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John M. Dirkx
Michigan State University, USA

Jody Jessup Anger
Michigan State University, USA

Bernard Gwekwerere
Michigan State University, USA

John Brender
Wayne State University, USA

Regina O. Smith
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, USA

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Emotion and Cross-cultural Experience:
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John M. Dirkx, Jody Jessup Anger, Bernard Gwekwerere
Michigan State University, USA

John Brender
Wayne State University, USA

Regina O. Smith
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, USA

Abstract: This paper suggests a theoretical perspective, grounded in the idea of self-formation, for interpreting emotional experiences within cross-cultural contexts.

As part of a graduate program in higher and adult education. Lisa, Derek, and Erica participated in a field study that emphasized a comparative analysis of higher and adult education practice. The focal point of this experience was a week-long set of visits to educational practice sites and locations within another country. During these visits within the host country, students interviewed, observed, and interacted with faculty, students, and staff. In addition, they also toured various cultural settings intended to help them develop familiarity with the country's historical, cultural, and social contexts. In reflecting on her experience Lisa remarked, "I was blown away by the trip. I don't know what I was expecting but I never realized how different they are, even though we share the same language. This experience will stay with me for a long time." Derek commented that the trip "stirred up a lot in me. It made me think about things I hadn't every really paid attention to. At first I didn't seem to fit in anywhere but now I see it was more me than them." Several years later, Erica still recalls her study tour as a "a life-changing experience" that contributed to her altering the focus of her graduate program and ultimately a career with nongovernmental agencies.

These comments represent fictitious composites of stories told by individuals participating in a short-term, study abroad program that we have offered over the last four years for graduate students and interested practitioners in adult and higher education. In this program, adult learners from our institution and a collaborating institution from another country participate in and host one another in reciprocal week-long study tours. The study tour focuses on different educational practice sites and cultural experiences, and engaging staff and students in discussions about the nature and context of practice within these respective sites. Beyond new insights into educational practice, many participants reported profound, affect-laden experiences, such as feelings of confusion and chaos, resistance to some local cultural rituals, a sense of connection, and otherwise being deeply moved by their experiences within the host country.

In this paper, we reflect on these observations, our collective experiences in both facilitating and participating in international study tours and short-term study abroad, and research and theory on cross-cultural experiences and self-identity. In particular, we want to develop a more theoretically-grounded way of making sense of these emotional

experiences as they relate to issues of self-identity. This paper summarizes a theoretical perspective for relating the emotional and affective dimensions of intercultural experiences to a process of constructing and reconstructing one's sense of self, to which we refer as "self-formation".

      We build on several theoretical perspectives, including culture shock theory (Oberg, 1960), acculturation theory (Barry, 2001; Brender, 2006; Dolby, 2004; Hopkins, 1999), and transformative learning theory (Lyons, 2002; Taylor, 1994; Ziegahn, 2000). These studies clearly document the salience of emotions and affect, as well self-formative processes within cross-cultural experiences, but do not adequately address the role of emotion in self-formation within cross-cultural learning contexts. Our work is framed within a psychodynamic cultural psychology, particular those theorists informed by postmodernist and poststructuralist perspectives (Chodorow, 1999; Frosh, 1991; Hillman, 1975; Roland, 1988; Watkins, 2000; West, 2001).

Self-Formation

      The concept of the self is prominently featured in much of the study of adult education and adult learning. In some instances, it is explicitly reflected in adult education theory and practice (Clark & Dirkx, 2000; Kuchinke, 2005; Tennant, 2000; West, 2001). In other ideas, such as self-directed learning (Knowles, 1975), reflective practice (Brookfield, 1995), and learning from experience (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985), it is more implied. It would appear that "theories of identity and the self widely found in contemporary research have found new sensitivities in the study of educational programs" (Chappell, Rhodes, Solomon, Tennant, & Yates, 2003, p. 2).

      Implicit in much of this literature is a notion of self-work, self-change, or self-formation (Chappell et. al., 2003; Tennant, 2000). While the idea of self-formation is not widely used in adult education, it receives considerable attention in the work of Parker Palmer (1992; 2004). In developing his notion of self-formation, Palmer borrowed from the wisdom traditions and focused attention on the need to care for the self – what he describes as "soul-work" – within professional practice. Palmer (1992) suggests that self-formation represents a major dimension of continuing professional development. It is, fact, a way of learning and knowing:

> [P]atterns of epistemology can help us decipher the patterns in our lives. Its images of the knower, the known, and their relationship are formative in the way an educated person not only thinks but acts. The shape of our knowledge becomes the shape of our living; the relation of the knower to the known becomes the relation of the living self to the larger world…The images of self and world that are found at the heart of our knowledge will also be found in the values by which we live our lives. (p. 21).

      Thus, our ways of knowing the world and what we hold to be true about that world serve to shape our understandings of our selves and inform our actions in the world. Self-knowledge and self-formation represents a dynamic relationship between our innermost sense of self and the world in which we live.

      Self and society are "jointly produced through discurvise practices" (Chappell et. al, 2001, p. 15) and self-formation is constituted by and occurs through narrative. These social and cultural expressions of the self, however, give shape and form to structures of consciousness reflecting both intrapersonal (Chodorow, 1999) and transpersonal

dynamics (Whitmont, 1991). In other words, self-formation represents a psychosocial process, in which inner aspects of the psyche express particular historical, social, cultural, and political contexts.

Postmodernist depth psychology emphasizes self-formation as both individual and social, pluralistic, and political, focusing our attention on the self as an affective intersection of life experiences and particular circumstances. Depth psychology stresses the critical importance of the non-rational in self-formation and emphasizes the integral relationship of emotions and affect to unconscious dimensions of the self and self-formation. The idea of self-formation refers to the ways in which the potentials of the inner self are invited and find expression in the world by being evoked by particular characteristics of community or social context (Palmer, 2004). One of these contexts is represented by study-abroad.

Study Abroad Experiences and Self-Formation

Most adult education programs either implicitly or explicitly seek to foster change among adult learners (Chappell et. al., 2001). This change process often involves some conception of self or identity. In this sense, graduate study in adult and higher education represents a potential location for self-work and self-formation, and experiences within short-term study abroad may be understood as potentially contributing to this broader process. As a component of professional preparation, many graduate programs in adult education now feature international study tours or short-term study abroad experiences. Such programs emphasize cross-cultural aspects of such experiences. They seek to develop greater awareness of educational practice internationally while also fostering a more critical, reflective, and enhanced awareness and understanding of one's self and one's home culture. It is believed that such self-understanding arises from a greater awareness of multiple identities and worldviews represented by the "other." Thus, study abroad experiences, including both the journey and the return or re-entry into one's own culture, often precipitate reflection, understanding, learning, and change associated with one's sense of self-identity (Adler, 1975; Dolby, 2004; Hopkins, 1999).

For the most part, conceptualization of these self-formative processes largely reflects rational processes, in which learners engage in reflection and confer meaning on their experiences. This process of reflection and construction of meaning is thought to be integral to the further elaboration of one's sense of self-identity. Some also argue that this process may to contribute to transformation of meaning perspectives or frames of reference (Lyons, 2002; Taylor, 1994; Ziegahn, 2000). However, participants in such programs often report powerful emotional and affect-laden experiences. For the most part, these emotions are interpreted as either aberrant or negative, as in cultural shock theory (Oberg, 1960), or as part of a process of adapting to the reality demands of a new and different culture (Adler, 1975). Even transformative learning scholars, while recognizing the affective dimensions of these experiences, tend to frame manifestation of emotion within a broader framework of intercultural adaptation and competence (Lyons, 2002; Taylor, 1994; Ziegahn, 2000). These views suggest that we can understand accounts of emotion and affect within intercultural experiences as being in the service of the ego's need and ability to adapt the demands of its perceived reality. Such instrumentally-oriented accounts of these emotional issues do not adequately address the self-formative processes associated with cross-cultural experiences (Dolby, 2004;

Hopkins, 1999; Roland, 1988) and the salience of emotions in the development of a sense of self (Frosh, 1991; West, 2001).

Unconscious Dynamics, Images, and Self-Formation

Cultural adaptation views of emotional and affective experiences suggest a concept of self that is largely rational, conscious, relatively unitary, and oriented towards effectively addressing the demands of an outer reality. From this perspective, emotions are in the service or result from the ego's needs and desires to meet these demands. In contrast, we suggest that some of the emotions experienced in cross-cultural settings may provide a kind of language to the deeper, non-egoic, and non-rational dimensions of the self. As such, they represent a kind of meaning-making that is not necessarily grounded in one's rational understandings of the outer world but, rather, an expression of the multiplicity of voices that make up one's inner world.

For example, some students visiting a collectivist culture, in which emphasis is placed on the group and not individual autonomy, may find themselves desiring more time alone and resenting the amount of time they are expected to participate in activities with members of the host culture. Other students may be embarrassed and overwhelmed when members of the host culture seem so quick and eager to anticipate and take care of their needs. Such emotional experiences can help trigger critical reflection (Taylor, 1994), potentially illuminate the students' assumptions around cultural and national identity (Dolby 2004), and perhaps contribute to transformation of meaning perspectives or frames of reference (Lyons, 2002; Taylor, 1994, Ziegahn, 2000).These frameworks convey a particular way of thinking about the self and self-formation, in which the self is understood as potentially knowable through observation and critical reflection.

The self, however possesses an ambiguous status, referring to both the object of knowledge – coming to know about one's self – and that which experiences or comes to know. We cannot not fully know ourselves because the knower is in the self. That is, there are aspects of the self hidden from the self and not readily accessible to the knowing self. This hidden dimension of the self is expressed through the language "of the unconscious – of the impulses, anxieties, wishes and contradictory desires that are structured and restructured by our immersion in the social order" (Frosh, 1991, pp. 2-3). In other words, emotional and affective experiences give voice to psychic realities that are often beyond our levels of conscious awareness. Aspects of the social order enter "unbidden and unnoticed into the foundation stones of our psychic structure" (Frosh, 1991, p. 2). Experiences of one's social context, especially those revolving around interpersonal relationships can often evoke impulses, desires, and anxieties, are intimately and unconsciously bound up with self-formative processes. They become, over the years, integral but unconscious aspects of the self. In this way, emotion-laden experiences represent ways in which the deeper, hidden dimensions of the psyche reveal themselves within our conscious awareness. These experiences reflect the ways in which a current social context awakens within the psyche unconscious conflict arising from past experiences but suggesting similar issues in present-day life.

Self-formative work involves engaging these deeper aspects of the self in dialogue (Hillman, 1975; Watkins, 2000). This process develops awareness and understanding of these aspects of the self, their presence in one's life and the ways in which they are making themselves heard in the everydayness of practice (Dirkx, 2003). Feelings of resentment that might arise within a collectivist culture, for example, about

not being able to have enough time for oneself are acknowledged and accepted as messages arising from the inner self and expressing important aspects of that self as they relate to the present social context.

To engage in this dialogue, however, requires a kind of language that expresses the meanings inherent in such experiences. In working with the unconscious in cross-cultural contexts, emotion-laden images constitute this language. The "image" plays a central role as a mediator of self-knowing and self-formation (Palmer, 1992; Whitmont, 1991). This notion of image, however, does not reflect something that is imposed from the outside, a frame of reference or way of picturing our reality that we consciously choose. Rather, our use of the term reflects a psychic reality that arises spontaneously within one's consciousness (Hillman, 1975; Whitmont, 1991). These images are often evoked by perception of something happening in the outer world, such as yet another social event with one's hosts. The experience of difference that can occur within different cultural contexts often disrupts otherwise dependable self-other schemas, resulting in the evocation of particular emotions that are usually bound up with an image. But the appearance within consciousness of these images is beyond the governance of one's will. They simply show up unannounced and uninvited, associated with powerful emotions and affect and often crowding out other aspects of our awareness. The image provides a kind of lens that the learner often implicitly uses to makes sense of what he or she is experiencing at the moment.

Emotion-laden images that populate one's experience convey the ways in which the self is understanding and making sense of the particular situation in which it finds itself. They are imaginative or "mythopoetic" representations of the ways in which the learner is making sense of his or her emotionally-laden experience. The emotion-laden images that are evoked through cross-cultural experiences are both windows to these deeper aspects of the self, or one's personal myth (Bond, 1993), as well as to the ways in which the self constitutes itself. In a sense, they are expressions of the self seeking further individuation and connection with the "others" of the outer world (Hillman, 1975; Whitmont, 1991).

Conclusion

In this paper, we suggested an imaginal, symbolic, and mythopoetic approach to cross-culture curricula and pedagogy. This approach focuses on emotional, nonrational experiences that are evoked within intercultural contexts. Earlier studies, (Lyons, 2000; Taylor, 1994; Ziegahn, 2000) suggest such emotions represent trigger events for a cognitive, rational process of transformation. In contrast, however, we argue that such experiences express the manifestation of extra-rational dimensions of the self that must be approached imaginatively rather than solely through analysis and critical reflection (Dirkx, 2001). Emotion-laden images that arise within cross-cultural experiences provide a language for differentiating and fostering individuation of the self (Dirkx, 2001) and furthering self-formation associated with professional preparation and development.

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