

Illuminating Transformative Learning, Context, and Meaning Making in Adults: A Student Perspective



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Purpose

Examine the context and activities that foster perspective transformation and influence adult meaning making, providing an experiential account of transformative learning.

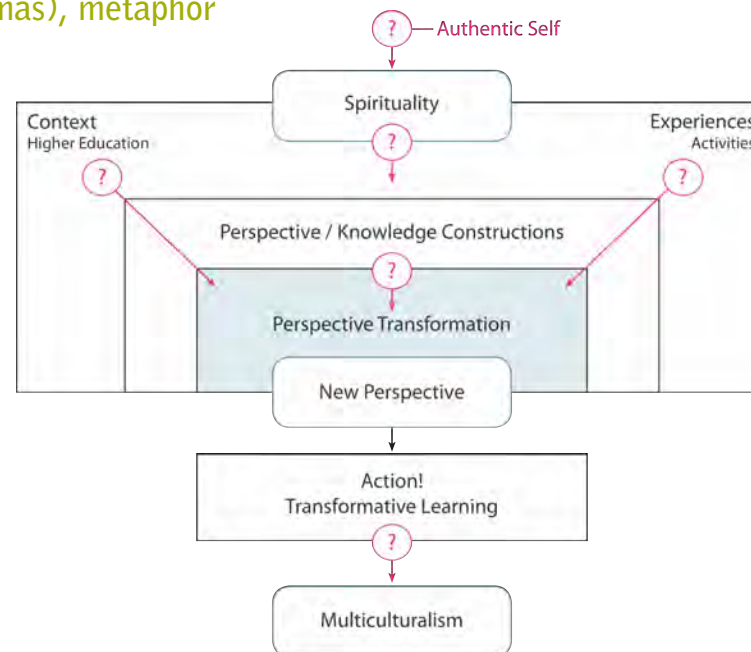
Transformative Learning

The process of challenging assumptions and belief systems through critical reflection, resulting in self-directed meaning making, problem-solving, and new actions/behaviors.

Methodology (Autoethnography), Research Questions, and Considerations

Autoethnography: relates the personal to the cultural. **Research methods:** a study of artifacts (physical, verbal, behavioral), self and participant interviews (over 20 interviews), examination of critical incidents (including disorienting dilemmas), metaphor analysis, and conceptual mapping (see samples).

- ❖ What does the process of perspective transformation look and feel like for adult learners, and how does it relate to higher education?
- ❖ How do one's spiritual beliefs influence knowledge constructions? Are they transformative and, if so, how? What fosters them?
- ❖ How do transformative experiences and spirituality influence perspective and multiculturalism?



When questioning "other" or "universe," we must inherently identify and address notions of "self," discerning what is assumed versus what is authentic. It's really a matter of perspective. It is from this place, we discover what is unique and what is shared, planting seeds for greater awareness and humanity. —Kate, Researcher/Primary Participant

Findings

- ❖ Perspective transformation:
 - Complex process that occurs over time
 - Involves some discomfort/vulnerability
 - Engages intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive dimensions
- ❖ Awareness precedes transformation.
- ❖ Transformative learning occurs both in and outside of the institution, and may be supported by it. Action is required!
- ❖ Like transformative learning, spirituality shapes meaning and action through vigorous questioning, reflection, and the development of personal standards. As one challenges knowledge premises, perspective transformation may occur.
- ❖ Perspective transformation, spirituality, and authenticity strongly correlate, increasing awareness and influencing action.
- ❖ Context/culture, personal experience, *and personality* influence transformative learning and spirituality.
- ❖ "Unlearning" is critical and fosters authenticity, while increasing awareness.
- ❖ Activities that foster transformation: critical reflection, self-inquiry (personal narrative/journaling), identification of assumptions/expectations/fears, dialogic discourse/contradictions, diverse/international experiences, self-directed/service learning.
- ❖ Time plays a critical role: age, diversity of experience, wisdom, consciousness.
- ❖ Autoethnography is a transformative process, in and of itself.