Setting the Stage for Transformative Learning

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Lessons learned along the way
Interest in the self lead to exploration and study of:

Deep learning

Transformative learning
Our focus today – transformative learning

What it is

Why it’s important

Fostering a transformative learning culture in higher education

Assessing outcomes
Large group sharing activity

Transformative learning – What does the term mean to you?
An emerging field of theory and practice

The XIII International Transformative Learning Conference
Teachers College Columbia University New York, New York
Nov 7 – 10, 2018
Mary’s Story

Making sense of her experience
Clips from *Educating Rita*

What do you notice about how she changes across these three clips?
What these stories tell us about learning in higher education

• Larry Daloz – Fraying of the fabric of meaning

• Our frames of reference – our ways of making sense no longer work
Meaning making involves

• Reworking our frames of reference

• Remaking our sense of self
Making meaning challenges

Our existing sets of beliefs, values, assumptions

Resulting in - new meaning – Learning!!

Vs
Reflective activity

Can you recall a recent time when your beliefs, values, or assumptions were challenged?

• Briefly describe the incident

• How did you feel about it?

• What was the outcome of the experience?

Take a moment to think about this and then share with a colleague next to you
Not all change is transformative...
All learning is not transformative

We don’t always learn from transformations

Transformative learning – a particular kind of learning and change
a powerful metaphor of transformation
Relationship of transformative learning to other forms of adult learning
(Merriam and Clark)

Experience

- Personally Meaningful
  - Transformative: Changes or adds new meaning schemes or perspectives; shift in consciousness
  - Nontransformative: Adds to existing meaning schemes/perspectives, or elaborates present level of consciousness
- Not Personally Meaningful (routine, not learning)
Not all high impact practices are necessarily transformative
Learning that:

• Enhances
  – Self-awareness
  – Self-understanding

• Integrates
  – Head and heart
  – Cognition and emotion

• Fosters
  – Deep personal change
  – Deep organizational and social change
Experience of disequilibrium – a trigger event

• Experiences that challenge or shake what we know about....

• Experience of disorientation, dis-ease, disconnect, or malaise – something is not right

• Arousal of powerful feelings and emotions

• No real clear or satisfactory resolution
Engaging in critical reflection

• Reflect on key assumptions related to the experience

• Explore alternatives to current assumptions

• Develop and test alternative perspectives

• Integrate new perspectives into daily life
Further development of theory:

• Transformative learning as working with emotions

• Expressive ways of knowing

• Spiritual/planetary dimensions of transformative learning

• Cultural contexts and differences
Outcomes of transformative learning

Deeper awareness and understanding

More inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change and reflective

More adaptive to and reflective of needs of current situation
Revisit . . . .

- Mary’s story
- Rita’s story
Questions or epiphanies about what’s been said so far?
Why important to higher ed?

What do you think?
Why important to higher ed?

Increasing diversity of faculty and students

Changing landscape of higher ed

Interdisciplinary and multi-sector collaborations

Emphasis on process rather than content

Emphasis on high impact practices
Why important to higher ed?

Internationalization

“Wicked” problems & sustainability

Global citizens
Creating a Culture of Transformative Learning
What does it take?

*Cultural change*

Change in *underlying assumptions, behaviors, processes, and products*

*Deep and pervasive*

*Intentional*

*Occur consistently over time*

(Eckel, Hill, & Green, 1998).
Transformative learning environments require

- Safety
- Support
- Challenge
- Dialogue
Faculty, staff, and students

- Mentally and emotional preparedness
- Engage or embrace the uncomfortable
- Emotional upheavals and the nonrational

Can the academic institution foster and nurture these kinds of experiences?
Preparing staff and students

• Facilitating TL is a complex pedagogical process

• Need for orientation for both students and instructors

• Skills for critical reflection and imaginative engagement need to be developed over time
Strategies to foster the culture

• Top down and bottom up

• Encourage reflective practice

• Use mentoring among faculty, staff, and students

• Build learning communities among faculty, staff, and students
Strategies to foster the culture

• Peer coaching

• Scholarship of teaching and learning

• Explore potential of technology to mediate and foster transformative learning
In essence, an organizational transformation
Assessing Outcomes of Transformative Learning

What is to be learned?

How is it to be learned?
Qualitative measures

Semi-structured interviews

Focus groups/debriefings

Journals, reflective essays

Surveys
Quantitative measures

Emerging Beliefs, Events and Values Inventory (BEVI)

Our cross-walk with TL, global learning, and the BEVI scales

Other tools less compelling as measures of transformative learning
Wild Geese

Mary Oliver
I am caterpillar. The leaves I eat taste bitter. But dimly I sense a great change coming. What I offer you humans is my willingness to dissolve and transform. I do that without knowing what the end-result will be.