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Defining and Analyzing Transformative Learning

Definicja i analiza transformatywnego uczenia się

Introduction

When I think of transformative learning theory and its evolution over the years, I like to ponder the key influences that shaped Mezirow's thinking and thereby influenced much of the conversations and literature surrounding the theory. One of those influences is Gregory Bateson, whose theories of learning served as an important precursor to the work of Habermas as well as that of Mezirow (Mezirow, 1990). A key contribution of Bateson that Mezirow did not explicitly discuss in his writings but that I find important in my scholarly reflections is that there is an important difference between the phenomena we study and the names we call them or theories we use to explain them. Bateson argued that gravity, for instance, was not discovered but rather was invented. Newton's theory of gravity describes the *what* of the phenomenon but not the *why* or *how*; it is in essence "an explanatory principle … (that) really explains nothing. It's a sort of conventional agreement between scientists to stop trying to explain things at a certain point" (Bateson, 1972).

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Similarly, transformative learning theory is a human construction designed to describe a phenomenon, but it is imperfect at best. The phenomenon it attempts to describe is, broadly speaking, one in which people change in dramatic ways. You can see in Mezirow's original study—of women in the midst of profound social change who were returning to school to prepare for employment - that he was looking specifically at how higher education can promote positive social change. He used the analytic tools at his disposal to help explain what he thought he saw in those women's experiences; namely, the critical assessment of assumptions, critical dialogue, trying on of new roles, and so forth.

To put his study in context, it took place toward the end of the second-wave feminist movement in the United States. So, although Mezirow usually spoke of transformation from the perspective of how educational programs can facilitate it, his research occurred within a broader social environment where many people were already experiencing a dramatic change. His study was especially influenced by the broader social movement because the women in it were enrolled in educational programs to help them transition from a role as stay-at-home wives and mothers to working professionals. This context of societal upheaval shaped Mezirow's study and his interpretations of its findings.

This background is important in understanding how Mezirow described what he meant by the word *transformation*. In short, Mezirow described it as "learning how we are caught in our own history and are reliving it" (Mezirow, 1978, pp. 100–110), His focus was on the *frames of reference* we use to interpret our experiences, make sense of the world around us, and understand who we are. He claimed that dramatic personal events (e.g. loss of a mate, loss of a job, graduation from college) as well as "rapidly changing behavioral norms" (p.101) sometimes contradict or do not make sense according to our existing frames of reference. When these experiences build to a critical mass, they can cause a *disorienting dilemma*, which in turn can put us on the path toward transformation. He spoke of the transformational outcomes of this path in terms of changes in how learners construct meaning in order to make sense of the world around them. Specifically, he described transformations as resulting in frames of reference that are "more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective" and that help us "gain greater control over our lives as socially responsible, clear-thinking decision makers" (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 3–33).

To reiterate, Mezirow did not use his theory in reference to just any kind of change; he explicitly used it to refer to learners coming to understand and evaluate how they made meaning of the world. Transformation involved the development of greater autonomy of thought, a greater openness to others' perspectives, and a more critical and expansive way of making meaning of the world and our experiences.

Of course, returning to Bateson's ideas, all the terms and explanations Mezirow created were just that: creations. We should therefore be careful not to reify his terms as if they are just as real as the phenomena they intend to describe. This perspective by Bateson is likely one of the main causes for me to focus so much on clarity when scholars discuss transformative learning (or any other) theory. In seeking clarity, I turn to the terms Mezirow used. He initially used the term *transformation theory*, which he later called a *theory of perspective transformation*, and has since been referred to as *transformative learning theory*. This evolution of terms is important because although Mezirow used all these terms to refer to his theory of learning, scholars using his theory have tended to do two things with them: 1) only use the latter term *transformative learning theory*; and 2) use it to refer to phenomena and *explanatory principles* far beyond what Mezirow had in mind when creating the term.

It is for this reason that I advocate a delineation of terms (Hoggan, 2016). Namely, the term *perspective transformation* should be used to refer to Mezirow's theory because it has only ever been used for his specific theory and it captures the tone of this work. The term *transformative learning* should be used to refer to the broad range of theories (including Mezirow's) that attempt to describe and explain dramatic changes in how people experience, conceptualize, and interact with the world.

Take, for instance, the contribution to transformative learning theory of Boyd & Meyers, as well as their intellectual successor, John Dirkx. These scholars talk about how various forms of introspection can lead to profound changes. Their portrayal of *transformative learning* begins with the ontological premise of Jung's model of the human psyche. The process of transformation involves integrating the conscious and unconscious parts of one's psyche. This is brought about by paying attention to one's dreams and fantasies, being present with one's emotions, and by engaging in creative activities such as, in Carl Jung's case, drawing mandalas.

In my own explorations, I have used *transformative learning* to understand the experiences of military veterans transitioning from combat to civilian

life, of breast cancer survivors navigating the psycho-social transition of their disease, of students from backgrounds of poverty attending community college, and even the negative transformation of people becoming radicalized into violent terrorism. There are many, many more situations that cause people to change, and those specific situations shape the processes that lead to change and therefore shape the eventual outcomes of that change. In some of these cases, I have found Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation to align well with the experiences of the people I was studying; in other cases, there were other approaches and theories of learning under the proverbial umbrella of *transformative learning* that seemed to provide a better representation of what I was seeing than did Mezirow's theory. In one case, I even developed my own addendum to Mezirow's theory in light of what I learned in the study (Hoggan, 2014, pp. 191–205).

This is why I claim that *transformative learning* has not and does not function as a theory. Rather, it is a collection of theories, models, and approaches that seek to understand and explain learning phenomena that result in dramatic change. Therefore, it is more correct to describe *transformative learning* as a metatheory. A metatheory is an overarching paradigm, an "umbrella under which several theories of development or learning are classified together based on their commonalities regarding human nature" (Aldridge, 1992, pp. 683–687). Most scholars of transformative learning have contributed to one or more of the specific, underlying theories of the metatheory, but some few scholars have explicitly engaged in metatheoretical work of the broader "umbrella" of transformative learning as a metatheory. Probably the best known metatheoretical work is that of Taylor, who has conducted several systematic reviews of the literature and provided an organizing structure for all the underlying theories (Taylor, 1998; Taylor, 2007; Taylor, 2012). It was Taylor who provided the descriptive names for the different *approaches* various scholars were using under the guise of *transformative learning*. This work can be described as a *synthetic* form of metatheory because it provides a framework with which to understand the myriad theories, models, and approaches used in the metatheory (Wallace, 1992, pp. 53–68).

Another type of metatheoretical work is analytic (Wallace, 1992). This is the type of scholarly work that I have been engaged in for the last several years. The purpose of an analytic metatheory is to generate broader understandings of the phenomenon under study by generating themes and concepts that cut across all of the underlying theories, models, and approaches of the metatheory.

One purpose of this type of work is to provide analytic tools that can be used across all the underlying theories of the metatheory. These tools can function as a common vocabulary (rather than having many different vocabularies in the literature from many different scholarly disciplines) so that scholars from different disciplines can work together to generate practical knowledge and broader understandings rather than remaining as simply a collection of disparate *approaches* divided by disciplinary perspectives. In the following sections I discuss some analytic tools created based on my reviews of the transformative learning literature.

Analytic Tools: Definition and Criteria

To begin, there needs to be a definition of transformative learning that is broader than what Mezirow offered because his definition of perspective transformation does not account for transformations as described in other approaches to transformative learning. To function as a metatheory, transformative learning needs to be defined such that it is has firm boundaries yet is broad enough to account for the wide array of transformations that are possible. For me, "Transformative learning refers to processes that result in significant and irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualizes, and interacts with the world" (Hoggan, 2016). This definition focuses on the results of the learning experience, insisting that it affects the learners' lived, felt experiences (*experiences*), the way they understand and make sense of the world and their experiences (*conceptualizes*), and their behavior (*interacts*). Other than that, it is purposefully broad.

Nevertheless, this definition is meant to exclude most learning experiences. To explain, I will offer an expanded example that demonstrates how scholars can easily but mistakenly classify non-transformational learning experiences as if they were an instance of transformative learning. There is a useful construct in the higher education literature called threshold concepts (Meyer, Land, Baillie, 2010). In brief, threshold concepts refer to discipline-specific understandings or ways of thinking that are often counter-intuitive or otherwise difficult to learn but that are necessary in order for newcomers to fully acclimate to and understand the discipline. I find this construct extremely useful because in my own experience as a student and as an educator, I agree that all course material is not of equal importance. Very often, there is one *concept*, usually a particular way of thinking, solving problems, or making sense of the issues of a particular

discipline that is absolutely essential to understanding everything else in the discipline. And, once a student "gets it" with this concept, their progress and understanding of the discipline "clicks." Alternatively, until a student has this breakthrough, they never really seem to understand the discipline. At best, they can receive passing scores on tests in a classroom, but they usually cannot apply their learnings of the discipline to a variety of situations or settings.

As much of a fan as I am of the threshold concepts construct and its usefulness, for me the learning of a threshold concept does not necessarily mean that it is also transformative learning, despite the book, Threshold Concepts and Transformational Learning, that attempts to connect the construct with transformative learning (Meyer, Land, Baillie, 2010). For me, expanding one's knowledge and skills – even though it can broaden one's understanding and capabilities in whatever domain it is in – would not normally be considered an instance of transformative learning. In the case of threshold concepts, the two concepts may overlap like a Venn diagram, but they definitely do not equate with each other. The reason for my reluctance to equate the two concepts is that threshold concepts are by definition discipline-specific. They affect how a person understands and functions in their discipline, but in most cases this does not seem like it would really change them as a person and affect their whole life.

To articulate these concerns and to provide some explication on the definition of transformative learning offered above, there are three criteria that learning experiences should have in order to justifiably be considered transformative learning. These criteria are: depth, breadth, and relative stability. Threshold concepts should normally have the qualities of depth and relative stability. *Depth* refers to the degree to which a learning outcome affects the way a person experiences, conceptualizes, and interacts with the world. Transformation implies something more than a minor change. Similarly, threshold concepts dramatically affect how a person conceptualizes (and probably experiences and interacts with) the given discipline. *Relative stability* refers to the longevity of the change. It is common for people to feel like they have experienced something life-changing, only to revert to former ways of thinking and being a short time later. For something to be considered transformative, the change needs to be permanent. That's not to say that the person will not change again, nor does it mean that the person does not retain former ways of thinking and being in their repertoire of meaning-making habits, and these habits may even resurface for brief moments due to contextual prompts, stress, etc. Nevertheless, if the change is not long-lasting,

it surely cannot be considered transformational. As with the criterion of depth, the description of threshold concepts aligns with transformative learning in terms of the need for stability of the change.

However, the criterion of breadth is where a difference between the two theories arises. This criterion is based on the notion that learning is contextual and that for something to qualify as transformative it must extend beyond a specific context to affect the entirety of a person's life. It should affect the way the person experiences, conceptualizes, and interacts in multiple, if not all, contexts of life (e.g. work, home, community). It is precisely because of this lack of breadth that I see a distinction between transformative learning and threshold concepts, and I believe it is crucial for scholars to be careful and purposeful with the terms they use.

Further Thoughts on the Definition of Transformative Learning

"Transformative learning refers to processes that result in significant and irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualizes, and interacts with the world" (Hoggan 2016). I am careful in this definition and criteria to avoid the temptation of assuming that only instances of positive transformations should be considered *transformative learning*. This issue has not been taken up in the literature, but in personal communications I have noticed that some scholars disagree with me. For them, *learning* denotes some kind of positive change. For me that distinction does not hold merit because often whether a type of change is *positive* or *negative* is completely subjective. For instance, some of my work has focused on radicalization that leads to violent terrorism. It would be comforting to look at a terrorist and say that their process of radicalization was not *transformative learning* because we do not agree with the way that person has changed. But then, the people who shaped that radicalization *would* agree with the outcome, and so for them it would seem correct to consider it an instance of transformative learning. In my work, I find it helpful to leave this judgment of *good* or *bad* outcomes aside. Even in this case of radicalization, there are some learning outcomes that most people would agree are positive changes. Life is never so clean and orderly that the totality of a learning experience will always yield only *positive* results. Very often, positive changes in one aspect of a person's life are concomitant with undesired changes. Where would we, as scholars, draw the line between transformative learning and some other type of transformation if we insisted

that *transformative learning* only encompassed experiences that contained exclusively positive results, or mostly positive results? That kind of hair-splitting would be untenable and unhelpful. It is important that we consider the totality of transformational experiences: the good and the bad. And so, the definition and criteria of described above are purposefully devoid of the judgement of whether outcomes are good or bad in order for an experience to qualify as an instance of transformative learning.

So, what is the state of the art in the metatheory of transformative learning? The metatheory has explicit parameters (i.e. depth, breadth, and relative stability) delimiting the range of learning phenomena it addresses. Within those parameters, however, there is space for a wide range of transformative experiences – and those transformations do not necessarily look alike. There is space, for example, for the experiences of cancer survivors whose lives are dramatically improved because of the disease, as well as for those of first generation college students, combat veterans, and religious converts. It is incumbent on scholars to articulate how exactly learners have changed in dramatic ways so that the literature is clear about the exact nature of the transformation being described.

Analytic Tools: Typology

Another conceptual tool that can help facilitate better discussions across disciplinary perspectives is the typology of transformative learning outcomes. This typology is a response to the problems in the literature that arose because scholars from so many different disciplinary perspectives were engaged in the dialogue surrounding transformative learning. These scholars were using terms, definitions, and understandings common in their respective disciplines, but they were talking past each other rather than really with each other. Scholars were paying scant attention to what they meant when they said that learners *transformed*, and as a result, the literature is a collection of vastly different recommendations for facilitating vastly different types of transformations—often without explicitly portraying what those transformations entailed.

In response to this problem, two doctoral students and I sought to review the transformative learning literature as meticulously as possible and with the intent of documenting the variety of transformational outcomes present in it. (For details, see (Hoggan, 2016) The typology we eventually created consists of six broad categories of change: (a) Worldview; (b) Self; (c) Epistemology;

(d) Ontology; (e) Behavior; and (f) Capacity. Within each category exist several distinct ways that scholars have described transformation. The intent is for scholars to use this typology as a common vocabulary and as a prompt to be explicit about the types of changes they mean when describing a transformation. Also, the typology can help scholars become aware of learning outcomes that otherwise they might have missed because they are not commonly addressed in their specific discipline. Following is a brief overview of each of the categories. (For a more extensive description, see (Hoggan, 2016).)

Worldview

The most commonly talked about way that people change is in their fundamental understandings of how the world works—probably because Mezirow wrote in these terms even when he was referring to other facets of a person's meaning-making processes. He spoke of perspective transformation in terms of changing "the structure of assumptions and expectations through which we filter sense impressions" (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 3–34). Perhaps this is why some scholars find it difficult to differentiate between transformative learning and, for instance, "good learning" (Newman, 2012 pp. 36–55). (In response to these scholars, I would point them to the three criteria of transformative learning as a way to make this distinction.)

A change in one's worldview represents something much more than simply acquiring new knowledge. Rather, it is a shift on one's tacit schemas or paradigms about the world and how things work. In our review of the literature, we created the following subcategories to represent various ways that scholars have described changes in worldview: 1) assumptions, beliefs, values, and/or expectations; 2) ways of interpreting experience; 3) more comprehensive or complex worldviews; and 4) new awareness and/or understandings.

Self

Illeris (2014) has been the most vocal scholar in advocating that transformative learning must and necessarily does revolve primarily around issues of self. Although I believe there are many other facets of a person's meaning-making processes that are affected in a transformation, I tend to agree with Illeris that it is difficult to conceive of an instance of transformation that did not involve a shift of the learner's sense of self.

This category of change has a diverse range of subcategories. The most common is: 1) self-in-relation to others and/or the world. In this sense, people experience a profound shift in their sense of connectedness. This might mean a greater sense of connection to other people or kinship with the physical world or even, as in the case of my cancer study (Hoggan, 2014), the oddly comforting realization that you are actually not the central figure in the universe. Other subcategories are: 2) identity and/or view of self, 3) increased sense of empowerment and/or responsibility, 4) self-knowledge, and 5) finding greater meaning or purpose in one's life, all of which are self-explanatory.

A subcategory we discovered in the literature that may not be as commonly understood is: 6) personal narrative. We all have storylines running in the background of our minds that we have created to make sense of our lives. Often in transformation, we change the story that we have been telling ourselves about our lives and what different experiences mean. This is one of the primary tasks that therapists try to help facilitate with their patients.

Lastly, in the literature there is 7) a change in personality. This description of change comes from Jungian depth psychology and is pretty specific to his theory of personality. Personality is defined as the totality of a person's psyche, consisting of the Conscious and Unconscious, as well as all the subsystems contained in them (animus, Collective Unconscious, etc.). In Jung's theory, human development involves a striving toward wholeness, and that is mostly accomplished by integrating the Conscious and Unconscious. As we become more whole, we are said to have changed our personality, and this type of change is dramatic enough to be considered transformative.

Epistemology

Mezirow wrote about epistemic habits of mind, for which he gave as examples "learning styles, sensory preferences, focus on wholes or parts or on the concrete or abstract" (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 3–34). He also alluded to epistemology in his description of the outcomes of perspective transformation as meaning perspectives that are more discriminating, open, and permeable. Instead of accepting things as true simply because that is what taught in one's culture, what one's most important authority figures (parents, etc.) demonstrated as truth since the person's birth, Mezirow wanted people to use a different epistemology. (Note: I doubt most people have thought about epistemology in this way, but if you accept things as true because that is what

an authority figure told you, *that* is the epistemology you are using.) Mezirow advocated for a more autonomous, critical, open epistemology. Similarly, I define epistemology broadly as the way people construct and evaluate knowledge in their moment-to-moment thinking. What justifications do people rely on in order to believe something? In the literature, scholars write about changes in epistemology in terms of becoming 1) more discriminating, 2) more autonomous, and 3) more open, very similar to what Mezirow did.

Other scholars have written about 4) utilizing extra-rational ways of knowing (e.g. contemplative, spiritual, intuitive, somatic or embodied, emotional, holistic, imaginative, empathetic, artistic, reflective, or multiple ways of knowing). For these scholars, the development of new ways of knowing in our repertoire of meaning-making processes can lead to dramatically different ways of experiencing, conceptualizing, and interacting with the world; i.e. it can be transformative. Many scholars have talked vaguely about 5) shift in thoughts and/or ways of thinking—without expanding on what that might mean. Lastly, some scholars refer to epistemic changes in terms of the development of 6) more complex thinking.

Ontology

Ontology is the study of *being,* as opposed to epistemology as the study of *knowing.* For the typology, we use it to refer to the way a person exists in the world. Mezirow gives examples of ontological changes in his description of psychological habits of mind: "personality traits or types, repressed parental prohibitions that continue to dictate ways of feeling and acting in adulthood, emotional response patterns" (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 3–34). These changes are ontological because they affect the moment-to-moment felt (emotional) experience, inclinations, and automatic reactions that shape the person's lived experience and overall quality and tone of their existence.

The first subcategory of ontological change derived from the literature was: 1) affective experience of life. If a person had been going through life incessantly pessimistic and then developed a habit of being optimistic (or, at least, more neutral), that would have a profound effect on their day-to-day lived experience. It would change their emotional experience of life as well as their thoughts and expectations.

Another subcategory is: 2) ways of being. This subcategory refers to dispositions and traits, such as changing from naïve to cynical, from cynical to

hopeful, from content to bitter, or from bitter to grateful, and so forth. It could refer to becoming more mindful and present in the moment or becoming more risk-tolerant or risk-averse. Any of these changes, if they met the three criteria of transformative learning, would affect the learner's *way of being*. Lastly, there is 3) attributes. There is a vast range of attributes that different scholars have mentioned in their descriptions of a transformation, such as increases in generosity, patience, empathy, integrity, and so forth. Again, to qualify as transformative learning, changes in these attributes would need to meet the three criteria of depth, breadth, and relative stability.

Behavior

It would be difficult to consider something a transformation if the changes involved did not translate into different behaviors. As such, a change in behavior seems like it should be a part of every description of transformational change. Mezirow hinted at this necessity in his definition of transformative learning wherein changes in one's frames of reference yield beliefs and opinions "that will prove more true or justified to guide action" (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 3-34).

Most commonly, scholars in the literature have talked about behavior changes in terms of the first subcategory: 1) actions consistent with new perspective. This description aligns with the way Mezirow talked about behavior change; i.e. changes in perspective should necessarily yield changes in behavior. Many scholars are not content with just any behavior change. For them, an additional subcategory was necessary: 2) engaging in social action. Personally, I find this noble but very limiting in terms of transformative learning as a useful metatheory. On the other extreme, some scholars in the literature were vague, with a subcategory created for them: 3) changed behavior. These scholars noted that behavior was different, but did not think about or feel it necessary to describe how exactly the behavior was changed.

One of the biggest surprises in our review of the literature, and something that turned into a learning experience for me, was the way some scholars talked about transformative behavior change as 4) new professional practices and 5) new skills. In seeing this in the literature, my initial reaction was that these scholars were falling prey to the trap of using transformative learning theory to refer to any and every instance of learning. How could learning new skills be considered transformational when this theory was created precisely to distinguish transformative experiences from the more mundane and typical

learning experiences, such as learning new skills? I have since reconsidered. Very often, in order for a transformative experience to become possible, people must learn new skills; the development and use of skills are an integral part of the whole learning process. Even Mezirow's ten phases includes the step: "Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22). Also, I have seen in my own research that the process one follows in navigating the difficulties of transformation very often turn into transformative outcomes (Hoggan, 2014). If a person learns critical thinking skills, for instance, then adopting a habit of critically assessing knowledge claims (an epistemic transformative change) becomes possible.

Capacity

We created the category of *Capacity* to refer to transformational changes whereby learners not only gained new perspectives but also increased their capability to have such perspectives. As (Hoare, 2006) describes, these are developmental outcomes that involve systematic, qualitative changes that allow for greater complexity of thought. Hence, the most prominent subcategory is: 1) cognitive development. Several key developmental theorists have written about their work in terms of transformative learning theory, and the underlying theme for each of them is that developmental changes have profound effects on the way people experience, conceptualize, and interact with the world because it creates new possibilities for more complex ways of thinking and being.

Some scholars approach transformative learning from the perspective of mindfulness, spirituality, and similar metaphysical orientations. These scholars write about transformative outcomes in terms of increasing 2) of consciousness or 3) spirituality. These outcomes are usually described as obtaining a higher level of consciousness according to some hierarchical model or becoming more attuned to or feeling connected with something larger than themselves, such as with deity, humanity, the universe, and so forth.

Concluding Thoughts

Returning to Bateson's ideas, all of the theories and constructs in the transformative learning literature are nothing more than human creations designed to explain the phenomena associated with dramatic learning and

change in adulthood. The value of transformative learning as a metatheory is to provide constructs in the form of *analytic tools* that scholars from disparate disciplines can use in working together to create better, more useful constructs for understanding that phenomena. The purpose of the analytic tools presented above (e.g. Definition, Criteria, Typology) is to provide a framework for scholars to think carefully and with clarity about what they mean when using the word *transformation*. They were designed to facilitate better, more holistic, interdisciplinary understandings of transformative learning, thus promoting the use of transformative learning as a metatheory.

Abstract: There is an important difference between the phenomena we study and the names we call them or theories we use to explain them. Transformative learning theory is a human construction designed to describe a phenomenon, but it is imperfect at best. The author advocates a delineation of the terms. Namely, the term perspective transformation should be used to refer to Mezirow's theory because it has only ever been used for his specific theory. The term transformative learning should be used to refer to the broad range of theories (including Mezirow's) that attempt to describe and explain dramatic changes in how people experience, conceptualize, and interact with the world.

The author uses transformative learning in adult education investigations to understand the experiences of military veterans transitioning from combat to civilian life, of breast cancer survivors navigating the psycho-social transition of their disease, of students from backgrounds of poverty attending community college, and even the negative transformation of people becoming radicalized into violent terrorism. There are many more situations that cause people to change, and those specific situations shape the processes that lead to change and therefore shape the eventual outcomes of that change.

All of the theories and constructs in the transformative learning literature are nothing more than human creations designed to explain the phenomena associated with dramatic learning and change in adulthood. The value of transformative learning as a metatheory is to provide constructs in the form of analytic tools that scholars from disparate disciplines can use in working together to create better, more useful constructs for understanding that phenomena. There are identified and presented the analytic tools (definition, criteria, typology) to provide a framework for scholars to think carefully and with clarity about what they mean when using the word "transformation". The need in more holistic, interdisciplinary understandings of transformative learning is substantiated, thus promoting the use of transformative learning as a metatheory.

Keywords: transformation learning, term, analytical tools, definition, criteria, typology metatheory

Streszczenie: Pomiędzy badanymi przez nas zjawiskami a nazwami, jakie do nich stosujemy lub teoriami, za pomocą których próbujemy je wyjaśnić występuje istotna różnica. Teoria transformacyjnego uczenia się to opracowany przez ludzi konstrukt mający opisać zjawisko, ale w najlepszym wypadku można go uznać za niedoskonały. Autor zaleca rozdzielenie terminów. Dokładniej, termin transformacja perspektywiczna powinien być stosowany w odniesieniu do teorii Merizowa, ponieważ był on wykorzystywany wyłącznie do jego szczególnej teorii. Termin transformatywne uczenie się należy stosować w odniesieniu do szerokiego zakresu teorii (w tym Merizowa), które próbują opisać i wyjaśnić dramatyczne zmiany w sposobie, w jaki ludzie doświadczają i konceptualizują świat oraz wchodzą z nim w interakcje.

Autor wykorzystuje transformatywne uczenie się w badaniach nad edukacją dorosłych, aby zrozumieć doświadczenia weteranów wojskowych przenoszonych z pola bitwy do cywilnego życia, osób, które przeżyły raka piersi i muszą sobie poradzić z psychologicznymi i społecznymi zmianami spowodowanymi przez chorobę, studentów pochodzących z ubogich rodzin, którzy uczęszczają do community college (publicznej szkoły wyższej), a nawet negatywną transformację osób, których postawa uległa radykalizacji w kierunku walczącego terroryzmu. Wiele innych sytuacji może spowodować zmianę w ludziach, a te specyficzne sytuacje kształtują procesy prowadzące do zmiany, a zatem kształtują ostateczne wyniki tej zmiany.

Wszystkie teorie i konstrukty zawarte w literaturze na temat transformatywnego uczenia się to nic więcej niż tylko twory człowieka, których celem jest opisanie zjawiska związanego z gwałtownym uczeniem się i zmianą u dorosłych. Wartość transformatywnego uczenia się jako metateorii wiąże się z zapewnieniem konstruktów w formie narzędzi analitycznych, które mogą być wykorzystywane przez naukowców z odmiennych dziedzin podczas wspólnej pracy nad stworzeniem lepszych, użyteczniejszych konstruktów pozwalających zrozumieć to zjawisko. Zidentyfikowano i przedstawiono narzędzia analityczne (definicję, kryteria, typologię) tworzące ramy dla naukowców, pozwalające starannie i jasno rozpatrywać co rozumieją pod słowem „transformacja". Konieczność bardziej holistycznego, międzydyscyplinarnego pojmowania transformatywnego uczenia się jest uzasadniona, promując w ten sposób stosowanie transformatywnego uczenia się jako metateorii.

Słowa kluczowe: uczenie się transformacyjne, termin, narzędzia analityczne, definicja, kryteria, metateoria typologii

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