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Roundtable: Exposing Shadow Culture for Transformative Learning

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Keywords: image discrimination, somatic expression, social construction, transformative learning, shadow culture

Abstract: Discussion will be based from the proposed transformative learning framework lesson materials to determine 1) whether a critical event can be expected from material exposure; 2) how long disorientation is likely to ensue based on previous knowledge; and 3) best classroom techniques to manage individuals' transformative learning needs within group instruction. Instruction materials include historical timelines, extent of exposure around the world, and sketches of prime examples for comparison and are structured as an observation inquiry project for learners to determine the prevalence of astrology as a socially constructed shadow culture influence.

What

I want to provide lesson structure that allows the learner to run *image discrimination* tests as a way of showing how our body language *somatically* (Vgotsky, 1978) shapes us and how society affects that shape through *schema* projections at the *social interactional* level. Learners would be asked to view and tell a *narrative* from the nuances presumed from features and expressions of sketches of six males and six females, mostly European decent (Parker & Parker, 1984). The experimental lesson design is intended to test the validity of these sketches as a tool for use in Mezirow's (1997) *transformative learning* framework while revealing to the learner the effects of subtle discriminations in day-to-day social interactions. The finding expected is how repeated facial expressions from repeated expression leave traces that can be somatically read and what that means in *schema* creation. The analysis would be comparing the answers between participants to determine if there is a shared *social construct*. If there is a shared social construct from this test, then the instrument would be usable for a transformative learning framework addressing stereotyping and what that means in terms of cause and effect at the social interactional level.

Why

My instrument choice (Parker & Parker, 1984) is an astrology tool I am familiar with, yet is obscure to most audiences, because mainstream U.S. culture already dismisses the subject completely. The subject matter itself is particularly valuable for catalytic purposes as head sketches display physical traits, purportedly imbued by ones zodiac sign. I suggest this has a significant shadow influence in western culture in which birthdates have socially constructed meaning that is so entrenched, its evidence goes unidentified.

It is predicted that the material chosen will incite a *critical event* (Mezirow, 1997) and subsequent *disorientation* (Mezirow, 1997) in a significant percentage of participants engaged in the learning because of its novelty (Yorks, Dilworth, Marquardt, Marsick, & O'Neil, 2000). I seek to validate the claim that length of time disorientation lasts is directly related to 1) how foreign the knowledge is to the recipient; 2) how much resistance predicated acceptance of the

knowledge; and 3) whether there is an *action plan* (Mezirow, 1997). For the purposes of this design, this translates into 1) how much does the participant know about astrology; 2) how much credibility does the participant give to astrology; and 3) whether there are replacement behavior examples to design new behavior from with the perceptual transformation. I further contend neuroscience suggests disorientation is the state in which the brain is building and un-building neural connections throughout the nervous system (Zull, 2002). The brain recognizes the new information as valid, but needs time to orient the neural pathways used for translating this knowledge into interactional behavior patterns.

How

Because exposure to new material can be the most fruitful ground for perceptions to be challenged (Zull, 2002) it is most likely to create a critical event which begins a transformative learning experience (Mezirow, 1997). Withholding knowledge of the sketches original design ensures facilitation of learners in constructing meaning separate from preconceived conceptions of meaning which become barriers and creates an environment Zull (2002) contends is best for learning. With unhindered construction, perceptions can be openly challenged through *critical dialogue* (Adriance, 1982) and lead to a higher understanding of other social stereotyping such as of “angry Black men”, “lazy Hispanics”, or “stupid Blonde” which could incite a critical event leading to *perceptual transformation* with ensuing action plans. Mezirow’s (1997) transformative learning framework stages can be followed to facilitate processing of the newly acquired knowledge. When perceptual transformation is completed with an action plan, new behaviors become somatically expressed as neural pathway construction is completed.

I need peer-discourse of how best to handle the possibility of a large group of students simultaneously in disorientation and to plan for expected learner discourse concerning implementation.

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