

## Bio

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how individuals enlist the transitional trigger and accompanying uncertainty, as a motivation for creativity. I have inquired into my own experience of the three general phases of transformative learning; disorienting dilemma, exploring options and integration. Discovering that anxiety and fear are indicators of a learning threshold for me and others, I conclude that our response to anxiety and our ability to tolerate change is of critical importance to creating a sustainable future.

The class room, be it an art studio, traditional desk and blackboard, informal seminar or online environment can provide a relatively safe environment and supportive community to develop our individual capacities to tolerate ambiguity and complexity of emerging multiculturalism. The art student is given an opportunity to metaphorically engage with transformative events using brushes and paint to explore the edge. The graduate student engages with other scholars who are exploring new ideas. Learning environments are places where we gain confidence in our ability to engage in creative self inquiry and critical self-reflection.

Learner empowerment is inextricably linked with the social context and social action may or may not be an observable end result (Cranton, 1994). However, I suggest that individual growth at any level results in the experience of empowerment. Increased capacity for managing change fuels ordinary creativity which can then transcend immediate individual needs and serve our need for a sustainable future. Empowered people have the confidence and courage to take creative action on behalf of themselves and others.

upon which to rest and appreciate the expansive vistas his climb has afforded him.. This was/is a mountain climbers journey and they are, slowly but surely, moving to achieve the summit of that particular mountain as they have scaled the summit of countless other mountains successfully. Yet, on this trip, the climber decides – instead of continuing upwards, to fling himself into the void of NO LEDGE and experience what other realms exist. This is the deliberate and risky decision to go in pursuit of KNOWLEDGE. There is always and forever the risk of crashing and burning, but then there was always that possibility in every step of the climbers ascent. ( Parker, 2005)

I will be inspired to ask a question that I haven't asked before because I read of someone's words here that gave me just an inkling of insight, just a whisper of courage. (Hutchinson, 2005)

What motivates us to risk falling, feeling foolish, and to grapple with the unknown? The courageous journey is an individual one. We each find inspiration and motivation from different sources. Finding the merest “whisper of courage” (Hutchinson, 2005) enables us take the leap.

### Conclusion

It is no exaggeration at all to say that creativity is the key to a more advanced humanity, a key to the realization of human potential and the control of human destructiveness. (Barron in Barron, Montuori & Baron 1997 p. 1)

The modern world pushes us to respond to rapid change with original and innovative solutions that often accompany the personal. This paper has focused on

– if I fall too far I will get up again – if I take a wrong turn I learn which way not to go next time – I am always learning, growing, changing – becoming someone new. – reinventing myself. What am I trying to say?

Thoughts turn to risking love. Is this it? Fear of love? Love of knowledge? Is this the motivation to leap; to get in over my head? The boundary between writing and living seems thin, is dissolving. I live my life as I write. The two are inseparable. I effect change and am changed. I am a verb not a noun. I am living in the currents. Effort turns to freedom. I live in the infinite gap of potential. (May, 2005)

Finding courage in the face of fear is a capacity we build from birth onward through adulthood. Once we identify the anxious edge, what enables us to leap into the unknown? My classmates speak of courage.

I'm overwhelmed by a desire to contribute with sincerity and integrity to creating a more loving and compassionate world. I'm trying to find the strength and courage in myself to face what I see as a pretty dark world...a world we can only face with love if we can face ourselves with love first.

(Hedley, 2005)

I read your reflection with interest and need to tell you how impressed I am with the level of honesty and earnestness with which I feel you approach this new journey. It takes a lot of courage to tear away from a world within which you are comfortable and successful, and throw yourself into the unknown.

Last semester I shared with the cohort that I had been pondering the word knowledge and that the image had come to me of a mountain climber struggling his/her way up a sheer rock face and finding, at times, LEDGES

knowing that I will eventually take the leap just the same as getting up in the morning.

However, in painting and in life I also have the choice not to paint something new, not to get up in the morning. Maybe I need to stay in bed resting. Resting is an act of self nurturing. I listen to what my body needs and respond. In painting, I can choose to repaint the same image as many times as I want. Again, I listen to what I need and respond with support of that need. Maybe I need to develop confidence and self esteem before I explore the unknown or maybe the unknown lurks in the old imagery somewhere.

If I have an idea it's old. If I don't have an idea it's new. Like the fool I am clueless. I retreat and advance oscillating between fear and excitement on the edge of new knowing. What I find is imagery, feelings, insights and meanings that are surprising and sometimes confrontational and uncomfortable. If I work at the edge of what I know, I feel a tension which creates energy for new imagery. I find new solutions in painting and I find new solutions for my life. The two are inseparable.

I'm hanging on the edge, not knowing how to proceed with this paper. How long can I stay here without grasping for a solution? I have an idea that I need to bring it together in some kind of conventional way, some way that will sound professional; academic speak. No – I say to myself, stay in this messy part. Feel uncertain, anxious, insecure, wondering, questioning. It's a dilemma, a line to walk between creativity and acceptability. Go for it - let the creative moment expand – swim in it - keep writing – it's ok to write junk – it may lead somewhere new – I know how to walk in the dark

extensive quote from my academic journal. I needed to take a break from working on this paper and am sitting in a local café having dinner and a coffee. I decide to just write what ever comes:

I am trying to look at the edge of the cliff; the place where cliff and sky meet. It is really hard because the cliff itself (where I am now; solid, known, old) and the desire to be finished are so compellingly attractive. Either I am secure on the cliff or I am projecting into an imagined future. Or am I free-falling into the chasm? Between the two? The moment to moment choice to let go of both the past and the future is disorienting. I am in the split.

I often think of something I read years ago in Rollo May's *Love and Will* (1969). He was describing the gap between laying in bed thinking about getting up in the morning and actually making the move to get up. At one moment we are in bed, the next we are out and moving into the activities of the day. Writing about that moment is confusing.

My experience in writing this paper causes me anxiety. I feel the same when I am laying in bed not wanting to get up. The gap fills with anxiety. I feel like I'm balancing on the edge, arms flailing, preventing my self from falling. I can move neither forward or backward. Can I stay on this edge? How long?

It's the same while painting. I repeatedly approach and retreat from the edge of the paper. I can imagine images on the other side. I can see myself adding paper; leaping into the open space of creative potential. I repeatedly choose to go back to existing images; adding detail, adjusting colors, reworking old territory. I'm balancing as long as I can on the edge yet

### Supporting Change

From the information in Table 2, we can deduce that safety, care, affirming relationships, acceptance, listening, self-awareness and equality are critical support measures at any level of growth. In order to manage the anxiety filled dilemmas that tend to inhibit human flourishing, we must have appropriate support

Learning theory must recognize the crucial role of supportive relationships and a supportive environment in making possible a more confident, assured sense of personal efficacy, of having a self- or selves- more capable of becoming critically reflective of one's habitual and sometimes cherished assumptions, and of having the self-confidence to take action on reflective insights. (Mezirow, 2000, p. 25)

In our modern world, we often feel isolated and alienated from the support of others. To use Keagan's (2004) phrase we are "in over our heads". We are like fish out of water desperately trying to survive without the supportive environment that our systems demand: being pushed into radical change without the necessary support systems in place. We are asked to transform our capacities for living and to literally evolve into new beings, humans who are able to internalize the previously external supportive environment. We must find ways to evolve from water creatures to land creatures. The critical balance between challenge and support characterizes the creative leap in transformative learning. The leap is an active, subjective experience: a verb not a noun.

### The Courage to Leap

Returning now to my own experience with disorienting dilemmas as an artist and as a graduate student, I will examine how I and others have negotiated this critical leap from the old to the new with creativity and courage. The following is an

Developmental level of Knowing	Disorienting Dilemma	Transitional Support	Integration
Silence	Formal education, child bearing, family trauma, difficult or challenging relationships, exposure to other cultures, a new kind of work, psychotherapy	safe and caring community, listening with care	Receive, retain and pass on knowledge, mind, voice
Received Knowing	Exposure to diversity of opinions, Loss of trust in male authority do to experience of violence or sexual abuse,	Mutual, reciprocal and equal relationships, praise and reinforcement	Relying on self as source of knowledge, emerging voice, Recognition of self as authority
Subjective Knowing	Notice inner contradictions, errors in intuitions, break with past	Reaching out to others, non judgmental, listening and acceptance	Beginning to think critically, , increased strength, optimism and self-value
Procedural Knowing	Psychological or geographical dislocation, Intense self-reflection and self-analysis	Deep listening,	Integration of thinking and feeling, reconciling different opinions
Constructed Knowing	Able to tolerate ambiguity and complexity	Self awareness, and knowledge of alternate ways of knowing	Integration of the self, mind and voice

Table 2

*Transitions from 5 Epistemological Perspectives* (Love, & Guthrie, 1999, pp. 17-27;

Belenky & Stanton in Mezirow 2000, pp. 71-102)

In Table 1, we can see that despite variations in terminology and the number of stages in the transformative process there seems to be consensus on a general progression through 3 phases: 1-The trigger event which causes discomfort, confusion, disorientation, and a motivation; 2- exploration of previous assumptions; 3- integration of the new insights into a new way of being in the world.

Cranton urges us not to see the phases as sequential or hierarchal, stating that “the dynamics of transformative learning may influence the length, sequence, and appearance of the stages” (1994, p. 72). Recognizing that not all learners change and grow in the same ways, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule (1996) studied a diverse group of women in order to illuminate ways of knowing that were missing from major developmental theories. Table 2 represents compiled information from Love & Guthrie (1999) and Belenky & Stanton (2000) that focuses on transformative and transitional events for each of five developmental levels of knowing. Transformative events or “disorienting dilemmas” to use Mezirow’s term, are considered motivating stimuli which either push the learner towards a higher level of integration or towards a regression. Transitional support is needed to achieve integration of new experiences or new information so that the transformer can progress to more complex ways of knowing.



knowledge” (Maslow, 1966, p. 135). In the examination of these crucial beginnings of growth are the seeds of creativity and transformation.

What is at the heart of transformation? If we can identify the moment when we leave behind the old self and start traversing new territory, will we be able to manage it more effectively? Patricia Cranton (1994) provides us with a comparison of some of the major theories on the process of transformative learning. By placing the phases and stages described by five different theorists in a table, we can quickly see how they compare. Although not all theories are represented here, we are still able to get a general feel for how transformation happens.

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If so, then we can study our own ordinary and incremental experiences as if we could use a microscope to look at the gap between the cliff edge and the open sky. Because “experiential knowing” (Heron & Reason, 1997) relies on identifying an often non-verbal inner sense of knowing, subjective reflections are an important resource for understanding this ground of knowledge making. In its broadest sense, transformative learning occurs on many different levels at many ages for many reasons. “Learning and adaptation in adult life also depend on discovery and new construction (Bateson, 1994). Ordinary creativity is pervasive and often unremarked” (Bateson in Montuori & Purser, 1999, p.154). In this sense, transformative learning is the key to human development and is at the core of human survival. Abraham Maslow’s (1966) theories of motivation and self actualization provide us with a rich source for understanding human behavior. Regarding growth-motivations he says, “Growth [is] an endless series of daily choices and decisions in each of which one can choose to go back toward safety or forward toward growth. Growth must be chosen again and again; fear must be overcome again and again” (Maslow, 1966, p.22)

Mezirow, on the other hand, has developed a very high level theory transformative learning. “Transformative learning involves participation in constructive discourse to use the experience of others to assess reasons justifying these assumptions, and making an action decision based on the resulting insight” (2000, p. 8). Mezirow’s definition assumes a high level of maturity, one that demands a sophisticated ability to question assumptions, to perform critical self-reflection, to validate meaning by assessing reasons, subjective reframing or reflective discourse, to name a few (Mezirow, 2000). However if we acknowledge the remarkable transformative achievements of even small children, it is evident that “the beginning stages of knowledge should not be judged by the criteria derived from ‘final’

creativity, and learning, is beautifully summarized in this online exchange between student and professor. The student posts a personal reflection on fear and addictions:

I read your question and notice that something tightens in my belly.

Anxiety. To be in the question is to be open to life, but it bears a tension that creates anxiety. I listen to this sensation. I remember how many times I try to remove my self from this sensation by falling in little addictions: eating, smoking a cigarette, have a glass of wine. In my experience, there is a relationship between stay [sic] in the question, creativity and addiction. If I stay in the question, I am repective [sic] to the flow of life. I can be creative, which means: say yes to what comes and flow. But sometimes anxiety takes over. I think that addiction is the spiritual call for that opening that sometimes it is too hard to bear. It's liminal space. (Mengotti, 2005)

The professor responds with a supportive comments about learning through self-reflection:

I see that the real learning here is NOT that a person goes away from a question and away from anxiety, but the real learning is the SENSATION of feeling the anxiety and the resistance in the moment... I hope that we all can recognize the immense learning that can come from such an experience.

(Jones, 2005)

Capacity to this liminal space seems to hinge on willingness to remain uncomfortable in precarious balance. It requires self-awareness, creativity and commitment to positive change.

### Transformative Learning

This paper makes the assumption that transformative learning can be defined as an everyday occurrence and is a necessary component in the process of maturation.

evolutionary link between now and the future. We must immerse our selves into the gap between what we know and what we do not know. This is the creative edge; the point of tension, the fertile womb. Perhaps this is where life happens and where reality manifests. If we can step into thin air where nothing yet exists, we may find that the chasm is perhaps an illusion. If we can forgo the desire for solid ground, we may discover opportunities previously unimagined. Let us not build bridges prematurely. The structure of the cliff determines the quality of the leap. New concepts are “context dependent” surviving only as they are connected to established knowledge (Csanyi in Montuori & Purser, 1999, p. 307). Csanyi point out that it is the complexity of variables that make possible the surfacing of “hidden properties” (p. 309) which lead to creative evolution. He recognizes that it is the extreme complexity of the current “structural and functional variability, which is the manifestation of the high creativity of the social system and the cause of the high speed of cultural evolution” (pp. 306-307). In other words, the level of complexity from which we begin determines the level to which we may arrive.

I propose that the aesthetic of the unknown is to be floated, expanded, nurtured, and delimited rather than bridged as is often suggested. In order to build bridges we must not only know where we begin but where we are going. If we cling to the place from which we jump or alternatively we predetermine our landing site, we will never discover what there might be, remembering always that we can not predict the future. We can not learn unless we are willing to take the risk of becoming someone new. Our capacity to take the leap of the fool is in John Dewey’s words, “an imaginative experience [which] is what happens when varied materials of sense quality, emotion and meaning come together in a union that marks a new birth in the world” (1934, p.267). The creative leap, described as a struggle between anxiety,

into a sustainable future. We must engage the unknown with the positive anticipation of transformation.

The ancient tarot symbol of the “fool” represents an attitude of creative willingness. The image in Figure 1 (Smith & Waite, 1971) shows an innocent youth about to unknowingly step off a high cliff. The card signifies a willingness to step into the unknowable, infinite creativity, suggesting that if we can suspend our habits of holding onto what we know and risk being foolish we can discover a new way of being. Alternatively, this foolish character also represents ignorance and denial, warning us of the danger of blindly stepping into the future. We will either step off the cliff accidentally because we don’t recognize the future as it rushes up to meet us or step forward with consciousness, deliberately leaping into a positive transformative process.



Figure 1

*The Fool* (Smith & Waite, 1971)

It is the cliff’s edge that causes so much anxiety. I use the image of the edge to signify the “liminal space” or the “threshold” (McWhinney & Markos, 2003; Berger, 2004) where change happens. The edge is the site of transformation and it is the

My biggest anxiety is fear of not understanding academic inquiry, and getting stuck. (Stenger, 2005)

My hidden fear is that if to engage with others, for instance with other people in the course, or with supervisors, or with authors that I am requested to read, I get confused and loose my inquiry (Mengotti, 2005)

Now if I could only move past the anxiety, fear and paralysis I'm feeling about the paper...(Morgan, 2005)

I confuse myself so easily and my release of anxiety in this instant is tangible! (Hutchinson, 2005)

I struggle with the paralyzing effects of these feelings to varying degrees. Sometimes, I am able to remain in the expansiveness of uncertainty which enables me to transcend the limiting effects of fear and anxiety and other times I revert to secure and familiar ways of knowing. I experience a pendulation between feeling excited about going beyond my current knowledge, and the need to confirm that what I know is valid and true. Anxiety signals to me that I have encountered the edge of my limited knowledge. If I have adequate support in managing these powerful feelings and am able to choose exploration of the unknown I am able to mature: If not I stagnate.

#### The Creative Fool

Neither the disengagement with the new and rapidly changing post-modern world nor the aggressive scapegoating and destruction of what we fear will bring us

stretched my consciousness to its limit. I would arrive at that amazing place and feel totally intimate with it. With my senses out-stretched to new dimensions, I recognized this as the place I came from – away from the limitation of age, body, and name, away from the narrow space allotted to me as a human. My attempts to answer my question would move me into a vastness where I knew I belonged. (p. 4)

I also have, when able to remain in my anxiety long enough, been able to transcend the perceived limitations of my creative ability in life.

The Transformative Learning and Change course at California Institute of Integral Studies is primarily conducted in an on-line learning environment. This environment is new to me and I am concerned about my ability to perform at PhD level and my ability to learn on-line. Now, as a fifty year old graduate student, I am again facing a metaphorical blank paper and I am responding to this challenge with excitement, anticipation, and fear. Like others, I am taking a personal and academic risk to look at what may be outside my realm of knowledge. I find my concerns echoed by other students. A quick search for “anxiety” and “fear” in the on-line text for the three introductory classes over a time span of three months resulted in 284 hits! Anxiety and fear are evidently major issues in post graduate study. The following are several quotes from the on-line text:

Sally, you wrote: "Is fear a factor in restraining my creative inquiry?" Given what we're been hearing from Cynthia and Virginia, and others, it's no surprise there should be some degree of fear, so once again that becomes an opportunity for inquiry and self-inquiry. Again, the academic can become transformative, and the transformative grounded in the academic.

(Montuori, 2005)

studio. I begin to notice the burn in my belly, pounding heart and shallow breathing. I know these signs indicate an opportunity to question the unknown. For example, “What happens at the edge of the paper?” Traditional art theory treats the rectangular frame as a limit within which to create a pleasing composition. I treat the edge as a place of tension that will stimulate a creative response. I ask myself open-ended questions: “What would I paint on the other side of the edge? What could be above or below? What could come into the painting from the outside? What could reach out of the painting?” Then I add paper to accommodate the new visions that become alive in the questioning process. Anxiety becomes my creative friend. It shows me where to question my assumptions. Each assumption becomes an edge to explore with creative inquiry. In order to be original, I must risk feeling foolish and I must be willing to abandon the known, release assumptions, and leave the safe haven of what I already know.

Michelle Cassou describes a similar experience of wanting to explore the edges of knowledge:

As a child, I loved the dizziness that came when I asked my-self, “What is at the edge of the universe? What is found when all ends?” I often tried to go there to look at what happens when matter stops. My mind searched for that edge in every way possible, eager to glimpse the unknown. I wouldn’t give up until I got a strange twirling feeling in my head. That sensation would tell me that I had gone as far as possible for the moment. (2001, p 4)

She then takes this exploration further, leaping into what I call the open sky. She describes a transcendent experience:

I relished that mysterious perception. Then, without further effort, a familiar sensation of soft vertigo would arise, with the delightful feeling of having

### The Experience of Fear and Anxiety

Expressing and communicating personal experience has been a primary concern in my art practice for over twenty years. Through creative self-expression, I have developed and practiced capacities to manage uncertainty, confusion and difference. It is through consciously experiencing anxiety in the face of the unknown that I have cultivated the courage necessary to learn and change. As a visual artist, I face the unknown every time I start a new painting.

Approaching the blank paper becomes a metaphor for my life. I practice overcoming anxiety in many small and creative ways. One is to just make any kind of mark on the paper to which I can respond. If the mark is not meaningful, I don't care about doing it wrong; I can always change it in the next moment. Once I begin, it is easier to proceed. The painting emerges one stroke at a time. If I become bored, I know that I need to risk facing the unknown again. The unknown carries the charge of anxiety and pushes me to creative response. To the degree that I can make each brush stroke and each color choice a decision to face the blank paper, I feel alive and my work progresses at the highest level of creativity. Rather than work with an idea that simply needs to be skillfully executed, I work at this intuitive creative edge facing each decision as if it were the first. Fear and uncertainty are commonly expressed by other students in Michelle Cassou's Point Zero painting classes. "When I let go of control, I feel afraid" (2001, p.89). "I am afraid I have lost my way. I am painting slowly and heavily. I feel I am going through mud" (p.213). "I am afraid I have stretched myself too far" (p. 213). "I am feeling totally disconnected from what I am doing, totally lost" (p. 214).

If I want to understand how I react to the unknown in my life, I can examine the metaphorical blocks to creativity and the accompanying fears while painting in the

can choose to react with excitement and creativity or fear and destructiveness. Future Shock is defined as an “adaptive breakdown” (Toffler, 1971, p. 326). “As the pace of change quickens, the confusion is tinged with self-doubt, anxiety and fear....As the pressures relentlessly mount, tension shades into irritability, anger and sometimes senseless violence” (p. 363). Based on his theory of the limits of adaptability, Toffler suggests that there is an optimal adaptive range between under stimulation and over stimulation within which humans can successfully function. Rollo May’s 1950 studies on anxiety also show that there is an optimal edge at which an individual can use anxiety as a motivating force for creative thinking and transformative change (May, 1979). What makes the difference between defending and retreating from the edge and jumping into the new with creative excitement?

Many anxiety coping mechanisms have been identified as obstacles to creative thinking. These mechanisms include but are not limited to; the compulsive need for certainty, premature generalization, resistance to change, conformity, rationalization, repression, scapegoating, and the need to be tough and powerful (Maslow, 1966). We respond to perceived threat with a fight or flight response. We either withdraw from the situation or become aggressive. We see the flight behavior manifest in our society by rampant depression, and the numbing effects of drugs, alcohol, television. We witness the fight aspect of these defense mechanisms in terrorism, rioting, genocide, and wars. I believe that our limited capacity to negotiate fear and anxiety are at the forefront of personal and global conflict. Cultivating a creative response to rapid change from one of negative control to one of positive excitement and curiosity is an important transformative task. We must begin to change our way of knowing the future.

of a complicated world” (as cited in May, 1950/1979, p. 8). We are confronted by change every where we turn and therefore encounter the new and the unknown at a rate unprecedented in history. Robert Kegan describes this modern condition as an “ever-accelerating flow of information [necessitating and a] qualitative change in the complexity of our minds” (1994, p. 5-6). Edgar Morin concurs. “One of the greatest problems we face is how to adjust our way of thinking to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex, rapidly changing, unpredictable world” (2001, p. 5) and points to the necessity of global sustainability. He looks to education as the “force for the future because it is one of the most powerful instruments of change” (2001, p. 3).

We find ourselves cosmologically, ontologically and epistemologically estranged from the world, resulting in a crisis of being. Toffler (1971) calls for control of the rate of change. More recently Kegan (1994) and others call for the transformation of our ways of knowing. How do we teach ourselves and others how to meet this crisis? Jennifer Berger suggests that our work is to find the edge of our understanding, to find company at the edge and to construct a new transformed place (2004, p. 336). McWhinney and Marcos propose a need for “education suitable to 21<sup>st</sup>-century society” (2003, p. 16) acknowledging the obvious lag between our capacities to adapt to the radical change in the human condition stating that, “educational institutions, formal and informal, have not kept pace with the technological innovations, the lengthening life span, or the need for ongoing reeducation to reinvigorate lives” (p.16). We are continually pushed to the edge of the unknown future. No wonder we are anxious.

Although anxiety is considered to be a normal adaptive response to over-stimulation and change, I posit that individuals and societies can use it to motivate us towards creative solutions. As we face numerous shifting variables in our lives, we

modern world, we find ourselves precariously balanced at the edge of our comfort zones. In order to move into a viable future we must be able to successfully negotiate fear and anxiety associated with rapid change brought into our everyday lives by technology, information overload, intercontinental travel, and advanced scientific research. The problem is: how do we tolerate change? How do we approach the unknown future? In the face of the seemingly impossible challenges and the “disorienting dilemmas” (Mezirow, 2000) of our modern world, how do we continue to move forward towards positive solutions and avoid sliding back into reactive and destructive behavior patterns?

In this paper, I suggest that we can apply the lessons learned from creative process in the arts and academic inquiry to the larger and often more threatening aspects of life in the modern world. First, I explore the cultural context of rapid change that demands increased tolerance for uncertainty and anxiety. Second, I examine the experience of anxiety and fear in the face of change. Third, I suggest that the image of “the fool” may give us insight into the dilemma of creative learning. Fourth, I review some of the literature of the last six decades regarding, transformative learning, and cultural change. Fifth, through an autobiographical account and quotes from other students, I explore the subjective experience of fear and anxiety. Finally, I suggest that courage is at the heart of transformative learning and change and that creativity is a critical component of social change.

### Rapid Change

Future Shock is the term used by Alvin Toffler in his 1970 best seller of the same title (1971). His intention was to diagnose the malaise of our culture and to prescribe solutions based on coping or managing change. In the earlier part of the twentieth century, the Lynds’ identified anxiety as the result of “insecurity in the face

### The Creative Leap: Courage in Learning

“Paint what ever you want. It can be abstract or figurative, small or large, neat or messy, any thing at all. Choose a color, one that you like. Here, I can help you put the paper up. Let me show you how to use the brushes.” It is 1987. We are adult learners in a painting class at “The Painting Experience” in San Francisco. (Cassou & Cubley, 1995; Cassou, 2001) We are confronted by the dread of a big sheet of white paper and no precise instruction on how or what to paint. There are only a few general rules. “Don’t comment about other’s paintings. If you are stuck or think you are finished call over an assistant.”

We are artists, non-artists, male and female, young and old, from all walks of life. We have a desire for more creativity in our lives. Anxiety and excitement are palpable energies in the room. I am here out of curiosity. I have been an artist my whole life and still I fear the unknown space of “the blank paper”. I feel uncertain. My belly is flip flopping. My skin feels tingly and my breathing is rapid. I can feel my heart beating as I pick up a brush, dip it into a brilliant red, and turn towards the wall where my paper awaits me. What will I paint? What will I discover? I sense that I will change as a result of this class. I am approaching something new, something undiscovered in myself.

It is 2005. I am walking into an intensive retreat beginning a doctorate program titled “Transformative Learning and Change” at California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. Again I am approaching the unknown. I feel anxiety and excitement. I am at the edge of learning something new. I know that I will change and I know that I will feel anxious and uncertain.

Anxiety is central to artistic and academic creativity. Additionally, it is central to social evolution. Situated within the larger context of living in a globalized post

### Abstract

The modern world pushes us to respond to rapid change in ways that often result in transformed perspectives on our lives. This paper focuses on how individuals enlist the confusion and uncertainty brought on by transitional triggers, as motivation for creativity. Noting that anxiety and fear are common feelings for both artists and PhD students, the author uses subjective self- reflections to examine the sometimes precarious experience of learning and creativity. She concludes that courage is at the heart of transformative learning and that creativity is a critical component of social change.

The Creative Leap: Courage in Learning

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