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8

Facilitative Conditions for Transformative Learning

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Teaching multicultural counseling is challenging work. In order for students to learn course material, the instructor must often send them through a process of unlearning what they previously thought they knew in an effort to have them question their assumptions and form a deeper understanding of social identity. As Dibya Choudhuri notes, this can potentially lead to transformative experiences for students, as they begin to see the world much differently than they previously had. Dibya expertly uses the theory of transformative learning to shed light on what is happening in her class as her students go through this experience.

       Dibya chooses not to focus specifically on answering a "Yes-No" question of whether transformative learning took place in her class – although I would suggest that she provides clear examples of some transformation happening. Instead, her paper does something even more interesting. Dibya uses a range of data – primarily student journals and her own written reflections done before and after each class – to arrive at conclusions about what conditions *facilitate transformative learning. She suggests, with a little bit of undue modesty, that while instructors can do some things to facilitate transformation, much of it is beyond their control. True transformative learning requires a fortuitous mix of many elements – the learners, the instructor, the environment and the pedagogical process – to even have a chance of occurring.*

183

Introduction

Counseling, as currently practiced, taught, and learned, is a multidimensional endeavor. However, one of the primary features is that the self of the counselor is the most significant tool of the professional. In other words, just as engineers might use computers or slide rules, doctors use a variety of medical technologies, and lawyers use the body of rules and practices that make up the law, counselors must use themselves to develop relationships with others for the purpose of helping. In learning the profession of counseling, students often have to self-reflect to become effective. A piece of this process is that since we are relational creatures, everyone who seeks to become a counselor comes with a history of relationships and prior experiences with others and with the environments in which they have lived. These may need to be challenged, developed, unlearned, or simply reflected upon. When one adds in the dimension of cross cultural interaction and competency into the equation, it becomes a complex undertaking.

In assisting counselors-in-training to develop multicultural counseling competency, counselor educators strive to develop three interrelated dimensions of cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills (Arredondo et al. 1996). Due to the enormity of the endeavor, introductory courses in multicultural counseling typically tend to focus on cultural self-awareness and developing sensitivity and knowledge about cultural others. This presumes that the skills of using such sensitivity and knowledge will be integrated later. For this endeavor to be successful, students often need to go through a process of unlearning misinformation, confronting assumptions and biases, and becoming sensitized to critically examining issues of power and privilege (Steward et al. 1998). They also need to be able to move beyond the paralysis of such interrogation to be able to develop therapeutic alliances with cultural others (Hage 2005).

Such processes obviously seek to go much deeper than simply acquiring new information and the mastery of such material, since all such knowledge may well have seismic repercussions on the internal consciousness of the student (Ramsey 2000). It seems useful to use theories of transformational learning to strive to capture and make sense of such processes (Dass-Brailsford 2007). In addition, studying such processes may assist in developing our understanding of how

transformational learning may optimally occur.

Described first by Mezirow (1978, in Mezirow 1991), in the process of transformative learning, our assumptions must be examined from varied perspectives, critiqued, critically reflected upon, and altered, whether as a new understanding or a deeper understanding of previously held notions. As Boyd and Myers (1988) suggested, the learner must first be open to different meanings, and recognize the authenticity of such meanings. Learners may then proceed to let go of old inflexible categories and applications to allow for assimilation of richer meaning. Their work went beyond the reliance on rational processes originally emphasized by Mezirow (1991) and emphasized the intuitive and emotional components. Other pieces of the process include taking a constructivist stance of interpretation leading to new meanings, using reflective discourse as a critical tool, and assuming that such learning always takes place in a context (Baumgartner 2001).

In describing the scholarship of teaching and learning, Kreber (2006) declares it to be a process of building understanding, validating the practice through reflecting on both active pedagogy and pedagogical theories. In this paper, I strive to construct such awareness by referencing and reflecting on the teaching and learning that occurred in a graduate classroom, while bringing in theories of transformational learning to understand the process. The objective here is not to provide a template of pedagogical practices that can bring about transformational learning, but rather to meditate on the complex dimensions of the process, particularly from the perspective of the participants involved. The focus of this work is reflective rather than prescriptive, addressing itself to the ways we think about learning and transformation, rather than on the methods that might bring these about.

In the winter semester, a graduate course in cross cultural counseling at Eastern Michigan University was used as a site to collect qualitative data on the process of learning that was occurring. The process of teaching, the context, the students' perspectives, processes, and unique reflections and decisions, became an integral part of the study. In this paper, based on a preliminary analysis of the data, I strive to offer some description of the complex and interrelated processes of teaching and learning that occurred, and to develop a model that accounts for conditions that significantly influenced the transformational learning process.

Methods

Qualitative methods (Bogdan and Biklen 1992) were used because of the uncertain and ambiguous nature of the construct of transformative learning. It exists, so to speak, in the eye of the learner, given that it is usually ascertained through the learner's perceptions. Within the qualitative frame, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used. The aim of IPA is to explore in detail how participants make sense of their personal and social world (Eatough and Smith 2007). The main currency for such a study is the meanings of particular experiences, events, and states held by participants. In this case, these constitute how the instructor and students characterized, described and made sense of their learning and teaching processes. The approach is phenomenological in that it involves a detailed examination of the students' worldviews; it attempts to explore personal experiences and is concerned with the students' personal perceptions or accounts of the learning process, as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the pedagogy itself. At the same time, IPA also emphasizes that the research exercise is a dynamic process with an active role for the researcher, who is also the instructor, in that process. Thus methods were used in this study to elicit the perceptions of both students and the instructor, as well as observe and record interactions.

The bulk of the data came from ongoing weekly logs that students completed for the course. Following the relevant content coverage in class, students were asked to identify their current stance towards a dimension of social identity, describe significant experiences, critically reflect on the impact of new information and experiences on their existing position, and identify some changes that they might make. In parallel, the instructor critically examined and articulated the pedagogical assumptions and strategies in planning before each class (Brookfield 1995), as well as wrote reflections and descriptions of the class process after each class. These memos became a part of the data record.

At a midway point in the semester, students participated in a focus group where they spoke about their learning processes. Questions were open-ended, asking students to describe what they were learning, and then asking them to describe how they were learning. Additionally, students were asked to comment on what they identified

as critical and significant aspects of their learning process as well as to identify obstacles or difficulties they were experiencing. At the end of the semester, they wrote about their learning again and also identified areas they felt they needed or planned to explore further.

At the onset of the course, all students were asked to give informed consent for the use of their de-identified logs for the study. Refusal to participate did not impact their standing in the course, their learning process, or their grade. If they chose to participate, they turned in their signed sheets and placed them in a sealed envelope. The identity of the students who gave consent, the logs, or the data on the focus group (which was facilitated by an external person in the absence of the instructor) were not available to the principal investigator until the end of the semester, after grades were entered.

Participants

Eleven students agreed to participate in the study, as determined by their completed informed consent forms at the end of the semester. These constituted a little over two-thirds of the course students. Demographically, it was a mixed group. Table 8-1 breaks down the various social identities represented. It is important to mention that while not every student in the course chose to participate in the study, the class environment was as impacted and shaped by those who were not part of the study as by those who were. In descriptions of class process, it is impossible to separate out and describe only those interactive processes where consenting participants took part. Instructor memos describing class process as well as student logs will be used for a generalized portrayal to protect the identities of those who chose not to participate.   As the researcher/instructor, whose pedagogical memos are part of the data, it is also important to delineate my social identities as a small-built South Asian woman in my late thirties, born upper-class while currently middle-class, Buddhist, and bisexual while presently in a heterosexual marriage.

Course Structure

The course met on a weekly basis for 16 weeks, for a three-hour block. Every class period had a topic as described in the syllabus, where the focus would usually be on an aspect of identity. The sequence moved through a focus on oppression, power, and privilege,

Table 8-1:Demographic Breakdown of Social Identities of Participants *(n=11)*

Race/Ethnicity	4 African-American 7 European-American
Gender	1 man (African American) 10 women
Sexual Orientation	1 self-identified bisexual woman 10 heterosexuals (of whom 2 discussed considering changing their designation during the course)
Age	7 participants between 24–30 years of age 4 participants (all European-American women) between 50-60 years of age
SES	3 participants raised working class/poor 8 participants raised primarily middle-class
Disability	All participants were currently able-bodied
Religion	9 participants identified as being raised Christian (though some were currently non-practicing while others were very committed to their religion) 1 participant currently a practicing Buddhist 1 participant exploring indigenous spirituality

and then went into understanding race and ethnicity, culture, socio-economic class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, and disability. Readings from the assigned text focused on the counseling dimensions of that aspect of identity, while other assigned readings that students accessed electronically, gave personal narratives about the experience of such identities. Every class period, different class members volunteered to bring in refreshments, and there seemed a sense of camaraderie as people "broke bread together" and soon there was a spirit of friendly competition as students sought to outdo previous offerings.

Each class usually started with a check-in on reactions from the last week and any relevant experiences that students may have had. Then I usually began focusing on the current topic, starting with brief remarks, sometimes a piece of music, a poem, or a brief excerpt I read aloud. To continue the process of emotional engagement, we would usually then do an exercise, which could involve answering self-reflective questions, and discussing them in pairs or small groups, and then coming back to the large group. I then moved into an interactive lecture, assisted by PowerPoint slides that gave statistics, as well as history and sociopolitical context. Students were able to download the slides

prior to class so they did not need to focus on taking notes. We then would usually watch a video (about an hour or less in length) that focused on some aspect of the history or context or experience of that aspect of identity. Following this, I would facilitate a general discussion where I tried to link reactions to the video, experiential exercise, and information, with connecting to the context of helping. As the semester went on, I would add in more material on specific counseling aspects as well.

As the instructor, how I structured the course, developed pedagogical interventions, and facilitated learning, was much influenced by my own cultural identities. Often, I waited for insight to develop rather than being explicit. I was often indirect rather than directive and I preferred for students to reach their own conclusions and develop their own insights. As my students often complain, one of my most frequent responses to information-seeking questions of what to do with a client, started with, "It depends." Wenger (1998) has described "communities of practice" as a group of persons engaged in collective learning, and while I strive for and value a similar communal engagement, I am also conscious that each participant comes to the process from very different places and undergoes a different journey, even if situationally shared.

Data Analysis

Open coding was applied to the transcripts of the logs (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Specifically, the investigator conducted cross-case analyses, in which data were analyzed across the logs, feedbacks, and memos; themes and patterns were then identified in the data in a preliminary analysis (Huberman and Miles 1994).

Themes

The preliminary themes identified through the coding resonated around the strong influence of the learners and what they brought, the identities and pedagogical stance of the instructor, the complexity and fluidity of the process and classroom environment, as well as the ways in which transformative learning cannot be controlled or predicted. One challenge about describing process is that to capture it in narrative is to freeze it in place. Given the constraints of space, a model

was created to depict and organize the themes, and describe them with some attention to the interactive process of the project.

Facilitative Conditions for Transformative Learning

    One of the key themes that emerged was the inability of any one player or any one condition to control the outcomes and determine the process of transformative learning. In striving to facilitate transformative learning, an instructor must risk the possibilities of inglorious failure in order to be able to work towards transformation. At the same time as one takes such risks, one begins to reluctantly accept that it is hubris to believe that instructors have control of the process.

    While the instructor has power in terms of pedagogy and structure, in many ways the learners and group as a whole have similar powers to determine reception, interaction, and process. These powers can compete for control or collaborate, and in many ways, both such conflict and collaboration can spark transformative learning. In Figure 8-1, a model of such conditions is depicted. Necessarily static

Figure 8-1: Facilitative Conditions in the Occurrence of Transformative Learning
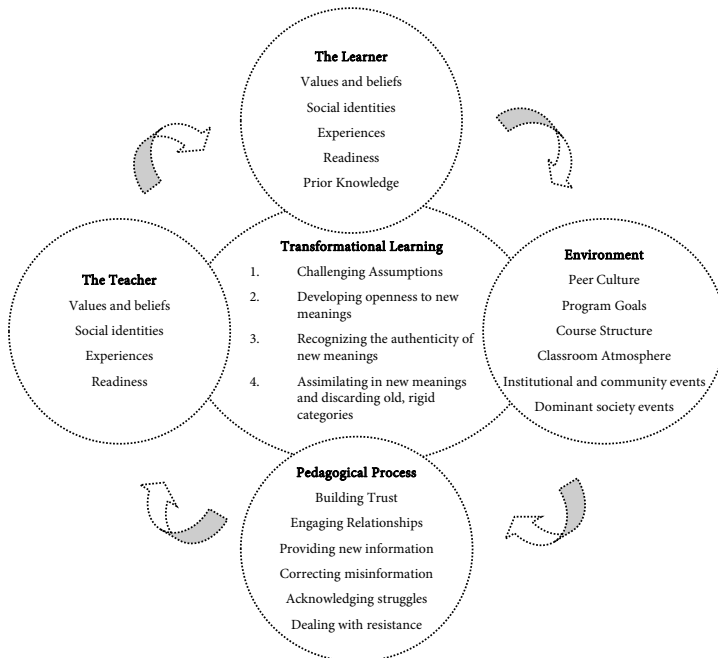
in such a two-dimensional projection, the viewer will need to imbue it with a sense of fluidity and constant motion to capture how constantly these elements interact.

In this model, four major dimensions of the learner, teacher, environment, and pedagogical process intersect with one another in ways that both provide affordances as well as constraints towards the central pedagogical goal of transformational learning. The arrows going back and forth joining across these four dimensions depict the interplay and lack of clear boundaries. In Table 8-2, I lay out some of the stages of transformational learning, together with illustrative quotes from participants' logs to highlight examples of how such stages may present. In congruence with the focus of this paper, however, the following discussion attends primarily to the precursor facilitative conditions rather than the identification and labeling of transformative learning per se.

The learner. Freire (2000) critiqued the banking model of education where we can deposit knowledge in passive students. However, we still tend to fall into the trap of exalting the responsibility, authority and control of the instructor. Learners bring to the setting their past educational experiences intersecting with, and shaped by, their social identities of race, class, gender, and religion. Emotionality, challenge, reflection, and unexpectedness are referenced by Brookfield (1995) as critical elements in the learning process. Learning that contributes to students' emancipation can be anxiety provoking. When one student explains:

> The women in my family have been unable to support themselves financially and had to completely re-invent themselves and make serious sacrifices in order to survive. As a result I have been bred for independence. I am able to take care of myself.

her perceptions are going to be shaped by the history she carries. A second result is a lack of understanding for women who may take a more passive role. Learners bring the life context of experiences and readiness to participate as well as the values and beliefs that shape their worldview. In addition, their personalities or preferences towards security versus stimulation, comfort versus challenge impacts their own

Table 8-2: Stages of Transformational Learning

Challenging assumptions	"Gender is what defines the line between male and female. So I thought!" "Class, this is a funny word and the reason why I say that is because growing up in school I always wanted to be in the smart class, the well behaved class, the "better" class. However I never thought that anyone could possibly attach those words to the class that society identifies me as." "For me getting older is scary because it's unknown terrain just like death."
Developing openness to new meanings	"I've always been curious about homosexuality and bisexuality in the sense of understanding how two people of the same sex can be attracted to each other until I had an experience where I was attracted to the same sex. Like the man in the video clip we watched I was more so attracted to the person not the biological sex of the person. We had chemistry and we enjoyed each other's company however I knew deep down inside that this relationship could never really fully develop into anything long term because of my beliefs in it being wrong."
Recognizing the authenticity of new meanings	"The movie we watched in class [*The Color of Fear*] brought me to a clear realization. Although I treat everyone with respect I have overlooked the most important aspect of someone of color. Treating someone with respect is not enough. I need to reach out into the community and learn about people from different backgrounds. I enjoy reading about different ethnicities and talking to people from all walks of life, but I have yet to really experience something different from my own environment. I feel somewhat like David in the movie when I thought treating someone as if they were the same as me was just fine. I never thought about the white privileges I have even though I was brought up in a low socioeconomic level. I can hide my childhood experiences, choosing to divulge only what I wish to divulge and to whom. If you are a person of color, issues are around every corner and you cannot choose when to be a person of color and when not to be a person of color. It is much deeper than treating someone with respect."
Assimilating new meanings and discarding old rigid categories	"There was a time where being black for me meant being angry and being angry meant being unapproachable and intimidating. I began to develop a hate or anger I should say to other races and the things that their possible ancestors contributed in the harm and pain of my ancestors. But I have started to understand that my anger was displaced. I had become angry with the things that had happened to my ancestors and the lack of concern and or explanation for the things that had happened to my ancestors that people had nothing to do with directly. I was angry at the apathy people demonstrated toward my anger as if they knew why I was angry. It took me a while to understand that I had to re-channel the displaced anger that I was feeling and understand that the people that I interact with now were not responsible for the pain that my ancestors suffered."

perception of new information. How taxing or novel is this new information? Retelling an early life experience, one participant set the context by saying:

> When I began attending church classes, my mom was the teacher so I sat next to her and listened while she taught the older kids all about the Bible. It was interesting to sit at the front of the class and look at all the "big kids" looking back. As my mom would call roll she spent half the time verifying spelling and pronunciation of the names of students in the class. She also would ask for contact phone numbers, and it was not uncommon for students to not have a phone. Diversity was all around me, however, in my family race/ethnicity was rarely addressed.

Where learners begin makes a difference in how well they adapt to the journey, the experience of the journey itself, and any discoveries they may make along the way. As one participant said:

> I have really begun to uncover more and more about myself that must have been hidden in my unconscious or was so natural in my life that I never stopped to think about the origins or that these might be different than others...I rarely if ever stopped to think about my race, culture or class. It simply just "was" and I left it alone.

> In teaching a group of learners, diversity of reception is rarely entirely acknowledged. Different learners will respond differently to material, pedagogical process, and the instructor, within the temporal frame of both the course process and their own lives. Perhaps the lack of control this implies is too unnerving. The process of struggle in transformational learning can lead to resistance, anxiety, and denial (Jackson 1999; Tatum 1992). Another participant complained at the mid-semester mark:

> I guess I would have to say being white, I kind of feel I do not have a right to my voice or my experience…I have a lot of valid experiences to offer to the class be them good, bad, or indiffer-

ent. However, I sometimes feel I cannot express them because at the end of the day I am white therefore life is better for me by default regardless of how I feel about that.

The teacher. In much of the literature on transformative learning, the role of the teacher is very much highlighted (Brookfield 1995; Cranton 1994). Some of the fundamental principles of transformational learning are the teacher's role in facilitating community building relationships as "conscientization" (Freire 2000), as well as the aspects of learning that work best when engaging both cognitive and affective components (Imel 1998). Instructor tasks include establishing a learning situation that is democratic, open, has access to all available information, and promotes critical reflection (Brookfield 1995). Other identified necessities include a trusting, empathetic, and caring stance (Cranton 1994), authenticity, sincerity, and a high degree of integrity (Palmer 1997); use of personal self-disclosure (Taylor 1998; Palmer 1997); discussing and working through emotions and feelings before critical reflection (Lee and Greene 2003); giving feedback and facilitating self-assessment (Lawrence 1998) and providing opportunities for self-dialogue (Imel 1998).

As seen above, this role is often defined in terms of the strategies and techniques the teacher can use as well as the pedagogical stance. In such silence, the social identity the teacher brings to the process often becomes invisible. The student interactions are also impacted. In one of my memos in the aftermath of an early class where I was still pondering the instability of the group dynamics, I note:

> As I was leaving the building later, one of my African American students was downstairs in the lobby waiting for a ride. I stopped to chat with her and she said she was really enjoying the course. Then she said that she loved that I was not intimidating but accessible and thought that I dressed very smartly.

In teaching a course on cross–cultural issues, my cultural identity becomes an inescapable part of the course, but so does the physical persona. In keeping with Western thought, the impact of the physical is underestimated in the pursuit of intellectual endeavors; as though students and instructor are minds in conversation, housed only in neutral shells. It is not accidental that my student saw me, a small built Asian

Indian woman who smiles frequently as is culturally appropriate, as not intimidating.

Over the semester, students began to pick up on that which was hidden as well as that which I shared. I tended to discuss topics with many factual examples, but did not often self-disclose my own opinions because I thought of it as asserting the power of my authority as teacher. So, one feedback read, "Sometimes it would be nice to hear about her [the instructor's] perspectives on the topics and less about the theories presented in the PowerPoints." As they grew more comfortable with me, they pushed for more, finally asking about two-thirds through the course for me to show them videos of my counseling work. When I asked in return what kind of examples they wanted, one student said, "It would be nice to see something where you screwed up." Everyone laughed, but there was certainly an undercurrent of agreement, and when I promised to bring in a video clip of my mistakes, there was enthusiastic applause. Interestingly, when I did bring clips to the next class, the students prioritized other pieces to cover and didn't really have the time to see them and we ended up delaying seeing the clips for a couple of class periods, by which time it seemed they had lost their charge. Perhaps they only had importance in terms of my consent and readiness to disclose "screw-ups."

Beyond my salient identities, my past experiences in both teaching the course and with cross cultural work was influential. One participant gave feedback:

> I listen and watch how you say things to people so they will not get offended. Yet, you say things that hopefully make people think. So, I think you are well aware of the multicultural subjects and I hope one day I can speak elegantly about controversial issues while at the same time inspiring people to think.

That stance the student picked up on is reflective of both my cultural bent towards maintaining harmony, while also being comfortable raising potentially taboo topics which in turn comes through practice.

The environment. The mix of persons and personalities, values and beliefs, creates its own unique cocktail, set within a particular context that is taking place in the larger social frame. For instance, it gave a poignancy and immediacy to the discussions on race and gender at

a time when the two major Presidential Democrat candidates were an African American man and a European American woman. An African American woman said in the discussion, "I would never have believed that White people would vote for a Black man, and they did. It gives me hope I never thought would happen."

At the same time, in a more local context, all the participants were getting regular emails from university security, striving to follow the Cleary Act (which dictates disclosure of offenses to campus communities to inform and protect members). Security was keeping community members informed about any thefts or muggings that might have occurred. Invariably, the suspects were generally and minimally described as African American males, a depiction that invited suspicion and fear of all African American men. It makes a difference to discuss racism in a social context where it occurs daily. Taylor (2000) described current transformative learning theory expanding the process to go beyond linearity to be more fluid and recursive, depending significantly on relationships embedded in both culture and context. An African American woman student shared a microaggression:

> One day while in the supermarket, I got up to the cash register and I said, "Hello, how are you today?" The cashier (Caucasian woman) did not reply, she just gave me the total in such a harsh tone and to make matters worse, although I put the money in her hand, she put my change on the counter. Now the couple that was behind me was Caucasian, so I watched and listened as she greeted them in a pleasant tone as well with a bright smile. In fact, she asked them if they preferred paper or plastic and she even slid the man's credit card through the machine for him.

Situated cognition theories (Greeno 1998) describe the learning that occurs in interaction with the living world. While such interaction is always happening, here it was made explicit and intentional as a part of the learning process. Our class discussions were enriched by real life examples of "driving while Black" and women's fear of walking alone after dark. On the other hand, one participant stated, "the class environment is what makes this class so difficult. Everyone in the class seems to come from such different and diverse backgrounds…none-

theless everyone is very respectful of each other's opinion." Another said, speaking specifically of the class participants, "I'm learning that even though we don't look alike doesn't mean we are not alike. I believe we are more interconnected than we like to think."

Pedagogical process. This dimension is a volatile combination of instructor intentions, plans, strategies, course content, and the disorientation that results when these intersect with the learners in their process. Participants pick up on a strategic teacher intention of engagement, with one commenting:

> Within a lot of the classes that we take we are so used to not being intrusive and used to having an invisible line that we cannot cross. And in order for us to understand each other we have to cross that invisible line [here].

However, teacher intentions rarely panned out as predicted. For instance, in an early class, I planned:

> I have a section on ethical and legal issues in multicultural counseling. I have placed it here in the course structure because of a belief that we need to start from a ground of ethical and professional rationale. We are not just building awareness and developing sensitivity because we want to be good, nice people, but because it is demanded of us in this profession that we have such sensitivity and competency.

In the aftermath, I described:

> …At one point, because our discussion had run over, I asked them to make a decision on whether to stop the film and cover the ethics, or continue with the film. They decided that since I had provided them the PowerPoint handouts of the ethical code that pertained, they would read it and ask questions if they had any, but really wanted to focus on the film. So that's what we did. So much for my belief in the importance of that….

> Events spilled over and influenced life outside the class and

then were revisited. One student described an encounter at work with a person who had a disability. She had condescended to this person and he had reacted and responded to her condescension.

> He printed a poem and brought it over to me and said, "Here read this." It was a poem written by a doctor who had a disability and the poem talked about how his disability does not define him as a person. This moment was so ironic because we had just discussed disabilities in class a week prior. I didn't even think about our discussion until he expressed that he didn't want to be applauded. I told him about how we were talking about that in my class on last week and I also asked him if I could have a copy of the poem so that I could share it with my professor, he agreed.

So, the class pedagogy impacted interactions beyond the classroom. In turn it can take on new meaning and richness that provokes transformation.

Conclusion

The multicultural focus of the course and subsequent power of the material is clearly visible in the course discussion. Issues of identity are where we live within ourselves and with others. The nature of the topics was so stimulating to the processes of transformational learning because of their significance to the lived and understood context of our lives. The participants came in to the course expecting to learn a bag of tricks on how to work with people different from themselves. Before they could learn how to engage with cultural Others, however, they had to develop an awareness of themselves as cultural and social beings. To build sensitivity, it was necessary to engage in the kind of scrutiny that delineated one's own ground before striving to build bridges to meet another. It is an apt metaphor for transformational learning to understand it as first, a mapping of our current location, and then a socio-historical and psychological understanding of such positionality and how we came to be there. Finally, the possibilities of mobility exist through the landscapes of self because of such new understandings.

In terms of counseling skills, the argument can be made that

being more grounded in a deeper and more complex understanding of self, while being more uncertain about received wisdoms, enhances one's stance with a diverse range of clients. One can be more flexible and allow for more ambiguity in dealing with human conditions, being responsive rather than reactive. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the acquisition of such skills cannot be directly attributed to the process of striving to enhance sensitivity and reflexivity but only inferred.

The ways in which transformational learning occurs can be accounted for, planned and strategized towards, but definitely cannot be determined nor are they ultimately predictable. One participant commented, "... you can't get out of this class feeling the same that you walked in. You see things differently. You have to, if you go through this process". While one hopes for that sea change in perception, it is true that the readiness to "go through" cannot be forced. Another participant commented, "Some of my learning has occurred in the uncomfortableness of what I feel in the discussions. Often a light goes on in my head and I think that what is being described is how I used to act."

As teachers, we need to acknowledge that transformation is not necessarily positive or pleasant. In striving to facilitate it we do ask participants to take risks on intellectual, emotional, systemic, and relational dimensions (hooks 1994). A participant panics, saying, "One of the biggest fears that I have from this class is what to do next. What battles do I fight and when do I back down? Now I notice every little thing that is wrong!" Another participant experienced this on a relational level, reporting:

> I'm like the angry black man [now] 'cause every time we watch these movies and I go to work and start talking about it people are like "oh my gosh what are you talking about?" and I do feel like maybe I was probably a little angry about some of the things we saw and read about and so I think I've been taking that and putting it out there and seeing how people are reacting… Everyone keeps saying that this class is personal and it changes you and makes you think about and see things differently like she said and every little thing I just keep analyzing and thinking "am I being treated fairly here?" So, yeah, people

in my office are walking on egg shells right now.

If we wish to risk transformation, we need to simultaneously press for risk-taking, while being responsible enough not to push the learner over the cliff.

One of the other aspects that became clear is that one cannot have grandiose expectations; one must take what one can get. While one student has an epiphany about social class, another has one about culture, and a third about sexual orientation. However, transformation appeared to be neither universal nor generally applied. There were some students who didn't appear to have undergone much transformation at all. One participant reflected, somewhat tepidly, at the end of the course, "one of the most prevalent notions I have learned is that no matter what ethnicity, social class status, gender, age or ability, each client needs to be treated as an individual and not generalized based on visual appearance." The real lessons from this project go deeper than deciding whether transformational learning took place, and present themselves in the complicated nature of transformational learning itself, the conditions that facilitate or hinder it, and the unpredictability of the enterprise.

> Through my experience in this course I realize now more than I've noticed before that I need help in greater awareness in the areas of age, sexual orientation, and disability. I've realized that those are the areas not only do I have the least knowledge but those are the areas of which I have the least compassion. I've understood this through the multiple conversations that we've had during our class. I've never really paid any attention to these areas because I never believed that they affected me directly...I need to become more aware of my current mind frame on these issues and constantly redevelop and redefine what I know about these issues versus what I feel. Part of being a counselor is having the compassion to be adequately equipped to counsel people of all different backgrounds.

This participant's deeply reflective voice captures for me the rewards of such process, the unique confluence of the conditions that can stimulate or retard the process, and the inescapable truth that

learning cannot be captured in any one slice of time but continues on, changing form and function. Transformative learning theories and practices offer processes but no comforting templates. At the end of this project, the conclusion is that instructors who seek to facilitate such endeavors need to balance the optimism of striving for the stars with the humility of making do with the trees.

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