to express themselves in writing they often excelled in work that allowed them to utilize imaginative and intuitive functioning. In addition, it was very common for participants to be drawn to professions that significantly involved an end product that itself was presentational: playwright, science fiction author, roofer, artist, paleontology, radio storyteller, etc. Even the college professor suggested that her great strength was her ability to translate raw data into models or patterns that explain what is going on. This preference also emerged in their reflective practices. It was common to hear that the most effective means of triggering insight involved practices like writing poetry or the use of expressive therapies, such as psychodrama. One participant described his reflective practice as “synthesizing.” Whenever he is trying to figure things out, he will pose questions and then imagine options that might provide answers to those questions. Selecting the most viable choices he will play with them in his mind and test them in the real world before deciding on one right answer to follow through with. The solution space for him is like the missing pieces in a puzzle.
He looks at the space and imagines what kind of puzzle piece could fill it. Each participant described similar process of active engaging their extrarational capabilities in discerning the path forward in work and in life.

**Discussion**

The dominant view of transformational learning advocated by Mezirow (1991) posits the ego as the primary actor and the rational mind as the arena of transformation. Through critical reflection and rational dialogue the person seeks to surface, examine, replace, and/or restructure problematic habits of mind to achieve perspective transformation. That view proved inadequate to describe the transformative experience of the participants in this study. An alternative perspective offered by Boyd and Myers (1988), *transformative education*, proved to be a much more effective frame to understand the process of transformation experienced by the participants. In transformative education a different paradigm is at the heart of transformation: discernment. Discernment is a process in which an individual imaginatively engages their extrarational mind and brings it into dialogue with the rational to foster contemplative insight. In much the same way that Schon (1983) describes the reflective practitioner as being engaged in a “conversation with the situation” the process of discernment is best understood as an ongoing conversation. The difference is that the situation we are engaging goes to the depth of who we are (our contracted ego) and who we are seeking to become (our unrealized potential and yearning).

The case for discernment as the primary operational approach for the transformation of these successful dyslexics seems quite clear. Dyslexics are hard wired for a different approach to problem solving and learning that emphasizes visual spatial processing over language based processing and holistic thinking (seeing the whole system) over analytical thinking (seeing the pieces). Rational or propositional knowing is not dominant but it both supports and is supported by the extrarational. More importantly, the stories of transformation were less about gaining rational clarity and control and more about unfolding their personal mystery and illuminating directions for action that fit their deeply held aspirations. To use an analogy, within each acorn is the pattern of an oak tree. Once it takes root, it can only be fully realized by optimizing itself as an oak tree. The participants in this study were born with an underlying pattern of cognitive strengths and weaknesses and in a similar fashion they were fated by that pattern. The challenge is to move past the patterns imposed on them by others (the contracted ego) to discover the pattern seeking realization through them.

The major finding of this study was that discernment is a rich and viable process for personal transformation and is one that seems underdeveloped in the literature. If we really aspire to a more integrated and holistic theory of transformative learning it would be beneficial to expand research in this area. In Heron’s theory of personhood he suggests that the rational ego must evolve first and become strong before it can take the next step which is reintegration with the extrarational realm of the unconscious and collective unconscious. In the same way, the rational view of transformational learning has emerged and become strong but it is now time to open a dialogue with the extrarational processes of learning and work towards a more integrated view of transformation (Scott, 1991).

**References**


Red City High School Meets Blue City High School Online: Engaging Diversity in a Collaborative Inquiry with Students
Ilene C. Wasserman

Abstract: Twenty students traveled from a suburb of Spokane to meet students from a suburb of Philadelphia with whom they had an online relationship on a forum created by their US history teachers. Together they explored the impact their encounter had on how they view themselves and their social world.

Overview
In the wake of the events of September 11, 2001, the force of the us and them language in the public discourse accelerated at a rapid pace. The polarity of views and perspectives only exacerbated in the days leading up to the 2004 Presidential Election. Despite indications of shades of purple, the force of our public discourse continues to perpetuate an illusion of competing voices and polarized values.

In the fall of 2004, two high school history teachers, one from a suburb of Spokane Washington and the other from a suburb of Philadelphia Pennsylvania decided to build a bridge using the internet with their high school advanced placement U.S. History (APUSH) classes. With the help of technically savvy students at each end, the APUSH Forum was launched in early October 2004. Participation on the forum was voluntary. Initially, students addressed issues of historic significance posed by their teachers. Before long, students generated threads of conversations ranging from controversial current events, (i.e., legalized abortion and gay marriage) to music preferences. In collaborative inquiry, we explored the impact of their participation on their meaning making perspectives and the implications for transformative learning in an online environment. We also inquired into the impact of the inquiry itself in noticing, and thereby acting on, meaning making shifts.

Theoretical Foundations
Our research was based on transformative learning theory, with Mezirow’s work being central (1991, 2000) viewing that our process of meaning making is grounded in frames of reference or meaning perspectives created by our experiences. We build from Mezirow’s work in how we pursued moments of dissonance, or disorientation. Transformative learning theory maintains that the disorienting dilemma presents an opportunity for examining our taken-for-granted perspectives, and changing, or expanding the way in which we make meaning (Mezirow & Associates, 2000, p.7).

In the course of our daily lives, the opportunity to pause and reflect on our meaning making processes is often an option not pursued, certainly for individuals and even more so for people in the context of their relationships. Collaborative inquiry invites that opportunity. It is a process that brings to the fore “an awareness of the four ways of knowing, of how they are interacting, and of ways of changing the relations (Heron & Reason, 1997). Kasl and Yorks (2002) build on this to state that “critical subjectivity is the process of heightened awareness that, when incongruence among ways of knowing is detected, requires returning to the experience of the felt encounter. Experiential knowing, site of the affective and imaginal, is the ‘touchstone for the validity of all higher sets of transactions’” (Heron, 1992). Reflecting on moments of incongruence, dissonance or even different ways of making sense of our social lives provides the opportunity to expand our way of knowing.
The researchers used an appreciative collaborative inquiry (Wasserman, 2004) to engage the students in a reflective process. The heuristics from the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) were used to guide the process (Pearce, 2004; Wasserman, 2004). CMM is based on a communication approach to social construction theory, which suggests that meaning is created in relationships and that we create our social worlds in the turns of conversation and speech acts (Gergen, 1985; McNamee & Gergen, 1999; Pearce, 1995, 2004), as well as relational theory which proposes that people create new meaning in the process of relating (Fletcher & Ragins, 1998; Gergen, unpublished; Wasserman, 2004).

Methodology

Twenty students from Spokane arrived in Philadelphia in the spring of 2006 to participate in an appreciative collaborative inquiry that explored what they learned about each other and themselves through their relationships. Specifically, students reflected on how their taken-for-granted ways of seeing themselves and each other were influenced by their encounter. Prior to their visit, participants in the online seminar met separately at their respective high schools to explore defining moments in their online encounter when they noticed how they made sense of things in relationship with others. This core question became the basis of the initial inquiry. Defining moments were operationalized as interactions that prompted students to question or re-examine their values, ideas and feelings in a way that aroused confusion, disruption or challenge to their taken-for-granted way of viewing issues and/or their identity.

Students from Spokane spent 4 days in Philadelphia. The first day students traveled to historic sights, matched faces to names and played Frisbee together. The inquiry was planned for the second day. After establishing shared agreements for their conversations, students chose which defining moments they would explore. The Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) model (Pearce, 2004) was used to guide both the inquiry and the data analysis process. The third day students visited local historical sights and had free time in Philadelphia.

In addition to the day of reflection, teachers were interviewed. Students were invited to participate in a follow-up interview that explored the impact of the visit to Philadelphia and the inquiry following the meeting.

Findings and Implications

The opportunity to meet face-to-face was reportedly consequential to identifying perspective shifts, and perhaps transformative learning that may not have been apparent prior to the reflection. We have summarized five findings supported by quotes and excerpts from the data.

Greater Awareness of Self in Relationship to Others

The relationships they formed online and deepened during their visit. Many students stated that while they had not changed their own position on an issue per se, they could now embrace an opposing view and understand it as another perspective.

I learned that I was afraid of difference more than I thought I was. I thought I was open minded but there were some differences that I was scared of.Getting to talk about what I firmly believe in opened my eyes to other perspectives and views.

Reflection on How They Constructed their Arguments at a Systems Level

They described one group as structuring their arguments issues through a “political lens” and the other group viewed issues through a religious faith-based lens.
We were arguing from different logic forms – how do you argue with someone when you are coming from different paradigms? Our faith is in logic and reason and theirs is the bible.

Enhanced Capability to Know and Articulate One’s Perspective

The act of articulating views with others, particularly others whose views differed significantly from their own, sharpened student’s views of themselves.

When people are… supporting their argument in a way that is well researched, you need to as well. You can’t just say what you think.

Abortion is another one… Obviously I am still pro-choice but I can really understand how someone would be against abortion.

Online Relationships as a Medium

Students agreed that meeting face-to-face was consequential to recognizing that the complexity of each other’s identities—recognizing that the other students’ identities went beyond political and philosophical labels.

Alex and I did not get along very well on the forum and meeting him I did not expect to get along with him – but meeting him we really got along. The main topic [we disagreed on] was gay marriage. With my religion I firmly believe that a man should marry a woman. I did not leave it open for debate. Alex came back and said this is what I believe… We said some harsh things on the Internet. We did not care for each other. We were being closed-minded…. I was skeptical about meeting him I was not sure what he would remember. We did not say anything about it. {We} were able to be more open-minded and were able to see why people feel that they do… I was disappointed in myself that I made judgments too quick. [If we were to continue], I think it would be totally different because we would be responding to people as individuals. [Before], the LM kids would respond to UH kids as one group. Now we would not be responding as LM v UH – we would be responding to people individually – know each other as a whole person. Now that I know that people know who I am, I would not feel like I would have to represent all people or all Jews. Now that you know them you want to understand them.

Students Felt Forever Changed

Some described it as a political awakening. Others said that they feel like they carry the voices and perspectives of the new friends they made and bring those voices and perspectives into conversations with people at home and in their communities.

I’d certainly say it was broadening… the experience altogether. Right in the middle of the polarization we had the ability to explore personal views. We talked about our upbringing … And I personally was raised in a completely.. I’d like to think it was.. neutral atmosphere… like think what you want… And this was a chance that was perfect for me to be able to widen my views and just broaden my political awakenings. I feel personally I have pretty strong political acuity and I think that the forum was a great chance to hone that.

I think political awakening is a great way to put it. I think it was [one] for everyone. I live in a house that is pretty conservative, [but] not single-minded, not contrary to certain beliefs, and I wasn’t taught to think in a certain way.. But after the forum I was taught to
think my own way and to explore different ideas and different possibilities. I’d go home and have conversations with my parents, you know, a conservative issue, and then you know… and it was just really cool. It was interesting for them too. They learned a lot about different ways to look at things. I think overall it was just a great learning thing. I’m still pretty conservative but I know why I think what I think now and I know how to defend it a lot more, and I know how to defend the different sides… I know why I think what I think and that sounds weird cause I didn’t know that I didn’t know.

I feel like when people talk about people who have faith more that I do, I hear it differently because I hear it how you guys will hear it. I have your perspective in the back of my head.

One of the participants in the inquiry worked on the data analysis as her senior project. As part of her project, she and another student created a video montage of their 5 days together. We plan to share this montage as part of our presentation.

The literature that describes the process of transformative learning has focused primarily on adults. Further, theories of human development suggest that most teens have not fully developed the capacity to reflect on their behavior from a third party perspective (Piaget, 1983; Kegan, 1994). The experience that students were creating on the forum sparked the opportunity to explore how the students engaged across multiple differences (for example, social class, culture and faith identities) and to offer the opportunity for pause and reflection.

**Summary**

Transformative learning theory teaches us that critical reflection is essential to the process. While the online experience expanded student’s learning experience in their AP American History course, facilitated critical reflection with each other extended and deepened what students learned through their encounter with each other. The process promoted critical thinking, fostering self/other awareness in the areas of intellectual, social, class and faith diversity as well as supporting civic engagement. The findings from this study inform curriculum design particularly at a time when educators are increasingly pressured to teach to the test.

**References**


Transforming Higher Education through Authentic Self-Studies
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Abstract: Our self-studies have the potential to counter the performative culture of our institutions and transform higher education if we approach self-study guided by an ethic of authenticity.

Introduction

Amidst numerous and increasing calls to “transform” our institutions of higher learning, rethinking and reshaping them so that they better reflect core academic values and goals, this paper focuses on self-study practices in higher education. Most self-studies in these settings are conducted for the purpose of quality assurance and improvement. For example, teaching portfolios allow colleagues to assess one another’s teaching, while internal academic reviews allow us to assess the quality of a department’s academic programming. Self-study is also used as an approach to teaching scholarship, in which case it is a form of practice-based inquiry that ideally focuses teachers’ attention on the connections between their teaching and their students’ learning.

In this paper I argue that self-study is potentially transformative if undertaken authentically, yet is potentially dehumanizing if undertaken performatively. Authenticity entails being true to one’s self: “There is a certain way of being human that is my way (Taylor, 1991, p. 29). Our authenticity is unique, but it is socially situated: being conscious of self, other, relationship and context (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004). Performativity refers to the use value of individual academic work for optimizing cost-effectiveness and increasing competitiveness of a person or institution (MacKenzie, McShane & Wilcox, 2007). My purpose is to consider first, how we can respond to the ethical challenges of conducting self-study in contemporary higher education institutional contexts, where performativity has become the norm; and second, how we can improve the chances that our self-studies will result in the transformations we hope for.

My hope is that we may come to better appreciate the need for self-studies that encourage us to care for our authentic selves and develop more meaningful and sustainable academic and institutional identities. Such self-studies offer a route to meaningful transformation.

What do we Mean by Transformation?

Transformative learning theory offers a lens to examine what is implied by a call to transform higher education. “Transformation” suggests a dramatic change for the better; transformative learning theory explores how that change comes about. Transformation learning occurs when we develop new interpretations that guide our decisions and action. Through critical questioning of ourselves, our beliefs, and our expectations we experience a deep shift in perspective which leads us to a new way of being in the world. Learning may be a response to disturbing life experiences (a disorienting dilemma serves as a precipitating event, and is followed by gradual or sudden change), or it may be a developmental negotiation of life transitions, in which there is a sense of being on the edge of, and moving towards, something new. Through transformative learning we reconsider the ways we make sense of the world, and our revised understandings inform subsequent decisions we make.

The transformative learning process is often described as cognitive and rational, but it may also incorporate imagination, intuition, affect and soul-work. It is not a solitary exercise.
Discourse with others often plays a vital role in the critical process of reviewing our long-held assumptions. And when individuals who have transformed their perspectives act differently in the world than they did before and share their new perspectives with other people, societal transformation can come about.

Transformation is a self-directed and voluntary process: we cannot transform someone else, only ourselves. However, we can facilitate and support transformative processes in others. When we engage in efforts to promote transformation, we must be prepared to change ourselves, as well as to bring about change/transformation in others; transformation requires a deep, honest, authentic and open engagement in the learning process – from all who are involved in the process.

What is Involved in Self-Study?

A self-study invites us to consider “who we are” and “what we do”, “what we know” and “how we know it” (Samaras & Freese, 2006). Personal subjectivity is both assumed and appreciated, allowing us to uncover our underlying values and the manner in which actions and beliefs intertwine. Thus, a completed self-study is a celebration of the individual/unit, and is validation and valuation made visible. Self-study typically serves as a starting point for further development, a place from which we can identify what is needed to improve in particular contexts. Self-study may also help us to gain a deeper understanding of what is involved in the transformations we say we desire.

An appreciation for self-study as a tool for transformation comes from those who use it as an approach to scholarship (where understanding is the goal), and do not limit self-study to documentation and quality assurance purposes (where showing evidence of success is the goal). Probably the single most important aspect of an effective/meaningful/successful self-study is its use of critical reflection. Self-study invites us to engage consciously and intentionally in the self-reflective process that characterizes transformative learning experiences. It is an ideal approach for those who are willing to critically examine their own beliefs and to challenge their existing practices.

Self-study incorporates – yet takes us beyond – reflective practice. Loughran and Northfield (1998) argue that self-study takes the personal processes involved in reflective practice and makes them public, thus leading to another series of processes that need to reside outside of the individual. Reflexivity becomes a tool for connecting self with others, enabling critical discourse among members of a community of practice. The self-study sets the stage for next steps: engaging productively with others, developing shared understandings of educational issues and strategies to address them.

There is no one way of conducting a self-study, no one best method to use. Self-study scholars have been particularly successful at incorporating approaches to learn that involve different ways of knowing, including cognitive, rational self-reflective processes as well as extra-rational processes relying on imagination, intuition, discernment, soul work and affect. Self-studies may be conducted using imagery, metaphor, mapping, art-making, drama and music, role-play, ritual and contemplative practices. Other methods include discussion and group work/dialogue, writing (i.e., memoir, autobiography, fiction, poetry) and using texts.

Self-study is a marvelous way to respond positively to the things that take us by surprise, allowing us to turn disorienting dilemmas of practice into positive prompts for transformative learning. Self-study can also help us to first notice the transitions we are facing and then
negotiate these transitions (e.g., to a student-centred approach) in more authentic ways. We begin to recognize when our perspectives are changing and must look for new ways to act/practice.

Self-studies may be conducted by individuals or they may be collaborative ventures, in which a group of individuals as a collective explores areas of practice where they have a shared responsibility. TL theory’s focus on the socially transformative power of an individual’s critically reflective learning lends credence to the value and impact of self-studies that are conducted within professional practice communities.

We may initially take on the task of conducting a self-study for very pragmatic and instrumental purposes, willing to engage in some self-analysis in order to highlight for others how we are doing good work, and hoping that the study may contribute to self-improvement and development. The literature tells us that learning outcomes fostered through self-study include professional knowledge creation, an enhanced capacity for professional reasoning, critically reflective practice and self-directed professional/academic development, and transformation of the perspectives that shape our practice.

**Barriers to Self-Study in the Academy**

My own encounters with self-study confirm that it can indeed be transformative, yet there are barriers – some more significant than others – to fully realizing its potential for the transformation of individuals and their institutional and disciplinary cultures. For example, issues of professional identity often surface and may become problematic when academics engage in self-study. In my work with new university teachers, I have found that an invitation to explore their emerging teacher-self may well challenge their barely formed identity as disciplinary experts. Busy with learning how to think and act like cultural theorists or research biologists, electrical engineers, psychologists or management specialists, these novice academics have a need to belong, and are leery of any activities that may threaten that goal. Transformative approaches to self-study ask them to rethink academic roles and practices, and not surprisingly, not all beginning academics feel free to consider alternative ways of thinking and doing things when they are not yet secure within their disciplinary communities.

The educational developer who chooses to promote and support self-study scholarship among and with her colleagues also faces risks. The task of facilitating self-study demands a very special caring relationship between facilitator and academic/teacher. Universities are not places where such relationships are valued. The capacity to foster such relationships is a gift – and we are afraid of things we cannot learn. We can choose to develop this capacity (self-study itself is particularly useful in this regard), but our efforts to improve in this area will not be rewarded in the academy. Our work will be most appreciated by those individuals and units we work with, but these relationships are confidential. Also, when we facilitate self-study, the focus should be on the study and the self who “owns” the study. In educational contexts we want to be invisible, to fade into the background while the learner takes ownership of their development. But in institutional contexts, this means there is a great risk that the valuable work of the facilitator will be unseen, devalued, not protected or supported. This is a huge loss to the institution in terms of realizing the potential growth and development that it hopes to achieve through educational development activities.

Open and honest dialogue is a necessary condition for transformative self-study, with exchanges that might nudge thinking in new ways. This project is complicated by the increasing diversity within academic communities of practice. It requires a particular type of communication skills and demands a capacity for reflexivity. Of course, these skills are actually
developed through engagement in self-study, and the self-study process can lead to a deeper appreciation for the diversity of ideas, perspectives, and values shaping professional experiences and institutional contexts. But the learning process is a risky one, with the potential for miscommunication and misinterpretation among those with different values and backgrounds.

Performativity is a technology, a culture and mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change - based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). (Ball, 2003, p. 216)

Impression management and emotional management are critical tasks of what Ball (2003) has termed ‘performative fabrication’. The contemporary academic must ‘perform’ herself, creating convincing depictions of her achievements and aligning her activities with performance and tenure criteria. In fact, self-studies are one kind of performance we are expected to engage in. Yet there can be profound personal and institutional costs in trying to sustain and live up to our fabrications: dissonance, dividedness, anxiety, and alienation. The irony is that a performative culture has given rise to self-study documentation practices, yet within such a culture it is very difficult to safely engage in the kind of self-study that will teach us something new about ourselves and thus empower, enlighten, and transform. How to counter the dehumanizing culture of the performative university? How to make it more likely that in responding to the crises of working within performative conditions we overcome anxiety and enable transformation?

Academic practice (including self-study) rooted explicitly in an ethic that embodies an ideal of authenticity (as opposed to an ideology of performativity) is a possible response. While the language of performativity overshadows and silences discussions of ethics and authenticity and of the moral purpose of the university, many of us see the ideal of authenticity as central to what it means to be an educator, intellectual, academic. We can respond to the performative culture of the university by naming it as such, and can counter its dehumanising ideology by adopting an ethic (and a language) of authenticity. Elsewhere (MacKenzie, McShane & Wilcox, 2007), I and my colleagues have argued that authenticity in higher education is strengthened through attention to intellectual, emotional and spiritual growth. Self-study affords a wonderful opportunity to promote this kind of development – the authentic growth that enables transformation.

Authentic Self-Study

When we aim for transformation – though the desired or necessary change may be at the personal, relational, institutional and/or global level – we must be prepared to “work on ourselves” (Tennant, 2005). This is where self-study fits in. Fortunately, a wide range of techniques, processes and practices – or ‘technologies of the self’ – are available to us. Tennant and his colleagues (Chappell et al, 2003) have usefully categorized the basic ways in which we may act upon ourselves to bring about transformation: knowing the self, controlling the self, (re)creating the self and caring for the self. I propose we review each of these technologies in light of our efforts to engage in authentic self-study.

Knowing Oneself

Most of us are familiar with the idea that it is a good thing to know who we are, as much as this is possible, because we will bring ourselves, to a greater or lesser degree depending on circumstances, to our professional roles. Becoming aware of our values, qualities, perspectives, and experience allows us to establish the groundwork for personal and professional action and
development. Autobiography analysis, reflective journaling, and asking for feedback from others are some examples of the many techniques, processes, and practices available for knowing oneself or gaining psychological insight in higher education settings. The difficulty is that self-study may be a tool for coming to better know ourselves so that we can be more authentic – but ONLY if we engage in self-study with an attitude of openness to truly knowing ourselves. This category of technologies highlights how important it is to be clear about our motivations for engaging in self-study.

Controlling Oneself

Ultimately, self-knowledge is not enough to enable transformation – it is also necessary to change those things that work against transformation, such as everyday habits, patterns of interpersonal relationships, community and organizational structures, etc. Self-study always results in implications for further action, and we ourselves are implicated in these action plans. Efforts may be directed inwardly towards correcting one’s habits and values, or outwardly towards modifying the social, historical or cultural conditions that limit us. The idea is that to sustain transformational change, one must implement and consciously practice new behaviours and attitudes and new strategies for relating to self and others. It is not enough to say what we plan to do as a result of our self-study – we must actually do it! Do we follow up on the plans made?

(Re)creating Oneself

Transformation is about the possibility of creating or recreating a ‘new self’ in the world. Will this new self be a more authentic self? Will the old self be discarded or reinterpreted or strengthened? Many questions arise, but the basic idea is that the individual builds a sense of agency and takes personal responsibility for finding a way to move forward. This typically involves re visioning one’s place or one’s role, for example, and/or re writing and pursuing new narratives about the self. Visioning exercises are fairly common in higher education – typically surrounded by questions of whether they are intended to help us imagine a real future that reflects our strengths and weaknesses, or are simply window-dressing and positioning ourselves so as to appear to be what we desire to be.

Caring for Oneself

In my view, ‘caring for self’ is the category of practices we least attend to in higher education settings. The profound rethinking that characterizes transformative learning will inevitably affect academics’ relations with colleagues and students and may have a remarkable impact on their personal lives. Metaphors of healing are common enough in the transformative learning literature, which advises that we should pay attention to the emotional, intuitive, extra-rational and intensely personal and interpersonal aspects of transformative change. Yet support for emotional, holistic, psychological, and spiritual growth in higher education contexts is woefully inadequate. We need to learn how to be kind to ourselves, particularly in the context of our relationships with others. It is wise, for example, to give time to caring and respectful relationships with colleagues in which we devote our attention to learning from our shared experiences. Authenticity is risky business – so we owe ourselves and one another an attitude of care.

I believe the key to effective self-study lies in the quality of the relationships among those involved in the self-study. Sometimes we are actively engaged in self-study ourselves, other times we are playing a more-distant supporting role, but whenever we are in a professional
relationship with a colleague doing self-study, that relationship has the power to enable or impede the self-study process. We need encourage all members of the academy to exercise responsibly the power they hold: for example, not just to complain about all the paperwork involved to doing self-studies but to actually respond to the reports they read, listening carefully, asking questions, encouraging plans, and following up.

We also owe one another safe spaces for risk-taking, if we are truly interested in challenging one another to growth. One challenge in facilitating others’ self-study is in determining the correct “challenge to support” ratio: what degree of safety is required so that a professional will successfully undertake the risks associated with critically reflective learning? Providing adequate support for self-study is especially difficult when time is short – a problem that is all-too-common when working with busy professionals in a performative environment.

**Conclusion**

Hope for self-study as an approach to transformation lies in the ways we collaborate across diverse communities in identifying the challenges that are there for all of us in our performative institutions, and determining how we can negotiate and manage them together. When professionals and institutions together assume a caring yet self-critical stance and integrate the philosophy and varied tools of authentic self-study into professional development programs and institutional assessment practices, we have the opportunity to transform our selves, our practice and our institutional cultures.

Technical knowledge of practice – without critical self-reflection – is no longer sufficient in an increasingly diverse, complex and rushed world. Wisdom gained through self-study is the foundation for authentic and transformative engagement in higher education, opening up new avenues of understanding, communication and action.

**References**


Abstract: This paper examines three subtheories within intercultural communication in terms of their relevance to the project of nurturing transformation around cultural issues and identities within higher education.

The central question guiding this paper is: What can educators interested in fostering transformative learning glean from theories of intercultural communication about teaching and learning around diversity and cultural difference? University faculty and students delve into a wide variety of multicultural issues, ranging from language and value differences across cultures, to the effects of culture on personal identity, to the impact of racial disparities and prejudice on the larger society. A key supposition about the learning that occurs in this environment is that there will be a positive change—or transformation—in views toward the "other" that leads to greater communication, understanding, and political and economic parity. The assumption of intercultural theories about movement toward a positive outcome connects, at least in part, with a central tenet of transformative learning: "...transformation can lead developmentally [italics added] toward a more inclusive, differentiated, permeable, and integrated perspective...insofar as it is possible, we all naturally move toward such an orientation" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 155).

Within the field of intercultural communication are numerous theories that explore the experience of the outsider (who could be an immigrant, refugee, international sojourner, or member of an ethnic group who regularly crosses cultural boundaries within his or her own country) in interpreting intercultural experience; that is, the experience of encountering a new culture in which one's usual perspectives, behaviors, and styles of communication are significantly out of sync. In this paper, I explore three subtheories and models within intercultural communication— the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, cross-cultural adaptation, and cultural identity. While these perspectives do not speak to the totality of the multicultural issues that are raised in universities today, I believe they can be useful to those educators who seek theoretical frameworks for understanding the continuing shifts in identity and adaptive processes that occur as individuals negotiate unfamiliar cultural contexts.

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity
The underlying assumption of Milton Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) is that as the construal of cultural difference becomes more complex, individuals' understanding of their own and other cultures, along with competence in intercultural relations, are increased (Bennett, 1986; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). The DMIS is a model of changes in worldview structure, through which the state of a person's worldview can be assessed through observable behaviors and self-reported attitudes. The value of an intercultural communication approach to learning around cultural difference is that it can focus on the development of intercultural competence—the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriate in a variety of cross-cultural situations (Bennett & Bennett, 2005).

The model is divided between ethnocentric stages, in which a person uses his or her own set of standards to judge all people, even if unconsciously; and ethnorelative, where the individual is comfortable with a number of standards and customs and is able to adapt behavior
and judgments to a variety of interpersonal settings. The first ethnocentric stage, denial, describes people who either don’t perceive cultural differences at all, or unwittingly stereotype. Those at the defense stage generally attach negative evaluations to the cultural differences they perceive. The minimization stage is particularly important, because it characterizes the many who may accept more superficial cultural differences, but assume that “deep down” people are all the same. This stage is often the "default" perspective of individuals acculturated to only one primary culture.

The ethnorelative stages can present practice opportunities for improving intercultural competence. Those at the acceptance stage are curious about other cultures, including their own, focusing on a conscious differentiation and elaboration of cultural categories. It is with the adaptation stage that people intentionally shift into a different cultural frame of reference, empathizing with another perspective. Bennett refers to an increase in a person’s “repertoire of behavior”, wherein an individual maintains the necessarily skills for operating in his or her home culture, but is now interculturally competent—bicultural, or even multicultural—shifting frames of reference with little conscious effort. Finally, people at the integration stage are able to interpret and evaluate behavior from a variety of cultural frames of reference, taking a constructivist approach to the crossing of cultures. This highest stage, however, can be accompanied by confusion resulting from the internalization of many viewpoints, necessitating a contextualized sorting through of the most appropriate, most ethical behaviors responses.

**Cross-cultural Adaptation**

Cross-cultural adaptation is an interactive communication process that leads to a gradual, personal transformation beyond one's original cultural boundaries toward a "more inclusive, less categorical self-conception and self-other orientation" (p. 375). Intercultural communication theorist Young Yun Kim (2005) frames this shift in personal, adaptive, and transformational learning terms:

As [sojourners] confront their predicaments as strangers and engage in new learning for an improved ‘goodness of fit’, they begin to undergo a gradual process of personal transformation beyond their original cultural perimeters and toward more inclusive and less categorical self-conception and self-other orientation. (p. 375)

Key processes around adaptation are new learning, psychological growth and the struggle for internal equilibrium (Kim, 2005); along with the predisposing personality traits of openness to new cultural experience, preparedness for change, and ethnic proximity to the new culture (Kim, 2001). Cross-cultural adaptation is simultaneously a process of acculturation and deculturation—embracing the new, while letting go of the old, at least temporarily.

Kim's cyclical "stress-adaptation-growth" model represents a dialectic between opposing psychological forces—resistance to change and embrace of change, through self-adjustments. Competence in the new cultural environment is manifested through the cognitive (language, worldviews, beliefs), the affective (openness to new aesthetic and emotional expressions), and operational, or behavioral. Stress accompanies these shifts as the individual realizes he or she is inadequate to the demands of the new environments and attempts to restore equilibrium to the process. Adaptation encompasses the active development of new habits, and over time, growth occurs, albeit in a cyclical, nonlinear, dialectical fashion.
Intercultural Identity

Ting-Toomey (2005) places identity negotiation as a central process in intercultural boundary-crossing, as individuals move back and forth between identity security and insecurity, and between identity membership inclusion and exclusion. It is also a key process within cross-cultural adaptation. People can bring a multitude of identities into an interaction--social class, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic identity, to name just a few. Identity is a self-reflective process constructed, experienced, and communicated by individuals within a specific culture and interactional context. Negotiation is also a communication activity in which individuals attempt to assert, define, modify, challenge, and/or support their own desired self-images and those of others.

A core theoretical assumption of identity negotiation theory is that individuals in all cultures have basic motivational needs for identity security, inclusion, predictability, connection, and consistency (Turner, 1987, 1988). These needs are influenced by cultural, personal, and situational variability. Communicating effectively and appropriately with culturally dissimilar people is dependent upon skills in intercultural identity-based knowledge, mindfulness, and interaction. The outcomes of a satisfactory process of identity negotiation includes being understood, respected, and positively valued.

Racial and ethnic identity negotiation models, one type of cultural identity model, generally progress in a linear, albeit gradual path to identity change. Models such as those of William Cross (1991) extend from unawareness of one's ethnic identity (in this case, African American), through stages in which an individual encounters and embraces an ethnic/racial consciousness, to an internalization and commitment stage in which a person both develops a secure racial/ethnic identity and establishes authentic connections with dominant culture members. Similar models, with similar stages, have been constructed for Asian Americans, Latino Americans, and European Americans, to mention a few. The latter stages of such ethnic identity models resemble Bennett's DMIS, particularly adaptation and integration, in which individuals broaden their skill in shifting reference frames, adapt communication styles, and internalize two or more cultures.

The identity negotiation perspective predicts that individuals creatively approach the negotiation of identity dialectics, such as security and vulnerability, inclusion and exclusion, predictability and unpredictability, connection and autonomy, consistency and change (Ting-Toomey, 2005). Identity negotiation skills include values clarification, mindful observation and listening, verbal empathy, face-work management, and conflict reframing. Identity negotiation competence is assessed through the criteria of appropriateness and effectiveness, leading to a definition of mindful intercultural communication as "the process and outcome of how two dissimilar individuals negotiate shared identity meanings and achieve desired, conjoint identity outcomes through appropriate and effective behaviors in an intercultural episode" (p. 228). Competent identity negotiators are able to work with the tensions that accompany two seemingly polarized value systems, use multiple cultural frames of reference to interpret cultural ambiguities, use multiple communication styles to listen, empathize, and code-switch when the situation demands.

Common themes emerge from these intercultural communication perspectives. First, the goal of competence is expressed, in terms of adapting to a new culture, in communicating effectively, and in negotiating shared identities within the framework of intercultural interactions. These goals are generally referred to in transformational terms, as individuals move toward more openness to cultural difference, greater tolerance of ambiguity, and more ways of
looking at personal identity, dependent upon the cultural context. Second, these theories speak in developmental terms, moving from stages of less awareness to greater awareness and competence in communicating across cultures. Third, all three generally recognize to some extent that while the process may be linear, there is a cyclical element to the process of becoming more interculturally competent, as individuals rotate back to earlier stages to gain confidence as they move forward. And fourth, intercultural communication theories echo core transformative learning research themes: the primacy of personal experience as a starting point for transformative learning; the centrality of critical reflection as a means of interrogating the integrity of prior worldviews and assumptions; and the role of the disorienting dilemma and stress in precipitating transformation (Mezirow, 1991; Taylor, 1994; Ziegahn, 2005).

**Transformative Learning and Intercultural Communication Theories**

Two researchers examined cross-cultural learning within the framework of transformative learning theories from the field of adult education. First, Taylor (1994), in his study of intercultural competence among international sojourners, concluded that missing in theories of intercultural competence was an attention to significant processes of learning to become competent; specifically, how perspectives were transformed, and how old meaning structures or perspectives were changed to reflect newer, broader, more inclusive interpretations. His conclusions suggested that (1) those who learned to be interculturally competent were ready for change due to former critical events, personal goals, prior intercultural experiences, (2) emotions were a driving force for participants to regain balance in life, (3) perspective transformation was not contingent upon critical reflection—a nonreflective orientation could also lead to change in meaning perspectives, (4) new routines could become habitual outside participants' conscious awareness, and (5) behavioral strategies in the face of intercultural challenges were not necessarily tied to disorienting dilemma, but could be approached from a short-term perspective, and guided by feelings.

Ziegahn (2005) explored the degree to which critical reflection shaped learning around cultural difference in graduate level learning, specifically in the computer conference. Results showed that positionality and affective expression were important vis a vis reflection, race was a catalyst for reflection on cultural difference, and that students' approaches to learning about the other ranged from nonreflective to critically reflective. Specific self-reflective student behaviors and mindsets that influenced the extent of critical reflection included: the ability to link personal cultural positions to social inequity, embrace and interrogate negative emotions, question prejudices, reframe underlying assumptions about the other, and apply previously learned habits of reflection to perplexing intercultural experiences.

**Intercultural Communication Perspectives and Higher Education**

The purpose of this paper has been to explore approaches from the field of intercultural communication that may be useful to educators helping students in colleges and universities grapple with change toward more open and inclusive multicultural perspectives. Following are thoughts on how the intercultural communication literature can complement research conducted on this topic by transformative learning researchers.

An advantage of intercultural perspectives is their focus specifically on communication dynamics and interactional processes. In cross-cultural conflict, these are the forces that often confound understanding, and lead to stereotyping and prejudice formation. This focus on relational transactions complements some of the common fields and theories that prevail today in
academe: culture-specific, anthropological approaches that focus on particular mores and values; and theories on race, oppression, and gender that delve into the historical and political dimensions on inequities and power imbalances.

Transformation in cross-cultural worldviews is a highly self-reflective process. Whether the goal is increased competence, cross-cultural adaptation, or identity negotiation, essential to the process of understanding the other is understanding how one's personal culture and communication intent affect communication episodes.

The skills that accompany transformational learning around cultural difference are inextricably linked to self-reflection. These skills led generally to increased intercultural understanding and competence, and included strategies for becoming competent in a foreign environment, such as observing, active participation, and developing friendships (Taylor, 1994); the more instrumental "self-adjustments" to which Kim (2005) referred, including learning a new language and emotional expressions; identity negotiation skills such as values clarification, empathy, etc. (Ting-Toomey, 2005); and the critically reflective skills of reframing, connecting past reflective habits and experiences with new academic frames, and questioning emotions and prejudices (Ziegahn, 2005). The importance of all of these various strategies is that they translate shifts in thought and belief to the behavioral level, through a developmental process, over time. Again, the self-reflective, interactional focus of an intercultural communication focus is critical in the context of teaching and learning about cultural difference; helping students to move from knowing about and appreciation of other cultures, to being able to communicate across various psychological, linguistic, and behavioral barriers.

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Experiential Studies Presented

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Descansos: A Process to Discover the Redemptive Sequence Leading to Wisdom in a Transformational Experience
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Allison Alliance Inc. Wisdom Out

Abstract: By making a Descansos, people can identify the significant losses in their life that represent turning points leading to the development of personal wisdom. A Descansos, as used in this experiential process, is a timeline that allows participants to reflect on the presence of a redemptive sequence.

Introduction
The experience of making a Descansos derives from the author’s 2006 doctoral dissertation research at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. In that study, wisdom and its relationship to loss and adversity were explored in the lives of fifteen nurses who were nominated as being wise. The Descansos was employed as a graphic organizer that allowed participants to visually reflect on the significant losses and adversities in their life.

People who are drawn to transformation theory are keenly interested in processes that promote change in themselves and others. Some of the characteristics of transformational change as defined by Mezirow (2000) include a disorienting dilemma, critical assessment of assumptions, realizing one is not alone, planning a new course of action and eventual reentry into life guided by the newly gained perspective. In my 2006 study, I adapted a method for exploring life loss (disorienting dilemma) called “Descansos.” The Descansos activates several steps in the transformative process, providing a person with a compressed experience that allows them to make sense of significant events in their life and use the insight and wisdom gained to navigate future disorienting dilemmas or inspire others who follow.

Theoretical Frame
Descansos is a Spanish word that means “place of rest” (Anaya, 1995). Historically, the Descansos may have originated with the Conquistadors who marked the place in the road where one of their own died, usually with a small white cross. Some people say the Descansos comes from Old Mexico, when families would convey the coffin of a loved one through the hilly countryside to its final resting place. Along the way, they would have to rest. So they would lay the coffin down, and place a little white cross next to it to consecrate the ground. After a while they continued the journey until they reached the final place of rest.

Throughout New Mexico and the Southwest, these white crosses often decked with flowers and bearing the name of a departed person appear all along the sides of the road. The Descansos marks the places where a car accident has taken one or more lives. As you drive, these Descansos beg your attention. They are metaphors for the disorienting dilemmas. Wake up! They say. Pay attention to your life! Today, especially in the Southwest, Descansos are memorials erected—crosses, photos, wreaths, pictures, flowers—and kept by family and friends to mark the place where a life was abruptly altered by death.

The process of “making a Descansos” comes from author and Jungian psychologist Clarisa Pinkola-Estes (1992). She uses the Descansos to mark metaphorical deaths or losses—the disorienting dilemmas in a life. Disorienting dilemmas are uniquely relative to each person and no one gets to sit in judgment about the authenticity of another person’s loss. Pinkola-Estes, calls these losses “las muertes chiquitas, and las muertes grandotas,” “small deaths and big
deaths.” She says these are, “…the roads that were not taken, paths that were cut off, ambushes, betrayals, and deaths” (p. 396). Authors and adult educators Patsy Boverie and Michael Kroth tell us the transformative change process involves the questioning of personal beliefs and assumptions. They say, “When we start asking ourselves questions like “Is there really a God?” “Why am I here on earth?” and “What am I doing with my life?” we can tell that things we believed were “truth” about the world are open for questioning” (p. 123).

Pinkola-Estes encourages the people she works with in her therapy practice to make a Descansos of their lives – sort of a timeline that marks the places where the big and little deaths occurred. She believes this helps them to sanctify these places of loss, find meaning in them, and get on living life with a transformed perspective. Pinkola-Estes writes,

I encourage you to make Descansos, to sit down with a time-line of your life and say where are the crosses? Where are the places that must be remembered, must be blessed? In all are meanings that you have brought forward into your life today (p. 396).

The Descansos process when used therapeutically as described by Pinkola-Estes ritualizes the need to sanctify the place of loss ( endings) so that the individual can move on, presumably with a more useful perspective. In the present experiential session, the Descansos is not used therapeutically but as a methodology for collecting data about the losses experienced by participants. As a metaphor for how a person uses loss as a catalyst for growth, the Descansos offers itself up as a compelling visual artifact for the display of growth toward wisdom in the life of an individual.

Carl Jung began to use imagery with patients he worked with, asking them to portray what they saw in their dreams. He believed the process of making art is healing and life-enhancing. Through visual imagery, an individual can explore experiences from the past and relate them to the present (Jung, 1964).

Writing about “ordinary wisdom,” Randall and Kenyon (2001) seem to support this idea when they say, “Ordinary wisdom does not manifest once and for all, however, but in the form of a journey. Moreover, it is a journey fraught with doubt and confusion, paradox and tension, ambivalence and fear” (p. 13). Robert Atkinson (1995) suggests support for the therapeutic effect of the Descansos when he says that people seem to tell stories as a “…way of purging or releasing ourselves of certain burdens” (p. 15).

For the purposes of the present experiential session, the Descansos are not intended for therapeutic use, but simply provide a graphic image from which the participant can reflect and refer to.

Methods

The Descansos process adapted for the present experiential sessions makes visible not only the disorienting dilemma, but also the assumptions, the people present at the time, emotions, and actions the person took. Transformation Theory embraces each of these elements. More importantly, the Descansos may allow the participant to see how redemption of the disorienting dilemma brings wisdom to their newly reintegrated life. An additional benefit comes from the discourse created by the participants themselves as they consider the Descansos as a process and concept relative to transformation theory.

During the experiential process, participants make their own Descansos, for a period of time they select in their life. The session begins with a brief description of the theoretical concepts that link to transformative learning (wisdom, loss, Descansos) and frame the Descansos experience. Following this initial positioning, participants engage in a facilitated process to
create their Descansos. At the end of the facilitated process, the process includes whole/small
group discussion of insights about the process itself, it’s perceived relationship to transformation
theory, benefits and challenges of the Descansos process as a transformational tool, and
implications for the field of adult education.

The facilitated Descansos process

The process includes the following steps:
1. Select a 5-10 year period of life to focus on.
2. Recall and list as many significant experiences during the time period selected,
   characterized by loss and adversity.
3. Place those events on a timeline indicating them with a significant marker (cross,
   image from nature, a word, a shape).
4. Select one event to focus on in this session. Either alone or with a partner, identify the
   assumptions that died along with the event, the people who were present in your life
   at the time and what they brought to you, the actions you took afterwards, and the
   way life is now different.
5. Reflect on the event and ways it may influence the future.

This session will use delivery methods that include:
- Brief presentation (10 minutes)
- Samples of Descansos from my dissertation research (displayed in the room)
- Facilitated process using graphic art (paper and colorful markers will be
  provided)
- Individual reflection
- Pair share
- Group discussion
- Summary sheet

Participants will leave the session with their own Descansos and a one page summary sheet
of ideas from the session.

The outcomes from the session are both personal and professional. On a personal level,
participants examine the transformative process in their own life and reflect on the assumptions
and actions that followed and even redeemed the loss for wisdom. On a professional level,
participants expand thoughts they have about transformation theory and engage in dialogue with
others in the field. The expansion of thought in participants will most assuredly lead to new
theoretical frameworks and an illumination of transformative learning processes.

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Using Role-play (and Music, Poetry, and Drama) to Challenge Perspectives and Understand “Difference”
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Abstract: Role play is a well-accepted method for “trying on” new perspectives. This workshop will invite participants to experience what happens when role-play is supported by an especially compelling story line, plus poetry, music, and drama.

Introduction
The musical “Les Misérables” has been immensely popular for over 20 years. Audiences around the world sympathize with little Cosette and her mother, who gallantly dies trying to shield her daughter; cheer Jean Valjean’s attempts at evading Inspector Javert; deplore the Inspector’s obsession with Valjean, the ex-prisoner become exemplary citizen, business owner, and eventually life-long protector of Cosette; revel in the passion of the students who think they can change the world, but die trying; and burn with indignation at the societal structures that fostered such pervasive injustices.

On the surface, it is simply a good, stirring—and at times heartrending—story. On another level, it provides commentary about good, evil, justice (or lack thereof) and the law, human nature, religion, romantic and familial love, and social change. On yet another level, it effectively describes the personal and psychological transformation of one of the characters and the lack of it in another, thus making this musical narrative a study in development, and especially the factors that can support a change of perspective.

A well-written novel, such as Zola’s, invites the reader into the minds of its characters. A play adds the dimension of watching people engage with one another in ways that tend to reveal what is in their minds, sometimes, perhaps, thoughts and feelings about which they are not consciously aware. And, as everyone who has left the theatre humming the rousing finale can attest, music adds yet another level of emotional and even physical engagement. All of which is to say that “Les Miz” is an unusually rich theatrical experience, which undoubtedly explains why it has been produced in over 30 countries in as many languages.

Back to role-play, however. When, rather than merely watching others do it, people engage in “make believe,” they can often temporarily let go of a long-held perspective for another that may be new, different, and sometimes challenging. Engaging in role-play enables someone to be someone else, if only to a limited degree and for a little while. Even so, to get into another’s head-space requires some understanding of or identification with how this character sees the world. What is s/he experiencing? What parts of her/his history lead to certain behaviors? Does this character have other choices? Why or why not? What would it take for me-the-character to see, feel, experience the world differently? Not surprisingly, engaging in this intimate way with the “other” often leads the role-player to experience some shift in his or her own perspectives. Using non-rational parts of themselves allows people to access their imaginations and thereby perhaps experience a breakthrough or deepen their self-knowledge and understanding of others (Bassett, 2000; Bassett, 2006).
We suggest that this potential of role play is enhanced when it is framed within the powerful artistic, emotional, and sensory experience that “Les Miz” provides (Taylor, Marienau & Fiddler, 2000, p. 203).

Theoretical Perspectives

Two theoretical frameworks help us understand the potential of role-play in general, and this role-play in particular, for facilitating perspective change: Mezirow’s transformational learning theory and Kegan’s orders of consciousness model of epistemological development. As Mezirow (2000) observes, “The justification for much of what we know and believe, our values and feelings, depends on the context—biographical, historical, cultural—in which they are embedded” (p. 3).

The concept of embeddedness is also a primary feature of Kegan’s (1994) constructive-developmental model. We are embedded in our current meaning-making system and, like the proverbial fish, are unaware of the waters in which we swim. This notion—of awareness as the key to change—is pivotal. Transformative change occurs when we become aware of how we construct meaning and, indeed, that we construct meaning—when we realize that we can change a perspective because we (often with the help of our social surround) created it in the first place.

But what form is being trans-formed (Kegan, 2000, p. 35)? And what kinds of supports or challenges encourage such transformation? What happens when people’s foundational understanding of themselves and the world around them is put at risk? Finally, how can examining a role play from the perspectives provided by Mezirow and Kegan help us better understand the challenge of diversity and difference?

Workshop

We have found that the role-play is enhanced by using video clips from the artistically powerful musical, not only to set up the initial activity, but afterward, to examine how each character responds to the “disorienting dilemma” that he is presented with. Why was one character able to change his life course and the other feel he had no choice but to die? What might this tell us about the journey of growth and change that each of us is embarked on? What implications could there be with regard to larger societal questions?

As facilitators, we are not so presumptuous as to claim that a brief role-play leads to major perspective transformation. It can, however, be a chink in one’s assumptive armor. By giving participants an opportunity to experience “being” someone else, it can raise to awareness aspects of being oneself that might otherwise go largely unnoticed. Furthermore, “if you become aware that something is in a certain way, then you also become aware that it could be in some other way,” (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 207, original emphasis).

We intend that participants come away with (1) a clearer understanding of how and why role-play can be an effective tool in encouraging perspective shift, (2) a new or additional perspective on the particular challenge of dealing with difference, and (3) a desire to delve further into two powerful theories that may inform practice.

References


Becoming OtherWise: Using Word Association in Transformative Learning to Cultivate Practical Wisdom
Caroline Bassett
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Abstract: Three questions are explored on the subject of cultivating practical wisdom: Can wisdom be taught? How can it be taught? How can transformative learning advance this process? Using Sternberg’s balance theory of wisdom and its application in schools along with my Emergent Wisdom model, I demonstrate how to teach for wisdom.

Introduction
Can we become different/otherwise from what we are now? Can we also become other-wise™, that is, wise (insightful, caring, reflective, and engaged for the common good) in ways that part from conventional societal norms? This paper is centered around these questions, phrased as three more specific ones regarding wisdom, learning or teaching wisdom, and the uses of transformative learning in advancing the development of wisdom.
1. Can we learn to be wise(r)? Can wisdom be taught?
2. How can wisdom be developed?
3. How can transformative learning advance the process of becoming wise(r)?

Can we learn to be wise(r)? Can wisdom be taught?
I am an educator, I am a developmentalist. For me, given my perspective on life, philosophy of learning, and academic discipline, the answer is yes. Or, I should say, at least we can—and should—try.

Learning to become wiser depends, of course, on what we mean by wisdom. In this paper, I understand wisdom is a multi-dimensional mutually interacting construct of cognitive, affective, active, and reflective components. Or, in simpler language, it is a deep and empathic understanding of the human condition engaged for the common good. More specifically, wisdom is the application, for the common good, of complex intelligence to the human condition and all that supports it. Included in this complex intelligence can be found the components mentioned above: cognitive, affective, active, and reflective, each consisting of different dimensions and characteristics (Bassett, 2006). (See www.wisdominst.org/wisdom for two views of the model of Emergent Wisdom.) The focus in this understanding of wisdom is not just on human beings but also on what sustains us all of us creatures, that is, the biosphere. What is good for it may likely be good for us. Destroying the environment in the long run will not be so good for us, although the biosphere itself may survive.

Further, a characteristic that separates wisdom from individual self-development is the attention to the common good. Wisdom is not for my own personal gain, or for those like me. If I profit at your expense, then it is not wisdom. Or, as Sternberg (2004) says, in his balance theory of wisdom, only a cynical individual would believe that Mobutu of Zaire or Marcos of the

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1 I was reluctant to insert a trade-mark in a paper shared with colleagues. Nevertheless, given that the Wisdom Institute is in the business of offering consulting, I felt it important to say that I have formally retained the right to use this phrase in the context indicated.
Philippines, who robbed their countries of wealth, have done so for the good of the many. Instead, it served them and their families, a far cry from the commons.

Who is to say, however, what the common good is and who is included? Whose good? Sternberg (2004) maintains that it depends upon values. But whose values? This question can lead to a whole discussion of relativistic value systems. Yet, although many different religions and widely accepted systems of values differ in how they define and decide what they determine is important or right or worthwhile or worthy, certain common ones can be found in all or most of them. These will probably include respect for human life, honesty, and fairness, for example. At the same time, we must recognize that probably not everyone or every interest group will be fully included. We do what we can.

Can attention to the common good as one characteristic of wisdom be taught? Can others? Sternberg (2004) has incorporated this and others aspects of his balance theory of wisdom into an experimental curriculum for the New Haven middle schools sponsored by the Yale University PACE Center (2003). His definition reads, “Wisdom is defined … as the application of intelligence and experience as mediated by values toward the achievement of a common good through balance among (1) intrapersonal, (2) interpersonal, and (3) extrapersonal interests…” (Sternberg, 1998). The PACE group incorporates these ideas into the school curriculum through the study of early American history, from the days leading to the American Revolution through the abolition of slavery. They focus on the decisions that people have made in the past and the circumstances surrounding those decisions, which leads to studying how the students themselves can make better, wiser decisions in their own lives. To accomplish this, the curriculum is broken down into critical thinking skills and wise thinking skills and objectives.

Sternberg’s is one approach to teaching for wisdom. Another is more developmental in terms of ego maturity, that is, wisdom as postformal development (Bassett, 2006). As we develop, as we gain in cognitive complexity, we understand the world around us and our place in it differently. We develop greater capacity to see through the illusion created by cultural conditioning, unexamined assumptions, and self-limiting belief structures. In the Emergent Wisdom model, this kind of growth is called Transformation. It is here that individuals move towards self-transcendence, that is, the ability to go beyond their own subjectivity and projections, which decreases ego-centeredness and allows them to see reality more clearly.

Kegan’s (1994) theory of orders of consciousness offers another perspective on postformal development. He offers us a way of understanding the increasing complexity of mind that can be associated with some kinds of perspective transformation. As individuals move from the socializing (3rd) order to the self-authoring (4th) order, they are able to understand the world more completely because they see that their beliefs are not immutable truths for everyone to adhere to. Self-authoring individuals have their beliefs and values and can choose to act on them or not. This is in comparison to socialized individuals who are “had by” their beliefs and values and are unconsciously governed by them. Fourth order can therefore separate out its own values from various situations and see these situations more for what they are (to the extent that anyone can). This is a proficiency associated with wisdom.

Self-authoring people have the capacity to balance self-interest and the interests of others and to make sound judgments based on these determinations. As people move towards the 5th order (self-transforming), they become adept at embracing paradox and ambiguity and may exemplify what we mean by wisdom.
How can wisdom be developed?

I will discuss two approaches to teaching for wisdom: Sternberg’s work and the associated PACE curriculum and my own using the Emergent Wisdom model. In the third section, on transformative learning, I will get more specific on how TL can be used to foster wisdom.

Having established a basic framework for what wisdom looks like and that it can potentially be learned, the question is “How?” A caveat—simply learning certain wisdom-related skills does not necessarily make one wise. It is probably a necessary, but not sufficient, condition. Wisdom is too complex a phenomenon to be reduced to simple task-related constituents. However, since it is a habit a mind—a way of looking at, understanding, and being in the world—it seems possible to train people for new skills and strategies that may result in wiser decisions than those that they otherwise might have made.

I begin with Sternberg because he has the most developed process for teaching wisdom-related skills. He believes that wisdom should be included in the school curriculum because wise judgments improve our quality of life and conduct (Sternberg, 2004). People need knowledge to inform them in rendering judgments: “knowledge of human nature, of live circumstances, or of strategies that succeed and those that fail” (p. 167). But, merely having knowledge does not mean that a person uses it for good ends, that is, for the creation of a better, more harmonious world. Sternberg goes on to point out that school children and youth grow up to become adults who will benefit from learning to judge rightly, soundly, or justly on behalf of their community.

The processes of wise thinking that he and his colleagues discuss (Yale University PACE Center, 2003) include dialogical thinking, dialectical thinking, critical discussion of examples of wise and unwise decisions or acts, and role modeling. Dialogical thinking is familiar to most of us adult educators. It means taking into account multiple perspectives and points of view. Dialectical thinking is the dynamic integration of opposing perspectives, including an understanding of how ideas are conceived and evolve over time. In thinking about dilemmas, they recommend that students ask themselves such questions as, Who is involved? What are they trying to do? Who else might be able to help solve the problem and what will happen if they are consulted? What are some possible solutions? What are the consequences of these solutions for the people involved? (And, I would add, also for those not yet included.) What seems best for the common good? What are the short-term and long-term consequences? What is the best solution? Why? What is the worst solution? Why?

In the critical discussion of wise and unwise decisions or acts, the curriculum includes examples of sermons, speeches by Benjamin Franklin and others, and various documents such as the “Plan of Union” by Joseph Galloway, 1774, where he urged a compromise solution that would accommodate both British and American independence interests (PACE Center, 2003, p. 97). Students discuss the wisdom or lack thereof of this proposal.

Modeling wise thinking is perhaps the most powerful way of conveying what wisdom looks like in human behavior. Though it is not described this way in the PACE curriculum, it seems to me that teachers can do this by saying “I don’t know.” They can draw attention to wise behaviors in the classroom and use classroom situations, such as conflicts, to demonstrate alternative ways of thinking about resolution.

In my own work I have developed a number of exercises and practices for my adult students. Two will be discussed here. One consists of some homework for the rest of the participants' lives. I ask them, each week, to notice incidences of wisdom or folly/foolishness in
the world around them: books, movies, TV, news, encounters of any sort, and to share them in class. For foolishness, I ask them how it could be turned around into wisdom. (I usually don’t go from wisdom to folly, however. There is enough of that to go around without attention being called to it). The point of this practice is twofold: first, to notice wisdom whenever and wherever it occurs, and second, when they think they have identified something as wise, to ask themselves why they think so, thus developing their analytical and reflective skills.

The other technique employs the model of Emergent Wisdom and is based on the Quaker notion of the query, which is a question or series of questions used within the Society of Friends for prompting reflection and honest and frank self-examination, both individual and communal. While the queries (or learning prompts/developmental stimuli, as they are called in the model) are presented in this paper as cognitive verbal material, they can and should be handled so as to require the engagement of different parts of the self, for example, the spiritual, imaginative, intuitive, or artistic, in order to plumb and use the subconscious mind in addition to the conscious rational one.

In the model, each of the chief characteristics of wisdom has associated with it certain of these queries (learning prompts or developmental stimuli). For example, for Discernment, which is the cognitive dimension, people need to ask themselves what is really going on, what’s true or important about an issue or situation or event. The more they are able to detach themselves emotionally from the situation or issue, the more likely they are to see clearly what is happening. The exercise is simply (but not simple at all) to ask students (or yourself) constantly to distinguish between how they understand an issue or event through their own subjectivity vs. taking a more objective stance to see what might be “really” going on.

For Respect, the affective component, students work on taking different points of view about a situation. The goal is to be open to new ideas, perspectives, and understandings and bring them to their own conceptions about the world. It is hoped that looking at the world from a variety of perspectives will lead to sympathy for the suffering of others, resulting in increased compassion and caring. Like the queries for Discernment, students can ask themselves whose point of view they are taking, what the situation might look like from the eyes of the people not at the table, and how they can relate to all kinds of people with magnanimity.

For Engagement, the active component, which is about judgment and actions based on considerations of justice and fairness, students here need to understand their values, reflect on how they conceive of the common good, and make decisions or take action. The learning prompts include questions on what guides their actions and the relationships between means and ends, for example.

For Transformation, the reflective dimension, students look inward with the goal of expanding their consciousness as their recognition of interdependence with the rest of the biosphere grows. They can constantly ask themselves what they are part of. They strive to see (and then see through) the illusion created by cultural conditioning, assumptions, and self-limiting belief structures with the goal of transcending their subjectivity and personal projections. Becoming less identified with their habits of mind and points of view allows students to discern more clearly what is really going on. Thus, they are able to discern better—and the cycle of wisdom thinking: Discernment, Respect, Engagement, and Transformation, in any order, continues, deepening and enriching itself.
How can transformative learning advance the process of gaining becoming wise(r)?

Is transformative learning a method that can promote the development of wisdom as discussed above? Can it help people become wiser? Probably. Transformative learning seems like an approach that lends itself to cultivating wisdom.

Practical wisdom is born of experience, but experience alone does not wisdom make. Experience must be nurtured by reflection and tempered by analysis to even begin the movement towards a greater expression of wisdom. Mezirow’s (1997) transformative learning theory presents a method for changes not just in meaning schemes but also (and especially for wisdom work) in meaning perspectives. As we have seen in the discussion of wisdom above, becoming wiser entails a shift in meaning perspectives. People considered wise (or wiser than many of the rest of us) are able to dis-identify more and more with their own cultural conditioning and habits of mind and to see through their presuppositions to a way of understanding that permits, in Mezirow’s oft-quoted phrase, “a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective; and of making decisions or otherwise acting upon these new understandings” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 14).

Mezirow’s (1997) process, often precipitated by a disorienting dilemma, involves three phases: critical reflection, discourse with others to validate what was discovered during reflection, and action and reintegration. Mirroring the wisdom method in some ways, particularly reflection on assumptions (and self-knowledge) and action, Mezirow’s process allows change in meaning perspectives to take place, which is a necessary part of the wisdom development process. As most of us are familiar with Mezirow’s work, I will not discuss it further.

But, I will repeat the caveat a number of researchers have mentioned when describing the almost exclusive emphasis on rational thinking that Mezirow promulgates. For example, Cranton (1994) argues that Mezirow’s work overemphasizes rationality; Kramer (2000) believes that most emotional or existential dilemmas in life do not lend themselves to a linear rational method; and Dirkx (2001) suggests that the imagination must be nurtured.

Gunnlaugson (2007) also discusses some critiques and then presents his ideas for a kind of conversation that differs from Mezirow’s. Called reflective dialogue, this method prescribes steps that students can use to discover and inquire into each other’s assumptions. The first step, suspension, allows students to reveal tacit assumptions during dialogue, with the result that they become less identified with their own frames of mind. Second, participants move into the next phase, which is called presencing, where they can pay attention to what is not yet known enough to be articulated, to what is emerging. Gunnlaugson claims that generative dialogue cultivates meta-awareness, which is kind of witnessing that can make our emotions, thoughts, behaviors, and desires object to us. We then have more control over them than they over us—and this is a wisdom-thinking skill and part of the Transformation-Discernment part of the Emergent Wisdom development cycle.

Can we become otherwise and other-wise™? I firmly believe so and have offered some ideas on different concepts and practices that we can use with our adult students or perhaps ourselves to advance practical wisdom.

References


Triggering Critical Self-Reflection Through Creative Behavior:
Transformational Learning with The Emperor’s New Clothes
Merriam Fields Bleyl
Wisdom in Life and Learning

Abstract. This experiential session integrates transformational learning principles with Creative Behavior, an innovative, introspective teaching method that utilizes aesthetic means—art, movement, writing, and story—to facilitate critical self-reflection in participants. Stories are an excellent source for “triggering” critical thinking by challenging our tacit assumptions about others and life in general.

Introduction
Most adults continue to learn throughout their lives—usually outside a formal school setting. This learning is transformational when it involves a “trigger” to get one’s attention, critical reflection on the situation, and a change (or transformation) in one’s perspective. Stephen Brookfield (1986) noted that some of the most significant learning in adulthood occurs, not because adults really want to learn something new or different, but because we are forced to challenge our previous assumptions as a consequence of “some external event or stimulus that causes us to engage in an anxiety-producing and uncomfortable reassessment of aspects of our personal, occupation, and recreational lives . . . . [W]e may regard such learning as highly significant, precisely because it caused us to question our ways of thinking and behaving in our personal relationships, occupational lives, or social activities. Such questioning is initially uncomfortable and may be resisted, but it will often be the cause of our deciding to change some aspect of our lives” (p. 22).

This paper describes an experiential session presented at the Seventh Annual Transformational Learning Conference in 2007. Designed to present an aesthetic stimulus that “triggers” critical self-reflection in each participant, the session utilizes techniques developed by a curriculum called Creative Behavior. Originally designed by Eugene and Juanita Sagan to motivate creative individuals (artists, scientists, innovators, writers, etc.) realize their full potential, Creative Behavior has proven valuable to other learners as well. It is a self-system, based on the concept that within each individual are the answers they need to help them make healthy choices. It attempts to facilitate such development, empowering and encouraging learners to take credit for and integrate that which they learn. Despite its name, Creative Behavior does not claim to teach creativity. It promotes reflective thought to help individuals strengthen their self-concepts, assisting them in understanding and appreciating themselves and others. The process demonstrates the principles of transformational learning in dramatic and significant ways. The author has studied and utilized Creative Behavior methods for more than ten years (Bleyl, 1996).

Adulthood is the time for reassessing the assumptions of our formative years, including those that have often resulted in distorted views of reality. The way we see the world may be transformed through reflection. In describing how adults learn and challenge long-held assumptions, Mezirow (1990) introduced the term critical reflection and noted its distinction from the term reflection:

Reflection involves the assessment of the assumptions implicit in beliefs, including beliefs about how to solve problems. There is a special class of assumptions with which
reflection has to deal that are quite different from these procedural considerations. While all reflection implies an element of critique, the term critical reflection . . . refers to challenging the validity of presuppositions in prior learning. (p. 12)

Challenging assumptions marks the beginning of the critical reflective process. Assumptions are those taken-for-granted ideas, commonsense beliefs, and self-evident rules of thumb that inform our thoughts and actions. They are heuristic mechanisms through which we account for the events of our lives. They confirm and shape our perceptions. We create meaning in our lives because of the assumptions that undergird our understandings. Assumptions, in fact, can often constrain our learning. We are often so comfortable with our assumptions that we are unaware of them. When we become aware of assumptions that “constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 167), we experience a perspective transformation. An empowered sense of self is often the result of perspective transformation.

Creative Behavior assists participants in taking a realistic assessment of their lives and often results in self-transformations—“changing one’s character so that it will conform more closely to the requirements of one’s ideal of a good life” (Kekes, 2002, p. 15). To transform one’s character, a person must make a commitment (tacit or known) to act in a way that is consistent with his or her beliefs. It means that the assumptions of one’s culture, religion, family, and tribe have been examined, and accepted or rejected. “Self-direction thus does not involve withdrawal from the world; it involves conditional participation in it. It is conditioned on living according to one’s unconditional commitments and according to as many of one’s defeasible and loose commitments as circumstances allow” (Kekes, 2002, p. 35). Even faced with calamities, individuals maintain their sense of self, and their ability to choose right actions. They become wiser.

The Creative Behavior Process

Just what does Creative Behavior entail? Normally the Creative Behavior process works with the aesthetic mediums of movement, art, writing, and/or drama. It is a slow-paced classroom activity. Paper and large crayons or chalk are available for art projects. In addition, individuals are encouraged to write in journals. The facilitator attempts to create a comfortable and “safe” nurturing environment by incorporating a combination of appropriate limits and a curriculum that takes into account the students’ ability and need to learn. Time is always allotted for participants to share and/or dialogue their insights with one another.

A climate of trust, nurturing, and safety is established at the beginning of the session, so participants will be as comfortable and relaxed as possible. This is important in that critical thinking is informed by reflection; tension and stress paralyze clear and reflective thinking. Class participants are asked to relax and focus their attention on their breathing. In a regular Creative Behavior class, students often bring pillows and blankets to ensure that they will be able to relax. Participants are asked to do “different” activities—some of which may challenge their assumptions about classroom work—or adult activities in general. They are asked if they are willing to draw simple shapes on a piece of paper with large “kindergarten” crayons or chalk with their eyes closed. For some, this aspect of the class may invoke a “disorienting dilemma” (the term coined by Jack Mezirow, 1990). No one is forced or pressured into drawing, however.

Often an essay, poem or story is presented to the class, and participants are asked to reflect on it, and then to write their thoughts in a journal. Stories are an excellent source for “triggering” critical thinking. Stories can challenge one’s assumptions about others and life in
general. “Stories and recounting of personal and communal experiences evoke interest in learning new ideas, and arouse reflection that often is followed by some sort of personal communal transformation or change of attitudes for the better. Stories and deep-seated personal experiences connect listeners and tellers to higher values that transcend them and their immediate situation” (Mosha, 2000, p. 165). Stories vicariously take the place of personal experience. As a replacement for direct experience, even fairytales can be effective in promoting profound thinking. The creation of simple art and the writings trigger reflection and call attention to the free choices each participant makes. Art and writings are shared before the class ends, if the participants are willing to do so.

The experiential session utilizing Creative Behavior presented at the 2007 Transformational Learning Conference was shortened to an hour. It allowed participants to reflect on their assumptions about themselves, challenged pre-conceived mind-sets, and permitted perspective transformation by encouraging reflective assessment. Participants sat in chairs. Supplied with paper and crayons, class members created a drawing with their eyes closed. The focal point of the session was the reading of Hans Christian Andersen’s famous fairy-tale—*The Emperor’s New Clothes*. The story of the emperor enamored with new clothes will be familiar to most participants.

Following the recitation of the story of the *Emperor’s New Clothes*, class participants are asked to reflect on the time when they first heard the story (if they had), and then upon the characters of the story—to consider the various roles described and the reverence contract the townspeople and court ministers had tacitly entered into with the king. A short discussion of human interactions and reverence contracts follows.

Participants are then encouraged to reframe the story within their own perspectives. A writing is assigned to them—to describe a time in their lives when they played one or more of the roles in the story—the emperor, the little boy (whistle-blower), the townspeople, the ministers, the weavers, the parents of the boy. Or, class participants could write from any other frame of reference. They can also choose not to write. It is recognized that the writing assignment could be “disorienting” for some, depending on their life experiences. This writing takes ten to fifteen minutes. Writing about one’s thoughts is a useful and integrative activity. Time and space are required to understand and examine reflective thoughts. Following the writing period, participants are invited, if they are willing, to share their thoughts or writings with the group, or with one or two other individuals. By doing so, they “take credit” for their reflective work.

This activity represents action learning. It allows participants to try out new roles in a “safe” environment. It also raises the participants’ awareness of the values of journal writing. A discussion of the theory involved in teaching with the Creative Behavior method and its application to transformational learning theory ends the session. Based on the author’s experience with this exercise, the Creative Behavior experience creates important insights for participants.

**Creative Behavior and Transformational Learning**

Creative Behavior follows the critical reflection process, outlined by Brookfield (1990) as comprising three interrelated phases:

1. Identifying the assumptions that underlie our thoughts and actions;
2. Scrutinizing the accuracy and validity of these in terms of how they connect to, or are discrepant with, our experience of reality (frequently through comparing our experiences with others in similar contexts), and
3. Reconstituting these assumptions to make them more inclusive and integrative. (p. 177)

Creative Behavior classes utilize all three of these steps. The tasks are accomplished by creating drawings, journal writing, and verbal sharing of ideas, experiences, and thoughts. The Creative Behavior experiential session described above facilitated transformative learning, specifically through reflective learning. The first stage of reflective learning (Boud, Keogh, and Walker, 1985) occurred immediately after the story when the participants were asked to write about when they first heard the story. The story was the “trigger” that brought the participant’s own experiences to his or her memory.

The second stage began when the class members were asked to reflect on the story’s meaning in a role of their choosing—and sharing that with someone or the group. The third stage was stressed at the end of the session during an explanation of the process and class discussion.

Critical reflection often leads to transformational learning. Jack Mezirow (1990) defined transformative learning as “the process of learning through critical self-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 these insights” (p. xvi). The Creative Behavior experiential session mirrored this definition and was planned to facilitate transformative learning.

Critical reflection is not a process that can be hurried. It is important that educators understand the processes that encourage it. Reflecting on the moral messages of time-honed stories helps people understand themselves in the present, and mindfully guides their actions toward the future. The current contemporary learning environment discourages a student’s appreciation of the experiences, knowledge and wisdom of past generations. Television, movies, computers, and other fast-paced flashing media tend to “blunt our appreciation for stories, proverbs, and other wise quotations because [stories] require more mental and spiritual attention, deeper thinking, and reflection—which seem to be a waste of time to a modern society that is constantly on the move, perpetually in the linear mode of life” (Mosha, 2000, p.165). Critical reflection does not infer mind-control. The opinions and preferences of each individual must be respected.

Creative Behavior is an effective method to facilitate transformative learning in adults. To question the validity of long-standing presuppositions about one’s beliefs, one’s values, and one’s self is often a difficult yet rewarding experience. Reflective thought leads to self-discovery, personal learning, and understanding.

References


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Abstract: In this paper, we focus on action inquiry as a complex and robust learning practice for personal and systemic transformation.

Introduction

We identify three conditions contributing to our group’s transformative learning through this practice. These are: the observations that transformative learning or double loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Mezirow, 1991, 2000; Torbert, 2003, 2004) is a continual process stimulated by the practice of AI, the exploration and impact of developmental diversity (Drago-Severson, 2004), and the role of our group and the relationships within it as a holding environment (Kegan, 1982, 1994; Winnicott, 1965). The following paper is a discussion of the essential elements of action inquiry, of the understanding that transformative learning is a continual and interactive process, that developmental diversity provides the context and condition for learning, and of the importance of the group as holding environment. We illustrate each dimension using reflective vignettes from members of the group.

The Practice of Action Inquiry

Torbert describes Action Inquiry as a type of behavior, “we mean a kind of behavior that is simultaneously inquiring and productive. It is behavior that simultaneously learns about the developing situation, accomplishes whatever task appears to have priority, and invites a redefining of the task if necessary,” (Torbert, 2003, p.1). In other words, it combines reflection or conscientious reflexivity in the midst of action, along with the potential for adaptation in the moment. The behavior of inquiry in action includes subjective intentions for the future, intersubjective data about the present from multiple points of view, and objective data. Torbert (2003) writes of these interconnected features:

The special power of action inquiry—transforming power—comes from a combination of dedication to our intent or shared vision; alertness to gaps among vision, strategy, performance, and outcomes in ourselves and others; and a willingness to play a leading role with others in organizational or social transformations, which includes being vulnerable to transformation ourselves. (p.9)

Action Inquiry considers the three dimensions of human experience: that of the subjective first person; that of the inter-subjective second person; and that of the objective third person. The action of inquiry moves from the inside out, from the subjective to the objective, beginning with gaps between the present state of affairs and the vision of the desired future. It is based on values for first person integrity, second person interpersonal mutuality, and third person organizational sustainability, utilizing practices that help to support these values in individuals and communities. In our understanding, the “transforming power” of AI comes from the willingness to be transformed, and to surrender to mutually transforming vulnerability in the way we learn, love, collaborate, and lead. Of these three dimensions of experience, Torbert writes:
Thus, AI heightens your awareness of your own purposes and assumptions, of the quality of your conversations moment by moment with the other person or persons with whom you are meeting, and of how your action in the moment relates to group and corporate quality. The power of AI is in its potential for linking personal quality improvement and quality improvement in the immediate conversation with quality improvement longer term in the work group and wider organization (2003, p7).

**How does the practice of Action Inquiry promote transformative learning?**

Constant attention to the first person integrity of one’s intentions, strategies, actions, and the outcomes of one’s actions provides a means of checking the alignment and wholeness of these four territories of experience, a more conscious sense of purpose and groundedness in one’s ultimate aims, and a more concrete way of framing the three loops of learning in terms of evaluating one’s: 1) behaviors; 2) assumptions; and 3) intentions. Single loop learning consists of behavioral alterations (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Torbert, 2003, 2004). Double loop learning, closely akin to our understanding of transformative learning, consists of conscientious changes of assumptions or mental models (Mezirow, 1990, 2000). And triple loop learning entails the re-visioning or transformation of the underlying intentions and desires that in turn, affect our mental models and actions (Torbert, 2003, 2004).

In the second person, the practice of AI is grounded in attention to the quality of communications in the interpersonal sphere, acknowledging that all social and organizational reality is shaped by the ways we communicate. Torbert writes, “action inquiry is inherently risky because it is played out in real time with real relationships,” (2003, p. 34) and requires considerable attention to the way we speak and the way we listen.

Further, Torbert writes:

> Engaging in action inquiry is taking the skills identified with the action of inquiry and doing them moment by moment. Only if you take these ideas, skills and encouragement into the contexts of your home, work, loving and living and only if you have remembered them as you were speaking and listening to others; and only if, after observing the conversation, as it was occurring through these ideas, you have changed how you were speaking during the ongoing conversation; only if you have done all this, have you begun to engage in action inquiry. (Fisher, Rooke & Torbert, 2003, p. 33)

He advocates for what he calls the *four parts of speech* as a way of promoting understanding and mutuality in relationships, and as a basis for truly collaborative agency for common purposes. The four parts of speech include attention to: *framing* where a person is coming from; *advocating* a position or stating one’s intention; *illustrating* the rationale and meaning of this advocacy; and *inquiring* as to whether one is understood, and whether there is agreement, or a blind-spot in one’s thinking. This style of communication can transform the way that we think about power, promoting the value of mutuality over any forms of coercion. This mutuality requires a willingness to be flexible in positions we take, in the ways in which we take up our authority, and perhaps even more fundamentally, in the ways that our egos find satisfaction.

Torbert writes, “AI takes us to the very frontier of our current way of balancing. It may even take us beyond our current way of balancing—out of that balance, perhaps temporarily altogether off balance—as our way of balancing transforms,” (2003, p. 34). In this sense, AI provokes or stimulates what Mezirow calls “disorienting dilemmas,” experiences of disequilibrium that might lead to learning and growth by revealing the inadequacy or incompleteness of the prior perspective.
And finally, in terms of the third person dimension of experience, Torbert advocates for attention to the four territories of operations at the organizational/systems level: visioning (long term goals and intentions); strategizing (plans for achieving these intentions); performing (tactical actions and organizational behaviors); and assessing (measuring effectiveness) (Torbert, 2003, 2004). Without consideration to the alignment of these operations, long-term sustainability is impossible, whether the organization is an AI group, or a major global corporation.

How has the practice of AI helped to stimulate transformative learning amongst the members of our group? Each of the three practices are means of stimulating double or even triple loop learning, helping us to revise assumptions, mental models, and in some cases, even our underlying intentions. The following vignette illustrates ways that AI has helped to support learning and growth among the members of our group:

David

What is Action Inquiry (AI)? Whatever “it” is, it is more than simply a type of action research… it is more of a habit of being and a practice of paying attention to what is ultimately meaningful about becoming an integrated person in increasingly mutual relationships, and about becoming a better leader. In fact, insofar as it is a kind of work that takes an investment of energy and attention, Action Inquiry feels like a labor of love on behalf of the social whole. Only a labor of love would inspire me to be more open to feedback, more mindful of my blind-spots, and hopefully more aware of the gaps between what I intend and what I actually enact.

Transformative Learning

As a practice, AI is intended to promote continual transformative learning through ongoing inquiry into the nature of our experience and the meanings we make. Torbert writes: It is this self-overcoming, self-transforming quality of action inquiry that accounts for both its costs and its benefits. Action inquiry requires the risk and often the pain of personal developmental change. On the positive side, action inquiry provides the operational handle for shifting one’s thought and action away from a pattern where underlying assumptions go unrecognized and unchallenged, where one’s own frame of reference is a limiting, confining boundary, and where self-interest and mistrust prevent any effort to attain legitimacy. (Fisher, Rooke & Torbert, 2003, p. 39)

How have we experienced the kind of learning that leads to a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrating perspective, and then to action that flows from this new perspective (Mezirow, 2000)? We present a few experiences of what we would call transformative learning, or in the language of Action Inquiry, double and triple loop learning—the revision of assumptions or mental models, and intentions.

Rachel

The timing of our AI group was, in a word, serendipitous. Things that I had long taken as ‘known’ about myself (my spiritual path, my relationship with my parents, my longest and most important romantic relationship, my sexual orientation, my relationship to conflict) were in question. Or perhaps to try and say it more accurately, I felt like I was in question. There were moments when I felt like I was seeing the world from glasses that had an old prescription. I knew that my previous view of things was limited and I had moments of seeing things in a way that felt more expansive and less reactive, but I couldn’t always hold onto that new way of being/seeing.
Developmental Diversity

Our experiences of our first, second and third person learning and meaning making of these experiences and learning are enriched and challenged by the diversity present in the group – gender, race, experience, age, and developmental diversity. Here we elaborate on our developmental diversity. We begin with an epistemological premise grounded in the constructive developmental understanding of cognition and affect (Kegan, 1982, 1994). Constructive developmental theory suggests that human beings are fundamentally meaning makers, actively creating the meaning of our experience from moment to moment. This meaning making manifests differently depending on the cognitive complexity or capacity available to a person at a given stage of their development. Maturation is understood as a function of a person’s growing through phases of knowing that are increasingly differentiated, inclusive, and open to transformation.

What is developmental diversity? Developmental diversity consists of the variety of ways of knowing (Drago-Severson, 2004) or action logics (Cook Greuter, 1999, 2004; Torbert, 2004) that often coexist and sometimes conflict and/or compete in a single social group. What follows is a brief description of the distinct action logics beginning with the Opportunist, a pre-conventional phase of development and ending with the Alchemist, a post-conventional, late stage of development (Cook-Greuter, 1999, 2004, 2006; Torbert, 2004).

Pre-Conventional

The Opportunist: Own needs and self-interest primary (self-protection and action on impulse). Short term horizon; focuses on concrete things; manipulative; deceptive; rejects feedback; externalizes blame; distrustful; fragile self-control; hostile humor; views luck as central; flouts power and sexuality; stereotypes; views rules as loss of freedom; punishes according to an eye for an eye ethic; treats what one can get away with as legal; forcibly self-interested.

Conventional

The Diplomat: Acceptance and belonging. Socially accepted behavior; observes protocol; avoids inner and outer conflict; works to group standards; speaks in clichés and platitudes; conforms; feels shame if violates norms; bad to hurting others; receives disapproval as punishment; seeks membership and status; face saving essential; loyalty to immediate group; not ‘distant’ organization or principles; needs acceptance.

The Expert: Internal craft logic rules. Consistency and improvement. Rationality; interested in problem solving; seeks causes; critical of self- and others based on craft logic; chooses efficiency over effectiveness; continuous improvement and perfection; accepts feedback only from acknowledged authorities; dogmatic; value decisions based on merit; sees contingencies, exceptions; wants to stand out; be unique; sense of obligation to wider, internally consistent moral order.

The Achiever: Results, goals and plans, Objective reality. Long term goals; future is vivid and important; welcomes behavioral feedback; effectiveness and results oriented; feels like an initiator, not pawn; appreciates complexity and systems; seeks generalizable reasons for action; seeks some mutuality (as well as hierarchy) in relationship; feels guilt if does not meet own standards; blind to achieving shadow, to subjectivity behind objectivity; energized by practical, day to day improvements based on self chosen (but not self-created) value/ethical system
Post-Conventional

The Individualist: Everything is relative, own ability to have impact; works independently with a high value on individuality; self-curious; freer of obligation and imposed objectives, thus finds new creativity; aware that what one sees depends on one’s world view and experiments with this; may be a maverick as they experiment with finding their own way; uses power differently; increasingly conscious of the impact they have on others.

The Strategist: Process and goal oriented. Systems view, developmental over time; creative at conflict resolution; recognizes importance of principle, contract, theory, and judgment- not just rules, customs, and exceptions – for making and maintaining good decisions; process oriented as well as goal oriented; aware of paradox and contradiction; unique market niches; and particular historical moments; relativistic; enjoys playing a variety of roles; witty, existential humor (as contrasted with pre-fab jokes); aware of dark side, of profundity of evil, and is tempted by its power.

The Alchemist/Ironist: Interplay of awareness, thought, action and effect, transforming self and others; disintegration of the ego-identity, often because of a near death experience; seeks participation in historical/spiritual transformations; creator of mythical events that reframe situations; anchoring in the inclusive present; seeing light and dark, order and mess; blends opposites, creating positive sum games; exercises own attention, researches interplay of intuition, thought, action, and effects on the outside world; treats time and events as symbolic, analogical, metaphorical (not merely linear, digital, literal).

What is the experience of the developmental diversity of our group? We understand developmental diversity as the context, and sometimes the condition of transformative learning in our group. By this, we mean that the variety of ways that our group members know and make meaning of our experience provides a complex milieu in which we learn, and both supports and challenges us in expanding our epistemic perspectives.

Rachel

I had begun to see that my existing frame of reference (which included an emotional belief in cause and effect, knowable explanations for all things including my own motivations, and low tolerance for ambiguity) was coming apart. When I read that a central defense mechanism for Achievers is the attitude of “better to concentrate on the positive and what can be done than to dwell on the problems and difficulties” I almost fell out of my chair. That described me to a T. I was excited to be part of a group where I could consciously explore some of this inner process, share other people’s experiences, and to build deeper connections with people that until the formation of the group I didn’t know very well.

The Group as a Holding Environment

The constructive-developmental theory of adult growth takes into account the total psycho-social context in which an individual is embedded (Kegan, 1982). Inspired by the work of D.W. Winnicott (1965), Kegan considers the dialectical relationship between a person and the all encompassing horizon or milieu of relationships, meanings, values, and influences in which that person is situated (Kegan, 1982). This milieu might be constituted by prevailing social conventions, political ideas, economic concepts, religious beliefs, and unique family dynamics, for instance. While Winnicott focused on the initial holding environment of infants and the way that this environment affects the way that children develop, Kegan sees the holding environment
as a constant feature of human experience, such that as we age, we might move from one holding environment to the next (Kegan, 1982).

The specific features of the holding environment that are essential for supporting growth and maturation are: the providence of sufficient security, support, and care necessary to relieve unhealthy degrees of fear/anxiety; a level of challenge that invites an individual to stretch beyond their comfort zones and to experiment with boundaries, try new experiences, etc.; and a faithful commitment to the person through and across their experiences of growth, loss, etc. (Kegan, 1982). A positive holding environment characterized by these features is considered an “evolutionary bridge” that helps a person to move from one developmental stage to the next when this is called for by the contingencies of a person’s life (Kegan, 1982).

How has the group provided a holding environment, the conditions necessary for supporting transformative learning? Perhaps the key element or energy has been what Torbert calls transforming power, the willingness of members of the group to change and be changed by our experience, and to support and challenge each other along the way (Torbert, 1991). The following reflection gives an expression to this combination of support and challenge:

David

This is really the easiest question for me… I feel seen and held in this group, appreciated both for what I bring to the group and for my being, and as a result, I feel more and more open to challenge by the group as well. However, I have to continue to work on this openness, and I ask the group to catch me when what I am saying or doing does not feel present, connected, or authentic. I feel that it is absolutely amazing to gather with such a group of people from month to month, to bring such attention to our personal, vocational, and professional intentions. There is an element of our gatherings that is downright fun, and I don’t just mean the way that Michael brings wine. There is a way in which I feel that each person has a passion and enthusiasm for growing and for supporting the growing of others… that we enjoy being with each other at the edges of our learning. What a gift!

Closing

Over the past two years our action inquiry group, in various shapes and forms, has continued to be committed to engaging and learning through our experiences of our selves, each other and our group. Through this commitment to learning as a community, the developmental diversity present in our group, has served as both a condition for transformative learning as well as a context for such learning. We’ve experienced transformative learning as a continual process as we support and challenge ourselves and each other through inquiry practices of intention and awareness which provide an un-balancing of and opportunity for shifts of perspectives. The supports and challenges defining our particular holding environment are felt as welcoming. Welcoming and open to our vulnerability, lovingness, fear, ambivalence, passion, grace, trust, confidence, incompetence, silliness, seriousness, and care. This commitment to seeing ourselves, others and opening ourselves to being seen enables the sustainability of the relationships supportive of our continued learning.

References


Transformative Relational Dialogue Activities
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Abstract: Twelve participants were interviewed about their transformative, long-term, cross-cultural experiences that altered their self-identity to become more inclusive of others’ ideas to support a self-other orientation and what factors facilitated their success.

Introduction
Over the past 20 years, I have taught non-native speakers of English and learned in the process more about my own culture—Who I am and what we are making together? I had the opportunity “to put the shoe on the other foot” several times and truly see how others perceived me while living and working abroad. Those experiences not only changed the way I viewed myself but also the way I viewed the world and acted in it. I saw these changes take place in others and discussed this perception with colleagues. I asked if they perceived such changes and growth within themselves. The study that evolved out of those conversations and experiences has led me to find ways to put into practice activities that would give others a glimpse into these transformative experiences.

Successful intercultural [expatriate] experiences based on my research supported transformative learning and growth related to cultural difference and disorienting dilemmas. Participants’ perceived changes to their identity becoming more than their own culture, which affirmed their becoming intercultural. Analysis in relation to the ways disorienting dilemmas within cross-cultural, lived experiences related to cultural difference was explored. The participants’ responses demonstrated communicative factors connected to one’s identity that resulted in critical self-reflection and discursive interaction related to cultural difference, relationships and transformation. Shifts in self-awareness and a broadened worldview supported a self-other orientation. Participants’ corroborated transformative learning, which encouraged creating space for discursive interaction and interplay connected to shifting frames of reference and raising awareness.

Theoretical Framework
I framed this research with transformative learning theory. The participants changed their self-view to step into the shoes of a “glocal” identity, worldview. Their long-term, cross-cultural experiences raised their awareness about ways of being in the world; so that, their self-view was no longer the same. Their own cultural identity broadened to become more inclusive of others’ cultural ideas. As my participants stated, “we were the oddity, different. The situations were a re-learning of all through relational experience at various levels—beliefs were shaken—questioned because others lived so differently—hygiene standards, religion, etc. for example.” One’s personal, spiritual and human development transforms. I follow Cranton and others (Mezirow, 2000) holistic perspective on transformative learning theory, but with Mezirow’s (2000) work at its core. I claim the centrality of critical reflection that Mezirow does, but I advocate the social construction of communication as performative acts, which affect the multiple contexts in which they happen, the relationships among the people involved and the cultural systems.
Methodology

This study used a thematic analysis of interview texts that examined, by descriptive research design, the narrative, self-reports of intercultural expatriate teachers’ cross-cultural experiences. An interpretive approach explored recurring themes. Five overarching themes emerged: transformation, cultural difference, relationships, identity and factors (personality) and communication. Two of the overarching themes, identity and factors, it was determined were internal to self and contributed to the co-construction of sensemaking more than the other three that were the interaction and interplay with others within the external environment. I determined these two were related to one’s communication perception that was socially constructed and deconstructed and could not be separated from communication. Therefore, identity pervades all three other overarching themes, as it is integral to each one. The factors are the nature of identity that aid the co-construction of sensemaking are co-joined with communicative interactions with self and others, consciously and unconsciously, so they too are integral to each theme also.

I interviewed twelve participants from my own network of colleagues and friends during my expatriate experiences in Hong Kong and mainland China and through recruitment by nomination from others. The interviews lasted one to two hours and were conducted mostly in participants’ homes and places of work. Participants’ were all teaching in China in English and were English speaking experts if not native speakers, from non-American countries of origin/culture for the first six years of life, had at least five years or more of experience immersed in a cross-cultural setting, and their cultural and educational backgrounds were from a country other than that in which they were living, studying, and working during their cross-cultural experiences. The participants’ were seven women and five men from five different continents.

Findings and Discussion

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis of participants’ narrative semi-structured lifeworld interview texts. I lived and worked overseas with most of the participants for three years, so I felt familiar with the people and their mind-sets. I conducted all the interviews overseas myself, and transcribed a few. I studied reading my journals from the process and listening to all of the transcriptions over and over before interpreting the results. I could relate to the participants and many of the dialogues, experiences, and activities shared in the texts. The five overarching themes were most often expressed by all participants. I explain them, include quotations that exemplify each and suggest activities related to critical reflection and raising awareness to elicit transformation.

Cultural Difference to Self-Other Orientation

Identity and factors are internal to self and related to one’s perception that is socially constructed and deconstructed by the communicative interactions with self and others, consciously and unconsciously, and can not be separated from our cultural systems. Through immersion in a different cultural environment our cultural acuity is heightened. We are more aware of our own culture and have the opportunity to critically reflect on aspects of ourselves that are innate therefore exposed.

Anne expresses it like this, “Even though we had all these different ethnicities in the country, we were kept in separate compartments and we looked, I looked upon people of other cultural groups suspiciously. And that was, that was taught to us at a fairly young age to be suspicious of other groups of people, because we didn’t have any common elements lots of
White people, lots of colored people—to me all White people looked the same. I couldn’t see the difference. I couldn’t see the difference between the African children and colored. They looked the same to me. But then I was put into a situation where I had to work with children, pretty soon after a year or two, I began to see each individually, individually as an identity. As someone who is unique and different. I began to respect people much more than I did prior to having these experiences. And I remember my impatience and my intolerance of the children all because I didn’t understand their culture. You know, I sit back sometimes and think of how awful my behavior was; you know I had many many issues because it was not the children it was me. That impacted my life greatly. I have learned that it has changed me. I have learned over the years to be more accepting of different cultures. It has even taught me so that now I take nothing for granted nothing. I do not assume, and I’ve also learned that there is a richness in each culture.”

As Anne so aptly expresses, culturally different experiences can teach us much. Some activities that may point this out to others and foster much critical reflection and discussion after viewing are visual cognition activities such as Daniel J. Simon’s basketball video which can be viewed at http://viscog.beckman.uiuc.edu/media/ig.html.

Enriched Dialogue for Relationships

Enriched dialogue is positive, possible, and inclusive of all perspectives. It looks at communication not through it to solve problems of everyday life, events, episodes and situations. It has the positive potential to make better social worlds. It transforms who we are and what we are making together. It includes engagement, empathetic listening, having integrity, being real, self-reflective, collaborative and reciprocal in conversation.

Dale states it best, “On a personal level, I became lots more confident in just having to deal with all sorts of different situations and different ideas. I became much more confident as a person, but as like a British person it was strange because I had never considered myself to be British. But in going away somewhere else all of a sudden you become British, and you have to, you have, you are almost like an ambassador of Britain. And so you become more British and then you start to realize as well things that maybe British that maybe you do have that you never even really noticed before, that people pick up and you do not, you just think its normal and so you’re exposed, if you like, and you know people can see. I made an effort to be very tolerant of like not just tolerant but interact really get involved and understand why people were doing all these different things that they did, and it made me more aware of all the differences. You become more aware of where you fit into the whole thing, of how your peg is.”

Enriched dialogue activities provide ways for each participant to compare and contrast their ways of knowing and being in the world with others and discover new points of view, mindsets and frames of reference upon which to expand their viewpoints.

As Bob reiterates, “it isn’t how much you are exposed to other cultures, but exposures, traveling of different experiences, education wise, working wise…open myself up, ok open myself give me more perspectives, so when I go back to China where I grew up…even though they are different, but they are co-related because we are all human beings. It doesn’t matter if you grow up in different cultures for some issues you have a co-related thinking, co-related views even though they may not be 100% though very much…so you share those views with people. They are overlapped, they are co-related. I see because the globalization those views, those perspectives will be getting more mixed, more complimented by each other…more international, bad or good I don’t know.”
Enriched dialogue activities provide a space where people think of a time in their lives when they have experienced tremendous personal growth and/or significant learning that left them changed or expanded in some way (it may have happened in a myriad of ways—over time or in a moment). As a result of this experience perhaps they viewed themselves, their relationships, or even the world differently. This shift in perspective, way of being, and making sense of the world may have even affected their priorities, choices, even their day to day behavior. These activities may be written and or discussed in dyads and/or small groups. Participants are encouraged to consider what was happening during that time, who made up their support system/network and how did they engage with them, how did others engage with them, what do they remember feeling during that time, and what were the qualities of your social, physical, emotional/psychological environment that most contributed to this being a significant experience.

*Coordination of Sensemaking Fosters Transformation*

When communication is viewed as a performative act, the coordinated management of meaning, it is both internal and external to one’s self-view and worldview. It can be developed holistically using the whole of our being—cognitive, affective, and symbolic (spiritual/intuitive) domains. The more we strive to do, learn and grow in this way in a supportive, challenging environment the more apt we are to examine new and different ways of knowing and being in the world with an open mind; then expansion, adaptation and/or integration may take place. When we cooperate with each other, collaborate, growth and learning is fostered and transformation is possible.

PK describes this so well, “I was interested in my culture more when I lived abroad, so rich, intuitions, such rich, intuitions like an eye-opener and so much more intellectually satisfying to treasure my philosophy not in an exclusive way—but I could say I saw myself the same and yet different. It changes you and your teaching experiences, so you learn to become adaptive and flexible. It was another learning process. One negative is one does not really feel at home anywhere, but now I am a world citizen.”

PK went on to affirm that communication is important on other levels between his children and himself which involves traveling to other continents and spending time there; it also involves knowing that cross-cultural experiences affect our children wholly and continually also. Another participant corroborated this as well, Penny declared, “As my son said, I would not have known those differences and a whole different way of life.” Penny’s cross-cultural experiences have affected her whole family and still are. Apple too states, “It changed my whole life. When I grew up in rural Canada, I had never seen a Black person. I lived in an environment that was totally Caucasian. And when I walked into my classroom it was a sea of faces and I couldn’t tell the difference between the students. Even getting off the plane was a culture shock of it all, and all the beliefs you have as a child are shaken—questioned—because they live totally differently then you do. Even the hygiene standards, religion, female circumcision, for example, and then I, you know, talked about it a little more with someone I was staying with at the time. And of course, I was horrified at this! And it’s something that has stuck with me to this day! And you know I still hear BBC programs or talk shows about this.” Apple returned to Winnipeg after spending 2 years in Africa. She expressed, “It was a culture shock in reverse. It was a very lonely time because during those 2 years a lot of my friends had not changed very much—ah, it was just a very lonely experience because I had gone through so much of my own personal, spiritual, and human development. And they had all stayed the same. Now when people ask me
if I am Canadian; then they say, how is Canada? I haven’t lived there for a long time, so it seems that I am much more Asian now then I am sort of the traditional Canadian prairie girl that I was when I was growing up. Ah a Canadian citizen, but um I think a citizen of the world now having traveled so much and worked and lived in so many different places.”

Several other participants interviewed also expressed this expanded self-view toward a self-other orientation that was transformative. They express deeper relationships with colleagues and having grown in relation to awareness of others ways of being in the world.

Harry declares, “Oh yeah, it has changed me. I said to my wife I think sometimes I feel as though I’m turning Chinese. I mean—you know like, you know—when immigrants come to Australia, we kind of half expect them to kind of start to change to be more like Australian, and frankly I feel like, I’m becoming more Chinese in things. I wonder about my face. I find myself, very much particularly with me, I’m a lot closer to my colleagues within my school, and I really understand how they fear to lose face, and how to achieve what I want in a round about way, rather than being, confronting in a Western kind of sense. Whereas now I’m a little bit more circumspect in how I go about things. And that’s how the Chinese are.

Keith said, “When I went back to South Africa I was a different person. I had definitely changed, not personality or not sort of approach or anything like that, I think it was purely in terms of just saying I can do anything that I want to do; therefore, it kind of changed the way I approached everything. I couldn’t actually tell the difference and it was only after, honestly, about ten years that I realized how much I had changed in my overseas experiences. You know I didn’t need anybody’s sort of encouragement or all of that had to come from me, and I think America definitely did that for me because I wasn’t going to stop there. I had an achieving outlook that if I wanted to do something all I had to do was do it.”

Marie also affirms, “The experience I had in Canada has encouraged me to be myself or to enjoy being whoever I am. It’s a wonderful experience. Every time I think back to its environment its very supportive, very accepting. A lot less, a lot fewer rules and regulations to follow and stuff like that. It’s a funny thing because I keep being asked by others, so what do you consider yourself to be? Are you Chinese or are you Canadian? And nowadays I just answer, yeah, well I’m Canadian-Chinese or Chinese-Canadian whichever you are able to be, but, yeah, I am both because I have to be fair to Canada all the experiences that I’ve had in Canada. It’s a country that helped me grow up a lot in a very positive way. The whole country is more accepting whereas here it’s a lot more judgmental, and we have to fit a certain form, we have to behave in a certain way. I consider myself a true east meets west type of creation.”

Transformative exercises get participants moving and doing involving the senses that are reflective and thought provoking. One such activity is creating a drawing using a variety of materials to express any image or metaphor that comes to mind that evokes their learning experience or the learning space that held the experience. There are no limits or right or wrong approaches to this activity—items may be sculpted or 3-dimensional time permitting also. These can be individual or shared creations and upon completion reflected upon and discussed—what do you notice about the image, what themes are emerging, what do we know so far about learning space and transformative learning? This can be done using articles that are read; then reflected on and discussed from a variety of perspectives—author, audience, participants in the context of the article, point of view of publication, purpose of publication, etc. Music is another media, art and theater also that can be examined and discussed to give voice to many perspectives and interpretations. Small groups can conduct interviews related to difference/diversity on their own; then share their perceptions and learning through this process.
Games are another way to get people using their whole being to examine how they feel, think and perceive ways of knowing and being when they are experiencing the unknown/discomfort. There are many of these also.

**Conclusion**

When one doesn’t have the opportunity to immerse oneself long-term in a cross-cultural environment where one’s being different is exposed for a myriad of reasons one can reflect upon over time, it is important to participate holistically in experiential activities that jar and jolt one’s self awareness, make one step outside the box, take risks, stretch themselves beyond their comfort zone to think differently about who I am and what we are making together to broaden one’s self-other orientation. This is possible by engaging with others in transformative relational dialogue activities like those mentioned and more.

**References**


Only Connect: Taiko Drumming as an Integrative Arts Practice

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Abstract: This paper provides a background for an experiential conference session exploring the Japanese-rooted practice of taiko drumming as an integrative art form that fosters an embodied sense of connectedness to self and others through movement and sound, as well as a way of exploring cross-cultural awareness within diasporic cultural spheres.

Introduction

Taiko drumming is an ensemble art form of Japanese origin, now practiced by many professional and community groups not only in Japan but also in North America and around the world. It integrates elements of percussion, dance, theatre, and martial arts and, as an ensemble practice, involves a high degree of communal awareness and interactivity. As a hybrid practice with strong populist roots, taiko expresses a voice that is simultaneously musical, physical, cultural and political. The purpose of this experiential session is to use improvised drums to engage in a short taiko workshop, practicing a few simple taiko drills and exercises to explore how rhythm, movement, and non-verbal group interaction can contribute to a sense of embodied presence that can promote deep or transformative learning. It draws on research I am currently conducting on the role of embodied arts practices in fostering individual empowerment and social change.

The Structure of the Session

This one-hour experiential session is participatory and active in nature. It gives participants a hands-on opportunity to collectively move, play, make noise, listen, and reflect on their own understanding of the potential for (and/or challenges associated with) embodied practices such as taiko to contribute to both personal and social transformation.

Opening

The session begins as participants enter the room, where an audiovisual PowerPoint montage is playing, combining still photographs of taiko drummers in performance, quotes from relevant literary sources, video clips, and a soundtrack of taiko drums being played in the background. To whatever extent possible, given the layout of the room, chairs and tables will be moved to the side, creating a space for movement at the centre of the room.
**Introduction**

This audiovisual point of entry is followed by a brief introduction to taiko fundamentals, and an explanation of the purpose of the session as it relates to transformative learning. The main focus of the session is not to talk about taiko but to experiment with some basic elements of taiko rhythm and movement. As an experiential session, even those who think of themselves as movement/rhythm-challenged are encouraged to participate (with, of course, no obligation to do so). Academic conferences are places where bodies typically do more sitting and talking than moving and making music; including such activities can be uncomfortable and strange, which in itself is a meaningful focus for reflection and discussion.

**Playing with rhythm and movement**

This part of the session begins with a few minutes of light stretching (neck, shoulders, hands, fingers), followed by a series of basic taiko exercises. Since there will be no actual taiko drums available, this will involve making sounds using a combination of claps, taps, vocal calls and, *à la* the taiko-influenced percussion group Stomp, “found objects” (chairs, tables, books, notebooks) temporarily recruited as makeshift instruments. The focus will be on learning some simple taiko rhythms and movements, and playing with rhythm patterns using a “call and response” process to encourage individual listening and group interactivity.

**Reflection**

The session will close with a brief opportunity for dialogue and reflection. Since the session is too short to permit much in-depth discussion, participants will be provided reflective questions to think about afterwards, once the session is over. (E.g.: How do you incorporate embodiment in your own understanding of transformative learning? In your own experience, how is the body linked to emotion and spirit and how are these involved in the learning process? Some people have referred to taiko as a practice of “moving mindfulness” – what other mindfulness practices have you experienced and how have they shaped your sense of your capacity to be reflective and present as a knower?)

**Background and Theoretical Influences**

The impetus for this session came from a day-long conference I attended a few years ago. The focus of the conference was on critical social learning in the context of hospice and palliative care. During a short break between sessions, as an informal energizer activity, a woman with a collection of drums and noisemakers invited anyone who was interested to pick up an instrument and play along with her. For those who responded to her invitation, it was the highlight of the day. Although brief and only tangentially connected to the theme of the conference, it drew people together, raised spirits and energy, and provided insight into the power of drumming as a grounding, integrative practice even – or perhaps especially – in such an emotionally charged setting as hospice and palliative care. It brought home the idea that “kinaesthesia,” as Shusterman (2000) states, “is the ground of our consciousness” (p. 535). This experience was influential in nudging me towards further explorations of the role of embodied arts and leisure practices, such as drumming, dance, theatre, and martial arts, in sparking those potent learning moments that linger in the memory and open the way, sometimes inexplicably, towards deeper awareness and widened possibility.
I turned to taiko as a specific focus of interest because it is such a multi-layered practice that confounds traditional arts categories and offers a fully integrated practice of rhythm and movement along with a strong community sensibility. Although the art form of taiko as an ensemble practice draws on ancient underpinnings from Japanese history and folk culture, it is a relatively recent phenomenon. The first taiko groups began to appear in Japan in the late 1950s, influenced from the start both by Japanese religious and festival drumming traditions and the Western “drum set” style of percussion. The booming sound and energetic movements of taiko quickly became popular in Japan and soon many other groups began to form, arising as part of a larger movement that fostered popular arts as a medium for sustaining cultural heritage and restoring local communities (Izumi, 2001; Konagaya, 2001).

The popularity of taiko quickly spread beyond Japan, with the first North American groups starting in the late 1960s, extending from two groups in California in 1968 to several hundred groups across the United States and Canada by the mid 2000s (Varian, 2005). The original development of taiko in North America came about at a politically charged time in the 1960s and 1970s when questions of power and identity were being raised. For many early groups, taiko was a positive expression of Japanese culture, challenging entrenched racial stereotypes, and also gender stereotypes as more women joined in. It became an important avenue for expressing, in an embodied way, a philosophy emphasizing cooperation, leadership, responsibility, and spirituality, in addition to the physical and musical discipline of taiko as a performance art form. Although many groups retain a strong commitment to the Japanese roots of taiko and the Japanese community in North America, most include both Asian and non-Asian members and serve as a vital cross-cultural meeting place for people of diverse backgrounds, brought together by the bonds created through practicing, playing and performing together. A sense of connectedness is an integral element of taiko philosophy, using the power of the drum to “reach common ground of what is essentially human – that which lies underneath ‘culture’” (Conant, 2002, p. 2).
Increased awareness of bodily experience through physical arts and culture practices can be a powerful source of empowerment and resistance.

- Gustafson (1999)

There is a growing body of sources identifying the importance of the arts in transformative learning. Clover, Stalker and McGauley (2005) assert that because many communities are fraying under neo-conservative policies, alternative sites of transformative social learning are becoming more necessary. They point to community-based arts and cultural practices as one such venue. Lipson Lawrence (2005) explores the importance of including arts practices in understanding how knowledge is construed. She uses the term “art” expansively to refer to all forms of artistic expression, including literature, drama, dance, music and the visual arts. She sees art as a form of indigenous knowledge expressing dimensions of understanding that are non-verbal and not easily encompassed within the cognitive domain. Artistic expression can contribute to the process of uncovering hidden or subordinated knowledge, challenging dominant ideologies, and promoting a wider frame of cultural understanding.

Among other art forms, Thompson (2002) considers the importance of arts practices that have an embodied, physical dimension, providing a framework for learning that is grounded in corporeal presence. She states that there is great power in using physical bodies to explore and express meaning, especially in the context of forms of movement that provide an opportunity for cross-cultural learning and touching base with cultural heritage. Gustafson (1999) similarly argues that increased awareness of bodily experience through physical arts and leisure practices can be a powerful source of empowerment and resistance, reclaiming a sense of connectedness to dimensions of meaning and understanding that are often overshadowed or de-legitimized by dominant cultural values and practices.

Admitting the body into the realm of knowledge does not displace the importance of critical awareness in the creation of meaningful knowledge, but can serve to ground epistemology in the physical, somatic lifeworld. As Ng (2005) states, introducing the body into classroom (and conference room) settings serves to “disrupt normalized practices,...raising questions about how we come to treat learning merely as an intellectual exercise when in fact learning involves our mind, emotion, body and spirit” (p. 3). Shusterman (2000) states that including an embodied dimension in our understanding of epistemology overcomes the inadequacy of thought at the level of words alone. Similarly, if self-understanding is central to transformative learning, then attention to the presence of the body in shaping meaning and perception must not be ignored (Ng, 2005).
There is a socially integrative role which rhythm plays. How do we keep this sense of rootedness alive?

- Menzies & Newson (2007)

Rhythm and music are also important aspects of embodied knowing and creative expression. Olson (2005) states that active music making in a community has great potential for connecting aesthetic experience to life experience, as well as creating empathic bonds among individuals of disparate cultural and social backgrounds. When a group is engaged in cross-cultural musical performance, there can be “a circle of life being formed where we feel each other culturally, give to each other emotionally, learning from one another by sharing familial backgrounds and experiences” (p. 58). Olson also notes that active music making can serve as a creative mode of resistance to the increased fragmentation, intensification, and mechanization of contemporary hyperculture, reclaiming a sense of connectedness to the natural rhythms of the body. As Menzies and Newson (2007) state, those rhythms have been eclipsed by the staccato, time-compressed rhythms of an accelerated culture, resulting in a loss of time and space for meaningful dialogue, reflection and critical engagement. In academia in particular, they argue, where the temporal impacts of the wired economy have been acutely felt, there is an urgent need for “championing temporal practices which allow time for the reflection and deep presence required for creative intellectual work” (p. 83).

Discussion

Against the multiple fragmentations and accelerations of contemporary hyperculture, taiko offers a dynamic opportunity for rooting transformative learning in the embodied experience of the present moment. Transformative learning entails the radical reassessment of values and practices that give life meaning. Creative activities that draw attention away from habitual ways of being can assist in this process. As my experience at the hospice and palliative care conference showed, activities that foster movement and rhythm, even for short periods of time, can play an integrative role in sustaining the connection between mind and body, self and other. They can help draw people out of the habitual detachments and disconnections from space and time that shape so much of what is taken for granted as “normal” social life.

Taiko is a challenging art form that entails rigorous discipline and training over a long period to be able to perform with grace and competence. Obviously, in a one-hour experiential session, facilitated by a taiko novice with no drums, there will be little time to do much more than touch the surface of the art form and the kinds of associations that can be drawn between the practice of taiko and the process and theory of transformative learning. However, the aims of the session are simply to enjoy the experience of taiko rhythm and movement and begin to sketch out how such activities might be connected to the other themes of the conference. Taiko is one practice, among many others, that can serve in the capacity Menzies and Newson (2007) suggest of fostering a sense of deep presence through playful embodiment and group interaction.
The potential of embodied arts practices in the context of transformative learning is to explore different sources of vitality to support critical intellectual work and social and political action.

As an art form with strong Japanese identifications, taiko also invites attention to the making of meaning beyond the body, with respect to cultural identity and diversity. The practice of taiko is strongly influenced by philosophies and values rooted in Asian culture; however, it reflects an openness to cultural hybridity and fusion, serving both a bonding and bridging function. Among many other arts and cultural practices that derive from non-European origins and have become popular in the west, it creates a space for challenging the domination of the western arts and entertainment monoculture, de-centering western influences without rejecting them, opening a wider space within global diasporic public spheres (Appadurai, 1996) to counter the colonizing tendencies of monolithic globalization.

References


Abstract: This experiential session engages participants through multiple ways of knowing in reflecting critically on how to develop personal capacity for communicating about white privilege, race and racism. The session is designed for white people's particular needs, but everyone is welcome.

Introduction

This experiential session is intended for white people who are interested in sharpening their conscious awareness about how unexamined assumptions and emotional attachment to self-concept can distort critical self-reflection when white privilege, race or racism is salient. People of color are welcome, and we emphasize that the session is rooted in the context of our experience as white people who are trying to become more aware of how we are limited by hegemony and privilege.

We identify four premises that shape this experiential session. The first two are presuppositions on which the third is based. The third premise describes the session's content—participants thinking critically about three interrelated issues that affect their communications when race is salient. The fourth premise guides our design of the session. We list the premises before discussing them and conclude with a brief overview of the session activities.

1. White people are deeply embedded in meaning perspectives that make it difficult for us to perceive how white privilege affects our lives and the lives of others.
2. When white people begin to understand the injustices perpetrated by our participation in systems of privilege, we often seek to become change agents who will correct these injustices. Effectiveness as an agent for change is enhanced when white people practice critical humility, a dialogic practice of communicating and acting with confidence while remaining humble about what one does not know.
3. White people are aided in developing critical humility in discourse about race, racism, and white privilege by systematically examining three interrelated issues: personal stake in maintaining particular self identities, impact of context on the role of privilege, and personal purpose in the particular communication.
4. Learning from critical reflection on personal meaning perspectives is facilitated when learning activities tap the learners’ intuitive and emotional ways of knowing.

White Supremacist Consciousness Is a Powerful Meaning Perspective

Our first premise is that white people are deeply embedded in the meaning perspective of white supremacist consciousness, and as a result find it difficult to perceive how white privilege affects our lives and the lives of others. We begin this section by explaining what we mean by white supremacist consciousness and why we use the term, followed by our description of the link between this consciousness and perspectives on privilege, race and racism.

White Supremacist Consciousness is a Profound Unconsciousness

Our thinking about white supremacist consciousness grows from our work as an inquiry group. We are six white European Americans who, as individuals, are adult education
practitioners in a variety of institutional and community settings. We have worked as a group since 1998, seeking to change our relationship to white hegemony and institutionalized racism.

We follow the lead of U.S. scholars of color (Delgado, 1995) in adopting the term white supremacist consciousness. In spite of the fact that the United States is increasingly multicultural and multi-racial, it remains rooted tenaciously in the colonizing influences of Great Britain and other western European countries. The system of thought that springs from these roots, and persists today, is white supremacist consciousness, a web of assumptions based on values and beliefs held by white, Protestant colonists that have evolved and been normalized. Because consciousness that assumes cultural normalcy is invisible to those who hold it, white supremacist consciousness manifests a profound unconsciousness about race privilege and hegemony.

The distinction between white supremacist consciousness and white supremacist is important. “White supremacist” refers to a person who believes that white people are superior human beings. “White supremacist consciousness” refers not to a person, but to the system of thought that grows out of the values and norms associated with the nation's white founders. Emphasizing that we refer to a system of thought and not to people, we note that not all white people in the United States consciously or unconsciously subscribe to these norms, nor are these norms and values exclusive to whites. Through the process of cultural imperialism, some people of color have also internalized these standards.

Although our experiential session focuses on race and race privilege, we note that white supremacist consciousness permeates multiple realms of thought and 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).

Meaning Schemes Used to Understand Race and Privilege

Moving from the general perspective of white supremacist consciousness to specific meaning schemes on race and privilege, our group turns to Ruth Frankenberg (1993), who identifies three points of view held by different segments of white dominant society. The first is essentialist racism, in which races are perceived as unequal within systems of white superiority. Essentialist racism is the meaning scheme held by white supremacists. The second point of view, evasiveness, includes two components. Color evasiveness is a meaning scheme in which people deny that there are any differences among races; power evasiveness is the scheme that allows people to discount the impact of historical factors and structural inequity. Within color evasiveness, since all people are assumed to be the same and race is therefore irrelevant, white people take-for-granted that personal norms are universal. From this belief, it follows that others' norms are deviant. White people with a meaning scheme of power evasiveness do not see how they have benefited from race-based privilege. In both cases, evasiveness arises from and perpetuates the profound unconsciousness that characterizes white supremacist consciousness. In Frankenberg’s third viewpoint, race cognizance, race is recognized as salient. Race and associated cultural practices are perceived as different, but uniquely valuable. We believe that a meaning scheme of race cognizance is requisite to becoming effective as a change agent.
Expanding Consciousness

Transforming a consciousness as invisible as white supremacist consciousness provides great challenge. Our second and third premises break the challenge into two parts.

Tackling the Challenge with Critical Humility

Our second premise explains the function of critical humility. Through our cooperative inquiry process, with ourselves as the subjects of our own research, we have noticed that as we struggle to inhabit the perspective of race cognizance, we often manifest attitudes and behaviors that interfere with our well-intended efforts to work toward racial justice. We notice that we are often tempted to see ourselves as having "arrived" at an end destination where we have achieved a properly transformed white consciousness. We like to think we "get it" because we have "done our work." Another temptation is to tell other white people, from our perspective of wise authority, how they ought to think and act. We proselytize. We also rush to negative judgment when we meet white people who are less evolved in their race consciousness than we perceive ourselves to be. We may decide they are not worthy of our time and try to distance ourselves from them. All of these temptations are counter-productive to effecting change. Striving to practice critical humility is our response to these temptations.

Developing a dialogical consciousness that we call critical humility (European American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness, 2005a, 2005b) helps us be more open in our approach to communicating what we have learned about white supremacist consciousness. 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 and, we assume, with which white adult educator colleagues may also struggle. If we are to hold ourselves accountable for acting, we must have confidence that knowledge shaping our action is valid. At the same time, knowing that our knowledge is distorted by hegemony and probable self-deception, we need to be on constant alert about limits to the validity of our knowing, and consequently, to the merit of our actions.

Excavating Assumptions and Meaning Perspectives Related to Self Identity

The third premise posits that examining three interrelated issues, all related to self-identity, can be instrumental in developing capacity for critical humility. This premise is rooted in our beliefs about transformative learning—a process of making visible perspectives and assumptions that have been invisible and recognizing distortions in belief systems so that we can create and internalize more appropriate ones. Because a web of epistemic, sociolinguistic, and psychological factors (Mezirow, 1991, pp. 41-56, 118-144) shapes white people’s relationship to race, their belief systems about race, racism, and white privilege are exceedingly difficult to excavate and change. “When inadequate meaning schemes involve self-concept, we fill this void by compensation, projection, rationalization, or other forms of self-deception” (1991, p. 44). Negotiating the pitfalls of self-deception is challenging.

We have devised questions that we find helpful in detecting our personal self-deceptions (See Figure 1). We believe these questions can help other teachers and learners first to identify and then to explore factors that confound their efforts to negotiate the paradox of being confident enough to act while staying open to the need for continual learning and self-examination. The questions guide reflection about self-identity and values, the role of privilege, the purpose of actions, and the self-reflective process.
These guidelines are useful both for examining one's own beliefs and practices as well as for engaging others in examining theirs. In practice, they are used more for reflection-on-action, either prospectively or retrospectively, than as a viable guide to reflection-in-action\(^3\). However, by diligent effort, adults can gradually develop capacity to integrate these guides for reflective practice in a way that enables reflection-in-action.

I. Self-identity and Values:
   - What are all of the self-identities that might be operating and at risk in this situation? (e.g., competent teacher, understanding parent, “good” person, anti-racist ally, etc.) Are there competing or contradicting values or identities involved?
   - Where do I feel threatened? What am I scared about?
   - What attracts me in this situation?
   - What is the identity label I seek to avoid? How do I see myself as different from others in this situation?
   - What are the costs and benefits of changing self-identity? How are these costs related to feelings of self-worth?

II. Role of Privilege:
   - What is the privilege operating in the situation? Acknowledging that we all have multiple identities, which ones are salient here?
   - In what ways am I resisting perceiving myself in a dominant position?
   - Is the context indifferent to my identity? Does it reinforce or reject my identity?

III. Purpose:
   - What is the phenomenon I wish to change?
   - To what extent is my purpose aligning with or threatening my self-identity(ies)?
   - How might I be perpetuating the phenomenon I wish to change in this situation?

IV. Self-Reflective Process:
   The questions above require critical self-reflection. If a learner is stuck or confused about the first three sets of questions, the questions below may be helpful. In our experience, feeling lost or confused is part of the process.
   - To what extent have I disclosed myself, allowed myself to be vulnerable to new learning?
   - 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?
   - How patient am I with myself about being wrong? How compassionate?

Figure 1. Questions that Guide the Practice of Critical Humility. Adapted from European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness (2005a).

Engaging Multiple Ways of Knowing as an Aid to Critical Reflection

Our fourth premise influences the design for the experiential session. We believe that critical self-reflection is more potent when stimulated and supported by multiple ways of
knowing. Many learning theorists have noted that the process of unearthing unidentified assumptions and hidden meaning perspectives requires multiple ways of knowing:

The phrase “multiple ways of knowing” has great currency in contemporary adult education discourse. A steady drumbeat of studies documents the importance of the affective as an important element in the transformative learning process (Hunter, 1980; Egan, 1985; Scott, 1991; Clark, 1993; Taylor, 1994; Barlas, 2000). Many educators critique the hegemonic force of an epistemology that privileges rationality. For example, ... Mary Stone Hanley (Tisdell, Hanley, & Taylor, 2000) characterizes Anglocentric culture as emotionally repressed and argues that over-reliance on the mind limits learning. (Yorks & Kasl, 2002, p. 184)

Over-reliance on the mind limits learning because rational analysis is a poor conduit to the emotional tenor of life experiences. In their conceptual map of how intuitive and imaginal ways of knowing foster transformative change, adult educators Lyle Yorks and Elizabeth Kasl (2006) document through rich description from multiple case studies the power inherent in these ways of knowing for bringing emotional material into consciousness. Thus, intuitive and imaginal ways of knowing are important precursors to the process of critically reflecting on previously unexamined assumptions. Yorks and Kasl use the model developed by John Heron (1992) to frame their theoretical understanding of multiple ways of knowing. Heron describes an extended epistemology that accounts for how a phenomenological encounter with lived experience, which is pre-linguistic, is first expressed in non-analytic ways and ultimately examined critically, for the purpose of formulating conceptual understanding that serves as a basis for new behaviors. The session plan follows Heron’s model.

Plan for Experiential Session

Opening: Session facilitators introduce concepts with short dramatization that includes characters who are personifications of educators' unexamined assumptions.

Identify an incident from personal experience: Through guided meditation, participants identify a difficult personal experience when race, racism or privilege was salient. After identifying the incident, still working alone, participants use art inquiry to re-engage with the tenor of their emotional experience during the incident.

Use questions to guide the practice of critical humility: Working in trios, one participant shares his or her experience. Group uses guiding questions to explore assumptions that had an impact on the interaction and tries out alternatives that might have contributed to greater success in the problematic interaction. As time permits, others share and group repeats.

Full group debriefing of participants' experience with the guiding questions.

Notes

1. The European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness fosters research and learning about the subject of White Supremacist Consciousness. The use of collective authorship under the name of the Collaborative reflects our understanding of the way in which knowledge is constructed. Members came together originally through their association with 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 about the Collaborative's work can be addressed to: collaborative@eccw.org. Find further information at our website: http://www.iconoclastic.net/eccw/

2. In this paper first-person plural pronouns such as "we" and "our" are used with multiple
referents. They may refer either to "us" as authors or to "us" as members of the larger category white people. Although it is tempting to resolve this ambiguity by reserving first-person pronouns for our group and third-person forms for white-people-in-general, the result might imply that we are separate and perhaps see ourselves as superior to other white people. Instead, we have chosen ambiguity, with apologies for any potential confusion.

3. We credit our use of the terms meaning perspective and meaning scheme to Jack Mezirow (1991) and the terms reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action to Donald Schön (1987).

References


Imperatives for Transformative Learning Theory-building in Three Postcolonial Contexts
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Abstract: The purpose of this experiential session is to expand the transformative learning (TL) theory base through the consideration of three postcolonial contexts along with the problems they share, those that are unique, and where adult educators often engage in the facilitation of TL for social justice, poverty alleviation, and human rights.

Introduction
A recent addition to the literature on transformative learning (TL) theories (Taylor, 2005) has contributed to the maturation of this theoretical stream through categorization of multiple perspectives of TL into seven basic categories. Three of those categories, social-emancipatory, cultural-spiritual, and planetary, which view the locus of control as a sociocultural phenomenon rather than individual, inform the practice of the session presenters, but, at the same time, fall short in conceptual development as related to postcolonial contexts. We apply the postcolonial label as a counterpoint to the very helpful distinction made by Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007, pp. 221-222) of Western and non-Western epistemologies. However, postcolonial contexts defy this distinction because Western perspectives have so influenced their governmental structures, language, economic practices, education, and ethnic conflicts in ways that require descriptors that take these influences into account. This suggests that Taylor’s “Organizing Framework of Varied Theoretical Views of Transformative Learning” (2005, p. 463), may require revision. Hence, not only do the existing theoretical articulations of transformative learning come under scrutiny, but the key leverage points, the actors, and their obligations to bring it about also come into sharp relief as subjects for reexamination and further development.

Questions for Consideration
During this experiential session you will learn about three postcolonial contexts (Philippines, specifically Mindanao, Mali, West Africa, and Sri Lanka) and then be asked to consider three main questions. In doing so you will be provided with handouts on existing TL theories most related to this task (mentioned above) and key points related to each case.

1. Select a particular case and consider what transformative learning might mean in that context. Seek assistance as needed from the case presenter (all case presenters will circulate and be available as needed). What do the existing sociocultural theoretical perspectives on transformative learning offer to guide us in this endeavor? What do we need to add? What components are missing or underdeveloped?

2. Imagine a community development project in one of the contexts that has been described, (literacy, income generation, resolution of local ethnic strife, etc.); pool your knowledge of the sociocultural views of transformative learning, and reflect on your role as an adult educator. What do you see as the most significant opportunities and challenges for transformative learning for yourself (as a cultural outsider or insider) in your role as an adult educator for a project in the context you have selected? What do the existing socio-
cultural theoretical perspectives on transformative learning offer to guide us in this endeavor? What do we need to add? What components are missing or underdeveloped?

3. Consider the notion that the transformative learning potential for this particular context may reside in its pre-colonial history, culture, language, and myths. How would you proceed in carrying out your project objectives to allow these elements to surface? What do the existing sociocultural theoretical perspectives on transformative learning offer to guide us in this endeavor? What do we need to add?

**Postcolonialism**

Although the three contexts described below are each unique, the prolonged periods of colonization by Western countries have left intransigent problems somewhat common to all. Specifically, colonizer practices regarding “official” language, government, education, et cetera were so firmly established that once these countries reclaimed their independence, they have encountered endless conflicts. According to a recent report from the International Institute for Educational Planning:

> Despite unprecedented growth in world incomes and unparalleled improvements in global standards of living over the past few years, abject poverty and hunger remains:
> - 840 million undernourished people;
> - 1.5 billion people who live without access to safe drinking water;
> - 860 million illiterate adults, more than half of whom are women;
> - 130 million children out of school;
> - 14 million children who have lost one or both parents to AIDS. (Atchoarena & Gasperini, 2003, p. 23)

Whereas these statistics vary among the countries we describe, of greater importance is our general understanding of (1) some characteristics of pre-colonial societies and (2) the lasting impact of colonialism on these societies.

Pre-colonial societies had rich histories. There were many coexisting kingdoms, ethnicities, cultures, traditional religions, and languages in what are now known as Sri Lanka, Mali, and the Philippines. Foreign religions, including Islam, and cultures entered these societies along with traded goods. In the Subcontinent, the Aryans traveled to the North, while the Dravidians were in the South. A deeply-rooted caste system pervades Hindu society up to this day, despite constitutional provisions to the contrary. In Mali and in the Philippines, Muslims believe that Islam—which has been synchronized with the local religions and cultural practices—is an indigenous religion.

Sri Lanka was most recently colonized by Britain, Mali by France, and the Philippines by Spain, the U.S., and Japan. These colonial powers imposed their respective bureaucracies and languages. They engaged in economic plunder and political hegemonic control along with local sympathizers. Imperialists harassed, tortured, and killed those who resisted colonial rule. Western powers changed the societies, economies, politics, and cultures of the colonies forever. After World War II, national liberation movements brought about “independence” for the contexts we describe. However, imperialism left a permanent mark on postcolonial societies. Colonists conquered the richest resources of these countries, and, in many cases, imported slaves, who did not speak the local languages, thus dividing communities based on powerful economic interests.

There is a distinction between the terms postcolonialism and neocolonialism. Apologists for imperialism call these neocolonial economies “developing countries” or “newly industrialized
states” to conceal exploitation. These countries are beholden to imperialism; the vast majority of the people are poor, but the dominant bourgeois ideology permeates society and represents the norm. Today, there are two general worldviews that reside within the broader concept of postcolonialism: neocolonial and anti-neocolonial. Most people have false neocolonial consciousness and identity brought about through centuries of western influence, exploitative transnational globalization, and western pop culture. Those with neocolonial consciousness are proud of transnational corporations (TNCs) in their countries, even as TNCs exploit cheap labor and natural resources; imperialist propaganda abounds. However, workers, landless peasants, indigenous peoples, and human rights activists, and enlightened professionals are engaged not only in transformative popular education but also in actions for social transformation.

Postcolonialism on the Ground in Three Contexts

For the purpose of this session, we focus on the Philippines (specifically Mindanao), Mali in West Africa, and Sri Lanka. Except where otherwise noted, data documentation for each context can be found via the UNDP website (see references). The most recent data available are from 2004.

The Philippines

Prior to colonization, the Philippines, with over 7,100 islands, was composed of hundreds of independent kingdoms. Compared to other Asian countries, Southeast Asian women, including Filipinas, were relatively equal to men. The people had different cultures and languages and practiced traditional religions. Traders from China, India and the Arab world brought political systems, religions, and cultures and influenced the development of the local economies, politics, and cultures. Spain colonized the Philippines for over 300 years; and the U.S., about 50 years. Japanese aggression in the Pacific resulted in direct occupation of the Philippines. These three colonial powers have permanently changed Philippine society. Spain destroyed the different local writing scripts and imposed Spanish as the official language. Spain appropriated lands and converted them to haciendas or agricultural estates to plant export crops for Spain. The U.S. imposed its bureaucratic system and made English the official language. Japan entangled the Philippines in World War II and committed wartime atrocities, including the mass raping of “comfort women.” The Philippines formally gained independence in 1946.

Today, the Philippines is a semi-feudal, semi-colonial society. There are three major societal problems. First, economic monopolies from around the world control the Philippine economy. Feudalism is a second major problem. The haciendas, are in the hands of few big landlords. The land problem is so intense that it spawned a continuing armed revolution, criminality and terrorism. The national wealth is in the hands of very few families, who are lackeys of transnational interests. Another major issue is state repression and corruption. To get anything accomplished corruption money is extorted at every level of the Philippine bureaucracy. Transparency International (2006) ranks the Philippines among the top ten most corrupt countries in the world nearly every year. Although the Filipino people legally have constitutional rights and freedoms, opposition to the government policies and actions are met with state repression, including political killings. International human rights groups such as Amnesty International consistently raise concerns about the treatment of peasants, workers, and indigenous peoples.

In addition, Mindanao, the Southern Philippines, has additional issues regarding ethnicity and religion. While the majority of the Filipinos are Christian, 85%, (due to Spanish and U.S.
Mali

In Mali it is estimated that 70% of the population of about 13 million live on an income of US $2 per day. The majority of people living below poverty are women (UNDP, 2004). Women’s access to employment is limited with only 15% represented in the labor force and concentrated in traditional occupations such as teaching, nursing, and working as unskilled laborers. Rural women are predominantly engaged in subsistence farming and have limited access to land, farm inputs, and technologies. Men control profits from cash crop farming even though women provide most of the manual labor.

Mali is one of the most stable democracies in West Africa today and paradoxically one of the world’s least developed economies. It has known periods of greatness and great losses in terms of political, economic and spiritual leadership and colonial and neocolonial subjugation (Dumas, 2002). Mali is changing today with women’s progress in leadership, women in participation in democracy and education, and in cultural and environmental preservation. Women in Mali are still underrepresented in government and parliament and they are underpaid. They receive inadequate education and health care that affects infant and maternal mortality rates. Changes in these patterns are occurring but full equality for women in Mali is an aspiration but not a reality (Dumas, 2002). Dumas noted that women representation in government has improved with “12% of Parliament and 32% of Government Minister Posts held by women” (p.152). These changes for women impact the whole community because of the social role of women as primary health caregivers, educators, and providers of basic needs.

In terms of literacy and education, only 19% of the women have attended primary school and 8% secondary education. Less than 1% has received university education. The low literacy rate and limited access to health and other social services are major contributors to women’s poverty (UNDP, 2004).

The family is the first social division, in Africa in general, and in Mali in particular. Therefore, any analysis regarding Malian women must include the family, which is the background for women’s activities. For that reason a Malian saying points out that “men cannot build up a family by themselves.” They need the assistance of women (author translation). Within the Malian family, the husband is called “дутigi (dû= family; tigi = owner, chief). The Malian woman is commonly called “gwatigi-muso” which means that the role of a woman is to take care of the housework, childcare and care of the elderly. In addition to domestic chores, Malian women have always worked with men in the fields. Men have always asked them for advice about issues and decisions affecting the family and society, but in a very discrete way, for it is considered unfortunate for a man to rely on his wife.

Mali is under the influence of the Arab World (90% of the population is Muslim). Therefore, religious and local cultural values are indistinguishable in Mali. Women and Islam are presented in ways that favor male and class privilege by keeping women illiterate and powerless. Males in Mali manipulate the religion to oppress women by denying them their rights. Although Islamic teachings rank women equal to men, the Malian culture deliberately treats women as
second-class citizens. Women are encouraged to stay at home, be submissive, respectful, tolerant, and quiet, for it is believed that only submissive wives give birth to powerful children. Most women take these rules, which keep them away from participating in decision-making and holding leadership positions, for granted.

_Sri Lanka_

This tropical island is located in the Indian Ocean about 20 miles off the southeast coast of India. It is comparable in size to the state of West Virginia and is the home to over 19 million people. The population is multi-ethnic with a 70% Buddhist majority who speak Sinhala. Another 7% of the population is Hindu, 8% is Muslim and 6% are Christian. Tamil is the predominant language of the Hindus and Muslims. During the British colonial rule (1796-1948) English became the link language as well as the instructional language medium. In the late 1950s, Sri Lanka (then known as Ceylon) joined many other nations freed from British imperialism in eschewing the English language, and returned the Sinhala and Tamil languages to the schools.

Sri Lanka endured nearly 500 years of colonial domination by European naval powers, first the Portuguese, then the Dutch, and finally, the British. The Portuguese and Dutch colonizers took control of port cities but never really invaded the interior of the island. However, the British took full control in 1796 and obliterated the last island kingdom at Kandy in 1815. The British occupation brought about a dramatic change in the island’s economic structure by firmly establishing a plantation economy and importing thousands of Tamil speaking indentured people from the Tamil Nadu province of India to work the tea plantations in the interior of the island.

In an effort to expedite the efficient production and transport of exportable products to the port cities, the British made substantial improvements to the island’s infrastructure including roads, schools, and healthcare. Paradoxically these changes have enabled Sri Lanka to maintain high literacy and low infant mortality rates. However, they also sowed the seeds of the nearly 30 year violent conflict between the Sinhalese majority and the Liberation Tamil Tigers (LTT). Broadly reported to the rest of the world as an ethnic conflict, at its heart, it is economic.

Although Sri Lankans have the highest per capita income in South Asia, a significant source comes from young women who go to the Middle East to serve as domestics. Sri Lanka is the only country in South Asia that has established a “safe house” in the Middle East for these young women who often are victims of sexual abuse and various forms of violence.

Indrani Iriyagolle, Director of the International Alliance of Women and Chairperson of its Civil and Political Rights Commission, has written an historical perspective on women in Sri Lanka (1989/1990). Although women were considered equal partners in pre-colonial times, she now asserts that:

Seclusion, segregation of women, domination over women, and over-protection of women are social phenomena that have entered the modern scene in recent times. Hence, socially, morally and culturally women’s position has deteriorated. All the modern changes in education and the law have not helped women enjoy the rights of the individual. Until such a status and position is accorded to her in real terms she will not be able to enjoy the esteem her counterparts did, in the early period of the island’s social history. (p. 25)

There are over 25,000 rural villages in Sri Lanka where over 80% of the population resides, and many of the families in those villages depend on the female head-of-household to
survive. Their choices are limited, and this is especially frustrating to the women of Sri Lanka who cherish the fact that women have had the power to vote for over 70 years.

Concluding Thoughts
As you reflect on the questions posed above with respect to the cases presented, we surmise that your self-concept as an adult educator, your role, and the beliefs that guide your practice will require examination. You may confront the issues that put learners at risk when facilitating learning about social justice, poverty alleviation, women’s rights et cetera, particularly within unfamiliar cultural contexts. As adult educators move on to other projects and as grant fund priorities shift, responsibility toward the learners remains an important but neglected concern. Although the session presenters fully appreciate the on-going critique of transformative learning theories, there is some frustration that work-on-the-ground is hampered by insufficient attention to generative work on this important topic. In this sense we are striving to create a “third space” for conceptual development of transformative learning theories where, according to English (2005, p. 87), “. . . third is used to denote the place where negotiation takes place, where identity is constructed and reconstructed, where life in all its ambiguity is played out.” We aspire to move beyond acknowledgement of the need to modify existing theory for postcolonial contexts and actually begin the work.

References
Transformative Learning of a Kurdish Woman in Turkey
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Abstract: This study aims to examine the dynamics of transformative learning of a Kurdish woman in relation to socio-cultural and political contexts in which multilayers of oppression and repression are a big part of the daily lives of women. The study revealed valuable insights that will assist adult education theorists and practitioners in understanding the importance of the material and subjective conditions of a specific context in the process of transformative learning.

Background
The case was situated in Turkey. Turkey is a state that has a long history of oppression and state terrorism towards dissidents, the Kurds, and other minorities. Besides military and police-state oppression, in Turkey cultural oppression (including racism, misogyny, sexism, and oppressive religious practices) is historically embedded. Zelo, a pseudonym name for the participant, does not know exactly what year she was born, but she thinks she is 49 years old. Zelo is a Kurdish woman with short hair, all gray. Dark circles are under her eyes. Her teeth are tinged yellow from smoking. Her height is considered short, but when she talks, when her courage and enthusiasm waves in the air; one would think she is a big woman. Even though she is in her late 40s, her energy, her idealism, and her courage make her look younger. In spite of her agony, political, cultural, and economical repression, her hope, her eagerness, and her doubtlessness about what she is doing and why she is doing it are unshakable.

Zelo was born in a big traditional family. She is one of the nine children from two different mothers. Her mother left home when Zelo’s father married a younger woman. Zelo and her younger brothers had to live with their stepmother for 3-4 years. Zelo was 8 years old and was responsible taking care of her younger siblings while her own mother was gone. She had to drop out of school; she was only in the second grade. “When my mom left home, I became a mom for my younger brothers, 4 and 6 years old. I had to take care of them. I had to protect them.”

When Zelo was 14, she got married to one of her cousins who was 8 years older than she. For her, marriage was “from one house [she were] going to go to another house.” Nobody asked her opinion. Everything was arranged and done in 40 days recalls Zelo. “In 40 days, he came, he saw me, he approved that I was okay [to be his wife] and ‘took’ me.” She says “I was a child, you know…. While my friends were still playing [on the streets], I was forced to make a home in a room.”

Her marriage was traumatic from the beginning. “It was our first night, he told me that if I didn’t treat his family right, he would kick my ass out and send me back to living with my family. I didn’t understand why he was talking with me like that. I couldn’t understand why he brought me there and then was telling me to go to my father’s home.” When Zelo was beaten for the first time by her husband, she was pregnant. She had become pregnant the night they got married. After the first beating, she went and asked her mother-in-law why he had beaten her. She told her that it was okay because husbands both love and beat. Zelo tried to find out why he had beaten her. She tried to find out a reason for the beating, a reason that perhaps could help her to justify the beating. She scanned all her verbal and nonverbal behaviors; had she done anything
inappropriate in front of his parents, had she said anything wrong, had she sat wrong, had she stood up right, had she worn something that she was not supposed to? Nevertheless she could not find any reason that she deserved to be beaten. She had not done anything wrong. The only reason that was given to her was the idea that he had both the right to beat and the right to love her.

Zelo’s entire marriage went humdrum with beatings and cheatings. When they moved to a big city nothing got better for Zelo. She was not a “child” anymore. She was expected to be a woman defined by the tradition. She was the only one to be blamed for any wrongdoing. In the city, besides her marriage problem, she faced other problems such as racism, poverty, and political repression. Her kids grew up under a military coup which repressed all dissident voice and predefined people’s daily lives by the regime of terror. Her children got involved with politics. Her oldest son was arrested and tortured. One morning she found a little note from her youngest son stating that he was going to join the Kurdish liberation movement. Zelo was blamed for not being able to be a good mother. She stood up and defended her son and her son’s act. Then she dared to divorce her husband. And then her daughter joined the movement. Finally Zelo got involved with politics, went to night school to learn how to write and read, attended cultural activities, took a role in a pro-Kurdish political party. She is now a head of a women’s branch in the party and member of several human rights and other non-governmental organizations.

**Literature**

One of the unresolved, diverse, and contradictory issues over the theory of Transformative Learning is whether or not social change, one of the important aspects of adult learning, is neglected. Taylor (1998) points out that this problem results from Mezirow basing his theory on Habermas’ emancipatory learning theory. Another source that this problem might be sprung from is Freirian pedagogy’s influence on Mezirow’s transformative learning theory. While both Habermas and Freirian theory put social transformation in the center of their own theories, Mezirow’s concern is broadly about individual transformation. Cranton (2006) identifies four major issues in the literature that criticize transformative learning. These issues are directly and/or indirectly related to the issue of socio-political dimensions of learning, such as power, social action, and cultural context. In his response to Inglis, Mezirow (1998) acknowledges the importance of socio-cultural and political context in the process of learning and social movements as powerful agencies for transformation. Nevertheless, he is not very clear about a fundamental social change through transformative learning. Cranton (2006), however, asserts that Mezirow neither suggests that adult educators be concerned about social action nor denies the possibility of social transformation through transformative learning. In other words, recognizing social change as a vital component of adult education, Cranton believes that those who criticize Mezirow’s theory’s shortcomings of socio-political transformation, are perhaps belittling people’s learning and self-transformation as a core of greater social transformation.

It does not seem that this debate can easily be fully addressed and resolved. Since Mezirow identifies his theory as a *theory in progress* and that he is open and responsive to the feedback he receives, the transformative learning theory is given an opportunity to improve and develop. In addition to the issue of social change, Taylor’s (2007) updated literature review reveals that the role of context is one of the areas that needs greater attention within the transformative learning. Therefore, this study hopes to contribute to the debate on the theory’s
relation to social change and further contribute to understanding the importance of the material and subjective conditions of a specific context in the process of transformative learning.

**Methodology**

For this study, a qualitative paradigm was chosen and narrative analysis was the kind of qualitative inquiry that was utilized. Qualitative inquiry focuses to explore, explain, or describe a social phenomenon of interest to provide an in-depth understanding and meaning (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The focal point of narrative inquiry, on the other hand, is the overlapping of individuals’ narrations and their socio-economic, cultural, and political milieu. As a result, qualitative research is centrally concerned about meaning which is socially constructed by human agents through their interaction with both the material and social world.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Purposeful sampling is used in this study. Due to some limitations that are coming from the nature of this study (it is political in nature and risky), one participant, who is well known by the researcher, was identified and selected. Since this study is interested in understanding how people make sense of their experiences and their relationship to transformative learning in a particular time and context, quantifying the data was not considered necessary. By valuing meanings, especially the subjective meanings of the participant’s experiences, this qualitative inquiry offers opportunities to understand the dynamics of transformative learning in relation to social change. It might also offer adult educators an opportunity to acquire new perspectives or to gain more in-depth information that may be difficult to convey otherwise (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Eight semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted on the phone with the participant. The focus of the data gathering was on Zelo’s journey of transformation under the multilayers of socio-political oppression from her childhood to her adulthood.

**Findings**

While oppression determines the way(s) of thinking and learning that may create conformist learning, it may also create subjective and material conditions to resist; Zelo’s narrative revealed that while oppression may create conformist learning, it may also create resistance to learning the given ways of knowing, internalizing, and being. There can be so many factors that lie beneath this counter-productivity of an oppressive situation which is a well controlled and manipulated environment. Even though this study was not intended to find all the possible reasons to explain this, the data revealed that personality trait is an important one. There is something with Zelo that does not allow her to let go. We do not have enough data to explain this, but we could only interpret and relate to Freirian ontology. According to Freire (1998) even though both humanization and dehumanization are historical and possible for people, only humanization is people’s vocation. Humanization is a priori. However it “is constantly negated, yet it is affirmed by that very negation” (p.45). Dehumanizing practices (i.e., injustice, oppression, repression, and violence) are inhumane and do not fit well in our ontological being. Therefore, oppression inevitably creates possibilities for reactionary responses. Most of the oppressive templates which Zelo was expected to acquire and internalize were rejected as if they were alien materials for her body or consciousness.

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An analysis of the data indicated that Zelo’s journey of transformative learning does fit with most of Mezirow’s (1991) phases that individuals undergo when they experience transformation. Interviews with Zelo, for example, revealed that Zelo experienced disorienting dilemmas several times. She questioned her existing assumptions about marriage, womanhood, and motherhood several times. Her unquestioned assumptions of a “husband” who was supposed to be loving, supportive, and protective were challenged and shattered when she was beaten by her husband, or when her husband threatened to kick her out if she would not treat his family members respectfully. She experienced a deep disorienting dilemma. She did not know what to do. She did not know how to respond. As a wife, was she supposed to be strong and not allow her family to be ruptured? She examined herself: her feelings, emotions, reasons. She tried to make them fit (even though they did not fit anywhere) in an artificial schema that can be translated to “a husband has a right to beat and love” or “this is my fate, my destiny.” Nothing worked. She saw many women were going through similar batterings and abuses. Then she saw some women dared to divorce, and then she saw them “stand on their own two feet.” Even though it took a very long time she, many times, explored her options, her possible actions, her new roles, and possible obstacles of what ifs that lay in front of her. Even though she did not mention any plan that she deliberately made before her action, she did things when she felt those were needed to be done. For example, she joined to a political party and then decided to go to a literacy program to learn how to read and write. Then she built a new - her own perspective about life as she lived her life.

Zelo’s life experiences also indicated that her transformation was not just rational, it was also emotional, cognitive, and even symbolic and imaginative. For example, Zelo was given a nickname by others in the party, “Gorki Ana,” which refers to one of Maxim Gorki’s revolutionary characters in his novel entitled *The Mother*. The mother is a proletariat woman who goes through a socio-political transformation and becomes an activist when her son was arrested for his involvement with the socialist movement in late Czar Era. “Gorki Ana” has become Zelo’s pride and her model for her political transformation. Zelo, through her own very personal transformation (dysfunctional marriage, patriarchal cultural, and religious formations), learned to analyze and question historically embedded messages in the language and practices in her daily life and learned the ways to resist them. Furthermore, she also learned to politicize her motherhood, her feminity, and her ethnicity. Her personal transformation led her to a socio-political transformation, and she now demands peace, equality, and liberation through a collective act, asking other oppressed people to collectively make a fundamental change in her society.

Finally, Zelo’s life story revealed that cultural, historical, and political conditions play a crucial role in the process of transformation. Her story indicated that it was almost impossible to be free from the oppressive ideological influences, especially internalized ones. Even though Zelo was opposed to the oppressive cultural formation over women, women’s body, and sexuality, cultural and traditional norms and values still have power over her. For example, she still would not smoke on the street because it is not traditionally appropriate for women. Or she feels embarrassed when she says anything related women sexuality, and she either laughs or puts it in a culturally acceptable form such as, “You are a son to me.” However, she became open for more transformation. For
example, Zelo treated her daughter in a traditional way: oppressive and conservative. She would not allow her to go out, find friends (especially boys), and socialize with them. When her oldest son criticized her way of raising her daughter, she did not resist. She even encouraged her daughter to go out and socialize and even become politically active in the community.

Discussion

Zelo’s life experiences revealed that transformative learning is immanent in people’s lives. Individuals somehow undergo certain transformative learning experiences in the course of their lives. However, there are some questions that need to be asked. Is each transformative learning experience empowering or liberating? In Zelo’s case, yes it is. Her transformation empowered her, increased her gender consciousness, increased her political awareness, self-confidence and self-efficacy. In addition, she became open to further transformations and personal developments, which is a potential to break the internalized oppression.

Through transformative learning, she found grounds to interact with the world. Through this interaction, she found a channel to voice her hopes and her frustration. She also found a way to reflect her “self” in order to change the oppressive constructions not just for herself but for other women who go through similar experiences. In other words, her personal transformation did not keep her in her own shell; it led her to go out and find others and do something about it. Her transformation became collective. Even though this study focused on one participant’s experience, it is crucial to ask questions for further research. For example, during the research I could not stop thinking and questioning about other women’s similar lives under oppressive conditions. When women encounter dehumanization, I assume, they would go through most of Mezirow’s stages. They experience a kind of transformative learning, but would they be empowered or liberated like Zelo? Oppressed women’s unofficial number in Turkey tells me that apparently transformative learning is not a liberator itself. Therefore, everyone who goes through a transformative learning will not necessarily be empowered. They may be disempowered, may internalize the oppression, and may choose to be silent about their oppression, but regardless of whether the outcome is empowering or not, it is survival.

References


Creative Art Processes and Transformative Learning in Adult Classrooms
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Abstract: Assumptions in transformative learning are explored through focus on consciously non-rational processes related to art, methods of creative processes, and to extra-rational sources such as symbols, images and archetypes. The primary objective is to increase discourse, understanding and application of art and creative processes for usable knowledge to a more diverse group of learners and educators.

Introduction and Assumptions
A central aim of this experiential activity is to expand our understanding of transformational learning through focus on consciously non-rational processes related to art, methods of creative processes, and to extra-rational sources such as symbols, images and archetypes. How can we, as educators, be equipped to better recognize, manage and facilitate transformational learning the adult learning classrooms?

An assumption in this experiential activity is that the way to cognition is too cognitive for all learners in the adult classroom. Mezirow’s theory and approach to transformative learning theory is based on analytical and cognitive approaches to learning (2000). The theory suggests that the meaning schemes we construct from our beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions are based upon experiences that can be deconstructed through critical reflection and acted upon in a rational way (Taylor, 1998). Critics of the theory state it is too focused on rational, cognitive processes and therefore limited to learners with cognitive, rational preferences for learning (Taylor, 2001).

Another assumption in this activity is that art and creative processes create potent approaches to examining aspects of transformative learning and for creating portals to examine assumptions. Artistic and expressive ways of knowing demonstrate that knowledge and transformation are derived from many different sources. In addition to art being a means par excellence for accessing powerful realms of affect in transformational learning, art objects, through their symbolic power, allow us to discover or ‘try on’ different points of view.

Method
This experience is facilitated through hands-on experience with creative art processes using clay – simply, playing with clay. First, participants are introduced to ‘studio etiquette’. This is a way of creating respectful behavior and emotional safety for participants, materials and the process, using the language and rituals of art. Exposure to studio etiquette also introduces cross-disciplinary vocabulary and validity to participants who are unfamiliar with art processes and artful engagement.

The exercise guidelines are simple – participants are invited, given permission, to silently, freely play with their clump of clay. Participants are asked to keep their eyes closed to reduce visual sensory stimulation and to increase internal and kinesthetic awareness. Participants who are reluctant to close their eyes should feel free to keep them open, open them occasionally, or move to a different site to reduce sensory stimulation around them. Participants are informed...
that there are no aesthetic requirements, no judgments or critiques. Responding to the experience of the clay is the method. Participants are invited to handle, mash, roll, fold, and form the clay for 15 minutes. They are encouraged to make no attempt to deliberately create an object but to allow form (if any) to emerge from their experience of working with the clay. They are encouraged to mentally take note of everything – sounds, silence, sensations, and thoughts, and to continue through the timed exercise. Participants with limited mobility of their hands may require accommodation. The clay can be pre-softened. It can be handled or marked with a basic sculpting tool.

Upon signal, participants are then invited to open their eyes and visually meet their ‘art object’. Through continued silence, they are asked to write down the first word, name or phrase that pops into their mind. Capturing participant’s first responses to their objects is key to capturing authentic, unedited, internal responses. Introduction of the objects to the group stimulates the direction of the discussion. First, participants are asked to simply, in turn, introduce the name of their object (or verb, phrase) to the group. Do not rush this time. Allow enough time for each name and the presence of each art object to enter into everyone’s awareness and into the collective ethos of the group. In the next round, participants are asked to briefly describe their experience of playing and interacting with the clay. A few prompts may include comfort/discomfort levels, mental activity, sensational, kinesthetic and emotional responses, thoughts, experience of aversion/pleasure, memories, awareness/lack of awareness of time. At this juncture the leader can make decision regarding the direction of the ensuing discussion, depending on the agenda and purpose of the group. This level of engagement can be enough to facilitate a dynamic discussion about the validity of creative process as a portal for exploring assumptions in transformative learning, especially noting experiences of discomfort, disorientation or resistance.

This activity requires a room where students can sit in front of surface space (i.e. tables), with capacity to shut the door for quietness and privacy. Materials should be provided for uniformity of the experience. The size of the group is limited to materials, facilities, and over-all goals of the learning experience.

**Materials**

Each participant works with a softball-size chunk of plasticine. Plasticine is recommended because it is a non-hardening, malleable, re-usable, clean form of clay. It will not harm or stain surfaces, dry out skin, or damage jewelry or manicures. It is an ideal clay product for a non-studio environment. Play-Doh is an excellent and colorful, economic alternative, though it is less articulate and tends to flake and drop pieces of dough. Moist clay is better suited for therapeutic environments and should be avoided for its messiness and regressive potential. Each participant needs access to Handiwipes (or damp paper towels) to wipe their hands and any surface area.

**Theoretical Perspectives**

Under-girding my doctoral study is the premise that art images and creative process can be transformational. The value of art to transformational learning lies in the many qualities inherent in the process of creating images and in the images themselves. Art and creative art processes have the capacity to surprise, delight, provoke, and challenge our assumptions. Art brings up nuances and subtleties that may be difficult to speak in words. Images and creative art processes can help us to extract our words, provide structure for cognition, and create meaning in
learning. Art and creative processes reveal complexities of transformative learning while also providing additional lenses through which to view possibilities and potential, particularly through the concept of disorienting dilemma in transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000). I assert the arts are an effective agent of change, disrupting and making unfamiliar what we take for granted as natural and normal. Increasing what is unfamiliar through creative art processes enables us to shake off the trappings of that which holds us down or maintains intellectual comfort zones and unquestioned assumptions.

Another theoretical foundation is recognition and appreciation for internal stimuli in adult learning. Jung claimed the ‘prima materia’, the primary material of our life, as perhaps the most potent stimulation for human consciousness in that it is generated from within (Jung in Edinger, 1994). Art is a means par excellence for accessing and portraying the conjunction of authentic affective and cognitive experience necessary for transformative learning. Play combined with creative art process is a potent and fertile combination. The experience of play has its own distinct attributes. Booth (2001) describes play as always new. It taps directly into what you know, bypassing interpretation and explanation. It bears no responsibility beyond the moment, it is not self-conscious, it distorts the sense of time, it seeks control within different kinds of order, and it tells the truth. What you know meets with what you don’t know.

Findings and Discussion

This art experiential is an activity that I have extended for multiple purposes with varied audiences. I have facilitated it to a range of adult learners in multi-disciplinary undergraduate and master programs – arts, education, business, liberal studies, psychology, and pastoral, including staff development for college administrators. While the direction of the follow-up discussion is unique and customized to the learning objectives of the group and setting (i.e. development of reflectivity in leadership, teambuilding, increased awareness of learning styles, developing creativity skills), the common denominator is tapping into non-rational, intuitive and affective realms of cognition for the purpose of transformative learning. Participant responses to the experiential exercise are varied, depending on the group and the context. It is common for students to be surprised, sometimes delighted or nervous, when they enter the room. They are inclined to pick up the clay and start handling it while I am orienting the group. It is also common, following discussion, for students to express surprise at how much they learned from their play and work with art materials. Responses from John, Mary and Robin (not their real names) are examples for consideration.

I was invited as a guest lecturer in a course on leadership to a Fifth-Year Master of Business Administration program. All of the students were young (mid-twenties) with aspirations for business leadership, but they were inexperienced in their field. By prior arrangement the experiential focus was on skills and values of reflectivity in leadership. The purpose of the session was to provide them with an experience of reflectivity rather than a traditional lecture/discussion. John was dynamic, outgoing, and comfortable with participation but with a touch of bravado. As we wound round and round the discussion circle, he added a comment:

“I can’t remember the last time I was totally quiet while doing something. I always have noise around me – TV, Walkman, car radio – even when I study. I can’t remember the last time I experienced silence. When we started working, I couldn’t imagine that I could even do this exercise. But I really liked it. I think I need to try being quiet more often.”
John stopped me in the hall some weeks later and confirmed that he had indeed started turning off what he now described as distractions and was enjoying more contemplative moments in his life. He was beginning to enjoy his own thoughts. In an undergraduate course on imagination and creativity, multi-disciplinary adult learners experimented with approaches to cultivating creativity. After introducing their clay objects and describing their experience, the group was then asked to cluster into groups of four students, then eight students until they were one whole group. Each time they clustered they were to create a new story (within four minutes) that incorporated every single object/character. The stories were wildly imaginative and robust. Some were silly, metaphorical or wise. Mary exemplifies a typical response:

“I thought the exercise was scary at first. I’m not a creative person. But it was fun. Then we started making up stories and more stories and then more stories, and they were really great. I see how creativity can come out of a whole group. It all started with these art objects, mine, too. It was amazing.”

There have been surprises. Robin, a master education student, exemplifies potential numinous quality of images:

“I felt like I was tapping into some great reservoir of images. They were flowing through me and into my fingers. When I opened my eyes to see my image (a swirling mass of lines, forms, and shapes that seemed to be energetically stretching upwards), I felt like I was seeing a great mystery that had emerged out of my hands.”

In a similar vein, at a residency colloquium, a student created a beautifully rendered horse. No one was more shocked than she. She claimed she had never sculpted before and all she saw in her mind was a beautiful resting horse towards which she felt profound love and yearning. Each of these experiences was pivotal for exploration of assumptions about learning, self-perceptions, and about the ability to be generative. Arrival at the edges of our knowing has the potential to stimulate innovative action that we may not have previously considered. Moving away from certainty takes us to what Berger refers to as the ‘growing edge’, the threshold of our thinking and sense-making (2004). The liminal space at the threshold of understanding is unfamiliar, potentially uncomfortable ground, making it the most precarious and important transformative space.

As educators we need to be prepared to meet a range of responses to new ideas and experiences in our classrooms. Learners range from those who seek out, embrace the edges of their knowledge and enjoy transformation, to those who anguish at the edges of their understanding or retreat from it back to some kind of certainty (Berger, 2000). Rejection, avoidance and devaluation are possible responses in the classroom, as well as curiosity and imagination. Defamiliarization through creative art processes may be experienced as disorienting, and therefore, avoided or minimized by both learners and educators. Uncertainty can also foster inertia, mis-direction, or even retraction of engagement. An essential challenge for transformational educators is empowering our students to welcome and manage the emotional, intellectual and neurological stimulation of unfamiliarity, as opposed to warding off or avoiding change (Mezirow, 2000, Berger, 2004, Ratey, 2001). The arts contribute directly to possibilities for teaching and learning because they offer our students and us multiple modes of expression and communication. This experiential activity suggests that by effectively utilizing and promoting art media in learning, more meaningful learning can and will occur. There are admittedly many variables that impact participant’s responses to art and creative responses. In the context of a supportive academic environment, students may chose to willfully engage with
the newness of their experiences and their disorientation. A primary objective in my use of this exercise is to increase discourse of factors and realities in transformation and to bring transformative learning through art and creative processes into clearer understanding and application for usable knowledge to a more diverse group of learners and educators.

References
Re-imaging Oppression: An Arts-based Embodied Approach to Transformative Learning
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Abstract: In this paper we explore some key elements of arts-based learning approaches and how they can create powerful transformative learning opportunities in relation to examining experiences of oppression and difference. Particular attention is given to popular theatre processes and how they support storytelling, embodied knowing and engaging with emotions.

Introduction
We believe that through the arts, (theatre, drawing, painting, dance, movement, music, poetry and other creative texts); we can tap into a kind of knowing that deepens and expands our exploration of oppression and difference. Arts-based embodied approaches can create spaces where risky storytelling can take place. Authentic engagement with our experiences of being oppressed as well as oppressing others is a highly emotive process, requiring that we listen to ourselves, our bodies and to each other with deep empathy. These exchanges can often involve conflict between individuals and within oneself. The arts are creative activities that can support storytelling and respectful, empathetic listening that honor emotions. As Maxine Greene (1995) argues: "It may well be the imaginative capacity that allows us also to experience empathy with different points of view, even with interests apparently at odds with ours". (p. 31)

Exploring oppression from a transformational learning perspective requires engaging with the subjective-objective dialectic, that is, it involves both the naming of lived experiences that are often painful and traumatic, and also a process of making sense of these experiences in order to collectively and individually take action to achieve social justice. We have both witnessed the limitations of abstract, rational engagement with the topic of oppression and difference, particularly how such conversations often do not engage with emotions and embodied forms of knowing. In contrast, through our research and teaching practices, we have discovered how creative, embodied arts-based activities can create crucial spaces for sharing difficult stories and how these processes can provide alternative pathways to theorizing about them, within a plurality of experiences and understandings. Arts-based and embodied activities offer a medium for sharing experiences, of breaking silences in a way that allows the storyteller and their audiences to bear witness and respond with deep empathy. The arts, particularly popular theatre processes, are very effective ways to engage with conflict, pluralities of experiences, and respectful listening.

Given the space limitations of this paper, we will be focusing on one particular arts-based process--popular theatre. We begin with a brief introduction to popular theatre followed by discussions about embodied knowing, storytelling, and affective knowing; offering examples of how these elements might be played out in a popular theatre process. We focus on these elements, as we believe they are key to creating spaces for transformational learning. While these domains of knowing are discussed individually we recognize that they significantly overlap and want to emphasize their interconnectedness.
Popular Theatre

Popular theatre is a dynamic process, which uses theatre exercises to move through cycles of exploration, analysis, and taking action on matters of concern to individuals and their communities. Popular theatre is called *popular* because, as Prentki and Selman (2000) note:

It is theatre created with, by and for the communities most involved in the issues it seeks to address. When the process of making the theatre is given over to community members, communities can come to control the content and the form of this powerful medium. A space is created where groups and individuals can afford to work on dangerous issues. (p. 8)

Popular theatre works with people’s lived experience. The process of discovering, uncovering, and telling personal stories is at its heart. The work is closely linked with Freire’s theories and methods, with theatre creation offering a dynamic and more fluid approach to strategically blending codification and decodification processes (Kidd, 1983, p. 12). Stories are mined for their meanings, making issues tangible and personal and, conversely, revealing social and systemic oppression. Brazilian educator, director, activist Augusto Boal created the *Theatre of the Oppressed* in 1970. Influenced by Freire’s work, participants were invited to share their personal stories of struggle and oppression using the medium of spontaneous theatre to work out alternative solutions to personal and societal problems which could then be translated into action. (Boal, 1979, 2000). Some popular theatre facilitators seek to dramatize these ‘true stories’, whereas others see personal storytelling as a step in a longer process, where fictionalized stories are created from the process of storytelling. Salihu Bappa and Michael Etherton (1983) propose that fiction is “capable of presenting a picture of reality with such stunning clarity that it reveals the different levels of the specific social reality which exists in that community” (p. 56). They state that popular theatre “is purposefully different” from traditional western drama: “The roles of the characters, everyday life and society itself are all shown to be subject to change. The play provides a means of objectifying social reality for the purpose of changing it” (p. 56).

Creating images, or theatrical metaphors, is another key feature of many popular theatre processes. Participants explore and relate their experiences and understandings via the body. Lib Spry (1986) sees image work as a “profoundly radical and democratic process”:

Our bodies are shaken out of their usual molds, our senses are stimulated; we are dynamized by the alternatives we are trying and the discovery of the consequences of different actions. We rehearse well and from these rehearsals we will choose a solution most useful to us, individually or collectively. When we go back to our daily lives we will try ‘to create a future instead of waiting for it. (p. 54)

Many popular theatre facilitators and drama educators view group trust building as central to successful work. Drama educator Helen Nicholson (2002) proposes that “a productive and creative environment built on an ethic of care does not mean that there will be agreement between participants; on the contrary, a political theory of trust acknowledges that a caring environment may create a robust environment in which debate, dissent, [and] generosity…might be encouraged and valued” (p. 90). Without this, the experience is “vulnerable to injustice and closed to the potentially liberating risks of difference” (p. 88).

Embodied Knowing

Using the body, being conscious of the body as a vehicle and source of knowledge is central to popular theatre processes and other arts-based activities. Much more attention is now being given to embodied knowing. Allen (1995) argues that our earliest ways of knowing are
preverbal. Children naturally express themselves through music, drawing, and dancing and dramatic play often before they acquire a spoken language (Lawrence, 2005). Paradoxically, traditional schooling insists that we work at a desk, remaining still and silent much of the time. We are even punished for excessive activity or “talking out of turn”. Matthews (1998) labels educators’ disregard of children’s bodily activity and their view of it as a distraction to learning, as “miseducative.”

As adults, we sometimes lack the words to express how we are feeling, particularly in issues of oppression or when the feelings are very strong. While the words may not be there, the knowledge is present all the same. As we have noted earlier, we have found that drawing upon extra-rational processes, particularly the arts, is a way of making this knowledge visible. One way we do this is though the body. “Something is being made sense of before words can describe it. I call this experience ‘somatic nudges’—I know something in my body before I have the words to express the knowledge” (Lindsay, 2002, p.170).

Embodied knowing challenges the Cartesian dualism of the mind-body split along with positivistic notions of the knower as a separate and distant observer from the known. Walking down a dark street and seeing shadows in the distance raises an “alert”. Your heart races, breathing becomes shallow, your throat may become restricted and your skin may feel cold and clammy. These responses are instinctual and automatic and come before our brain registers fear or feelings of being threatened. To take this a step further, we would not acquire the cognitive knowledge without the bodily sensations to clue us in. Embodied or somatic knowing precedes all other ways of knowing. Somatic knowing triggers affective knowing (emotion), which in turn triggers cognitive knowing. Brockman (2001) believes that unlike cultural-linguistic theories of knowledge which are culture specific, somatic knowing which locates the source of knowledge in one’s body (which we all have) promises a broader more inclusive epistemology that transcends cultures.

Michelson (1998) offers a feminist critique of traditional theories of experiential learning, which see learning as occurring upon cognitive reflection on experience, rather than in the actual experience as it occurs. She argues that “Learning is understood as a moment of emotional and physical response [to experience] not a moment of dispassionate self-reflection, as the product of an embodied, social selfhood rather than of a disembodied mind.” (p. 226). Similarly, Denise Nadeau who used popular theatre for economic development with a group of women workers in Mexico City believes that the privileging of the mind and denial of the body as a source of knowledge has a profound silencing effect on women creating a deep sense of powerlessness. The way to interrupt these oppressive structures is to invite women to tap into their body wisdom (Nadeau, 1996).

In popular theatre the body is central to the activities; many of the warm-up exercises used in popular theatre processes help students get in touch with their embodied selves. For example, participants might be asked in a workshop exploring oppression, to state their name and provide some kind of gesture that symbolizes how they are feeling in the moment about the topic. Participants are encouraged to not 'think' too much, but to go with whatever comes up in the moment. For example, someone might give a big sigh after they say their name, or a moan, or cover their eyes. Others in the group are then invited to collectively mimic the gesture as they repeat the participant's name and welcome the individual.
Knowing Through Storytelling

As noted above, much of the power of popular theatre is its focus on telling stories which provide an avenue into examining the specifics of our daily lives, an important aspect of disrupting how processes of domination ignore and render invisible individual's experiences of oppression. Human beings have engaged in the oral tradition of storytelling since the beginning of time. According to Cajete (1994), “the telling of story is such a universal part of human communication and learning that it may be that story is one of the most basic ways the human brain structures and relates experience” (p. 137). Through stories we share our feelings, heal wounds, discover hope, increase understanding, and strengthen community.

Stories always reflect the lived experience or subjectivity of the storyteller, which may or may not reflect reality. Many women in particular have constituted their subjectivity through internalized oppressive structures; sometimes damaging (and largely erroneous) assumptions about self. Davies (1992) found poststructuralist theory to be a useful construct to challenge old stories that serve to subjugate and oppress, allowing us to examine multiple discourses and create multiple stories about how we see ourselves.

Storytelling is a powerful way to challenge our dominant ideologies of what is considered “normal” (Butterwick & Selman, 2006). The arts are a way to tell our stories, very personal experiences of pain or oppression, conflict or confusion and to also share them with others. Performing our stories takes the knowledge to a new level. Ellis and Bochner (1992) created a play to share their stories of male and female perspectives of pain when the couple chose to have an abortion. They discovered that: “Performing the narrative extends the process of inquiry by introducing another form in which one experiences the experience” (p. 98).

When we share our stories through the arts we can see them through our own and others’ embodied interpretations—we can stand back a bit and see our story from a different angle which can help with analysis of the problem and identifying steps for action. In this way we can imagine alternative realities and write new stories with more positive outcomes. In doing so we become agents for personal and collective transformation.

Following from the introductory exercise mentioned above, small groups of 3-4 people are formed by inviting individuals to search out others whose gestures, during the introduction, touched them in some way. In these small groups, participants are then directed to share something about themselves and their gestures, to tell a story that relates to the gesture, and finally to create a group body sculpture, or collective tableau or image, that captures aspects of these stories. These images are then shown to the larger group who comment on what they feel, what they see, and what kinds of stories might be represented in the image.

Affective Knowing

Closely tied to telling stories and processes of embodiment are tapping into our feelings, not just what we are thinking. Mezirow (1991) introduced transformative learning as a process of critically reflecting on our assumptions and meaning making schemes and reframing our ways of understanding based upon more inclusive information. This assertion implies that transformation is largely a rational process. Yet, our most profound experiences; what Mezirow refers to as “disorienting dilemmas” (p.168) i.e. childbirth, death, job loss etc are fraught with great emotion.

Until recently, our western culture has not recognized the value of affective knowing. Women in particular were criticized for being “too emotional “and thus less effective in leadership roles. We are now learning that not only is emotion a valid source of knowledge it is critical to learning. Emotions often come to us in symbolic imagery. According to Dirkx (2001 p.
“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.” Knowledge accessed through emotion can take us to the deepest recesses of our soul. We can use this affective knowledge to enter into an authentic dialogue with self and others to explore the meaning of our experiences at a deeper level.

Our traditional discursive form of everyday speech, however, is limited in its potential for authentic dialogue, particularly when the conversation is about difficult and painful experiences around difference or oppression. Marshall Rosenberg (1999) who teaches about non-violent communication discusses how many of us fall victim to “emotional slavery” (p. 60) a state of internalized oppression where one takes on the responsibility for the feelings and actions of others. Many of us are illiterate when it comes to feelings. We are not in touch with our emotions or lack the language to express them.

Energetic movement and dance, creating visual art, poetry and music takes us to a feeling state allowing us to access our emotions in new and dynamic ways. We use symbol, imagery and story as a way to uncover knowledge that probably always existed but was veiled or hidden from our consciousness. Arts-based learning can be a way to connect us with our emotional states, which can result in altering our communication patterns and ultimately our way of being in the world.

Feelings can be assessed more easily when we listen, attend to our bodies- the rapidly beating heart, shortness or breath, flushing of the skin. In the activity outlined above, after the images are shared, the audience is invited to call out what they see, how they felt, and what feelings and stories they thought were being expressed/represented. Following this, the members of the tableau talk about their process and what they were portraying. Often in these discussions, many different interpretations are offered. The artists/creators of the tableau are often surprised by the different meanings that the audience members are creating, which lead to a rich and deeper exploration. This exercise can identify some themes that are then built upon as the popular theatre process continues. Another way to work with the tableaus is to invite the small groups to gather together again and illustrate in a second body sculpture or tableau, a transformation of the oppression articulated in their first image. This new image would be shown and unpacked in a similar fashion to the first one. In exploring the process of transformation e.g. ‘how did you get from the first image to the second, transformed, image?’ , often more stories are told, new feelings emerge, and the horizon of understanding oppression and transformation is expanded.

**Conclusions**

In the limited space of this paper, we have discussed how popular theatre activities tap into embodied knowing, offer spaces for storytelling, and honor the emotional dimensions of our experiences. We have outlined a few activities that illustrate these elements. We argue that arts-based learning, like theatre, is a powerful way to tell stories of oppression, to honor the specificity of those experiences, and engage with an analysis of them in order to determine actions that can move us in the direction of achieving social justice which is “full participation and inclusion of everyone in a society’s major institutions, and the socially substantive opportunity for all to develop and exercise their capacities and realize their choices” (Young, 1990, p. 173).
References


Co-Creating Living Systems that Thrive on Diversity
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Abstract: As we come to know ourselves as relational beings that are shaped by the other, we can embrace diversity in a way that fosters curiosity and overcomes our fear of difference. As we reduce the fear of difference, we can dismantle the structures that reinforce oppression and co-create inclusive systems that thrive on diversity.

Introduction
An appreciation for diversity begins with a desire to encounter and engage with others. As we recognize and learn to value people from different walks of life, our ability to embrace diversity becomes integral to our lives and ways of being in the world. The core of diversity is our encounter with “the other,” that which is different from us. Diversity enriches and transforms our lives, yet often we become afraid when we encounter others with radically different ideas or perspectives. Fear creates and sustains the conditions for oppression—in families, schools, organizations, and society. To embrace diversity fully, it is helpful to understand how we participate in systems of oppression and how we can co-create systems of inclusion and freedom.

As human beings, we are diverse in many ways, including race, ethnicity, language, culture, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, abilities, perspectives, and ways of being in the world. To engage with the complexity of the diverse world we inhabit, we must fully appreciate the potential differences among us. Diversity begins with the recognition and appreciation of people with different backgrounds and from different lifestyles, and it is so much more. To understand diversity, we must be open to an encounter with “the other,” open and willing to learn and be transformed by someone who is different from us.

This encounter with “the other” is a gateway to transformation if we are willing to question our assumptions and those that are commonly held in our culture. Questioning these assumptions exposes us to very different realities, which can create what Mezirow (1990) described as disorienting dilemmas. As we call into question that which we thought we understood and from which we have based our relationships and actions, the very fabric of our sense of self in the world may be shaken. A disorienting dilemma can result in a major life transformation and may leave one situated at the threshold of a new understanding, but not able to integrate the experience and understanding. This place of unknowingness and vulnerability helps us respond to others to create openness and trust and to encourage deeper, more mutual relationships.

This paper explores a human systems view of transformative learning to support an understanding of who we are in relationship with others, our organizations, our communities, and our world. Our hope is that as we come to know ourselves as relational beings that are shaped by the other, we can embrace diversity in a way that fosters curiosity and overcomes our fear of difference. As we reduce the fear of difference, we can dismantle the structures that reinforce oppression and create new structures that are inclusive and collaborative. First we explore a shift in consciousness from individual to relational self, then we discuss how we can co-create new a world where diversity and difference become sources of creativity that strengthen our commitment to inclusion and equity.
We are born into a world of relationships, dependent on our relationships to thrive. Our world and our relationships are increasingly more complex and diverse. Maturana and Varela (1987) describe our existence as a living system. When we understand that we are part of natural, living systems, we begin to understand the systemic structures in which we participate. We discover that as we pursue our lives, we contribute to living systems that often reinforce oppression. This in itself is a disorienting dilemma. When we face our unconscious collusion with systemic oppression, this understanding compels us to make a conscious choice to co-create systems that support inclusion, learning from difference, and liberation of the human spirit.

Our early childhood experiences create perceptions and understandings that shape the meanings we create as we mature. Developmental psychologists have found that as children we begin to attach meaning to the people and events around us. We use this knowledge and/or these understandings of experience to create a lens through which we view new people and events. These lenses contain our assumptions and worldviews. We learn from those who surround us within our families, communities, and cultures. Our relationships provide us with information about appropriate ways of thinking, acting, and living. With this understanding we then make predictions and develop actions we think are appropriate based on our assumptions. There are both external and internal affects of these societal teachings.

When we think and act according to societal norms, often we are rewarded by praise, acceptance, and financial recompense. These are the external rewards of conformity. This affects us internally. We may feel pride and self-confidence if there is a close link between our actions and what is rewarded. However, if there is a gap between the expectations of others and our sense of self, then we may feel shame, guilt, anger, a sense of oppression, as well as fear. The more we encounter inner dissonance, the greater the internalization of oppression. We oppress ourselves and in turn oppress others when we perceive them to be different from us.

Inner oppression arises from fear, and our fears of diversity create systems of oppression. Oppressive societal and organizational systems attempt to control rather than to free human expression. Freire (1970) recognized that oppression was the result of systems of control, especially those within our educational system. Rather than teaching children how to learn, to think critically, or to make good judgments, educational systems often force meaningless information into children and do not foster learning environments where diversity thrives. Freire used the analogy of banking to express this type of oppressive education.

The idea of learning as “banking” continues within most of our educational systems, developing children who fit our cultural norms rather than human beings with the capacity for evaluating the need for change and for creating the change we need in the world. Although we have had other models of education, such as the liberating approaches of Montessori or Waldorf education that have been around for over 100 years, they have had little influence on the U.S. public education system.

As adults, the students who have been oppressed through our educational system create livelihoods, contribute to, and participate in organizational systems. Many of the organizations we work for foster oppression through systems of control where people’s voices and spirits are marginalized. To some extent, we all have been oppressed by these systems, yet few of us are aware of how that oppression has been internalized and thus how we unconsciously collude with systems that perpetuate the cycle of oppression.

As we become aware of the systems in which we participate, both those that include and those that oppress, we often experience disorienting dilemmas that help us to see the larger forces at work and the many opportunities that we have been given to understand things more
deeply. The disorienting dilemma opens our awareness and we experience unknowingness and vulnerability. Openness and vulnerability help us to see more clearly, to understand, and to acknowledge how privileged we are and have been. Those of us who are privileged to have had opportunities for education that have enabled us to develop an understanding of the affects of our participation in human systems have the responsibility to use our understanding to foster freedom and inclusion in our world. We have developed the critical ability to evaluate those systems and to make choices that support our own transformation and that of others.

How do we break cycles of oppression and create greater opportunities to develop the consciousness and capacity for transforming oppressive systems into joyful, freeing systems? Our belief is that this transformative learning process begins with our ability to fully embrace diversity, learn from difference, question assumptions, and recognize and change patterns of action in collaboration with others. As we engage with others with different perspectives and life experiences, we create the ability to enlarge our individual horizon through understanding and embracing the horizon of another.

Gadamer (1993) posited that this ability to reach a fusion of horizons occurs when people with different perspectives and experiences come together with an orientation to learn and reach new understanding through conversation, sharing their thoughts, experiences, questions, and learnings. Through this dialogic, generative process, we create the possibility for authentic relationships and collaborative action to co-create what Habermas (1985) referred to as our world. Habermas’ concept of the three worlds within which we live is important to this discussion. Our ability to understand the cultural context (the world) in which we live, and how it shapes who we are (my world) is a necessary orientation for understanding how to come together to co-create our world.

When we make the choice to embrace “the other” and to participate in “our world,” we create opportunities for learning and liberation. To develop the capacity to co-create systems that thrive on diversity requires the willingness to embrace “the other” and to understand our existence as participating in living systems. (Maturana and Varela, 1987) Discovering that we need others with different perspectives, experiences, and abilities to co-create our desired future, is essential to embracing diversity as the fabric of our lives.
Daloz (in Mezirow, 2000) sees one’s ability to embrace “the other” as needed to understand our interdependence. A significant question is to what extent we are separate selves standing apart needing to embrace “the other” versus relational beings that are formed by and through the other. Heidegger (1962) posited that we are “always, already in relationship, recognizing that we are born through relationship and birthed into a world of relationships. This movement from understanding ourselves as separate selves to understanding our relational being may help us focus our energy on strengthening our relationships, enabling those relationships to continually shape who we are becoming throughout our lives.

This experience came alive for one of the authors, Mary Lewis, through her time of living and working in various cultures as a social worker with people whose differences from me were influenced by culture, class, race, ethnicity, faith, and important life experiences, she discovered that the first and the most important step is the development of a personal desire to truly understand the ‘other’ and how his/her experiences impact his/her perceptions and behavior. Figure 2 shows how this sense of curiosity is generated the willingness to enter a ‘relationship of care’, which is a deep understanding and acceptance that we are all connected; it is the desire to form a relationship where we are subjects to each other, not objects. Once the movement into a ‘relationship of care’ occurs there is a reason or impetus to engage the needed practices of reflection and dialogue as we explore our assumptions and beliefs which influence our thinking and actions. The desire produces the energy and commitment that is needed to do the hard work of transformation.

Mary found that the energy which flows from the desire to form ‘relationships of care’ moved her forward to explore, question and engage the difference between ‘us’. She discovered that “in this process I become aware of the differences of power and privilege that I, as a white, protestant, middle class, able bodied, heterosexual, middle aged, American woman from New England carry. I become aware of how the fear of difference created personal and systemic oppression, and how that has influenced my thinking, beliefs and actions. I also become more aware of the affects of internalized oppression that are active within me as a member of the dominate culture and within those who are members of a marginalized culture”. Those effects
and experiences act to separate us even when ‘we’ are in a connected caring relationship. The pain of the separation becomes clear and presents yet another barrier that must be explored and understood within its context. Again, it is the desire to form and sustain ‘relationships of care’ that empowers the persistence to continue. A commitment to the process of exploration of self and other is necessary. It is important to remember that if we are already and always in relationship, that the process of understanding that relationship only enhances and broadens our horizons.

Kegan (1982) writes about the ability to recognize our existence as interrelated in his work on levels of consciousness or being in the world. Kegan views transformation as a “change that takes us beyond or outside of the previous form, enlarging our horizons. Kegan’s model has five such transformational phases, and within each of the phases there is continuous movement or evolution. These phases are described by Kegan as levels of consciousness since each holds a framework through which the person views and relates to the world and people around him/her. The ability to sustain and be in relationships of care requires the fifth order of consciousness; the interindividual stage, which signals a new balance of self and other that enables the ability to “hear, and to seek out information which might cause the self to alter its behavior” (p. 105). For most of us this is a level of consciousness to reach towards as we expand our relationships of care. Milton Bennett (1993), the co-founder of the Intercultural Communication Institute confirms that expanding our understanding and relationships with difference is a process of “changing our ‘natural behavior’…We [are asked to] transcend the traditional ethnocentrism and to explore new relationships across boundaries” (p. 21). Each step is a process of transformative learning.

Yongming Tang (2006) describes one’s ability to develop the consciousness to learn from difference as a process of synergy cycles of differentiating and integrating. Differentiating involves processes of self-knowing and other-knowing. Integrating involves processes of the differences-holding and differences transcending. His synergic inquiry process, a collaborative action methodology, can be used by individuals, dyads, or in larger groups of people, in organizations and communities to develop the capacity to engage in relationships of care where inquiry and discovery create new understanding and foster inclusive systems where people can work together to create the future they desire.

To create systems that thrive on diversity, qualities of openness, truthfulness, and vulnerability enable us to speak truthfully to one another. Our commitment to bring these qualities into encounters with “the other” helps us understand one another and create mutual relationships of care and inclusion, leading to joy in our lives. As we seek to encounter the other, to engage with others who are different from ourselves, we become aware of the impact of privilege both personally and as a force that permeates our society and affects our ability to have relationships of care. With openness, truthfulness, and a commitment to question assumptions, our ability to learn from difference expands. When we understand one another, we remain open to the differences, to be transformed by the encounter with the other. This cycle sparks joy in our relationships, a sense of being in care and included in a world we share with others as interrelated and interconnected beings in the natural systems of life.

Moving from systems of oppression to co-creating systems that thrive on diversity happens through an invitation to participate with others in sharing disorienting dilemmas, and inquiring into the beliefs, assumptions, and systemic patterns that keep us stuck. As we participate in dialogue, we become conscious of the cognitive shifts and collective actions that are needed to co-create systems that thrive on diversity and inclusion. This consciousness gives
us the opportunity to create relationships with others to bring forth a new world where diversity is the joyous fabric of life in which we come to know ourselves and draw forth our collective experience as mutual participants in a natural, living system.

References
Abstract: This paper presents a transformative learning perspective of images and voices used to represent sexual minorities in mainstream media. It attempts to provide the reader with greater awareness of their own visceral biases toward sexual minorities as well as an exploration of their understanding and perpetuation of those biases with others.

Problem Statement
Mainstream media plays a dominant role in the information presented and received in society and consequently is often the bedrock that informs the meaning making we engage in. Although we may be cognizant of the fact that all presentations by mass media are not accurate portrayals of people, situations or ideas, we are only aware of the accurate and inaccurate portrayals of those which we are familiar or have had the opportunity to engage with.

Mainstream representations of sexual minorities are generally presented through the lens of the ruling culture. Those employed in media outlets who are in positions of power and control determine the depiction of sexual minorities as well as the points of view regarding issues specific to sexual minorities. Thus, media can and often does portray people, situations or ideas in ways that are acceptable or recognizable to the prevailing audience, which in turn, generally reflects the ideas of those in positions of power. Quite often this audience is comprised of heterosexuals who have limited exposure to the world-views and meaning making of those in the sexual minority. Hence, sexual minorities and sexual minority culture are often portrayed in a manner that is recognizable to heterosexuals but not necessarily sexual minorities.

The same argument could be made for those of other minorities such as race, age, nationality, etc. But, this paper will focus on the mainstream media representations and transformations of images and voices of those members of a sexual minority as portrayed by the majority heterosexual mainstream media population.

A counter point that will be explored in addition to the above stated problem, is how and why certain images and voices that have in the past represented sexual minorities in a negative light have been reclaimed or transformed into positive representations within the sexual minority population. The power and process of such transformations will be examined for their historical and present day meanings.

Framework
The issue of the portrayal by mainstream media of images and voices they feel are representative of sexual minorities and the transformative nature these images and voices carry will be examined through a constructivist approach utilizing experiential and transformative learning theory.

For the purposes of this paper, the experiential and transformative learning work of Mezirow (1978, 1991, 2000), Boyd and Meyers (1988, 1991), and Dirkx (1997, 1998, 2001) will form a foundation for the exploration of the meanings we ascribe to the images and voices of sexual minorities as they are represented in mainstream media as well as the ways such voices and images have been transformed within the sexual minority population. The framework as outlined in this paper will demonstrate a progression in the field of transformative learning.
theory from minimal emphasis or recognition of specific archetypal images to full recognition of the importance such images play in the meaning making of adult learners.

Mezirow’s seminal work in the area of transformative learning theory has long served as a springboard for other adult education researchers interested in the nature of how we learn; create meaning from our experiences, and the conditions that lead to transformative learning in adulthood. Thus, I feel that the most basic premises of Mezirow’s theory must be outlined in order to demonstrate the various developments and paths his original theory has traveled. In fact, Mezirow has always been open to constructive criticism of his theory having described his ideas on transformative learning as a “theory in progress”.

According to Mezirow (1991), adults create perspectives out of experiences, thoughts, values and insights. Adults may alter or in rare cases “transform” such perspectives based on new experiences, thoughts, values and insights. In the case of a “transformed” perspective, a disorienting dilemma “trigger event” must take place, followed by critical discourse and reflection. In Mezirow’s view, the process of critical reflection is the heart of transformative learning.

In 2000, Mezirow stated that, “Transformative learning refers to transforming a problematic frame of reference to make it more dependable in our adult life by generating opinions and interpretations that are more justified” (p. 20). And, he proposes that such learning can occur in four ways: 1) by elaborating existing frames of reference, 2) by learning new frames of reference, 3) by transforming points of view, or 4) by transforming habits of mind (p. 19).

To summarize, transformative learning according to Mezirow (2000) refers to a process by which we “transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind sets) and 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). A purpose of this paper is to draw attention to the taken-for-granted images and voices of sexual minorities and the critical reflection and dialogue needed to accomplish the task of transforming them into more accurate portrayals.

Boyd and Meyers (1988) expanded Mezirow’s work by questioning the emphasis he places on the rational thought needed for critical reflection. Boyd and Meyers (1988) don’t feel that a transformative learning experience requires critical reflection per se. Boyd (1991) views learning transformation as a “fundamental change in one’s personality involving the resolution of a personal dilemma and the expansion of consciousness resulting in greater personality integration” (p. 145). Hence, the ideas held by Boyd and Meyers around transformational learning are grounded in the analytical psychology work that is most associated with Carl Jung.

For Boyd and Meyers (1988), transformation is a process of discernment, which leads to “contemplative insight, a personal illumination gained by putting things together and seeing them in their relational wholeness,” (p. 274). Discernment is a process comprised of three activities. The first activity is receptivity, an individual’s ability and openness to receive symbols, images and messages that arise from the individual’s unconscious. The second activity is recognition, an individual’s ability to recognize choice. The third, final and most critical activity is grief, an individual’s realization that the actions and beliefs they have held in the past are no longer relevant and they must let go or lose them if they are to further integrate themselves into the world.

The topic of this paper can be examined through the work of Boyd and Meyers’ interpretation of the discernment process as it relates to the images and voices representing sexual minorities in the mainstream media. First, a learner must be receptive to the presented
images and voices and then (second activity) recognize that they have a choice to question, accept or reject the voices and images presented to them. The final activity is the learner’s grief in understanding that the beliefs they had previously held about the voices and images are no longer relevant for them if they are to integrate themselves further into the world.

Whereas Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning is highly cognitive, relying on rational, analytical thought, the process of discernment advocated by Boyd and Meyers “allows the exploration of both, moving back and forth between the rational and the extrarational” (Imel 1998). However, both theories are similar in that they deal with “old patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting, which previously prevented growth, [and] have finally been discarded (Boyd and Meyers 1988, p. 279)”.

The transformational learning work explored by Dirkx (1997, 1998, 2001) moves a step beyond Boyd and Meyers with regard to extrarational processes by placing a greater emphasis on imagination, fantasy and the contributions that images, symbols, language, and emotions play in our learning and experiencing of the world. Dirkx (1998) refers to this view of transformative learning as “mytho-poetic”. In the published proceedings of the 39th Annual Adult Education Research Conference, Dirkx (1998) elaborated on his view of the mytho-poetic perspective by stating that if adults were to examine their experiences “imaginatively rather than merely conceptually, learners [will] locate and construct, through endearing mythological motifs, themes and images, deep meaning, value and quality in the relationship between the text and their own life experiences”.

Adult educators who subscribe to Dirkx’ mytho-poetic view of transformative learning will incorporate he says, “story, myths, poetry, music, drawing, art, journaling, dance, rituals or performance” into their teaching. Such educators, Dirkx (1998) believes, will invite learners to explore answers to questions that ask “what” rather than encouraging learners to inquire as to “how” and “why”. A “how” or “why” question tends to emphasize process and requires the rational and critical thinking that is necessary in Mezirow’s concept of transformative learning. However, a “what” question will generally allow a learner to explore more deeply her feelings, emotions and connections to what she is experiencing and learning.

For example, in alignment with the topic of this paper, Mezirow in an attempt to encourage a learner to analyze and critically reflect, might ask, “How does the portrayal of AIDS on television affect you?” or “Why do you feel ________ when you hear someone expressing an opinion about sexual minorities?” However, in an attempt to allow a learner to explore more deeply her experiences and learning, Dirkx may ask “What emotions do you feel when you view the portrayal of AIDS on television?” or “What do those emotions remind you of?” In the mytho-poetic view of transformative learning, learners are encouraged to express their feelings, give meaning to their emotions, and ultimately make a deeper connection to themselves and their world.

**Research Questions**

The intent of this presentation and paper is to encourage and challenge the participants to contemplate the following questions:

- **Can images and voices trigger disorienting dilemmas?**  
  This question will be explored through a multi-media presentation.

- **What images and voices have transformed your thinking toward sexual minorities?**  
  Personal answers to this question will be examined in an individual experiential exercise.
Are there images and voices of sexual minorities that have transformed culture, society, the nation?

A group exercise with time for reflection and sharing of learnings will be used to probe answers to this question.

How can images and voices be used in transformative learning, particularly in the areas of diversity and difference?

A whole group sharing of ideas and recording of new understandings will be used to seek answers to this question.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

As educators, the images and voices we choose to use have the potential for transforming learning. And, as educators we must be cognizant of our positionality in terms of transforming the voices and the images we present and represent. When viewed in these terms our practices often take on new responsibilities. This paper and presentation attempt to illustrate through examples of voices and images experienced in mainstream media, the responsibility we all have for the images and voices we choose to represent sexual minorities.

In addition, it is imperative that as educators we are aware of our own images and voices we subscribe or associate with sexual minorities and the levels of acceptance and comfort we each possess toward such individuals because it is our own meaning making in this area that will influence our educational practices.

**References**


Through the Lens of Transformation: Considering Diversity in the Cinematic Classroom
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Abstract: This paper explores how the use of films provides students from diverse background and experiences with shared experiences that brings about disequilibrium yet provokes reflection, awareness, and critical thought. This paper focuses on social and cultural dimensions of the cinematic classroom in terms of identifying, considering, and altering assumptions.

Introduction
Given, the popularity and availability of film, educators are recognizing that the unique characteristics of films may be conducive to the educational process. Conceptually, a number of educators in their respective fields promote the use of film as a viable educational tool for teaching and learning (Champoux, 1999). However, a lack of knowledge exists concerning the use of films as educational tools in higher education. Specifically, while the use of films is increasingly endorsed as an educational tool, there are numerous unanswered questions concerning its use. In addition, little is known about how to effectively integrate films into the curriculum. More specifically, less is know about addressing cultural differences and social diversity in the classroom when films are utilized as an educational tool.

Theoretical Framework
Films are considered a medium for studying cultural differences because films communicate on multiple levels. Champoux (1999, 2001) suggest experimenting with the most effective way to use films that work with teaching style and course content. Champoux (2001) suggests that film clips can be used before or after discussing theories and concepts, scenes can be repeatedly shown for more emphasis, and comparisons can be made by viewing film clips from different cultures and time periods. Culturally, films provide viewers with stories about individuals from a variety of life circumstances revealing hopes, challenges, and fears. Socially, film reveals behaviors that are socially diverse, acceptable or considered offensive. Overall, films provide individuals with opportunity for awareness of others whose culture and social experiences differ (Daine, 2006).

Mode of Inquiry
The methodology of this research drew on the guidelines of interpretivism. This methodology was employed to gain an understanding of a phenomenon of the use of film in the classroom of university students through inquiry and the process of meaning making (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Meaning was sought from the experiences of those directly engaged in the coursework in which film was utilized as part of the course curriculum. Consequently, this research was aimed at an interpretive meaning of the participants’ experiences with film in order to clearly portray the participants’ experiences and ideas concerning the use of film in the university classroom.

Data was collected through personal in-depth interviews with twenty-two undergraduate and graduate university students who had experienced the use of films in the classroom as part of the learning activity and with seven instructors who integrate film into their course curriculum. A
primary intention of the design of the 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. Following this the participants were asked specific probing questions to help provide greater depth of understanding regarding the specific nature of how or why the use of film was effective in their particular learning experience.

Results

According to students, when film clips are appropriately integrated as an aesthetic tool they generate enriched and diverse experiences for university students. Findings revealed that when students view the film in the shared forum of the classroom students become present and become aware of their feelings, thoughts, and assumptions. In the instructional setting of a classroom when films are effectively integrated, students reflect, engage in dialogue, and begin to change how they think as they interact with others (Roden, 2007). To illustrate, *Dead Poet’s Society* illustrates the social struggle against conforming to society, encouraging those in the film to “seize the day” and become true to their authentic self. Students viewing the film began to consider ways in which they socially conform and rejected their true self. While, other students began to consider ways in which they want others to conform revealing their lack of acceptance for the diversity of others. The findings discussed in this paper relate to those findings that pertain to the social and cultural dimensions of learning in the cinematic classroom.

**Social and cultural awareness**

Instructors and students report that the sights, sounds, and action of the film reveal the subtleties of cultures and social settings. Films provide a glimpse into the cultural traditions, values, and experiences of different groups. Students are quickly drawn into the stories. Through the stories portrayed in the films students come to appreciate the traditions and customs of other cultures and social groups. Students are transported to different places and into cultures and social realms different from than their own through the use of film. By providing students with a glimpse of how others live through location filming and creatively crafted settings students develop a greater sense of the differences and similarities of social diversity and cultures around the world.

Students report that this insight open doors for critical thought and begins their process of questioning assumptions. Moreover, the use of film often allows students to reflect on what they believe and how they behave. Students tell about discovering the impact of certain assumptions and even discerning unconscious behaviors they had not noticed before especially in relationship to issues of social and cultural awareness and diversity. This insight causes significant disequilibrium for many students especially when they realize they had lived with assumptions about social differences and cultures that they were not aware of which had affected their responses toward other. With respect to social/cultural awareness and diversity the students reveal that they are able to consider new or altered ways of thinking or behaving. Students report remembering the moment that assumptions changed as new frames of reference developed. While the transformational process did not occur in an instant of viewing the film, the process of reflection, awareness and critical thought was initiated through the use of film allowing the transformation to transpire over time as students engaged dialogue in the classroom or in diverse cultural situations that they are exposed to throughout their experiences in higher education.
Social awareness through instruction.

Students reveal that when instructors discuss issues of social concerns through the use of film, their understanding is heightened. Students reveal that with this form of instruction not only is their understanding improved, but their ability to discuss the issues is greatly facilitated. Instructors and students also revealed that they are more comfortable bringing up social concerns with the use of film than when films are not used. Beginning a discussion is easier when the focus, at least at first, can be centered on a scene from the film depicting the social condition or the sensitivity of social issues. Participants report a scene that everyone has viewed is more comfortable to reference than personal experiences. Instructors reveal that referencing a scene allows a common reference points with which to discuss social issues that may not be among everyone’s experiences. An instructor in the College of Arts and Sciences stated, “[Film] . . . reveals what is relevant . . . incorporating the types of images we are accustomed . . . what the students are learning connects . . . [them] socially with each other and connects what we learn to real life issues. It increases . . . the social relevance to what we are learning . . . .”

Cultural awareness through instruction

Film also allows cultural differences to be revealed. Students reveal that they learn about cultural issues when instructors provide opportunity for discussion. One student remembers that culturally sensitive issues not only arise but are enthusiastically discussed and debated. At times questions occur between students of different cultures or between students with different experiences and beliefs about cultural issues. Students also report that opportunities for them to ask questions about cultural differences occur when these differences are seen on the film. Instructors reveal that when students become familiar with cultural mores through the film, their discussion involves greater depth, they ask more questions and they listen more intently to those from other cultures.

Social awareness through the shared experience

Students reveal the occurrence of more social interactions involving speaking, listening, understanding, and cooperation among students in the class. Being part of the shared experience allows students to also socially interact with others from diverse backgrounds. Students report that as they interact with others as part of the shared experience, they learn more about their own beliefs and have insight into their own experiences. In addition, the shared experience also provides students with an avenue to develop understanding of different social concerns and conditions. Furthermore, the shared experience provides students with opportunity to hear how those with other social experiences respond to issues concerning the subject of the class. While this is a global society, students admit to having limited experiences with those from diverse social conditions; therefore, they appreciate hearing other perspectives.

Cultural awareness through the shared experience

Through the shared experience of viewing the film and the dialogue that ensues, students cite learning about different people of different cultures. Discussing the subject in light of the film with other students they realized that culture is not necessarily what they had been taught. To illustrate “As we all sat there together I realized America is not a big melting pot. We’re not all the same.” Students listen to peers’ responses to cultural issues and have insight they had not had before. Through the shared experience they come to recognize cultural diversity. An undergraduate student confides, “There are so many different people, culturally different, and
we’re not all the same.” or “I realized so many students are culturally different from me.” In the shared experience students ask question about the subject and/or the film that they would not asked otherwise. For example, one student admits that “Since we all saw the movie together, I could ask why . . . and come to understand more . . . .”

**Interpreting Awareness of Social and Cultural Issues**

Analysis revealed that the awareness of social and cultural issues was part of the transformative learning process. Awareness is described as a complex process whereby something that was previously unclear comes into ones consciousness. In other words, awareness refers to how unconscious thoughts and behaviors become conscious; and the unknown becomes known or understood. Results revealed that awareness is essential to the understanding of others, to identifying, forming, and changing assumption as well as essential to the process of transformation. This study revealed that through transformational awareness the direction of students’ focus shifts from the preoccupation of what is happening on the outside to a mental process that is happening on the inside. In an educational context, when students engage in the process of transformational awareness, they shift from external distractions to attending to what is occurring in the classroom and to the internal processing of considering new information and developed assumptions Students report that they begin to listen and reflect as they examine assumptions and dialogue. Consequently, they gain ability for insightful and novel ways of thinking whereby they develop new frame of references with respect to social and cultural issues.

**Cultural awareness**

Students contend that through the use of film in the classroom they become more aware of cultural diversity. Students report learning about cultural customs, traditions in terms of differences as well as similarities. Students reveal that they realize that their way of life is not the only way people from other cultures live. In addition, students reveal that they have greater awareness of how other students think and what they actually believe and value. Through aspects of film students make note of fine social and cultural distinctions that become more visible, concrete aspects of social and cultural nuances that are different form their own. More precisely, they begin to sense the importance the subtle differences in others values and the ways in which they think, act, react, and respond. In addition, students become aware that this understanding created at times new or altered ways of thinking or behaving in relation to other cultures. To illustrate, a student recalls the realization that “Our way is not always the best way.” Another student recalls that their assumptions changed as new frames of reference developed:

What I think is not necessarily how others perceive their reality; it is just my way. Before I thought everyone . . . felt pretty much how I did. I began to realize that others see things differently . . . Others make choices because of what they believe, what they value, and even though it is different they are good, happy people. . . .

**Social awareness**

Students also reveal incidences of social awareness when films are integrated into the curriculum. Specifically, the social awareness that occurs with the use of film gives rise to “. . . greater awareness of diversity . . .” as well as awareness of similarities with those who are socially different. Students report that awareness of social differences and similarities become
more apparent with films in relation to course content than with traditional mode of instruction. They also report much greater awareness of social conditions, concerns, and behaviors through the use of film as part of the instruction than when these social conditions are revealed through regular lecture or through their reading their textbooks. As one student stated: “When we saw *A Raisin in the Sun* in relation to the lecture on power of social stratification, I became aware of what it’s like to climb out of poverty. I always thought I was socially aware, but I didn’t understand with any kind of real understanding . . . .” As a result of greater awareness of various social issues that are made visible through the use of films, opportunity for alternative ways of thinking or behaving is created. In fact, one student admits, “After that class I signed up as a Big Brother . . . .” Another student said they had developed new viewpoints on students reviewing need based state and federal grants for college tuition.

*Process of transformational awareness*

In the case of students, awareness was experienced when films are integrated with course concepts. Transformation began to occur as students become more conscious of their own behavior and thoughts as well as those of others. The qualities of awareness that this study revealed included the process of engaging in the present, reflecting on assumptions, participating in dialogue, considering previously held assumptions and transforming ways of thinking or behaving.

*Engage in the present*

When films were shown students suspended their prior focus of attention and no longer were preoccupied with what they were doing before class began. They stop sending text messages or engaging in other non-related class activities. In essence, mental distractions were suspended. Instructors concur that when films are introduced student attentiveness increased. To illustrate, one student, active in campus activities noticed that films “. . . helps focus my attention. I am not thinking about fashion, the shoes someone is wearing, or the meeting we are having or, last night’s dinner.” Another student who commutes and is the mother of three attests that when films are used in the classroom “my mental lists and all my frustration are put on hold and before I know it class is over, and I actually was able to be in class without all the distractions of my life. Students report that instead of thinking of other things they attend to instructors lecture rather than the main points, they listen to classmates responses, and allow themselves to “. . . be part of the class . . .” rather simply be in the class as indicated by a student who admitted often being “. . . in the class but not part of the class . . . .”

*Reflect on assumptions*

Reflection refers to the way in which viewing a film prompts students to focus and consider events and experiences that are relevant to the particular concepts or subject of the class. Film encourages students to reflect on past memories of events as well as on present beliefs and behaviors. In addition, students become aware of behaviors they had not previously noticed. Finally, through the process of reflection new or altered ways of thinking begin to emerge. For example, one adult student proclaimed that film “…connects at a very personal level. We very quickly get down deep to a thought, an emotion that maybe wouldn’t get into a conversation otherwise. This student continues:

Movies give you a snapshot. . . It gets you to think about those things, things you had not thought of in a long time . . . Sometimes it even gets you to think about
things in ways you never had thought of before. And without realizing I’m connecting the movie and what we are talking about in class to my own experiences in some really important ways.

**Participate in dialogue**

Students’ engagement in the classroom related dialogue is heightened when films are introduced. Through this dialogue students report experiencing greater opportunity to express their thoughts, listen to others and ask questions: “It also helped me be able to know what others were talking about. The movie helped me know where they were coming from.” Students agree that they become more aware of their emotions and beliefs as well as more aware of those of others. In addition, as they hear other students express similar thoughts and questions, their own experience of awareness is validated. One student recalled, “Until we started talking about oppression I did not know I had experienced it too . . . .”

**Transform ways of thinking and behaving.**

Finally, students begin to understand others in new and different ways. Old assumptions about others are replaced with new ones. Moreover, what appeared remote begins to have relevance and what appeared abstract becomes concrete as they realize its connection to real life experiences. Students behave differently as they replace the previous assumptions with the new or evolving assumptions. For example, when cultural differences come into view several students revealed that they realized that their way of life is not the only way people live, think or believe. For instance, a student reported realizing “Our way is not always the best way for everyone.” Students recall that their assumptions changed as new frames of reference developed. One student stated: I discovered our way [western culture] is not the only way . . . I realized it is just one possible way and there are many different . . . ways to . . . have live happy and productive lives.

**Concluding Comments**

Findings from recent research of students and faculty reveal that the use of film is a viable educational tool in higher education when employed thoughtfully and creatively. Results indicate that when films are effectively utilized a cinematic classroom evolves creating opportunity for an array of experiences stimulating attention, reflection, dialogue, inquiry, and critical thought for students. According to the findings when films are effectively integrated in the curriculum shared, aesthetic experiences are created providing a transformed atmosphere conducive to learning as well as personal growth and development.

Specifically The social and cultural dimension of the students’ experiences reveals that not only are students more socially and culturally engaged, they also experience greater awareness and understanding of social and cultural issues. As this emerges for the students they examine their assumptions, at times alter their perceptions, and develop new ways of reacting to those in diverse social and cultural circumstances. Students report being more accepting, more compassionate, more open to the differences of others as they see social circumstances through film which creates a desire to hear and understand the perspective of others. Doll maintains that effective communication can “lead to different social vision” (Doll, 1993, pg. 61). This study suggests that students develop different social visions for themselves and others through the awareness they gain and the transformation that transpires from viewing a film as part of the shared experience of discussing the course material.
References
The Developmental Exchange As Reflected in Learning Outcomes of Guided Autobiography

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Abstract: Guided autobiography can activate transformative influences in participants’ retrospection of their lives. Through the dynamics of developmental exchanges and sharing of experiences, memories and emotions, GAB participants learn to re-experience life events and understand their lives from new perspectives.

Introduction

Guided autobiography (GAB) activities are structured to promote three learning objectives – didactic knowledge exchanges, open group social-cultural exchanges, and small focused discussion groups involving self-other exchanges. Evidence that these objectives occur is reported in the literature. What has been missing from the wider discourse are reports from participants themselves recounting “What am I learning” as a result of the GAB activities, interpersonal exchanges and reflective exercises. This paper catalogs participants’ own reports of meaningful learning and introduces an analysis of the processes that promote and sustain such learning beyond the schedule and structure of the GAB workshops themselves.

Theoretical Frameworks

In transformation perspectives on human development, learning is clearly understood as one of the primary developmental processes over the life-span. Current theories of learning provide concepts and schema that describe how behaviors change and how transformation and transcendence are stimulated, observed, and experienced. The guided autobiography method is grounded in developmental and narrative psychology and engages participants, clients, or patients as learners in transformational learning experiences, best accessed by personal narratives within small structured social groups (Thornton, 2007a). As an educative learning intervention, the guided autobiography method is commonly organized around a series of about ten weekly “workshops” and in terms of learning principles appropriate to collaborative learning groups. Participants share their life stories as a ‘social exchange’ with expectations of learning about others and themselves, about enhancing self-awareness and personal abilities, and accomplishing the goals necessary in developing their life stories. In the autobiography method as an educational intervention, established guidelines and themes (Birren & Deutchman, 1991; Birren & Cochrane, 2001) are outlined regarding participants’ preparations, interactions and disclosures. Participants’ goals and motivations are varied and are expected to change as the activity progresses. As well, the time dimension is personalized. Biological time, clock time, social-cultural or historic time, and narrative time are all reflected in “story time” that result in stories which may be retrospective, perspective, or prospective. Strategies derived from reminiscence and life review for remembering, telling, reflecting, and reviewing one’s life experiences are used in the activity; hence, as a learning experience, it is often ‘transformative’ with ‘therapeutic benefits’ and fosters meaningful, insightful, and purposeful learning. These transformations and changes during the narrative process encourage further reflection and validation of the goals and experiences of participants and becomes a social activity in which participants’ co-author their stories collectively.
The Developmental Exchange

The developmental exchange emerges within small groups that are organized for participants to write, read, and reflect on themes about their life experiences, particularly themes that involve deep mutual exchanges and reflections on personally important past, present and future milestones and events – those which “tell the stories of our life” (Birren & Deutchman, 1991; Birren & Cochran, 2001). The developmental exchange was first described by Reedy & Birren (1980) as “a progressively deep, mutual exchange between individuals of personally important historical and emotional events.” Subsequently, Birren & Deutchman (1991) provided an expanded conception of the developmental exchange as the ‘coupling’ of a group experience with personal reflection and writing.

The coupling dynamics during the developmental exchange create a temporary social community in these small work-groups and within the larger primary guided autobiography group. The coupling occurs as participants read and listen to their thematic life stories and subsequent conversations in which further experiences are exchanged. This becomes a value-added sharing and significant social dialogue emerges. Furthermore, as the social coupling develops, participants expand the autobiographic scope of “self-other knowledge” they are prepared to reveal and share – the experiences, expressions and impression of our existence as outlined by Randall (1995). Thus, the coupling dynamics create potentially transformative exchanges that further enhance their learning experiences (Thornton, 2007a). These complex exchanges are identified as a ‘transformative exchange’ by Vella (2000), the ‘reflective discourse’ by Schugurensky (2002), and ‘popping conversations’ by Van Stralen (2002). Within these structures of learning, four ‘ways of knowing’ are activated and shape the dialogue: experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical (Yorks & Kasl, 2002, p. 6).

The guidelines and rules for guided autobiography that govern these group structures and interactions provide a framework for transformative learning: freedom from coercion, equality of access to information, shared norms of inquiry and meaning-making, and validation of diverse experiences (Kask & Yorks, 2002). The themes, guidelines and rules structuring guided autobiography activities provide a context with appropriate questions eliciting lived experiences, cycles of action and reflection, authentic relationships, multiple ways of knowing and telling, emotional support, and validation of experience (Yorks & Kasl, 2002, p 100).

These aspects of the guided autobiography method are shaped by seven major components that provide context for the reflection on and the recall of personal knowledge in the exchange (Thornton, 2007b). First, the context of the group is based on shared goals regarding telling, writing and sharing life stories. Second, participants and the organizer/facilitator share responsibilities for group collaborative activities and structures and reflect the present social world. Third, time is a ubiquitous variable in the exchange involving clock time, social time, historic time and biological time, all shaping the narrative dialogue of the past, awareness in the present, and envisioning the future. Fourth, guiding themes and sensitizing questions frame the dialogue in common issues that shape adult development and life transition, yet accommodates the diversity of personal experiences or socio-cultural differences. Thus, the dialogue is situated in everyday knowledge and wisdom. Fifth, the developmental exchange in small groups provides considerable latitude in the voice, viewpoint, and venue that give perspective to individual stories. Voice – I can tell my story and express it in a gendered voice as shaped by social and cultural experiences. Viewpoint – I can dialogue with myself, or share my view of my feelings and experiences with you, or express my understanding of others’ views of me. Venue – I can place the context of my story in time, location, events and persons involved. Sixth, the medium
Method

Emerging from this interplay of guided activities, personal agendas, and workshop activities are both narratives and written texts that “tell the story” of participants’ lives. Yet, however retrospective the surface agenda may appear to be, people share, experience and learn in prospective mental frameworks that give substance to their current and future lives. In two recent GAB workshop cycles, participants were invited in the next-to-last session to “write briefly on “What am I learning during these GAB workshops?” The present progressive wording of the question (What am I learning?) was deliberately selected in preference over a past or pluperfect phrasing (What did I learn? or What have I learned?) in order to maintain a focus on the ongoing and forward nature of learning and life narrative. The full data set from these two workshop cycles comprises scripts from 38 participants in two geographically distant locations, each averaging about 180 words. Two participants chose not to report age or gender, but of those who did, 28 were women and 8 were men. They ranged in age from 52 to 93, but averaged about 67.5. Scripts undergo thematic and qualitative analysis by both authors to investigate two major questions: (1) What substantive learning outcomes do participants report? and (2) What learning processes and activities do they invoke in accomplishing these outcomes?

Results

What participants wrote in response to “What am I learning” reflected dialogues with themselves, their workshop peers, and their evolving life-story narratives as experienced during the various workshop sessions. In total, their scripts yielded well over 200 learning outcomes typified by statements such as:

“I have learned the importance of leaving a record;
“I am learning to have faith in myself;”
“Through the process, I learned about my family and myself as part of that family;”
“I am learning to express my thoughts through poetry;”
“At first, I didn’t think I had really learned anything new, [but] the weekly topics and questions were very helpful…and I have learned to use a new tool to guide my thinking into areas I may have skipped over or forgotten;’
“Most importantly, I found that regardless of our different paths, there was common ground in what we learned about life.”

Learning Outcomes

As expected, their scripts reflected common GAB themes (branching points, family, money, work or career, health and body, sexual identity, ideas of death, spiritual life and values, goals and aspirations) around which the weekly workshop sessions are structured (Birren & Cochran, 2001). But more directly to this study’s objectives, throughout their scripts are more than a dozen categories of declarations of “What I am learning”. Direct participant quotes illustrate several of these categories: self-efficacy; “I realized how far I have come from a shy,
GAB as triggering event. At a different level were comments regarding the occasion of the GAB sessions, how they served as triggers to open new learning vistas, how they helped participants to thematicize their lives, how to construct their personal narratives, to probe beneath their surface memories, to trust their intuitions, to focus more in learning to write, and to ‘seize the moment’ to write their stories.

“My story was bottled up inside me just waiting for this window of opportunity to open”; “I would never have actually written it down without this course”; “the sensitizing questions were helpful in sorting out details of the various phases of my life” “…the process of recall can be formalized by breaking my life into ‘themes’, thus the interpretation of events are as important as the events themselves”; “there is a new language to be learned – a creative artistic language [that] allows one to visualize initially and then to describe verbally”; “This workshop created a time for me to think about my life and the experiences that were useful to my growth and development”.

Developmental Exchange Processes. Thirdly, there were extensive insights about the centrality of the developmental exchange as essential to the process of reaffirming the validity of their personal experiences and coming to grasp the commonality and universality of central human experience.

“Talking and sharing my life within the group made it easy to laugh or cry about some issues”; “…as I learned to trust my group, I learned to have more confidence in my writing”; “It struck me that a roomful of strangers became close and in the small groups, the opportunity to tell our stories brought everyone close”; ”It has been good for me to talk to myself about my feelings, but very useful to share with those in my small working group; they have been very supportive and I could not have wished for three more understanding companions on this guided journey”; “I am learning that some people have not had an outlet to work through tragedies and losses in their lives”; “This gave me personal confirmation that our
Aside from the reinforcing and reaffirming consequences of sharing selecting portions of one’s life-story, this developmental exchange appears to be a requisite component of moving beyond merely ‘having an experience’ to one of authentic learning. In these smaller, more situated small-group venues, the memories, feelings, and challenges of bygone events were reworked into contemporary narratives and self-stories constituting the themes of participants’ life histories. Only in the sharing and the experiential exchanging were their memory fragments forged into coherent and integrated elements of their life stories. Thus, the developmental exchange is fundamental to successful reconciliation of their personal agendas which lead toward participants’ own personal transitions and perspective transformations. Only in the sharing and exchanging were their memory fragments forged into an integrated and contemporaneous narrative. And moving from ‘the intention to write one’s autobiography’ at the workshop’s outset to ‘a written draft of 8-10 themes’ at its conclusion is prime evidence of personal transition-in-process.

**Discussion**

All 38 of these participants reported that the overall GAB process was ‘positive’, if sometimes challenging or even unsettling. None reported a negative experience, nor were there any dropouts during the two ten-week sessions and all reported a variety of insights throughout. But what are the learning insights enroute to “transformative”? Definitions vary about what distinguishes ‘everyday learning’ from ‘transformative learning’, but nearly all participants reported expanded meaning structures (Mezirow); some reported structural shifts in their basic premises (O’Sullivan); others reported alternative expressions of meaning (Boyd & Myers); some mentioned new perspectives on dealing with conflict and family tension (King); and most expressed the importance of their small groups as constructivist venues for testing, rehearsing and refining segments of their stories and for comprehending how each person’s story was a variation on a common story of humanity (Vygotsky).

Our preliminary analysis finds evidence of critical reflection and potential transformative behavior. Many start-and-stop points occur as individuals engage in changes of consciousness and behavior integral to transformation. Our further research will explore more of these pathways toward “the long process and many steps that individuals take before reaching the transformational stage” (Schugurensky, 2002, p.60). In the words of an 89 year old participant in one of our GAB workshops:

“Writing my autobiography has awakened memories lying dormant and brought about an urgency to try to settle episodes still unresolved. I can now enjoy the thrill of pleasant memories all over again…I am grateful!”

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References


How did you hear that? A storytelling process for “trying on the other” in three rounds.

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Abstract: In an experimental effort to weaken “them and us” dualities, four theoretical strands – transformative learning, storytelling, social learning theory, and borderlands theory – are woven together to underpin a group exercise in experiencing otherness. Background, the four theoretical strands, and the design of the session are briefly discussed.

Background

In my time as a white corporate vice president in the Fortune 500 (in the years just before during and after this most recent turn of the century) I experienced a fair degree of positional power and associated privilege. I was aware of this privilege, was self-conscious and a bit embarrassed about it – feelings connected to my working class roots – and I confess also to having enjoyed it. There was money, high life and, even better, the opportunity to put my ideas into play. I like to think that I used my advantages for the greater good, though this is a judgment better left to the people who were affected by my actions during that period.

At the same time, I was a white female corporate vice-president, and a deeply closeted lesbian. My status as a woman resulted in a slightly dulled or diminished edge to my power. My status as a closeted lesbian left me with the rich complexities associated with hidden identity, and with a layer of paranoia and fear associated with membership in an oppressed and threatened group or class (Pharr 1997; Friskopp & Silverstein, 1995). I was deeply bifurcated, and deeply determined to succeed in both my professional and personal lives. As such, I travelled across the border between “them” and “us,” maintaining membership in both groups separately and in the same moment, that I became fluent in the language of each.

I learned the language of corporate privilege and lesbian oppression over more than a quarter of century of balancing my two personas, these two social spheres. It took many years of total immersion. I’ve been out of the closet for five years now, am in my late 40’s, and have recently been spending much time reflecting on the nature of my transition, with its attendant losses and gains. I have begun to see language, and subsequently voice, as critical to my ability to move between the two sides of my bifurcated life. Language and the ability to story my experience lay at the root of fitting in, productivity, satisfaction. It lay at the root of my survival. I have been steeped in considering the phenomenon of my self/selves as “the other,” and have called upon story/telling to endeavor to make sense of but especially communicate my experience to those who will (for better or worse) never be in a place know of experiences like mine in a firsthand way (Winfield & Spielman, 2001). Especially since I have been teaching full-time, working with adult professionals, I have wondered about other ways, ways that leverage language and voice, that might provide glimpses into the other in ways that are more multisensory, more layered and more inter-textual or dialogic than reading books and watching films.

And more recently I have been called once again to wonder about ways that I can understand those whose own experience as the other I cannot (again for better or worse) embody. What about those ways of living, those experiences of oppression and indeed of privilege, that I cannot possibly physically achieve, cannot possibly “live into” in an authentic way, e.g. those
whose race is not white, whose gender identity is not female, whose sexual identity is not lesbian, whose educational level is not post-secondary, whose upbringing was not in an intact nuclear family, or those who were raised under the strong influence of a particular religion or theology? How can I hope to understand them? And if I cannot, how can I hope that my own experiences can be understood by those to whom they feel so intensely foreign and even unreal?

Oppression appears to us as a universal, but I do not believe that the experience of it is generalizable. So, my oppression on the basis of my lesbian identity does not “qualify me” in the experience of those oppressed on the basis of, for example, other sexual identities, or on the basis of race, religion, poverty, and conditions where these and other forms of oppression are compounded in a complex alchemy of trapped energy.

**The Question**

I typically have some confidence in my ability to imagine the trials and tribulations of the oppressed, and my confidence may be justified when it comes to major issues of human, civil, and equal rights that the media explicates audibly, visually and in print for our benefit. What these news stories and sound bites often leave behind is the sort of detail that we hunger for in the deeper stories provided by documentaries and book length examinations of social phenomena. Even in these modalities, I experience them from the comfort of my recliner or my hammock, a cool drink at my side, perhaps with something to munch on just within my reach. I may be challenged by the images they evoke, I may situate myself imaginatively within a powerfully told story, but as I journey through the narrative, a companion to the protagonist, I feel safe in the knowledge that the story I participate in is not my story. For me there is a temporality in the journey. I am not asked to cross over, to become oppressed – not even for a week or a day. Not for an instant do I even attempt to take on the voice of the oppressed other. I may reach into my experience, listening through an empathic lens, but I am always conscious that I can turn off the electronics supporting the documentary. I can close the book and leave it behind while I stroll through the stately Victorians that stand in my historic Baltimore neighborhood as testimony to my separateness from the story of the other.

Lacking a view into the finer points of their interactions and transactions, we can easily underestimate the challenges and complexities experienced by those who are in some way oppressed/suppressed/repressed, by those whose lives play out on the margins and in the shadows. But short of an ethnographic approach, how can we work with groups constrained by time, to get a glimpse of those complexities in a way that will allow for reflection and meaning making? What method can we use to separate the divide of difference that lies between “them” and “us” so that the dualities are weakened in practical and meaningful ways?

**The Response: A Storytelling Session in Three Rounds**

At the heart of this one-hour experiential session is the suggestion that story/telling can provide us with such a method. I have been experimenting in classroom and conference settings with ways of creating a group-based experience, circumscribed by time (1-3 hours) that will allow for the adoption of the voice of the other, based on the other’s expression of their own experiences. The highly interactive session planned for the Sixth Transformative Learning Conference extends this ongoing work and will focus on the lesbian experience as an example of “otherness.” In the interest of authenticity and ethical rights to material, the session will incorporate story fragments from my own story. These fragments will be applied by participants to a three step process (described in detail in the following section) that will take advantage of
the qualities of storytelling and story listening that support and foster Mezirow’s ideal conditions for communicative learning (1991, p.77), and that can prompt premise reflection (1991, p. 110). The session draws its theoretical energy from the intersection of four areas of theory – transformative learning theory, storytelling theory, social learning theory and borderlands theory. In the paragraphs that follow, the relevancy of each of these to the experience is briefly discussed.

**Transformative Learning**

The experience is informed by certain principles of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991), in particular Mezirow’s ideas on communicative learning and the importance of rational discourse. This idea of rational discourse matters on the basis that much of the discourse connected to oppression and to the other is already shot through with emotion, and some is completely emotional in nature. There is value in this emotion, especially as it connects to authentic experience, and the suggestion here is not to replace it with rational discourse per se. Rather the idea is to facilitate the exploration of this emotion, the unpacking of assumptions, in the context of the conditions that foster rational discourse (Mezirow, 1991). Of these conditions, there are four that are particularly integral to the experiential session: “freedom from coercion” (p. 77), being “open to alternative perspectives” (p. 77), the ability to “become critically reflective upon presuppositions and their consequences” (p. 78), and “equal opportunity to participate: (p. 78). The session we will experience in Albuquerque is short (less than an hour in practical terms), but my experience is that the importance and usefulness of these conditions expands with the expansion of time devoted to the post-experience discussion and storytelling of the participants. As Mezirow notes, “The focus of communicative learning is not establishing cause-effect relationships but increasing insight and attaining common ground through symbolic interaction” (1991, p. 80). Finally for our purposes here, Mezirow’s notion of premise reflection as the precursor to the development of “meaning perspectives that are more inclusive, discriminating, permeable (open), and integrative of experience” (1991, p. 111) is important as we consider possible outcomes of the experience.

**Storytelling**

Story/telling (Boje, 2001; Tyler, in press; 2004) is at the heart of this experiential session, the design of which relies on the use of story fragments from the authentic experience of, and articulated directly by, the other. Particular attention is on the stories that compete with (and typically lose out to) the dominant stories of cultures and organizations. These shadow stories fail to be included in the public discourse in ways that are sufficient for the tacit knowledge they express to be useful to those who have not experienced the stories as they emerge. The results range from misunderstandings to conflicts that impede collaboration and productivity in organizational and social settings, and an inability to appreciate the full arc of discourse in those settings. Storytelling is a symbolic interaction, one that synthesizes experience and conveys tacit knowledge, often through use of metaphor. As vessels of tacit knowledge and experience often lying between the lines of the story, story/telling links us neatly back to Mezirow’s ideas of meaning schemes and perspectives as drivers of metaphors that illuminate experience and “concepts such as understanding, argument, idea, love, happiness, health, and morality, [that] can be described only in terms of metaphors (1991, p. 81).
Social Learning Theory

Bandura’s social learning theory further girds the use of storytelling as a process of symbolic modeling (1977, p. 12) that can foster mental rehearsal and the testing of alternatives (1977, p. 27). Practically speaking this aspect of social learning is directly connected to my initial musings about my inability to ever experience firsthand the oppression of those who are, for me, the other, and their inability to experience my otherness in everyday life. In support of the idea of “creating” a symbolically-oriented experience with efficacy in that it is both suggestive of, and conveniently outside of, everyday complexities, Bandura explains that “unlike learning by doing, which requires shaping the actions through repeated trial and error experiences, in observational learning a single model can transmit new ways of thinking and behaving simultaneously….There is another aspect of symbolic modeling that magnifies its psychological and social effects. During the course of the daily lives, people have direct contact with only a small sector of the environment. Consequently, the conceptions of social reality are greatly influenced by vicarious experiences – what they see, hear and read” (1987, pp. 70-71).

Borderlands Theory

The final theoretical area that informs this session is Anzaldúa’s conceptualization of the borderlands (1987) (1987, p. 79). In the preface to Borderlands/La Frontera (1987), Anzaldúa explains that there are both physical borderlands (such as her homeland along the Mexico/US border in Texas), and psychological borderlands, such as the sexual borderlands and spiritual borderlands that are not linked to geography. Rather, this is a psycho-social territory in which dualities dissolve in the face of multiplicities, in which la mestiza, the mixed (and therefore) oppressed one, “discover[s] that she can’t hold concepts or ideas in rigid boundaries” Importantly for this session, she defines the borderlands as a place where “the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy” (1987, Preface, unnumbered page).

In this experience, the intention is not only to explore the borderlands created in part, or at least fostered by otherness, but to create a sense of these borderlands through the symbolic processes of storying the mestiza experience of the other. In borderlands theory, the nature of the borderlands dissolves dualities. Anzaldúa asserts, for example, that “most societies try to get rid of their deviants. Most cultures have burned and beaten their homosexuals….the queer are the mirror reflecting the heterosexual tribe’s fear” (1987, p. 18). She tells the story of a creature who “for six months was a woman with a vagina that bled once a month, and that for the other six months she was a man, had a penis and she peed standing up” (1987, p. 19), explaining that from a borderlands perspective, “there is something compelling about being both male and female, about having an entry into both worlds” (1987, p. 19). Story/telling, facilitated in ways that are thought-full and fear-less, becomes a channel for the safe experience of the worlds that lie outside of our own experience, but that nonetheless touch our experience, inform it, shape it, even in the face of our efforts to ignore or avoid them.

The interplay of these four theoretical areas – transformative learning, storytelling, social learning and borderlands – provides a rich foundation for a series of intensive storytelling and story listening exercises in small groups (pairs or trios depending on the arithmetic). Participants will have an opportunity to take on, experiment with and listen deeply to the voice of the other, followed by facilitated, large group debriefs in which learning will be shared and enlarged. The following section briefly describes the design of the session.
Presentation Format and Style

This one-hour, interactive session will use a facilitated storytelling process to generate a participant experience in adopting the voice of “the other” by telling and listening to, with permission from the story-holder, a fragment of “the other’s” story. Following some introductory material on the nature and behavior of marginalized stories in social/organizational settings where they are crowded out by the dominant story (5 minutes), the facilitator will provide each participant with a story fragment drawn from her personal story of experience as a lesbian over the past 40-plus years. (The facilitator has chosen to use her own story, not in the interest of self-indulgence, but in order to ensure that the process is ethical from the standpoint of story rights and answerability.) Participants will consider the fragment they receive. They will spend 5–7 minutes becoming familiar with it. They will consider how they will tell it to a fellow participant – in the first person and without notes, and without reading from the fragment directly. This portion in total will not exceed 15 minutes.

The group will then break into pairs for three rounds of storytelling. Each participant will tell his or her fragment, in the first person voice of the lesbian facilitator whose experience the fragments represent. That is, they will tell the story of the fragment as though it were their own – regardless of their own gender, adopting the first person voice of the other. (In a longer session – with an additional 20-30 minutes – this round would be followed by some positive feedback from the listener, highlighting an element of the story, and of the way it was told, that mattered to them, that “stuck with them” or resonated in some way. It might be an image from the story, and/or a point regarding the oral delivery of the story. This would in turn be followed by a second telling of the story, influenced by the feedback the teller had received. The listener will then retell the story, as they heard it, but in the third person, essentially giving the first teller the opportunity to hear their told-story as the listener heard it. The original teller will then tell the story again, this time reversing the hierarchy, telling the story in the dominant voice – in the voice of the oppressor. The process will repeat at each step with the second teller’s fragment, during which time the first teller becomes the listener. The three rounds for both tellers will take approximately 25 minutes, including instructions.

Participants will then reconvene as a large group for the last 15 minutes of the session. During this facilitated debrief, participants will discuss the experience, sharing key insights, challenges and observations related to the process, making connections to the theoretical underpinnings of the exercise (in particular to Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning), and exploring questions as they arise.

References

Engaging Diversity: Disorienting Dilemmas that Transform Relationships
Ilene C. Wasserman and Placida Gallegos

Abstract: The diverse workforce offers opportunities for us to challenge our everyday assumptions and reflexive responses to our social worlds. New skills and tools for making sense of our experiences are critically important. The REAL Model helps organizations leverage differences in their workforce and the marketplace.

Overview
Our paper introduces the REAL Model that helps organizations manage and leverage differences in their workforce and the marketplace. The process of reflection is a critical component to taking the perspective of another and, in so doing, see one’s own meaning making processes in a new way [Cranton, Marsick, Mezirow, 1993, 2001]. Critical reflection and engaging with those whose social world, values, or historical narratives are significantly different from our own expands our ways of construing meaning and making sense in relationships [Wasserman, 2004]. Transformational learning practices thus provide organizations with new and constructive ways of addressing challenges and issues previously found to be at best inhibiting and at their worst, intractable.

Disorienting Dilemmas and Diversity
Life in organizations is so complex that we encounter disorienting dilemmas or moments of mis-meeting in our social encounters on nearly a daily basis. Stories of self and other are often so deeply embedded that for significant shifts to occur in the dynamics of relationships, transformative learning must occur in relationships and the culture of organizations, rather than merely for individuals. At the point that we are confused or thrown into uncertain situations, we have a choice – do we ignore the difference and move away from the interaction or do we engage in critical reflection. If we avoid moments of mis-meeting, dissonance or disorienting dilemmas, we miss the potential opportunity to learn more about ourselves, the other, and new ways of relating. Wasserman (2004) suggests that critical reflection on these moments, with others with whom we experience dissonance opens the possibilities of creating new forms of relating that include our differences more fully.

The following example from our consulting practice demonstrates the confusing situation people often find themselves facing. When intentions do not align with impact or outcomes, people wonder what went wrong and feel confused, ineffective and often resentful.

- Maya is a senior manager who conveys a lot of optimism. She is an immigrant who has been afforded many opportunities. While eager to understand others, she has been having a hard time understanding the difficulties others have when it has felt so easy for her.
- Teresa is a supervisor in the same organization. She has great pride in having risen through the ranks of the organization having started in an entry-level position. She was born in Puerto Rico and feels that her successful movement into a professional role positions her as a role model for other Latinas in the organization. She takes every opportunity to tell her story in the hopes that it will inspire others to invest in their own development.
- Maya serves as a mentor to Teresa and offers her feedback intended to advance her career. She suggests that Teresa not tell people of her humble background as it only
invites negative judgments and distracts from her positive attributes.

- Teresa feels insulted. Maya feels misunderstood and underappreciated for her efforts.

Teresa and Maya would benefit from a shared language for reflecting on their encounter. The opportunity for reflection would support Teresa and Maya in moving from being identified with the conflict or being the conflict to looking at the conflict. This would be characterized by a move from the first to the third person perspective.

Using reflective tools derived from the CMM model (Coordinated Management of Meaning (Pearce 1994, 2006), we can map out the different rules, norms and influences – messages if you will - that Teresa and Maya bring to their encounter. The following “daisy” diagram outlines some of these [Figure 1: Adaptation of the Daisy Model from B. Pearce, Communication and the Human Condition, 1989]:

In the encounter between Teresa and Maya, Teresa learned that Maya places a high value on accommodating to the expectations of others and promoting oneself in the most positive light possible. Maya’s taken-for-granted frame of reference is grounded in her Asian cultural norms which value conformity, fitting in, being part of the group and deference to the dominant culture. Teresa shapes her story based on her Latino cultural value of remembering where you came from and honoring your roots [Gallegos 1987; Cox 1994; Ferdman and Gallegos 2001]. This dynamic of group identity norms playing out in interpersonal dynamics is a frequent source of disorienting dilemmas at the workplace.

Senior leaders who recognize the value of coordinating communication are interested in ways to develop employees who encounter differences with curiosity and empathy rather than avoidance or defensiveness [Bennett & Bennett, 2005]

Disorienting dilemmas occur within organizations at the individual, interpersonal and systemic levels. Individuals such as Maya face dilemmas related to contradictions between the people they think they are and how others perceive them.

**Model for REAL Dialogue and Engagement**

The **REAL Model** offers a way to create traction and insure meaning contact in relationships by fostering new ways of relating. This model incorporates the work of Pearce, (2004), Kegan and Lahey (2000), Senge and Schwarmer (2005) and Wasserman (2004). Each of these scholars provides a perspective for unpacking assumptions or mental models for making meaning, and looking at alternative possibilities. Our years of practice have been enriched by the principles of the work cited, and helps to inform the kind of structures and processes that would support Maya and Teresa to shift from judgments to curiosity, from assumptions to inquiry and from fixed stories of the other to unfolding and emergent shared narratives. Noticing and engaging around moments of mis-meeting or disorientation are opportunities for destabilizing entrenched habits and exploring new, more creative paths of engaging.

**REFLECTING on Current Relationships, Assumptions and Situations**

We are continuously constructing our social worlds in the process of communication. Communication consists of an action that makes rather than reports meaning. Every
EXPANDING Awareness across Differences

Having explored current relationships, assumptions and situations, the next phase in our work with clients is focused on expanding awareness and deepening understanding of how the current situation is lived in the organization. Within every organization, there co-exist multiple narratives of the organization, past, present and future as well as multiple ways of contributing to the mission and contributing to its success. Leaders play a key role in creating the conditions for people to have deep and rich conversations across differences. These conditions include exploring what creates safety and trust, and suspending knowing and certainty.

When people come to work they bring the stories of their lives with them. According to Bruner (1990;), people organize their experiences and knowing in the form of narrative. Narratives that potentially foster connections and affiliations among people may also create walls of misunderstanding and disruptions to relating. When my narrative conflicts with yours, we find ourselves in a relational disorienting dilemma.

A poignant example of this dynamic occurred in a large financial services firm where we were working with the senior leadership team. Among the six senior vice-presidents, Andre was the only African American man. He interacted well with his white male colleagues in business settings and became an avid golfer recognizing the important conversations that took place during these activities. In one particularly candid team building session, Andre disclosed the day-to-day challenges he faced as a Black man in a predominantly white organization, discussing his marginalization in relation to other African Americans at lower levels as well as the difficulty he encountered fitting in with his peers at the senior level. He likened his experience as having to “put on a suit of armor” every morning to face the daily onslaught of incidents of racism and exclusion. His colleagues on the team were shocked by his disclosure. They thought Andre fit in effortlessly and felt totally accepted. It was a challenge for them to understand the gap between his story and theirs. The ability of the team to hold the contradictions and learn from them helped them fully embrace Andre more fully as their esteemed co-worker.
Daily routine communication, such as reporting on each other’s tasks, actions and operations, usually takes place in the form of storytelling (Boje 1991; 1995). Different representations of the different groups in an organization, be they cultural, functional or other, are created in everyday communication. Some of these may seem harmless, but in effect are offending and harassing and debilitating to the organizational atmosphere (Olsson 2002). Raising awareness of such harmful representations is often one of the central focuses in diverse organizations.

For example, a large hospital located in an ethnically diverse community is struggling to deal with the many languages spoken by employees and patients. Initial attempts to manage this linguistic diversity lead to the establishment of a harsh and punitive “English Only Policy.” Problems arose for the nursing staff when patients and medical staff addressed them in other languages. Through dialogue and reflection, they were able to arrive at a more realistic and appreciative stance on multi-lingual communication that was respectful of employee’s cultures, patient care and business need. They are on their way to being an employer of choice for nurses in their region at a time when nursing shortages are reaching critical levels. We often rely on story telling across difference to create breakthrough experiences for co-workers. Many people carry stereotypes about others that are more or less fixed depending on the extent of real life exposure one has to other groups. These stereotypes are fostered in narratives that are influenced by one’s own ethnicity, gender, class and generational cohort.

AGILITY in Behavior and Ways of Engaging

In a recent education session, a participant exclaimed sincerely his intention to “never say anything that would offend a person of difference ever again”. While his sincerity was admirable, this is difficult if not impossible to achieve. None of us can expect to fully understand all interactions. The best we can hope for is to humbly position ourselves as learners, as being curious, being willing to listen and reflect on our own behavior and taken for granted frames of mind and habits of engaging, to explore with others, what other possibilities exist.

In a diverse environment, it is easy to assume that we are all having the same experience. The data we collect in conducting organizational assessments clearly indicates that people are in the same building, (literally or virtually) living very different narratives. People are making sense of their lives based on both individual and collective social identity group experiences. Part of the difficulty of making dominant rules inclusive for all is the fact that not all rules are visible and explicit. Everyday practices such as giving and receiving feedback, offering advice or mentoring, paying compliments and building trust become fraught with the potential for misunderstanding. Increasingly these diverse worlds are encountering each other side by side – presenting opportunity for people to gain, benefit and learn from their encounters. To transform rules from dilemmas into organizational learning we need to stay engaged with each other long enough to challenge our assumptions and form new ways and patterns of relating (Wasserman, 2004).

Telling a story about, as distinct from describing, what life is like in the organization from different perspectives helps to stimulate people’s empathetic orientation, which provides a basis for connecting to the experiences and world-views of other people. Similarly, organizational culture is created and perpetuated by communication processes. The culture defines “What kind of an organization are we?” and “What kind of people are the members of our organization?” through narratives and communication processes [Barrett and Cooperrider 1990; Lamsa and Sintonen 2006]. As it relates to diversity, an inclusive culture is one in which multiple realities are acknowledged and openly explored. In establishing norms in teams and departments, leaders may need to attend to the conflicting narratives being told by various groups and support a more
participatory narrative that honors the differences and yet establishes clear boundaries and expectations. While minimizing differences and focusing only on similarities is easier in the short term, there are also long term costs associated with taking the path of least resistance. Organizational learning can only occur when we are willing to stay in contact and explore the values of the other in a climate of mutual respect and reflection.

**LEARNING from Shared Stories that Transform Individuals and Organizations**

There are certain episodes or events that, unfortunately, have occurred in many different organizations with which we have worked. We find that when we use these examples in a teaching venue, we see many nods that indicate, “Oh, I know that one!” One story is of an African American employee who discovers that she or he has been depicted in e-mail by a racial epithet. In this scenario, the person who sent the e-mail claims not to have meant anything racial. Rather, the communication was an expression of frustration with the individual. In this case, the Serpentine model along with the Daisy model are two tools we might use to help us stand back and reflect on what we are making and how:

**Challenges to Taken for Granted Assumptions Enhance the Workplace**

We have seen many situations where issues faced by diverse individuals and groups become opportunities for organizational learning and success. Some examples from our work include:

*Work schedules.* At first, flexible schedules were considered special dispensation for working mothers who needed to take care of children. Over the past 20 years, we have seen the benefits extend to life style, co-parenting, eldercare, as well as workload issues.

*Who does what work* often brought to light “taken for granted” habits of mind or assumptions that did not necessarily reproduce the most efficient, safe or smart ways of working. For example, women firefighters helped their male counterparts discover alternatives to backbreaking heavy lifting.

*Different abilities* shifted our attention to how the workplace could accommodate different needs and in the process, improve team performance. In one instance one of the authors was working with a leadership team of a major university. One of the members of the team was hearing impaired and read lips. She requested that at our meetings, we paused between speakers to enable her to notice where she needed to shift her eyes. The effect of her request was to slow down the conversation so each person listened to whoever was speaking and people did not talk over each other.

*Products are moving toward customization* as technology enables companies to more closely address diverse markets.

These are only a few areas in which having skills and processes for addressing differences opened the possibilities for doing work as usual in a different way, expanding our repertoire while better meeting the needs of the customer.

**Summary**

Leveraging the value of diversity requires fostering a culture of inclusion to develop the skills and competencies that cannot be easily transmitted in a short training session. Advancing an inclusive culture requires new skills that call for shifting habits of mind and habits of relating. In this chapter we stressed the importance of capturing the opportunity for disorienting dilemmas as portals for transformative learning in action. While letting things “roll off one’s back” is a noble quality, too often each instance of letting it go becomes a pattern that creates divisions among people. If we wait too long, those divisions become too deep to transverse. Creating the norm in
organizations that we address moments in which we misconnect without blame or criticism but rather as opportunities for relational learning, can be transformative for individuals, teams and organizations as a whole.

References
Kegan, R. and L. Lahey (2000). *How the way we talk can change the way we work: Seven languages for transformation.*
Diverse Applications of Transformative Learning: Community Action, Transnational Leadership Development, and Non-traditional Graduate Education

Beth Fisher-Yoshida, Columbia University  
Kathy D. Geller, Areté Leadership International Limited  
Steven Schapiro, Fielding Graduate University  
Ann Davis, Alliant University  
Charlyn Green Fareed, Genesis Coaching & Consulting; DeVry University  
Placida Gallegos, Fielding Graduate University  
M. Sue Gilly, Consultant and Coach  
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Abstract: "How can transformative learning be encouraged…" (Cranton, 2006, p. vi)? The stories we describe show TL applied to interventions in the expressive and performative arts; applied cross-culturally in graduate education & leadership development programs; and in multidisciplinary approaches integrated with Coordinated Management of Meaning, participatory action research, and communities of inquiry.

Our Work

Transformative learning is one of the dominant approaches within the field of adult learning and development. It has been widely embraced as a means of teaching for change through intentional action. While the basic principles of transformative learning and adult education have been applied in situations outside the academy, the writings on transformative learning generally have provided little insight into its application in such settings. Rather, they have focused primarily on classroom applications (Taylor 2006). Patricia Cranton (2006) notes, "Oddly, we have few resources for practitioners" and she further asks, "How can transformative learning be encouraged . . . In the workplace? In informal self-help groups? In community development initiatives? “(p. vi). Cranton’s question draws attention to the need to connect transformative learning theory as espoused and practiced in the academy to the application of transformative learning tenets in the workplace, in communities, and in other non-formal educational settings.

This panel presentation addresses this need by providing diverse examples and analyses of the application of transformative learning beyond formal classroom settings, and by introducing new models of transformative education that integrate transformative learning theory with other models of change and development. The stories we live describe transformative learning theory applied to create conscious interventions drawing on the expressive and performance arts; applied cross-culturally in graduate education and in leadership development programs in Asia, Africa and the Middle East; and developed through multidisciplinary approaches synergistically integrated with theories of communication, participatory action research, and communities of inquiry and practice.
While each of the panel members has an important story to tell (and many are doing so in related sessions) our focus for this session will be on holding an inquiry and dialogue on the methodologies we have used to consciously incorporate transformative learning into the design of interventions for action research, diversity and organizational consulting, community inquiry and student-centered graduate education.

Our goals in this inquiry and dialogue are to consider: 1) shared practices and specific dynamics that allow us to bring transformative learning to life in these settings; 2) other streams of theory, research and practice that further the application of transformative learning; 3) the unique attributes of our work that enhance its applicability; and 4) the challenges of bringing transformative learning to life in many contexts.

Our work as a community of practice grew out of a series of conversations. We were drawn together by our mutual belief in the potential power of transformative learning to positively impact individuals, our organizations, our communities and our society. Following a meeting we had at the last (Sixth International) Transformative Learning Conference, where many of us presented our work, we became very excited about the unique contribution to the field that we could make as a group, and began working as a community of scholar-practitioners.

We first crossed paths as faculty and students in the doctoral program at Fielding Graduate University’s School of Human & Organization Development. Faculty members are scholars and practitioners with extensive experience in research, practice, social activism and policy with backgrounds including psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, education, social work, theology, law, and communication. Doctoral students enter at mid-life with extensive professional practice as organizational consultants, lawyers, family therapists, human resource specialists, educators, community activists and more, and emerge as broadly based scholar-practitioners dedicated to bringing theory to life and adding life to theory in diverse settings.

Our stories are drawn from this space between. The work we do is centered in communities, multinational corporations, not-for-profit organizations, governmental agencies, and graduate schools in global locations. In this paper and conference session, we introduce the attendees and readers to applications of transformative learning in communities, collaborative partnerships, organizations, small groups, across cultures, and through the visual and performative arts. A discovery to be made is how transformative learning is partnered and integrated with other theories and approaches to develop new ways of looking at the phenomenon of transformation.

Our work is placed into three themes: Creating the Space for Learning; Looking through the Lens of Culture and Diversity; and Animating Awareness through the Expressive and Performative Arts.
The following is a brief overview of each presenter’s focus.

Creating the Space for Learning
In Learning in the Space Between Us, Sue Gilly and Martin Leahy describe what they define as Collaborative Transformative Learning (CTL) and explore how to create the conditions that make such learning possible in a range of settings. They introduce and describe the four commitments that are central to the development of practices to sustain CTL over time: (a) being intentional about creating a certain kind of time and space; (b) being willing to struggle; (c) being together in the space between us; (d) while inquiring into questions that matter. The foundation for all of these commitments is relationship.

In Learning Space/Work Space
Can We Make Room for Transformative Learning in Organizations?, Pamela Meyer addresses her question by presenting key findings from her work and research with adults’ experiences in learning theatrical improvisation. She draws on five lessons from improvisation: acknowledge fears and expectations; share responsibility for the learning space; hold the learning space until everyone can hold it for themselves; name the givens; and practice attunement. And explains how organizational practitioners can respond to their charge to achieve transformational learning outcomes by overcoming the constraints that many organizations unwittingly put on the very space necessary for these qualities and capacities to emerge.

Working with a not-for-profit client organization with members who have been convicted of crimes, Beth Fisher-Yoshida, in Transformative Learning in Participative Processes That Reframe Identity, describes profound transformative learning experiences that occurred through an "appreciative participatory action research" (A-PAR) approach. The process she introduces encouraged “Second Chance” members to engage at a level of involvement that was deep and
profound; as members rewrote the stories of who they are and their identities changed as they began to realize and accept they were more capable than they previously believed. Building off their success in creating and enforcing a zero tolerance for violent culture at Second Chance, members are drawing on insights from their own experiences to identify appropriate interventions to deter youth from violent paths.

Drawing on varied experience in student-centered collaborative education for mid-life adult learners, based on a research study of adult development and transformative learning, Steve Schapiro presents a model for transformative graduate education, A Crucible for Transformation: The Alchemy of Student Centered Collaborative Graduate Education for Adults at Mid-Life. This crucible serves as a container that holds learners in a safe space and provides a boundary for their learning experience; turns up the heat and the fire, providing various forms of contradiction and disorientation that “unfreezes” people and melts their rigid frames of reference and ways of knowing, opening them to the possibility of change; adds new ingredients to the mix in the form of new paradigms, perspectives and ways of learning; and provides continuing support as learners “cool down” to solidify a new sense of self as scholar-practitioners, re-integrating themselves into their work, community, and family contexts, and work to change those contexts.

**Looking through the Lens of Culture, Difference and Diversity**

*Self-view and Worldview*

Successful Long-term Work Life Experiences in Non-native Cultures, Ann Davis provides insights into an integrated understanding of transformative learning related to culture, communication and consciousness. She provides a paradigm for understanding how successful long-term work life experiences in non-native cultures offer the basis for transformation of individual boundaries and conscious reframing of both one’s self view and worldview. Davis introduces evidence of transformative learning’s applicability beyond North America. Davis integrates Mezirow’s (1990) view of transformative learning with Kim’s (2001) “integrated theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation,” and Pearce’s “coordinated management of meaning” suggesting a conceptual model for preparing expatriates for success.

Her collaborative inquiry into the shared experiences of being a *strong black woman* provides the context for Charlyn Green Fareed’s introduction of a culturally responsive transformative learning model to catalyze transformations within the context of community based inquiry groups. In *Culture Matters: Developing Culturally Relevant Transformative Learning Experiences in Communities* Green – Fareed blends collaborative inquiry transformative learning perspectives, and participatory action research, and introduces a four-goal model inclusive of a) creating culturally sensitive learning environments; b) encouraging culturally inclusive learning experiences; c) creating opportunities for critical reflection and learning through critical questioning on culturally shared meaning; and d) assessing personal and group learning and change using evaluation methods that allow freedom of expression.

With changing organization demographics in the United States, plus the impact of globalization on multinational organizations, Ilene Wasserman and Placida Gallegos present.

*Engaging Diversity*

Disorienting Dilemmas that Transform Relationships as a response to the challenge to create inclusive workplaces that leverage the value of diversity. Recognizing the innate power of disorienting dilemmas inherent in the challenge to communicate across difference, Wasserman and Gallegos suggest that it is at the point where individuals and workgroups are confused,
thrown into uncertain situations and in conflict that the choice to engage in critical reflection and story-telling in relationship with another may create breakthrough experiences for co-workers and organizations. They introduce the R-E-A-L model for diversity consulting as a proven methodology for organizational learning.

Working with transnational leaders in multinational organizations based in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, Kathy Geller was charged with creating a leadership curriculum that would prepare global leaders for the exigencies of the 21st century. In Transformative Learning Dynamics for Developing Relational Leaders, Geller introduces the confluence of transformative learning, intercultural communication, and transformational leadership as the basis for a new model of relational leadership development in non North American settings. She introduces and operationalizes six dynamics of transformative learning, suggesting a foundation for increasing levels of reflective action, intercultural appreciation, employee engagement and ethical action amongst leaders.

**Animating Awareness through the Expressive and Performative Arts**

Annabelle Nelson explores *Storytelling and Transformative Learning*. The ancient oral tradition of storytelling has been used as a means of passing on cultural values and norms. Another use for stories is that they can also be used to transform our consciousness as they may question our current perceptions and cognitive frames and create new frames in their place. Nelson builds on the links between Piaget and Jung and further connects them to Dirkx and Mezirow as she shows how this psychological development and identity alignment can foster transformative learning.

**Bodymindfulness for Skillful Use of Self:**

Is a process Nagata coined the term *bodymindfulness* based on two concepts: bodymind as a way of paying attention to the systemic nature of lived experiences; and mindfulness from the Buddhist practice of developing awareness of self, other and experience. She used this approach with graduate students in a leading university in Japan and cites their experiences and reflections throughout the chapter. Nagata situates this work in the transformative learning literature that emphasizes extrarational, whole person learning.

**Dreamscape:**

Is an approach that addresses knowledge creation in organizations. In more recent years there have been socially constructed linguistic turns in knowledge creation. The newest wave, of which dreamscape is a part, Dreamscape is the performative turn, as Tiffany von Emmel describes, *Dreamscape: Art, Knowledge and Organization Development*. Tiffany identifies four types of transformation that dreamscape facilitates: 1) connectivity; 2) new meaning; 3) embodiment of values; 4) and adult development. One important characteristic of dreamscape is that it is a participatory process and it is this participation that is used as a theory of organization development.

In *Black Mama Sauce*: "**Embodied Transformative Education**, Hameed (Herukhuti) S. Williams uses Theatre of the Oppressed, yoga and ritual, as a means to practice a form of transformative education that is both embodied and decolonizing, which he coined as "Black Mama Sauce". Williams states that the rich history and tradition of transformative education was present in Black working-class
communities in the United States, in the 1960s and 1970s, and that it has yet to be incorporated with the more traditional transformative literature. He draws on Black feminist thought, Afrocentricity and decolonizing queer theory and shares several personal experiences working with groups and organizations that exemplify the application of this theory and the resulting outcomes and consequences that were produced.

References
Appreciating Self & Other through Mask Making An Experiential Session
Beth Fisher-Yoshida, Columbia University
Kathy D. Geller, Areté Leadership International Limited

Abstract: This is a two-part workshop where participants learn through a lived transformative experience. During debriefing participants reflect on their experience(s). They also trace their assumptions; how they were formed, and how they related to the expectations they had of themselves, their partners and others (Brookfield, 1987; Mezirow, 1990).

Introduction
It is significant that transformative learning has yet to be incorporated in a major way into transformational leadership development efforts. 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.

Our decision to include transformative learning as the basis for corporate curriculum design called for a translation of its largely scholarly principles described in educational settings into practical dynamics that would be able to drive learning design. E. W. Taylor (2000, 2003) reviewed the research on transformative learning theory identifying several themes that arise naturally from the empirical perspective. Building off Taylor's (2000, 2003, and 2006) analytical reviews, Geller (2005) sought to operationalize as dynamics the key themes of transformative learning: a) the importance of self knowledge and 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; e) acknowledging that empathy provides a foundation for collaboration and trust; and f) appreciating cultural diversity.

Overview
This is a two-part experiential session in which participants learn through a structured potentially transformative experience. There are several opportunities throughout the two sessions that provide for these transformative experiences (Cranton, 2006). During the debriefing sessions questions are posed to the participants asking them to reflect back on the experience(s) remembering what was going through their minds while they were engaging in the activity. We ask them to think about the ways in which they were self-conscious, and to link those feelings to assumptions they may have had. We take the reflection a step further asking them to trace where their assumptions may have originated, how they were formed and how their assumptions relate to the expectations they had of themselves, their partners and others in the room (Brookfield, 1987; Mezirow, 1990). It is when expectations do not align with actual experience that we may have disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow, 2000).
What we will do

In the first one-hour session participants will engage in making masks with a partner. The session is designed for the participants to have interactions with others in the group and especially, significant interaction with one other individual. The presenters will set the context within the theoretical framework of transformative learning. They will model the activity for the participants.

The necessary materials will be ready for the participants to engage fully in the experience. Throughout the demonstration and the experience, the presenters will create a safe space that allows for close interaction. We will introduce the importance of trust as a necessary pre-requisite to the task and frame it as the basis for the way the two partners engage one another.

Each person makes a mask of the other’s face using plaster of paris strips. One partner will lie on a sheet or towel on the floor, with plastic wrap on his or her face (a hole is created for breathing), while the other partner takes the strips and begins to construct a mask on his/her partner’s face. Different partners manage this in their own ways - in terms of how much talking is done, when and whether they cover the eyes, when they cover the mouth and so on. The mask making for each person takes about 10 minutes, followed by 3 minutes for the mask to set. Once set, the mask is lifted off, labeled and set aside to dry. Then the partners switch places. Throughout this process gentle, relaxing music is playing in the background.

We let participants self select and we will monitor their mask-making time to ensure that all is going well and that no one is feeling threatened. To respond to personal concerns, if someone prefers to make one half of the mask at a time and assemble the two pieces off the face we support this alternative approach.

At the completion of both partners’ masks we ask the partners to reflect on the experience and to share insights with the larger group. The presenters will share their observations and will support the learning from the experience with the theoretical underpinnings of transformative learning applied to the activity.

In the second one-hour session the participants will work with the masks they made in Part One. The instructions given will be for them to look at their masks and “let their masks talk to them about how they want to look” as though their masks are empty canvases. They will be
advised that this is not an activity to duplicate your face as in a self-portrait. (If participants did not attend Part One they will be welcome to use masks that were prepared in advance by the presenters. While this diminishes the personal aspect of the experience, it is still meaningful.)

There will be an assortment of paints and other decorations (glitter, feathers, stickers, sequins, string, etc.) for the participants to decorate their masks. The participants will spend about 20 minutes decorating the masks of their own faces. They will then gather in groups of three or four showing their masks to the other members of the group and selecting three attributes of the mask and sharing what each attribute symbolizes for them. The other members of the group will then say what they see in the mask. Each person will have about five to seven minutes for discussing his or her mask and a short group discussion can take place if time permits. This reflection and discussion provides opportunities for the participants to engage in individual reflection, as well as, group reflection which can lead to more self-awareness and knowledge of others (Fisher-Yoshida, 2003).

The session closes with an integration of the theories of transformative learning into a group debrief. As the attendees are familiar with the theory, we will be considering the insights gained and experiences in relation to TL theory.

References


Transformative Learning in Farmer Field Schools: An Entry Point for Change Among Resource-Poor Farmers in Africa
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Abstract: This paper explores the role of transformative learning in the Farmer field School context and the extent that this has led to empowerment related outcomes among resource poor farming communities in East Africa. Preliminary results show that transformation has taken place in aspects related to changed behaviours, worldview and social change.

Background
Agricultural extension and farmer education are important components for improving farmers’ livelihoods since a majority of the poor derive their main livelihood from agriculture. However, Scoones and Thompson (1994), Chambers (1993) and Leeuwis (2004) argue that existing approaches and methods, generally focused on a transfer of technology, do not fit the resource-poor farming context of the South. In the changing context for rural small holders where non-farm income is becoming increasingly important, collective action is required to access markets. Farmers’ need to organise and to be innovative and able to adjust to changing situations means that new skills and capacities are called for. Human capital, innovative mindsets and the production of knowledge for a framework of action are thereby crucial for agricultural development (Haug 1998). However in emerging democracies of Africa the sense of citizenship is very low and the general farming population has very little power in relation to other actors in society (Friis-Hansen 2000). African small-scale farmers are rarely viewed by governments and donor agencies as active citizens with rights and responsibilities, but rather as subjects or beneficiaries with needs or as passive recipients of aid. In response to this, current donor policy documents have replaced the concept of ‘target groups’ with ‘citizens’ and argue that local people and their institutions as assets and partners in the development process. However, Hickey and Mohan (2004) argue that to become transformative, participatory approaches must move its focus beyond the individual and local and involve multi-scale strategies than encompass the institutional and structural. Participation is often framed narrowly as a methodology to improve project performance, rather than a process of fostering critical consciousness and decision-making as the basis for active citizenship. Further information flow is poor and thereby also peoples ability to demand for services. This situation calls for a new paradigm in extension, and as expressed by Freire (1973) with a stronger focus on education that is liberating in nature rather than domesticating and where the focus is on dialogue, knowledge and rural innovation in extension activities rather than dissemination of blueprint solution (Leeuwis 2000), in order to allow for farmers to become experts in their own field and actors of their own development.

Role of transformative learning
Mezirow (1991 ) mentions that one of the most important areas of learning for adults is that which frees them from their habitual ways of thinking and acting and involves them in what he (Mezirow 1981) terms ‘perspective transformation’, meaning the process of becoming critically aware of our assumptions and our ways of viewing the world. Traditional education teaches people, and in particular disadvantaged peoples, into a culture of silence while
transformative learning is thus seen as a process of drawing people out of their unconscious pattern and coaxed out of their learned culture of silence (Fals Borda and Rahman 1991). Freire (1970) refers to this as education that is liberating rather than domesticating. He also talks about education in terms of “the practice of freedom”, by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. Transformation can be achieved through development of competence in “critical reflectivity” (Brookfield 1987). He argues that “Significant personal learning entails fundamental change in learners and leads them to redefine and reinterpret their personal, social, and occupational world”. Freire (1970) has used the term ‘conscientization’ to describe the process by which one’s false consciousness becomes transcended through education. Transformative learning results in individuals that become more responsive for their actions and more autonomous, and use clearer thinking when making decisions (Franz 2003). Freire mentions that (1970) liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferral of information and say that the important thing in liberating education is “for the people to come to feel like masters of their own thinking”. Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students.

In the agricultural extension context transfer of technologies could be seen as domesticating process where farmers are often pushed into preconceived behaviours and acts, often with a focus on uptake of externally designed technologies as opposed to situations where the farmers and extension advisors work together to find solutions to problems and to reflect on experiences, in a more liberating manner. The uncertain, disorientating conditions in which farming communities find themselves mean that transformative learning can assist people to reflect on and analyze their lives, allowing them to recognize new options (Percy 2005). The transformation process thereby get people to start questioning one’s own habitual behaviours and oppressive or restrictive external factors inhibiting possibilities for change, and based on this information discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. Thus transformative learning becomes highly relevant in the African small-holder context where most acts are based on habitual behaviours and where poor farmers face a range of exploitable and oppressive forces.

**Farmer Field Schools as a Platform for Transformative Learning**

Farmer Field Schools (FFS) provide an institutional platform where farmers meet regularly in groups to study the “how and why” of a particular topic and engage in an action learning process that includes making regular field observations, relate their observations to the ecosystem and apply their previous experience and any new information to make crop or livestock management decisions under the guidance of a facilitator. Apart from technical issues group dynamic exercises and session addressing “special topics” relating to non-agricultural issues are integrated in the learning approach. Song and dance is often used to internalize learning in a way where it can be expressed to other. The FFS approach was introduced in East Africa, with support from FAO in 1996 and currently about 3000 FFS groups have been carried out in the region by various actors.

There are some key learning tools and exercises that are carried out in the FFS as a mean of enhancing learning, and as an aid for the facilitators to ensure participation, dialogues and critical reflection. These are for example the field trials where farmers experiment on various practices identified as possible solutions to a specific problem defined by the farmers. By being involved in identifying the problem and possible solutions, establish test trials, regularly monitoring the trials and finally critically evaluate its outcome farmers gain a range of
experiences and skills related to critical reflection. The weekly Agro-Ecological System Analysis (AESA) exercise which is a field-based analysis of the interactions observed between biotic and abiotic factors co-existing in the crop/livestock field facilitates learning on how to make regular field observations, analyze problems and opportunities encountered in the field and to improve decision-making skills regarding farm management. The analysis follows a cycle of observation, analysis and action. Discovery-based exercises further stimulate participants to think beyond preconceived believes and norms. These exercises are usually 1-3 hours long to fit into a regular FFS session, and addresses the learning topic of the day in a practical manner. These kinds of exercises are often based on PRA tools and problem based learning tools (Chambers 1994).

**Research focus and methods**

The focus of this paper is to 1) reflect on the role of transformative learning in FFS and its impact on individual and collective level, 2) examine the role of transformative learning in the agricultural context.

The paper draw upon information from several interrelated research investigations carried out in the East African context over the last couple of years, merged with direct insider experience as practitioner and field worker. The analysis focus on how transformative learning occur within the context of Farmer Field Schools in East Africa and how the FFS have contributed to personal and collective agency and action as a result of transformation among rural poor, particularly women farmers.

The focus of analysis relate to indicators of changes in following aspects:

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<th>Aspects</th>
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<td>Changing habitual behaviours</td>
<td>Changed routine and habitual behaviours</td>
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<td>Perspective transformation / changed world view</td>
<td>Beliefs, attitudes and opinions more inclusive, differentiating, permeable, critically reflective and integrative of experiences and views.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social change</td>
<td>Ability to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and take actions agents oppressive elements of reality</td>
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Methods used to collect the data include a combination of qualitative and quantitative data with a focus on outcomes from an exploratory survey carried out among about 700 graduated FFS members in Western Kenya and non-members from the same community. The results were analysed in SPSS and significance levels tested by Pearson Chi-square test.

**Results**

Some of the key outcomes of the learning process in FFS relate to changed behaviours and mindsets among farmers, both in terms of the actual farming practices applied and in terms of empowerment at individual and collective level. This suggests that the learning taking place can be considered to be of transformative nature. Transformation would not necessarily need to be seen as a the trigger for all changes observed, since other factors such as information, capital base, institutional context also have proven to be of high importance. However there are some common practices and perceptions, related to agriculture, generally considered to be strongly
linked to habitual and socially restricted or linked aspects such as choice of crops and enterprises, interest to experiment and try out new things, nature of cooperation among farmers etc. and where thus observed changes can be assumed to require a certain level of “broadening of the mindsets”, thus transformation, in order for change to happen. Below is a description of some of the changes observed among FFS graduates, following their participation in FFS groups.

**Change in Habitual Farming Practices**

Farmers attending FFS have shown to diversify their farming system and try out new technological solutions to a higher extent than their average fellow farmers. Especially the habitual reliance on maize as the main crop has changed following farmers learning and analysing the benefit of the practice. Many farmers explain this learning as a big mind-opener, as expressed by a farmer in Mwingi, Kenya “until now I have never realised that I actually operate at a loss by planting maize, I always assumed that just by planting I at least gain something”. Farmers have also been observed to gain confidence for experimenting with more market oriented practices and mention that the learning process has been a process of change from a mind-set of risk minimization to opportunity search. A recent study in Soroti, Uganda show a correlation (1% significance level) between membership of FFS groups and level of adoption of improved techniques for soil erosion control, soil fertility management and pest management (Friis-Hansen Forthcoming). Technology development through FFS in Soroti district can be characterised as a group approach in which proto-type technologies are adapted on group managed plots through continuously monitoring of the crop and its growing conditions. This study concludes that farmers’ innovative capability to detect and solve field problems has been enhanced as a result of a transformative learning process. This form of agricultural development encourage and capacitate farmers to exchange ideas, experiment and adapt technologies to local specific growing conditions, and organise and produce required local biological based inputs, i.e. botanicals (participatory observation).

**Perspective Transformation**

The change of mindsets to be more differentiating, critically reflective and integrative of experiences and views is well expressed in a case in Mwingi district among a local stockist selling agro-inputs. He explained that farmers often blankly used to come and ask him to tell them which seed to buy. However among FFS graduates he had noticed a fundamental change in that they often confidently would come and ask for a specific variety, and when the stockist would enquiry for the reason the farmers were able to specify reasons in detail, usually based to the reflection of actual field experience gained in the FFS, for why demanded the particular item. This indicates an increase in self confidence and changes in how farmers perceive their role vs. the role of expert outsiders.

There are also indications of a change in mindset in relation to gender roles, how men and women interact and the role of women in development. One female FFS member in Nakuru mentioned “men and women used to always sit separate in the group, but now men even learn from us talking”. Among the women in the survey among FFS graduates there was a significant (at the 5% level) difference in the feeling of “myself” having the biggest influence to change aspects of life to the better as opposed to other people having the biggest influence to change the course of life.

**Social Change and Action**
Much of the social change experienced among FFS graduates relates to farmers taking steps for dealing with challenges and obstacles faced through reflective critical thinking or collective action. This often results in farmers that increasingly are challenging authorities, such as information providers or market actors etc. One government office expressed this by stating “I really feel challenged by the farmers, I have to rush up and down to gather information and readings since the farmers keep asking me for so much”. FFS graduates also seem to take interest and action in community decision making processes. The survey among FFS graduates in Kenya showed significant difference (at the 5% level) against non-FFS members in aspects such as participation in community meetings voting in local elections. Among male FFS graduates 56% (n=115) stated that they often participate in community meetings while only 36% (n=191) of non-members. Further, 96% (n=288) of FFS graduates voted in the last local election compared to 88% (n=335) non-members. Also significant difference was show among members and non-members in relation to farmers getting into leadership positions in the community 63% of FFS graduates (n=300) and 54% (among non-members). Among men the difference was bigger, 71% compared to 55%.

In Kenya farmer networks and associations have emerged as a follow-up effect of FFS and these units have increasingly been breaking manipulative relationships with trade middlemen and thereby gained access more lucrative markets for sale of their produce. This is a large breakthrough considering that normal practice often entails farmers being manipulated and exploited by market actors. Farmers attribute this achievement to the social bonding and trust building taking place within the FFS context.

Conclusions

Findings of this exploratory inquiry show that the learning process in FFS could be considered to be transformative in nature since changes in habitual actions, perspectives and world views appear to have taken place as well as social change and action being triggered following participation in FFS. Farmers have gained agency in terms of taking a greater control over their lives. This has highly important implications for agricultural development interventions and in particular extension activities since human empowerment is often assumed to be a precondition for the success of community based interventions, services and project. However often such interventions fail due since the level of empowerment generally is low. Thereby transformative learning has a crucial role to play in serving as a platform for human capacity building and empowerment, which in turn can ensure the success of services provided for the community. This study was explorative in nature and has therefore only touched the surface of this issue. More in-depth studies will be required to fully understand the dynamics that surround the facilitation of transformative learning at local level among resource poor African communities.

References
Impact Assessment of Transformative Learning Through Farmer Field Schools in East Africa

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Abstract: This study explores the impact of transformative learning among smallholder farmers in East Africa.

The Farmer Field School (FFS) approach, involves farmer groups in season-long practical learning, where farmers engage in transformative learning through practical agricultural experiments, as well as externally facilitated learning sessions aimed at gaining knowledge about human and cross cutting issues related to their broader livelihoods. The East African Sub-regional Pilot Project for Farmers’ Field Schools, which ended in 2003, operated more than 1000 FFS groups in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. During the project phase a range of project impacts were observed such as improved agricultural production among participating farmers, uptake of sustainable farming practices, development of producer organizations and networks, empowerment of women etc. However no quantitative documentation of the impact exists and minimal follow-up has been done to track livelihood change among the graduated FFS participants.

This study aims to assess the impact in terms of individual and collective agency of transformative learning among graduated FFS members 3 years after FFS implementation. The study applies a contextual impact assessment methodology which combine qualitative social science research-based studies and stratified random household surveys. The study emphasis analysis of the socio-economic context and view intervention as one among several factors resulting in development impact. The contextual impact assessment aims to uncover relationships between context, intervention, development process and impact. The household survey uses a counter-factual analysis, as no baseline study was carried out. FFS graduate farmers is compared with a control group consisting of non-FFS farmers, which is as similar as possible to the FFS graduates, whereby the difference between the two is that only one has experienced transformative learning cycles as participants in a FFS group.

The study is on-going. The Poster will illustrate transformative learning aspects of FFS; explain the contextual impact assessment methodology; and outline preliminary results.
Preparing to teach online: Facilitating change
Carol A. McQuiggan
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Abstract: A literature review was conducted to investigate the adult education and faculty development literature and research to discover what is known about teaching changes when faculty teach online or prepare to teach online, and to determine whether these changes impact their face-to-face teaching.

Introduction
In institutions of higher education, there are an increasing number of faculty teaching online courses. While there is a recognized need for faculty development to prepare to teach online, there are many different faculty development models being implemented with differing foci on technology, pedagogy, and course content. The purpose of this literature review is to investigate the adult education and faculty development literature and research to discover what is known about teaching changes when faculty prepare to teach online or when they are engaged in online teaching, and to determine whether these changes impact their face-to-face teaching. The implications could inform faculty development for online teaching and also inform face-to-face teaching practices.

Implications for Transformative Learning and Practice
While the studies and articles reviewed had a focus on online teaching and not necessarily on transformative learning in particular, there are some implications for transformative learning in teaching online. It has been reported that as faculty participate in faculty development to prepare to teach online, and as they actually teach online, they find themselves as beginners again (Diekelmann, N., Schuster, R., & Nosek, C., 1998). Reconsidering their teaching practices can begin with something as simple as realizing that they now have different opportunities to communicate with their students (West, Waddoups & Graham, 2007).

Often the changes faculty experience online give them an unsettled feeling. This has been reported as feeling bewildered and overwhelmed (Alley, 1996), and disembodied and disempowered (Cowham & Duggleby, 2005). One must also consider resistance by faculty who believe that face-to-face instruction in the traditional classroom is the best and only way for students to learn (Meyer, 2004). Will their online teaching experiences cause them to reflect and possibly question their beliefs about teaching?

Faculty’s assumptions, beliefs, and expectations about teaching and learning can limit their ability to change their teaching practices (Sunal et al., 2001). Changes in teaching practices must be considered over time with “reflection being the crucial driving force for continued evolution” (Torrisi & Davis, 2000, p. 171). However, faculty rarely reflect on their own learning as a way of understanding their teaching beliefs and assumptions (Lawler, 2003), often citing the lack of time. Without reflective practice to learn new ways of thinking about teaching and learning, faculty will resort to what they already know and consider familiar and continue their current teaching practices (Layne, Froyd, Simpson, Caso, & Merton, 2004).

Critically reflective thinking is an integral component in transformational learning. Cranton (1996) has done much to develop transformative learning’s potential within faculty development and has recommended strategies to facilitate it. If teaching online brings inherent changes that challenge our old assumptions about teaching and learning, then perhaps it is time
to rethink everything about the way we teach and learn face-to-face (Ellsworth, 1997). There seems to be a great need to learn how reflection occurs, how reflection by faculty can be encouraged and supported, and how that reflection can inform their teaching, both online and face-to-face.

**Conclusion**

While many changes were noted when faculty move to the online environment, what was lacking was how faculty development, through reflective activities, could facilitate these changes in the online environment and have them, in turn, also benefit face-to-face teaching. Faculty development has the potential to cultivate a reflective practice among higher education faculty members that could lead to new possibilities for teaching and learning online and face-to-face.

**References**


How Do Age and Cognitive Development Affect Transformational Learning?
Sharon L. Walsh
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Abstract: This paper presents the results of a study investigating the effect of age and cognitive development on transformational learning. Two surveys were used to collect data that were then analyzed statistically. The analyses indicated that age had no effect on transformational learning and that cognitive development was not affected by whether transformational learning had occurred or not.

Introduction
A noteworthy factor that may affect transformational learning is the level of cognitive development. Because pre-adults have not yet gained enough life experience, they are not developmentally capable of critical reflection, rational discourse, and reflective action (Kegan, 1994, 2000; King & Kitchener, 1994), which are necessary for transformational learning (Mezirow, 1993). Merriam (2004) argues that critically reflecting on one’s own assumptions and those of others requires a high level of cognitive development. Likewise, examining alternative perspectives and not making premature judgments also are the hallmarks of dialectal thinking and thus, mature cognitive development. Without this high level of cognitive development, transformational learning will not take place. Because a high level of cognitive development is related to increased age, both age and cognitive development should determine whether an individual experiences transformational learning.

Methods
The effect of age and cognitive development were investigated in this study. Five age groups were formed: 18 to 29, 30-40, 41-59, 60-75, and over 76. Two-hundred-thirty-three participants (78 men and 155 women) were recruited for this study. One-hundred-eighty-six of these participants reported that they had a transformative experience and 47 said they had not. The participants completed two surveys: the AADE and the LEP. The AADE, a survey based on the Learning Activities Survey (King 1998), has 56 questions with 31 of the questions related to Mezirow’s ten step process leading to transformational learning and 20 that cover the characteristics of those who have experienced transformational learning. Both of these sets of questions are 6-point Likert scale items. The LEP, constructed by Moore (1989), assesses cognitive development based on the Perry (1981) scheme. These data were statistically analyzed using MANOVA and the One-way ANOVA.

Results
The MANOVA tested for the effect of age on the 31 Likert items related to the 10 step process and showed that age had no effect on the transformational learning process. The One-Way ANOVA tested for the effect of cognitive development and indicated that there was no significant difference in the level of cognitive development for those who had experienced transformational learning or those who had not.

Discussion
This study, as part of a larger study, is noteworthy because it is one of the only empirical studies that quantitatively documents aspects of transformational learning. While the results did
not support the hypotheses that were initially posed, that transformational learning would vary among age groups and that higher cognitive development would characterize those individuals who have experienced transformational learning, it nonetheless showed that this kind of data could be collected. Most of the participants were contacts of the researcher and this may have contributed to the lack of any statistically significant results because 71.6% of the participants had at least a Bachelor’s degree. With more education, cognitive development is usually higher. This study supported this statement.

References