

Anatomy of Adults' Learning Experiences

By

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Abstract

In this study, 4 researchers conduct phenomenological interviews to find out how adults describe their learning experiences and what meanings they attach to those descriptions. The study proposes common structural and functional features of adults' learning experiences, while noting important substantive differences between and among the participants interviewed. The study also raises questions concerning the differences between experiences in general and learning experiences in particular; between learning and performance; and it questions the meaning and validity of the construct, group learning. It also draws several implications regarding the teaching of adults. Lastly, it proposes a way to reconcile the apparent chasm between the two dominant phenomenological schools: transcendental and existential phenomenology.

Purpose of the Study

Our ability as educators to assist learners would be enhanced by knowing how they (learners) construe and construct learning experiences. Bodies of literature that are likely to provide such knowledge are adult learning, phenomenology, and where these two intersect. Research that focuses directly on adult learning has given only cursory attention to the lived experiences of adult learners. Consequently, most research on adult learning is long on speculations and theoretical propositions about what adult learning is or should be, but short on information about the meanings adults confer upon their lived experiences as learners (Knowles et. al, 1998; Jarvis, 1992; Merriam & Cafferella, 1999; Mezirow, 1991; Smith & Pourchot, 1998; Tennant & Pogson, 1995).

In the phenomenological literature we found studies in which the primary focus was the existential experiences of adults. However, in none of these studies was the phenomenon, adult learning, a primary focus. The phenomenological studies we encountered explored related

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concepts and ideas such as adult education, professional adult educator, lifelong learning, collaborative inquiry, and intuition (Bray, 1995; Chalmers, 1997; Mott, 1995; Stanage, 1989; York, 1995).

Finally, regarding literature where adult learning and phenomenology intersect, only a single study was found—Tempesta (2001). However, despite its title, that study was not a phenomenological description of adults' learning experiences. Rather, it was an accounting for how learning contributes to leadership in social movements.

From our review of the literature we therefore conclude that adults' learning experiences are not adequately addressed. This study is a small step in filling that void. In it we seek to construct a phenomenology of adult learning by closely examining experiences adults associate with the term learning.

Theoretical Perspective and Research Design

Phenomenology is concerned with understanding phenomena from the perspective of those who have experienced them. Phenomenologists agree that a rich, full understanding of any human phenomenon requires a deep, probing examination of people's lived experiences (Gadamer, 1990; Heidegger, 1962, 1972; Husserl, 1931, 1970, 1973; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). Since the purpose of this study was to gain a richer, fuller understanding of the phenomenon *adult learning*, phenomenological inquiry seemed most appropriate.

The four researchers conducting this study all subscribe to the interpretivist as opposed to the transcendental view of phenomenology. (This distinction is addressed in our discussion section below.) With Heidegger we believe that all human experiences are by definition interpretive. This inevitability of interpretation precluded our bracketing or suspension of our assumptions, as Husserl (and the transcendentalists) advocate. We found that it was impossible for us to proceed without making some preliminary (though tentative) assumptions about what constitutes a

learning experience, for instance. So instead of attempting to bracket our presuppositions, we continuously shared them. This sharing allowed us to make more transparent our biases: permitting us to identify areas of agreement and disagreement, be less proprietary about our individual positions, and be more open to being challenged by the emerging data. Our interpretivist stance also framed the nature of our task: to construct a plausible understanding of the adult learning phenomenon, rather than to uncover and describe its pure, objective essence.

Research questions

Our initial research questions were:

- 1) What do adults mean when they say that they have really learned something?
- 2) How do their descriptions of what it means to really learn something change with maturation?

To address these questions, research participants were presented with the following prompts:

- Describe a time, when, as an adult, you felt you really learned something.
- How did the experience affect you and what changes associated with the experiences did you observe?
- What thoughts, emotions, etc., were generated by the experience?
- How did the experience alter your relationship to self and/or others?
- What else, significant to this experience, would you like to share?

Participants were then asked to compare their *adult* experience of really learning something with a learning experience they had during childhood or adolescence.

For reasons we will discuss later under Findings, we modified our research question during the data analysis process. The new question was: *how do adults describe their learning experiences and what meanings do they attach to those descriptions?*

Case selection, data collection and analysis

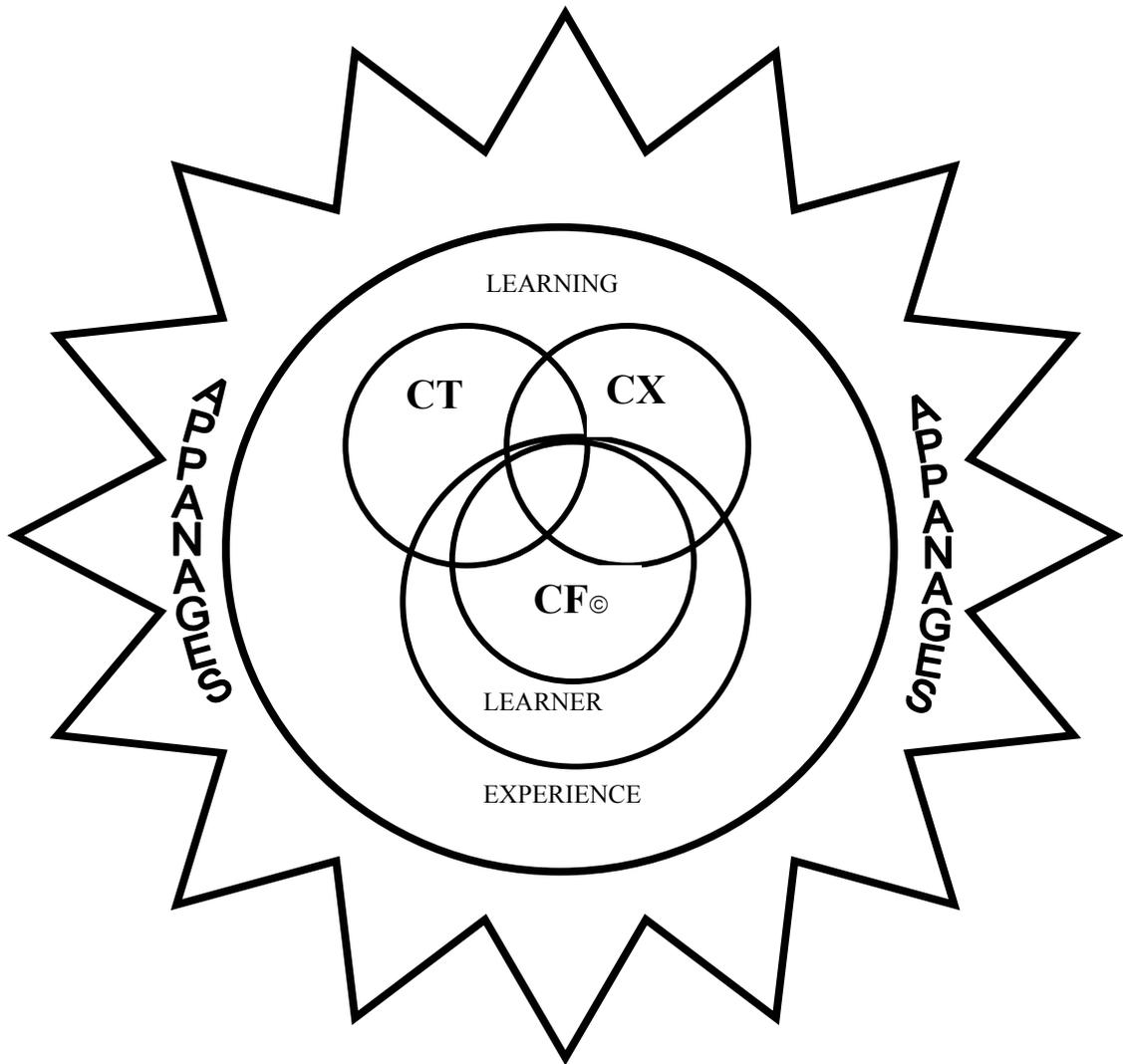
The study was conducted in Pennsylvania by four researchers--one faculty and three graduate students--jointly involved in a graduate program in adult education. We represent three different nationalities (USA, Tanzania, and Trinidad and Tobago). Two of us are white and two are black; two women and two men. The participants selected were laypersons (*not* self-described professional adult educators) whom we regularly encountered; who had little to no professional knowledge regarding adult learning; and who, presumably, had no vested interest in either promoting or denying any theory of adult learning. Using the combined criteria of age, psychological and social roles (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982), eight adults were selected--four women, four men. In the selection process we strove for diversity in gender, age, race/ethnicity, and occupation. Time did not permit our interviewing of all eight subjects, so we made a decision to interview only the male participants. In a current study we are interviewing the female participants. As with all phenomenological inquiry, our primary method of data collection was unstructured, individual interviews. In conducting the interviews (and later analysis) we drew on the following works: Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Dey, 1993; Feldman, 1995; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Moustakas, 1994, Strauss & Corbin, 1998.

For the analysis, we listened as a group to each tape-recorded interview, making individual summaries throughout this process. During this initial listening and summarizing phase, we would frequently rewind and replay portions of the interviews. During this (and subsequent phases) we openly shared and recorded our feelings and insights—quite often comparing and contrasting our learning experiences with those of our participants and/or the literature. In short, heuristic inquiry, which asks "What is *my* experience of this phenomenon and the essential experience of others who also experience this phenomenon intensely?" was an integral part of our data collection and analysis (Patton 1990, p. 71).

On large flip chart paper, we compiled our individual summaries (of each interview) into team summaries. In this process we frequently replayed the tapes to reconcile differences in our individual summaries. This process produced a team summary for each of our 4 participants. These team summaries were the primary data source used in conducting our analysis. We supplemented the summaries (where necessary) by re-listening to relevant portions of the audiotapes.

Using the team summaries, we tagged and labeled meaning units (bits and pieces of information we considered most relevant to the purpose of the research) onto separate flipchart paper. In the literature, this process is referred to as open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We then grouped our meaning units into categories, continuously refining them through constant comparison until all meaning units were incorporated or accounted for (axial and selective coding). To enhance the trustworthiness of this study, we conducted our analysis collaboratively: that is, with all four researchers present for all phases of the analysis. Where possible we also shared our findings with our participants (member checking).

Writing was as collaborative as the rest of the process. We literally wrote together, sometimes on the board, other times huddling around the computer—always feeding off one another. This process was very time-consuming—at times taking us over an hour to write one small paragraph.



Elements of Adults' Learning Experiences: A Model©

Findings

From our participants' responses we constructed a normative definition of what our participants meant by a learning experience. This definition is comprised of three interconnecting elements: content (CT), context (CX), and con-fects (CF)© (see diagram above). However, we also noted tremendous individual differences in the ways adults interpret, inhabit, and manipulate those three elements. Interwoven in our discussion below of the three elements are examples of substantive individual differences.

Content

By content, we mean what is being learned. During the earlier phases of our analysis, we divided content into activities (such as swimming, driving a car, riding a bike, and how to get along with people), and subject matter (such as math, science, and business). However, under closer scrutiny, it became difficult for us to separate activity from subject matter. We concluded that all content contained both activities and subject matter; that particular content varied only in the ratio of psychomotor to mental activities particular learners perceive in that content. For instance, one participant perceived science as largely a mental activity (subject matter) while another (having had practical experience as a chemistry tutor) perceived science as a much more practical activity.

Context

Initially, we distinguished between learning *contexts* and learning *processes*—conceptually and temporarily. We assumed the former comprised those things that reside outside the learner—the instructional activities, and the larger physical and socio-cultural environment within which particular learning occurs, and which, consequently, shapes (directly or indirectly) what is being learned. The latter, learning processes, referred to the internal mechanisms (cognitive,

affective, volitional, spiritual, etc.) used by the learner to make meaning of the content. Upon deeper analysis, however, we realized that personal (internal) and non-personal (external) environments formed a dialectic union. Our participants' construal of their external environments was always influenced by their internal environments (beliefs, values, abilities, and so on) and vice versa. From a meaning making standpoint then, it did not seem instructive to us to temporally or conceptually separate a person's external and internal environments. *Context*, we concluded, is a dialectic union of personal and external forces; a dynamic (as opposed to static) notion, consisting of the materials, mechanisms and opportunities learners use to make sense of and manipulate their learning *content*.

Regarding the personal aspect of context, we found that it consisted of the learner's ego strength along with his assessment of the cost/benefit ratio of the learning experience. By ego strength, we refer to the individual's general predispositions and propensities to learning. For example, one participant spoke of how his undergraduate experience positively predisposed him to withstand the rigors of his first year law school experience, not by equipping him with law-related knowledge or skills, but rather by imbuing him with a sense of self-efficacy.

Assessment of the cost/benefit ratio refers to: a) how the learner perceives the nature of the content, b) what efforts mastering that content requires of him, and c) his aptitude to master the content, as weighed against d) the perceived benefits of his efforts. Here we cite as an example a participant who spoke of his insecurity around people with scientific knowledge. Perceiving the nature of scientific knowledge as predominantly cerebral and removed from his lived experiences, he estimated the efforts required of him to master that content as highly intellectual and therefore difficult. Having assessed his scientific aptitude as inadequate, he learned to feel "insecure around persons with scientific knowledge." This insecurity is part of the context that he brings with him

to any scientific endeavor. The degree to which the perceived benefits outweigh these contextual costs determine the efforts he makes to learn.

We found that the environmental aspect of context consisted of physical and socio-cultural elements. These elements varied: a) by intensity and/or pervasiveness--i.e., how much of the content and context the learner was subjected to; and b) by form--i.e., the ways in which the learner was subjected to them (content and context). As an example of intensity, one participant spoke of learning Swahili by being "immersed" in the context. As an example of form, another talked of the "rigid structure" of his college curriculum.

Constituent Effects (Con-fects ©)

The third component of the learning experience we identified as constituent effects (or con-fects). Our data led us to differentiate the consequences of learning into constituents and appanages. Constituent effects refer to the necessary impact of the experience on the learner, whereas appanages are those things that accompany or follow the experience but are not a necessary part of it. For example, losing weight is an appanage of the experience we call physical exercise, and not a constituent of it. Con-fects (the necessary consequences of a learning experience) are the changes that occur in the person who utters the words "I have learned." They denote the *private* effects on the learner of the interplay of *content* and *context*. To illustrate: when a participant commented that his "learning of Swahili opened up new relationships with Tanzanian natives," we initially coded that response as a consequence of learning--making no distinction between constituent effects and appanages. However, upon deeper reflection, we came to realize that "opening up new relationships" was an appanage resulting from *prior* private changes that had occurred within the participant. Those prior changes are what we have coined the con-fects of learning and in this case, they included the participant's greater proficiency with the Swahili

language and the confidence that proficiency produced within him. As another example, a participant spoke of how learning to swim (con-fect) provided the occasion and opportunity for greater intimacy with family members (appanage).

We have tentatively grouped the con-fects that our participants spoke of into the following categories: a) attitudes--which include emotions, such as confidence and resentment; b) psychomotor abilities, such as increased ability to ride a bike or swim; c) awareness, i.e., gaining new insights about oneself and the world, such as coming to an appreciation that failure is inevitable in life; and d) intellectual abilities, such as becoming more proficient at doing calculus, or becoming better at interacting with a legal text. This classification is very rudimentary, and no doubt needs significant refinement.

Discussion and Conclusion

Contribution to Phenomenology

During the course of this phenomenological inquiry, we were led to sharpen and refine our original focus. One of our initial questions sought to gain information on whether and how the learning experiences of participants changed with maturation. But that information was difficult to discern. It became apparent early on that apart from the very spectacular, it was next to impossible for adults to provide rich constructions (required of phenomenology) of their childhood experiences. Furthermore, some of the participants noted that even when they were able to reconstruct a childhood experience, it was from an adult perspective, rendering child-adult comparisons rather dubious. For these reasons, we concluded that a phenomenological inquiry is an inappropriate method for examining a maturation process. Instead, longitudinal studies--either actual (such as panel or cohort, see Babbie, 1998) or simulated (such as Vygotsky's 1978 experimental-developmental method)--are more suitable.

Phenomenological research is concerned with understanding phenomena (actions, events, ideas, etc.,) from the perspectives of those who have lived (that is to say, experienced) them. All phenomenologists agree that a rich, full understanding of any human phenomenon requires deep, probing examination of people's lived experiences (Gadamer, 1990; Heidegger, 1962, 1972; Husserl, 1931, 1970, 1973; Moustakas, 1994, Van Manen, 1990). Despite their essential similarities, phenomenologists differ in important respects. Roughly two camps have emerged—the transcendentalists and the existentialists. Transcendental phenomenologists such as Husserl, Giorgi, and Moustakas assume that human experiences are made up of invariant, essential structures that transcend time and space. For them, an objective (that is to say, non-interpretive) dimension resides in the core of every social phenomenon. They believe that there is an objective dimension to such ideas as love, caring or adult learning, and that it is the task of phenomenological inquiry to uncover those invariant, essential structures. As Cohen & Omery (1994) point out, Husserl assumed that every phenomenon has an eidetic meaning—that is, a meaning “that is fundamental and essential to the experience no matter which specific individual has that experience” (p. 148). Ostensibly, these invariant structures are uncovered via an analytic process that includes bracketing. By bracketing, the researcher holds her assumptions in check so that they do not contaminate her findings. Ideally, the transcendentalist would come to the inquiry without presuppositions about the meaning of the phenomena she is attempting to describe. To illustrate: those who hold this view of *bracketing* would attempt to investigate the phenomenon, adult learning, as if they had no preconceived notion of what either term, adult or learning, meant.

Existential (also called interpretivist or hermeneutic) phenomenologists such as Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricouer, and Van Manen, on the other hand, do not accord objective status to any human experience (Ray, 1994). Cohen & Omery note that Heidegger's research method, “rests on the

ontological thesis that lived experience is itself essentially an interpretive process” (p. 148). Accordingly, Heidegger believes that “understanding and possibilities” are the outcomes of phenomenological inquiry, and not the discovery of invariant, essential structures (Cohen & Omery, p. 148). Put differently, existential phenomenologists believe that human experiences are, by definition, interpretive; that without interpretation our world is merely one big bundle of meaningless events and occurrences. It is only via interpretations that these meaningless occurrences are transformed into human experiences. As such human experiences can never be objective—that is to say un-tainted or less tainted by human desires, interests, abilities, dispositions, etc., etc. The task, therefore, of existential phenomenology is not to discover (via bracketing) the objective essence of a phenomenon, but rather to *construct* plausible, contextual understandings of it.

From our investigation we believe that we have found a way to reconcile the conflict between transcendental and existential phenomenology. Via heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990; Patton, 1990) and deep probing of our data, we came to realize that there would be absolutely no reason to group individual entities (events, actions, ideas, etc.) under the same label if these things shared nothing in common. Things that have nothing in common are different *phenomena*, not the same *phenomenon*. In other words, every member of a phenomenon must, by definition, share something(s) in common. All birds (as a phenomenon) must share something in common, so too must all plants, chairs, atoms, parents, and so on. We propose that members of the same phenomenon always share common structural and functional elements. To illustrate: every house possesses similar structural elements—foundations, walls, roofs, doors, windows, and so on. And every house possesses similar functional elements—to provide shelter, comfort and so on. It is because of their structural and functional similarity that we are able to refer to very different

architectural constructions (Victorian, Ranch, Bungalow, etc.) as houses.

The combination of structural and functional elements considered necessary and/or sufficient to define a house (foundations, roofs, walls, shelter, comfort, etc.) is culturally, i.e., subjectively determined. As such, definitions of what constitutes a house are normative, not universal—varying from culture to culture, over time and space. To engage in meaningful discourse about houses, there must be, in any given time and space, agreed upon definitions of houses. These normative definitions identify the necessary and/or sufficient structural and functional elements making up the phenomenon we call a house. However, what these structures look like, what they are made of, and how these functions are fulfilled may vary significantly. The roofs and walls of various houses quite often look different and are made up of disparate materials. Similarly, though every house fulfills a shelter and comfort function, how and the degree to which these functions are fulfilled differs considerably from house to house. These substantive differences, in the structure and function of houses, account for their individuality and uniqueness.

In much the same way, we argue, every learning experience (as a phenomenon) is made up of three elements: two structural and one functional. The structural elements of a learning experience are its content and contexts. The functional element is its con-fects. An experience that does not possess all three elements is, **in our opinion**, not a *learning* experience. We emphasize: “in our opinion,” to highlight the subjective way in which all definitions of phenomena are determined. As is the case with houses (or any other phenomenon for that matter), what constitutes a learning experience will always be culturally and subjectively determined. The definition we propose here is **our** construction—guided no doubt by the responses of our participants, but wholly rooted in our cultures and backgrounds; we do not claim objective or universal status. We expect this definition to grow and change.

Though we claim that every learning experience is structurally and functionally similar in that each possesses three elements (content, context, and con-fects), we have also shown that the three elements vary substantively (and considerably) from person to person over time and space.

Husserl and the transcendentalists, we believe, focus primarily on the structure and function of phenomena--thereby emphasizing only their common features. Moreover, transcendentalists assume that these common features are derived objectively and therefore are accorded universal (as opposed to normative) status. With transcendentalists we postulate common features of all phenomenon (represented in their structures and functions). However, unlike transcendentalists, we do not accord universal status to those common features. As pointed out above, we believe that these common features are normative—varying from culture to culture, over time and space.

Heidegger and the existentialists, we believe, focus primarily on the substance of phenomena—thereby emphasizing their individuality, their uniqueness. The mistake made by both transcendentalists and existentialists is that neither distinguishes among structure, functions and substance. They lump all three elements of a phenomenon under one of two interchangeable labels--essence and structure. By dividing the elements of a phenomenon into three conceptually distinct components--structure, function and substance—we are able to reconcile the differences between the transcendentalists and the existentialists. There are normative aspects to every phenomenon—reflected in its structure and functions. And there are idiosyncratic aspects to every phenomenon—reflected in its substance.

Contribution to Adult Learning

Based on our investigation, we make three pedagogical observations regarding adult learning. First, our investigation led us to distinguish between an experience and a *learning* experience. By carefully examining the consequences of learning, we concluded that a learning experience only occurs when there is a change in a person's view of and/or relationship to him or herself. Other experiences are not imbued with this personal change criterion. We came to this conclusion when we differentiated the consequences of learning into constituent effects (con-fects) and appanages. Such a differentiation permitted us to pair the con-fects of learning with learning itself, and the appanages of learning with performance.

From these observations we concluded that a learning experience is a special kind of meaning making experience. All experiences (including learning experiences) are, by definition, meaning making experiences; because, to have an experience is to make meaning of a particular encounter or situation. However, not all meaning making experiences lead to new or revised personal awareness; not all experiences result in people viewing and relating to themselves differently. For

instance, every time we look into the mirror and recognize ourselves we are engaged in meaning making. However, it is doubtful if each time we recognize ourselves in the mirror that such an experience in fact leads us to view and relate to ourselves differently. We propose that only those experiences that cause us to view and/or relate to ourselves differently qualify as learning experiences; all others are of the general sort we call meaning making experiences. In short, what we are saying is this: it is possible to have an experience without having learned from it. Put differently, it is possible to perform without learning.

Con-fects may vary from the mundane to the spectacular. We noted that most of our participants described dramatic as opposed to ordinary con-fects--riding a bike, learning to swim, learning Swahili, etc. This is understandable, given the fact that our participants were asked to recall *prior* learning experiences. We believe this mode of observation (recollection) explains why our participants chose the dramatic over the ordinary. We do not assume, however, that this focus by our participants on the spectacular disqualifies the mundane as con-fects.

Let us elaborate a bit on the distinction between con-fects and appanages. Like content and context, con-fects are a necessary component of a learning experience; appanages are not. Appanages accompany each and every learning experience—in the same way that sweating or increased heart rate accompanies physical exercise. However, just as sweating or increased heart rate is not a necessary component of physical exercise, so too the appanages of a particular learning experience are not a necessary constituent of *that* experience. Nonetheless, like context and con-fects, we expect that appanages of a *prior* learning experience would become part of the context of *subsequent* learning experiences.

The performances that accompany or follow a particular learning experience (appanages) utilize the con-fects of that experience; *but they also make use of con-fects derived from other*

learning experiences. To use an illustration mentioned above: In describing a particular learning experience, one of our male participant spoke of “building new relationships with Tanzanian natives.” We labeled his “building of new relationships” as an appanage, not a con-fect. “Learning Swahili” was the particular con-fect that catalyzed his “building of new relationships.” However, it takes more than proficiency with Swahili to build new relationships with Tanzanian natives. Building new relationships with Tanzanian natives also requires some minimum knowledge of Tanzanian customs, some social skills, and some expenditure of effort by our participant. These other requirements are con-fects derived from *prior* learning experiences. We conclude then that the con-fects of prior *learning* experiences may become part of the performances (appanages) of *subsequent* learning experiences.

By differentiating between con-fects and appanages of learning we are better able to distinguish between learning and performance. Learning is to con-fects what performance is to appanages. Learning necessarily results in changes in a person's view of or relationship to self (con-fects). Performance refers to what a person does (appanages) on the basis of those personal changes. We make this distinction, between con-fects (learning) and appanages (performance), not to trivialize the latter, but rather to facilitate their attainment. By attending to the con-fects of learning, educators are more likely to promote the appanages they desire. This differentiation seems to challenge the body of literature which appears to equate, or blur the distinction between, learning and performance--particularly that of behaviorism, information processing, and social learning theory (Bandura, 1977; Newell, Shaw, & Simon, 1958; 1961; Skinner, 1991).

Con-fects is not an entirely new idea. It is tantamount to Dewey's reconstructed experiences (Dewey, 1938). Con-fects, it also appears, are the personal changes resulting from what Piaget has referred to as adaptation—with its twin processes, assimilation and accommodation (Piaget, 1950;

1971; 1972). However, we believe that Dewey focuses primarily on the processes by which these changes occurred rather than on the nature of the changes themselves. And neither Dewey nor Piaget makes a clear distinction between constituent effects and appanages. Piaget does focus on the nature of the changes. However, his primary emphasis is on the cognitive dimension. Although we acknowledge Piaget's findings, we seek that which goes beyond the cognitive dimensions of learning.

We have classified constituent effects (con-fects) into attitudes, psychomotor abilities, awareness, and intellectual abilities. We recognize that these are very rudimentary categories. There is significant (and probably too much) overlap between them; and we doubt that they exhaust the range of con-fects that are humanly possible. Why is it necessary to distinguish between different types of con-fects? Because certain types of con-fects might be better accomplished via certain combination of content and context. For instance, the combination of content and context that might best boost someone's *confidence* (attitude) regarding calculus might be different from the combination that best fosters her/his calculus prowess (intellectual ability).

Our second pedagogical observation is this: since con-fects are purely individual or private operations (or interpretations), such a distinction confirms the platonic notion that learning is at its core a private activity of the self--even if the self is regarded as a socius (Butler, 1966, p. 83). This assertion also calls into question the so-called phenomenon of group learning. For to speak of group learning is either to confuse learning with performance, (con-fects with appanages) or to assert that a group of individuals could occupy the same (i.e., identical) existential space.

Thirdly, we were surprised to discover how constraining the term adult learning could be. Employing this linguistic formulation (the gerund) enticed us to focus myopically on cognitive

elements such as memory and other internal mental processes--to the exclusion of such things as content and context. Fortunately, our participants kept talking about their learning experiences in broader terms, incorporating content, context, and consequences of learning. Their broader focus led us to adopt the more expansive term: "the learning experiences of adults." This new linguistic formulation also provided a vehicle for us to highlight not only the commonalties but also the differences in adults' learning experiences. The commonalties refer to the normative structures and functions that adults share vis-à-vis their learning experiences, specifically the *content*, *context*, and *con-fects*. The differences manifest themselves substantively in the various ways adults interpret, inhabit, manipulate, and fulfill those structures and functions. The notion that there are tremendous substantive differences between and among adults regarding their learning experiences suggests that it might be instructive to shift the focus of adult learning theories from inter-group comparisons (adults verses non-adults) to intra-group comparisons (adults verses adults).

For us, some important questions remain unanswered: How many different classes of con-fects do adults experience? What explains differences in the learning con-fects of adults? What role, for instance, do ideology, culture, or educational background play in determining adults' learning con-fects? We believe that cultural elements such as race, class and gender affect the learning experiences primarily through the contributions they make to the learning context. But what specific contributions do they make? How do the personal and environmental aspects of context interact (in specific situations) to produce certain con-fects? Is the relationship sufficiently patterned to allow for prediction and control? We assume that one of the purposes of this and similar research studies is to help educators better facilitate learning for adults. Educators will do so only to the degree that they are able to predict and control the learning situation.

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