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Using Transformative Learning Theory to Achieve Sustainability in Education and Business: An Interview with Janette Brunstein

ANDI ULLRICH
University of Central Oklahoma

JACIE HARVEL
University of Central Oklahoma

This editorial interview was conducted with Dr. Janette Brunstein, who researches sustainability and transformative learning in the master and doctoral program in Business Administration at Mackenzie Presbyterian University in São Paulo, Brazil. At the time this interview was conducted, she was a visiting fellow in the Center for Excellence in Transformative Teaching and Learning at the University of Central Oklahoma. She was interviewed by editorial research assistants, Andi Ullrich and Jacie Harvel.

Keywords: sustainability, paradigmatic change, critical reflection, consciousness raising

Jacie: *Well, first, thank you so much for the opportunity to interview you. We're excited to dig deeper into your research*!

Andi: *Yes! We'd like to start by asking you when you realized that the transformative learning theory was a good theory to use for your research?*

Janette: I have been researching sustainability in business through education, learning processes, and the development of competencies. I have been studying this in two environments: in the academic environment—how we can create the transformative learning mindset as professors in the classroom—and in organizations for people who are already in the workplace. Sustainability calls for paradigmatic change because you need to see the goals of the organization that are not solely for profit. You have to think about environmental, social, cultural, and territorial issues, too. This is very controversial and problematic since businesses seem to currently focus on results, productivity, and growth. But, just how sustainable is it to grow a business solely with profit as the end goal? One must think of other environments, not just the profit of the owner of the company. You have to put effort and money in things that aren't just for profit or profitable. You have to invest in social and environmental issues as well. To achieve the kind of transformation that redefines an organization's values and main

Author's Note: Andi Ullrich was a JoTL editorial research assistant and Diverse Student Scholar at the time this research was conducted; she graduated from the University of Central Oklahoma with a Bachelor of Arts in English and a minor in Mass Communications. Jacie Harvel is a JoTL editorial research assistant and Diverse Student Scholar pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in English at the University of Central Oklahoma.

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objectives, you need the transformative learning process, because this is the process that leads us toward this new perspective.

I had to come back to Paulo Freire's (1970) work and the idea that we need to go through critical transitivity. We needed to direct students to think about the social and political responsibilities of students, of management, and the managers themselves. What is critical transformativity? Freire (1970) describes it as the ability to think globally and critically about the present condition, and decide to change. Transformative learning helps people to think about their condition and how to change their condition critically. It demands that people place the most effort into thinking about the origin of a problem—the root of the problem—instead of just fixing it in the moment. This is called problem-posing. To achieve this, when you are questioning, you need to ask *why*. What is behind social responsibility? How are we going to address these issues in the company?

Andi: *Have you had experience with transformative learning before? Did you find out about it during your research?*

Janette: My background is in education, and transformation is part of educational discourse, so as educators, we are always worried about the transformation of our students. This is the main goal of education.

Transformative learning became more significant when I started to combine education and business toward sustainability because I needed a way to make a paradigmatic change. It became very important to go deep into transformative learning, because you need its practical process in schools, organizations, and education. In universities, educators have to foster transformative learning, but you need to make the educator first go through the transformative learning so they can foster it in students. For me, the whole process has a lot of mediums: students, faculty, staff, boards of organizations. And it goes beyond the organization or university, to the educational system encouraged by the government, the policies, the direction that education is thinking in a certain place, culture, country. When we talk about transformative learning, we are talking, not only about the individual, but everything involved in the education system.

Jacie: *Alright! Now let's discuss your personal program of research. What made you care about sustainability in business?*

Janette: Sustainability in education is just one of my areas of research. I like to first think about professors; how can the professor foster critical reflection through transformative learning in order to teach sustainability in the business classroom? Fostering critical reflection is not easy, as I mentioned earlier. You have to believe that there are other important goals for a business besides profit. But how are you going to ask the businessperson to not grow the business? How are you going to ask the businessperson to put money in things beyond profit? It's hard. There's paradoxes and contradictions. But I'm trying to understand how the professors in Brazil have been doing this. I've found that the professors are trying to make students reflect, but how are they doing

this? The professors are focused on the companies and their actions. The companies hug a tree, but they don't hug an employee? These professors are worried about the company's actions. Personally, I'm worrying about being an example myself. If my behavior isn't sustainable in the classroom, how will I teach this? If I am able to make students calculate the consequences of their individual actions, they will be able to make a lot of similar calculations when they are in the business place about the consequences of their actions. So, companies are the first point in the critical reflection. Beyond companies, educators are making students think about what is the responsibility of the management theories in building sustainable behavior. Because, year by year, the books, scholarly papers, discussions in congress—everything is made to teach people how to become wealthier, how to produce more, how people can consume more without thinking about the environmental and social consequences.

Beyond this, professors are trying to erase the consciousness of the students. In what ways do you practice consciousness where you live? What does a sustainable business look like? What kind of business peaks in a sustainable society? These questions should be asked because there are a lot of businesses that are good for the business itself but not as good for the common good. Then, to what extent will we accept a business that is just good for itself?

The last point I'd like to discuss is the role of the managers. The professors are asking the students what the role of the managers is: to make profit? No, that's not the only role of the managers.

In summary, my research has five points:

1) The impact of a company's actions
2) Consciousness raising
3) The role of the manager
4) The responsibility of the management theories
5) To make students realize the interest in power-relations that are behind managers' actions.

My research has been searching for the professors who are making the business students question and think critically, resulting in a transformation of their conceptions. The second part of the research I'm doing follows *how* these students are being transformed. We are measuring the experiences of learning quantitatively, and evaluating them qualitively to see if we've built a more transformative learning experience in the classroom. How much are these students are being transformed from the beginning of the course to the end of the course?

Andi: *Is there one piece of practical advice you would give educators in order to transform the professors in the best way?*

Janette: Go back to the beginning. When I say the "theories" of management should teach students how to make a profit and how to be self-successful, I am only focusing on the individual needs and achievements, not the collective. Some professors are now questioning this, and pointing out that such ideas were formed during a certain point in history. They were built with a certain kind of mindset that can be transformed, and we can think about another kind of business. So the most practical advice I could give is

that you have to teach your students how to change the "taking for granted" mindset. Business was always made to make profit and nothing else. Now, though, we can build a different way. We are educating managers in the same way. If educators don't change it, we don't change the students, we don't change the generation, it will not have an impact in the environment as a whole. So, I think the most important advice is how to change the "taking for granted" mindset.

Jacie: *So you mentioned the educator modeling transformation. How much do you think it's the professor's responsibility verses the student's?*

Janette: The question is, you cannot transform other people, but it's up to you to be open to transformation. But there's still something educators can do. We can create an environment that makes you think, makes you create new ideas, makes you go further and get rid of this "taking for granted" mindset in order to think differently. You can create this environment, and this is our main goal. How can we create a good environment to foster transformative learning?

As educators and managers, what I can do is help create the best experience students go through, because what is most important is this experience students have during their time in education. You have four years to provide them with the best experiences in order to transform them and encourage them to be open-minded, and think about the common good rather than solely the individual good. It's the responsibility of the students, of course, but I believe educators have a huge responsibility themselves.

Andi: *Okay, so how do you implement sustainable education in your life and in your position as a researcher?*

Janette: I try to make my life more sustainable at home. I try to make the way I educate my son more sustainable and the way I live in this world. And, I try to see my own contradictions, because when you look to personal experience, it's hard, because it should lead me to not use my car and not buy so much. And it's not easy. But, this is the way it is. It's not easy, and it is full of contradiction. But beyond the contradiction, I'm trying to improve and think about how my life can be more sustainable. The reason people's work is unsustainable now, and sometimes the pressure we live with, results in unsustainable choices, and sometimes I can't avoid that. But, what can I do, at least, is reflect on my choices in order to change.

I, along with the professors working alongside me, are trying to make students go through this construction process to create something new. For instance, we have been measuring strategic management discipline. You start with the classical definition and classical way approach model of strategic management—competition-oriented, profit-oriented, and completion dynamics, etc.—and piece by piece, you are showing the students that it is not that simple. You say to them, "I know you are used to this theory, but now we have to think about the environment, society development, and economic rationality. And sometimes the students got very lost in the process. They may react something like, "Oh my gosh! I was taught I had to work just for profit, and you are saying no." You have to incorporate organizational complexity, tensions,

contradictions, and paradoxes. And now that we have discussed these contradictions and paradoxes, what can we do? We tried to reconstruct it. We can think not just in competition, but in cooperation. Competition and cooperation—co-petition—a new word! In organizational sustainability, one has to ask, "Oh, how can I do this?" They have to think in stakeholder theory; they have to think in cooperate social responsibility. Educators have to give tools to the students and think about everything that makes from another perspective. It's a trajectory; I have to deconstruct and reconstruct. I have to think this theory and go further and complicate it a little bit, and think of other issues, too. We are trying to implement this in various courses. And, personally, I'm trying to involve my graduate students from master and doctorate programs to engage in research about transformative learning for sustainability in business and in the business school environment: researching, discussing what literature has said about this, watching lectures, video analysis, and everything that helps us to question the unsustainable world and the responsibility of managers in it.

Jacie: *So, outside of academia, how do you believe organizations and professionals should practice transformative learning, and do you see a value in that?*

Janette: I think the organizational world is very tough; there's not enough space to reflect. And there are a lot of rules and a lot of processes—you try to control, control people, control time, and control other things. I think we need to create space to reflect. When you create space to reflect, you allow new beginnings. And transformative learning is about new beginnings—the opportunity to start something new, to think new, to act new, to develop another role in society. Should the organization create that space? People in organizations fear saying what they think because they feel more pressure. They could be fired. There are a lot of consequences, and people are not always interested in change. So, there is a lot of tension and pressure that tries to make business go on as it is. And even when there are efforts to transform it, it doesn't necessarily mean critical transformation. Sometimes it means instrumental transformation where you do something better, but you don't do things differently—this is the paradigmatic shift that we need, especially when talking about transformative learning. Even when you create spaces in the organization to reflect, it's a very controlled space because the organization can't take the transformation so far out of the control. So, there is a lot of tension in an organization, much more than in the university, because in the academic environment, you tend to have more free discussion. There is not as much play, so you don't lose much, but I think if we don't start making space for people to question things and construct new beginnings, we will not foster anything new.

Andi: *What do you think the future holds for transformative learning?*

Janette: I think we are going to see more of the interdisciplinary approach to transformative learning because it's so hard to understand what makes students, or people in general, transform. You could see it through the lens of philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, or education, and you need all these combinations/fields to try to understand what makes people transform. And I see more integrative and interdisciplinary studies. It is not easy to build. Second (I've been working in this area now), I wish the

transformation theory would go toward the direction of thinking, not only about individual transformation, but about collective transformation. I'm not just concerned with how individuals can transform, but how we can face collective dilemmas to transform and address social issues. The third thing, I'm seeing transformative learning put effort in is building tools or instruments to help us evaluate transformative learning, because the qualitative way we are evaluating is not always enough. And the quantitative way we are measuring, even less. So, I think in the future, these discussions will have more strengths: evaluation, collective dilemmas, and interdisciplinary approaches.

Jacie: *I believe we are at the end!*

Andi: *Is there anything else you would like to add?*

Janette: I would like to mention one thing I've been studying recently. I think it further addresses the question you asked me, about how to foster transformative learning. I forgot to mention that we have to organize based on Vincent's and Reynold's theory about organization and reflection (2009). There is a need for transformative learning through the organization of reflection in education. But, how do we create an environment that fosters reflection? It's not just about what professors do; it's about how I do it organizationally—how I create process, spaces of reflection, discussion, an exchanging of experiences between professors and between students, what worked and what didn't. I think there's an organizational subject that hasn't been considered enough. I also think there's a learning curve for the universities to transform themselves, and think how, organizationally, they are able to foster reflection—from the staff, to the students, to the environment beyond.

Andi: *Well, I think that is the end of it. Thank you!*

Jacie: *Yes, thank you!*

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Practice Makes Deeper? Regular Reflective Writing During Engineering Internships

MIA MINNES
University of California, San Diego

JOHN MAYBERRY
University of the Pacific

MELISSA SOTO
San Diego State University

JACE HARGIS
University of California, San Diego

Abstract

Does regular reflective writing enhance engineering students' capacity to be reflective professionals? This study explores whether writing and sharing weekly reflections throughout a summer internship can transform the way engineering students' think about their work in a way that connects it more profoundly with their academic studies. A quasi-experimental mixed methods design is used with a sample size of 60 participants over two years. Using the AAC&U's Integrative Learning rubric, we find statistically significant improvement in the quality and depth of students' written reflection at the end of a summer internship enriched with regular writing. In their writing, students find explicit concrete and abstract connections between their studies and the internship work they do, drawing lessons from it and re-conceptualizing their role as both students and engineers. The reflections facilitate transformative learning during the internship experiences, guiding students in their professional development.

Keywords: written reflection, metacognition, transformative writing, professional preparation, internship

Author's Note: Dr. Minnes is an Assistant Teaching Professor in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering at the University of California, San Diego. Dr. Mayberry is currently an Associate Professor of Mathematics at the University of the Pacific. Dr. Soto is currently an Assistant Professor of Mathematics Education specializing in Cognitively Guided Instruction of mathematical thinking. Dr. Hargis currently assists faculty as the Director of the Center for Engaged Teaching at the University of California, San Diego.

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Introduction

Successful engineers integrate skills from multiple disciplines to formulate and implement solutions to novel problems. A central learning objective of engineering education is for the academic foundations our students learn on campus to serve them well in their profession. One context in which engineering students start to transfer their studies into practice is the summer internship. In these apprentice-like positions, engineering students perform tasks expected of a working professional under the supervision and mentorship of full-time employees at the company. At times, however, students report feeling a disconnect between their projects in industry and their studies on campus. This research studies an effort to make the connections between these contexts explicit, hopefully transforming students' experiences and learning in both.

The setting is a course taught by the primary author to students participating in summer-long internships. The students work in engineering teams on projects related to computer science and engineering. The course (cseweb.ucsd.edu/~minnes/cse197/index.html) asks students to engage in transformative learning: through journaling and regular written reflections, students make meaning of their experiences both in their coursework and on the job. They reflect on the growth of their professional, problem-solving, and technical skills. The written reflections are shared with classmates on an online discussion board each week and are read and commented on by group members. While the instructor stipulates certain key topics that must be included in each weekly post, no evaluation of the writing is given throughout the summer. Nonetheless, in this study we observed significant average improvement in the quality and depth of integrative learning exhibited in the writing over the summer internship.

Research Question

To what extent does the writing of students transform over a summer internship experience, and does this change demonstrate a deeper sense of connection between on-the-job experiences and academic studies?

Related Work

This literature review will focus on the primary aspects of this study: transformative and integrative learning, written reflections, metacognition, and internships.

Transformative and Integrative Learning

Schunk (1996) argues that the primary criterion for learning is a change in the capacity for behavior due to experience. Clark (1993) defines transformational learning as learning that encourages extensive change in the learner, especially experiences which fundamentally shape the learner's perspective and create a lasting effect on their future experiences and actions. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) defines integrative learning as "an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus" (AAC&U, 2016). Combining these, we study the integrative learning that is prompted in the real-world

experiences student confront during internships, that then spur the critical reflection underpinning transformational learning.

Regular Reflective Writing Practice

The concept of practice, especially when aligned well with an authentic desired task, requires more than simple repetition to achieve deeper, more sustainable coding of information in a usable form (Eichenbaum, Yonelinas, & Ranganath, 2007). The ability to offer frequent opportunities for learners to engage in twenty-first century skills such as to critically think, collaborate, and communicate (written and verbally) are key to determining their true abilities to function in their professional career (Siemens, 2004). Mechanisms that can enhance a student's ability to model behaviors that parallel their industry expectations include self-talk and reflective writing. Reflective writing can lead to communicative learning, where new experiences are made sense of and interpreted in more familiar contexts (Mezirow, 1990). In addition, the process of writing, reading, rewriting, and reviewing others' writing forms the foundation for building metacognitive skills (Hennessey, 1999).

Metacognition

In its simplest form, metacognition is "thinking about thinking" (Flavell, 1979). In a deeper form, metacognition is a process used to plan, monitor, and assess one's understanding and performance. Metacognition includes a critical awareness of a) one's thinking and learning and b) oneself as a thinker and learner (Baker & Brown, 1984). The ability to consciously pause and examine the process of thinking, especially thinking about particular concepts that may not make sense, is an extremely valuable skill set. Metacognitive skills are teachable skills (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). To develop these skills, learners should be provided opportunities to reflect, direct their thoughts through appropriate prompts, document (verbally and/or in writing) these thoughts, and have a mechanism for accountability (Zohar & Adi, 2009). Often this process occurs through written communication. When a highly metacognitive environment is created, learners are more likely to be able to reflect upon their thoughts, analyze, and detect if and how well they can apply and synthesize conceptual frameworks.

Internship

Providing authentic experiences in the form of internships can allow learners the ability and context to make the connections between their discipline content knowledge and how they will be expected to translate that knowledge for client usability. A successful internship program will allow the learner to engage in authentic low-stakes risk, while providing a true sense of the activities which they will ultimately encounter when they officially enter the profession (D'Abate, Youndt, & Wenzel, 2009). A delicate balance of sufficient responsibilities, with associated stress and anxiety, coupled with supportive mentors, supervisors, and instructors of record creates the best ingredients for a productive internship experience (Rothman, 2003). The interplay between sufficient real-world experience (real deadlines with real deliverables) and methods to assess the learners' results using well-aligned criteria and expectations is both challenging and essential for success (Jackson & Jackson, 2009). Setting the stage for expectations to transition the learner between the classroom environment and the workplace

environment is key. An overburden on one or the other can result in misunderstandings in both environments. Clearly articulated and measured expectations are the most effective manner with which to provide the learner the tools needed to transform and adapt the theoretical constructs into application (Narayanan, Olk, & Fukami, 2010). Incorporating foundational learning theories such as information processing, metacognition, and self-regulated learning into an informal learning environment will capitalize on what we empirically know about how we learn (Wilson, Iverson, & Chrastil, 2001).

Methods

This study compares the extent of integrative learning demonstrated in students' work at the beginning and at the end of summer internships. The study design is a mixed method quasi-experimental pre-assessment/post-assessment, with qualitative analysis informing quantitative results.

Participants

This study was conducted in the Computer Science and Engineering department of a public research-intensive university in North America. Participants were drawn from students in a companion course for summer internships. The internships are competitive: students typically apply months in advance for these paid, full-time, temporary, on-site apprenticeship-like positions. Students must have an internship offer "in hand" before enrolling in the course. The course activities last throughout the duration of the internship experience (between eight and fourteen weeks) and include daily journaling, weekly written reflections shared with peers, and ongoing discussions. While many students participate in multiple internships during their undergraduate program, students may only enroll in this course once. Therefore, while students in this course range from freshmen to seniors, none have previous exposure to the regular written reflections and discussions of their internship experience.

The pool of possible participants for this study consisted of students taking this course in two consecutive years. In the summer of 2014, this was a group of 100 students working at over 60 companies; and in the summer of 2015, 202 students working at over 100 companies participated. The university's institutional review board (IRB) certified this research exempt from review under category 4.

Data Collection

The collection of written reflections from both years' cohorts of students was anonymized and then made available "off the shelf" for research purposes at the completion of the summer 2015 internships (per the IRB requirements). Sampling from the subset of students whose internships were at least nine weeks long, 30 study participants were randomly selected for each of the two years studied. The random sample was found to have similar gender distribution to the overall class (roughly 80-85% male, 20-15% female). All information was numerically coded by randomly assigned user IDs, and confidentiality was maintained to the extent stated and required. The reflections from week 2 and week 9 for each selected participant formed the collection of anonymized writing samples.

Data Analysis Instrument

The AAC&U Integrative Value rubric was used to assess each of the writing samples. The AAC&U (2016) describe the rubric as "intended for institutional-level use in discussing student learning, not for grading," which matches the objective for this study. The rubric attributes are as follows:

1. Connections to Experience: Connects relevant experience and academic knowledge
2. Connections to Discipline: Sees (makes) connections across disciplines, perspectives
3. Transfer: Adapts and applies skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies gained in one situation to new situations
4. Integrated Communication
5. Reflection and Self-Assessment: Demonstrates a developing sense of self as a learner, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts (may be evident in self-assessment, reflective, or creative work)

The gradations for the rubric range from the highest level of Capstone (4) to Milestone (3 or 2) to the low of Benchmark (1). A zero score may also be applied, in cases where the learner did not display any of the noted characteristics.

Procedures

Beginning around March before each summer, students who had been hired by companies for summer internships began enrolling in CSE 197, the course associated with this study. As part of the enrollment process, students discussed their participation in this course with their company managers and/or supervisors and received permission to share their written reflections on the internship experience for the class.

Each participating student committed to daily journaling and weekly reflection throughout their summer internships. The weekly reflections described their activities over each week, including technical contributions (problems, frustrations, surprises, successes, key moments), and ethical and professional dilemmas, conversations, and insights. Students were also expected to analyze what they applied from their on-campus work in their internship, and the differences they observed between their academic studies and the internship. In addition, the course instructor (the primary author) picked a theme for students to reflect on each week. For example, the week 2 theme in Summer 2015 was "Real World Problems":

> What differences arise when working on real world problems in the internship as compared to assignments in your courses? What are your areas of strength and weakness in working on the real world problems presented by your internship? Can you use your strengths from your coursework [on campus] to help the problem-solving process?

The instructor assigned students to groups of 10 to 15, typically with similar internships (common start dates or durations, or common sectors within the computer science discipline). Group members read and commented on each other's weekly reflections and sometimes engaged in follow-up discussions.

To accommodate the diverse locations of the summer internships, all weekly reflections and intra-group conversations were hosted on an online discussion forum (Piazza). Piazza is commonly used at this school to facilitate group discussion for courses. Many CSE 197 students were already familiar with its features. Students accessed Piazza via their own mobile devices and computers equipped with Internet access. The user interface is similar to a mail client like Outlook: each student can start a new post (reflection, note, question); other students can browse through all notes; readers can give feedback using comments, follow-up discussions, links, questions, and polls; search functions allow retrieval of relevant content. These features supported group-wide discussion during the summer. However, before data analysis, information identifying the author, internship company, and date of each post was removed. This ensured anonymity of the author as well as mitigated any possible bias stemming from the researchers who analyzed the quality of the writing knowing whether the reflection was written early in the summer or later.

Ultimately, 30 participants were selected from each of year 2014 and 2015, and two artifacts (week 2 and week 9) were used for each, producing 120 data points. The artifacts were anonymized and then reviewed and evaluated by two faculty members (the third and fourth authors) clinically trained on the AAC&U rubric. To calibrate the application of the rubric, the two reviewers examined 10 artifacts, then checked on agreement. If they were within 1 point (on a 0 to 4-point scale), they proceed to review. If they disagreed on any of the initial 10 by more than 1 point, they discussed their operational definitions of the rubric attributes and reviewed another 10. For the study, the reviewers agreed on eight of the first 10 by less than 1 point. They discussed, agreed on a value, then proceeded to another 10, where they reviewed, and were within 1 point. They then continued to review year 2015, reviewed and agreed on all except one, which was discussed. They then reviewed year 2014 in a similar fashion resulting in 95% agreement within 1 point. They discussed and ultimately agreed on all items within 1 point. To inform the quantitative analysis, the reviewers also made notes of common themes and selected writing samples that illustrated them.

Data Analysis

Sixty student artifacts (30 from week 1 and 30 from week 9) from each of the two years (2014 and 2015) were randomly selected for analysis, for a total of 120 data points. Responses were scored independently by two professionals trained in the use of the AAC&U Integrative Value rubric in the five sub-items of Connections to Experience (E), Connections with Discipline (D), Transfer (T), Integrated Communication (I), and Reflections & Self-Assessment (R). Scores obtained by the researchers exhibited strong agreement and differing responses were averaged to give each reflection a score for each of the five categories. Scores on the five items were then added together to give each student a combined overall score for each writing sample. The early (Week 2) writing sample gave a pre-score and the later (Week 9) writing sample gave a post-score. A matched pairs t-test was used to determine if the average combined post-score of all students was significantly different from the average combined pre-score. Subsequent post-hoc matched pairs t-tests were then performed for each of the five sub-items using Holm's method to adjust for multiple comparisons. Results were considered statistically significant if the resulting (two-sided) p-values were less than 0.05.

Results

On average, students improved in all five sub-items and exhibited a significant overall mean improvement of almost 1 whole point:

$$\bar{x} = 0.967, SE = 0.375, t_{60} = 2.580, p = 0.012$$

Furthermore, almost three-fifths (58%) of all students showed a positive overall gain (Median = 1.000, 75th Percentile = 3.125).

The mean improvement differed between 2014 and 2015. The mean overall improvement in 2015 was almost twice as large as the improvement in 2014, but the difference was not statistically significant because of the large amount of variability in improvement scores:

$$\bar{x}_{2014} = 0.667, \bar{x}_{2015} = 1.267, t_{58} = 0.798, p = 0.428$$

Looking at the five individual sub-items, we can see that Connections with Experience exhibited the largest increase in score and was the only sub-item which demonstrated significant improvement (Table 1). While only one sub-item showed significant improvement across all students, the overall gain was significant; in other words, students' writing was improving, just not necessarily in the same way.

Table 1

Results of hypothesis tests for non-zero mean improvements in each sub-item

Sub-Item	Mean Improve	SE	t	p-value (adj)
E	0.267	0.088	3.044	0.018
D	0.192	0.086	2.234	0.117
T	0.183	0.098	1.871	0.148
I	0.117	0.077	1.526	0.148
R	0.208	0.104	2.007	0.148

Note: The p-values were adjusted for multiple-comparisons using Holm's Method

A box-plot is used (Figure 1) to analyze the mean and outlier distribution of score improvements for each year. The lines in the middle of each box represent the medians of each variable while the upper and lower edges are the 25th and 75th percentile, respectively. In 2014, the majority of scores show overall improvement, but the median improvements for each sub-item were close to 0. This means that there was no uniform improvement across a particular sub-item; students improved, but not necessarily across the same dimensions. In contrast, 2015 yielded positive median improvements for all five sub-items.

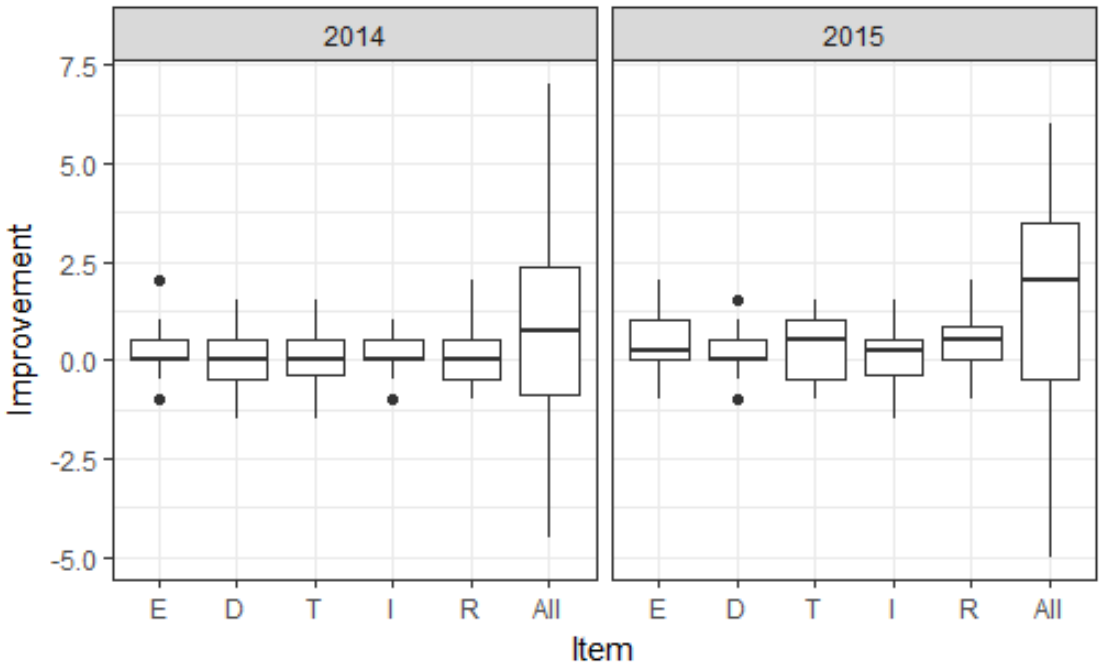

Figure 1. Box-plot comparing improvements for each sub-item and overall, for each year studied

As an example of the calibration of the rubric, here's a complete (anonymized) reflection from week 2 (2014 student # 212t):

> Description:
> This last week, I had my 1:1 meeting with my host to finalize milestones and communicate any concerns I had with the project. I also had lunch with different members on the team, and attended a few of the all hands meetings. Overall, I've been getting up to date on various projects on our team in addition to my own. I spent a majority of the week trying to understand previous code given for my project. I'm hoping I can submit a few code reviews this week, preferably two.
>
> Also, my host won't be here for the next two weeks. She will be on vacation so I'll have to figure out how to keep up progress in the meantime she is not there. She also didn't set specific expectations of me in the time she is gone so I'll probably shoot her an e-mail asking her explicitly. It's a bit concerning, but I think that I'm in good hands with the team so I hope they will be helpful in crafting the technical detail. Moreover, my team's manager recently passed away so it really left a somber atmosphere in the office. I'm still excited to be there and am glad that the team is excited to see what I complete in my internship. The team has been extremely friendly and supportive. One of the rather fun moments of this week was when the VP of […] gave an interview in which he shared career advice. He had powerful and simple things to share, which I share below.
>
> Analysis:
> I've learned that communication is key. No matter what, honest and frequent conversations with my host and team members will help me grow here. It's my favorite part about going to the office really. This communication is largely missing from the

> university curriculum. It's one my semi-strengths luckily, and makes up for some of my technical ability. Yet, I notice that not all interns are as capable of communicating their ideas compared to their incredible technical skills.
>
> So far, I've applied my ability to trace code and formulate a class structure, most of which I honed in my [on campus] classes. Yet, the difference is large. Logic is simple and one-directional in college while most of the code I encounter here has many pieces coming together at once. Different architectures and frameworks all used in one place, and it can be a little bit difficult to follow. My biggest challenge right now is completing something specific each day. I'm in the exploration stage so a few days, I didn't complete much other than understand my project a little bit more. It'll take time, but I plan on setting specific goals each day the night before from now on. I think that will really help in my productivity. Talking about productivity, I'll also have to take a 2:00 p.m. nap each day, otherwise, my productivity just goes down the drain at that time.

The same student's complete (anonymized) reflection from week 9 is:

> Description:
> This week, I've been preparing for my product interviews coming up. It has strongly impacted the way I think, what I think about, and my understanding of my own project. Questions cover topics like design an alarm clock for blind people, estimate the servers you would need for a photo messaging service, etc. And in preparation for these questions, I've begun reading Techcrunch, Wired, Hackernews, etc. I've started seeing products and companies in a completely different light. Take for instance, the current PR fuss at Amazon. In summary, a reporter collected opinions from 100 pre-selected employees about their work culture, and used their testimonies to completely berate the work atmosphere there. Though clearly an exaggeration, it brings up the topic of how important a work culture is to development. Tech companies are hailed as the best places to work because of their perks, while for instance, hospitals ironically serve really bad hospital food and lack exercise facilities.
>
> Analysis:
> So the question is how I want my professional work to affect others around me. I'd break down it into a few specific areas: 1) facilitate 2) cure 3) grow. Technology has often made life a little bit easier. I think that is the constant trend in nearly all products—they make life easier, even if just a bit. Then, you have ideas that try to change the world—save humanity. This is where I'd like to be. Solving problems that people never imagined technology could solve (life sciences, death). Then you have products that help humanity grow, that help us understand one another and ourselves better. So, Medium as a storytelling platform helps share people's stories, and personal assistants i.e. Siri, Now-ish provide insight into ourselves that even we didn't know.
>
> I'm very excited about the potential of technology to change the world. Just think about it. Five, ten years from now, the world will not be the same. The internet will have completely changed. Companies like Tesla claim that autonomous driving cars will be

> out by then. Homes are becoming a place of technology, with smart thermostats. Virtual reality is the next big wave of excitement. What's next!

These reflections were scored:

Table 2

	Week 2	Week 9
Connections to Experience	1.5	3.5
Connections to Discipline	1.5	2.5
Transfer	1.5	2.5
Integrated Communication	2	2.5
Reflection and Self Assessment	2	3.5
Total	8.5	14.5

Discussion

Even though there was no active coaching on reflection or writing skills over the summer, the data shows improvement in these skills. The immersive internship experience, including mentorship and feedback from internship supervisors, reading and writing of technical documentation, and personal maturation may have played a role in facilitating students' transformative learning. In many of the student responses, later written reflections exhibited greater connections to experience and an overall improvement in integrating and synthesizing their learning.

Transformative Learning and Metacognition

The student reflections gave glimpses into attitudes, perspectives, and insights that students may not otherwise have the opportunity to articulate and share because they do not fit naturally into the standard undergraduate computer science curriculum. The open-ended prompts allowed students to integrate their experiences in the workplace and reflect them back to their academic goals and future careers. This was a catalyst for transformative learning, wherein some students described the development of their professional and personal perspective. One student wrote:

> I grew this week by just realizing something. It is too early in my career to decide on a specialization, like networking or computer vision . . . I remember that famous quote about known knowns, known unknowns, and unknown unknowns. I need to eliminate my unknown unknowns, the stuff that I don't know that I don't know (2014 Student # 212t, week 9).

One of the weekly prompts asked students to assess their work's impact on society: "How would you like your work and professional activities to impact the world around you?" This prompt led to reflections that challenged students' preconceptions and invited them to dig deeper. Many students wrote about wanting to make a difference in the lives of the consumers of the products they were building. Others discussed the value they could bring their company through strategic recruiting suggestions or helping other engineers do their jobs more efficiently. Some, especially those working in companies in the defense or health sectors, talked about

ethical consideration of the impact their work could have on society. This prompt also elicited some of the more revealing posts, with some students sharing personal dilemmas about how they can (or should) make a difference in the world.

> I would like to help make people's lives easier/more efficient in some way, preferably doing something more meaningful than enabling speedier food delivery or writing boring corporate software. Besides my colleagues having their days endlessly greatened by my cherubic presence, the company having to pay an intern, the subways and trains being subjected to a large white man twice a day, and a midtown sandwich shop line being made one person longer I cannot think of any real ways in which my job affects the world aside from the products I am building. The product I am building, however, will directly influence millions of lives, helping patients receive better, more attentive and thorough care, being able to reduce their healthcare bills, and of course, helping save our company tons of money in government fines . . . (2015 Student # 04qc, week 9).

> But really, I feel like my work isn't as big as I'd like it to be . . . I like the idea of doing something that feels important, even if only a small way, as long as I can witness the kind of effect it has on a community of people . . . I suppose that everyone wants to feel important, like they mean something. . . . [I]t is still important for one to feel as if they at least have *some* ambition in life, otherwise they wouldn't really be living; they'd just be, like, a blob of human jelly staring blankly at a TV screen eating copious amounts of ice cream. I mean that's just fine, I do that on certain nights, but… well, yeah (2015 Student # 64qm, week 9).

Connections between Academic and Internship Learning

The sub-item of the Integrative Learning rubric that saw the most improvement was "Connections to Experience." Student reflections over the summer ranged from the "Benchmark" level ("Identifies connections between life experiences and those academic texts and ideas perceived as similar and related to own interests") to the "High Milestone" ("Effectively selects and develops examples of life experiences, drawn from a variety of contexts . . . to illuminate concepts/theories/frameworks of fields of study"). Since internships serve as apprenticeships to facilitate the transition between university studies and professional life, it is not surprising that reflecting on these experiences could increase students' appreciation of the connection between their studies and future careers.

Some students interpreted the academic context very narrowly. They identified concrete links between on-campus opportunities and finding "real-world" work, for example the on-campus recruiting fairs, the social network of students and alumni (especially when the alumni become recruiters for companies), and the industry connections of instructors who can recommend a student for an internship positions. Students realized that they used concepts (programming languages, software engineering principles) from specific courses in their internship projects. Some students recognized that the emphasis on strict coding style and documentation on campus makes sense after their experience with industry practices. Indeed, some wistfully wished that the coders who had developed their company's large codebase had followed these academic guidelines for readability and extensibility.

Several students wrote about learning *how to learn*. For example, 2014 Student # 64nu

(week 2), "I applied the skill of absorbing knowledge at a quick pace that I honed [at university] to this week's work because there was constantly more information to be absorbed about the databases, about the analysis as well as SQL." Others wrote about the importance of *iterating and refining*, "Something that was applied that I learned from my classes was refactoring. Refactoring and constantly refining the elements of your code is important because it's like revising a paper, the first draft isn't always that good" (2014 Student # r2is, week 2). These metacognitive skills often appear in the learning objectives of courses and curricular but may be hard to measure and assess authentically in the academic setting. The students' written reflections demonstrate that this learning is indeed happening.

In both the quantitative results and the writing samples that support it, we see a positive answer to the research question: regular reflective writing exhibits transformative learning associated with internship experiences, and in particular, demonstrates students' increased appreciation for the connections between the academic and non-academic learning contexts.

Possible Limitations and Further Work

The overall mean improvement was found to be larger in the second year for which data was collected (2015 rather than 2014). Some of this may be attributed to increased awareness among the student population of the value of reflective writing due to the first student cohort's experiences. In addition, some of the instructions and prompts for the course were refined between the two years. For example, the general format for weekly reflections for 2015 included a prompt for students to discuss issues related to "Ethical and professional: Dilemmas, conversations, insights." It may be that this framing invited students to dig deeper into the connections between the academic and the professional contexts. In future work, additional analysis into the relationship between the prompts and student writing will be done. In particular, is there a correlation between the extent to which students specifically address the given prompt and the extent of their transformative learning over the summer? Would prompts focusing on resiliency in the workplace, debriefing failures and missteps, and explicitly referencing co-curricular components of the academic context lead to even more integrative learning over the summer?

In informal conversations with students following their summer internships, some suggested that the platform for written reflections offered a supportive community from which they could draw encouragement and self-affirmation. Future work will explore the extent to which students give peer feedback on their group members' reflections, and the effect of this feedback. Moreover, different group models may be explored: is it helpful to have large, diverse groups so students are exposed to multiple perspectives? Do students in small groups develop closer relationships and are able to mentor each other more effectively?

Feedback from the instructor or from more experienced students may help students dig deeper in their writing. Students can explicitly be encouraged to explore more abstract connections between their internship experiences and their education to date. They can be invited to link multiple approaches and perspectives in forming their professional self-image, especially when challenges arise in their internships. Does a more active discussion facilitator lead to greater gains in depth of writing? Can near-peer mentors achieve similar effects?

Within the cohort of students working through the course in a single year, there is significant variation. While each student is only allowed to enroll in the course once, students may choose to do so at any time during their academic program: in each cohort, students ranged

from freshmen to seniors, some working at their very first internship experience, while others returning to a company at which they'd worked for multiple years. Moreover, some students were working at large software firms with well-established internship programs (with significant institutional support and mentoring), while others were at start-ups or at other companies that had never hosted interns before. These variables may significantly change both the experience of the internship and the extent to which students are exposed to positive role models of reflection and written documentation.

Internal factors may affect students' reflective writing as well. The university at which this study occurs serves many English language learners, for which writing in English may pose specific challenges. Moreover, previous work has suggested that women may experience engineering internships very differently from men (Seron, Silbey, Cech, & Rubineau, 2016). While the data sampled for this study was calibrated to reflect the proportion of women in the program, future work will analyze any gender differences in the reported internship experiences and resulting reflections.

Conclusion

In this study, engineering students in summer Computer Science internships were invited to reflect weekly on their growth and professional development, and on the connections between their experiences on the job with their academic preparation. This regular reflection required students to express themselves in writing and enhanced the standard engineering curriculum. The written reflections showed measurable, significant improvement over time as indicators of integrative learning. Evidence of transformative learning that helped students conceptualize themselves as professionals was seen. This work suggests a space in the undergraduate engineering curriculum where authentic reflection can deepen core academic foundations and help build essential career skills. Future work will study the role of peer and instructor feedback on student writing, as well as variations across students from different demographics and backgrounds.

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Transformative Learning and Teaching: How Experienced Faculty Learned to Teach in the Online Environment

MICHELLE COLLAY
University of New England

Abstract

Emergent technologies and changing priorities in higher education are driving change in pedagogy and instructional practices in graduate education for professionals. How do instructors in an online doctoral program characterize their learning about designing and teaching courses in a fully online environment? This study documents participant perspectives within a program of support provided to experienced faculty moving into a fully online teaching environment. Cranton's (2002) facets of transformation structures were used to inform interview questions and to analyze faculty perspectives about their own development as online instructors. Findings suggest that reflection on practice, making meaning together, and sharing of expertise are essential for those navigating the unfamiliar landscape of online teaching and learning. While these early adopters developed and often taught courses online as independent contractors, they expressed appreciation for mentoring, technical support, and the emergence of a community of practice. Faculty sought dialogue with others who were doing the same work, developed coursework embracing the technology available, and worked independently, yet sought resources as needed and valued mentoring by knowledgeable others.

Keywords: faculty development, transformative learning

Introduction

When I was a brand-new Ph.D. teaching the 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. "after school" classes for working teachers and principals, a senior member of my college stated derisively, "If students can't devote themselves full-time to graduate education, I'm not teaching them." My, how times have changed! The economic realities of attracting and retaining "customers" require that educational institutions provide coursework that is responsive to students' academic and professional needs and personal schedules. In the Fall of 2014, 5.8 million students took some, or all, courses online (*On-line Report Card*, Babson Group, 2015). Faculty committed to providing a quality education to professionals, particularly those who work in the pressing conditions of under-served school districts, adult education, and other social services, have been reaching out to practitioners for generations, physically bringing coursework, professional development, and action research support to schools, districts, and agencies in rural and urban areas alike. However, technology now provides more efficient ways to extend that support. The challenge as

Author's Note: Dr. Michelle Collay is a Professor of Education in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of New England.

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faculty is to reframe *how* one teaches, not *whom* one teaches (Clark-Ibanez & Scott, 2008; Marek, 2009; Savery & Duffy, 2001). One way to understand how faculty respond to the changing demands of teaching in the online environment is by evaluating their capacity to learn in the language of Cranton's transformative learning theory. Faculty face an activating event of changed expectations for their role as instructors, they question their own experiences as teachers and learners, they need to be open to alternative viewpoints, engage in discourse, and, they take actions on transformed assumptions and beliefs (2002, p. 66).

Statement of the Problem

As more faculty choose to teach online, or are pressured to do so by heightened competition for students and the changing role of professional education, the emphasis on improving instruction has emerged in the online environment (Schifter, 2000). While the challenges of learning to teach well in higher education are greater than ever, incentive to do so is problematic and governance structures flawed (Hoyt & Oviatt, 2013; Mullenburg & Berge, 2009; Schifter, 2000; Visser, 2009). Lack of instructional support, limited institutional resources, and often marginalized online programming continue to limit those who do embrace distance education (Marek, 2009; Schifter, 2000). Professional development is even less available for adjunct or part-time faculty (Higgins & Harreveld, 2013).

A number of universities have established systematic approaches to course design, faculty mentoring, and program evaluation that has greatly improved opportunities for mid-career and experienced faculty to make the transition to online or distance education (Buckenmeyer, Hixon, Barczyk, & Feldman, 2013; Hodge, Schmidt, & Tschida, 2013; Tobin, 2004). Even with support in place, instructors teaching in a different mode may struggle to accommodate new approaches to instruction. While there is some attention to the affective responses of adult learners who are students in the online environment (Zembylas, 2008), research on faculty development primarily addresses instructional skill development. They, too, have conflicted responses to a changing work environment (Clark-Ibanez & Scott, 2008). Exploration of faculty perceptions of learning to teach online will provide greater understanding of the challenges of this professional transition.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to document faculty perceptions of learning to teach online as they moved to a fully online teaching environment. The need for quality online instruction is growing; recent studies indicate that about 25 to 30 percent of higher education students now take at least one online course (Straumshein, 2014). As faculty members from across the spectrum of instructional philosophies join the ranks of online instructors, each brings different assumptions about pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment. Whatever their practices in previous settings, they must now design instruction and assessment that is student-centered, efficient, and measurable. The learning curve is steep, and the cultural context of higher education is not the most responsive (Hodge, Schmidt, & Tschida, 2013)

Research Question

The guiding research question for this qualitative study was: How do instructors in an online doctoral program characterize learning to design and teach courses in a fully online environment? An analysis of their responses to interview questions about their experiences are presented within a "transformative learning" theory framework.

Relevant Literature

Research on faculty development for, and within, the online learning environment is growing (Dawson, Dana, Wolkenhauer, & Krell, 2013; Hixon, 2008; Meyer, 2014; McQuiggen, 2007) as portrayed in a plethora of studies about evolution of higher education programming. The transition from on-ground teaching to on-line teaching has re-focused attention on changing instructional practice, pedagogy, and faculty development approaches. Hixon suggests the need for further study of "general faculty characteristics, faculty's motivation, faculty's approach to instruction, team dynamics, resources and support available" (2008). This study considered the strategies and processes used by the core faculty of an online doctoral program to design or refine instruction for the online environment. Researchers, Meyer and Murrell (2015), published a review of theories that support faculty development of online teaching, which inform the conceptual framework of this study. The majority of studies they reviewed draw upon adult learning theory and transformative learning theory.

Faculty are both adult learners and designers of coursework for students. Poorly designed online pedagogy can reflect face-to-face "sit and get" or, "read, listen to lectures and be tested" approaches. Recommended practice for online course development and evaluation (Caladine, 2008; Moore & Kearsley, 2012; Tobin, 2004) places constructivist teaching and learning at the center: "Constructivist philosophy accommodates a family of closely related pedagogies, which optimize the potential of e-learning environments" (McDonald & Twining, 2002, p. 604). Wherever faculty place themselves on the continuum of teaching philosophy, developing online courses pushes instructors to revisit, balance, and weave together constructive, or transformative, approaches to providing professional learning. After three decades of hybrid and fully online course and program development, technology has improved and instructional practices have become more sophisticated (Moore, 2013). While faculty who began teaching before the Internet, and when few individuals had personal computers, are not the majority of instructors in any university, they are part of the teaching force and play an essential role in providing online programming. They confront changing roles in both their identity as faculty who may have little influence on the institution's decision to offer online instruction (Hoyt & Oviatt, 2013), and yet face heightened expectations to teach effectively in the online environment (De Gagne & Walters, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

The next section provides a brief theoretical framework that informs the structure of the study. The three areas addressed are: adult learning, transformative learning, and critical reflection.

Adult Learning

Adult learning theory is broad and increasingly divergent, and has evolved from the "assumptions" articulated by Knowles (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011) to current thinking about types of, and approaches to, adult learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). In this case study, adult professionals are challenged to reconcile decades of on-ground, or face-to-face, instruction within a different medium (Visser & Visser, 2000). Even the most skilled and dedicated instructors may find the transition away from known to unknown terrain a challenge.

The basic tenets of supporting successful adult learning or "andragogy" are based on the assumptions that the learner:

- Has an independent self-concept and who can direct own learning
- Has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a resource
- Has learning needs closely related to changing social roles
- Is problem-centered and interested in immediate application of knowledge
- Is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors (Knowles, 1984; Merriam & Bierema, 2014)

Additionally, adult learning in contemporary settings is evolving as the settings do. A study by Olson (2016) found that adult learning in innovative organizations required them to work in collaborative teams, to work with other agencies, and to solve problems that were not well formulated. These characteristics were less common in conventional university life, and are emblematic of the modernization of adult learning in the changing workplace and school environment (Conlan, Grabowski, & Smith, 2003; Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007).

Transformative Learning

Online instructors, as do any instructors, need to know about the content itself and how to engage with learners and the content, or what adult learning theorists call "informational" and "transformational" learning (Drago-Severson, 2012; Kegan, 2000). In this case, "informational learning" is what instructors need to know about the technology to teach in the online mode. The journey through the new landscape of online instruction requires adults to revisit attitudes and beliefs about "learning," and to accept (if not embrace) some level of discomfort. Transformative learning is a process through which adults might approach the complexities of new role expectations at work. Cranton (2002) provides this definition:

> At its core, transformative learning theory is elegantly simple. Through some event, which could be as traumatic as losing a job or as ordinary as an unexpected question, an individual becomes aware of holding a limited or distorted view. If the individual critically examines this view, opens herself to alternatives, and consequently changes the

> way she sees things, she has transformed some part of how she makes meaning out of the world.

Whether an early adopter or a reluctant recruit to teaching online, faculty members must navigate changing expectations of instructors.

Critical Reflection

One of the central characteristics of transformational learning is reflection, during which the learner interprets actions, or professional practice, by more fully examining underlying belief systems (Brown, 2004; Cranton, 1996; Mezirow, 1998). Instructors benefit from critical reflection as they learn new teaching approaches in higher education. Drawing on the work of Mezirow, Roessger (2014) describes the role of reflection in adult learning in the context of problem-solving:

> When learners critically reflect on assumptions in task-oriented problem-solving, they engage in *objective reframing*. Learners use *narrative critical reflection* to assess the validity of knowledge and skills and *action critical reflection* to examine the assumptions underlying how a problem is defined. Here, learners critically reflect on the content, process, or premise of the problem to increasingly adapt or modify skills and knowledge to immediate contexts (p. 325).

The online faculty learning framework described here draws on adult learning theory (Kegan, 2000), transformative teaching and learning (Cranton, 2002; Shields, 2010), and critical reflection (Brown, 2004; Mezirow, 1998; Roessger, 2014).

Faculty who teach in the evolving learning setting are professionals who need to muster former and current skills and experiences to enact instruction in the fully online environment. Faculty are, themselves, transforming their practice, and striving to provide transformative learning opportunities for their students, who are also mid-career and mature professionals. Critical reflection is a constant companion, as instructors who seek to establish excellent pedagogy are in regular dialogue with themselves and with peers following the same path (if they are fortunate). Not only do early adopters among the faculty need to reconcile their emergent identities in the online course setting, they must also navigate being outliers in communities of practice that may not yet see their work as legitimate (De Gagne & Walters, 2010).

Methodology

This is a case study of core instructors from one education department who implemented a new, fully online doctoral program in educational leadership. Team members were co-researchers in the tradition of Participatory Action Research (Grogan, Donaldson, & Simmons, 2007; McIntyre, 2008), reflecting on their own learning as they navigated course design and program development. Stevens-Long, Schapiro, & McClintock (2012) draw from social emancipatory transformative literature and present “praxis” within that tradition. The team members engaged in a cycle of praxis: a systematic curriculum mapping process using currently accepted practice (action), worked with the instructional technologist, and each other, to design and critique their courses (critical reflection), and engaged in regular, online communication

strategies (dialogue) to refine course design and complete implementation.

Through a process of critical reflection, team members revisited the tenets of transformative learning (Cranton, 2002; Mezirow, 1998), constructed curriculum (Jacobs & Johnson, 2009; Weiner, 2011), and fashioned assessment protocols (see Quality Matters, Stevens & Levi, 2005). Interview questions reflect assumptions outlined in "auto-ethnography" (Holt, 2003; Reed-Danahay, 1997), an approach to critical reflection in which individuals describe their relationships to the larger culture. In this case, they are making sense of a personal, and often, unexplored part of professional work within a community of practice and in relation to a rapidly evolving curriculum delivery system.

Cranton's (2002) facets of transformation were used to create an interview protocol and to analyze responses to a set of interviews. Her facets include:

• An activating event that typically exposes a discrepancy between what a person has always assumed to be true and what has just been experienced, heard, or read;

• Articulating assumptions, that is, recognizing underlying assumptions that have been uncritically assimilated and are largely unconscious;

• Critical self-reflection, that is, questioning and examining assumptions in terms of where they came from, the consequences of holding them, and why they are important;

• Being open to alternative viewpoints;

• Engaging in discourse where evidence is weighed, arguments assessed, alternative perspectives explored, and knowledge constructed by consensus;

• Revising assumptions and perspectives to make them more open and better justified

• Acting on revisions, behaving, talking, and thinking in a way that is congruent with transformed assumptions or perspectives.

The initial phase of the faculty development dimension of program evaluation focused on individual faculty perceptions about learning to teach online.

Sources of Evidence

This case study used individual faculty interviews to document their experiences about learning to teach online. The case includes eight instructors, ranging from full-time, department-based instructors, to part-time adjunct faculty. The group includes proficient, very experienced online instructors, and those early in the process of teaching in a fully online setting. Six of the eight are former teachers and teacher educators; two of the eight are a nursing educator and a business educator. They ranged in age from mid-30's to early-70's—seven of eight are women. The findings were first documented in a research paper presented at a regional conference (Collay, 2013).

Table 1 *Participants by Role and Course Designed*

Participant (pseudonyms)	Role in Program	Course Designed
Olga*	EdD Instructor	Qualitative Methods
Yolanda	EdD instructor	Literature Review
Carl	EdD Instructor, Founding Program Designer	Change Management (org theory)
Linda	EdD Instructor	Literature Review
Annabel	EdD Instructor	Policy Analysis
Molly	EdD Instructor	Preparation for Transformative Leadership Managing Change 2 (org theory)
Rita	MSEd Instructor	Advised Research Team
Donna	MSEd Instructor	Advised Research Team

Note: Olga's interview was the pilot and text from her interview appears in an earlier paper.

Interview Protocol

The department-based case study provided a forum for faculty to share their individual experiences as professionals learning new modes of instruction. My dual role as program director and a co-designer of many of the courses in the sequence and researcher influences and potentially limits the candidness of responses. Reflecting the work of Coughlin and Brannick (2014), the dynamics of studying one's own organization were present, providing both opportunity and challenge. In discussion of role duality, they recommend the following approach to perspective-taking: in first-person, researchers question their own assumptions through self-awareness and reflection; in second-person, researchers engage in collaborative inquiry; in third-person, researchers link practice with theory (p. 135).

All current faculty teaching in the Ed.D were invited to interview and were provided with an overview of the study. Faculty agreed to participate via email response. Following the interviews, participants were emailed a transcript of the notes taken, or interview transcripts for a member check. All of those invited agreed to participate. Interviews were conducted in the following two ways: (1) recordings were made using electronic meeting technology; (2) typed notes were collected from telephone or face-to-face interviews. Participants were emailed an one-page description of the study, interview questions, and information about the potential use of the data. A research proposal was filed with the institution's IRB and was approved.

The protocol followed for data analysis was the following: After member-check, transcripts were reviewed and responses to the interview questions were placed in a table. First, each transcript was reviewed and coded for content that addressed the questions. Responses from all interview transcripts were then analyzed against the Cranton facets and compared in a simple cross-case analysis. These two processes reflect recommendations by Creswell (2013) for identification of key concepts. Finally, the responses to "Questions we should be asking," was used inform "for further study" were documented for use in the final part of the paper.

The presentation below is a synthesis of responses to the interview questions. This section is followed by observations about and analysis of common themes, and demonstrates the alignment of the findings with transformative learning theory. Finally, conclusions and implications are addressed.

What is the name of the course you first designed? What compelled you to consider designing this course (in a distance or online mode)? The majority of the participants started out teaching courses for teachers completing licensure or master's degrees. Courses included Action Research, content area courses (history), adult education, leadership and introduction to teaching types of courses. In almost every case, instructors were asked to teach in an online setting by their administration to provide coursework for students to complete degree or licensure programs. Linda described her agency's decision to create online courses for rural teacher education candidates who could not otherwise enroll in coursework. "A lot of districts down there are very rural, a lot of the teachers have lived there their whole lives." In describing early master's degree completers, Carl said, "They were being pressured by their districts to get the advanced degree." Molly described a university-based graduate program that the department decided to offer as a hybrid, where the instructor would drive to different regional centers and teach the other centers via "polycam" or video technology. "We were trying to expand our program, the department said, "'This is the direction we're going to go.'"

Most were compelled by their employer to create a specific course or training module, whereas a few chose to engage in the design process out of interest and a desire to reach learners who would otherwise be excluded from educational opportunities. Annabel was "a teaching assistant and my mentor brought me into the online teaching." Carl recalled that "Canter created the coursework and our institution's faculty would do course review and approval." Molly was an adjunct faculty member at Florida State University and her department was adopting distance education strategies to reach students in rural areas of the state.

Most participants did not begin their distance or non-face-to-face teaching in the current, Blackboard environment, but were early adopters of other distance education approaches. Olga described teaching via video camera from UH Manoa to the outer islands, and Molly taught teachers in regional centers around southern Florida using a similar technology. Rita began as a distance educator using "course in a box" materials that later evolved into web-based coursework. Carl reported a similar, non-web-based pathway in his role as administrator of a continuing education unit in a small college. "We started by using e-mail with [another university]." At the youngest end of the age continuum, Donna's first experience with distance education was in her doctoral program. As a new professor in teacher education, Donna stated, "the course was in my load." She picked up an existing course and "deleted everything and started from scratch."

While most participants were required by higher education administrators to move their instruction into the distance or web-based environment, they also reported being "early adopters" in previous settings. Rita described her role as assistant principal supporting teachers to move from paper to email daily announcements. Molly stated, "I wanted to provide resources for the non-profit I worked for." Annabel, an early adopter as a student in a nursing master's degree program, and said, "When I was an online student, I fell in love with it!" Yolanda, a non-education instructor, worked as an assistant director in an MBA program for career changers. She began her online instruction when "my supervisor asked me to take those courses (that others couldn't or wouldn't), and then I started teaching courses I wanted to teach." Olga agreed to create the course as a favor to me as program director. She responded, "Compelled me? Well, I'm retired and I probably would never have tried to do it if I were teaching full time. I thought it would be good to learn something new."

What formal training have you taken to learn about online course development? The eight instructors I interviewed had little or no formal training in online instruction when they started. Donna described "a doctoral seminar in online teaching, but it wasn't helpful. So, I had to learn on my own." Carl described "coming here and conducting course reviews of 'course in a box' materials. I began to see that some of these things weren't developed as well as they could be." As a founding member of our online team, Olga took a formal course, and recalled, "the Quality Matters course was tremendously helpful. It really helped me to get what online learning was really about and how it is different than face-to-face."

How would you characterize your learning to design an online course? Linda recalled a small team of instructors charged to create coursework for rural education students. "I developed courses as part of my day job—trial and error." Yolanda learned about course design by picking up existing courses. "I'm pretty good at it now. I know what I want, I can visualize it." Molly described her approach by stating, "I would say by reading. I didn't engage in workshops. I was engaged in technology as a classroom teacher, when I wanted to learn, I

Googled it." All participants described learning to teach online as an independent, self-directed effort. Donna recalled, "I had to learn on my own." Carl reported, "Most of my learning was ad hoc—learning by doing. Linda reflected that "really, it's been trial and error, finding things that worked, seeing if there were ways to make Blackboard work." Annabel, one of the most experienced instructors on several platforms, noted that, "a lot is OJT (On-the-Job Training)" and said she completed her master's degree fully online in 2001—definitely early days for online instruction. Most found themselves on their own as learners. Olga described:

> It's sort of like a jagged line. It just goes up and down and up and down and up and down. Sometimes I feel like, 'oh this is great, they're learning something, I'm reaching people from all over the country.' And other times, it's bombing, it's not going well at all. If I were to chart my course, it would have to be that really jagged line. I think it would go up, I mean, I am learning! How would I characterize my learning? Hit and miss!

Who/what was most helpful in supporting your learning? Rita described an "Ed tech (teacher's aide) in our school who was highly motivated and enthusiastic about supporting our staff. She showed me how to do things." Molly described "Seeking resources independently. In terms of designing courses, you have been helpful. Having conversations about the course, looking at how you've designed the groups, encouraging students to reach out (meet synchronously). Yolanda noted that "other faculty members were probably the biggest support," along with technology people at her former and current institution. In her day job, she trains mentors within a highly technical framework and uses a lot of web-based media. Donna said, "It was helpful spending time looking at Blackboard resources more generally. A lot of those things that were in these model courses, we don't do here. I'm picking it up as I go along." Carl stated, "My own experience as a teacher and administrator, went to conferences, workshops, gradually accumulated experience." Rita added, "The word that comes up right now is research, investigative work. I go online, I take the best examples and I put them together."

What are your next steps as a learner about online course development? Molly reported that she will "take additional courses, I'd like to go into the student mode. There are courses at (regional college), I'd like to learn how they generate those kind of materials. I will continue to read." Donna described going into the research, "Doing my own research within the courses is forcing me to dive into the literature. I try to improve each time." Annabel asked, "Where can I go from here? It seems so unimaginable! When my daughters go to college, what will it be like?" Rita is "undertaking a large course revision effort of five Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS) courses, top to bottom." She would like to see "department-level colleagues trading strategies." Linda stated, "I'd like to keep working on designing courses with someone who is a good mentor." Olga indicated, "Now I'm trying to spread out and try some new things I didn't have time to try last time." Rita summed it up this way: "It's great to sit there on the couch working out how to do things on your own, but it's also important to work with another person."

What questions should I ask moving forward? As the program evaluation framework is put into place, instructors continue to collaborate in program design, through course creation and refinement, assessment approaches, and improving instructional approaches. In the tradition of Participatory Action Research (PAR), they will also craft the next round of research on their own

learning. Participants were asked for additional questions that should be used in an interview or focus group. These will also inform our next steps within the department and future studies.

Molly: How are you enculturated into an online teaching experience? Where do you see the tensions between online and face to face teaching? How can we maintain each other as a resource and have the hard conversations?

Olga: What were supports and barriers to your learning?

Carl: How have your perceptions of your role as a teacher changed? Do you feel more or less valued as a teacher and mentor?

Linda: What do people like about it? I think there are some very different answers . . . I like to teach people all over the country and engage in dialogue with them.

The questions proposed by the participants who are members of this faculty team provide some insight into how they each made sense of their journey and what they experienced as transformed learners. As each reflects on the "supports and barriers" they encountered, the concepts of perspective-taking, perceptions about learning, and reconciling tensions between the two learning environments are evident in these reflections.

Reflections on Learning to Teach Online

Responses to the interview prompts were analyzed to illuminate common themes. In the next section, themes from the interview transcripts are presented with supporting excerpts from individual participants.

Improving instruction occurs much the same way as it does in face to face teaching. Participants used formal and informal feedback from students to improve course design and instruction. Donna noted that: "The goal was to have students research a topic and share some practical research with each other. They didn't really share, it was a poor assignment on my part." Carl stated that he "got a lot student feedback" in his journey toward course improvement. Annabel recalled her early years moving into online teaching, and noted, "We're all novices when we start something new. I might be an expert in some things, but not in others."

Online technology allows instructors to integrate student groups. Molly used the interactive technology to bring students together from different cultural perspectives. "I first imagined working via Blackboard to cross-pollinate between the cohorts. They are culturally very different. For example, the Ocala area is very rural, Fort Lauderdale is very urban, then there was the island nature of the Keys." Carl noted that, when he first began to modify 'course in a box' materials, he saw opportunities to improve instruction beyond the basic reading and writing format, and his current course design attends carefully to grouping. Rita described "looking at how you've designed the groups" as part of her design process.

Faculty made observations about why some colleagues were not moving into the online environment. Donna described her observations about non-adopters, guessing that "Fear, not being comfortable with their computer, always having problems, not comfortable with the technology" might prevent people from stepping into online teaching. "There are just faculty who absolutely believe you have to have face-to-face instruction." Rita reflected on her experience leading a grant for technology adoption by teachers, "If they could see technology as

a useful tool, they'd want to know more about it. There may not be somebody there to influence them, to take away that fear."

Faculty seek dialogue with others who are doing the same work. Linda described the importance of ongoing conversations with other faculty: "Most helpful was the dialogue. Being able to go back and forth, and say, 'what do you think of this, what do you think of that?'" Molly found that, "Having conversations about the course, looking at how you've designed the groups, encouraging students to reach out (to meet synchronously). Olga found dialogue with our IT (Instructional Technologist) very helpful. "You, your meetings with all the faculty so I could talk to the people that were going to come before me and after me, and also (IT support person). Those were all very helpful." Rita would like to see more "department level swapping."

Transforming Practice to Teach Online

The Cranton (2002) transformative learning facets guided the design of the study and the development of the interview questions. Responses reflect participants' meaning making in a new teaching environment and framed the analysis of individual reflections and self-dialogue. Transformative learning theory was a useful approach for faculty to examine assumptions about roles as instructors and learners in the fully online environment. In this section, the facets are presented with descriptions of faculty reflections on their learning.

An activating event that typically exposes a discrepancy between what a person has always assumed to be true and what has just been experienced, heard, or read. The primary activating event moving these faculty members into online teaching was being asked to create or convert on-ground coursework to the online environment. A rapidly changing higher education environment continues to pressure faculty into hybrid and fully online teaching, often with few resources or support. In this pilot study, instructors now choosing to teach in a fully online program described the role of early distance and online teaching experiences in their overall career as teachers. What participants assumed to be true was that students needed access to coursework and, as instructors in the field, they were able and willing to provide that access.

Articulating and revising assumptions, that is, recognizing underlying assumptions that have been uncritically assimilated and are largely unconscious. This group of faculty members has made the leap into the online environment. For the most part, they describe a continuum of learning about teaching that is an extension of their previous work experience in the "regular" classroom. They made observations about others who have been less comfortable moving into the on-line environment. While one participant noted he wished he had moved into the medium sooner, he and the others described learning to teach online as one more step in a longer journey of early adoption of technology. Building on previous experiences, however, did not diminish the challenges presented in the new medium.

Critical self-reflection, that is, questioning and examining assumptions in terms of where they came from, the consequences of holding them, and why they are important. The responses captured in this pilot study indicate that these instructors treated their learning to teach online in a similar way to how they learned to teach face to face. The reflections reported here articulated that "good teaching" in the online environment was of utmost importance. Participant

reflections contained many examples of learning by trial and error, needing to seek technical support, and the importance of peer exchange. They examined their assumptions about the work of teaching online in the context of their early experiences.

Being Open to Alternative Viewpoints

There were several examples in the interviews about faculty seeking information from instructional technologists, responding to student input and feedback, and, when possible, seeking support through dialogue with other online instructors or technical support staff. Previous experiences with other forms of distance education ("course in a box," teaching from centers via polycam) might be construed as alternative viewpoints that led to their current ability to adopt new approaches to teaching. More relevant, however, were participant reflections on colleagues who have not yet taught using distance technology, which they characterized as fear-based and discomfort with technology. Those alternative viewpoints were noted, but not a limitation to their own learning.

Engaging in discourse, where evidence is weighed, arguments assessed, alternative perspectives explored, and knowledge constructed by consensus. Participants described useful dialogue with other instructors, IT/ID (instructional technologists and designers), with students via formal and informal feedback, and with me throughout the course design process. Much of exploring perspectives was expressed as the individual conducting research and seeking out resources and models of teaching. The interview protocol provided additional opportunities for discourse about how we are learning to teach online.

Revising assumptions and perspectives to make them more open and better justified. The questions elicited responses about learning to teach in a new medium and continuous improvement, which parallels how one learns to teach in the face-to-face environment. Several faculty recognized that, while they were on their own as early adopters, they preferred interacting with knowledgeable others to improve their practice.

Acting on revisions, behaving, talking, and thinking in a way that is congruent with transformed assumptions or perspectives. These faculty members represent instructional leaders who have always been open to whatever technologies would allow them to reach students beyond the conventional classroom. Ranging in age from mid-30's to early 70's, everyone on the core faculty sought continuous improvement on their own part and strived to design a quality product for students. Their presence as core faculty developing an online program indicates they are acting in congruence with transformed assumptions.

Conclusions

Core faculty members in this study represented the continuum of online instructors: from very experienced through newcomers to online instruction. As they co-constructed their curriculum and instruction, they drew on their own experience, sought technical support, and drew from online sources. Faculty learning occurred in the context of faculty support at several levels: Resources, training, mentoring, and formal interaction between instructors and with knowledgeable others. Each participant in this study reported changes that reflect

"transformative learning" as they faced an activating event of changed expectations for their role as instructors, questioned their own experiences as teachers and learners, and strived to be open to alternative viewpoints. They described engaging in discourse and taking actions based on transformed assumptions and beliefs (Cranton, 2002, p. 66).

Faculty Members Developed Coursework Embracing the Technology Available

Faculty members' interview responses about their decisions to engage in online instruction varied as individuals drew from earlier experiences in face-to-face instruction to inform their practice. Instructors worked systematically through program and course design processes to refine content (resources), instructional strategies, and assessments. Instructors considered feedback from the instructional technologist, program director, students (during and after the course), and peers. Faculty members embraced opportunities to teach in distance and online settings over their careers, often the early adopter in their settings. While their histories of being early adopters limited opportunities for systematic learning about online instruction, they expressed appreciation for mentoring, technical support, and their emergent community of practice. This finding aligns with research by Vaill and Testori (2012), who evaluated online instruction orientation and documented faculty appreciation for technical support within a cohort of instructors.

The instructors in this study have been early adopters and have been willing to reach out to distance students via the technology available at the time, whether mailing a "course in a box," speaking by telephone, teaching via a poly-cam, or using early versions of web-based communication modalities. Online instruction is not presented as external to individuals' experience as educators, but rather, part of a longer continuum of innovative practice. A recent study by Angolia and Pagliari (2016) recognized that "distance education is entering its fourth generation, requiring universities to consider how to sustain this continually evolving delivery method" (n.p.). Perhaps this perspective of change over time mitigates the notion that online instruction is still divergent from the mainstream.

Faculty Worked Independently yet Sought Resources as Needed

The norm for learning about online teaching was primarily characterized as independent, on-the-job training. Instructors also reported examples of systematic refinement or cycles of continuous improvement as they sought to improve the quality of their online instruction within courses and over time as new technology became available. This finding reflects the presence of "experiential learning," noted by Meyer and Murrell (2015) as one of the most prevalent theories supporting faculty development for online learning.

Even though participants work intrepidly as independent contractors, they valued opportunities to work with others. While instructors learned to teach online primarily through trial and error, when support was offered or mentoring available, it was welcome. Instructors are hungry for dialogue about teaching (Buckenmeyer et. al, 2013; Pataraia, Margaryan, Falconer, I; Littlejohn, and Falconer, J., 2014)

Faculty Members Valued Mentoring by Knowledgeable Others

The work of the "knowledgeable other," in this case, both peer instructors and instructional technologists, contributed to participants' development. Mentoring to improve instruction in higher education has always been limited, but new pressures on faculty to teach with unfamiliar media using more constructivist pedagogy may compel administrators to provide stronger support and resources. Marek (2009) studied structural supports necessary for comprehensive adoption of online instruction, and recommends that university faculty development teaching centers commit to supporting quality online instruction. Clark-Ibanez and Scott (2008) cite research suggesting online courses are not simply face-to-face courses converted to new media. "Creating an effective online course requires varied skills that are seldom found in one faculty member" (p. 36). In a study of faculty learning to teach online, De Gagne and Walters (2010) found that:

> Several participants expressed the importance of *mentoring* in the early stages of online teaching practice. One suggested that it is necessary to find a good mentor, ideally two: one who knows the content of the course, and the other who knows the technical system, such as how to post, when to respond, and who to call for help. (n.p.)

The "community of practice" (Wenger, 1998) in the online program setting is, ironically, developed in a more visible and public setting than are conventional programs. Every facet of our courses was visible for critique and feedback, unlike face-to-face teaching. "Peer review" of our course design process requires systematic protocols so the designer has trust in the process. Teaching is very individual and personal, whether on-ground or online. While these instructors recognized tensions between those who teach in the fully online environment and those who haven't yet, they did not characterize that tension as a limitation to their own growth or philosophy. They were not concerned with traditional faculty's negative portrayal of online programming, a phenomenon noted by some researchers (Peach & Bieber, 2015).

Implications

Individual narratives are never proffered as "generalizable" (Merriam, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Rueschemeyer, 2003); however, the common experiences expressed by senior faculty learning to teach online are instructive. Their collective understanding of the journey of moving through one or more generations of distance, media-enhanced, interactive instruction, will parallel those of online faculty elsewhere. This action research study informs faculty development practice and strengthens the emergent field of online instruction professional development (Meyer & Murrell, 2015; McIntyre, 2008). Many factors influence online faculty development (Buckenmeyer, et. al, 2013; Hixon, 2008) and the transformative learning lens provides another look at adult development in the context of online instruction. Reflection on practice, making meaning together, and sharing of expertise are essential for those navigating the unfamiliar landscape of online teaching and learning.

Samaras and colleagues (2014) documented their collective, cross-disciplinary reflections on their teaching and described the power of the community to support transformed practice: "Enacting the self-study methodology reaffirmed our commitment to improving our teaching in a transparent and documented process with peer review" (p. 382). Their findings are especially cogent when considering faculty development for online instruction:

> As faculty efforts in collective self-study to improve teaching allow individuals to transcend the technical and transform their teaching from the inside out, they are particularly applicable to periods of potentially disruptive innovation and change within the academy (Samaras, et. al, p. 383).

Research about the role of transformative learning for faculty striving to teach effectively in the online environment will continue to expand. Adult learning theory provides a strong foundation for researchers to more fully examine and interpret faculty development. The transparency of course content, design, and assessments in the online learning environment provides a window into how faculty think about teaching in so many ways, in contrast to the less visible world of traditional teaching. Peer engagement between online faculty about their teaching has, to some degree, disrupted the isolated, "independent contracting" nature of higher education instruction. Such transparency makes possible a powerful shared community, transforming instructors and their practice.

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Interview Documentation

Communities of practice:
A case study of one department's on-line teaching and learning development

Purpose of the study: To document experienced education faculty perceptions of learning to design and teach online courses. Findings will allow program leaders to:

- improve course development strategies through more focused PD;
- provide useful resources to instructors;
- collect data for program evaluation and publication.

Research question: How do instructors in an online doctoral program characterize their learning about designing and teaching a course in a hybrid or fully online environment?
Participants: Online instructors in the Education doctoral program and members of the Department of Education who are teaching online courses
Prompts for individual interviews or focus group(s);

1) What is the name of the course you first designed? What compelled you to consider designing this course?
2) What formal training have you taken to learn about online course development?
3) How would you characterize your learning to design an online course?
4) Who/what was most helpful in supporting your learning?
5) What are your next steps as a learner about online course development?

Online faculty meetings will be recorded through online meeting technology. The audio track will be transcribed and excerpts used for program evaluation and publication. Please reply via email if you would prefer that your reflections and analyses not be used for publication.

In addition to recording online faculty meetings, I plan to interview members of the Education Doctoral faculty, in person or via online meeting technology about the questions above. Are you willing to participate in an interview? You are not required to do so and your decision will have no bearing on your membership in the online instructor group.
The program evaluation plan has been reviewed by *Institution* and is available for your review.

Thank you for your consideration!

Mentoring Model

We used a lead instructor and support instructor model sharing a large class rather than having each instructor take a smaller cohort. There are two main purposes for this approach: To create a more fluid environment to move students in and out of study groups, and to provide modeling for the less experienced instructor. While a roster of 50 students is large, two instructors are able to divide the groups into sub-sections for interactive work, assignment evaluation, and advising tasks.

Lead Instructor															Associate instructor													
Section One 25 - 30															Section Two 25 - 30													
Discussion					Discussion					Discussion					Discussion					Discussion					Discussion				
8 - 12					8 - 12					8 - 12					8 - 12					8 - 12					8 - 12				
Role-alike					Role-alike					Role-alike					Role-alike					Role-alike					Role-alike				
a	a	a	a	a	b	b	b	b	b	c	c	c	c	c	g	g	g	g	g	h	h	h	h	h	i	i	i	i	i
d	d	d	d	d	e	e	e	e	e	f	f	f	f	f	j	j	j	j	j	k	k	k	k	k	l	l	l	l	l
Cohort-wide activities (wiki, blog, other fora with short postings, such as references)																												

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An Assessment of Service Learning Objectives and Outcomes

VERONICA F. MCGOWAN
Southwestern Oklahoma State University

Abstract

Service learning is increasingly recognized in higher educational settings as a transformative learning method for increasing student engagement in learning experiences, promoting civic responsibility, and exposing students to field settings and potential professional networks. As more institutions devote more classroom time or credit credentialing to the service learning experience, institutions are beginning to grapple with needing to validate this learning experience in quantifiable and qualitative terms in order to describe the experience to stakeholders, including accrediting bodies. This paper presents an investigation into institution-provided, publicly available materials regarding assessment of service learning objectives, outcomes, and activities in order to inform stakeholders of emerging trends, changes, and best practices in transparency of service learning outcomes. Findings indicate an orientation towards demonstrating program effectiveness rather than learning progression.

Keywords: service learning outcomes, assessment

Introduction

Service learning's recognition as a valid learning method has its roots in models of experiential learning in which students reflect and conceptualize understanding by active involvement in a concrete experience. Early theorists further defined service learning as an experience in which students, faculty, and community stakeholders collaborate to shape the experience to affect social or civic change (Furco, 1996; Seifer, 1998). As applications within higher educational settings increased (Stoecker, 2014), educational practice, supported by field literature increasingly started to advocate for service learning incorporation into higher educational settings (Hatcher & Studer, 2015) because of its benefits to campus and community populations (Buch & Harden, 2011; Eyler et al., 2001; Willis, 2002; McGoldrick & Ziegert, 2002); fostering of critical thinking and higher order thinking skills; and development of personal outcomes such as social awareness (Buch & Harden, 2011), leadership and identity (Eyler & Giles, 1999) and civic responsibility and inter and intrapersonal skill development (Dressler et al, 2011; Hébert, 2015). With integration into credit-based programs of study (Coffey & Lavery, 2015; Gazsi & Oriel, 2010), coursework (Hildenbrand & Schultz, 2015; Zamora, 2012), and other curriculum-based experiences (Martin, 2015), higher educational institutions began to struggle with how to quantify and qualify the learning experience in order to assess its effectiveness and present the experience to stakeholders.

Author's Note: Dr. Veronica F. McGowan is an Assistant Professor for the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Southwestern Oklahoma State University.

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Literature Review

While many higher educational institutions tout the number of offered service learning opportunities, variety of settings, and format of experiences, they are more challenged in translating the experience into communicative terms that convey the meaningfulness of the experience as a learning activity. With assessment transparency related with mixed results to stakeholder confidence (Bamber, 2015) and motivation (Seevers, Rowe, & Skinner, 2014), publicly presenting valid and reliable data may serve to impact program success and effectiveness evaluation. In addition, transparency of service learning experiences may forward efforts to benchmark such activities for implementation into a continuous improvement framework. External benchmarking of service learning outcomes beyond the institutional level is limited due to several factors including difficulty of standardizing experience components due to variety in length, format and setting, as well as, to questions regarding the validity of the standard benchmark measures (Nora, Crisp, & Matthews, 2011). Hawk's (2014) study of experiential education assessment methods serves as one benchmarking example with findings that student preparation for potential future experiences serves as an emerging data point.

For implementers, one of the attractive features of service learning is its flexibility in terms of adoption (Ziegert and McGoldrick, 2008) and format (Craigen & Sparkman, 2014), but with this flexibility comes concerns about assessing the experience in a standardized and fair manner and the realism that such a continuum of experiences may not consistently fall into a high-quality learning experience. Chan (2012) noted a lack of studies related to exploring outcomes-based assessment methods in experiential learning. In part, to counteract this deficit, Hawk (2014) studied the use of direct assessment measures of experience-based learning to evaluate transferrable skills and discipline-specific proficiencies into evaluative categories of communication, creative and critical thinking, ethical reasoning, information literacy, self-directed leading, technology, global competence, leadership, professional practice, research, and responsible citizenship.

Efforts to benchmark individual service learning outcomes across courses, programs, and institutions are rare (Steinke & Finch, 2007); although benchmarking engagement and satisfaction with service learning as a program offering is a prominent component of popular instruments such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Searches performed for the current study confirm underperformance of available benchmarks. In addition, Harvey, Coulson and McMaugh (2016) noted the paucity of field literature devoted to developing the reflective component of a service learning experience, long considered a staple of the service learning experience. Some field literature has pointed to a lack of assessment studies of outcomes for particular populations (Greenwood, 2015) or types of community activities (Martin, Warner, & Das, 2016). In addition, literature is increasingly noting the lack of assessment on the side of the community participant, a concern that has gained traction with some field literature advocating for a service-learning redesign in favor of community participant origination (Butin, 2015; Gates et al., 2014). Brydges and Gwozdek (2011) noted a need for longitudinal study design which would obtain baseline and post-service learning data to better evaluate satisfaction levels and study effectiveness on learning outcomes of curricular topics. Finally, some studies note the importance of a top-down design in terms of measuring experiential learning outcomes and point to a lack of accreditation standards in fields (Krieger & Martinez, 2012).

Assessment of specific service learning objectives have been the focus of some scholarly research. Service learning's fostering of civic competency and engagement (Tourney-Purta et al., 2015) and critical thinking (Heinrich et al., 2015) was assessed with positive correlations. In addition, institutions are surveying student engagement with, and perceptions of, service learning activities (Dressler, Cedercreutz, & Pacheco, 2011; Reed, et al., 2015). An investigation into the alignment of learning objectives to field professional standards (Schlesselman et al., 2015) found increased awareness of standards but inconsistent implementation in a member institution study. Visual representation of service learning as an activity has also been studied to discover the meaning that institutions attach to the activity. Donahue, Fenner, and Mitchell (2015) documented a disconnect between institutional stated aims of service learning as a learning activity and practice with a pattern of racial and class discrimination present.

For the literature review of this study, assessment instruments of the grounding and related literature were studied to determine what types of quantitative and qualitative assessment methods were deployed in the collection of study effectiveness. These findings are used to ground instrument development in this study and are not presented as study findings, due to the literature review focus and lack of sampling mechanism. Results found that quantification of work hours, pre and post experience survey results, and learning experience and satisfaction ratings were commonly used to evaluate learning outcome effectiveness. Types of qualitative assessment include portfolio, diary, and discussion narrative content analysis. Scoring rubrics would be used on these items to gauge student understanding of service participant and organizational issues, demonstration of cultural intelligence, and synthesis of stakeholder mission elements. Less important, but still significant findings, found that the ability of the learning experience to develop attitudes and global mind-sets and student ability to identify service participant values and change agents were considered important in judging critical thinking ability. The most common required outcome was a self-development or self-awareness journal followed by comprehensive projects with a required presentation component. Less important, but still statistically significant, outcomes included goal-setting activities, and action-building plans for the behalf of the service participant; in some cases, these activities may have been implied to occur within the journal framework, hence the lesser finding. With the exception of explicit findings related to ethical literacy, these findings seem to correlate well with Pless, Maak, and Stahl's (2011) description of six reflective learning competence areas. A non-significant but conceptually important finding was that some studies mapped the service learning experience to institutional student learning outcomes with correlations strongest for citizenship or global competencies and self-directed learning, and weakest for research and technology-related competencies.

Method

In a method similar to that described by Kim and Kuljis (2010), the content analysis method deployed by this study used a pilot study of 10 website presentations of institutions in the researcher's home state in order to determine an initial set of evaluative criteria, and a possible spectrum of responses that met the criteria. This activity lead to a level of abstraction for the inductive categories that allowed the research coders to correctly place each phenomena presentation especially in relation to study parameters. Consensus between coders resulted in minor revision of categories to best represent viewing perspective and enhance formative and summative reliability (Mayring, 2000). Search terms relating to service learning were deployed

to find potential assessment of experiences. In addition, the institution's assessment, reporting, institutional research, and effectiveness pages were mined for potential data sources. Each possible finding was evaluated for fit to the service learning paradigm, or other types of volunteer opportunities. Community-based research is not considered part of this study.

Due to the pilot study finding that only one institution out of a sample size of 10, reporting service learning by learning outcome, the sample was changed to those institutions that hold Carnegie Community Engagement Elective Classification in the hope of obtaining significant findings. With 361 institutions earning such a designation (Carnegie Foundation, 2015), the research study will consist of a sample of 45 of these institutions with an equal representation of four institutional types (doctorate-granting, masters' colleges and universities, associates colleges and special focus institutions) representing regional areas of the United States of America.

While the Common Data Set (CDS), a data-gathering collaboration of higher education institutions, does collect data regarding the offering availability of a category that would include service learning, that publication does not seek explicit service learning assessment data and will not be mined for this study. In addition, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) asks about current and intended participation in service learning as well as in terms of its availability as an offering, but does not ask about, or relate findings to, learning outcomes. Should a school's analysis of those results be provided, it was mined as qualitative evidence. Results from more comprehensive instruments, such as the National Assessment of Service and Community Engagement (Siena Research Institute, 2014), Community Service Attitudes Scale (Shiarella, McCarthy, and Tucker, 2000) or the Civic Minded Graduate Scale, Social Justice Advocacy Scale were used, if found. In addition, data on community service that is not structured as a service learning activity were not mined due to the anticipated lack of identified learning outcomes. Student and Alumni surveys were mined if responses linked service learning to learning outcomes in any manner. Finally, accreditation self-studies of an institutional focus were mined for potential reporting of service learning outcomes and activities.

In each case, the service learning website or page(s), institutional assessment site, and institutional reporting/effectiveness site were searched for institutional transparency findings. For large institutions, an office of academic 9 was also a common search. Both the terms service learning and experiential learning were deployed. Departments were not part of the search protocol due to lack of standardization for all students. However, if institutional search lead to departmental findings, then results were recorded. To reflect current issues in service learning, data findings earlier than 2010 were not recorded. Data resulting from applications to develop or designate a service learning course were included if learning outcomes information was provided.

Results

Due to small significant percentages and sizes, the intent to report results by institutional type will only be used in cases where there is a need to aggregate data. Thirty one of 45 (68%) studied institutions offer information regarding student learning objectives, however, only eight of the 45 (18%) present developed objectives. An additional five institutions present typically one or two service learning objectives as part of their General Education learning objectives. One additional institution provides a declarative statement that all service learning courses must provide learning objectives, therefore, a total of 14 of 45 (31%) of institutions present some meaningful learning objectives. The highest data provision of the study (82%) regards program objectives, only 8 institutions did not provide program objectives for service learning. The most common program objectives: 1) involves a statement that the goal of the office is to facilitate service learning opportunities; 2) communicates the desire to develop campus and community relationships; and 3) foster the inclusion of best-practices into service learning curriculum.

In terms of learning objectives themselves, only seven of the 45 (15.5%) studied sites presented the objectives linked to a framework of a civics-based, problem-based, or discipline-based model or capstone course, service internship or community action research. However, evidence exists in the form of sponsorship and related policies of that intent for an additional 5 presentations for a total of 12 of 45 (26.6%). Only 23 of the 45 (51%) studied institutions presented learning objectives in terms of relationship to categories of learning, personal or social outcomes; broadly it can be said that these institutions were seeking to balance the engagement experience into the three domains. The most common learning objectives included improvement to students' ability to problem-solve and think critically and to improve application of knowledge to real world settings. The presentation of personal objectives that reached the level of significance include improved personal efficacy, interpersonal development, and improvement in leadership and communication skills. Top social objectives included improved social responsibility and citizenship and greater understanding of the impact of diversity and inter-cultural topics. Exact representations are not provided due to the difficulty of parsing and extracting language from provided content.

Six of the 45 institutions (13.3%) are providing course syllabi as examples of student learning objectives and coursework requirements. As a common theme, information about program requirements, often in the form of reflection templates and evaluation forms, are provided, but outcomes or results of those surveys and tabulations are not provided. In addition, analysis of provided data is often not publicly transparent with only 6 of the 45 institutions (13.3%) providing analysis, usually in an annual report form.

Commonly reported items that reflect program outcomes include: 1) 11 of 45 (25%) report number of participants, with those results evenly distributed between being found on a dedicated page, within the institutional self-study, or in a service learning annual report; 2) 19 of 45 (42%) present data regarding the number of service-learning courses or departmental involvement with that information evenly divided as presented on a dedicated page or in an annual report; 3) 13 of 45 (29%) present data regarding the number of service learning projects or partners; and 4) 14 of 45 (31%) present number of hours with an additional 10 institutions (adjustment to 53%) presenting evidence that an hour log is used to collect this information from students.

Institutions may be demonstrating a long-term investment into service learning as demonstrated by 7 of the 45 (15%) presenting some form of longitudinal data regarding service

learning at the institution. 4 of the 45 (9%) institutions present data related to financial impact of service learning or expenses related to service learning. 5 of the 45 (11%) institutions require all undergraduate students to take a service learning course or other significant learning experience; one additional institution requires a service learning component for all honors students.

Perhaps due to lack of investment in national instruments related to service learning, only 5 of the 45 (11%) of institutions present quantitative results of surveys related to service learning. Reporting of qualitative results fares significantly better with 27 of 45 (60%) providing data, an overwhelming percentage of those results took the form of project summaries. Perhaps due to the difficulty of making service learning assessment relatable to audiences, only 5 of 45 (11%) report such results within institutional assessment report. An observed trend is that institutions are more likely to present information and results about service learning assessment on sponsored pages, particularly if the institution hosts a service learning or civic engagement center or sub-unit.

While 13 of the 45 (29%) institutions provide evidence that students evaluate the service learning experience, only 6 of the institutions provide results, with the remaining institutions providing a link to the evaluation instrument. 11 of the 45 (24.4%) institutions survey faculty and 7 of the 45 (15.5%) have a mechanism for seeking community participant feedback.

Discussion

Despite gains in the quality and quantity of assessment measures for higher education institutions, regional, and national bodies and consortium, improvements in transparency of assessment results are still needed as evidenced by recent announcements by the United States Department of Education to improve and expand researcher access to data, enhance the FSA Data Center, expand use of administrative data, and support evidence-based policymaking (Mahaffie, 2017). Large public institutions tend to funnel all academic activity through departments and not have the effectiveness or assessment infrastructures of the institutional body; nearly one-fourth of the service learning programs in the current investigation were sponsored by an academic sub-unit, college, or department, and an additional one-fourth only had representation from two or three academic areas. A 2016 survey of Association of American College and University (AACU) member institutions found that while 87% assess learning outcomes within departments, only 67% assess learning outcomes in general education across multiple courses (Hart Research Associates, 2016a), where service learning is most likely to be found. Therefore, as illustrated by this study, service learning is often occurring at the course level, so assessment of service learning may be underreported or under analyzed if not linked to an institutional initiative. Steinke and Fitch (2007) identify concerns including service learning integration in assessment processes, systematic documentation, and incomplete data gathering methods as prominent stumbling blocks toward true service learning assessment. Field literature seems to support this study's findings: a study of pharmacy schools found that only 26.5% of schools presented some type of service learning outcomes. (Schlesselman, et al., 2015). In addition, Yates, Wilson, and Purton (2015) noted the dearth of studies validating experiential learning experiences and used their literature review to conclude that a range of assessment methods exists in the field. To compare to the field, 46% of the AACU study of member institutions include service learning, however, the AACU study included a civic learning category which may have split that population.

Althoff et al. (2007) found achievement and motivation benefits due to the posting of learning objectives to teacher, parent, and student audiences. While field literature still supports that the provision of learning objectives is a response to accreditation requirements (Stovall, 2014), it is clear that posting of learning objectives is gaining field traction, as exemplified by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA)'s development of a transparency framework for evaluation of institutional websites (NILOA, 2017).

While the provision of a large number of program objectives means that institutions should be commended for focusing on program improvement, this provision in no way reflects or absolves institutions of the need to present learning objectives. Based upon all of the above evidence, it is clear that a rate where only 4 of the 45 (8%) institutional provision of transparent data regarding service learning outcomes should be considered underwhelming with levels below those of other studies that explore the assessment of student learning (Thompson, et al., 2014). However, given that an additional 13 institutions do present evidence of a culture of learning from student learning outcomes, as well a field perception that service learning assessment is still on the beginning of the curve, this study's low rates seem justified. It should be noted that the field of service learning assessment is still developing; Steinke and Fitch's (2007) illustration of 17 direct, mixed and indirect measures makes clear that widely used instruments available to measure knowledge application, critical thinking and problem-solving, and intellectual development do not meet needs as only one tool addresses all three areas.

In order to foster better learning, Association of American College and University (AAC&U) has identified and recommended six learning objective categories related to service learning: 1) Diversity of Communities and Cultures; 2) Analysis of Knowledge; 3) Civic Identity and Commitment; 4) Civic Communication; 5) Civic Action and Reflection; and 6) Civic Contexts/Structures (Brammer et al., 2009). Confirming this study's findings of 31% of stated outcomes, a recent AAC&U study of member institutions found that only 63% had explicit outcomes related to civic engagement or competence (Hart Research Associates, 2016a). Of this study's most common program objectives, support was found in field literature of the need to foster participation or persistence rates (Arendale, 2016).

In terms of requiring a service learning experience, this study's findings of 13% (2% of which requires honors students only) are validated by field literature parallel findings of 14% (Hart Research Associates, 2016a). The honors student data may serve as an outlier; an AACU study indicates that 85% of institutions have a common set of learning objectives, with the remaining percentage devoted to departmental or program objectives, rather than other populations (Hart Research Associates, 2016b).

Due to positive findings in Green, Marti, and McClenney (2008)'s study of the benefits of increasing academic integration for racial and ethnic groups, aggregating service learning assessment by student factors may better serve at-risk populations by proving baseline data for intervention programs. Given that quality of the learning experience is a significant issue, evidence exists that institutions of this survey may be deploying data results to evaluate the program but are not being transparent about the results due to underperformance of findings in this area.

A surprising finding is that only 2 of the 45 institutions (4%) provided data linked to describing the long-term relationship between the institution and the community partner; a standard that field organizations are working to consider part of the definition of service learning (Schlesselman et al., 2015). Another relevant finding of the Schlesselman study was a confirmation of this study's findings that hour logs are the most commonly found assessment

items. A surprising finding of the current study was the number of institutions support faculty inclusion in service learning with funded fellow's programs (some of which are for a larger umbrella of student affairs or student engagement) or other faculty structures such as advisory boards.

Conclusion and Implications for Future Research

Institutions are investing in long-term success models for the inclusion of service learning in a variety of campus implementations. However, factors including the large variability in models, discipline-specific goals, and lack of institutional supports continue to challenge local and large-scale assessment processes that can be compared and benchmarked against other institutions. While institutions should continue to track and improve program effectiveness measures, a deeper commitment to assessing learning outcomes and engaging with data offers the only true potential for insights into validating service learning as an authentic learning method.

Coordination with state, regional, and national consortiums are needed to improve a deep deficit in sustainable collection and analysis of service learning assessment data and benchmarking to establish baselines and averages for improvement.

The study of student learning outcomes in service learning appears to be a ripe vein for additional examination. Unlike traditional forms of study, service learning is also tied to institutional reputation and service, so managing needs and expectations of community partners is part of the learning experience and serves as an impact factor in the assessment process. In addition, it may be difficult to assess student learning when there are other factors that may make the service learning experience valuable to the student. Few longitudinal studies exist to examine factors over time so causality linkages are few. Due to the informality of some service learning formats, serious data collection may at best be compromised, and at worst unavailable. This study has shown that data collection is occurring amongst faculty populations. Field literature is only recently reflecting development of the pedagogy involved with service learning, so studies examining experiences with learning communities and related teaching methods would be welcome.

Finally, due to this study's findings of data collection and analysis regarding community participants and organizations, lessons for improving community development and higher education's service relationship to the community are sources for potential research.

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Transformational Learning: A Literature Review of Recent Criticism

JOSEPH DESAPIO
Boise State University

Abstract

A gap exists within transformational learning theory between theoretical construct and practical application. Recent critical literature of transformational learning theory is marked by four trends related to this problem: alternative conceptions, the target area, identity, and a lack of practical discussion of applied theory. A survey of transformational learning theory's origins, as well as recent trends in critical literature, demonstrate a bridging of the gap, yet not entirely. Suggestions are made for further study in attempt to close the gap entirely.

Keywords: transformational learning, transformative education, Mezirow, literature review, critique, critical reflection, implementation, identity, practice, spirituality, story, justice, equality, race, andragogy

Introduction

Transformational learning is a theory that has been, as it is with all ardent theories, analyzed, tested, critiqued, revised, embraced, and (by some) written-off. After nearly four decades since the earliest iteration (Mezirow, 1978), the theory has proven itself to be worthy of constant discussion. The theory has been the subject of 12 international conferences (Transformative Learning Network, 2016), and in 2003 spawned the inception of *The Journal of Transformative Education*, a quarterly publication of scholarly and peer reviewed articles (Markos & McWhinney, 2003). John Mezirow, a key founder of the modern theory, has noted that the theoretical and practical implications of his work have been addressed by more than a dozen books, hundreds of scholarly papers and presentations, and more than 150 dissertations (Mezirow, 2006).

Given the volume of literature and discussion around transformational learning theory, one may assume the theory is well defined, and articulated in a consistent, universal way. While some have concluded that decades of critical thought around transformational learning have produced a "definitive framework for describing how adults learn best" (Kitchenham, 2008), the author of this paper disagrees with these conclusions, and, with this essay, aims to accomplish a three-fold task: (1) assess the current state of academic though, (2) report trends in recent critical literature, and (3) offer suggestion to advance the scholarly discussion. Before we unpack the problems that lead the author to this dissent and survey current trends in recent critical literature,

Author's Note: Joseph DeSapio is a learning futurist and design thinker who has worked as a learning and development specialist for many Fortune500 companies including CenturyLink, Time Warner Cable, Walmart, CVS Health, and United Healthcare. His work focuses on human-centered design that creates transformational learning experiences in the workplace and society. DeSapio holds an M.A. in Theology from Covenant Theological Seminary and is expected to earn an M.S. in Organizational Performance and Workplace Learning Program from Boise State University in 2018.

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it may be helpful to the reader to review the historical development of transformational learning theory with a focus on John Mezirow's work which is the most widely recognized and engaged articulation.

Summary of Thought

In 1978, John Mezirow conducted a study of women returning to postsecondary study or the workplace after an extended time away from either environment. Mezirow's aim was to "identify factors that characteristically impede or facilitate" (1978, p. 6) women's progress in re-entry programs. The study provided evidence that the conditions which caused the societal and personal suppression of women were being eroded through a "development of consciousness" (Illeris, 2014, p. 148). Mezirow concluded that organizations that successfully sponsored re-entry programs for women had experienced "personal transformation" (1978). Mezirow's original study has been paralleled to the work of Paulo Freire who worked to help illiterate Brazilians, as well as Oskar Negt's work relating to German industrial workers (Illeris, 2014, p. 149).

Knud Illeris points out the impact Mezirow and his contemporaries had on laying the initial framework and trajectory of transformational learning theory as being focused on cognitive processes of learning:

> By focusing on the development of consciousness, these three contemporary and path-breaking projects placed the main psychological emphasis on the cognitive processes of understanding the hidden power structures behind the oppression as a necessary condition for working actively and determinedly with liberation and empowerment. (2014, p. 149)

This cognitive approach to transformational learning was crucial to Mezirow's early articulations of the theory which emphasized how individuals change the way they view themselves and the world around them (1978). Overtime, through many revisions, and in response to scholarly engagement of his theory, Mezirow came to define transformational learning as the transformation of learners' meaning perspectives, frames of reference, and habits of mind (2006).

For two decades, Mezirow's theory was almost exclusively explained through "cognitive" terminology, with "critical self-reflection" being the crux of transformation (Kitchenham, 2008, p. 108). It was not until 2000 that Mezirow revised his theory once again to acknowledge the importance of the affective, emotional, and social factors that influence transformational learning (Mezirow, 2000; Kitchenham, 2008, p. 110).

Also in 2000, Robert Kegan posed his crucial, and now infamous, question, "What forms transformation?" which is to say, as Illeris points out, "What is actually the target area of transformative learning?" (2014). This question was, in the author's opinion, the spark that would ignite overwhelming critical thought and discourse about what transformational learning is, what its target is, how does it happen, and how can it be implemented in academic, workplace, and social environments.

The "In-Between" Problem

Mezirow has made an invaluable contribution to adult learning theory. Most would agree that his work has been the catalyst for a theory of learning that can have profound impacts on society. Yet, transformational learning theory is still, perhaps, one of the least consistently defined and explained learning theories. Its origins can be identified, as well as the kinds of problems the theory seeks to remediate, and its intended outcomes (in general). But the "in-between" (in-between theoretical conclusions and practical implementation), from this author's study is somewhat oblique. In essence, scholars understand there is a kind of learning that transforms, and this transformation is most useful, and indeed necessary, to tackle workplace issues of equality, compassion, and ethics; or social issues regarding racism, justice, and reconciliation. But beyond that essence, there is little agreement on anything practical.

Transformational learning is observable—there is no question if it occurs. Most seasoned professionals can describe experiences of transformation they've seen in themselves or others. Consider examples of individuals who have gone from being "bad" leaders to "good" leaders. Perhaps a "bad" leader could be described as one who is cold, distant, and exceptionally transactional. What happens when this person experiences learning that causes them to be a "good" leader—one who is warm, inviting, and relational? Most scholars would agree that this is a fine, yet rudimentary, example of transformational learning. But adult learning theories, especially as they relate to the workplace, are intended to be not only observable and describable, but repeatable also. However, current literature, is often focused on a more acute understanding and definition of transformational learning than articulating a descriptive process for implementing a transformational learning program in a given context. This is precisely the kind of focus that is required to bridge that gap between theory and practice, and turn observable transformation into repeatable transformation.

Trends in Recent Criticism (Theoretical Framework and Research)

How have recent critical articles sought to fill the gap between theoretical conclusions and practical, repeatable implementation? The four trends identified below seek to answer this question. Each trend can be viewed as a "guiding question" driving scholarly engagement of transformational learning. While the list below is not exhaustive, the author believes it represents the most consistent and strong arguments found in critical literature.

Trend One: Alternative Conceptions of Theoretical Framework

As previously stated, Mezirow himself has revised his original theory on numerous occasions (1981, 1991, 2000, 2006, 2009; Kitchenham, 2008). Modifications to Mezirow's theory are common even among literature that laud Mezirow's work, particularly related to Mezirow's narrow inclusion of non-rational, emotional, and social influencers of transformational learning (Merriam, 2004; Malkki, 2010; Kokkos, Kasl, Markos, Marsick, Sheared, Taylor, & Yorks, 2015).

Critical Literature goes beyond these cognitive spectrum modifications (while always recognizing their necessity) to offer, at times, entirely alternative conceptions of transformational learning. The reason for this, as Illers points out, is that there is "no clear understanding of the central concept and no formal organization [of the theory]" (Illeris, 2014). This observation led

Illeris to develop a conception of transformational learning that is focused on the "identity" of a person, as opposed to Mezirow's focus on the cognitive spectrum.

Mezirow's theory of transformational learning has been described as "psycho-critical" (Taylor, 2008), meaning the theory is based on cognitive critical-reflection. But scholars have identified at least seven other conceptions of transformational learning: psycho-analytic, psycho-developmental, social emancipatory, neuron biological, cultural-spiritual, race-centric, and planetary (Taylor, 2008). These theories all use Mezirow's work as a reference point, but depart to one degree or another (from Mezirow and each other) in an attempt to create a "central concept and formal organization" (Illeris, 2014) of transformational learning theory.

Some critics have boldly asserted that the alternative conception of transformational learning is nothing more than "good learning" (Newman, 2010). Michael Newman, the most notable proponent of this perspective, appears to identify the readily visible gaps in Mezirow's theory, and is more so dissatisfied with alternative conceptions, particularly, the non-rational and spiritual. It is the author's opinion that this perspective is erroneous and indefensible, given the volume of scholarly work and research around transformational learning, which, though more work is needed, demonstrate that the theory is unique, observable, and necessary.

Trend Two: Pondering the "Kegan" Question

Behaviorism targets a person's behaviors. Cognitivism targets a person's cognitive spectrum. But what is the target of transformational learning? What is that realm, or domain, or "thing" of a learner that can be engaged to bring about transformation? Or, as Kegan put it, "What form transforms?" (Kegan, 2000). These are common questions in the critical literature, and scholars have constantly engaged Kegan's question since it was first proposed (Malkki, 2010; Newman, 2010; Illeris, 2014; Dix, 2015). The author would agree with Illeris that this "very direct question has never been answered clearly or satisfactorily" (2014), but nonetheless, attempts are being made.

Illeris elaborates on the problem and guiding question related to this trend:

> …in spite of a great deal of activity, there were also signs of general uncertainty at the two most recent international conferences in Athens 2014 and San Francisco 2012. Probably, to some extent at least, this has to do with a similar lack of a clear and immediately understandable definition that can separate transformative from non-transformative learning, a precise term for what is transformed by transformative learning and what is outside the target area. (Illeris, 2014, p. 150)

It is apparent that scholars who engage Mezirow's work see a great need to understand what it is that is targeted in the transformation learning process. Without an understanding of this, there is no effective, repeatable way to cultivate transformational learning.

Trend Three: "Identity" Language

The attempts by scholars to answer Kegan's question has led to a trend of "identity" language used to describe the target of transformational learning. The definition of identity, as Illeris points out, has been understood "not just as psychological but specifically as a psychosocial concept, that is, a concept explicitly including the combination and interaction between the individual and the social environment and how this influences the development of

the individual" (2014). In other words, identity is how an individual understands his or herself and the world around them — or, how an individual makes sense of their place, and the place of others in the world.

Various terms have been used in place of identity: personhood, personality, self, soul, biographicity, competence, wholeness, and being. All of which share the essence of the term identity, as it has been defined above (Merriam, 2004; Taylor, 2008; Poutiatine & Conners, 2012; Illeris, 2014).

Critical reflection that is generally enthusiastic about Mezirow's framework also seeks to understand the role of identity in transformational learning, such as Merriam when asking, "how related are the 'pre-conditions' of education, socioeconomic class, gender, and so on to transformational learning?" (2004). It appears that Merriam (and others) stumble upon identity language without even realizing it, or at least without directly connecting their arguments to literature more directly proposing identity solutions to Kegan's question (2004; Taylor, 2008; Poutiatine & Conners, 2012).

Trend Four: An Absence of a Robust "How" Discussion

A final trend the author observed is that nearly all of the literature that was surveyed lacked any thorough discussion of how practitioners might promote or implement transformational learning. It seems that much of the discussion is related to what transformational learning is, or what it is that catalyzes transformation from within a person, but not what can be done to make transformational learning happen in the workplace or various other institutions of society.

Some have offered theoretical constructs (Illeris, 2014), but these lack any practical value in the workplace. And others, such as Michael Newman, have offered strong critique with no suggestion on what form or shape learning may take to elicit the desired outcomes (Newman, 2010). It is possible that this trend is a result of the stage of development the theory is currently in. It took twenty years for Kegan to ask his most helpful question, and it is now going on twenty years that scholars and practitioners have attempted to answer it. Perhaps, the next twenty years will result in a robust answer to the question of *how* practitioners promote and implement transformational learning.

Is the Problem Solved?

The problem the author has identified in this literature review is that there is a gap between theory and practice of transformational learning. So much has been written on the theory, yet the literature has produced incredibly diverse conclusions and hypotheses. For example, there have been numerous conceptions of what transformational learning looks like; practitioners have identified and engaged guiding questions that will advance the theory; and there is a growing consensus on how to speak of transformational learning's target. Yet, unlike the commonly implemented theories such as behaviorism, constructivism, or cognitivism, we don't know how to "do" transformational learning. We don't know how to consistently and repeatedly see the transformation of poor sales people becoming good sales people, or bad leaders becoming good leaders, or unhelpful customer service agents becoming providers of exceptional customer service. These intangible qualities move beyond traditional understandings

of learning and require a more dynamic learning experience to promote transformation. We understand this in theory, but the gap between theory and practice remains.

The author believes that transformational learning has the potential to be an incredibly valuable tool in the workplace, and society at large. Transformational learning has the potential to play a vital role in the workplace, whether it be promoting compassion among customer service representatives, implementing community policing among law enforcement agencies, or engaging issues of pay equality for women among corporate establishments. The theory would also be appropriate for addressing social issues regarding racism, homophobia, and human rights. Sensitive issues such as these have no easy remediation, and it would therefore make sense that the academic community has struggled to provide a robust answer to the *how* question. But just a Mezirow and his early contemporaries were pressed to think through and develop transformational learning based on the circumstances they faced, so too, do we have a great need and responsibility to think about this form of learning because of the things our culture faces.

The author would agree with what appears to be a minority view, that the scope of possible resolutions to understanding the *how* of transformational learning needs to be broadened for a repeatable model of transformational learning to be understood and implemented. Upon its inception, *The Journal of Transformative Education* called for academically "provocative" contributions that would further the development of, and thought around, transformational learning (Markos & McWhinney, 2003). It is precisely these provocative, non-rational, or even spiritual contributions that the author believes should be studied and developed further to promote a robust discussion of *how* to finally close the gap between theory and practice. The rising popularity of identity language is perhaps evidence that such non-traditional remedies are becoming more widely accepted in the academic community.

A Suggested Way Forward

The author would suggest that the academic community pursue further study of at least three factors that may cause transformational learning (i.e. answering the "how" question): problem-based learning, story-formed learning, and connectedness. These three suggestions stem from the authors own experience promoting workplace learning as a practitioner more than studying workplace learning as a scholar. The reader should consider them as hypotheses yet to be fully explored and tried by the scientific method.

Problem-based learning aligns with Mezirow's first phase of transformation, the "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow, 1978). The word "problem" is perhaps a more communicable and acute term to identify the catalyst of transformation that Mezirow was first alluding to. While Mezirow was essentially referring to a catalytic event to bring awareness of a need, a fuller problem-based learning approach to transformation would view the transformation itself as a solution to the problem.

Story-formed learning, as it relates to transformational learning, may be defined as a compelling message that inspires a dramatic change in a person's identity. The author would hypothesize—albeit based on experience and non-scientific observation—that compelling stories often lead to the shifts in perspectives and schema that Mezirow's theory is known for. Documentaries rooted in activism, or investigative journalism, is a good example of this. In both, a narrative is presented with the explicit intent of evoking a particular perspective, or shift in perspective, in the viewer/reader. This kind of narrative-based, agenda-driven, intentional story-

telling could be incorporated into sound instructional design methodology to promote transformation.

Lastly, what the author calls “connectedness,” may be broadly defined as a person’s sense of connection to some external entity (such as an idea, philosophy, person, group, or organization) that gives some measure of meaning to their identity. Despite its non-rational implications, this sort of “connectedness” should not be neglected in research (the notion is entirely absent from Mezirow’s theory). Many examples of “transformation” (especially if using Mezirow’s own definition) are tethered to various testimonies of awakening to an idea or participation in a community. Communities of practice, or generating buy-in to an organizational mission statement, or commitment to principles such as justice and equality may be examples of the kind of “connectedness” that may promote transformation.

Recent literature has made great strides in developing transformational learning theory. While gaps remain, they are growing smaller and smaller. Contrary to the findings of some critics, the author believes there certainly is a kind of learning that is more than just “good learning,” but a good learning that is profoundly and uniquely transformational. Such a theory requires critical literature to be refined and developed, and that is precisely what is happening. Practitioners would do well to recognize that four decades of thought is relatively young, especially for theories that have potential to transform organizations, society, and the world. Onward.

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Reflection, Writing, and Transformative Learning for College Teachers

KOENRAAD KUIPER
University of Canterbury

Abstract

Transformative learning is facilitated by teachers who are student-centred and passionate about the subjects they teach. When teachers write about their teaching the results can be inspirational. This essay reports on a set of such writings. The writing of others can also serve to inspire teachers to do their own writing about their teaching. Opportunities for this occur in the normal course of a professional life. It is suggested that these opportunities should be seized not just for their operational ends (such as promotion) but also for expressing deeply felt engagement with teaching.

Keywords: reflective writing, subject expert teaching

Introduction

Let us suppose that we want to be teachers who involve our students in transformative learning (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012, p. 571). Such learning is facilitated by teachers who are student-centered (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999) and passionate about the subjects they teach. Effect is the key here. To maintain the love of a subject and of teaching it we need to have ways of starving off ennui and the effect of so many pressures that impact college teachers. As a result of those pressures we can lose the love of our subject and become more mechanical. We can also, for example, become more research focused. We can gain grants that provide us with teaching relief or become administrators (permanently).

How do we become and remain the kind of teacher who stimulates, facilitates, and catalyzes transformative learning? To do that, we must become, and remain, reflective (Brookfield, 1995) through our life-course as teachers.

In this essay, I will look at teachers' writing as a way of accomplishing these goals; namely, the goal of remaining focused on what matters in our teaching, clear objectives for students, providing transformative learning experiences which change our students' view of the world, and encourage a life-long joy in learning. I will start with an illustration of the way a number of gifted subject-expert teachers have reflected on their teaching of their subject as a source of inspiration for transformational teaching, in turn, inspiring other teachers by their writing. Then, I will turn to ways in which any teacher is provided with opportunities to do likewise.

Author's Note: Koenraad Kuiper is Professor Emeritus at the University of Canterbury, NZ. He is an author and editor of 16 books and numerous articles and book chapters. His academic discipline is linguistics.

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Background and Method

A colleague and I worked together on a textbook (Kuiper, 1996) because we both taught large first-year classes where the available textbooks in our field did not adequately cover the learning strategies and outcomes that we considered important. My co-author died at a tragically early age, and I thought a suitable memorial to his committed and exemplary teaching would be to edit a book in which teachers reflected on their particular approaches to teaching the sub-disciplines of our shared subject. The contributors' writings are inspirational in that they are a result of personal commitment to the subjects they teach, and to inspiring their students. In turn, that is inspiring to colleagues, to their own commitments to their subjects, and the education of their students.

The participants who were invited to contribute were all subject-experts in their field with extensive research records. Seven had doctoral training in the UK and ten in the US. Nine were women and eight were men. Almost all of the sub-disciplines of the discipline and its associated areas were covered.

For the purposes of getting people to write about their teaching, the brief was simple and without the constraints these writers face when writing research papers—it was open-ended. Write about teaching your sub-discipline. What do you think is important? What turns you on? What turns students on? There was no page limit, no style sheet. There were no models. As an editor, I gave no advice, not even when asked.

After the book appeared, it seemed worthwhile to analyze the themes that emerged from the teachers' writing so as to understand what this group of internationally well-known scholars thought about their own work in the classroom. To that end, discourse analysis was employed (Brown & Yule, 1983). The next section contains the result of that analysis.

Results

Themes in the reflective writing of the seventeen subject-expert teachers that emerged from discourse analysis showed that subject-expert teachers are aware of many of the major factors in teaching transformatively, as well as other factors which impact teaching. Themes mentioned included: graduate attributes, learning outcomes, fitting the subject into the curriculum, course planning, textbook selection, practical work, assessment, student engagement, making learning enjoyable, competition for students among disciplines and generating research from teaching. Most of these concerns were emergent, coming from the participants' self-reflection on their teaching practice rather than having been formally acquired. No one mentioned formal training in teaching as a source of their reflections, although some of the contributors had received formal teacher training. Furthermore, each contributor had his or her own approach. No one contributor mentioned all of the themes to be documented below. More will be said about that later. In the following account, the contributors speak for themselves. The contributors' comments are presented as illustrations of each theme, as is the practice in discourse analysis:

What graduate attributes and learning outcomes need to be addressed?

"We have to ask where we want the student to end up."

"If students are used to thinking about potential objections and presenting arguments based on evidence, this should stand them in good stead."

"We need to build students understanding of how science progresses."

"I have very real concerns for linguistics as a discipline and I want to make sure that I am doing my part to ensure its survival in our universities."

What methods and motivations should be pursued?

"I believe that the degree to which one can engage the students, and keep the classroom lively and interesting, has a direct effect on the students' learning."

"Students love the sense that they might uncover a gap in theoretical coverage."

"Historical linguistics being what it is—there are many ways that topics can be ordered for presentation."

"Socratic learning requires a lot of energy from everyone, including the instructor."

"As things stand, language teachers in training usually hate their linguistics courses, and, moreover, are totally 'spooked' by them."

The writing also reveals that gifted subject-expert teachers share many personal attributes. Good subject-expert teachers are sharers. Almost all the chapters show an others-directedness and a keenness to share teaching expertise with others.

"Improvise as you teach. You will have to, because who knows what ideas or solutions will emerge from the discussion?"

"… if you love your subject, and you love teaching, and you care about your students, it will probably work pretty well."

"I had the very great good fortune to inherit this unit from a colleague."

Good subject-expert teachers teach and writ, as individuals. Being unburdened by style, length and content requirements, the subject teachers write as themselves rather than as subject-experts. All of the chapters are written in the first-person singular. Hence, the writing is more creatively anarchic than in journal articles.

"In this chapter I present a personal view of the teaching of psycholinguistics, a view which will inevitably be influenced by how I currently teach the subject, as well as by my personal history."

"… some of my own biases will leak out."

"Not only do I believe that suprasegmentals need to be taught, as well as segmentals, but, in fact, I have argued for years that the latter are more important."

"In fall, 1997, I was ready for a change in the life of work."

"… these pale before producing uvular fricatives or ergative case in a "normal" stream of speech …"

Subject-expert teachers must master disciplinary specifics. They know that all subject areas present their own pedagogical problems that, as subject-expert teachers, they must solve. However, the challenges of teaching a particular sub-discipline only gradually manifest to a beginning teacher. So often, you must find your own way to solve these pedagogical problems.

"Students seem to best develop an understanding of the component parts of speech when they are actually able to hear them separately."

"What happens in phonology, and why, seems to me less mysterious than what happens in syntax (a field that I know less about), and much less mysterious than what happens in morphology (a field that I know more about, but still do not understand well)."

"One point which it is difficult to communicate to students is the problem posed by unique morphs."

"Two of the most challenging concepts to teach Socratically are the difference between description and analysis, and between analysis and theory."

Subject-expert teachers are also well aware that their teaching is subject to local constraints. Every nation, state, and institution frames and constrains teaching a subject in its own way. Such constraints are not always recognized, but recognition comes with moving to other education systems and institutions.

"For reasons peculiar to Edinburgh's degree structure, students doing a joint major in any modern language and linguistics have to spend their third year abroad."

"In New Zealand, it is best to assume that students have no background knowledge at all."

"In Moscow, it is unusual and difficult to take courses outside the established curriculum of your major field."

"My university likes to brand itself as a research-intensive university …"

Most importantly subject-expert teaching is affectively engaged.

"They (school classroom teachers) are merely swept along as the bandwagon rolls through without any solid basis for doing what they are being told to do."

"Another of my biases is the privileging of good ethnography."

"Phonetics is my favorite subject to teach."

"We owe it to [our students] to articulate how our classes will help them go on to greater (and, yes, more lucrative) things."

In being affectively engaged, subject-expert teachers are good learners. They pick things up from others. They learn from their mistakes.

"I was slow to appreciate how challenging this situation is for students."

"The importance of teaching differently for different audiences was all too apparent when I had an unsuccessful experience teaching an undergraduate course in formal semantics at Leipzig."

"I used an excellent problem on sorting loanwords from cognates, which I adapted from one constructed by Calvert Watkins."

Discussion

I have shown by quoting their own words, that subject-expert teachers have a range of attributes and approaches that make them motivated, and motivating, teachers. These attributes and approaches can be set against the desiderata for transformative learning and teaching. They measure up well, I think. Mostly, though, committed teachers do not get to write chapters in books reflecting on their teaching. They do, however, get opportunities to write reflectively in the normal course of a teaching career. Every college teacher applies for teaching positions, quite often, more than once. Both in the letter of application and in associated statements, applicants have an opportunity to reflect on their personal commitments as subject-expert teachers. While such statements are circumscribed by the position description of the position for which the applicant is applying, they always provide opportunities for making the kinds of statements the teachers in the previous section of this paper made.

Some teachers write diaries or construct portfolios. These can have multiple purposes. They can be purely personal records, but can also be used for qualitative research (Symon, 2004) and for academic promotion. In each case, such diaries and portfolios can be used reflectively to empower a teacher to maintain himself or herself as a creative and positive-orientated individual.

This is also the case with tenure applications. While evidence of successful teaching is important (student evaluations among them), personal commitments to teaching are also significant. If after five plus years, a teacher shows that they are a worthwhile colleague, he or she should then affirm the affective orientation to the students and the subject being taught. Again, this is a form of reflective writing, although it has an operational aspect. My experience is that an application that shows a creative and positive effect towards both students, and the applicant's subject, has a better chance in the academic competition than an applicant who goes through the motions and says what he or she think their readers want to read.

While such writing is personal, it can also be collegial, especially if the institution is lucky enough where mentorship and friendship, rather than competition, prevail. Many people show their job applications to a colleague or friend and get collaborative feedback. In institutions where mentorship is encouraged, a mentor can be a great help in making useful suggestions to improve the writing of job and tenure applications.

Beyond the personal, there are always co-operative opportunities to write, and thus reflect on one's teaching. Take the humble course outline. No course outline is written without reflective work having gone into course planning. This planning usually takes place with others and within the constraints of a curriculum. If a teacher, in a course outline, relates the reasons why the course has the form it does (even if that section is brief), it can be engaging for students and lead them to expect that the course will have a transformative goal.

Co-operative curriculum review and development, likewise, gives opportunities for co-operative reflective writing. Involving senior students in this process can be creative for everyone concerned. Why are we teaching this material? How should we teach it? What is the best way to engage students? What are the students going to find most difficult? Such questions can only be answered by serious reflection.

Sometimes a whole degree will be reviewed, and the opportunity to write position papers advocating changes of various kinds will result. Each of these gives an opportunity for creative reflective engagement with subject matters and with graduate profiles.

All such processes have the potential to be transformational experiences for those involved. Instructors need not to teach the same material in the same way for the whole of their professional life. It is sure that if this is the goal, then ennui will set in. The dark side will beckon. Not only should there be transformational teaching, there should also be transformational teachers who are themselves constantly engaged in transformational activities, for, without transformed teachers, there can be no transformational learning. I have suggested that, with reflective writing, even under the constraints of mundane activities such as applying for jobs and writing course outlines, creative opportunities to reinvent oneself as a teacher occur.

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Relationship Conflict as Disorienting Dilemma: An Experiential Prototype for Transformation

LARRY J. GREEN
City University of Seattle

KAISU MÄLKKI
University of Helsinki

Abstract

This paper applies Mezirow's theory of transformative learning (2000) to the experience of relationship conflict—characterized here as a disorienting dilemma. We do so in order to facilitate the integration of theoretical knowledge with personal experience that such an application affords. We propose that the resultant procedural framework will more likely be employed to resolve future disorienting dilemmas We chose relationship conflict as our prototype for two reasons. Firstly, it is virtually a universal experience and as such can serve as a common reference point. Secondly, the emotions aroused during such conflicts approach the same intensity level as those reported for major crises such as bankruptcy, debilitating illness or injury, unemployment, and divorce. Like relationship conflict these dilemmas disrupt and disorient because the challenge they present overwhelm the effected person's conceptual framework. Being faced with the threat of chaos they may begin a search for more encompassing premises. We introduce and employ the concepts of ontological security, edge emotions, and boundary confusion in order to explicate the affective forces and cognitive errors that make such conflicts so distressing. Essentially, two sources of ontological security are pitted against each other: the attachment to a significant other is opposed to the attachment to one's foundational premises. The need to belong is pitted against the need to defend one's meanings. Framed this way, loss is inevitable—unless one develops a premise which transcends that conflict. We conclude with some pedagogical implications.

Keywords: disorienting dilemma, transformative learning, ontological security, boundary confusion

Introduction

This paper attempts to show how everyday conflicts, or micro-disorienting dilemmas can be utilized to generate transformative learning. By "everyday conflict" we are referring to—those clashes of opinion between significant others which produce discomfort and distress but often leave the meaning framework of each party unchanged. We offer a framework for understanding such incidents that would make perspective transformation a more likely outcome. We also suspect that repeated application of this framework to such conflicts would reduce the necessity for major crises as a precipitating condition for transformation. In order to theorize

Author's Note: Larry Green is an associate professor in counseling psychology at City University of Seattle, Vancouver Campus and Kaisu Mälkki is a lecturer in the department of teacher education research group of educational psychology at the University of Helsinki.

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everyday conflicts, we employ Mezirow's (1981; 1991; 2000; 2009) transformative learning theory (TL), as well as more recent elaborations that introduce notions of ontological security (Mälkki & Green, 2014; 2016), edge-emotions (Mälkki, 2010; 2011), and Mahler's (1985) earlier work on the development of psychological boundaries. With the help of these conceptual tools, the paper analyzes the micro-processes of relationship conflict. Having outlined these processes, we then refer our discussion back to educational settings to reveal how this acquired knowledge can be employed pedagogically.

Although relationship conflict is not the typical case represented in the transformative learning literature, it is one that is encountered in most everyone's life—whether it is with one's significant other, a family member or colleague. Because such is the case, students will be able to refer to their own lived experience. This reference point enables them to apprehend the existential matrix from which the theory is abstracted. When that occurs, they will more easily integrate theoretical knowledge with personal experience. Having realized such an integration on one occasion, they will be more prepared to generalize this process to other future disorienting dilemmas (see also Mezirow, 1991). Such repeated experiences begin to problematize the notion that the self is essentially a stable, once and for all, achievement in favour of a model of a dynamic self that requires ongoing construction and maintenance. As Kegan (1983, p. 12) puts it, we are meaning-making creatures. "That activity is experienced by a dynamically maintained 'self,' the rhythms and labors of the struggle to make meaning, to have meaning, to protect meaning, to lose meaning, and to lose the Self along the way." If we educators are to be effective midwives of this process then we need to be able to attune to the learner's ongoing existential and epistemic activity. This meaning-making and meaning-protecting activity is the process we will be exploring as we examine how it manifests during relationship conflict.

Before continuing, let us acknowledge that the cultivation of reflection and critical thinking is central in the theory of transformative learning theory. Both serve the purpose of deconstructing culturally derived assumptions that may no longer serve the individual (see Brookfield, 1994). The aim of such practices is to remove the constraints on the creative freedom necessary for constructing more adequate premises. It is a freedom *from* limiting beliefs, rather than a prescription *for* specific, replacement assumptions (see e.g. Mälkki & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012). That is, it is up to the individual to develop their own premises as they move through, and emerge from, their liminal experience (see also Green, 2012; Timmermans, 2010; Solnit, 2006). Hopefully they emerge with a more inclusive meaning perspective (Mezirow, 2000). That is, they will have developed a set of assumptions that can be effectively applied to a wider range of circumstances. This wider range implies that the transformative process is not only about resolving the present crisis, but is also future oriented. When further disorienting dilemmas occur, the current resolution is available as a resource that can be applied to the emergent dilemma. Having experienced a greater sense of efficacy as a result, one would expect that the person would, over time, become more willing to subject their governing assumptions to critical reflection. From this perspective, working through relationship conflict could be utilized as a template for other disorienting dilemmas that the student is likely to encounter during his or her education. For example, the acquisition of "threshold concepts" for any academic discipline or profession (Timmermans, 2010) would be one such outcome where these procedures could be applied.

Theoretical Framework

Mezirow's (1981; 1991; 2000; 2009) transformative learning theory focuses primarily on major disruptive events that initiate a process of metamorphosis. Loss of employment, divorce, death, bankruptcy, returning to civilian life are all examples of Mezirow's (1991, 2000) disorienting dilemmas. They present a crisis that exceeds the capacity of the person's cognitive framework to render them intelligible. As a result, one is not able to go on one's life and one feels oneself plunged into non-sense or chaos. The extreme discomfort that such crises elicit can motivate a process to develop a more encompassing meaning perspective. This is how the transformative process begins (see Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow chose to focus his theoretical research on *major* "disorienting dilemmas." Doing so produced clear concepts which were foregrounded or made explicit relative to the tacit background of everyday existence. In this paper, however, we focus on the transformative potential of relationship conflict, as embodying many of the same forces as those unleashed by major crises. Just as reflection and critical thinking are necessary procedures for transformative learning, they can also be profitably applied to the clashes and conflicts of everyday life. However, as research indicates (see Taylor, 2007; Mälkki 2011), reflection is neither easy nor automatic. In other words, even when the results that our assumptions produce fail to satisfy, they do not *force* us to reflect on them. To repeat: reflection is an ideal and not an automatic response to problematized assumptions (Mälkki, 2010). We believe that Mezirow's theory neglects or overlooks the *existential* turning point upon which reflection and critical thinking depend (Mälkki, 2010; Mälkki & Green, 2014). Our quest in this paper is to develop an understanding on which to base a pedagogical approach that would *encourage* the individual to choose critical thinking over assimilation. It takes courage to question one's assumptions—to take up the challenge to author one's life. We are invited to be explorers of an unknown territory. Some confidence can be had if we have access to a rudimentary map of the process involved. Mezirow sketches out the major stages in that sequence. However, we suggest that his theory lacks sensitivity to, or awareness of, the subtle, experiential processes that, taken together, generate the larger processes that he does name. In what follows, we articulate those subtle processes through a phenomenological investigation and description of conflicts occurring in everyday life. We believe that such an enhanced map would give the transforming individual the confidence to continue their personal exploration.

Although the literature on transformative learning names bankruptcy, unemployment, return to civilian life, and divorce as characteristic disorienting dilemmas, we believe that relationship conflict can be viewed as a rehearsal for such processes. Indeed, we think that such dramatic shifts are not inevitable if we learn to make the ongoing opportunities for correction that daily life offers. For example, when we understand that relationship conflict includes within it the *potential* to disrupt or even destroy an individual's preferred life narrative, we can respond in one of two ways: we can impulsively say or act in ways that are damaging to the relationship or we can utilize TL theory to critically examine the inadequate assumptions that are generating the relationship tension. Therefore, in the following, we will offer further theoretical elaborations that deal specifically with the interactions between the meaning perspectives that are being contested.

Let us begin these elaborations with the concept of *ontological security.* This term refers to the existential aspect of the transformative process (Mälkki & Green, 2014; 2017). While the term is not used by Mezirow himself, his writings imply its significance, "[a] defining condition of being human is our urgent need to understand and order the meaning of our experience, to integrate it with what we know, in order to avoid the threat of chaos" (Mezirow, 2000). That

"urgent need" is the engine that drives the TL process. We find ourselves scrambling to give form to the chaos of unprocessed experience. However, Mezirow's quotation is deceptively simple and benefits from an unpacking. A closer examination reveals a structural model of a dialectical relationship between two levels of human existence: experience and meaning (Mälkki & Green 2017). Here we are appropriating Gendlin's (1997) claim that meaning gives conceptual form to our inchoate experience. Once given form, this fresh meaning can potentially be integrated with what we already know. And further, we can employ that meaning to communicate with others regarding our condition and intentions. The result is enhanced ontological security as one's meanings arise from, and are integrated with our bodily experience (Mälkki & Green, 2017).

The "ordering" of experience, that Mezirow refers to, can be reframed as equivalent to establishing and naming conceptual guidelines that take the "if…, then…" form. For example, "*If* I cry, *then* mommy will come and sooth me"; "*if* it's raining, *then* I should take an umbrella"; "*If* my partner lies to me, *then* I should stop granting my trust"; *If* I like my community, *then* I should support local business"; "*If* I believe the world is becoming more dangerous, *then* I should become active in a political party that works for non-aggression", etc.

Two things can be said about the foregoing list of conceptual "rules." Firstly, those exemplary premises are loosely arranged from the most particular to the most general. Such is also the developmental path from infancy to adulthood (Kegan, 1983). That is, with the accumulation of processed experience, our premises become more encompassing. Consequently, they can be applied in a way that brings order to a wider range, of seemingly disparate experiences. For example, once one grasps the psychological notion of projection, then that can be applied to developing a deeper understanding of one of the roots of relationship conflict. Another way to understand meanings or premises is through the metaphor of "connecting the dots"—an attempt to identify patterns. Once identified, those patterns can be the means to augment our efficacy and autonomy. If we can predict what is going to happen, our sense of control is enhanced —the threat of chaos is calmed[1]. And this, in turn, produces an enhanced sense of ontological security (Mälkki & Green, 2014; 2017). We feel a sense of well-being…that we are OK, and the world is a good place. Giddens (1991) offered a complementary definition of ontological security as a sense of order and continuity regarding an individual's experiences. He argues that it is reliant on people's *faith in the stability of their meanings*. When an event occurs that destabilizes their existent meaning perspective, it will undermine their ontological security. The parallels with Mezirow's thought are obvious. Reliable meanings equal ontological security.

Let us deepen our understanding of these phenomena by employing a developmental lens. From that perspective, the roots of ontological security are initially established through attachment to our caregiver. We know, without "knowing" conceptually, that without the nurturance and love that our caregivers offer, we will surely perish. Our bonding is a matter of life and death (Mahler, 1985, Bowlby, 1988). Eventually, because we find this dependency on another to be uncertain or insecure, we begin to strive for autonomy. That is, we begin to develop behavioral schemes, and later, conceptual meanings that permit us to take care of ourselves. Gradually, our meanings begin to augment attachment, with both contributing to ontological

[1] The attraction of conspiracy theories is that they do connect dots resulting in a coherent worldview that is not necessarily true.

security. That is, meaning schemes not only provide us with a conceptual understanding of the world (as Mezirow's emphasis on rationality implied), but they also serve a more fundamental affective need: maintaining one's sense of ontological security (Mälkki & Green, 2017). This discloses why individuals cling to their meanings even when they suspect that they might be inadequate. They attach to these meanings for the same reason that they clung to their caregivers as infants and toddlers. These *attachments* make up the emotional substrate that has to be taken into account when supporting people during their transformative process. Toward that end we will engage in a closer examination of the theoretical aspects of reflection and their relation to the "edge-emotions."

Comfort zone and edge-emotions are concepts that represent recent developments in the theory of transformative learning. These concepts were developed by Mälkki (2010; 2011) in order to explicate the challenges and prerequisites for actualizing critical reflection. Through this process we hope to account for the perceived difficulties of translating the theoretical ideals of TL into practice.

One's *comfort zone* (Mälkki 2010; 2011) refers to the affective dimension of one's meaning perspective. We experience pleasantness and comfort as we carry on with our lives and interpret events, our social relations and ourselves unproblematically—according to our established meaning perspectives. The world appears as understandable, and consequently we have confidence in our ability to survive. Although we may be aware of the possibility of multiple, alternate, interpretations, we are grounded in our own sense of coherence and continuity as we apprehend the world via our expectations and previous understandings.

Edge-emotions (Mälkki, 2010; 2011) refer to the unpleasant emotions (such as fear, anxiety, shame, guilt, frustration) that appear when our meaning perspectives are challenged. Some conditions that produce edge-emotions include: when we are unable to utilize previous experience to understand our current situation; when our values, assumptions, or cherished viewpoints become questioned by others; and when our interpretation of that situation carries with it the risk of social exclusion and isolation. These unpleasant emotions have an existential basis as they basically work to preserve our sense of continuity and equilibrium, thereby, maintaining a stable identity and a consistent worldview (Mälkki, 2011). Generally, emotions work in favour of survival by informing us as to whether our external environment is safe or dangerous, and, when the latter is the case, mobilizing us for action (Damasio, 1999). Similarly, the edge-emotions alert us to the potential threat to the adequacy of our psychic organization or meaning perspectives (Mälkki 2010; 2011). In the first case, it is our biological survival that is at risk, and in the second, it is the viability of our ego. When the latter is the case, we often have a natural tendency to avoid dealing with the issues that challenge our premises. We accomplish this by interpreting the situation in a way that confirms, rather than invalidates our assumptions. For example, we may blame the other for the situation. In contrast to that tendency, we suggest that these same edge-emotions, when reframed, can be used to access, then inspect, the problematized assumptions. That is, we can learn to embrace the edge-emotions, to accept them as a source of significant information—as opposed to considering them shameful, because they've revealed gaps and contradictions in our conceptual framework. Rather, we can come to appreciate them *because* they allow us to identify those flaws. The edge-emotions can, in fact, be seen as the path toward more rational thinking: When we are able to embrace, feel and live through the unpleasant edge-emotions, the resistance to reflection that they provoke can be transcended. (Mälkki, 2010; 2011.)

Finally, transformation is a restructuring of a person's way of being in the world. Not only does it change one's understanding of the self, but it also changes one's beliefs about the world (Mezirow, 1991; Kegan, 1994; Taylor, 2007). That structuring process is governed (at least initially) by the ongoing recalibration of the boundary between Self and Not-Self (or world). The border that divides what is "me" from what is "not me" is not fixed and permanent but rather evolves over time (Mahler, 1985). In addition, the position of that structuring boundary isn't so much a matter of conscious, rational deliberation as it is a developmental achievement. At each stage, one's behavior is generated by a boundary assumption that signifies one's developmental level. Initially, for example, in childhood we experience the world is revolving around us. Only after achieving a boundary do we realize that much of world is "mind independent." At different stages of life, one's boundary gets redrawn. As infants, we act as if "mommy and I are one person." Ideally, by the age of three, according to Mahler (1985), we have achieved the beginning of a separate identity. But this struggle with regard to positioning the boundary is far from over. As we shall see later, romantic attachment often is an attempt to erase that demarcating boundary between Self and other—to achieve a state of perfect union. Only after repeated disappointments do some individuals turn to critical reflection as a preparatory step for redrawing that boundary. One of the first author's clients made that explicit when he stated, "I've re-drawn my circle of care to include my wife but not my in-laws."

From Theory to Praxis

In the following we use the above concepts to analyze the case of a relationship conflict. This analysis explicates the dynamics of the transformative potential of everyday encounters. We will consider various iterations of the phenomenon of relationship conflict. Iterations are not mere repetitions, but rather a cyclic process of inquiry with each cycle revealing another aspect of the phenomena. The more accurate this built up or sedimented description, the more likely the reader will be engaged. An engaged reader is more likely to internalize or integrate the process as a form of practical wisdom. Whereas theory engages the mind, narrative is more likely to engage the existential self. In this way, we intend to bring the ontological aspects of the transformative process to the fore besides the more often considered epistemological aspects.

Most often relationship conflict involves an incongruence between one's prereflective expectations for the other and their actual personhood and behavior. Phenomenologically, this is experienced (at least initially) as "you've upset me," or "I'm upset and you're the cause", or "I blame you for not living up to my expectations!", or, "you, and not my meaning perspective, is the source of my distress." In the foregoing series, we've gone through various ways, from very simple to more complex, that the distressed person is construing the incident. What they all have in common, however, is that they attribute the cause of the problem to the other. However, one's partner is unlikely to accept that attribution, and thus we have the potential for relationship conflict and a disorienting dilemma. By definition, in such cases, the parties' existent meaning perspectives are *incapable* of producing an outcome that would resolve the conflict. Ideally, they would interpret the situation "rationally" and objectively as a conflict between two sets of meaning perspectives. Framed this way, the conflict could then be seen as a source of motivation to search for possible resolution. However, in actuality, we often tend to experience the situation as if the possibility of resolution is being blocked…by the other. That is, the relationship has moved from harmonious and pleasant to one of frustration and distress.

We may unpack this situation further from the perspective of boundary confusion. Earlier we stated that we continually redraw the boundary between what is my Self (me) and what is not (Mahler, 1985). To get a sense of the far-reaching consequences of where that line is drawn, consider what happens when one experiences one's partner or child to be an extension of one's self—when a defining and separating boundary has not been established. In such a case, it would be the most "natural" thing in the world to attempt to control one's partner or child in the same manner as one attempts to control one's self. This imperative would certainly have relationship consequences. Attempts at independence by the partner or child would often be interpreted as defiance or disobedience. From a psychological perspective, the first party's way of understanding appears to be generated by the premise: "I hold *you* [the other] responsible for *my* expectations." That is to say, "*It is your behavior and not my assumptions that call for critical thinking*." If we manage to find "evidence" for our discomfort in the other's behavior, we preempt the need to critically examine our perspective. This is an inevitable result of boundary confusion. It's not hard to see how such a premise will inevitably produce a disorienting dilemma vis-à-vis relationship conflict.

The first author uses the following narrative to communicate the above abstractions to various audiences including grad students, conference attendees and couples in conflict. Relationships, if they are to persist, evolve through two, radically different premises: communion and communication. During the initial phase, communion is the objective. During the courtship, a secret conversation is taking place along the lines of: "It's a real drag being alone! Why don't you and I get together and be one person? And…that one person will be me…OK?" [This never fails to illicit a laughter of recognition.]

Of course, this conversation has to be covert—its expression would reveal its absurdity. So, keeping their wishes private, the two parties join together in an initial, blissful union. They can finish each other's sentences, read each other's minds. They have become a kind of composite creature—like a dog with a tail. The party who gives up most of their autonomy becomes the tail. The one who doesn't, is the dog. The dog's confidence and power increases as a result of their partner's sacrifice. The tail, on the other hand, becomes weaker and weaker, more and more *indecisive*. Finally, it has had enough, "I want to be a dog too!" It jumps off the dog, reclaiming its personhood—independent, no longer compliant. As a result of this separation, the first dog, once again, experiences the vulnerability that it had thought it had left behind. This is a turning point for their union: it can dissolve through divorce or the second phase of relationship can begin. In that phase, *communication* replaces mindreading as the preferred mode of coordinating their worlds. Their interactions are based on the assumption that they are two unique individuals who must express their needs and desires if there is to be any chance of getting them met.

This all sounds neat and tidy but there is grief involved in giving up the fantasy of perfect fusion. Grief that is accepted and worked through, is the prerequisite for establishing healthy boundaries. Grief denied means continuing frustration. Transitioning between these two phases is difficult because the parties have lost the ground of their initial premise—they have been dis-illusioned. (We hyphenate that word to reveal its original meaning.) The construction of a new, more effective relationship premise requires confidence and courage, as well as support from others.

Let us deepen our understanding of the boundary phenomenon by asking how it might work in a collectivist culture. In such cultures, there may be no boundary demarking individuals from the collective, such that one family member's behavior is interpreted as the whole family's responsibility. For example, when one member violates a tradition, the perceived taint is on the family's reputation. This underwrites the punishment delivered. Thus, the assumptions that comprise the family's collective comfort zone (Mälkki, 2010; 2011) may be internalized as the inviolate standard for each member. In a more individualistic culture, as in the West, there are still remnants of this kind of boundary confusion. This will most likely occur in an intimate relationship. There, a partner's non-alignment with one's assumptions is often taken as evidence of his or her moral culpability. These examples, drawn from both collectivist cultures and from intimate relationships, make it clear that such embodied premises orient or call forth behavioral reactions. A challenge to those foundational beliefs, therefore, provokes an intense reaction—the "offended" party knows that something vital has happened but doesn't know how to respond. There appears to be no acceptable script and the individual is thrown into chaos. Verbal abuse or physical violence is often the result. The forces unleashed by this disorienting dilemma reveal why transformative learning is the exception rather than the rule. Few people have the resources to move through the ontological upheavals engendered. If they are fortunate enough to have a teacher, professor, life coach or therapist that understands the process, their chances are increased considerably.

Personal Identity Anchored by Meaning Perspective

Our "urgent need to understand our experience" (Mezirow, 2000; Mälkki & Green, 2017) can also be understood as a need for intelligibility. We want to *know* why we do what we do. That is, we want to codify our experience into concepts that allow us to navigate intentionally. Here again we have two levels: experience, which is sub-verbal and meaning which is a linguistic codification or mapping of that experience. When we *identify* our selfhood with the resultant map, an eruption of unprocessed experience is experienced as the threat of chaos. An adequate map, on the other hand, seemingly "guarantees" our continuity. That is, intelligibility enhances survival. The life force, or the will to survive, is primary and acquiring reliable knowledge, meaning, or concepts are the means to that most important of ends. We attach to those meanings as they function like life preservers keeping one afloat in the flux of experience...providing a kind of stability within that flux (see Mälkki & Green, 2017). Before we develop and attach to those meanings, however, we attach to caregivers. We are utterly dependent on their care for our survival. In summary, both caring relationships and reliable meanings are in the service guaranteeing our ongoing existence.

As a consequence, relationship conflict represents itself as a disorienting dilemma. We attach to our partner and expect them to be a stable source of belonging. Similarly, we attach to our meanings as a reliable map for insuring our ongoing survival. When we are in relationship conflict, both those attachments are threatened, and one's sense of ontological security (Mälkki & Green, 2017) faces a double threat. On the one hand, we risk losing our attachment to the person we love and a caring relationship is put in jeopardy—it might be severed. And, on the other, we risk having the meaning that we were struggling to assert, invalidated. If we sacrifice our meanings for the sake of preserving the relationship, our dependency on that relationship is amplified to compensate for loss of meaning. That is, we surrender our autonomy and adopt

someone else's meanings, in an effort to retain our relationship attachment. In contrast, if we sacrifice our relationship in favour of our hard-won meanings, then those meanings can become closed or rigid in order to compensate for the loss of belonging. Because the relationship support is being threatened or undermined, both parties tend to insist on the meanings that each is advocating. Such uncompromising insistence further threatens the relationship. It seems like either way some loss of ontological security is entailed. No wonder the conflict can become so intense. That intensity is the spur that drives a transformative process whose end is a premise that reconciles the need to be both authentic and in relationship. This happy solution is only achieved when both parties recognize that, while there may be only one reality, there are multiple, valid perspectives on the issue being contested.

Accepting Rather than Suppressing Edge-Emotions: News from Reality

Above, we have illustrated the way the relationship conflict presents itself as an everyday disorienting dilemma, where our initial response to edge-emotions is not to reflect and transform, but rather to fight for our right to remain in the comfort zone. In the following, we consider what it would take to transcend these tendencies and to actually utilize the potential for micro-transformations that these instances involve. Toward that end, we offer the following illustrative narrative:

A psychiatrist with whom the first author worked conducted a training day for the staff which began with the following question: "Have you noticed that couples who have lived together successfully begin to be conflictual after they get married?" There was wide spread head nodding. "Would you like to know why that happens?", he continued. Again, more head nodding. He answered as follows: "We all have a dormant fantasy of the kind of person we will marry." That fantasy is activated once the relationship is formalized through marriage. Once activated, that previously dormant template becomes the standard by which one's partner is compared and criticized. Whereas, before they were good enough; now, they can't measure up. The resultant relationship difficulties are attributed to the other. Or, to put it in everyday language, "Somebody is crazy here, and I'm pretty sure it's not me." This "diagnosis" is a means to situate chaos outside of oneself. In such a case, a disorienting dilemma has occurred but it doesn't, of necessity, lead to transformation.

What are the conditions that might favor critical self-reflection rather than faultfinding? One such condition is the dissolution of the marriage followed up some time later with a second marriage. When this second attempt gradually begins to resemble the first, an opportunity for critical, reflective thinking is more likely. It is the "sameness" across different relationship contexts that raises the possibility that one's behavior is, in some unrecognizable way, contributing to the relationship conflict. Being implicated in the creation of this recurring pattern, the person may begin to look at the beliefs, meanings or premises that might be generating that pattern. For example, they may discover a belief that their partner is an extension of their self as in, "you and I have achieved a state of perfect fusion—I can finish your sentences and you can finish mine." Tracing out the logic of this initial premise, one comes to realize its inevitable consequence: "When you do something that is different than what I would expect, you ruin everything." Going one step further, I may come to see that I might try to prevent this unpleasant outcome by coercing compliance. However, with a little reflection, I can recognize that I chafe at my partner's attempts to do the same to me. I resist having my autonomy and agency drained off

into compliance. Again, this presents a disorienting dilemma: "How can I justify getting my own way when I strenuously resist my partner's desire to do the same?"

Once premises have been explicitly articulated in this manner it becomes possible to think critically about them. In addition, once given a cognitive form, it becomes possible to track the consequences and contradictions that such premises produce. One is then motivated to begin a search for alternative premises that might make more satisfying outcomes possible—perhaps a premise that integrates the need for autonomy with the need to belong—something like an, "I'm OK; you're OK" disposition.

We've condensed a whole complex process of two marriages into a beginning and end, giving scant attention to the micro-processes that occur within either. Let us correct this omission. We suggest that valorizing, rather than repudiating, one's edge-emotions during relationship conflict might make a major crisis, such as divorce unnecessary. In what follows we will present a description of such a process. This evocative description is intended to remind the reader of their own experience of relationship challenges. Hopefully, they will be able to apply the framework articulated here as a model for articulating their own.

To begin: a conflict with one's partner can be used as a marker for one's felt, but unrecognized, internal conflict. It is the successful resolution of this internal conflict that will signal that transformation has been achieved. Initially, this internal conflict is experienced as a somatic tension that lacks cognitive content. Rather, one's embodied experience is a confusing mixture of unpleasant edge-emotions such as anxiety, frustration, sadness, disappointment and distress. Whatever cognitive powers are available are usually focused on the external conflict: marshalling arguments, preparing defenses, etc. (Mälkki, 2011). Thus, our cognitive capabilities are not employed for critically examining our interpretation of the situation but rather to promote defensive action—in a manner analogous to our response to physical danger (Mälkki 2010; 2011). Underneath this flurry of justifying activity an internal conflict is also occurring. That conflict is still inchoate…not yet formulated conceptually. Ideally, when the external argument is abated or suspended, then either or both parties have the opportunity to turn their attention inward. This turn to reflexivity is a necessary precursor for giving form to the internal conflict. This might take the form: "How can I be both angry and in love with the same person?" To experience and name such ambivalence is an improvement over the more global descriptor of disorientation, disorganization, or chaos. It is a more workable expression of the discomfort. One can re-orient by addressing both aspects of the ambivalence separately. "What specifically am I angry about?" And, "How can I express my distress in a manner that doesn't damage my loved one?"

However, the above iteration doesn't do justice to the most difficult aspect of this process: the experience of chaos that has yet to be given a conceptual form. One has been thrown into a quandary by an unexpected disagreement. Because there are two, conflicting response potentials (love and anger), the distress is experienced as noise, not signal—chaos not cosmos. The chaos may be felt as if one has fallen through the false bottom of one's expectations into some formless helplessness, into some kind of existential noise. As an expression of instinctual resistance and self-preservation, one can lash out, only making matters worse. Over time, one suffers and then recognizes the consequences of such indulgence. Self-control is cultivated as one struggles to master these hostile impulses. Toward that end, many individuals attempt to minimize the damage by turning away or withdrawing from the fray. Yet, the unpleasant emotion

continues to be stoked by the discrepancy between what one wanted and expected and what one actually received. One's attention is absorbed either by trying to control one's responses or collecting evidence to justify one's reactions. No reflection going on here.

In either case, cognitive tools are being employed, yet suffering continues. This suggests that cognitive strategies alone may not be the best way to move forward. Rather than managing or suppressing these disturbing feelings, we suggest that they should be accepted and valued (Mälkki, 2010; 2011). The following aphorism supports that claim: "You should feel grateful whenever you are disappointed or frustrated because it means that you are getting news from reality." The implicit wisdom in this aphorism is that one's emotions are pointing to the discrepancy between what one expected and what actually occurred. That is, the emotions are not some extraneous interference, but rather a more immediate (although difficult to interpret), registration of the reality of one's situation. When we try to control and avoid these alarming emotions, we block access to a source of information that might help us to resolve the dilemma. On the other hand, by "feeling grateful," we stop trying to control those emotions. In any case, they prevail despite our attempts at erasure—now without conscious awareness but as somatic distress. Our unsuccessful attempt to control the uncontrollable reveals the limited powers of our willfulness resulting in greater, not lesser, insecurity (Mälkki & Green, 2017). Such attempts tether our cognitive resources to an impossible mission—like a dog chasing, but never grasping, its own tail. In contrast, acceptance of the emotions enables a more realistic apprehension of the situation.

Furthermore, the aphorism is valuable because it identifies and separates two domains which formerly had been conflated: the domain of assumption from the domain of the event. Firstly, emotional arousal is a somatic response to a challenge presented by an event. It can be used to direct our attention toward the event in an effort to collect more significant information. Simultaneously, it raises the question, "Are one's operating assumptions adequate to that challenge?" When taken up in that manner, those emotions can be employed as signs that could direct our attention toward assumptions that had been operating in the background. For example, "When it comes to vacations, my partner and I *should* be on the same page." Such an assumption can now be subjected to critical scrutiny. "Just because my partner prefers museums and galleries whereas I like hiking and swimming doesn't presuppose that something is wrong with our relationship." This is the moment of negative capability—the moment when one realizes that things could be otherwise than previously construed. The "shoulds" that one has been laboring under are not absolute laws but rather provisional, and, therefore, modifiable orientations. Secondly, now that one's assumptions have been identified and made provisional, one can turn to the "news from reality"—to perceptions that haven't been prepackaged into familiar but inadequate meanings. This fresh "news" can be employed as a potential basis for constructing a more effective meaning framework. For example, if one turns and engages (even if only visually) with one's actual partner—that is, if one allows oneself to "receive" them— then one discovers that the "other" is different than that negative internal image that is being nursed. In other words, one sees more of the actuality of the other person juxtaposed alongside the internal image that one has been priming. They're both present and, being so, can be compared and their differences revealed. Whereas, formerly this gap was an occasion for disappointment or frustration, it now can be employed consciously and positively to learn about aspects of one's partner that had been previously obscured.

One is now at an existential turning point: do I revise my assumptions, giving up some troublesome ones such as "If you really loved me, I wouldn't have to ask you to do X because you would know what I wanted?" Or, do I share this fresh experience of my partner in such a way that the whole situation can be carried forward—no longer "locked in" to our habitual interactive pattern. Feeling freshly recognized, one's partner is more likely to respond in kind. Choosing the latter could be the occasion for one's trial learning. This claim is based on the notion that anything which results in a reduction of one's anxiety can have a structuring effect on the psyche. That is, the new response can become a premise that operates without conscious willing—based on the neuroscience dictum that what fires together wires together. Concretely, if the individual experiences a better outcome through stating their needs clearly rather than assuming that their partner is a mind-reader, then one is more likely to try communication on the next occasion. In this manner, a disorienting dilemma that has been successfully integrated through the adoption of a more inclusive premise will become part of one's automatic response set. A more modest claim would be that this pattern would need to be consciously enacted a number of times before it becomes one's default orientation.

In summary, we have discussed how to employ emotional reactions as the means toward identifying one's assumptions. Giving them conceptual form is a necessary precursor that enables a critical evaluation of their adequacy. That is, one has to *know* that one has been engaging in "mind-reading" before one can question its efficacy. This process is more difficult than it sounds because one's ontological security is dependent, in part, on our *attachment* to those operating assumptions and premises. Separating identity from those premises means loosening, even dissolving, that attachment—throwing one into a liminal state—betwixt and between two differing sets of orienting assumptions: those that are being shed and those that have yet to be fully formed. We employed the example of relationship conflict as a prototype of that process. We did so because such conflicts produce intense emotions because of the seemingly irreconcilable conflict between the need to belong and the need to be autonomous. The only way "out" requires the construction of a new premise that doesn't set these primal needs in opposition.

Educator as Midwife

Keeping the above considerations in mind, we wonder about their pedagogical implications. For example, as educators interested in Mezirow's theory, are we responsible for producing a disorienting dilemma for students? Or, would it be preferable to apply his theory to the students' *previously* experienced disorienting dilemma (Mälkki & Green, 2016)?

Let us pause briefly to consider one possible reason why these questions are being contemplated. Disorienting dilemmas have the power to unleash negative or regressive change as well as positive transformation. As a result, collateral damage is a distinct possibility. Emotions are "contagious," and one student's distress may stimulate others. For that reason, we suspect that many educators would not want to intentionally produce a disorienting dilemma. Furthermore, this potential for extreme reactions can also produce internal conflict for the instructor. On the one hand, they might feel reluctant to provoke or even accompany a student who might be experiencing such a disruption/eruption for fear of being caught up in the student's chaos. On the other hand, they want to see the student all the way through to the far side—a side where the student has constructed and integrated a larger frame of reference. One's reluctance to accompany that person can be substantially reduced if the educator functions as a catalyst for

integration rather than the "cause" of the disorientation. When the "disaster" has already happened, the educator is more likely to be perceived as a resource, rather than a source of danger. The boundaries, and thus, understandings of respective responsibilities are clearer.

We offer an example of this based on the first author's 45 years' experience as a psychotherapist and educator:

> *When doing relationship counseling I might offer an alternate, more hopeful framework for understanding a couple's dilemma. When it is received enthusiastically by one of the parties, the other will frequently remark, "I've been saying the same thing for the past six months." Yes, the second party has been sending, but the first party has not been receiving. It's not received because the party offering advice is the same party who "caused" the distress.*

An important issue here is trust. With a professional counselor, the client can more easily offer their trust because their relationship history with the counselor is blank relative to that with their partner…the client's expectation is for help rather than further injury. The same holds true for the educator student relationship *when* the former doesn't provoke the chaos.

Conclusion

This paper's claim is that the serial resolutions of relationship conflicts can produce the micro-transformations that successful living seems to require while at the same obviate the need for major crises as the pre-requisite for transformation. In addition, by employing relationship conflict as the prototype for disorienting dilemmas, we tap into the students' personal history, thus enabling them to integrate theoretical material with personal experience. We believe that such integration increases the chances that students will be able to apply this process to future disorienting experiences. That is, integration will allow them to generalize these procedures to differing contexts.

We also think that this essay has implications for widening transformative learning theory's range of influence beyond formal education. Western culture seems to be entering a transitional era replete with multiple disorienting dilemmas. Many of our fundamental institutions: education, law, health, government, etc. all exhibit signs of transition or even disarray. Surely, TL theory has a lot to offer persons working within or effected by those institutions. Because the experience of relationship conflict is a prototypical disorienting dilemma it can be used as an introduction to the theory of transformative learning and that, in turn, would enable more of us to navigate post modernity successfully. In addition, in this essay we've employed ordinary language, rather than a specialist vocabulary, such that its concepts are more accessible to as wide an audience as possible. In summary, relationship conflict appears to be an intermittent but inevitable aspect of all human relations and therefore offers an experiential basis to which we can apply the heuristics of TL theory.

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