THE JOURNAL OF TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION (JTED) is a peer-reviewed, scholarly journal focused on advancing the understanding, practice, and experience of transformative education. Specific goals of the journal are to deliver high academic quality in an engaging, thought-provoking, participative, and reflexive scholarly discourse across the spectrum of issues which transformational education encompasses. Those issues include individual experience, educational and institutional process, formal and informal purposes and venues for such education, and cultural issues such as accessibility and social context for transformative education. The journal is global in scope and content and is diverse in its approaches and topics—drawing from theory, research, practice, individual experience, and retrospective insight from past major theorists.

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Editors’ Perspectives

Auspice

When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all your thoughts break their bounds: Your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties and talents become alive, and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamed yourself to be.

—Patanjali

The publication of a new, peer-reviewed scholarly journal is an auspicious occasion. It holds the promise of advancing understanding, practice, and experience; stimulating and engaging a newly participative dialogue; and fostering interdisciplinary and intercultural exchange, which in turn develops the field, its depth, and its meaning. We approach the task, opportunity, and challenge of founding and editing this new journal both humbled and enthusiastic. We take this opportunity to introduce the new Journal of Transformative Education (JTE), its genesis, rationale, initial collaborators, and inaugural articles. The way in which the journal came to be is telling of its intentions and goals.

Another Journal of Education?

In the fall of 2000, with sponsorship from Fielding Graduate Institute and the Link Foundation, Will McWhinney sent invitations to a conversation to the leaders of 20 educational organizations in the United States and Europe, selected for their interest in transformative education. Almost all responded positively. We assembled for 3 days at a monastic retreat center near Santa Barbara, California, to share our involvements and concerns for a form of education that must be developed in response to the rapidly changing demographics of the world’s population.

Most societies have well-developed, if underfunded, programs of education for the socialization of children, the maturation of adolescents, and the instrumental learning that supports adults working at the institutions of culture. But few societies have recognized the need for a fourth order of education that serves adults who are asking what follows the years of raising a family, proving one’s prowess, and serving the economy. Increasingly large portions of our popula-
tions, on reaching middle age, can expect three or four more decades of healthy engagement, yet the institutions of propagation, work, and social management were designed with the assumption that most adults would depart from active involvement by the time they were 65. We live with 300-year-old social customs and school systems created 150 years ago to staff the factories of Europe and New England. They need transformation as well.

Our group of educators came together to review the instruments we have for transforming that would open the search for new meaning, opportunities, and responsibilities. We noted that in every culture, ancient and current, there are respected traditions of a fourth order education. Those traditions give form to transformations of a work-a-day perspective to a broader awareness of humanity, often of spiritual and ecological dimensions, and one’s roles within one’s relationships, organizations, community, and world. The ritualized retreat allows the student/learner to encounter the reality of one’s own mortality, accept the loss of loved ones, and the emptiness of earthly pursuits.

There is a body of knowledge on how to guide such transformations, and some current experience provided by such institutions as our conversants lead, but little support in our society for creating a broad venue for adult transformations. Rather, resources for adult education are increasingly being directed to reinforce the instrumental needs of the economy, deprecating the needs of emerging age cohorts, and ignoring significantly marginalized populations that have restricted access to education.

We came together in Santa Barbara to collect an understanding of such educational needs, review what we knew of transformational processes, and find ways of encouraging research and design of relevant programs and institutions. One outcome of that occasion was Laura Markos’s idea and initiative to found this journal.

No, not yet another journal of education. 

*JTE* is the journal of another education.

**From Ancient to Postmodern Roots**

Transformative education (TE) is practiced in a number of contexts: as transformative learning, new career training, programs for humanitarian service, rehabilitation, and spiritual renewal. It is supported in local reading groups, community colleges, universities, training centers, experiential and travel groups, correctional and rehabilitation facilities, and religious and spiritual organizations.

Although the roots of TE stem from ancient wisdom and ritual, current practice began in new-age colleges, men’s midlife experiential groups, 12-step programs, and the like, following the leadership of humanists such as Rollo May and Carl Rogers, educational theorists such as Paulo Freire and Jack Mezirow, and innovators such as Frederic Hudson and John Horton of Highlander Research and Educational Center. It has grown in the shadow of mainstream education, for
many educators see transformation as beyond their institutional responsibilities. In one form or another, something transformative takes place in certain learning processes, something that contributes profoundly to the lives of adults and the effectiveness of whole societies. TE can make contributions across society to individuals, groups, organizations, and communities.

A number of societal and global trends also converge to support the current interest in and development of TE, including:

- the aging population in Western and Northern societies, and the basic issues arising from the potential of average human life to extend productively well into one’s 80s;
- the increasing gap between rich and poor, have and have-not, and north and south, highlighting systemic needs for educational processes to stem life-threatening disease, famine, and ecological shifts, and global needs for social change, equity, and opportunity;
- the technological changes that call for continually renewing one’s work skills, and the response of educators to direct traditional education and the instrumental needs of consumer society;
- the increasingly stressful and competing demands of work, consumption, family, and community, including trends toward greater self-employment, multiple careers across the life span, the decline of industrialized society and the patriarchal employer, the growth of the knowledge society, and the search for greater meaning in work and life; and
- the opportunities provided by advances in pedagogical practice and the availability of distributed learning.

Despite these trends, transformation has not yet had the mainstream support of academic institutions offering TE or publications devoted to its research, theory, and practice. Nor, in turn, have the institutions of adult education transformed themselves to facilitate transformative emphasis. With the intent to bring visibility, critical examination, and further opportunities to TE, we have initiated the journal.

Rationale

We believe the field of transformative education, particularly as it is becoming more visible in a growing number of disciplines and constituencies, is ripe for articulation, exposition, and rigorous dialogue. We view the field as inclusive of diverse disciplines and critical in approach, addressing issues of significance to scholars and practitioners concerned with diverse aspects of transformative education within, among, and particularly beyond traditional students, educational institutions, organizational cultures, and social environments. We support innovative and provocative research, scholarship, methods, and practice informed by diverse orientations.
We believe that this colloquy will reflexively inform the resulting dialogue and bring greater insight and integration to otherwise distinct realms. We do so not only in the interest of dialogue and scholarly exchange, but also because we see the intersubjectivity of these disciplines as of more than scholarly interest. The interactions of individual, group, organization, culture, and society are integral aspects of the transformation process itself.

We recognize that certain pertinent boundaries are unresolved, such as between learning and education; adult learning, adult education, and lifelong learning; learning and transformative learning; education and transformative education; change and transformation; individual and organizational transformation; and societal change and transformation. Yet we believe, in setting out on this endeavor, that the process and effort to engage at the edges, gaps, and overlaps of these various disciplines will disrupt and inform each in pursuit of better understanding of transformative process.

We invite *JTE’s* diverse audiences to embrace reflexive interdisciplinarity and, in the case of diversity or contradiction, to avoid “the tendency, when both scholars are reputable . . . to regard the problem as stemming from different sorts of minds taking hold of different parts of the elephant [such that] a third opinion would but add to the embarrassment” (Geertz, 1988, pp. 5-6). As an alternative, we propose to suspend judgment, not as to the quality of scholarship but as to its approach and orientation. We propose to tolerate ambiguity in appreciative embrace of a variety of viewpoints, origins, disciplines, and methods that will come across the pages of the journal. We propose deference to what can be learned from embracing multiple paradigms, engaging in alternative approaches, seeing through others’ lenses, and viewing through multiple frames. We propose to engage collaboratively in what we hope will be a transformative process in and of itself.

We seek articles that will navigate the various levels and capabilities of TE:

- personal—transformative learning, understanding, belonging, and seeking;
- relational—dialogue, deep engagement, and connectivity with and beyond one’s world;
- institutional—environments, processes, and tools for transformation; and
- global—social action and responsibility, emancipation, sustainability, and ecological and spiritual holism.

In navigating these differences, we must remain mindful of limits, pejoratives, and abilities to communicate across diversity, and, ultimately, transferability. TE is clearly political, requiring conscious positioning of oneself in one’s culture, organizations, and society.

With these origins, contexts, roots, and supporting trends as a backdrop, and having shared our goals and concerns for the reflexive interdisciplinary dialogue to be engaged, we invite your participation in this venture to broaden and expand its view and enhance the opportunities of populations all over the world to experience new meaning and engagements across their life spans.
A popular assumption in Western cultures is that once people reach physical maturity, their basic values, purpose, and learning styles will remain constant for the balance of their lives. The social pressure to stay with the images of youth is so great that few enter the mature adult phase comfortably, let alone with a sense of completion and anticipation of what opportunities can be opened for their later years. The headlong drive to attain power and its symbols in early adulthood has thrown the later adult years into a shadow. Maturing beyond physical maturation, particularly in one’s 40s and beyond, has yet to gain a significant place on the social or educational agenda of Westernized cultures.

In the first decade of this millennia, the 40 to 60 age group has become the largest in the developed world. Men and women are employed more heavily than before, more are educated through college and graduate levels, and more are in better health than ever, perhaps having more vitality than 30-year-olds had 100 years ago. But in the latter decades of their lives, opportunities to use their energy and skills narrow. Only a small portion find occasion to make the best of their lives or to contribute broadly to their society.

In developing nations, the ravages of poverty, hunger, and disease have cut short many lives, whereas youth find themselves members of generations threatened by such tragedies as HIV/AIDS. These same cultures, striving to overcome such systemic challenges, find the needs for adult education, literacy, and the potential for individual and cultural change all the more urgent. And in developed and developing nations alike, the shifts from agrarian to industrial to knowledge society displace older and experienced workers if they do not have opportunities to develop new skills and roles through which to remain active in the workforce and of society itself. These shifting demographics require organizations and communities to find new ways to attract, retain, reeducate, and motivate older workers as the population of younger workers diminishes. Failure to recognize the needs and resources of this newly significant population will lead to worker shortages, so-called brain drain, and a loss of cultural and organizational memory and wisdom while increasing the numbers of economically dependent citizens.

The vitality, creativity, and wisdom of people across the life span are critical to society’s functioning in this era of increasing turbulence. The energy once directed primarily to the satisfaction of the needs of the individual and family can be extended to new socially responsive roles when there is support for further development of skills needed for these enlivening ventures. One indicator of how little we have recognized the potential for development to new levels of maturity is the paucity of educational situations attuned to people in midlife. We lack not only institutions for learning that focus on the issues and potentials of those in midlife and beyond but an appreciation that such institutions need different processes and content than programs developed for youth or young adults. Our concern is to make visible processes that are supportive of new opportunities across populations and the life span and increase opportunities for people of
every level of education and prior achievement. In pursuing opportunities for learning, we are committed to avoiding elitism to serve global variety in approaches, philosophies, and political orientations.

We hope this journal will encourage research, give visibility to exemplary cases, and present alternative processes for education of emerging and underserved populations. We will achieve this goal through the contributions of those of you who write for the journal and readers who test proposed methods and put into practice the insights that appear in JTE.

Collaborators

As we begin this enterprise, we are pleased to have been able to attract the editorial advice and counsel of an outstanding team of scholar-practitioners. They are exemplary of the cross-disciplinary and intercultural exchange we hope to engage in JTE.

Christopher Bache, Ph.D. (USA), is a director of transformative learning for the Institute of Noetic Sciences and faculty in philosophy, cosmology, and consciousness with the California Institute for Integral Studies. His interests include philosophy, world religions, consciousness, comparative spirituality, Buddhism, developments in postmodern science, transpersonal theory, and psychedelic studies. His books include Dark Night, Early Dawn: Steps to a Deep Ecology of Mind.

Ronald M. Cervero, Ph.D. (USA), is a professor of adult education at the University of Georgia, focusing on the politics and ethics of adult education, continuing professional education, and adult education in social change. His publications include Power in Practice: Adult Education and the Struggle for Knowledge and Power in Society with Arthur L. Wilson, and What Really Matters in Adult Education Program Planning: Lessons in Negotiating Power and Interests.

Patricia Cranton, Ph.D. (Canada), is a visiting professor in adult education at St. Francis Xavier University. Among her interests are authenticity and individuation. Her books include Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning; a chapter on individual differences in Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress, edited by Jack Mezirow; and Professional Development as Transformative Learning.

Laurent Parks Daloz, Ed.D. (USA), is acting director and faculty with the Whidbey Institute, and a guest faculty member in the doctoral program in leadership and change at Antioch University, Seattle. His books include Effective Teaching and Mentoring (2nd ed. entitled Mentor: Guiding the Journey of Adult Learners) and Of Common Fire: Lives of Commitment in a Complex World, coauthored with Sharon Daloz Parks and Cheryl and Jim Keen.
J. Rick Day, Ph.D., Psy.D. (USA), is president of J. Rick Day & Associates, an international organizational development consultant, and a clinical psychologist in private practice. He serves on the faculties of the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland and Pepperdine University. He has held vice presidential positions in organization and management development with an aerospace firm and in corporate services in a behavioral healthcare organization.

Olga Ebert, Ph.D. (USA), is a research associate in the Center for Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where she completed her doctoral work in adult and higher education. A native of the Ukraine, her interests include such diverse forms of adult education as literacy, English as a second language (ESL), and postsecondary education, as well as counseling psychology and social justice, particularly related to welfare and immigration.

Matthias Finger, Ph.D. (Switzerland), is a professor of public management at the Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration, and holds doctorates in political science and adult education. His interests include social change, institutional impediments to such change, and the transformation of public service organizations into public enterprises. His books include Learning Our Way Out: Adult Education at the Crossroads, with José Asún.

Kenneth J. Gergen, Ph.D. (USA), is a Mustin professor of psychology at Swarthmore College and chief executive officer of The Taos Institute. He is a major figure in the development of social constructionist theory and its application to practices of social change. His publications include The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life, Toward Transformation in Social Knowledge, and The Positive Aging Newsletter with Mary Gergen.

Pierre Hébrard, Ph.D. (France), is a lecturer in sciences in education at the Université Paul Valéry. His interests include critical analysis of the policies, schemes and processes of adult education in France and Europe, and problems of access and equity therein. His publication and presentation topics include inequalities in access to knowledge and adult education, the ethics and politics of continuing education, and Freire’s pedagogy as related to oppressed adults in praxis.

Ponnuswami Ilango, Ph.D. (India), is founder and honorary director of the Ageing Research Foundation of India and a reader in social work at Bishop Heber College. His interests focus on profound learning needs, government education policy, changing attitudes toward aging and lifelong learning such that public education addresses the rights of older people, and highlighting the marginalization of older people in India.

Dennis Jaffe, Ph.D. (USA), is a professor and director of mid-career programs in organizational systems inquiry at Saybrook Graduate School & Research Center, founding principal of Changeworks, editor-in-chief of World Business Acad-
emy Publications, and a licensed clinical psychologist. His books include *Getting Your Organization to Change, Rekindling Commitment, and Organizational Vision, Values and Mission*.

David Lane, Ph.D. (UK), is the director of the Professional Development Foundation and visiting professor to the National Centre for Work-Based Learning Partnerships at Middlesex University. His interests include the transformation of professional education, work-based learning, and learning in organizations for employability, competitiveness, and engagement of individuals’ worldviews in balancing personal agendas with business results.

Bernard J. Luskin, Ph.D. (USA), is executive vice president for institutional partnerships and director of the media studies and community college leadership programs at Fielding Graduate Institute, chairman and chief executive officer of Luskin International, founding chancellor of Jones International University, and a licensed therapist. His new book is *Casting the Net Over Global Learning: New Developments in Workforce Training and Online Psychologies*.

William H. Maehl, Ph.D. (USA), is president emeritus of Fielding Graduate Institute, and was principal investigator of the Commission for a Nation of Lifelong Learners. His interests include changes in perspective and understanding achieved by mature adults through educational experience, and the means to make educational experience available so as to encourage change. His books include *Lifelong Learning at Its Best: Innovative Practices in Adult Credit Programs*.

Peter Mayo, Ph.D. (Malta), is an associate professor in the faculty of education at the University of Malta, and founding editor of the *Journal of Postcolonial Education*. Among his interests are adult education, critical pedagogy, workers’ education, cultural studies, liberatory education and the politics of education, learning and social difference, and critical sociology of education. His books include *Gramsci, Freire and Adult Education: Possibilities for Transformative Action*.

Jacqueline McLemore, Ph.D. (USA), is president of Brinegar McLemore Consulting, an organizational consultant and change facilitator, and a faculty member of NTL Institute and the organization and systems development program of the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland. Her work involves a network of professional associates and spans individuals, work groups, teams, and organizations as they work to change in important ways.

Alfonso Montuori, Ph.D. (USA), is an associate professor at the California Institute for Integral Studies, principal of Evolutionary Strategies, and founder and general editor of Advances in Systems Theory, Complexity, and the Human Sciences at Hampton Press. His interests include complexity, creativity, improvisation, cultural epistemology, and strategic thinking. He coedited Evolutionary Competence and Social Creativity, volumes 1 and 2, with Ronald E. Purser.

Harry R. (Rick) Moody, Ph.D. (USA), is chairman of the board of Elderhostel and director of the Institute for Human Values in Aging at the International Longevity Center–USA. He previously served as administrator of continuing education programs for the Citicorp Foundation and codirector of the National Aging Policy Center of the National Council on Aging. His books include Abundance of Life: Human Development Policies for an Aging Society.

Maureen O’Hara, Ph.D. (USA), is president of Saybrook Graduate School & Research Center. Her interests include humanistic psychology, the development of deep learning processes, organizational learning, the relationship between personal and societal change, and the conditions necessary for people to achieve lives of dignity, love, and satisfaction. She also maintained a private practice for many years as a licensed psychotherapist and organizational consultant.

Edmund O’Sullivan, Ph.D. (Canada), is a professor in the department of adult education, community development, and counseling psychology at the University of Toronto. His interests include transformative learning, critical pedagogy, postcolonial theory, alternative development, and indigenous and modern knowledge. His publications include Transformative Learning: Educational Vision for the 21st Century and Critical Psychology and Pedagogy.

Thierry Pauchant, Ph.D. (Canada), is a professor of management and director and chair in the ethical management of organizations at the École des Haute Études Commerciales, Montréal. An internationally recognized expert in crisis management and its insights into complexity and systems, his interests include crisis and paradox management, spirituality, social and ecological responsibilities of managers, management and change of complex systems, and the search for meaning in management and the workplace.

Julia Preece, Ph.D. (Botswana), is senior lecturer in adult education at the University of Botswana and reader in the school of educational studies at the University of Surrey. Her interests include lifelong learning, life histories, nontraditional students, active citizenship and learning of citizenship values, transformative leadership, globalization, access to social capital and social exclusion in relationship to lifelong learning, and gender and HIV/AIDS perspectives.

Roger Schank, Ph.D. (USA), is chief education officer and distinguished career professor at Carnegie Mellon University, professor emeritus of Northwestern
University, and founder of Schank Learning Consultants, Cognitive Arts, Socratic Arts, and the Cognitive Science Society. A leading researcher in artificial intelligence, e-learning, and applying cognitive learning theory to education, his books include *Virtual Learning* and *Designing World-Class E-Learning*.

*Burkard Sievers, D.S.W. (Germany)*, is a professor of organizational development in the department of economic and social sciences at the Bergische Universität Wuppertal and coeditor of *Freie Assoziation*. Among his interests are organization theory from a psychoanalytic perspective, group relations conferences, social dreaming, and organizational role analysis. His books include *Work, Death, and Life Itself: Essays on Management and Organization*.

*Nelly P. Stromquist, Ph.D. (USA)*, is a professor of international development education in the school of education at the University of Southern California. Among her interests are the role of women-led NGOs in pedagogical and social transformation, Gramscian ideas on intellectuals, and education as political, the political as education. Her research spans many developing nations, particularly in Latin America and West Africa. Her books include *Literacy for Citizenship: Gender and Dynamics*.

*Jill Mattuck Tarule, Ed.D. (USA)*, is a dean of the college of education and social services at the University of Vermont. Her research is in adult and women students’ development; she coauthored *Women’s Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*, and coedited *Knowledge, Difference & Power: Essays Inspired by Women’s Ways of Knowing*, both with Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, and Nancy Goldberger.

*Mark Tennant, Ph.D. (Australia)*, is a professor in adult education in the faculty of education at the University of Technology, Sydney. His interests center on the relationship between learning, self-formation, and change. Published widely in the area of psychology and adult education, his books include *Psychology and Adult Learning* and *Learning and Change in the Adult Years: A Developmental Perspective*, coauthored with Philip Pogson.

*William Torbert, Ph.D. (USA)*, is a professor of organization studies at Boston College, a past graduate dean of its school of management, and founder-president of The Theatre of Inquiry. His interests span personal and organizational transformation. His books include *Transforming Social Inquiry*, *Transforming Social Action* with Francine Sherman, and *Personal and Organizational Transformations Through Action Inquiry* with Dalmar Fisher and David Rooke.

*Carlos Alberto Torres, Ph.D. (USA)*, is a professor of social sciences and comparative education and director of the Latin American Center at the University of California, Los Angeles, and a founding director of the Paulo Freire Institute in
São Paolo. Widely published, his interests focus on education in Latin America, with particular emphasis on the political sociology of education, nonformal education, and new research in the scholarship of class, race, gender, and the state in comparative perspective.

Alan Tuckett, OBE (UK), is the director of the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE), vice chair of the National Advisory Group on Lifelong Learning to the Minister of Education, and special professor in continuing education at the University of Nottingham. His interests in social policy and lifelong learning have been a major force in the United Kingdom and Europe. He also advises the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on adult learning.

Max van der Kamp, Ph.D. (the Netherlands), is a professor of adult education and research director of educational sciences at the University of Groningen, and consultant to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). His interests include arts and adult education, literacy, aging, social exclusion, citizenship, lifelong learning policies, and research methodology development studies. He has published a number of books and articles on arts and adult education and research methodology.

Shirley Walters (South Africa) is a professor and founding head of the division of lifelong learning at the University of the Western Cape. She works at the forefront of the international movement to transform educational institutions to practice lifelong learning, inclusive of older learners, learners of color, and open learning approaches that emphasize flexible, student-centered delivery. She edited Globalization, Adult Education and Training: Impacts and Issues.

Atsu-hiko Yoshida (Japan) is a professor of human science at Osaka Women’s University. His interests include holistic education, Japanese folk culture and informal education, and perennial values in each culture supportive of holistic education. His publications include a contribution to Nurturing Our Wholeness—Perspectives on Spirituality in Education, edited by John P. Miller and Yoshiharu Nakagawa.

We are honored and enriched by their collaboration.

In launching the Journal of Transformative Education, we also want to acknowledge the key roles of additional collaborators whose participation, ideas, and personal examples have influenced and encouraged our work. Frederic Hudson, Ph.D., was founding president of The Fielding Institute (now Fielding Graduate Institute) and is president of The Hudson Institute. Frederic’s life work has centered on helping people struggling with issues unique to the midlife years, in-
cluding leadership development, personal and organizational transition planning, and the training of adult mentors. His publications include *The Adult Years: Mastering the Art of Self-Renewal*. We are particularly indebted to Frederic, his work, and his innovative practice.

Additional colleagues who participated in the September 2000 collaborative exploration of TE in Santa Barbara include: Linda-Susan Beard, Ph.D., of Bryn Mawr College and the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society; Winston O. Franklin of the Institute of Noetic Sciences; Judy Goggin of Civic Ventures; Miguel Guilarte, Ph.D., of Fielding Graduate Institute; Christina Hardy of the California Institute of Integral Studies; Judith L. Kuipers, Ph.D., of Fielding Graduate Institute; Walter Link of Global Academy; Maureen Murdock of Pacifica Graduate Institute; Mike van Oudtshoorn, Ph.D., of Professional Development Foundation; Tom Valente of Global Academy; and Brian van Way of Naropa University. We are pleased to report progress on the goals outlined in that forum.

**In This Issue**

In this issue, we provide a diversity of perspectives contributing to this newly engaged dialogue on the various aspects and threads of transformative education. We look forward to broadening that diversity in coming issues.

The opening article, “Across the Threshold,” is homage to an archetypal and ubiquitous path of transformation taken by peoples throughout history. The editors draw on a Navajo healing tradition to model this path of transformative education. It can be used as a guide for education designers, but we would rather it be taken as one process with alternatives for which other authors will argue in future issues.

Peter Mayo’s piece, “A Rationale for a Transformative Approach to Education,” introduces his view of transformative adult education, based in large part on the work of Paulo Freire and Antonio Gramsci, as a liberatory pedagogical process of and for the oppressed, the disempowered, and the unprivileged. Part of this text is excerpted from his book, *Gramsci, Freire and Adult Education: Possibilities for Transformative Action*, and is augmented here with the inclusion of two case studies that ground the theory in practice relative to applications in diverse educational institutions.

Jack Mezirow’s article, “Transformative Learning as Discourse,” looks at the nature of reasoning in the context of critical-dialectic discourse and its implications for citizenship and adult education. The article elaborates on the epistemology of transformative learning in adult education presented in his books *Transformative Dimensions in Adult Learning* and *Learning as Transformation*.

Maureen O’Hara’s piece, “Cultivating Consciousness: Carl R. Rogers’s Person-Centered Group Process as Transformative Andragogy,” is adapted from a keynote speech she made at the World Congress for Psychotherapy in Vienna, Austria, in July 2002. She argues the need for a new educational praxis that de-
velops the consciousness levels necessary to survive, cope, and succeed in today’s world, examining the work of Carl Rogers as a model of such a transformative pedagogy in individual and group practice.

In closing our introductory remarks, we underscore our commitment to international, interdisciplinary, and cross-cultural dialogic processes. We invite readers to contribute and respond to the articles herein, and to participate in the development of the field with your own research, essays, reviews, and letters to the editors as well. JTE’s editorial guidelines are summarized herein, and available online at www.sagepub.com/jted. We welcome your insights and commentary. Most of all, we look forward to the codevelopment of the field of transformative education, across its diversity, opportunity, and promise for adults worldwide, and particularly for those populations underserved by traditional educational institutional processes.

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Reference

Transformative Education
Across the Threshold

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The human condition has changed radically in the past 100 years. Educational institutions, formal and informal, have not kept pace with technological innovations, the lengthening life span, or the need for ongoing reeducation to reinvigorate lives. The authors distinguish between learning and education and, more significantly, between transformative learning and transformative education. They then introduce the path of transformative education following a Navaho healing ritual that illuminates the mega-myth of death and rebirth as a model on which to organize ideas of adult transformative education across an extended life span. The purpose is to highlight the need for a fourth level of education suitable to 21st-century society, and to engage a global, cross-disciplinary dialogue to inform transformative educational practice across its personal, productive, instrumental, emancipatory, and holistic goals.

Keywords: liminal processes; rituals of education; Third Age; transformation; transformative

Beyond the looking glass, in a monastery, through the gate of purgatory, or under the tutelage of a master, there is a liminal place in which education can transform individuals, organizations, and societies. There one can get an education distinct from that acquired on the traditional path taken from infancy to majority. An education that is transformative redirects and reenergizes those who pause to reflect on what their lives have been and take on new purposes and perspectives. The transformation begins when a person withdraws from the world of established goals to unlearn, reorient, and choose a fresh path.

The archetypal form of transformative education is the path of death and rebirth, of regression in the service of a forward leap—“reculer pour mieux sauter” (Koestler, 1964). It is a generator of revolution for a society and revitalization for
organizations. It has been an instrument of education in almost every recorded culture. However, the opportunity to undertake such a spiral path has been limited to a small portion of a population and, on rare occasions, for communities. Transformation has been a luxury, one through which humanity has created its greatest spiritual, artistic, and intellectual achievements.

Now humanity itself has produced conditions that call for greater attention to transformative processes. Population growth that is pushing beyond ecological limits imperils our physical well being. Complexity generated by new technologies leaves many of our social institutions obsolete. The rampant growth of populations and economies is producing a surfeit of adults who are living healthily well beyond the age at which our social institutions expected their death. This changing demography calls on us to build on opportunities that were not feasible when survival was the prime focus of life. As Walter Truett Anderson (1997) wrote with regard to the search for self, “Never before has such a fundamental theme of human existence been discussed on such a scale, within the context of a global civilization. Yet there is an older discourse, stretching back at least to the time of Heraclitus and his Asian contemporary known as the Buddha” (p. 225).

In spite of their antiquity, transformative rituals of education and outcomes have not been a subject of inquiry and research in the educational disciplines. They have remained marginalized aside the massive job of training the young and job-skilling adults. It is timely to research and practice this order of education that has had little attention. Our purpose in this article—and in initiating the Journal of Transformative Education—is to open an enlivening dialogue about transformative education.

The body of the article describes one path of transformative education as an archetypal form based on ancient healing rituals. To facilitate this exploration we begin with some definitions that distinguish learning from education. A more difficult task is to establish distinctions between transformative and other forms of individual and social learning. We conclude with consideration of alternative purposes and goals of doing transformative work in the rapidly changing context of decentered cultures and information access.

Making Distinctions:
Learning, Education, and Transformation

Our intent is to make distinctions among various ideas of learning, education, and transformation; to discriminate among the various manifestations of transformation; and to encourage research on and design of educational efforts.

To distinguish between learning and education, we use the accepted definitions found in dictionaries and common usage. Simply stated, learning is the experience of acquiring knowledge and skills, and education is a course of learning. A learned person has acquired and internalized a vast knowledge. An educated person may be learned, but education also conveys a sense of properness; the educated person has been trained in some manner related to community expecta-
tions and traditions. Transformation refers to those psychological, cognitive, and social processes of learning and education that follow from a variety of reflective and maturing experiences.

**LEARNING**

We use learning to describe ways through which we internalize new skills and knowledge. Although the outcome of learning is knowledge, the ways in which we organize and integrate material suggests that there are a variety of processes through which we learn. Gregory Bateson (1972) and Chris Argyris (1982) presented models that described three distinct levels of inquiry and learning, the discussion of which will aid in exploring transformational processes as they are differentiated by the degrees of reflection and reorganization that accompany the acquisition of new understandings.

**BATESON’S TYPOLOGY**

*Learning I (LI).* In its simplest form, LI is rote learning. More generally, it is learning that adds information and skills without contradicting the prior learnings or raising questions as to the assumptions about what is being taught. This form provides the vast majority of our learning. Appropriately, most learning is achieved by mundane rote work, like learning how to buy food from a grocery store; some LI is integrated in complex ways into existing knowledge and performance skills; and a small portion promotes reorganization of what we already have absorbed. Paulo Freire (1970) calls such learning *banking*.

Argyris’s use of the term *single loop learning* indicates banking is achieved by single cycles of stimulus and response. As learning accumulates, we learn languages, social custom, and technologies, and take on pervasive worldviews. During the course of a person’s life, LI can produce changes that are radical compared to our infant states. However, we can learn an immense amount—languages, customs, and professions—without examining our goals, ethics, or lifestyle, continuing to follow a worldview that we established early in life. The vast majority of all behaviors are learned by additive exercises at this first level.

*Learning II (LII).* LII arises from reflection, from observing how one is making choices, and what frames of assumptions are involved in learning by rote and its extensions. Such learning reframes experience through double loops in which learning assumptions as well as content are examined. Through reflective apperception, one considers assumptions that were set early in childhood and adolescence and chooses new responses to the diverse contexts and environments encountered as adults.

The intent of LII is to question the data and assumptions used to conduct one’s life, whether consciously or unconsciously, and to adopt new constructions of reality, life goals, and moral obligations. Such questioning may produce broad changes in a person’s life, leading to quite different worldviews. However, fre-
quently people and organizations make changes and adopt new learning without recognition of the process by which they have chosen new worldviews. As Bateson (1972) and Argyris (1982) indicated, people make such reformation without exploring the process, goals, or ideologies that initiated the reflection. Thus, following the experience of new LII, most people settle back into programs of LI with assumptions they feel are better suited to their present conditions. LII is an event of change, a response to reflection and new insights, and a moment of instability that provides opportunities to take new paths.

Learning III (LIII). Bateson (1972) defined LIII as a mind set that allows one to hold and work with contradictions and ultimately to

the resolution of contraries . . . in which personal identity merges into all the processes of relationship in some vast ecology or aesthetics of cosmic interaction. That any of these [people] can survive seems almost miraculous, but some are perhaps saved from being swept away on oceanic feeling by their ability to focus on the minutiae of life. Every detail of the universe is seen as proposing a view of the whole. (p. 306)

Bateson argued along with William Blake that with LIII one sees “the World in a Grain of Sand,” in which all time and space are reflected in the moment. In such a learning mode, one is able to concurrently engage with the details of the moment while retaining the view of the whole, attaining humility in the presence of the infinite. Argyris’s (1982) use of the term triple loop learning indicates the depth of this little-experienced form of learning. Kegan (1994) referred to a fifth order of consciousness, transideological, and self-transformative.

LIII challenges the interpretation of experience, relations, and truth systems, leading to broad questions such as human life, world ecology, and relations to higher powers. Freeing oneself from dichotomized thinking and assumptions about assumptions, ideologies, and reality allows one to carry exploration into the nature of paradigms themselves, although, as Bateson warned (1972), sometimes at the price of one’s sanity. Those who indulge in such explorations are likely to be the sages and teachers of a society, the ones who induce LII, but who also disturb the course of normal community life. Sages and revolutionaries ask too many questions and demand that we pay too much attention to what they are revealing.

So learning is the acquisition of knowledge as well as of modes of organizing, questioning, making decisions, and exploring our own assumptions and constructions of reality. Learning takes place in events, not explicitly laid out along a path. Learning is a process, not a program. Its outcome may be an educated person or society, but it is clearer to refer to the scholar as learned rather than educated.

EDUCATION

As asserted in the beginning of this section, education is a course of learning. As such, it has direction and duration and consists of a number of learning events. We get a proper first-cut sense by noting that the term education was first
used to describe the training of animals and the rearing of children. Alfred North Whitehead (1929) defined education as “the acquisition of the art of the utilisation of knowledge” (p. 4), emphasizing its programmatic focus. Most education today is a process for rearing people to fulfill their proper roles in the existing society, socializing them with language, then teaching them the economics of their society, their role in procreation, and how they may make contributions to society in arts and sciences, as well as religions and philosophies. A few people are educated to be leaders for the political, economic, and legal systems, and for the traditions that support further education. Some education simply brings us the skills with which to enjoy ourselves and our relations with others.

Emile Durkheim stated that

Education consists of a methodical socialization of the younger generation. In each of us . . . there exists two being, which, inseparable except by abstraction, remain distinct. One is made up of all the mental states that apply only to ourselves and to the event of our personal lives: this is what might be called the individual being. The other is a system of ideas, sentiments and practices which express in us, not our personality, but the group or different groups of which we are a part; these are religious beliefs, moral beliefs and practices, national or professional traditions, collective opinions of every kind. Their totality forms the social being. To constitute this being in each of us is the end of education. (1956, cited in Wexler, 2000, p. 88)

Education is always programmatic, designed to produce a specific social outcome for the particular populations that it serves. Education is never politically neutral; it leads pupils to accept its assumptions about power, reality, morality, and the formulations of knowledge that the curriculum imbues.

TRANSFORMATION

The descriptor transformative has introduced considerable difficulty for those doing adult education and organizational development, and for good reason. The image of transformation is closely related to the development of the individual psyche and socioorganizational changes that may appear politically radical in cultures strongly biased toward a rationalistic paradigm in consumer-oriented cultures or traditional religious dogmas. Transformations in individuals or whole groups can be disturbing to people for whom the status quo is the desired condition. Euro-Americans have devised various strategies to avoid serious engagements with transformative issues. One is to relegate them to the spiritual or religious realms to make transformation appear irrelevant to the productive economy and inappropriate to consider as a secular goal for educational programs. Another is to trivialize transformation so that it is reduced to a descriptor designating any impactful learning for individuals and organizations. These strategies have worked to marginalize the terms transformative learning and transformative education. However, transformation is far too significant a process in human and social development to be dismissed by philistine disparagements.
Transformation refers to pervasive forms of development that occur in every culture as an aspect of every rite of passage (van Gennep, 1908/1960) in the grand movements from one social paradigm to the next. We get hints of transformation in the events many educators call transformative learning, events that promote reflective learning in a setting relatively free of social and political restraints. And as used today by many authors, transformative learning describes a philosophy of pedagogy congruent with transformative education but differentiated from critical pedagogy, progressive education, and most adult education. Some note that transformative learning and transformative education are used interchangeably. We prefer to distinguish between the two based on the programmatic content of education that is missing in learning events.

All transformations have a beginning, a middle, and an end. There are conditions that support changes, processes that initiate them, and ones that complete the changes. Kurt Lewin (1946) captured the basic dynamic with the simple prescription unfreeze, change, and refreeze with the implication that refreezing places a system in a more desired state than that from which it started. Its classic form is more dramatically described as a renaissance, a sequence of death and rebirth that appears in the rituals of human development and most religious traditions. It is a reenactment of the cycle of the seasons in the maturing of individuals. In an individual’s life, it is a regression in the service of the ego, reported in biographies from *The Odyssey* onto present day epics and dozens of books on mid-life transition (e.g., Kegan, 1982, p. 203). In form, if not in depth, it is built into therapies for individuals, organizations, and cultures.

The condition that fosters a person’s, organization’s, or culture’s search for new meanings is often one of loss, a loss of support for what has been, or the awareness that one can no longer turn back. This crisis unfreezes the person to accept the loss and begin a search that takes one across the threshold into a space where one can risk deep exploration, a space in which the exploration is free of immediate threats and consequences. Victor Turner (1969) called this space liminal, a place that is on the threshold but neither here nor there.

Existing in this liminal middle space are the archetypal conditions that vessel transformations of individuals, communities, and societies. There, learning transforms in radical, irreversible, and often unexpected ways. The conditions for such change may occur by accident or intentional plan, or may emerge from the natural rhythm of human life. They lead the traveler to let go of assumptions and wander in the transformative space, free from expectations and ego identity.

Typically, a transformation is considered irreversible, although there are conditions that drive a situation back to an earlier form. There are also considerations where accumulative transformative learnings during long periods of engagement gradually form a distinct worldview. The explorations we are encouraging with this article and journal should lead to better definitions of transformative paths and identifying new conditions, new schemes for transformation that may emerge in the informational society.

Those experiences which we now label transformative have been a part of societies as far back as we have historical records. In most ancient cultures, the
changes in roles were formalized in ritual practices. People participated in rites of passage at certain stages in their physiological development: at puberty, at majority, and, in lesser numbers, at maturity. The societal rituals have largely disappeared, but the needs for transformational pauses in our journeys are perhaps even more important now in an era when people are living well beyond the span of life allotted to those in earlier traditional societies.

Transformation is a possibility in the mind of every social revolutionary and the awakening of consciousness that gives meaning to life for many people. The settings are diverse, but the main process is ubiquitous. In systems terminology, a transformation is bifurcation, a change of system attractors. In psychological terms, it is an occasion when there is a shift from one set of goals to another. In sociopolitical terms, it is a change in assumptions about the desired governance of a society.

In this introductory article on educational processes, we depict a process used by the Navaho in their healing rites to exemplify the diverse paths of change that appear in the vast worldwide literature of transformation.

The Journey

Our image of transformative education is modeled on the archetypal heroes’ journey that appears in myths of cultures around the world, both ritualized in ceremonies of maturation and initiated in response to circumstance in an individual’s or community’s life. The ubiquity of this ritual form was brought to popular consciousness through the work of Joseph Campbell (1949) and supported by the research of Bühler (1968); Gould (1978); Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee (1978); Murdock (1990); and many others. There are other models of transformation (McWhinney, 1997), but none so widely recognized as that of death and rebirth. Lewin’s (1946) tri-part journey described it in the simplest form, but it is better articulated as a four-part path beginning with the crisis that initiates transformative action, as in the models presented by Mezirow (1981) and Boyd and Myers (1988). The depiction in the Navaho sand painting provides an even richer expression.

The sand paintings are visual programs for a healing. The ceremonies collect whole families and neighbors who gather to support the passage that may last 2 to 5 days. The “painting” itself is cast specifically for the occasion. It symbolizes the liminal space in which the malevolent experiences transformation. The afflictions treated are of personal failings, such as thievery, indolence, and gambling—social illness. The ceremonies are therapies that support the initiate in reflecting on behaviors, values, and responsibilities to family and community, and identify a hero’s path as evidence of possibilities and a guide to future action. The ritual we depict clearly presents four stages: the crisis as a retreat prepared for in total isolation before assembling in the sacred space, entry into the womb of the earth represented by the painting, the transformative passage that takes place in that space, and the reintegration (rebirth) into daily life (Sandner, 1979). In the following section, we discuss these as occasions for transformative learning.
Figure 1: Reproduction of a Navaho Sand Painting Used in the Ritual Healing Ceremony, the Pollen Path

Source: Reproduced from Campbell (1986).
Diversion from one’s expected life course toward a transformative experience begins with a crisis. Sometimes, the crisis follows dramatic loss: a loved one has died, a dream is denied, a life-threatening illness challenges one’s mortality, or a success has fulfilled one’s life dreams, leaving no place to go. More often, the crisis appears as a slow awakening that one’s life has lost meaning, that work, play, and relationships have habituated into empty routines. Anomie has taken over.

One may repress feelings of loss and rejection to stay on track. Young adults use their high drives to repress the meaning of losses and hold fast to familiar roles; people in marginalized populations resign their hopes and deny their own competencies by accepting the losses they experience as inevitable. When the losses are acknowledged and mourned, there is an opening to new learning that takes them beyond the compliant banking of knowledge to a search quest (Sandner, 1979). The Navaho chant represented in sand gives responsibility for this divergence to two tormenters whose job is it to awake the passerby to their frailties. Their taunting eventually blocks the path of unconsciousness, allowing the traveler to reject their habitual existence.

In traditional societies, a crisis is ritualized at standard ages as a series of initiations into advancing maturity: puberty, early adulthood, marriage, and professional roles in religious orders, education, and the military. Preliminary to the rites are periods of training, of education in the larger responsibilities of the new status. The intent is transformative, although many participants deny the opportunity and follow a linear course of instruction, not accepting the invitation of mentors to challenge the assumptions of the social form from which they entered.

For a person, the crisis may be induced by physiological changes and promoted in the traditional rituals of passage. Each of these changes may present shocks to one’s self-image, often as a loss of capacity that provide openings to new perspectives and values for social engagement. These awarenesses may coincide with the traditional transition phases or arise from personal journeys induced by particular losses and awareness. Crisis may also be induced by simulation (Brookfield, 1987) that provokes self-evaluation and begins a transformative learning cycle.

For an organization or community, crisis may begin with a disruption of the status quo, often due to a change in the external environment in which the organization works. Crisis onset may also occur with a rising awareness of repression or environmental conditions that have denied the possibility of community action and common direction. Such awareness might spontaneously arise within a marginalized community, as did much of the civil rights issues in the United
States; however, the focalizing energy is commonly generated by an outsider. This outside energy is the origin of the great reform movements: in religion, St. Francis of Assisi; in politics, Karl Marx; in education, Paulo Freire; and in participative action, John Horton at the Highlander Education Center. Teresa of Avila, Tolstoy, Gandhi, Mandala, and Saul Alinsky also exemplify this model. In each, the transformative process originates with an intellectual from a privileged status coming to awaken a repressed population through education. The leader/teacher provides new awareness about the conditions imposed by a person’s family, community, or hierarchical dictates.

Organizational change may also be induced by crisis (Mitroff & Pauchant, 1990), whether naturally occurring or by creating a sense of urgency (Kotter, 1996). Similar to individuals’ experience, crisis threatens the core identity of an organization, which induces fundamental change in the organization and its operating environment (Mitroff & Pauchant, 1990). For organizations and communities, crises arise out of a failure to attain some political, religious, scientific, or even managerial goals. Both typically enter into a transformative effort with preestablished goals, only to find that those goals somehow no longer relate to the present conditions. Crisis is ultimately associated with a loss of meaning.

Both in myth and current theory (Boyd & Myers, 1988), one prepares for transformation through mourning the loss of maintained intentionality. Processes for inducing confession, disowning, and ego release are essential to clear one’s spirit for new possibilities. Grieving unlocks the spirit and washes away association with prior success and failures. One cannot go into nowhere anchored to old expectations, grievances, or wealth. They must be “symbolically expelled from daily life” (Shor, 1980) or blindly driven by the inarticulate sense that their path must detour. Resistance to letting go is a major cause for transformative education failures; frequently those entering keep one foot well planted in the daily world. Robert Tannenbaum and Robert Hanna (1985) described the preparatory grieving as “holding on, letting go, and moving on” (p. 95); William Bridges (1980) described it as endings and beginnings. The responses to crises in individuals and organizations share many characteristics.

ENTRY INTO THE LIMINAL SPACE

Entry onto the transformative path begins with crossing a threshold into a “no-place,” Turner’s liminal space. It is a place of asylum variously described as the hell that Dante entered with his guide Virgil; the enveloping darkness of
a night journey (nekyia); the hermit’s desert; a classroom; a church sanctuary; a safe space defined by a legal contract; the enveloping words of a guide, coach, or charismatic leader; or even an hallucinatory vessel created by LSD. On entry, one experiences a symbolic death of the existing self. One way or another, crossing the threshold separates the participants from normal activity and expectations, as would their bodily death. They move into a liminal domain that is nowhere; those who cross the threshold vanish from their familiar selves and their community into night journey.

In the Navaho ceremony, the liminal space is created on the floor of the ceremonial hogan that is the vessel of the transformative healing. The hogan, and more immediately the sand painting itself, is a womb reentered for the passage along the pollen path to rebirth at the head. It is a trip that takes one along the corn stalk that Sandner (1979) identified with a passage through the seven chakra of the Hindu traditions.

At entry, the traveler finds that the liminal space is empty, frightening, and lonely. “What am I doing here?” has no answer. Murray Stein (1983, p. 9) described the characteristic feeling of those entering the liminal space as having an unusual degree of vulnerability to sudden emotional drafts originating either within or without, to sudden moods and highly charged images and thoughts, to sudden gains and losses of confidence. Inner ground shifts, and because the base is not firm a person can be influenced, pushed, and blown about. A sudden happening will make a more than normally deep impression, like an imprinting. More malleable in liminality than otherwise, a person may carry the effect of such imprintings through the rest of a lifetime.

Every culture uses different methods to enforce the liminal confinement. Some traditional cultures use intense degradation to separate the initiates from their prior habituation; the hazing in American college fraternities and boot camp in military organizations copied this style. The Zen environment disposes of every awareness that would follow from causal thinking. Transformative educators entice students with freedom from value judgments (grades). In current day ceremonies (often in growth workshops), separation begins with obscuring one’s name and professional identity, dumping one’s life story so that one’s baggage will not block self-awareness or inhibit talk with others. The resulting nakedness allows everyone to join in creating a community of searchers and be open to instruction by a mentor. Without identity, intimacy becomes tolerable and attractive.

On their own, participants tend to recreate community, developing an intimate communitas (Turner, 1969). Such communities are made up of wanderers who seek intimacy with others as they become strangers to themselves. Some mentors would speed this process by facilitating appropriate dialogue among the participants. David Bohm’s (Bohm & Peat, 1987) design of dialogue sessions and the early exercises in appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider, Sorensen, Whitney, & Yaeger, 1999) create such environments. The emergence of community within the
liminal space eases the pain of separation, which enhances learning but can also interfere with passage. One can grow attracted to living in a faux community; learners can become perpetual students, and spiritual seekers become groupies.

The design of the vessel, the degree of impenetrability of its borders, the duration of the passage, and the mode of direction are central curricular issues for transformative education. Dipping in for 2 hours on Tuesday evenings after work is not likely to produce transformation, although it may lead one to seek further insight. Nor can we expect transformative learning to take place in the corporate conference room. Rather, physical isolation is usually needed to support the psychical separation. Effective designs use retreat centers, monasteries, outwards-bound excursions, and absence from one’s work and family responsibilities. Similarly, transformative education requires blocks of time. An individual might dwell liminally for 40 days or several years or, after letting ideas brew for years, one may suddenly find rebirth in a flash. A society or organization might wallow for decades without finding stable direction to be transformed, then suddenly through social revolution reestablish its vitality. We have yet to see if liminal space can be created in the virtual nowhere of electronic networks (Turkle, 1995).

Wexler (2000) observed that new movements arising in the embodied self-work and decentered environment of the Internet “does not have such easily delimited borders . . . but are ongoing social practices that have the appearance of continuity and stability that we once attributed only to institutions” (p. 28).

Liminal space is no more value-neutral than any other educational setting. Every design implies a theory of human and social development, and every design has a political effect on the participants, whether by implication or following an explicit ideology. For every rebirth, there is an archangel and a creed for every crèche. Each practice of transformative education has its own purposes for educating and designs the liminal vessel accordingly. Adult education has traditionally been designed for effective participation in the work economy; Mezirow’s work has evolved to support a consciousness of power relations; and Horton at Highlander Center and Freire in Brazil designed the vessel to prepare for social action. O’Sullivan, Morrell, and O’Connor (2002) in Toronto imbue a responsibility for a holistic-ecological worldview, and religious sects have a variety of routes through the stages of death and rebirth.

Absence or weakness of an appropriate vessel for participants is another major cause of the failure of transformative programs. Irresponsible by those who initiate liminal work without adequate provisions for vesselling has given credence to charges that much work advertised as transformative is opportunistic manipulation and New Age hucksterism. Conversely, designs that effectively instill an encompassing belief system may deny the rebirth of the individual, entrapping rather than transforming their acolytes and evading the challenges of LIII.

The design principles for entry and vesseling differ greatly among the many theories and schools of adult education. Although there have been many studies of transformative learning viewed as specific events, there have been far fewer reports on the overall design of transformative education as the instrument for
transformations either in individuals or societies. This lack of understanding is one that we hope will be reduced by publications in this journal.

The transformative passage in the Navaho ritual is depicted as having two phases. One is characterized by a rainbow, the other by a lightening bolt, organized around the corn stalk. On the right, the processes are biased toward feminine; on the left, masculine.

The rainbow stage displays the early exploratory behaviors: questioning, collecting data, forming potential self-images, and envisioning new directions—none of which materializes at this stage. In transformative education, it is a period of unlearning, of research, organizing ideas, exploring forms of relation, and testing possible roles to adopt on reemergence. Some people follow the diffuse rainbow independent of others, but often students do their work in floating communitas—in student friendship groups, community projects, rural communes, and artist communes—that give comfort while in dark passages.

All along the path, participants are kept alert by the two spirit messengers, who are like the angel-devil pair that sit on children’s shoulders to prick their conscience with issues that accompany each new awareness. The spirit messengers are guides. As depicted here, they are agents of one’s intuition. But often they are mentors, chanting a ritual as in the Navaho ceremony, putting questions as did Socrates, or indulging in psychotherapy.

In the ideal passage, the wanderer at a moment of deepest despair comes on a new sense of self or of the issue that drove despair. Lightning strikes, and a person or a group grasps a direction on which to recreate identity. Teilhard de Chardin (1965) reported that on his journey there appeared “a bottomless abyss at my feet and out of it came—arising from I know not where—the current which I dare to call my life” (p. 48). From this moment, one organizes and directs energies using the more masculine style of encounter. Campbell (1986) noted that the moment of epiphany takes place at the heart chakra. A worldview is adopted on which to form meaning for one’s reentry, yet it may take time to evolve a robust form suitable to the everyday world.

In traditional societies, the departure is programmed by completion of the required ritualized tasks; in the academic world, with the completion of projects, papers, and dissertations; and for organizations and communities, a rising aware-
ness that it is now time to resume responsibility in the world left behind. Rebirth comes when a person or system can reintegrate into the community or has gathered the strength to remain at the threshold in continual experience of LI. III.

**REINTEGRATION**

The flowering of the corn tassel and the bird’s flight jointly illustrate the return to vital engagement as a generative and freed spirit, ready to resume one’s place in the community. This is the normal turn in the path for the Navajo healing ceremony and those transformations that have achieved a LI program. The person, organization, or community has retreated, reconceived the mission, adopted new directions, structured new roles, and is now ready to reappear in the agora. But all returns do not follow such a routine rebirth.

The alternative outcomes of the death and rebirth cycle reflect distinctly different energies and serve a variety of social needs. The return, Lewin’s (1946) refreezing, allows reaggregation with society. In Lewin’s model, and in the common parlance of change management, the system, person, organization, or society settles into a new stasis. If the reflective learning has occurred, the system will perform in some ways more compatibly with its environment. In Argyris’s view (Argyris & Schon, 1978), a double-loop learning has been completed and continues to travel a purposeful course, putting behind the joys and pains of liminality. Such reintegrations are merely corrective; the person or system now performs as expected. In other cases, the changes are so dramatic as to leave one unrecognizable, even unwelcome to family and prior associates. One may stay in dialogue, continuing to work the questions raised in the liminal world and exploring other possible journeys of the psyche or society. Such commitment to openness creates a continual LI III giving birth to sages, quiet wisdom, and perhaps a sense of the Tao.

**TRADITIONAL RETURN**

When the formal ceremonies are completed, the communitas dissolves and its members reencounter the mundane with a new worldview. Lewin (1946) envisioned them refreezing into a transformed system, thereby establishing new attractors with goals and commitments to new hierarchies of values. On return, individuals and communities again follow paths of LI, building from new assumptions, typically with more socially responsive relationships. The civilized,
undisturbing reentry is the desired outcome of most transformative education programs undertaken for personal or organizational needs. The return as matured member of the community is the expected outcome of those journeys taken on at adolescence as in a bar/bas mitzvah, as a young adult through military service, or as an adult following a midlife crisis. Similarly, it is the desired refreezing after a corporation has adopted new operating principles and established a proper image in its business community.

THE LIMINAL LIFE

Not all those who retreat into the cosmic womb return. Some participants remain encompassed. A continuing liminality is a destination for those who take on a spiritual life, devoted to preparation for the afterlife in a monastic vessel. Others find a lifestyle with one leg in the liminal world and the other treading in the work-a-day environment. Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) exemplifies a successful process that maintains both the day-to-day responsibilities and a communitas of a higher power. Part-time communitas enable members to resist their addictions while performing socially conforming functions. AA meetings form permanently floating communities of people able on occasion to set aside their personal identities, honoring their commitments to mutual contribution and relationship. Many meditative and religious organizations and the occasional formal educational institution provide the same function, ranging from nearly complete devotion to activities that primarily support secular functions, which recreate liminal communitas when former participants reconvene.

BEYOND LIMINALLY

A third outcome of the inner passage is to a transcendent LIII mode, where the individual continues to question and lead others to explore beyond their habituated lives. This is an ultimate goal of transformative education: to live in perpetual self-renewal, reviewing the assumptions by which self and society are guided and given support, reflecting on and challenging their belief systems. The epitome of this transliminal emergence is seen in the great religious leaders (Laotze, Buddha, and Christ) but also Socrates, the poet Maya Angelou, and the American Indian Chief Seattle. The appearance of transcendent ones is disruptive to their communities, leading to social turmoil, unmanageable anxieties, and some times, paradoxically, social class distinction such as emerged in the Hindu caste system. We can dream of a society of transcendent citizens, but have little idea of how to organize an egalitarian society that operates without stable goals and confining conditions that guide short- and long-term behaviors.

We could assert that all transformations follow the path of death and rebirth, and that the apparently linear accumulation of a new worldview is a reduced expression of that cycle. However, the conditions that support a linear progression are different from those that produce the regression that initiates the rebirth. Every educational path should open its followers to reflection on their world-
views. The reflective stance is one of the specific goals of liberal education; it is traditionally induced by a rich encounter with the literature and philosophies of other cultures. Progressive education challenges students’ cultural predilections using crafts, the arts, and participative teaching methods. These and other methods used in primary schools and beyond encourage students to develop tools for continually testing one’s worldviews. Linear development can be induced at any age, perhaps more easily with children than with young adults who have built their identities during a decade or two of public performance. It is a question for research to ascertain whether the accumulation of learning can produce the same depth of learning as does the cyclical path of regression and return, and whether “work of the self on the self” of which Michel Foucault wrote can be as effective as that work done in communities of seekers.

Four Goals for Transformative Paths

We have described an archetypal path of transformation. It can be undertaken for reasons that vary greatly with one’s social and psychological condition. In some sense, these journeys are always imposed, some overtly by one’s society following a tradition of maturation, some by a rational analysis of opportunities, some by the internal loss of self, and some in the service of transcendent causes. Although the paths they follow may be similar, different purposes call for different guidance, enabling conditions, and support from the enveloping community during the preliminary, liminary, and postliminary stages. There are quite different requirements for the educational institutions that support these diverse societal outcomes: some supportive of the status quo, others leading to revolutionary changes, and others leading us to continual inquiry.

Productive and Instrumental

A highly visible form of transformative education is the enhancement of one’s career opportunities. Such education follows a route much like that of the original carrière that young Parisian architectural students used to deliver their entries into competitions. Their vehicle from which we derived career provides a rich metaphor for the indoctrination and training that adults undergo to enter or grow in a profession. The preliminaries are acquisitive engagements aimed at mastering a field, a process that is often diametrically opposed to one’s unconscious goals. These are trips of the mind. For many, the regressive effort that takes one across a threshold into a liminal state is wasteful of everything they have worked for through the accumulation of knowledge. They may retain goals of advancement while avoiding the dangers of a transformative journey. Others who start on the same preliminary path suffer the downward spiral of awareness of loss and enter on the liminal state in which they experience LIII they did not an-
ticipate although intuitively chose. Many of those who take on career enhancement at midlife come to recognize that the career work was a personal cover story to allow them to embark on an unrationl journey into their own souls.

The instrumental function serves organizations and communities as it does individuals to enable them to operate more effectively. However, the processes of organizational learning and education differ enough from individual and cultural methods that we would address this domain in future issues of the journal. The instrumental path is supported by the economies of Western capitalistic democracies, as it seldom disturbs the political climate. It encourages LI that leads to improved performances. As in the Indian healing ritual, the adult returns better able to serve the employer's and the community's needs. Most adult education programs have the goal of providing such a product. The payoff to society is often great enough to offset an occasional loss of a good employee to a higher social purpose.

PERSONAL

The personal argument for transformational experience, the classic path of loss, liminality, and return, is embarked on due to changes in personal circumstances. It is a healing process for personal health and often chosen as a therapy, although it is more, as Csikszentmihalyi (1993) argued:

To help guide the progress of evolution it is not sufficient for a person to enjoy merely any kind of life, but a life that increases order instead of disorder. To contribute to greater harmony, a person's consciousness has to become complex. Complexity of consciousness is not a function of only intelligence or knowledge, and is not just a cognitive trait—it includes a person's feelings and actions as well. It involves becoming aware of and in control of one's unique potentials, and being able to create harmony between goals and desires, sensations and experiences, both for oneself and for others. People who achieve this are not only going to have a more fulfilling life, but they are almost certainly more likely to contribute to a better future. Personal happiness and a positive contribution to evolution go hand in hand. (pp. 207-208)

The objective may be entirely personal, as Abraham Maslow (1943/1996) suggested, the drive for transformation is “the desire to become more and more what one is to become everything that one is capable of becoming” (p. 168). However, many institutions recognize the value of transformation in developing a more conscious and involved population of adults. Clearly, with the changing demographics of the 21st century, transformation at mid-life and beyond can be an increasingly important educational contribution for the society as well as the individual.

Transformation becomes a goal most commonly at mid-life, when individuals are likely to suffer awareness of loss and personal mortality. As Robert Jay Lifton commented, “There is a special quality of life-power available only to those seasoned by struggles of four or more decades. The life-power of this stage can be especially profound” (quoted in Hudson, 1995/2001).
New goals at this life juncture tend to focus on issues other than those of the productive consumption-oriented society and more toward personal health, community responsibilities, and eventually to a concern with the spiritual domain. Still, there is little public support for personal transformation. It is left mostly to growth centers; religious and spiritual organizations; for-profit institutes such as the Hudson Institute in Santa Barbara, California; private colleges like the Buddhists started at Naropa; and graduate institutes such as Fielding, Union, and Saybrook (McWhinney, 1990). For all its importance to modern societies with life spans now 30 years longer than when most current schooling systems were devised, almost no effort has been expended to develop this fourth order of education.

**EMANCIPATORY**

Emancipatory education has goals of social transformation. It uses education to achieve what Freire (1970) called *conscientização* of a population to conditions that enforce their repression and to transgress oppressive boundaries (hooks, 1994). It is education in the service of society, rather than an intended transformation of the involved individuals. The initiating condition for this work is social repression, not individual loss or aimlessness. In this framework, a crisis is induced by the leaders to awaken discontent across a population. Some people become followers continuing on a path of social reform using new LI, others deepen their engagement into a personal transformation.

During the past century, the leadership for sociopolitical transformative education has come from inner-city housing and welfare agencies, from union movements such as the United Farmer Workers with Cesar Chavez, in the antiwar movements in the 1960-1970 period, and from civil rights groups. It has been supported by theories of social action, socialism, radical egalitarianism, and critical education theory (see Mayo, 2003 [this issue]). However, few organizations have sustained programs of emancipatory education. Horton’s Highlander Center is an exception that for more than half a century has vesseled the development of political consciousness and participative action skills; a newer effort is at the Labor/Community Strategy Center in Los Angeles. These organizations are effective in training for social transformation but have less provision for personal transformation. Without enabling personal transformation, social reformations are susceptible to corruption and cooptation by those whose political goals exceed their concern for individual rights.

Outside of these highly developed organizations, socially emancipatory education is mostly relegated to the fringe American and European institutions, for example, in single courses and transformative learning events. It often is too closely associated with humanistic psychology or left-wing socialism to find support in establishment schools and agencies. But we have not yet felt the effect of networking and decentered learning situations that are coming with new modes of communication and the emerging spirituality. We do not know what paths will emerge from thousands of years of tradition in the face of new conditions.
Holistic: Spiritual and Ecological Evolution

The most ancient of transformations are those in search of spirit and a holistic engagement with the natural environment. Transformations and commitments to these goals were a central feature of agrarian and nomadic societies, but have generally lost out in the industrialized economies. They have been slowly reappearing in holistic education and green political movements worldwide and with the reemphasis on spiritually in the United States in the past decades.

In our experience, students at mid-life often start programs without transcendental goals of the spirit or for humanity. Rather, such goals appear in the depth of their liminal explorations. An individual or group may regress over issues of rights, property, injustices, and losses, then find that at heart they are in pursuit of ethical, spiritual, and environmental issues of the world. In the United States, there is a revival of the spiritual worldview that is far greater than has been characteristic of Western populations since the beginning of the Age of Rationality. There is less pressure to stay the course of one’s ego and economic life, and more chance for the unconscious to surface earlier and start the detour more openly. These opportunities are being supported first by the established churches but also by many new age, environmental, and organizational development leaders. Tom Atlee described this broad movement in an article titled “Co-intelligence: A Vision for Social Activism” (2002), taking a perspective that leads to environmental and spiritual development as well as engagement for social change.

Beyond Thresholds

In this exposition of transformative education, we indicate that characteristics of human life, maturation, social support, and the existential fact of individual death are conditions for transformative education. There is historical and psychological support for the traditional model of transformative education that calls for regression in the service of a better start. This educative mode requires learners to cross over into a liminal space away from the world of linear engagement and responsibilities. The liminality echoes the origins of life in the womb and the role of the family and immediate community in vesseling the development of a person or an organization. It assumes cycles of return, death, and rebirth in response to internal and external changes. Its base in human physiology ensures it will continue to be an aspect of educative processes. However, there are emergent changes in culture that may lead to new learning situations related to the informational structures. Wexler (2000) observed that “the social relations of high informational production dematerialize the body and restructure time and space, unintentionally setting the stage for a mass resacralization of shared meaning” (p. 70) and, quoting Robert Bellah, “a revival of the profound collective experience.”
There are new possibilities arising with communications that use the vast capabilities of the Internet to open the boundaries of one’s engagements and challenge one’s sense of identity. With such a scope of information and immediacy of exchange, we may find that the existing images of education are inadequate, and even transformative education may take on forms more related to collective experiences than individual passages. What has been liminal may become the space of social commerce. What have been community rituals become private explorations. The vessel of transformation becomes the world in a grain of sand.

There is much to be learned and presented in the new journal.

References


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A Rationale for a Transformative Approach to Education

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This article proposes a rationale for a transformative approach to education against the backdrop of an analysis of the current political scenario marked by neoliberalism and the effect of this ideology on educational policy and practice. The author looks at some of the intellectual influences that, in his view, continue to abet this process and the larger process of capitalist restructuring, all of which have an effect on educational policy making and practice. What signposts should one explore for a transformative education, based on ideals of social justice, bearing this scenario in mind? The article will tentatively propose some of the ingredients for a transformative process of education and then proceed by providing a critical reflection on two “on the ground” projects taking place in the author’s home country.

Keywords: transformative; neoliberalism; public sphere; capitalism; parent participation; workers’ education; Gramsci; Freire; emancipation; civil society

The past decade has witnessed the propagation of a hegemonic discourse in education. This discourse is essentially technical-rational and focuses primarily on what works. It reflects a concern with marketability at the expense of, for instance, social justice. Among other things, it projects the image of learners as two-dimensional beings, namely consumers and producers, rather than social actors (Martin, 2001, p. 5). In this respect, it propagates the creation of programs aimed at providing a flexible and adaptable workforce. This workforce is to be capable of learning and relearning the skills for employment required in an age characterized by the threat of the flight of capital across different geographical boundaries. This is all part of the intensification of the globalization process that, as in-

Author’s Note: The theoretical discussion, which constitutes the bulk of this article, is a slightly modified version of Mayo (1999, pp. 1-7, 24-28). The case studies derive from material published in two other publications. The case study on the Workers’ Participation Development Centre derives, in a synoptic way, from Mayo (1997, 2003). The case study on parental involvement in public schooling derives, also in a synoptic way, from Borg and Mayo (2001; used with permission of Taylor & Francis, http://www.tandf.co.uk).

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dicated by Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto of 1848 (Allman & Mayo, 1997), has always been a key feature of capitalism. The intensification of this process of globalization constitutes the means whereby capitalism reorganizes itself to counter the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, owing to the crises of overproduction (Allman & Wallis, 1995). In his writings on Americanism and Fordism, Antonio Gramsci, one of Italy’s leading social theorists and a key source of reference in much of the literature on transformative education (Allman, 1999; Borg, Buttigieg, & Mayo, 2002; Coben, 1998; Giroux, 2000; Mayo, 1999), pointed to the need for capitalism to reorganize itself periodically to counter such a tendency. Taylorization constituted the earlier means in this regard (Hoare & Nowell Smith, in Gramsci, 1971, p. 280). The intensification of globalization is the latest form of capitalist reorganization (Foley, 1994, 1999). And yet there is ample documented evidence to show that this process of intensification has brought in its wake mass poverty in various parts of the world, predominantly in the so-called Third World. Accounts of the effects of neoliberalism, which provides most of the ideological underpinning to the process of global capitalist restructuring in the industrially underdeveloped world, makes depressing reading (see Boron & Torres, 1996; McGinn, 1996; Mulenga, 1996; Pannu, 1996).

It is the neoliberal ideology that underlies much of the discourse concerning education in this day and age. Since the early 1980s, it provided the dominant hegemonic discourse surrounding economic development and public policy and was very much a feature of the Pinochet regime’s ideology via the “Chicago boys” in Chile (see Quiroz Martin, 1997, p. 39), Thatcherism, Reaganomics (Pannu, 1996), and, of course, the International Monetary Fund’s and World Bank’s structural adjustment programs in much of the industrially underdeveloped world (Boron & Torres, 1996; McGinn, 1996; Mulenga, 1996; Pannu, 1996). It is now also a feature of parties in government that have historically been socialist. The presence of this ideology on either side of the traditional political spectrum in Western democracies testifies to the hegemonic nature of neoliberalism.

The presence of the neoliberal ideology in education, as well as in other spheres of activity, can easily lead one to think and operate within the logic of capitalist restructuring. This process is generally characterized by such features as that of converting what were once public goods (education among them) into consumption goods as the ideology of the marketplace holds sway. Neoliberal thinking brings in its wake increasing privatization and related cuts in public spending, together with increased user charges and cost recovery policies, therefore limiting popular access to health, education, and other social services. It also leads to a decline in real incomes, which turns the whole question of choice into a farce as people who cannot afford to pay for educational and health services are fobbed off with an underfunded and therefore poor quality public service in these areas. It also entails a deregulation of commodity prices and the shift from direct to indirect taxation (Pannu, 1996).

Other features, many of which have a direct bearing on certain aspects of education, also characterize the present scenario. Let us take adult education as an
example. The notion of participation constitutes one of the popular clichés in the education of adults. This is generally held to be an important concept within the progressive paradigm of thinking concerning production and learning. This particular conception of the process of participation has its roots in the various experiments that were intended to provide an alternative to the traditionally hierarchical forms of capitalist production. These experiments ranged from the process of self-management experienced in the former Yugoslavia and, until recently, the Malta dockyard (the Malta Drydocks), to the process of worker ownership one finds in cooperatives. The literature on education contains accounts and critiques of learning programs related to some of these experiences (e.g., see Baldacchino, 1990; Mayo, 1997; Ornelas, 1982; Spencer, 1998; Tonkovic, 1985; Vanek, 1977; Zammit, 1995-1996).

Yet it has always been one of the strengths of capitalism, a reflection of its dynamism, to appropriate a once oppositional concept and gradually dilute it in such a way as to make it an integral feature of the dominant discourse. Take the current fetish of total quality management. It involves the creation of worker management teams, arguably the one approach to employee participation that has been gaining currency. In this process of pseudo-participation, management often encourages employees to contribute to the handling of little else apart from “tea, towel, and toilet” issues at the workplace, possibly ensuring their loyalty and greater productivity in the process, without allowing them real involvement in corporate decision making and the development of corporate strategy.

The concept of participation has been appropriated in a neoliberal context even outside the sphere of production in the larger public domain. We are often being exposed, globally, to a discourse centering around such concepts as empowerment and active democratic citizenship (see Bron & Malewski, 1995), widely used in the adult education and community action/development fields, which, unfortunately, can easily prove insidious in that it can reflect another process of New Right misappropriation. As Margaret Ledwith (1997) argued, it can reflect “the New Right misappropriation of a language of liberation (‘empowerment’, ‘active citizenship’, etc) as a way of offloading social responsibilities onto the family, the individual and the community” (p. 148), especially in a scenario characterized by stringent budgets. Although I have always felt that grassroots empowerment should be a feature of any genuine democracy, a way of revitalizing the public sphere in this neoliberal age of privatization and commodification (Giroux, 2001), I would argue that this does not mean that the state abdicates its responsibility in ensuring, through an emphasis on equity, quality provision of services. In this regard, the literature on Paulo Freire’s work as education secretary in São Paulo can be instructive (Freire, 1993; O’Cadiz, Wong, & Torres, 1997). Here, community empowerment took on the form of a partnership between social movements and the state.

One other feature of the education debate deserving some consideration is the postmodern paradigm of thinking. It has gained currency in the education literature, as elsewhere (e.g., see Briton, 1996; Clark, 1997; Edwards & Usher, 1997;

I feel that educators can no doubt derive several insights from writers whose work falls within this paradigm, certainly in terms of the challenges they pose to those whose liberatory discourse is rooted within the Enlightenment project, with one of the constant dangers being that this discourse becomes a totalizing one. There are, however, strands of postmodern thought that are characterized by a nihilistic and paralyzing streak. In their critique of postmodernism, Paula Allman and John Wallis (1995, p. 31; 1997, pp. 118-119) argued, in the context of a debate on radical adult education and critical intelligence, that this has led to “the impasse in radicalism.” Freire and other contemporary writers have often used the term reactionary postmodernity (e.g., see Freire, 1998a, p. 14) in this context. The exponents of this type of postmodernist writing ensnare us with their ludic/playful mystifications (McLaren, 1995, p. 100). As Valerie Scatamburlo (1997) argued in a heartfelt tribute to Freire, these exponents are bent on “proclaiming the implosion of subjects or treating them as mere functions of discourse, as entities which float aimlessly in a sea of ever-proliferating signifiers” (p. 56). There are those who proclaim the end of the grand narratives, that is to say, the end of antagonistic grand ideologies (Fukuyama, 1992). In the reactionary versions of postmodernism, we witness a politics through which identities become ends in themselves—“identities of being,” in Predrag Matvejevic’s (1997, pp. 122-123) terms. This type of politics negates the possibility of border crossing and the forging of alliances characterized by an “identity of doing,” again in Matvejevic’s terms. It continues to provide what Nawal El-Saadawi called a “postmodern version of divide and rule.” In an essay entitled, “Why Keep Asking Me About My Identity?” El-Saadawi (1997) stated:

> The movement towards a global culture is therefore not contradicted by this postmodern tendency towards cultural fragmentation and identity struggles. They are two faces of the same coin. To unify power, economic power at the top it is necessary to fragment power at the bottom. To maintain the global economy of the few, of the multinationals, unification must exist at the top, amongst the few, the very few. (pp. 121-122)

Such cynicism and nihilism bring about a general distrust of and generate a culture of derision directed at any attempt to imagine a world not as it is but as it should and can be. Its proponents indulge in a politics devoid of hope. At the heart of this thinking lies a negation of the idea that one can work collectively for human emancipation. In one of his last works, Freire (1996) concluded that, according to this ideology,

> We therefore don’t have to continue to propose a pedagogy of the oppressed that unveils the reasons behind the facts or that provokes the oppressed to take up critical knowledge and transformative action. We no longer need a pedagogy that questions technical training or is indispensable to the development of a pro-
fessional comprehension of how and why society functions. What we need to do now, according to this astute ideology, is focus on production without any preoccupation about what we are producing, who it benefits, or who it hurts. (p. 84)

And yet the scenario of mass impoverishment in various parts of the world caused by the ruthless dismantling of social programs, the ever-widening gap between North and South, the concomitant displacement of people from this very same South and Eastern Europe to create a Third World in the first world, the constant rape of the earth (this also entails one's forcing the land to produce beyond its natural rhythms) for profit (see O’Sullivan, 1999), besides the persistence of structures of oppression in terms of class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and ability/disability, strike me as being among the several reasons why we should still be preoccupied about how (my addition to Freire’s statement) and “what we are producing, who it benefits or who it hurts.” They strike me as being among the several reasons why we should be concerned with engaging in educational processes that are not meant to consolidate “what is” but are driven by a vision of “what should and can be.” In short, I feel that the above are some of the many reasons why we need to retain an emancipatory vision of education, one that reflects the will to contribute to the creation of a world which, in Freire’s words, is “menos feio, menos malvado, menos desumano [less ugly, less cruel, less inhumane]” (cited in Gadotti & Torres, 1997, p. 100). Capturing the true spirit of Paulo Freire’s pedagogy and politics of hope, the leading contemporary Brazilian critical pedagogue and activist, Frei Betto (1999), stated:

Human beings need dreams, need utopia and there is no ideology, no system that can stop this force. Dostoyevski was right when he said “The most powerful weapon of a human being is his [sic] conscience” and this nobody can destroy. . . . I think that it is a matter of time before we witness the eruption of a world movement to rescue utopias. (p. 45)

We are faced with the question which Freire, arguing that there is no such thing as a neutral education, has been posing to us ever since his work first captured the imagination of educators worldwide: On whose side are we when we teach/act? In his foreword to Paulo Freire’s celebrated Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970), Richard Shaull, capturing the spirit of Freire’s work, posited the existence of two forms of education, none of which is value neutral:

There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the “practice of freedom”, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p. 34)

The statement certainly echoes the familiar contrast in Freire between domesticating and liberating education (Freire, 1972). The choice one makes in this re-
gard depends on one’s values. My specific values have led me to choose the second and infinitely more arduous path. It is the path that should characterize a transformative and emancipatory approach to education, formal and nonformal. It is an approach that is based on the conviction that people can educate, learn, and work collectively for change outside and within institutions, state controlled and nongovernmental.

My choice of such a phrase as within institutions indicates, with respect to the Freirean statement, concerning the two types of education, that an option in favor of transformative education also entails that we engage with the logic of the system. We do this for a variety of reasons, not the least of which being that we first need to survive to be able to transform. For many, survival means earning a living within the system itself. Most important, however, we have to engage with the logic of the system to be effective. The work of Paulo Freire moves us in this direction, especially with the constant insistence that we be “tactically inside and strategically outside the system.” In this respect, I feel that it would be more realistic to view the “two educations,” posited in the Shaul quote, as ends of a continuum where living and working critically would entail one’s readiness to experience the tension involved in trying to move toward the “transformative end” of the continuum while being pushed toward the other end by the material forces with which we contend daily.

Engaging critically and dialectically with the logic of the system implies a readiness to live with the tension to which I have just referred. Such an engagement is born out of a conviction that the system and its institutions are not monolithic entities but offer spaces wherein these struggles can occur. In keeping with an unmistakably Gramscian conception of social transformation, one obtains the conviction that dominant forms of thought and practice can be challenged in the vast and amorphous arena of struggle that is burgherliche gesellschaft (civil society).

Civil society has been given a lot of prominence in a section of the education literature and, more specifically, the adult education literature, where it has often been romanticized and conceived of as an arena of popular oppositional politics (see Korsgaard, 1997). Of course, this conception is arguably at its strongest among dissidents writing/acting in the context of a totalitarian state. Korsgaard made this point with reference to the positive connotations accorded to civil society by Eastern European intellectuals in the 1980s and the African National Congress in South Africa (Korsgaard, 1997, p. 22). My use of the term struggle suggests that I follow Gramsci’s conception of civil society (see also Holst, 2001). According to this conception, civil society is regarded as an area that, for the most part, consolidates, through its dominant institutions, the existing hegemonic arrangements but which also contains sites or pockets, often within the dominant institutions themselves, wherein these arrangements are constantly renegotiated and contested. As Stuart Hall (1996) underlined, when elaborating on Gramsci’s conception of hegemony, given “periods of settlement are unlikely to persist forever. There is nothing automatic about them. They have to be actively constructed and positively maintained” (p. 424).
What would be the ingredients of a transformative approach to education? I here adopt a tentative approach, describing a theory of transformative education as one that recognizes the political nature of all educational interventions. It is also a theory that calls for socially transformative educational initiatives, including nonformal educational initiatives that focus, in J. E. Thomas’s (1991) words, “upon change at the roots of systems” (p. 11) and therefore not on the mere symptoms of what are, in effect, structurally conditioned forms of oppression.

These considerations give rise to a series of tentative questions that, to my mind, can form the basis of an assessment of the potential that an educationist’s work can have for incorporation in a theory of transformative learning. It is my view that an alternative transformative pedagogical theory should be grounded in a critique of mainstream educational systems. The question that arises, therefore, is: Does the work contain a language of critique (Giroux, 1985, p. xiv)? By language of critique, I mean a process of analysis that ties educational systems to systemic and structural forms of domination in the wider society without denying these systems a relative autonomy. It also entails a form of dialectical engagement which exposes the contradictions that lie behind the veneer created by the dominant, hegemonic discourse. This constitutes a process of what Freire would regard as unveiling. A related question would be: In what way is the view of education, posited in the work, different from conventional, mainstream ones? This question calls for an assessment of the extent to which education is politicized in the work and, therefore, the extent to which the author(s) concerned expose it as not being neutral and therefore position it in relation to the dominant power interests and configurations in society.

The next stage would be to determine whether the work contains, to use another prominent Giroux phrase, a language of possibility or, more comprehensively, whether it exists within the contours of what Roger I. Simon (1992) would regard as a project of possibility: “an activity determined by both real and present conditions and certain conditions still to come” (p. 162). Does the work allow room for agency? I would submit that, when dealing with the issue of agency, a critically conscious agency, one should inquire: With whom does the agency lie? The question can, in my view, be answered in terms of an identification of the type of educator who can act as an agent of social transformation. Furthermore, are there particular subaltern groups, victims of oppressive social relations, with whom the agency for social transformation lies? This question leads one to explore the issues of class, gender, race, ethnicity, and other forms of social differentiation.

I consider also pertinent the following questions: Are there larger agencies that can promote the cause of these subordinated groups most effectively? If so, does the work being examined recognize and draw out the implications for the role which radical education, including radical nonformal education, can play in the context of this larger agency? This brings us to issues of party and social movements, the latter increasingly being considered in the literature (Bocock, 1986, pp. 12-13; Sklair, 1995), as important agents of social change. One also notices the existence of a corpus of literature in the area of transformative learning within so-
cial movements (see Arvidson, 1993; Finger, 1989; Lovett, 1988; Miles, 1998; Welton, 1993).

In terms of transformative education, one would perforce have to explore in what ways the kind of pedagogy being proposed is different from that which prevails in contemporary society and what would be the ramifications of such a change in pedagogical approach. Progressive nonformal education, for instance, tends to lay special emphasis on process, on the nature of social relations taking place within the learning situation. How far along the democratic continuum are these social relations?

Then there is, in Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970), Freire’s own dichotomy regarding what a progressive teacher does under conditions of dialogical education and what a traditional teacher does under conditions of banking education. This immediately brings to the fore the issue of social relations. I also consider the issue of social relations to be an important one because this is one of the areas in which power manifests itself. In my view, forms of power should not be reified, viewed as things, but should be regarded, among other things, as complex sets of social relations. One can partly challenge the power structure by attempting to change some of the social relations that give rise to it. And educational initiatives, complemented by similar initiatives in other sites of social practice, can make an important contribution in this regard.

However, progressive teaching also has to contend with the issue of content: Whose knowledge is considered legitimate, and why? Which knowledge forms part of the cultural arbitrary (Bourdieu) or, put simply, the cultural preferences of dominant groups? This, too, has become a feature of practice and theory inspired by democratic and critical pedagogical ideals.

Furthermore, one can refer to a specific feature of a critical approach to education whereby education is seen as a process that is not limited to schooling. It involves a variety of sites of pedagogical practice, including sites of what Henry Giroux (1999) would call “public pedagogy” (p. 4). There is a recognition that education should be viewed in its wider context, beyond the boundaries of formal institutions, and in its widest sense as a concept. There is also a recognition that processes of learning, whether in support of or against the existing power relations in society, take place in different instances and different settings throughout our life. An effective strategy, involving a counterhegemonic approach to teaching/learning, should therefore embrace as wide a range of social practices as possible.

In the remaining space, I should like to use some of the above considerations to reflect on two projects with which I have had some connection during the years, projects which strike me as lending themselves to an engagement in education of a socially transformative nature, predicated on the idea of education for social justice. I have been involved as a coordinator in one of these projects and as an occasional educator in the other. Needless to say, only some of the above considerations can be brought to bear on my analysis and reflections, given the limits of the learning settings in question. The context is a micro-island state, with a population of one third of a million and a land mass, for the whole archi-
pelago, of 316.3 km². The university in question is one of the oldest within the Commonwealth, originally set up as a Jesuit-run theological college in 1592.

In and Against the System

I have been working on a full-time basis at the University of Malta since the early 1990s, a period which saw several developments in the field of adult education in Malta. One of the many University agencies involved in adult education is the Workers’ Participation Development Centre (WPDC). It was set up in 1981 to cater for workers’ education, involving education for a genuine industrial democracy, and to provide research concerning the participatory experiences that were introduced by the then Labor government in a number of enterprises on the island. The Center was also intended to help promote the setting up of worker cooperatives (Kester, 1980).

I have followed the fortunes of this institution during the years, through (a) my occasional involvement in some of its projects (occasionally teaching in the Labor Studies Diploma course, participating and leading workshops in residential weekend seminars, etc.), and (b) carrying out qualitative research concerning the Center involving a case study approach (Mayo, 1997, 2003). Many of the considerations I provide in my discussion of the WPDC derive from the voices of course participants, educators, and WPDC personnel, culled from structured and semistructured interviews that appear in this case study. Readers intending to pursue this matter further are referred to the two pieces in question that comprise the case study (Mayo, 1997, 2003), the second piece providing a more updated version of the study.

The WPDC is committed to outreach activities involving participatory experiences in different sectors of the Maltese public sphere. However, the bulk of its activities consists of projects and courses held at the University’s main campus. An attempt was made to attract traditionally marginalized groups to the University, indicating a commitment, on the WPDC’s part, to groups who have traditionally occupied a subaltern position in the Maltese social hierarchy. The target groups during the WPDC’s initial years included a large number of employees at the Malta Drydocks and people from the trade union sector. Subsequently, the target group changed with more women and more people from the services sector being visible in the WPDC courses. When I taught a few sessions on workers’ education in the then Labor Studies diploma course in 1996-1997, people from the trade union sector and from labor politics were present.

As I had indicated in the published case study (Mayo, 1997, 1999), I felt that the WPDC programs can be regarded as an attempt to democratize the University in many ways. Here is an institution, funded, for the most part, out of public taxes, being made available to those who bear the brunt of such taxes (salaried employees) in a context wherein tax evasion by nonsalaried employees is considered to be high. Furthermore, in a microstate context where the cost per capita of facilities is high compared to that in larger countries, the University has, as a re-
result, rendered its facilities more accessible. I refer, in particular, to the University Library, which is undoubtedly the best available in Malta. As far as the question concerning whose cultural arbitrary is reflected in the organization's program, the WPDC’s courses were among the first at the University to allow the use of the Maltese language as a medium of instruction and writing. In most of the courses at University, English is the medium used for instruction and writing of theses, papers, and projects. English constitutes an important form of cultural capital in Malta. And yet Maltese is the national popular language, the language widely used by members of the Maltese working class. Participants in the course can therefore operate in the language they know best. Furthermore, the Center introduced, within the university setting, two areas that have potential for transformative education. These are labor studies, subsequently Industrial Relations, and women and development, subsequently Gender and Development (there is a diploma course in each of these areas).

The areas of Labor Studies and Women and Development had the potential of enabling educators to draw on material that can relate to the experiences of traditionally subaltern social groups, namely women and people from the working class, the two not being exclusive of each other because the domains of class and gender constantly intersect. With respect to women, however, the research has revealed the low participation of women in the main Labor Studies course, and reasons for this were provided by some of the female participants who were interviewed. They referred to the patriarchal nature of Maltese society that allows women few opportunities to be relieved of family chores, if only for a short time, to pursue courses, as well as the fact that the content of what is tackled in the course program reflects a cultural arbitrary which is androcentric.

The Center also helped introduce innovatory participatory pedagogical approaches to an institution where it has often been argued that teaching is, generally speaking, traditional, smack of banking education (see Mayo, 1997). The pedagogical approach nominally favored by the Center is one that would normally be based on considerations resulting from the language of critique that heightens awareness of the way the traditional educational system discriminates against traditionally subordinated groups by immersing them in a structured culture of silence.

As one former participant put it:

The course which the Center is holding is different [from mainstream education]. I am talking through experience. Whoever did attend had work experience. . . . So when we go there we share our own work experience. And we discovered, in the course I took, that several lecturers who came to deliver their lecture found it difficult at first to convey the message to us. Why? Because we would not accept, as a result of our life experience, what the person said as gospel truth. We questioned everything.

Of course, it is not easy to use concepts from the more progressive traditions in adult education within the context of the very hierarchical institution that is the University of Malta. There are many contradictions to be faced. In the first
place, the WPDC’s courses lead to recognized academic qualifications, and therefore reflect an important concern in adult education, namely the concern with certification. These courses therefore have to conform to uniform procedures and regulations governing all diploma courses held at the university. Some of these procedures and regulations can serve to undermine the very concept of participation that the Center intends to promote. One had to be really creative to come up with innovative approaches within the established constraints. From my own experience as coordinator of diploma courses at the same University (run by a different University agency, the Faculty of Education), I would argue that it is possible for the participants to conceive of and engage in a collective “on the ground” project in lieu of, for instance, writing the traditional dissertation. This has very much been the case with the diploma courses in adult education in which I have been involved as coordinator and educator. The WPDC can follow suit by organizing the participants into groups working collectively on a project of communal participation either at the place of work or in a particular locality. This has the added advantage of underlining the collective dimension of learning, so central to the concept of transformative education conceived of by Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, and other writers cited in the earlier theoretical discussion. It is one of many ways by which one begins to confront the ideology of individualism that characterizes not only capitalist relations of production but the kind of neoliberal inspired educational programs that support it, programs that project the notion of learning not as a social act, involving relational knowing subjects, but as a domain for atomized individuals.

Toward the end of the project, the participants can be encouraged to write a collective evaluative report, stressing not only the outcomes but, more significantly, the process involved. This is precisely what the participants, in the diploma courses I coordinated, did. Another constraint, faced by the WPDC, is that one would be hard-pressed to find teachers, for the different course units at the WPDC, who subscribe to the institution’s philosophy. My case study indicates that participants were often appalled by the presence of course instructors who embraced a teaching philosophy at odds with that of the Center. The University regulations stipulate that one ought to give priority, when selecting potential course teachers, to recognized University specialists in the field. Of course, there are ways and means of getting around this to ensure greater coherence between what is practiced and what is taught, the sort of coherence Freire is at pains to emphasize in his later works (Freire, 1998b). One way of attempting to do this is by couching the title of the area in terms that presuppose a particular pedagogical orientation.

In terms of connecting with other agencies, the WPDC works in tandem with groups and agencies that reflect a variety of social interests, such as, for instance, the Commission for the Advancement of Women and the Maltese trade union movement. One of the challenges for the WPDC is to engage in broader alliances, especially with potentially transformative social agencies, and therefore reach out to the broader domains of civil society, conceived of here in the Gramscian sense.
For, as indicated earlier, potentially transformative education occurs in a variety of sites, including those who would not, prima facie, be regarded as educational.

**Working Outside the Academy’s Hallowed Walls**

The WPDC case study underlines the difficulty of trying to engage in transformative education within, or possibly in and against (see Mayo, 2003), the system. And one ought not to ignore the issue of working within the system, as Freire himself emphasized, exhorting us to be “tactically inside and strategically outside” the system. This is based on the consideration that hegemony is never complete, its arrangements being constantly renegotiated.

As Paula Allman (2001) stated, with respect to the transformative thrust of Freire-inspired pedagogy,

> I cannot deny that applying a Freirean approach to critical education within the context of formal education is difficult—in fact, the most arduous and time-consuming approach that one could choose. Nevertheless, the rewards one experiences more than compensate for this and even for the various, and I presume obvious, risks one takes in adopting this approach. (p. 212)

It is here, in the spaces offered by institutions that are not conceived of as monolithic, that one faces the tension of trying to strive toward the progressive and socially just end of the continuum while being constantly buffeted toward the other end by the bureaucratic and commodifying forces with which we have to contend daily. It remains to be seen whether there is any significance, in this context, in the shift from Labor Studies to the more encompassing Industrial Relations in the diploma course title. Does this shift represent a broadening of the agenda conditioned by market forces, as a result of which the specific politics traditionally underlying the area of Labor Studies gets diluted to also incorporate managerial concerns? Which way is the war of position going?

In addition to working within the University system, there is also the option of working beyond the academy’s hallowed walls. It ought to be said that there is no coherent pattern concerning the University’s engagement with projects outside its walls. In fact, this involvement occurs on an individual basis. There are those, and our faculty of education thankfully has a few of them, who see their role as public intellectuals, using the concept of intellectual not in its pretentious elitist sense but more in the sense of transformative intellectuals, as propounded by Henry Giroux and others. This constitutes a minimal though important effort in enabling the University to contribute, in its own way, to a revitalization of the public sphere in an age when the corporatist culture holds sway as public spaces are shrinking through the onset of increasing privatization and predatory commodification (see Giroux, 2001).

As I indicate in my response to an interview question by Peter McLaren (McLaren & Mayo, 1999, pp. 405-406), many of us, working in critical pedagogy
in Malta, feel compelled to be involved in the public sphere. One major preoccupation is that of being relevant, of engaging in concrete attempts to try and make a difference. Now this is not to minimize, in any way, the value of committed academic work. To do so is to engage in a type of populism (or basismo, as Freire and other Latin Americans would call it) that is dangerous and ultimately reactionary. New Right policies, intended to minimize opportunities for critical reflective thinking, placing the emphasis on what works and learning on the job, thrive on such anti-intellectualism.

Parental Empowerment

I am committed, with a faculty colleague (Carmel Borg), to the coordination of a parent empowerment project in a working class locality in the South of Malta. The coordinating team includes the mother of a child attending this school and members of the School Council.

We were approached, for the purpose of this project, by the mother in question, who is a member of the School Council. She is a middle-class parent, one of the very few such parents in the locality to send their children to a state school. Her father was an esteemed figure in the community and the rest of the parents look up to her. She expressed the Council’s wish to develop a parental empowerment project and felt that we can make a contribution in this regard.

More than 50 parents, all women, turned up for the first meeting. The first session centered around the theme of homework, which the parent coordinator and staff at the school identified as a topic very much on the minds of mothers/female guardians within the community. The session itself, which was coordinated by one of us, consisted of a mixture of teaching and dialogue. The second topic was identified by the women themselves. Every effort is made to ensure that the female participants have a direct say in the selection of the theme for coinvestigation. Only thus can one ascertain that the object of coinvestigation is one that connects with their thematic universe.

The pedagogy throughout is directive (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 103). One of the coordinators, or guest resource person, anchors the discussion on the topic agreed to by the participants, interspersing the dialogue with brief expositions. The intention is to ensure that the sessions do not degenerate into examples of laissez faire pedagogy. On the other hand, every effort is made to ensure that the authority the guest speaker enjoys, granted to him or her by the participants as a result of their recognition of the guest’s competence in the matter at issue and as a pedagogue, does not degenerate into authoritarianism (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 181; Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 91).

The persons who consistently attend the sessions are women. The agendas are introduced by the mothers/guardians, including grandparents. They are discussed at the various meetings with the project coordinators and have led to an identification of priority areas. One of the priority areas is creative expression,
given that it was felt that people from this particular area of the island tend to be very low on confidence. This led to an engagement, in the project, of another cultural worker, a faculty colleague who is a specialist in creative arts among primary school children. Given the importance of a language of international currency in a microstate context (Baldacchino & Mayo, 1996; Bray, 1992; Mayo, 1994), it is not surprising that parents chose, as the other priority area, the teaching of English.

The demands of the parents, who regularly turn up for the sessions (there was a time when we had an average of 30 per session), are now beginning to translate into something concrete. Detailed research on this project can be found in an article published in the *British Journal of Sociology of Education* (Borg & Mayo, 2001).

This was socially committed action research, a form of praxis on our part, a reflection on our world of action, as a contribution to transformative action. An ongoing involvement in the project might enable us to eschew the traditional tendency among certain academics to engage in “studying and anthropologizing subordinated cultural groups” (Macedo, 1998, p. xxvii), being “tourists” and “enamored and perhaps interested in the [groups] for a time” (Memmi, in Macedo, 1998, p. xxvii) and then move onto something else. Our research and reflective pieces on the project also enable us to problematize our own involvement in transformative education and hopefully remain constantly suspicious of its own limits and the limits of the action to which it can give rise. We constantly need to problematize the assumptions we make, often based on some of the most convincing research available in the area, especially regarding who we construct as oppressed in specific contexts.

There are important issues that have to be faced in projects such as this. On whose terms is the partnership carried out? To what extent are the social relations involved genuinely democratic, that is to say, involving a two-way flow of ideas for action, as opposed to being hierarchical? One of the dangers is the fact that we are seen to be experts by virtue of our University background and position (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 192). This can easily lead us into adopting a patronizing posture, engaging in what Michael Apple (1991) would call, “The Bolshevik solution. . . . We shall bring you freedom!”

One of the greatest challenges is that of being able to listen (see Borg & Mayo, 2002). This might come across as being a very simple idea. Being able to listen is, however, no mean task. A colleague of mine, Ronald Sultana, captured the idea beautifully when, writing in Maltese and in the context of a process of parental involvement in public schools, he argued for the development of a “school that listens” (Sultana, 1994). The kind of listening being advocated here is that mentioned by Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of Freedom* (1998a):

> Listening is an activity that obviously goes beyond mere hearing. To listen, in the context of our discussion here, is a permanent attitude on the part of the subject who is listening, of being open to the word of the other, to the gesture of the other, to the differences of the other. This does not mean, of course, that listen-
ing demands that the listener be “reduced” to the other, the speaker. This would not be listening. It would be self-annihilation. (p. 107)

We are also under no illusion that the task ahead is plain sailing; indeed it cannot be. Connecting with the participants’ universe of knowledge and relevance is not a straightforward task. *Habitus*, in the sense conveyed by the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, often hinders us in attempts to remove or, more realistically, mitigate class obstacles. Constant recognition of the ways in which we are differentially located with regard to those with whom we claim to work should be born in mind as we seek to occupy different spaces within the system that, although structurally oppressive, is not monolithic and therefore offers spaces in which transformative action can be engaged.

The brief synoptic discussion of the two projects, drawing from more amplified published work, represents a modest attempt to indicate some pathways for educators to tread in a bid to engage in education for transformative action in an age of neoliberalism. These attempts, occurring in specific geographical and social contexts, serve to show that there are pockets of transformative education practice which provide a counterdiscourse to the dominant one of technical-rationality and marketability developed within the context and logic of capitalist reorganization. Of course, the issues outlined in the first part of the article indicate that these specific efforts at the local level must be combined with more comprehensive efforts if they are to make a contribution to larger and more global efforts for social transformation.

It is possibly in the exploration of the means of articulating local efforts with the more global ones that one encounters the greatest challenge for a genuinely transformative action, forged in the struggle for greater social justice and the radically democratic revitalization of the public sphere. The broader context of workers’ education, occurring within the international labor movement, constitutes an important larger context for the first effort. The context for the second effort can be found in the emerging international movement for parental involvement in education and the larger movement for the democratization of public schooling (e.g., see the Hillcole Group, 1998). Both movements constantly face the ever-so-pernicious threats of cooptation and appropriation intended to make these movements suite the current hegemonic framework. Nevertheless, they still hold out the promise of a context wherein people can participate as social actors (or subjects) rather than two-dimensional objects (consumers, producers).

Notes

1. See the collection of articles on globalization, adult education, and training in Walters (1997). See, in particular, the article by Korsgaard (1997). Another recommended article is Miles (1998). As for the connection between globalization and education in general, see, among others, Comeliau (1997) and McGinn (1996, 1997), and the rest of the Open
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File in *Prospects*, 32(1), besides the special issue of the *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 42(2). See also Ross and Trachte (1990) and Amin (1997) for more general discussions on globalization grounded in political economy.

2. I am indebted to Paula Allman for drawing my attention to this point as we worked on a joint SCUTREA paper.


7. These were the Malta Drydocks, Melita Knitwear, and Cargo & Handling.

8. More recently, I have been invited and accepted to join the Workers’ Participation Development Centre’s (WPDC’s) Board.

9. The University has an extension campus in Gozo, the second largest island in the Maltese archipelago.

10. For a revealing account of the difficulties and challenges involved in providing a transformative education within the formal system, see Chapter 6 of Allman (2001, pp. 187-216), entitled “Freirean Critical Education in an Unlikely Context.”

11. The next seven lines are extracted (with slight modifications) from McLaren and Mayo (1999).

12. I am indebted to my close friend and collaborator, Carmel Borg, for raising this point with me when providing feedback on a section of this article.

References


Peter Mayo is an associate professor in the department of education studies, faculty of education, University of Malta. He is the author of Gramsci, Freire and Adult Education (Zed Books, 1999) and has coedited Gramsci & Education (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002) and Beyond Schooling: Adult Education in Malta (Mireva, 1997).
This article presents an elaboration of the epistemology of transformative learning in adult education. Transformative learning is understood as a uniquely adult form of metacognitive reasoning. Reasoning is the process of advancing and assessing reasons, especially those that provide arguments supporting beliefs resulting in decisions to act. Beliefs are justified when they are based on good reasons. The process of reasoning may involve such tacit knowledge as aptitudes, skills, and competencies. The article examines the nature of reasoning within the context of critical-dialectical discourse—the intersubjective process of communicative learning by which adults assess beliefs—and its implications for democratic citizenship and adult education.

Keywords: transformative learning; meaning perspective; frame of reference; critical reflection; discourse

Moral and intellectual immaturity are not an ineradicable constant of the human condition, no matter how much support they receive from political ideologies and the usual agencies of social life. We remain prisoners in the cave—part of a “mass”—only so long as we lazily allow the frescoes on the wall to define who we are as political and moral beings.

—Villa (2001, p. 304)

Definition

Transformative learning is learning that transforms problematic frames of reference—sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets)—to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change. Such frames of reference are better than
others because they are more likely to generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action (Mezirow, 1991, 2000).

Taken-for-granted frames of reference include fixed interpersonal relationships, political orientations, cultural bias, ideologies, schemata, stereotyped attitudes and practices, occupational habits of mind, religious doctrine, moral-ethical norms, psychological preferences and schema, paradigms in science and mathematics, frames in linguistics and social sciences, and aesthetic values and standards.

Learning Meaning

A key proposition of transformative learning theory recognizes the validity of Habermas’s (1984) fundamental distinction between instrumental and communicative learning. Instrumental learning is about controlling and manipulating the environment, with emphasis on improving prediction and performance. Instrumental learning centrally involves assessing truth claims—that something is as it is purported to be.

Communicative learning refers to understanding what someone means when they communicate with you. This understanding includes becoming aware of the assumptions, intentions and qualifications of the person communicating. When a stranger strikes up a conversation on a bus, one needs to know whether he or she is simply passing the time, intends to proselytize, or is trying to pick you up. When a stranger recommends a new medicine or an investment, one needs to know whether he or she is qualified to make such recommendation or judgment. The process of understanding involves assessing claims to rightness, sincerity, authenticity, and appropriateness rather than assessing a truth claim. The process of critical-dialectical discourse centrally involves assessing the beliefs of others to arrive at a tentative best judgment.

The distinction between instrumental and communicative learning is fundamental. In instrumental learning, the developmental logic is hypothetical-deductive, and empirical methods are more often appropriate for research. For communicative learning, the developmental logic involves analogic-abductive inference. Abductive reasoning is reasoning from concrete instances to an abstract conceptualization. To understand communicative learning, qualitative research methods are often more appropriate.

Conditions of Discourse

Discourse here refers to dialogue involving the assessment of beliefs, feelings, and values. Discourse involves topics referred to from the point of view of a particular frame of reference. Justification of a proposition must be assessed in relation to the particular frames of reference applied. To take the perspective of another involves an intrapersonal process, drawing on the information one has
about the speaker to form a model of the other. Perspective taking also involves an interpersonal dimension, using feedback to adapt messages to the other’s perspective. What one talks about needs to be distinguished from what it means to the speaker and why he or she talks about it. Understanding depends on the nature and goal of the situation and its social relationships. For Habermas, rationality is inherent in the use of language (Waldenström, 2001, p. 81).

Skills, sensitivities, and insights are relevant to participating in critical-dialectical discourse—having an open mind, learning to listen empathetically, “bracketing” premature judgment, and seeking common ground. Qualities of emotional intelligence (self-awareness and impulse control, persistence, zeal and self-motivation, empathy, and social deftness) (Goleman, 1995) are obvious assets for developing the ability of adults to assess alternative beliefs and participate fully and freely in critical-dialectical discourse. In communicative learning, emphasis is on critical reflection and critical self-reflection, assessing what has been taken for granted to make a more dependable, tentative working judgment.

Hungry, desperate, homeless, sick, destitute, and intimidated people obviously cannot participate fully and freely in discourse. As economic, social, and psychological conditions fostering social justice are essential for inclusion in effective critical-dialectical discourse—the process by which we come to understand our own experience—overcoming the threat of exclusion constitutes a significant epistemological rationale for adult educators to commit themselves to economic, cultural, and social action initiatives. It is important to understand that the only alternatives to critical-dialectical discourse for assessing and choosing among beliefs are the appeal to tradition, an authority figure, or the use of force.

**Adult Learning Capabilities**

Learning to participate freely and fully in critical-dialectical discourse involves two distinctively adult learning capabilities. One is what Robert Kegan (2000) identified as the development of our uniquely adult capacity to become critically self-reflective. The other is what King and Kitchener (1994) identified as reflective judgment, the capacity to engage in critical-dialectical discourse involving the assessment of assumptions and expectations supporting beliefs, values, and feelings. These adult capabilities are indispensable conditions for fully understanding the meaning of our experience and effective rational adult reasoning in critical discourse and communicative learning.

King and Kitchener (1994) described the highest stage of reflective judgment as individuals with fully differentiated abstract categories see the problematic nature of controversies. The dissonance involved in understanding that a true problem exists conversely pushes them to become active inquirers involved in the critique of conditions that has been reached earlier, as well to become the generators of new hypotheses. Since the methods of criticism and evaluation are applied to the self as well as others, individuals see that the solutions they offer are only hypothetical conjectures
about what is, and their own solutions are themselves open to criticism and reevaluation. (p. 73)

Individuals at the final stage of reflective judgment can offer a perspective about their own perspective, an essential condition for transformative learning. Several years of careful research suggest that age and education are major factors in critical judgment. College graduates consistently earn higher scores on tests of reflective judgment.

When knowledge—beliefs, values, and judgments—is constructed through critical discourse—the synthesis of existing views and evidence—it is feasible to claim that, given current evidence or knowledge, some judgments or interpretations have greater validity than others. One may also reasonably contend that a given judgment is a supportable tentative conclusion on which to act until a new perspective, evidence, or argument is encountered and validated through critical-dialectical discourse. All conclusions remain open to the possibility of a future assessment by a larger, more diverse group.

Transformative learning is coextensive with rationality in instrumental and communicative learning. As the goal in communicative learning is mutual agreement rather than knowledge of an object or testing a truth claim, power relationships and cultural inequalities can distort the validity of a reasoned outcome and, hence, are a major concern of adult educators.

Transformative learning involves critical reflection of assumptions that may occur either in group interaction or independently. Testing the validity of a transformed frame of reference in communicative learning requires critical-dialectical discourse. Habermas's concept of emancipatory learning is here interpreted as the process of transformative learning that often takes the form of task-oriented problem solving in instrumental learning and critical self-reflection in communicative learning.

Critical reflection requires understanding the nature of reasons and their methods, logic, and justification. Transformative learning is metacognitive reasoning involving these same understandings but, in addition, emphasizes insight into the source, structure, and history of a frame of reference, as well as judging its relevance, appropriateness, and consequences.

Democratic Citizenship

There is a widely held view that more democratic participation will produce citizens who are

more tolerant of difference, more sensitive to reciprocity, better able to engage in moral discourse and judgment and more prone to examine their own preferences—all qualities conducive to the success of democracy as a way of making decisions. . . . For Habermas, discourse is an organizing principle of democratic judgment and legitimacy. (Warren, 1995, pp. 167-171)
Autonomy in discursive democracy involves a moral dimension. By participating in discourse with other affected individuals adults who challenge one’s interpretations can develop reflective judgment. This is the basis for Habermas arguing that Lawrence Kohlberg’s final stage of moral development in adulthood should be “discourse ethics,” achieved through reasoning with focus on the particularity of differences in points of view. We develop principles of judgment only by conversing with those affected.

Mark Warren (1995, p. 167) wrote that the tradition of “radical democracy” (Jefferson and Emerson, Marx and Gramsci, John Stuart Mill and Dewey) all noted that democratic participation is an important means of self-development and producing individuals who are more tolerant of difference, sensitive to reciprocity, better able to engage in moral discourse and judgment, and more self-reflective.

Transformative learning addresses the other side of the coin, direct intervention by the educator to foster the development of the skills, insights, and especially dispositions essential for critical reflection—and self-reflection—on assumptions and effective participation in critical-dialectical discourse (reflective judgment)—essential components of democratic citizenship. Dana Villa (2001) analyzed how this same process was central to Socrates’s conception of democratic citizenship, described his method of adult instruction, and illuminated its moral and civic implications.

Adult Education

Although adults may developmentally acquire the capabilities to become critically self-reflective and exercise reflective judgment, the task of adult education is to help the learner realize these capabilities by developing the skills, insights, and dispositions essential for their practice.

To foster the ability to reason in adulthood, the adult educator must help learners acquire the skills, sensitivities, and understandings essential to become critically reflective of assumptions and to participate more fully and freely in critical-dialectical discourse. Although the educator helps the learner assess and achieve the learner’s objective, the professional goal of the educator is to foster the learner’s skills, habit of mind, disposition, and will to become a more active and rational learner. This involves becoming more critically reflective of assumptions supporting one’s own beliefs and those of others and more discriminating, open, and disposed to transformative learning. This skeptical stance may involve challenging one’s own strongly held views. A discriminating skeptic may have strong values, but his or her understandings are always open to reassessment as new perspectives and assessments are encountered.

Creating the conditions for and the skills of effective adult reasoning and the disposition for transformative learning—including critical reflection and dialectical discourse—is the essence of adult education and defines the role of the adult
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educator, both as a facilitator of reasoning in a learning situation and a cultural activist fostering the social, economic, and political conditions required for fuller, freer participation in critical reflection and discourse by all adults in a democratic society.

References


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Cultivating Consciousness
Carl R. Rogers’s Person-Centered Group Process as Transformative Androgogy

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The case is made for the need for a new educational praxis that can cultivate the levels of consciousness necessary to succeed in the new emerging global contexts. The work of Carl R. Rogers is discussed as a transformational pedagogy. In particular, his work in large person-center community group processes during the past 15 years of his career is described where rapid growth in individual consciousness levels and group consciousness occurs. Elaborated are various configurations of individual and group conscious and how they are related to each other. Also considered is an extraordinary consciousness state observed within groups where high levels of individual consciousness and high levels of group consciousness are aligned. Some facilitative attitudes that may create the enabling conditions for consciousness alignment are described.

Keywords: group process; transformative learning; person-centered approach; Carl R. Rogers; conscious group

Here then is my theoretical model of the person who emerges from therapy or from the best of education, the individual who has experienced optimal psychological growth—a person functioning freely in all the fullness of his organismic potentialities; a person who is dependable in being realistic, self-enhancing, socialized, and appropriate in his behavior; a creative person who is ever-changing, ever-developing, always discovering himself in each succeeding moment of time.

—Rogers (1983, p. 295)

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Rogers’s Transformative Agenda

During his 60-year career psychologist and educator, Carl R. Rogers introduced several core concepts about helping relationships that have since become the sine qua non of all effective psychotherapy, counseling, and education—whatever the orientation. His message was straightforward and refreshingly devoid of the technical language so characteristic of much psychological writings before him. The message was that the simple and widely shared human capacities for empathy, genuineness, and unconditional respect for the other, along with a deep faith in people’s natural capacity for self-healing and growth, can be relied on to bring about transformative effects in people and their relationships.

This simple hypothesis was tested and validated in virtually every situation where one human being meets another—counseling, psychotherapy, education, business, conflict resolution, community development, family process, and medicine for the purposes of growth and healing.

Although these days best known for his contributions to the fields of psychology, counseling, and psychotherapy research, in the late 1960s and 1970s Rogers had an immense and permanent influence on the field of education. He was keenly aware that the scope of problems emerging in the world were beyond the reach of individual counseling, no matter how effective. What was needed, he believed, was a new way of being; a new level of consciousness on a cultural scale. He recognized that if this new way of being was to become a reality, we would need entirely new ways of educating children and adults. He saw his work explicitly as a contribution to the field of transformative education and drew parallels between his ideas about student-centered education and the emancipatory “pedagogy of the oppressed” of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (O’Hara, 1989; Rogers, 1977). He was impatient to identify an effective pedagogy by which person-centered principles might be used by educators within and outside the formal educational institutions to facilitate the development of higher levels of consciousness in individuals and within larger systems.

Here I wish to consider the work that during the past 15 years of his life was to become his overriding passion—the question of the applicability of his work in large, unstructured person-centered group encounters. In particular, I wish to explore Rogers’s proposition that if we are to succeed in building a sustainable global civil society, we will require forms of consciousness, habits of mind, combinations of mental capacities, attitudes, and values that so far are very rare. I would like to suggest that person-centered groups—reframed, renamed, and updated for a new generation—should be considered effective sites for new kinds of social learning wherein these new ways of being might be acquired. I want also to explore the possibility that under some circumstances, individual and group consciousness can be so aligned as to provide access to states of expanded consciousness that may be pointing the way to evolutionary possibilities.
Radical Change

We are living in times of unprecedented change, profoundly and permanently affecting the way we live, the environment, who we are as human beings, and, above all in these times of weapons of mass destruction, how we must relate to each other in our relationships and communities across the globe.

No one is exempt from the onslaught of change. In rural villages in Africa to skyscrapers in Europe, people of all walks of life are now being called on to manage the intended and unintended consequences of not just one mind-bending revolution, but hundreds occurring at the same time. Changes in life patterns that used to occur over generations now occur within a lifetime or, in the case of events like the attack on the World Trade Center, in the space of an hour. As Dee Hock (1998), the inventor of the VISA card, put it, “Fasten your seat belts, the turbulence has scarcely begun. Unless evolution has changed its ways we are facing an explosion of societal diversity and complexity hundreds time greater than we now experience or can yet imagine” (p. 4). What Hock did not say is that unless evolution has changed its ways, it works by favoring those adaptations that improve the chances for survival and eliminating those that do not. Consciousness unsuitable or maladaptive for the new world reality will have to change or become extinct.

The success of the industrial 20th century was built on a worldview that was developed in the 18th and 19th centuries. The patterns of mind or consciousness that emerged at that time, although immensely successful in producing the material advantages of industrial society, are no longer adaptive to the complex social demands of the emerging contexts in the 21st century. It is crucial, then, that if we wish to improve our chances of making the journey into the future well prepared to succeed in it we will need to identify or develop ways of cultivating the requisite modes of consciousness.

Affects—Uncertainty in the Face of Disintegration

By now, this picture of pandemic future shock is surely not news, but the scale of the psychological challenge it will present people and societies with as they try to cope with it has yet to be taken seriously by psychologists. We have not even begun to consider what psychological and educational science and practice might have to and need to be in the emerging contexts of the future if we are to meet the human challenges of the emerging world.

Whatever will be the long-range outcomes of such profound and pervasive change, the immediate psychological effects are already radically destabilizing. The creativity of human beings has resulted in a paradigm shift in which the same human beings are now scrambling to regain their footing. Our inner worlds of expectation, mental routines, imagery, and emotions no longer map the worlds we now inhabit. As the old rules are turned aside but before new norms have yet to be established, we must now all deal with rapidly rising levels of uncertainty
and ambiguity. In a conversation last year about what she perceived to be the obstacles to change in her neighborhood, an unemployed Scottish woman told me, “In Scotland in school we are trained to look at the world through the rearview mirror. We are never taught to look into the future. No wonder when things change it hits you like running into a brick wall.” A Japanese graduate student at Saybrook Graduate School reported that there is a wider gap in understanding between today’s Japanese youth and their own parents than between Japanese and European young people. In many families, he told me, both children and parents are in emotional meltdown and they have few resources to turn to. In both Scotland and Japan, suicide rates have skyrocketed.

Walking in the Land of Uncertainty

Dissonance between the familiar inner psychological landscape and the changing outer culture creates threat and opportunity. On one hand, a pervasive sense of dread and the feeling that “things are coming apart and the center will not hold.” On the other hand, there is an exhilarating sense that within all the disintegration and instability might lie immense possibility for transformation and breakthrough to new levels of consciousness.

In either case, caught between what was and what might be, the level of individual and societal anxiety is clearly rising everywhere. It sometimes seems as if humanity’s only alternatives are to descend into aggressive tribalism and chaos or, in the name of law and order, to surrender precious civil rights and submit to militaristic social control or fascistic corporate order. George W. Bush’s war on terrorism and Saddam Hussein, Le Pen’s attack on immigrants in France, El Quaeda’s attack on the United States, and Shell Oil’s oppressive interventions in Nigeria may all be interpreted as examples of these regressive trends.

But those of us who are therapists and educators are privileged from time to time to encounter the opportunity side of challenge and are reminded of the awesome resilience of the human spirit. Through intimate meetings with people struggling to find their way, we encounter the seemingly boundless capacity for learning and healing even of those who have lived through unspeakable horror. We have known clients and communities who do more than merely survive catastrophic crises but actually come through them transformed, better adjusted, closer to their lived sense of who they are, more in touch with the deeper meaning of their being, and more generous and open-hearted to their fellows. We have all experienced that when given the right kind of support from some caring other, even the most bewildering or anxiety-provoking of situations can lead to psychological growth and new orders of consciousness.

This inborn capacity for learning and transformation, this most human drive to engage with the challenges of existence and overcome them, has brought human beings from our primate ancestry to our current state, and the likelihood that we are not finished with this process provides me with the source of my hope.
Our present situation is calling on us as a species and individuals to undergo radical change. Business professor Robert E. Quinn (1996) said, “Deep change is different from incremental change in that it requires new ways of thinking and behaving. . . . Making a deep change requires walking naked into the land of uncertainty” (p. 3). This will not be easy.

Changing Larger Systems

By the time I met Carl Rogers in 1972, he was already shifting his focus from psychotherapy with individuals to transformation in larger social systems. When as a graduate student I asked if he would help guide my research, he accepted; in part, he said, because he saw my work in human development and emancipatory pedagogy as pushing beyond personal transformation into social transformation and, as he explained, that was where he was heading. He was particularly interested in the experiential group work in human sexuality, race relations, and action research I was doing with college students. Like him, I was convinced that if social transformations that challenged long-standing and well entrenched attitudes and beliefs (i.e., racial and gender equity) were to succeed, it would take more than changing laws—it would take changing hearts and changing consciousness. In other words, it would take whole person learning.

I saw in Rogers’s person-centered work a potential tool for making a contribution on the side of hope. In particular, the work in interactive groups appeared to offer an emancipatory pedagogy through which people might learn how to “walk naked into the land of uncertainty” and undertake at individual and cultural levels the deep learning required to exist and thrive in times of paradigmatic change.

It is significant, I think, that experiential process groups (variously named—encounter groups, personal growth groups, sensitivity training, etc.) developed during a particularly turbulent era in American and European life. In the United States, people were challenging traditional power relations and turning core values and social mores upside down. A new generation—dubbed the “counterculture” by its friends and the “me generation” by its critics—was emerging from the psychologically repressive 1950s, and they wanted a life that was different from the stultifying existence of their buttoned-down parents. These were the people who had spent their kindergarten years diving under school desks in futile drills for what to do in the event of a nuclear attack. They were people of color who finally grew tired of the hypocrisy of a society that proclaimed that all men were created equal yet refused to allow them access to quality education, lunch counters, and drinking fountains. They were women and sexual minorities who took on patriarchal White America and challenged traditional mores about gender, sex, and desire; they were the dreamers, poets, artists, and activists who saw the military industrial complex and the large bureaucracies of government and education flattening every spark of human originality in their paths.
Space for Social Learning

From the late 1960s to the late 1970s, process groups were important ingredients in this countercultural experimentation. They provided a safe space for a new kind of discourse where people could temporarily set aside their defensive masks to try out being what they sensed to be their real selves. They could be honest—especially about their emotions and their nonconformist ideas. For a few days or weeks, they could try on their newfound personal power, freedom of action, and expression, without disastrous consequences. In the best groups—and I think the person-groups were among the best—a tolerant space was opened up for a new kind of moral conversation about how we should live. The presence of others who felt differently and who may not necessarily agree provided people who were experimenting with pushing back the boundaries of old cultural norms, the necessary feedback by which they might learn how to handle these new ways of being in community with others.

As a context for social learning, the encounter movement was invented at just the right time, as hyper-rationalist industrial societies tried to figure out how to handle previously undreamed of degrees of individual freedom and self-expression, women’s increased role in all aspects of the public sphere, newly acknowledged ethnic and sexual diversity, and the personal and social consequences of all that. Although much derision has been poured on these gatherings as “touchy feely” self-indulgence, the best of these groups were extraordinarily effective human relations laboratories in which a generation undertook the individual growth and social learning needed to accept the expansion of democratic empowerment to previously excluded groups, for instance. They also helped people develop a sense of inner authority and self-mastery that permitted them to function in a changed world suddenly lacking clear external authority structures. I continue to maintain, despite the vitriolic push-back from far left and far right, that this broad-based social learning has had a major, and mostly positive, cultural impact.

By the 1980s, interest in process groups was in decline. By the early 1980s, things were stabilizing politically and culturally in the United States and Western Europe. The Vietnam war was over and many new civil rights were successfully established, extending power and social inclusion to previously disenfranchised groups. America and Western Europe became more culturally conservative—perhaps as a backlash, relieved to have survived the turbulent 1960s without an anticapitalist revolution, and determined not to let the unruly Dionysian spirit out of the bag again any time soon. The 1980s and 1990s saw the Reagan-Bush era, the success of the religious right in the United States, and Thatcherism in the United Kingdom. These were times of rising prosperity—at least for the educated middle class, the main consumers of encounter groups.

During the same period, psychology experienced a conservative reaction. After a wildly inventive era in psychological practice that had lasted from the end of World War II, by the early 1980s medical science had reasserted its dominance, squeezing out such innovations as encounter groups and personal growth labs. Unethical excesses in the human potential movement featured prominently in re-
ports about group work, whereas their benefits got little coverage. Gradually, psychologists and counselors gave up the messy nondirective encounter group in favor of tidier, more predictable therapist-controlled or “problem-focused” support groups. Experiments in education were shut down, casualties in large part of the right wing campaign to vilify any education that asked students to discuss their values, feelings, or other dimensions of their inner world.

Encounter groups continue to attract participants in settings where uncertainty and rapid change were still the norm. Rogers, for instance, found an enthusiastic audience for large groups in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and South Africa well into the late 1980s. Today, in many varied business settings, organizational development consultants put a modified version of encounter groups into service to help workers develop the increasingly crucial “soft” skills such as interpersonal communication skills, greater self-mastery, and racial and ethnic diversity sensitivity.

In many turbulent situations where the psychological ground is still moving underfoot, laboratories for personal and social learning are not regarded as subversive or as indulgent luxuries but as lifelines to survival and a route to success. It is now obvious that we are back into white water—this time on a far wider, in fact global scale—and there is every reason to believe that it will continue for some time yet, perhaps for generations. From whatever vantage point one looks at today’s challenges—as therapist, educator, business manager, trainer, relief worker, politician, social activist, or parent—it is also clear that people are as bewildered today as they were in the 1960s, and despite improved material quality of life, many are struggling psychologically.

Rogers the Futurist

Although not often mentioned, along with his many other interests, Carl Rogers was a futurist—almost from the moment there was such a field. In 1969 he gave a graduation talk at Sonoma State University entitled “The Person of Tomorrow,” in which he sketched the capacities, skills, and attitudes that he believed would be necessary for success in the future world. By 1973 these ideas had developed into a well-developed view of what he referred to as “emerging persons.” He was deeply concerned (and somewhat pessimistic) about the large-scale changes he saw in the world—he was particularly critical of America’s role in this: “We have reason to doubt whether our culture can survive. . . . Sometimes it seems the only question is whether we commit world suicide with the bomb or simply decay until world leadership is taken over by other hands. It is not a pretty picture.” He followed carefully and often quoted the writings of such futurists as Willis Harman, Harland Cleveland, Marilyn Ferguson, Joanna Macy, Walter Truett Anderson, Joyce Carol Oates, L. S. Stavrianos, Frijof Capra, Ilya Prigogine, and David Bohm in his quest to make his work relevant to what he believed to be the most important task of our generation—creating a new global society.
He agreed with the analyses of Harman (1998) and Stavrianos (1976) that the American modernist industrial culture, based on the ideas of the Enlightenment, had run its course and was disintegrating. He also agreed with Harman that success in the world that was coming into being would require not only changes in actions and policies but in who we are as human beings—what Harman referred to as a mind change. Pragmatist that he was, however, he took their theories and then looked for practical ways to help facilitate that mind change.

Rogers's vision of the “emerging person” (1969) was framed very much in North American values of the 1960s and was based on what he saw as the outcome of successful client-centered psychotherapy and learner-centered education and what he saw in the people close to him (1977). Looking back on this “person of tomorrow” with hindsight and the benefit of feminist and cultural critique, we might not share his enthusiasm for this overly individualistic person; but regardless of his Euro-centric bias, the fact remains that with his usual clear vision, Rogers saw that the world of tomorrow would require a new kind of person and to produce these people we would need new socializing processes and new pedagogies that would enable these qualities to be developed.

He believed person-centered group processes—in particular, the large group learning community—might provide such a pedagogy (Bowen, Miller, Rogers, & Wood, 1979). Rogers and his colleagues conducted large-group, person-centered encounters in many diverse cultural contexts and gradually began to see that these unstructured, person-centered process groups were in many ways, as Phillip Slater (1966) had earlier observed, a microcosm of both the threat and opportunity to be found in the disintegrating world. For a detailed description of such groups, see Bowen et al. (1979), O’Hara and Wood (1984), Rogers (1977), and Wood (1984). The chaotic beginnings; struggles for power; faltering faith in rationality; the contradictory demand by participants that leaders show the way but not impose external authority; the ubiquitous uncertainty, ambiguity, vulnerability, frustration, boredom, anger, and disappointment; the desire for quick answers; and the seemingly endless debate and action paralysis all mirror disintegrative processes in the world. Although only a simulation (after all, nothing very great is at stake), feelings are very real, confusion is real, and the confrontation with the existential realities of life in human community is real. And as the group process continues, new discoveries emerge:

- the importance that every voice be heard and every person recognized;
- the emphasis on process—not only what is done but how it is done;
- the importance of nonrational and emotional modes of consciousness and action;
- the desire—indeed necessity—to participate in the decisions that affect one, not just receive the dictates of leaders;
- the importance to the many of the one, of a common humanity expressed in a diversity of voices;
- the glimpse of the universal expressed in stories that are personal;
- the value of open rather than rule-bound systems, however intelligent;
the importance of tolerating ambiguity instead of rushing to clarity and closure;
the willingness to acknowledge feeling and permitting one’s vulnerability to show;
the need for communities that will respect each one as persons and where cooperation is favored over competition;
expanding the circle of empathy to include those with whom we disagree;
the need to respect the natural and social world around us and be mindful of the balance between human activity and the natural world;
the recognition that when all is fluid there can be no preset plans, only a sense of direction and willingness to be open to feedback to change and learn as we go;
faith in the potential wisdom of the group over that of any one person; and
the recognition that in chaotic human situations it usually matters much more who one is than what one does.

Synergistic Creative Process

My interest in person-centered groups initially focused on understanding more about the relationship between individual psychology and social processes. What facilitative conditions would enable the emergence of a synergistic creative process within a group of relative strangers? What interpersonal conditions would result in the combined efforts of a group exceeding that which would be predicted by looking at the capacities of the individuals within it? What levels of psychological maturity are required to reconcile the desire of sovereign individuals to realize themselves as unique and free subjects with the urgent societal need for people to voluntarily make personal sacrifices for the common good? How can we empathize across boundaries of difference and work together at more complex levels of organization? Some answers to these questions were reported (O’Hara, 1997; O’Hara & Wood, 1984; Rogers, 1977).

As our experiences in large groups continued, we began to get hints that something even more important might be learned. Extraordinary events occurred in person-centered groups that went beyond individual growth and group dynamic explanatory frames with which we were all familiar. We began to see that although what we were learning about the value of the large group in promoting individual growth and the cultivation of higher order mental capacities was important, experiences occurred in these groups that could not be explained as simply the sum of collective actions of separate individuals. “At these moments,” Rogers (1986) described, “it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the inner spirit of the other. Our relationship transcends itself and has become something larger” (p. 205).

I began to focus on this “something larger.” It seemed to me that what happened in the meeting of self-aware, self-responsible, and sovereign individuals was that this sense of being part of “something larger” may be revealing to us capacities not well developed, at least by Western societies.

In most of the world’s cultures, there appear two contrasting world views. People are either raised to see reality as a series of dichotomously branching linear-
ties—where what matters is individuation, causality, and difference—or as an ecology of interconnection of cybernetic networks where what matters is continuity, harmony, or blending in. In one case (most predominant in Western societies), individual sovereignty trumps social and ecological harmony; in the other (widespread in much of the rest of the world), the individual as a separate, conscious agent disappears into the service of the interconnected whole. The African concept of *umbuntu* (“I become me through you and you become you through me”) is an example of such a connected worldview. These views of reality have usually existed in a dialectical relationship to each other. Parenthetically, it is significant, I think, that whatever the culture, people who are regarded as the wisest ones—the sages—almost always propose that the superior mind is the one in which the either/or dichotomy becomes reconciled and transcended (Kidder, 1994).

In the new world that is emerging, people—not just sages but ordinary people—need both views and most certainly the habits of mind, or consciousness prized in both types of communities. If we could understand how people can be fully present to themselves as unique and particular, be capable of granting such sovereignty to others, and at the same time be in touch with and feel connected within something larger, we might indeed have a vehicle for facilitating a mind change.

**Integral Groups**

It turns out that there are certain moments in a group’s life in which an extraordinary level of alignment and attunement occur between individual members and the group consciousness. Simplifying the story very much, at such times we find four distinct but interconnected psychological states are present simultaneously.

There is heightened individual awareness. The individuals present become highly aware of themselves as whole, unique centers of consciousness who can act authentically as agents and simultaneously as parts—participants in a larger community.

There is a high level of interpersonal acceptance. Members of the group suspend their assumptions and judgements to become empathically attuned to others in the group as equally unique and sovereign coparticipants in the same larger community. Following the basic Rogerian conditions of empathy, genuineness, and unconditional respect for the other, and a deep faith in people’s capacity for self-direction, they create relational norms that permit individual sovereignty and mutuality. This does not mean that there is no disagreement or conflict, but only when it occurs there is a minimum of defensiveness and a willingness to hear the other out and, if warranted, to change.

There is conscious recognition of the presence of the group or community as a higher order entity with its own direction and purposes. Individuals in the group care about the community, are in empathic alignment with it (as needing
nurturing), and are willing to give of themselves. They are also willing to go along with it—not because they are conforming but because they believe that their individuated aims and the community’s aims are one.

The group as an entity gives up its exclusivity, transcends its own boundaries, and opens itself to membership, participation, and interconnection in even higher order entities of which it, too, is but a part. The community takes care of its own members but/and it also gives itself to the larger world.

In a recent article we have called such groups consciousness or groups (O’Hara & Wood, 2003).

In the same way that the consciousness of an individual is an emergent phenomenon from the coordination of activities of millions of sensitive cells in the body, we consider the “organ” of consciousness for an integral group to be the coordinated combined consciousness of their members. When groups can provide the necessary conditions for each of their members to become fully present to themselves and each other, the group’s capacity for self-organizing emerges, and when the individuals also begin to tune into and reflect on the workings of the whole, we consider that a form of consciousness. At this stage, the group may become capable of exquisitely creative, responsible, and wise collective action that goes well beyond that of any of the particular individual participants within the group.

Particularly exciting was the observation, confirmed over and over by its members, that in an integral group individual sovereignty and consciousness is not lost or subjugated to the group task but becomes aligned with it. When individuals find that their own personal and authentic expression provides some unique and vital element in the life of the group, and where there is coherence between their inner world and the community in which they live, they experience a deep sense of fulfillment and joy.

Deep learning by individuals seems to be facilitated by their participation in a group that is also learning. Participants frequently describe being “lifted beyond their own personal best” in such settings and reaching higher levels of personal consciousness. By fully participating in a conscious group and expanding oneself to incorporate all the seen and unseen realities, individuals are helped to enter a state of “flow” in which the usual defenses and inhibitions to creativity and learning are transcended and more of their inner resources become readily accessible (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). In such an aroused and expanded state, old fixed patterns of consciousness, cognitive, emotional, and perhaps spiritual commitments may be unfrozen. When old patterns unfreeze and reconfigure, new learning can occur at deep, transformational levels.

We observed people in such groups, including ourselves as convenors, gain access to deeper than usual levels of awareness, intuition, and extraordinary perception—even psychic and paranormal states of consciousness—beyond ordinary ways of knowing. People in residential workshops frequently dreamed the same dreams, had premonitions of future events, read each other’s minds, achieved startling levels of empathy and alignment, found innovative solutions to problems that appeared unsolvable in other states of mind, were able to play off
each other with awesome improvisation and synergy, were adaptable to rapidly shifting circumstances, and could handle ambiguity and dilemmas with playful aplomb. Not infrequently, people attained spiritual states not usually achieved without decades of meditative practice—all this occurs without losing their sense of self or their personal sovereignty.

One participant described the experience as like “being on some mind altering drug without the chemicals and without feeling stupid afterwards.” Another, echoing the spirit of umbuntu, said, “The more you all become fully yourselves, the more fully myself I seem to be becoming.” We also noticed that at times it becomes possible for individuals to read the group’s needs, sensing its direction, knowing intuitively when it needs resistance and when it needs provocation, when it needs closure and when it needs to keep things open, when it needs to confront its tensions and when it needs to comfort them, if it is to reach its most creative state. Often this knowledge comes as an image, a dream, or a novel association among seemingly unrelated memories. Only rarely does it come in the ordinary rational abstractions of psychology.

Elsewhere I have suggested that this kind of attunement goes beyond individual empathy and becomes relational empathy, where individuals go beyond simply entering into the world of the other individuals but entering the mind of the group as a whole (O’Hara, 1997). Experiences in conflicted situations are more risky but can be similarly extraordinary, taking people to places they might never have gone in another kind of group. A lifelong racist in South Africa, for instance, developed empathy for someone she at first despised; political antagonists in Belfast became comrades in a joint struggle for peace; feminists and antiabortion activists at a women’s conference found common ground and mutual respect.

We also wondered privately if such new capacities might represent a new step in the evolution of collective consciousness, where the high levels of individual expression and creativity achieved through post-Enlightenment European socialization could be married with the advanced collective forms of wisdom characteristic of more sociocentric societies to offer capacities that exceed either alone.

After observing conscious communities develop in widely different settings and under a range of conditions, we realized that if we could understand the reciprocal interplay between individual and collective consciousness and learn the conditions under which integral groups were more likely to emerge, we might indeed, as Rogers hoped, have a pedagogy by which to facilitate in a relatively short time the achievement of higher level human capacities with which to address the pressing large-scale systemic problems.

Facilitative Attitudes

Elsewhere we have described in detail what we know of the facilitative conditions for group consciousness (O’Hara & Wood, 2003). There is, in our experience, no one overriding facilitative attitude but several key attitudes all interact-
ing at the same time that seem to be crucial in nurturing the emergence of consciousness in a group.

In Rogers’s original work, a key component of the core facilitative conditions for individual growth is empathy. Empathy has since been shown to be the gold standard for effective facilitation in any growth-focused relationship (Bohart & Tallman 1999). Empathy is customarily regarded as an individual-to-individual phenomenon in which one person senses the unspoken or inchoate thoughts or feelings of another. Our observations show that group or relational empathy is also possible (O’Hara, 1997).

Another key attitude in facilitators is the willingness to let go of being an “expert,” suspend assumptions, open oneself up to see things afresh, risk being vulnerable, and learn in public. It is also important to be open at least to the possibility that one might be moved by forces beyond one’s ken—whether this is framed as a spiritual reality or scientific.

It also helps to maintain an existential, here-and-now focus. By engaging with the concrete existential predicament of the group in the company of diverse others, everyone has a shared experience that is real and concrete. By staying focused in the present, following the moment by moment experiential references in the context of life in a particular community, members seem more able to let go of previous mental maps. When they can experience the present with relatively few preconceptions, people are forced to learn in new and unexpected ways. When boundaries are softened in this way, new configurations of conscious become available to the individuals and the group.

It is through open-hearted and authentic surrender to another or others that we gain access not only to the lived world of another but also to the complex interpenetrated whole that is the emergent creation that we make together. Being truly open to dialogical encounter is to participate in “the mystery that rises up before us when thinking ends—to be kept alive by an enigma,” as Levinas said (quoted in Schmid, 1997). To surrender to a group of people we barely know and allow our own being to be altered in the meeting is in a psychological sense to die and be reborn, transformed in the meeting. Deep dialogue risks psychological death. This is an immense challenge and not a state to be entered into lightly.

Letting go requires a kind of faith. Whether it resides in God, nature, selfish genes, evolution, immutable laws of physical or biological reality, self-organizing systems, human creativity, implicate order, or all of the above, it is faith that the universe is not random and meaningless that enables human beings to move beyond themselves. It is through faith far more than logic that people come to believe that individuals, groups, and communities have intrinsic tendencies to self-organize and move from disorder toward ever more complex ordered wholes (O’Hara & Wood, 1984). On the individual level, this may manifest as a confidence that people can be trusted or that shared commitments are worthwhile. On a group or organizational level, it may appear as a dogged refusal of a small group to give up on a shared task despite overwhelming odds, or a willingness to make great sacrifices in the present for the promise of a better future.
Faith, like hope, is the conviction that the future is radically open and that despite turbulence and suffering in the present, there are real possibilities for betterment latent in the struggle. Faith is a powerful orienting force, alerting people to the presence, perhaps hidden as yet, of an evolutionary directionality to existence that can be trusted. It keeps eyes and hearts open even in the face of adversity. For Rogers, the object of his faith was the actualizing tendency which he believed was part of the intrinsic vector in all living organisms and the universe.

There are times during person-centered workshops or community processes that are very difficult and painful. Tempers flare, impasses occur, certainties dissolve, chaos reigns, anxiety spirals out of control, nothing interesting happens for hours or days, vitality ebbs, and people get bored, hurt, or upset. The temptation is high to individually withdraw from the group efforts and look out for oneself. It is the presence of people—particularly convenors—who have confidence in the group’s capacity to transcend its difficulties, who have faith in the Rogerian story, and who can urge individuals not to depart or withdraw into self-assertive individualism that will provide the necessary encouragement to keep the faith and stay involved with the learning process.

We have come to see conscious person-centered groups or communities as a pedagogy for transformational learning. These workshops (and processes like them) appear to provide opportunities for people to first experience and then develop the expanded capacities for individual and collective consciousness that will be crucial for our survival through the times ahead. When they are convened in situations where conflict exists—such as South Africa between Blacks and Whites, in Israel between Arabs and Jews, or in Northern Ireland between Catholics and Protestants—they provide a means where people can work through their mutual estrangement to touch a shared humanity.

In our view, the early experiments in cultivating the persons of tomorrow were a great but only partial success—they certainly changed the culture but left off too soon. People did become more psychologically minded; more self-sufficient; learned how to be better parents, managers, and friends; and came to enjoy deeper and more satisfying relationships with themselves and each other. People developed to greater levels of psychological capacity and reached higher levels of consciousness. But the full potential of the conscious group as greenhouses or learning contexts in which a new kind of relational consciousness could be cultivated was not fully recognized by their practitioners.

In the future, there is certain to be dire need for leaders and citizens who can cope with the never before experienced challenges and opportunities of the changing local and global contexts. The level of consciousness demanded in this moment of our evolutionary history goes beyond that which we have inherited from any of our ancestors. We are in uncharted territory.

In my view, we urgently need new institutional forms for accelerated social learning that can simultaneously expand individual consciousness at the same time they could expand group and societal consciousness. At their best, person-centered groups have many (if not all) the elements needed for such transformative learning.
I end with a statement by Rogers (1980):

If the time comes when our culture tires of endless homicidal feuds, despairs of the use of force and war as a means of bringing peace, becomes discontent with the half lives that its members are living—only then will our culture seriously look for alternatives. . . . When that time comes they will not find a void. They will discover that there are ways of facilitating the resolution of feuds. They will find there are ways of building communities without sacrificing the potential creativity of the person. They will realize that there are ways, already tried out on a small scale, of enhancing learning, of moving towards new values, of raising consciousness to new levels. They will find that there are ways of being that do not involve power over persons and groups. They will discover that harmonious community can be built on the basis of mutual respect and enhanced personal growth. . . . As humanistic psychologists with a person-centered philosophy—we have created working models on a small scale which our culture can use when it is ready. (p. 205)

References


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University of Toronto
An International conference by the Transformative Learning Centre (TLC) of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto (OISE/UT) in association with the Instituto Paulo Freire (IPF).

www.oise.utoronto.ca/~tlcentre/conference2003/home.htm

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Fifth International Transformative Learning Conference
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Paper Deadline: July 1, 2003
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