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Journeys: Changing Our Schools, Workplaces, and Lives Works-in-progress from a conference-workshop to mark 40 years of the Graduate Program in Critical & Creative Thinking

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Journeys: Changing Our Schools, Workplaces, and Lives

Works-in-progress from a conference-workshop to mark 40 years of the Graduate Program in Critical & Creative Thinking

PETER J. TAYLOR (Ed.)

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Journeys: Changing Our Schools, Workplaces, and Lives
Works-in-progress from a conference-workshop to mark 40 years of the Graduate Program in Critical & Creative Thinking

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May 2019

Abstract

A compilation of works-in-progress prepared for or during a conference-workshop to mark 40 years of the Graduate Program in Critical & Creative Thinking at the University of Massachusetts Boston. The contributions illustrate how preparing for and participating in the conference-workshop provided an opportunity to reflect on ways that developing as a critical, creative, and reflective practitioner is like a journey into unfamiliar areas—journeying involves risk, opens up questions, creates more experiences than can be integrated at first, requires support, and yields personal and professional change.

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Currently, I am building a curriculum to use in the Critical Thinking course I am teaching at MassBay Community College. During my time in CCT at UMass Boston and after, I have encountered numerous definitions of Critical Thinking. It is objective analysis, bias-free observation, it is problem-solving and problem-finding, it is asking trenchant questions and providing real solutions, and it is all these things. I have seen it founded on philosophical logics and kinetic looping paradigms of planning-execution-reflection-planning... At times it appeared indistinguishable from creative thinking.

The definition of Critical Thinking I am crafting includes processes like challenging the limitations of thought and language, expanding awareness, recognizing somatics and emotions, redefining self as an observable experience, and establishing creativity as a default operating psychology. Perhaps lofty or far-fetched, it is really based on little more than my experience in CCT. Actually, much of it goes back to a single 18-page reading assignment from the program: the 1995 interview with David Bohm titled “The Limitations of Thought.” Other significant contributors include: the article “How Does Mindfulness Meditation Work?” published by the Association for Psychological Science, Otto Scharmer’s Four-Phase Dialogue model in Theory U, Peter Elbow’s “The Believing Game – Methodological Believing,” and my own mindfulness meditation practice. The curriculum is intended to be reflexive, in that the principles it delivers to students are active in that delivery.

The reason I chose this path, to include applying to teach, is the passion I developed for my experience in CCT. In addition to a toolkit for asking meaningful questions, a means to creative problem-solving, and a reflective process for completing projects, I eventually perceived Critical Thinking as a broadening of awareness of myself and the outside world, conjoined to an intrinsic creativity. Together, this expansive awareness and innate creativity, which I believe are both learnable, are obliged to bring about empathy, “flow,” authenticity, original outputs and solutions, and other helpful ways of being in the world. Standing on the shoulders of my CCT experience, I wondered how much of this interpretation of Critical Thinking could be packaged into 40 class hours and made accessible to younger minds.

My personal reasons for undertaking this challenge revolve around how my roles as a diversity specialist in the military, personal fitness trainer, performance artist/writer, new father, and now adjunct professor often require me to shift the ways I interpret and use the information, and it is often as much a social challenge as an analytical one. This version of Critical Thinking helps both.
The best of what I’ve achieved so far would be the curriculum I created and used in my first semester at MassBay. Here’s one pedagogical experience I had there: I learned that my course needed a “point.” Why are students required to take this? Working with a version of Critical Thinking outside of the classic utilities like “good decision making” or argument analysis, I came to: “Critical Thinking allows us to change our thinking to best fit the current situation.” Eventually this was shortened to, “being able to change your thinking.” This objective clearly incorporates my experience in switching modes of understanding and articulation depending on what role I’m filling. Given that each process of this definition of Critical Thinking (mentioned earlier) could fill a year, or a lifetime, I felt that “being able to change the way you think,” was a useful and interesting starting point in making this curriculum coherent in one semester. Tying it all together, for now. At that point, there were the challenges of expressing to my students how truly difficult it is to change the way one thinks and motivating them to try it. I found this challenge easier to meet than I expected, and the significance of the course, as well as (some of) my students’ interest, began to emerge. Roughly 17% of my students’ feedback mentioned changes in thought patterns, perceptions, or thinking, and about 22% showed dramatic increases in writing ability by the end of the semester.

True to my intentions, what I found most helpful in my first semester was using the principles I was teaching to teach them. The Believing Game, active mindfulness, empathic listening, Dialogue, non-judgment, authenticity…these things that seem obviously helpful in communicating with students made that communication a pedagogical resource. So, I suppose the most helpful contributors to this endeavor thus far have been my students.

MassBay allowed me complete freedom to design my course. I don’t think I’ve had any hinderances except, of course, the nuances of the challenge itself, the limitations of time, and those improvements I have not yet become aware of. There is a long way to go.

What I’m struggling with right now is growing artifacts that bring this concept to life. Creating writings and online resources, a social media presence, expanding my library of freshmen-level excerpts. Although I’m growing this idea in a classroom, I’d like it to have a dialectic with a version of itself that exists outside. I’m hoping that by the end of the Fall 19 semester I’ll have one website, the beginning of a social media identity, and a completed manifesto.

What would help me right now is assistance in building a website. I have scoured the internet for examples of what I’m envisioning, and I need help putting these pieces together.

Thanks for reading!
PROGRESS WORK
How can communities resist misinformation?
Critical and Creative Thinking: Group Vs Self

Macro:
- ???
- ???
- ???

Micro:
- Skills
- Practices
- Tools
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macro/Structure</th>
<th>Micro/Agency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Norms</td>
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<td>Traits</td>
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‘La colmena,’ by Santi Molina (via flickr)  
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‘Signpost,’ by the_ewan (via flickr)  
CC BY-SA 2.0
What does critical and creative thinking look like…. 
At a community level? 
A society level? 
A global level?
## Critical and Creative Thinking: Macro vs Micro

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macro</th>
<th>Micro</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Shared values/joys/epistemology</td>
<td>● Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Decreased cost of norm enforcement</td>
<td>● Practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Collective artifact</td>
<td>● Tools</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Processes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>● Experiences</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>● Dialogue</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Next Steps:

- Seeking examples
- Identifying common components/traits
- Detect/Analyze
Having it all: combining science and librarianship
Post-CCT

Jan Coe – CCT ‘07
This Reflective Practitioner’s Portfolio is a record of my journey through the Critical & Creative Thinking Graduate Program at the University of Massachusetts Boston. I began my studies in the summer of 2003 and completed my Master of Arts degree in June of 2007. The e-Portfolio contains exhibits from courses I took and experiences I gained while in the program. Selecting these items has not been easy! To accurately convey my progress as a reflective practitioner and critical thinker would require the contents of my mind, heart -- and hard drives! To navigate chronologically through the e-Portfolio, click on the CCT Courses and Other Experience links on the menu to the left.
Telethon Institute for Child Health Research – Subiaco, Western Australia
Overview

Twins and singletons with Specific Language Impairment

A child’s ability to communicate is one of the most important developmental accomplishments and builds the foundation for success at school and beyond. Language difficulties can limit a child’s educational achievement and their social, civic, and economic participation.

The LOOKING at Language study aims to understand why some children have difficulty developing language and later in learning to read. Most children with normal hearing, normal intelligence and no other developmental problems develop language with remarkable ease, however an estimated 7% of children do not - and we need to know why.

*N*EWSFLASH* Prestigious Award for LOOKING at Language
AUS-CBT

Childhood brain tumours are the second most common childhood cancer after leukaemia, and are the leading cause of cancer death in children. In Australia, approximately 120 new cases of childhood brain tumours (CBTs) are diagnosed each year. Unfortunately, the risk factors for CBTs are largely unknown, despite several decades of research.

The Australian Study of Childhood Brain Tumours (AUS-CBT) is a 5 year, national case-control study that commenced in 2006. It aims to investigate genetic, dietary and environmental causes of childhood brain tumours by comparing families of children with a brain tumour and families of children who do not have a brain tumour. AUS-CBT is the sister study to the Australian Study of Causes of Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia in Children (AUS-ALL).

The Australian Study of Childhood Brain Tumours involves families of children (aged 0-14) diagnosed with a brain tumour since 2005 (our ‘Cases’), as well as families with children the same age, who have not been diagnosed with a brain tumour (our ‘Controls’). Recruitment for the study commenced in 2006, and by the end of 2010 we hope to have recruited 350 case families and 700 control families.

Families participating in AUS-CBT are asked to complete self-administered exposure and dietary questionnaires which are mailed out their home. It also involves a telephone interview with each parent, covering occupational and other exposures. DNA samples are also provided by all case families and some control families.
Adapting the AEDI for Indigenous Children

The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) is a national-wide program that looks at the development of young children in communities across Australia. It is a tool that helps communities and governments pinpoint services, resources and supports young children and their families need to give children the best start in life. However it is recognised that in order for the AEDI to provide the most accurate and useful information, there is a need for some questions to be adapted to take into account cultural differences, particularly relating to Indigenous children.

The AEDI was adapted from the original Early Development Index that was developed in Canada. Its reliability in the Australian context was tested in a series of pilot projects, starting in 2002. A new project to further adapt the AEDI to ensure its relevance and sensitivity to the needs of Indigenous children was initiated by the Centre for Developmental Health and the Kulunga Indigenous Research Network at Perth’s Telethon Institute for Child Health Research in 2007, on behalf of the national AEDI partnership between the Centre for Community Child Health and Telethon Institute for Child Health Research.

The AEDI Indigenous Adaptation Study has been overseen by a National Indigenous AEDI Reference Group. Indigenous peak bodies and grass roots community organisations, parents, unions and government and non-government stakeholders were involved in its development and continue to contribute to the study’s progression. Shell Australia provided foundation support for the AEDI and, with the Australian Government, is supporting the Indigenous Adaptation Study. The main modifications to emerge from the adaptation project include:

- The recommended use of Indigenous school personnel (e.g. Aboriginal Teaching Assistants/ Aboriginal & Islander Education Officers) to work with teachers in completing the AEDI checklists for Indigenous children.
- Modifications to the on-line teacher guide to provide additional information so that particular cultural considerations can be...
Community Toolkit

Following requests for information about using the AEDI data, we have developed and are currently trialing a ‘Community Toolkit’ which gives communities further information about child development at age 5. The Toolkit suggests steps to take to review and strengthen the services available in the community, or to determine gaps in existing services and develop context specific programs aimed to improve child developmental outcomes.

Flipchart

Using the posters of domains of development in the AEDI, we have developed a flipchart for trialing which gives an idea of what is expected developmentally of a child at age 5. The flipchart provides a visual representation of the types of skills and activities we look for in children in each domain.
58% or 21 out of 36 children in Eastern Carnarvon are performing well in ONE or more domains!

Icon charts created to help explain the stats
The Library – East Perth Campus, Central Institute of Technology
My professional journey led me from work as a computer programmer, to teaching high school math for a small charter school in Dorchester, to coaching math teachers, to my current position teaching in and managing a STEM teacher education program at UMass Boston. The Critical and Creative Thinking Program at UMass Boston played an integral role in supporting me to imagine my path and create an action plan to move forward in my teaching career.

I love math and teaching math. Working for the district office as a math coach led me to question the structures of schools and how students, especially students of color, lack access to rigorous, high level mathematical thinking. The normalized societal view is that not everyone can understand math; this dominant narrative is propagated in schools. My passion for inclusive mathematics teaching compelled me to enroll in the Urban Education, Leadership and Policy Studies doctoral program. Currently, I am in the last stages of my research, analyzing data and hoping to complete my dissertation to graduate in May 2020.

In my role with the UTeach Program, I teach STEM majors who are interested in teaching, instructing introductory courses and 3-credit classes leading to certification. Each semester, I also teach a section of introductory mathematics, College Algebra in the fall and Pre-Calculus in the spring. For UMass Boston (and nationwide), less than half of students enrolled in these introductory math courses earn credit to move forward. For students interested in STEM, this requires students to retake classes, extend the time needed for their degree, or often change their majors. My dissertation is about women’s experiences in College Algebra at the university, with
a hope of gaining insights into how we might improve our mathematics classes to support women’s (and all student’s) success.

I see a huge need at the university for leadership in reimaging mathematics classes and pedagogy to empower students and support their success. With the completion of my PhD, I want to position myself to lead this initiative. I need help with defining the role I imagine and determining what I need to do to pursue it. I enjoy my current position working with STEM majors and I feel that the position I hope to have in the future would be linked to my work with math majors who are interested in teaching. I look forward to working with others to help me think about this.
Welcome to Alum Talks!

CCT Program
40th Anniversary
Alum Talks, brings together graduates of the CCT Program with retired longtime faculty member, Nina Greenwald, to share interests, questions and challenges pertaining to our diverse fields of work. Since November, we have been meeting online through Zoom, two to three evenings a month, from 7-8:15 pm.

Any alums are welcome to join these meetings. Periodically, Nina sends an email with summaries and updates for everyone, until we meet again. No preparation needed, no homework, no tests.
Alum Talks is a referent group of supportive, like-minded professionals to learn from, grow with each other.

In easy conversational climate

- to reflect on professional goals that naturally connect us
CONNECTING US THROUGH THE FOUR R´S

FROM: Developing as a Collaborator
from: Taking Yourself Seriously, Peter Taylor and Jeremy Szteiter

1. Respect
2. Risk
3. Revelation
4. Re-engagement

Alum Talks supports our role as collaborators, and recreates the nurturing climate of the CCT Program, making it FUN to take deep idea plunge!
WHO WE ARE
I am a retired, longtime CCT faculty member with specializations in creative thinking and problem-based learning. I teach CCT-based courses for retired professionals in a lifelong learning program, and am an education and business consultant.

“...It's a special joy to reconnect with our alums, now together as colleagues, many of whom I had the pleasure of teaching!”
This is my 14th year teaching and coordinating the IB program at Brockton High School - have studio space in Brockton, share artwork...

“An important question for me is how to build more time for reflection in our lives?”

TODD
I am a Graphic Designer, work with STEM programs; always thinking about this.

“How do I teach teachers how to teach THAT?”
I teach high school engineering and astronomy, teach at the BU/Wheelock School of Education, make primitive musical instruments, and enjoy collecting unusual masks.
I am President of a Consulting Company, IT processes and Real Estate Management.

“I want my workplace to be safer and more open to critical and creative thinking.”

LOLI
The idea of safety rears its head again here. Organizations and individuals within these organizations both need safety in order for exploratory work to begin. I'm wondering more about the idea of creating, "organically", the "right" community in which to do the work you care about rather than trying to implant something at an existing organization. What's different about building a new path that somehow then gets its own momentum and tipping point of influence? What's different about the psychology of the people involved in these different creative paths?

In my new position at Cornell University I coordinate 25 people in horticultural research, teach part time for CCT, and aspire toward creating a workplace environment where we can be ourselves – not just our “work” selves.

"RHODA"
Alison Palmucci, Wipa Khampook, Pam Dibona are also with us and look forward to joining us more fully as time permits.
This is the question that launched our Talks and each session as well.

Thought was given to the status of CCT in our nation, and the challenge of creating organic “thinking cultures” in our workplaces and lives.
We’ve been talking about...

There have been some powerful themes emerging from our talks:

- The need for collaboration and why this is so important
- Cultivating humanism in the workplace and life
- Capitalizing on diversity in the workplace
- Creating a “safe” workplace environment in which to consider ideas
- Gender-based influences in the workplace
- Hierarchical organizational structure and idea development
- Importance of expressing gratitude in the workplace
- Instructional strategies
- Good reads and helpful professional resources
(Nina) CPS (Creative Problem Solving) Converting a WIBAI: “Wouldn't It Be Awful If” into a WIBNI: “Wouldn’t it Be Nice If” instead as a vehicle for solving workplace problems.

(Rhoda) “After our first meeting, I'm thinking about organizational development in the context of cognitive psychology. What I mean is that many organizations seem to be operating at an adolescent stage of development without the tools or structures to grow into adulthood. Using Nina's original prompt, "Wouldn't it be nice if" we could help those adolescents grow up to be responsible, empathetic and generative contributors in their relationships?”
(Nina) Rhoda’s emphasis on creating an organic problem solving culture, and stages of design thinking might lend itself to some interesting intersecting disciplines exploration; gets me thinking about The Medici Effect (Johansson 2006) – how breakthrough ideas most often occur when concepts from one field are brought into new, unfamiliar territory, and idea discoveries can be turned into groundbreaking innovations.
(Joel) I make primitive instruments (we see fascinating examples on the walls of his studio); I see a connection between what Todd say about immersion in his art – a shift in focus, a way to get over barriers, to decenter; perfectionism a problem; don’t see myself as a different person in the classroom compared to when I’m in my studio; the more I teach the better I am at teaching, at creating a culture of learning in which students enjoy coming to class.
(Andrea) Related to Rhoda’s thoughts, I thought Design Thinking would be of interest to our group. I could see this being implemented within an organization to facilitate teamwork. This process is just one of the many in the design thinking process; e.g., creating an “organizational journey” map, a graphic representation of a stakeholder’s experience as a means of accomplishing something of importance to them. We first map out the milestone experiences in a user’s journey including a major milestone; this is a means for teams to more easily recognize their blind spots, see where interventions help alleviate sticking points.
(All) In contrast, workplace life is often another story where “everyone is too busy and has no time to think in these ways” – a subset of the larger issue of the need to train people to think better but far from being a priority. Those of us whose mission is otherwise, (not nearly enough of us out there) have our work cut out; must project ahead to the kinds of thinking tomorrow’s world will demand.

(Loli) In my new workplace, I find it surprising that being open to dialog and sharing thoughts can be perceived by others as a lack of leadership and control on my behalf. How can posing questions to others to ignite dialogue and promote questioning be introduced into my workplace? CCT taught me that “an enriching conversation” is one where you are not listening to respond, but are expanding your view based on the other persons ideas ...
(Joel) At times, I lead discussions on highly sensitive topics for random groups of participants. For example, following a video on concentration camp survivors, a level of disinterest was shown that was perplexing and disturbing to me. How might a more positive, beneficial discussion have taken place?

(Nina) Tough one. Illustrates how assumptions, biases, values and experience, and who knows what other dynamics are at work below the level of awareness that shape people's thinking. ESR publications (Educators for Social Responsibility, Boston), plus the following publications on facilitating discussion of challenging topics can be useful resources: Cooperative Learning, Cooperative Lives; Open Minds to Equality (Schneidewind and Davidson).
I coordinate the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program at Brockton High School, in which students aspire to academic achievement. While I enjoy my time with students, more time is needed to coordinate the program, consisting of 12 teachers and 250 students, mostly females. The principal gives vocal support to the program, and no one wants to see the program cut as risked a few years ago. On other problematic levels (subtle or not so) programs like this risk being construed as elitist which undermines support.
(Nina): What Todd says parallels my experience long ago as a new teacher given a class of gifted sixth graders. Some of my colleagues thought it unfair to give a rookie teacher this opportunity. I asked myself, “What’s in it, what could be in the GT program for everyone?” A solution was finding creative ways to partner my students with a class of learning challenged students: e.g., my students as academic mentors, joint field trips and science projects, sharing outcomes and getting feedback from colleagues; went a long way to “unfreeze”, generate greater receptivity and collegiality among my 6th grade colleagues.
(Rhoda): I’m preparing a presentation for a large audience of curators in Portland, and invited to talk about anything I want. The theme I chose is “Approaching Humanity from a Slant: A Journey Toward Understanding Our Shared Humanity” taking a holistic perspective with a “garden” slant.

Origin of the word “garden”?.. found to mean “enclosure” or “compound”; brainstorming experiential learning possibilities for Rhoda’s presentation led to ideas for incorporating music, photography and poetry, lecture, and ways to structure the presentation: preparatory “experience” to promote diverse perspectives, in-depth immersion experience focused on a need for greater empathy and less division in today’s world, re-framing and wrap.

Question to ponder: How can I continue to grow and be challenged as a creative thinker? I’m a “people” person but need periods of privacy.
(Alison) Anyone read "Big Magic; Creative Living Beyond Fear" by Elizabeth Gilbert? Reading it now and loving it- reminds me of a Nina-type-class discussion topic :) Anyone read "The Highly Sensitive Person" or "the Highly Sensitive Child" (Elaine Aron)? Attended a workshop about highly sensitive children, curious if anyone has read these or is themselves a Highly Sensitive Person? Attached the link to the checklist, if anyone interested. As a teacher and mother AND a person who loves psychology and research I'd never heard of this. So this is what's on my mind- excited to join in on Monday!
(Rhoda) It’s so important to practice gratitude, so many beneficial effects of simply saying “thanks” first thing in the morning to colleagues and others in our lives - something I continue to contemplate and actively practice. Given these times, it’s too easy to fall into a pattern of expressing discontent, malaise, disgust and all the rest that interferes with openly expressing how much we value and appreciate one another.
(Loli) I’d like to say more about the need to be thankful, express gratitude, learn to relax and generate newfound hope – the latter is something that got lost along the way last year given socio-political strife in my country of Venezuela. There are salutary effects of group meditation and gratitude practices (e.g., writing 50 names of persons for whom we are grateful in life).

(Nina) The thinking sequence in a problem solving activity I led began with a relaxation exercise for her class of adult learners at Cape Cod Community College; doodling (graphic ideation) followed to promote verbal clarification of a problem or challenge that opens the way for solution finding.
(Loli) the current Venezuelan crisis is against the backdrop of longstanding problems going back to Chavez – building connections with drug dealers, fraudulent elections, violence begets violence –

(Nina) and the possibility of this odd metaphor or paradox - violence as "equilibrium", as a comfort zone way of operating…
Alums, please join in! For information, email Nina at nlgreenwald@comcast.net

Alum Talks can be a resource for the CCT program, for example:

- mentors for current students
- guest presenters in CCT courses
- contributors to the CCT newsletter

and that’s just for openers!...
Conversation on Housing:
Reasonable options to meet the needs of Foxborough Residents

The essence of the project is to engage in and power of the community leadership and residence in identifying if a housing options issue exists; and if so, to work with and lead said group in addressing the current situation to benefit the community’s future best interest.

Indications from feedback we’ve been getting over several years is that insufficient options exist for downsizing within the community. Additionally, one of our major corporate partners has indicated directly to us that in order to remain in town they need to attract younger, tech-savvy millennials. To do this, they have requested the town looking into downtown housing and transportation. While apartments are available, the quantity is insufficient and the amenities are not desirable to this level of employees in general, According to their corporate leadership. They command high salaries and it is assumed that with higher-end units and adequate transportation options, that these employees will come and Schneider electric will continue to operate; as it has for nearly the last 120 years.

The best of what we have achieved is:
- Support and feedback from colleagues, classmates, similarly situated professionals in other towns across the Commonwealth.
- Grant funded opportunities and support from Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)
- Team education and project skill building for him and the support from the Lincoln Institute for land policy in Cambridge
- Ongoing guidance and mentor ship from the president of the public sector consortium in Cambridge
- A skeleton of survey questions for distribution to a group of 25 selected high potential candidates for a public forum
- A plan for training and mentoring for facilitators hand-picked from the forum to round our team of four up to eight

What has been particularly helpful in this project has been:
- Ongoing weekly team meetings and guidance from our coach Georgie at the public sector consortium
- Keeping the focus on ownership of the project (at least of final decisions) in the hands of residents
- Having professional and association resources at hand to supplement our research
- An iterative process with monthly meetings with the coach and weekly meetings with our four-member team to stay connected and Informed
- The opportunity to discuss and probe this topic at least weekly because we have kept it active in our thoughts, plans, discussion, and meetings
What has hindered me in this project has been:
-Time to dedicate to it, considering other work, family, volunteer, and community activities
-To this point, we have spent a lot of time discussing and thinking about problem-solving we perceive to be the problem. We don’t want to overlook a problem we may be able to help, but we also don’t want to act on all assumptions we have made, or expressions shared with us that do not represent the majority view of residents
-as non-resident employees, we also want to ensure our professional enthusiasm does not over exert the powers entrusted to us; or under represent the actuality of the local housing cost and options reality for those who reside in the town
-The four of us on the team are all middle-age professionals, married employees who reside out of town and are single-family homeowners

What I am struggling with in this project is the tension of doing the best I can for the people they represent, in finding a solution to a public housing options problem within reasonable cost constraints, and not wanting to act or overreact to an issue that residents do not regard as a priority for them. If it is just a matter of public awareness then our public forums for dialogue, as well as question and answer sessions should be able to start teasing this out.

What would help me now in this project is substantial resident feedback from a diverse assembly of interested stakeholders. So far we have received 788 results in the 13 question Survey Monkey titled “Conversation on Housing”. The other thing that would help is survey results or data and feedback from other similarly situated communities on appropriately sized and priced housing options for their residence to remain local.
The Invitation
Jane LaChance

Thirteen years ago, I was invited to take a class in the CCT program by a well-meaning friend who recognized my angst at that time; struggling with work, personal and family relationships. I half-heartedly began with a Creative Thinking class and quickly discovered that we would work in groups to invent something. “What?? I can’t do that...I’m not an inventor!” I decidedly decreed to myself. But, I didn’t want to quit so I continued to attend the class with increasing interest, engagement and success with our group project that we called “portable pockets.” I still have one. During the course I was curious about two specific students’ thinking process. They demonstrated an ease with questions with an interesting range of possibilities, a flexible process and lots of laughter. Was it possible to change my way of thinking? Could I apply new skills to forge a way forward?

I officially started the program and each class offered unexpected opportunities to pursue my interest in story and storytelling. I began to transfer new ways of thinking to my nursing practice. For example, my critical thinking class introduced me to the research of Delores Gallo that describes a strategy of using empathy and imagination in critical and creative thinking. At the time, I was struggling to help a particularly difficult patient whose story I thought I knew. However, when I listened with Gallo’s suggested strategy, I developed an innovative plan that helped him get his necessary treatment and remain safely at home. The Dialogue course not only helped me improve my active listening skills but also increased my awareness and understanding of my own thinking. This led to a project about the role of story as a facilitating tool in group work; member dynamics and group process that was taking place within my department at work. As I listened to my colleagues’ stories, I created a tool to strengthen our group process that optimized results. As time passed, I practiced my new-found thinking skills and discovered that I had transformed; I felt energized with my increasing willingness and ability for reflection, risk taking, and creative problem solving. My work, personal and family relationships felt renewed, full and meaningful.

The best of what I achieved during CCT are specific thinking skills, reflective practice, risk taking, an appreciation for the role of practice and play. Following my completion of CCT, I went off to play with stories by taking classes, workshops and practicing at open mics. I began a storytelling program at local nursing homes that has been an unexpected pleasure. My synthesis project helped me to identify additional possibilities to connect story to my nursing practice. However, it wasn’t until after I accepted an invitation to present personal storytelling as another resource in the Critical and Creative program, that I began to imagine a similar presentation to nurses. I developed a workshop entitled “The Power of Presence; Personal Storytelling” several years ago that continues to evolve. I’ve presented it to small groups as well as to regional and national nursing conferences with positive response. My website; www.tourguidesforhealth.com is an achievement that reflects and records my work. It helps to keep me accountable. Another best ongoing achievement is the cultivation of my curiosity that has directed me to new areas of learning and practice; Coaching, Reiki and Holistic Stress Management Instructor. In addition, it’s facilitated travel by way of invitation to Camino de
Santiago; five-hundred-mile pilgrimage across northern Spain during which I cracked open bit by bit to soften to identify and support a spaciousness within.

Among the many helpers along the way are a trust in the process of self-reflection, in holding plans lightly, pausing as needed and making necessary changes along the way, writing regularly, my community of friends, family, storytellers and coaches. I’m better at reaching out and asking for help. In addition, Yoga and meditation have been powerful practices that help me to be, or at least make efforts to be, in the immediacy of the moment.

The usual suspects hinder me; self-doubt, fear, a sense that I haven’t done “enough” and ought to be “doing more.” My current strategies to decrease self-doubt, fear and the rest is to curiously explore the nature of my negativity, what is it all about and/or remind myself that there is no supporting evidence for this negative thinking.

I’m trying to let go of struggle for the moment but...I do want to continue to present my workshop, specifically to nursing students. In February I went to University of Maine in Augusta where a student coordinator scheduled the program for registered nurses who are working toward their BSN. I was very excited until...no one showed up! This was a new experience for me and although I was disappointed, I recognized this as a necessary pause. I’ve developed two holistic stress management presentations that I’d like to present at my cottage next year though have not determined next steps. I’d like to connect to a story group in Maine. I want to start storytelling at local nursing homes. I’m uncertain about what I want to do about Reiki and Coaching. I want to do more writing. I need to get my cottage in order.

When I read, “what would help me now?” I could only think of REST. I retired from my nursing position over a year ago, accepted an invitation to house sit throughout the winter, 2018 on Deer Isle, Maine and felt increasingly drawn to this place of tall pointed firs, rugged coast and quiet coves. I sold my condo in Beverly, Mass. last spring, bought a cottage on Billing’s Cove, Maine that has needed lots of repair. I began caring for my grandson twice a week and finished a course to become certified as Holistic Stress Management Instructor. I’ve just finished painting four of my six rooms...feels like home! While there is lots that I want to do, I realize the importance to be...So, as I reflect on my life at this moment, I unequivocally recognize that I have not only changed my way of thinking, I have developed a practice of thinking; habits of mind that have freed me from a limited and negative place to forge a new way forward. It’s a lifelong process that, most of the time, feels like a grand adventure.
I am very thankful to have the opportunity to share with you a story, not just a lecture today. I want you to engage your sense of sound, sight, maybe memories of touch and smell as we move through a journey together. Why story? Because human beings engage and learn in a story structure. It brings us out of our ego mind, allows us to connect deeply with experience, allows us space to respond, supports illumination, and decenters us enough that we become open to something new. As a mentor of mine once said, “There is a child running around in each of us. We need to free them in order to gain new perspectives.”

My story today shares my journey as a horticulturalist and photographer to find a connection with nature that restores a sense of awe, mystery, and wisdom to our lives. It’s a story of what has brought me to believe that solutions to complex challenges cannot be found without looking deeply within ourselves and the relationships we tend with the land, other people, and all living beings.

As Deena Metzger mentions in Writing for Your Life, “Stories move in circles. They don’t move in straight lines. So it helps if you listen in circles. There are stories inside stories and stories between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home. And part of the finding is getting lost. And when you’re lost, you start to look around and listen.”

My story is also about approaching deeper knowing on the slant, a kind indirectness that doesn’t represent fear or avoidance but rather respect and patience, allowing the time it takes for deep and meaningful connections and learning. I’ve coined this as heart knowing for myself, knowing that takes courage, community, and connection with our shared humanity. I’m asking you to pay attention to what tensions, connections, and extensions arise for you from my story today as the first step in an opening to something new for yourselves.

There will be three major braids in my story today:

- How photography as an art form changed the way I perceive the world and how my work and decisions are impacted by my time behind the lens
- A story of personal mastery and discovering a new social purpose for public gardens
- Mine and others work to build new methods and support for learning and research
And I will use seasonal metaphors to structure the story because they have both personal meaning for me and many connected to gardening across the globe. They approach the shy soul required for heart knowing from a third way. I’m asking you to remember and tap into the seasonal metaphors deeply embedded in our human experience, open our body-minds up to the deeper resonances and rhythms of natural grace within and all around us. Using Hutchins’ definition of Nature with a capital N, it’s both physical and metaphysical, both matter and mind, everywhere. It’s a wisdom that permeates through everything in our world from the cells in our bodies to our communities and ecosystems.

And to help you remember, I offer the writing of Parker Palmer:

“...When we understand winter in the natural world, we realize that what we see out there is not death so much as dormancy... But much of it has gone underground, into hibernation, awaiting a season of renewal and rebirth...

Spring is the season of surprise when we realize once again that despite our perennial doubts, winter’s darkness yields to light and winter’s deaths give rise to new life. As spring’s wonders arise from winter’s hardships, we must hold to live life fully and well – and to become more confident that as creatures embedded in nature, we know in our bones how to hold them...

Summer is the season of abundance and first harvest. Having traced the seed of true self on its arduous journey from birth, through death and dormancy, into flowering, we can look at the abundance that has grown up within us and ask, “Who is this meant to feed? Where am I called to give my gifts?”... The idealists among us tend to ask the “whose” question prematurely: we want to serve the world’s needs, but we burn out trying to do more than we are able. I cannot give what I do not possess, so I need to know what gifts have grown up within me that are now ready to be harvested and shared. If the gifts I give are mine, grown from the seed of true self, I can give them without burning out. Like the fruit of a tree, they will replenish themselves in due season.”

So we must begin our journey with winter: the story of my upbringing and professional career to understanding how photography as an art form changed the way I perceive the world; how my work and decisions are impacted by my time behind the lens.

To do this, I’ll share a bit of my story as a horticulturist and photographer, grown into a person concerned about process, metacognitive awareness, and supporting participatory processes of learning and research engagement. The images I share today are the glue that express my lived experiences and thoughts, nurtured by nature as much as my physical body has.
Upon arriving at the University of Washington, I intended to study biology as I had always dreamed of being a park ranger. I was still playing the violin in the University Symphony until I could no longer commit to the practice. You see I was attending college full-time but was also burdened with paying for my own education. I was making tough choices, but the toughest choice was already made, not taking the full music scholarship to Colorado College, but instead, to pursue my curiosity of the natural world through the sciences in a part of the world I always wanted to spend more time.

Thankfully any science degree at UW required some humanities and I soon found myself deep in the world of anthropology after unsuccessful recruitment by the Math Department. I was now working at the Seattle Art Museum and as a painter for Marvin Oliver (Quinault and Isleta Pueblo) and learning more and more about people in their local environment very different from my Midwestern roots.

I grew up in a family of artists. My mother was a ceramic artist and painter, my father a sculptor and commercial photographer. I was always amazed at the birth of images, the magic of the physical process in the darkroom. And I made pottery, canned fruits, and vegetables and tended the family garden with my mother. Today I still respect clay work, the birth of form from the earth. My wonder of the natural world was nurtured through tending the homestead of my parent’s best friends in northwestern Ohio, gardening for subsistence, spending countless hours in imaginary play, and making art of my own.

I still have many fond memories from the farm…

“After we completed our morning chores, the entire family gathered in the old farmhouse for breakfast. You could smell Mama Jeanne’s corncakes above all the other aromas of the farm in the morning. I couldn’t leave my boots on the porch of the mudroom fast enough when the breakfast call was given. Her corncakes had pieces of plump fresh corn in them topped with maple syrup the family made the previous year in the nearby sugarhouse visible from the side kitchen window. We were given every experience of the process of sugaring, tapping trees, collecting sap, evaporating, aproning and jugging… I was hooked on the wonder that the ooze from a tree was really a gift of luscious brown syrup used on pancakes, cereal, and ice cream. This was the first time I remember being hooked on the wonder of the intricacies of the plant world.”

Before I was old enough to work on the farm, getting up before dawn to feed newborn calves, collect chicken eggs, harvest crops and bail hay, my brother and I were taken on gypsy-like adventures traveling the back roads and natural areas of the United States mottled with my parents selling their art at local fairs. I saw more those summers than many people will see in their lifetime. That exposure to such diversity, outside the single lens of my childhood stomping grounds, both in people and places, sowed seeds of wonder, tolerance, and respect in me.
I was always amazed at the birth of images, the magic of the physical process in my father’s basement darkroom. At a young age, I was allowed to help move finished prints from one finishing bath to another. As I grew older, my father shared the processes of developing and enlarging for his commercial work with me.

After graduating from college with a degree in Anthropology, my father gave me my first fully manual camera as my graduation present. I worked in art galleries exhibiting art by indigenous and local artists from the PNW. I had found a new home and understood some of the beautiful diversity of the people living there. But I was still feeling distanced from understanding the plant life all around me, and the relationships people had to these plants.

And at the age of 28, I fell into the hospital with an infection of bacterial endocarditis that nearly cost me my life. This experience awoke a sleeping giant waiting to surface yet again. The continual question I struggle with, “what is my purpose here and what do I want to do now that moves me in this direction?”

Fast forward a few years and horticulture became my new way of learning about plants. I completed a horticulture degree at Edmonds Community College and starting working and volunteering in the Seattle community.

Here I could start to name and make sense of how plants were related to each other and how different relationships to nature brought influenced behaviors in management.

Photography and drawing became tools supporting my learning. Up until this time, photography was just a way for me to capture pictures of friends and family. But even with these first plant photographs, something changed. I started remembering associated details not represented in the final image. I don’t mean I remember the aperture or the shutter speed setting… but I remember the plants growing close by or the specifics of the site. I had started looking from the lens of a scientist and artist.

I spent years photographing plants on my travels to gardens around the world and in depth at the places I worked. But all this time behind the camera started to change how I saw things. The photographs were another piece of data in my horticultural work, informing curation and design decisions.

Now (entering spring) instead of remembering plant-specific information, I also remember background sounds. I remember how heavy the air felt or how frozen my hands were. I can remember how hungry I was after trekking into a remote location or how the clouds were dancing in the sky. My body can actually feel those sensations as if they are happening at the moment when I review my images months or even years later. Upon reflection, you can say that I was becoming aware of my own metacognitive process.
I was a well-respected plantsman and horticulturist, working in an arboretum in Pennsylvania when I started expanding into digital photography. The digital age and my work pressed me to adapt and stretch my skills once again.

Of course, I didn’t just do this slowly. Instead, I signed up for a professional workshop with National Geographic Photographers and brought my new camera after living with it for only two months! I found myself with people who stretched my skills but also my seeing. Photojournalists pushed me to consider “Why do you photograph?” It was a friend’s emphasis on *me* rather than *the form*, photography, which struck me like a dip in glacial water on a hot day of hiking. It took me a week to answer him, “to experience life”.

I remembered a comment Jay Maisel made to an audience of stunned impressionable photographers, “Get a Life. Want to be a better photographer, be a more interesting person.” Yes, you have to do the hard work... showing up on those cold dark mornings before sunrise and spending countless hours mastering technique. But you have to attend to your humanity for what you do to have meaning, for yourself and society. I heard my inner voice saying “Art and Science must work together through you”.

About the same time, I participated in two StoryCenter Workshops where the story circle space honored my visual expression through my photography, a space of learning from our histories, a supportive environment for taking apart and putting back together again things held tightly to our identities. But that experience only lasted 5 days, and I wanted more of that kind of learning space to help me grapple with my growing questions of how horticulture, art, and awareness of our environment add value to people’s lives, reconnecting me with my undergraduate work in Anthropology.

Usually, I go out with a plan of what I’d like to capture. These plans are usually based upon what I know or expect to be happening in the lifecycle of the plant world, what’s of interest this time of year, whether berries, bark, buds, flowers, forms, or textures – those things that can be physically represented in the frame. I have a huge mental filing cabinet built from years of observations that feels very second nature. But I also keep journal notes about possible future images. In the field, I consider what could be at a different time of day, at a different time of year, or under different light or weather.

But my most personally meaningful images and those that seem to resonate with other people are images I find in the moment. During a photographic session, I often find myself letting go of my plan, becoming completely absorbed in the feelings, light, and play of the moment.

This may trigger another location in my mind to check on, but most times it opens me up to find what was there right before me all the time, yet somehow hidden. In these moments I find a kind of presencing...
where I feel the complexity of my emotions and ideas connecting with science-based knowledge and a lifetime of anecdotal observations, working like an emergent knowing that connects with deeper wisdom.

So what weaves its way into our creativity, our creative process, the meaning for our work? I’ve prepared a sequence of images for you to ponder this question with me today.

_Sacred Heart by The Civil Wars and Images together_

This question was one of the undercurrents of my graduate work at UMass Boston where I was formally “allowed” to explore the marriage of science and art through me. My Science in a Changing World focus emphasized critical and creative thinking about research findings, community engagement and my engagement with my research. Instead of denying the biases each of us brings to our work, I consider and share it, opening my work/research to additional dialogue and emergent ideas.

When I enrolled in the program, I was looking for a place where I could discover ways that public horticulture might grow to serve the changing realities of our complex world.

Through my research, I’ve grown from someone concerned about finding the answers to complex social, economic, and biological problems to someone seeking to create spaces of support where the seed of discovery for finding answers together grows. With the courage I’ve gained through my practice, I feel more able to find an opening into hearing others and myself as valuable contributors to the beauty of our complex humanity, finding solutions we might not have seen before.

At this time in my life, I’m now a leader of research support and facilities teams whose vision deeply connects with my values.

And I’ve come to terms with the idea that I am a scientist and an artist: my photography and my research feed each other. I now recognize the essential nature of creative acts to my thinking toolkit. Likewise, I’ve found validation as a scientist in a community of researchers who don’t shy away from the complexities of applied action research, biological and cultural diversity, and wonder: explorer scientists.

The real answer to why I photograph isn’t as important as recognizing its value to my work and allowing the reason to stay fluid. Photography is just the media I’ve found to best help synchronize and clarify meaning to my journey.

_Discovering a new social purpose for public gardens_ (pause)

I’ve been diving into the question of what a social role public gardens might have in current socio-economic and biological contexts since my graduate work at UMass Boston.
For a little context, many public gardens consider themselves and operate as museums. Much like museums of art or natural history, we curate our collections. The difference, of course, is that they are living collections with all the challenges of dynamic environments and the process of life itself in the garden. Unlike a painting or piece of sculpture, plants grow, they die, and they respond to environmental stress and are often food.

I’ve had a rather traditional career in public horticulture both on the East and West coasts of the United States. I spent a good deal of my young career in the PNW, working at the Elisabeth C. Miller Botanic Garden and volunteering as a Heronista. Before my 13 years at the Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College, I spent a year working at Wisley Gardens with treks to see all the gardens I could fit into weekend adventures. And I’ve been privileged to experience horticultural visits to both Japan and Chile. So I’ve seen and learned about collections priorities at many gardens.

Some prioritize exotic tropical plants in grand conservatories or in outdoor displays depending of course upon their climate. And many blend the diversity of their collections across missions of biodiversity stewardship or conservation and preservation of historic landscapes.

But after many years of curating collections and growing my approach to photography as an art form, I witnessed a shift in myself. I was seeing the colonial roots of plant collecting and receiving questions about social and environmental challenges that horticulture might solve that had no easy answer. Complexity had shown its face to me again.

And have you ever considered how language shapes culture and culture shapes language, even our own? Where does the word garden or gardening come from? What is the root of its meaning?

“The etymology of the word gardening refers to enclosure: it is from Middle English gardin, from Anglo-French gardin, jardin, of Germanic origin; akin to Old High German gard, gart, an enclosure or compound, as in Stuttgart” - from Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garden

There is a tension to consider between this history and meaning, enclosure, when we are looking for a new social purpose for gardens. How do we move into creative and critical thinking about what it might be outside of the enclosure, outside the elite public it historically served, outside the power dynamics related to collecting, outside the practices of commodity culture, outside the silos of expert knowledge?

I was starting to recognize the braided reality of my work. I started wondering about the community of friends I’d grown around the world and asking how those experiences and friendships might be integrated with my horticultural expertise. I had become intimately aware that there are other valid ways of thinking about the relationship to the land, to people and all living beings, how different world-views and relationships to nature brought beauty to our shared humanity.
No doubt my young curiosity and excitement for difference was surfacing again.

I’ve already mentioned that the elite and colonial history of horticulture in relationship to a new social purpose for botanic gardens is troubling me. And I want to do something to help bring different voices and practices into the world that honor more sustainable and ethical ways of knowing and practicing relationships.

I’ve started thinking about collections beyond their taxonomy and in the context of climate change, one biocultural story that’s affecting our global community. But I’m also thinking beyond our collections in the eyes of western beauty, science, use, and knowledge. Some gardens have culinary or medicinal collections with amazing interpretation strategy. Some gardens tell the stories of arts and humanities from cultures around the world.

But I’m asking the question if curating our collections in our traditional ways is enough if we are going to start thinking about our collections as biological and cultural collections. I’m asking the question if diverse worldview representation in our interpretation programs should extend into our collections management strategies as really living in practice what we say we are doing. I’m not dismissing the value that western culture has, or the amazing biodiversity that gardens play a role in protecting. I’m suggesting that we have an opportunity to give voice to the breadth of knowledge within the human experience.

Can gardens craft collections policies that open opportunity for community-curated biocultural collections and integrate ethical and diversity issues for acquisitions? I took a chance at that while Director of Horticulture for Cornell Botanic Gardens, developing a plant collections policy that opens an opportunity for community-curated biocultural collections and addressed ethical and diversity issues for acquisitions. And I learned how challenging a shift like this is for an organization, even one with a mission to biocultural diversity preservation.

Most valuable to that experience is the self-knowledge that I’m most concerned with facilitating spaces of exploration around this and related issues of teaching and learning, not in prescribing take-home curation strategies. This is purposeful because to prescribe practices or strategies is reinforcing colonial power dynamics.

To act on this belief that curators and garden managers would find value in this kind of exploration with me, I was privileged to moderate a panel discussion on the topic of "Curating through a Different Lens: Biocultural Collections and Traditional Knowledge" at the APGA Collections Symposium in Vancouver, BC last October.

Ethnobotanist and UVic faculty member Nancy Turner discussed the importance of language being part of the story of biocultural diversity preservation. Pepeyla Miller offered a valuable perspective from an indigenous woman’s view on the ethics of intellectual property rights.
Sadafumi (Sada) Uchiyama spoke on exploring the meaning of what he does relevant to the time we live in and growing the value and practice of Japanese gardening beyond the arts and crafts image it has to Western eyes to reveal the depth of its aspect as a healing place.

Michael DeMotta, head curator for living collections for the National Tropical Botanical Garden, has struggled for years with the idea of "collections" since they imply ownership by an organization or curator. Instead, collections in Hawaii must consider stewardship for the group – and in his particular environment, conservation for Hawaiian culture.

What I’m seeing after 20+ years in public horticulture is a recognition that any social purpose for a botanic garden starts by redefining relationships with who the public or audience is, and how participatory practices of engagement are growing.

**Building new methods and support for learning and research: possible processes**

(pause)

It’s easy to feel overwhelming sadness or disempowered to influence global challenges when they are abstracted outside your day to day life. And I certainly have moments that challenge my courage to do this work. Yet we need only look at the way human beings process information to see a path forward.

You see, I believe story is the connective tissue that braids seemingly disjunctive problems with learning and empowerment for change. So much so that I take risks in the academic environment where I now work, sharing a complex braided story in places where people might expect the delivery of ideas in a different format. Places where knowledge is valued in written papers, formal defense of a Ph.D., or quantitative research. Yet it’s really not that foreign an idea. When we look outside our defined expertise that we live each day through work, we find scientists that are artists, cooks who are researchers, librarians who are storytellers, mathematicians who are poets, and many other practices that connect us with the wholeness of our being.

So why does our Western lens continually divide our thinking and seeing? For me, the awareness of how this dualism is deeply rooted and expressed in our daily lives is just the beginning of understanding how to approach this question. So I continually seek out new ways of seeing anew.

I’m in a practice of allowing those tensions to surface, allowing what comes from examining the assumptions and biases behind thought by thinking about thinking. I’ve learned, practiced and modified tools learned in my graduate work for my own practice. Allowing what comes when I photograph, allowing what comes when I’m practicing dialogue with colleagues are an essential part of seeing anew. But the reflection on those thoughts, the refraction of ideas in a community of shared exploration, and taking the time it takes to process that to the level of heart knowing is the work that must take place for real change and growth to happen. We must hold tension for ourselves and others in life-giving ways.
I teach and engage with communities of collaborative learning practices at Cornell and in the College of Advancing and Professional Studies at UMass Boston. In those communities, we have shared practices of dialogue and supportive listening we call collaborative explorations, critical friends and studios of support.

And I teach a course on Action Research for Personal, Professional and Educational Change that supports each student to explore, plan and evaluate a change they want to make in the world that supports them to examine their assumptions, collaborations, and methods in community.

I continue to practice photography, am growing a home garden, and practice daily reflective writing. For me, these do not work in isolation – they offer different ways of approaching a challenge or question I might have. I wear many labels given to me by our society: aunt, wife, cook, photographer, greenhouse manager, artist, horticulturist, daughter, sister, and friend.

Why should we divide our lives and relationships? Why then should we divide our thinking?

The plants are teachers. The giant sequoia and coastal redwoods are threatened. And their relatives in South America are facing similar challenges. My journey has helped me learn that the world is more connected than different. The plants show us if only we listen.

I believe we need to navigate new understanding and knowledge grown from community participation, dialogue, and personal interior growth. How that translates into horticulture and botany as scientific disciplines will not be easy. But it’s essential if we are to break through historic power dynamics and knowledge validity.

If there was one thing I would like to help you consider today, it’s that all landscapes are biocultural landscapes. And we have the choice of how to engage them. The idea of wilderness without human impact no longer exists and the worlds of ecology, planning, and horticulture need to germinate new practices to reflect this reality. We need to step up efforts to conserve dynamic languages, cultural traditions, and biological diversity.

For how else will we experience and appreciate the story of creation where the sun, moon, and stars were held in a bentwood box made of western red cedar and released to light the world. If the plants and stories flourish, we will flourish too.

Working in relationship with institutions of higher learning for so long, I strive to create spaces for transformative learning were seeking knowledge and understanding from diverse voices is not divided by value. To do that we must pay attention to and serve ours and other’s minds and hearts.

In November 2016 we collaborated with the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies and the university grounds department to plant hopes for spring after students reached out for support in response to election results. We built new communities across diverse disciplines and communities at Cornell. But most of all staff and faculty recognized our role as purveyors of
hope. People can positively impact the health of communities, natural systems and themselves through the nurturing of plant-people connections.

Perhaps Margaret Wheatley says it better...

*As the world grows more strange and puzzling and difficult, I don’t believe most of us want to keep struggling through it alone. I can’t know what to do from my own narrow perspective.*

*I know I need a better understanding of what’s going on. I want to sit down with you and talk about all the frightening and hopeful things I observe, and listen to what frightens you and gives you hope.*

*I need new ideas and solutions for the problems I care about. I know I need to talk to you to discover those. I need to learn to value your perspective, and I want you to value mine. I expect to be disturbed by what I hear from you. I know we don’t have to agree with each other in order to think well together. There is no need for us to be joined at the head. We are joined by our human hearts.* —*Margaret Wheatley, excerpt from Willing to Be Disturbed*

Despite my practice, despite my understanding that we are all in this together, despite my appreciation of the value of otherness and an ability to hold tension in life-giving ways, I was pot-bound in this garden. For without the space to grow or care for our well-being, we die.

So after years of putting my root system down, I reached a crisis point, an impacted root system bursting a rigid container. But a new pot offered me a promotion within Cornell last July to manage the CALS’s 127,000 sq. ft. of research greenhouse facilities, 150 environmental growth chambers and a research quarantine facility for arthropods. I’m back to creating a community for the work we do and the work I care about with support for these Habits of the Heart as they apply to workplace culture and learning communities.

*“One of the most calming and powerful actions you can do to intervene in a stormy world is to stand up and show your soul. Struggling souls catch light from other souls who are fully lit and willing to show it.”* —*Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estes*

One of those ways of showing up for me is to invite you into a practice of reflection in response to the thoughts coming up for you in response to the images, sounds, and words I’ve shared today. Usually, I would invite you into a practice of Freewriting where you would write for 3 minutes without lifting your pen, every thought that comes into your mind.

But today I’d like to invite you into a practice of silent reflection using 3 minutes of images to help you explore these questions. “What connections and extensions from your own journey have risen to the surface today? And what new parts of your own braid might you explore further?”
If I had to summarize my thinking today it would be that we need more spaces of dialogue and critical and creative thinking about how we learn, how we practice research, and how we find a new purpose for public gardens; and that they require braiding so that we don't find ourselves with solutions to problems that deny holistic reality - the social, spiritual, economic, cultural and ecological relationships of all things. We need more people practicing critical and creative thinking through practices of respectful relationships, risk-taking, reflection, and revelation. And we need more spaces of support for these practices in places of learning that extend beyond formal education. We need them at work, we need them at home, and we need them in our communities. Perhaps we can start by touching the earth as Tracy Cochran helps us frame.

“Touching the Earth symbolizes humility, coming down out of our thoughts, out of the busy hive of ego, to join the rest of life. The Latin word humus, the rich living earth, that part of the land which sustains life, is related to the word humility. When difficulty arises, it creates a clearing in the deadening trance of habit. We remember that what really matters is not the list of worries and desires we spend so much time thinking about every day. What matters is much more essential. Being alive, for example. Taking part in life, having a chance to give and receive in the most elemental ways, taking in the beauty of the world and giving back where we can. At moments when the ground gives way beneath our feet, it’s good to remember the power of touching the earth, descending from our racing thoughts and fears to an awareness of the present moment. When words fail, we can sometimes discover a new voice and a new kind of determination. We can rise up rooted, like trees.”

And to conclude our time today, the poem “Lost by David Wagoner

Stand still. The trees ahead and bushes beside you are not lost. Wherever you are is called Here, and you must treat it as a powerful stranger, must ask permission to know it and be known.

The forest breathes. Listen. It answers, I have made this place around you.

If you leave it, you may come back again, saying Here.

No two trees are the same to Raven.
No two branches are the same to Wren.
If what a tree or bush does is lost on you, you are surely lost. Stand still. The forest knows where you are. You must let it find you.

Thank you
As of this writing (Apr. 20, 2019) my presentation is still under development, however, my intention is to begin by presenting major themes throughout my professional career which have also significantly impacted my personal life. Followed by how these themes and their impact, in combination, led me to a point where I felt the only path forward left untrodden in regard to my work, was one of higher purpose and meaning. Fully aware of my experience and observation that, as a creator, what and how I choose to create tend to have more of an impact on how I live my life, rather than the reverse dynamic. It is probably relevant to the conversation that I tend not to differentiate between work and life ala “the work/life balance”; there is, as I see it, only life itself which is comprised of how we wish to spend it, and who we wish to spend it (life-time) with.

Jumping forward to CCT (with the gaps filled out during the presentation), I'm formulating a briefer version of the program’s impact on my mission, in a length suitable to such a presentation. Let us for now say that there has been significant impact, which I’ve attempted to roughly sketch in the images following this writing.

In terms of output, my time in CCT has resulted in two (for me) major works in particular, which in their complexity, nuance, and scope, call for additional learning and understanding, fueled by a continuing, long-term inquiry which fills many moments of my life, both in thought and practice. The one (“Deep Listening”) is encompassed by the other (shorthand title "The #ART Matrix"). The handful of questions (out of many) which currently pique my curiosity revolve around concepts and practices as diverse (yet related) as, for example, Temporal Orientation, Systems Thinking, and how to shift “thinking” into embodiment or tangible realization. I see the diversity in subjects as components of an emergent whole: my work-in-progress revolves around a “way of being” based on an economization principle I currently describe as “a singular movement, in many different ways.” An embodied version of this cryptic description might be, “the act of breathing.” My presentation will present the #ART matrix as a work-in-progress, including how I’m seeking to explore its possibilities and limitations, languaging, and practice.

Additional keywords: attentional focus, emerging future, Presencing, intuition, sub-conscious pattern recognition, mastery, flow.
A simple verse illustrates the dynamics behind #ART (work-in-progress):

"The Destiny Journey"

Sensing, relating, learning, moving,
Simply being, in symbiotic flow
The Destiny Journey
Is a dance of gentle action
Whispered into existence
By a voice from the heart

~ Bobby Ricketts © 2019

Most important in this context is the thought of ‘Destiny’ as a sense of ‘right time, right place’ or ‘meant to be’. ‘Journey’ of course, is the path toward the Destiny State, perhaps best achieved by listening deeply to the heart, followed by ‘gentle action’. Sensing, relating, learning, and moving in symbiotic flow with our environment, and those who inhabit it.

The verse illustrates a way of being, echoed by the great religions and philosophies of the world: that small, incremental actions can bring about significant, exponential impact, when carried out in alignment with the heart’s most authentic, truthful intentions, in observance of, and with respect for the world around us.

© 2019 Bobby Ricketts
"Perhaps more than any other time in history, we as individuals have the power, and possibly also the duty, to assume leadership roles in the creative realization of our own lives and transformation of the societies in which we live." - Bobby Ricketts

"Don't play what's there. Play what's not there."
~ Jazz legend Miles Davis (Tingen, 2001. "Miles Beyond").
JOURNEY: CCT & BEYOND

Music
Performance
Composition, Production & Audio Engineering
Broadcast Media

Improvisation

Mastery
acquisition, maintenance
& extension of skill/expertise

Imagination

Deep Listening
#ART
matrix

Observation & Perception

Purpose; Meaning; Why?

Travel
Celebrity
Transformation

Dialogues Processes
Fields of Conversation
Presencing

Philosophical Thought
Theory & Practice

Cognitive Psychology
Critical Thinking
Reflective Practice

Action Research
Creative Realization
Processes of Engagement

Parenthood
Leadership
Business
Responsibility, Integrity & Ethics

Mindfulness Practice

Temporal Orientation

Systems Thinking (quiet observation; pattern recognition; interrelations)

From 'thinking' to tangible realizations; embodiment

"Economization principle: a singular movement, in many different ways"

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What do I need help with?

Working toward designing a full-credit Advancing and Professional Studies graduate course (based on #ART), I am seeking to identify and describe a "concrete product" which each course participant would seek to actualize within the duration of 12-session full semester, or a 6-session, intensive (summer) semester. The course (as I see it now) would incorporate reflective practice, design for complexities of work and life - where the "customer" is oneself, and creative realization (i.e., a tangible "end-product"); Identifying/reflecting upon (in a not-yet-established order): Who (self-identity), Why (purpose/meaning), How (process/journey), Where (surrounding environment), and What (products, outcomes, future desired states, "destiny states")

Utility: solving challenges (and much else) related to (for example):

- Asking young people to choose an aspirational future "self" based upon existing careers and to work toward that static vision.
- Thinking differently about how we define ourselves beyond a one-time application of skills and knowledge in a single set career.


Assumptions:

[Beliefs, habits, practices, values, et al.] which have led to the creation of the present state may not serve us beneficially in the creation or realization of a desired future state.

In a world of complexity, a transition from a present state to a desired future state implies a degree of "change". Even a future desired state comprised of maintaining status quo relative to the present state may require, for example, adaptation or modification of current behaviors, beliefs, habits, practices, et al.

A capacity to visualize ("see") a desired future state may possibly be limited to that which we can imagine within a field defined by a range of factors such as social norms, cultural influence, and subjective experience.

Or, in other words, perhaps a perception of Potential (i.e., "what can be") is, in this case, determined (and limited) by what we "know", or think we know.

Furthermore, the concept of "visualization" with its reliance on mental capacity and visual imagery alone, seems to present additional limitations in itself - given our access to multiple senses and/or intelligences through which we both consciously and subconsciously perceive the world.

The objective must then be to "sense" (i.e., combine that which we see, think, feel, intuit, etc.) rather than merely "see" a desired future state; a state whose design is preferably crafted from a field of infinite potential, rather than from a limited notion of what might be.

Given a choice between operating from an awareness or consciousness which acknowledges a field of infinite possibility - which by nature also encompasses what we do not know or do not know we know (e.g., the subconscious), and a choice of operating from a comparatively "limited" conscious awareness rooted in what we "know", or think we know, the former is preferable.

Awareness, consciousness, and connection to a field of infinite potential are capacities which can be developed, extended, and applied usefully. "How" involves Observation, Empathy, Pattern Recognition, Subconscious pattern recognition, Temporal Orientation, Intuition, Mindfulness, and Skill acquisition, maintenance, and extension.

Premise:

In relation to the above, the necessary skills, abilities, and/or capacities are best activated, acquired or extended through leveraging a skill within which one has already achieved a degree of mastery, so that the capacities we seek to improve are monitored via the nature of extended mastery within the domain of departure In other words, it is possible to monitor progress of "new" qualities and capacities by observing their effect upon that which we already master.

Related disciplines: Quantum Theory (Bohm); Cognitive Psychology (Ericsson, Csikszentmihalyi); Systems Theory (Senge, et al.); Mindfulness/Attentional Focus/Deep Listening/Presencing [many different references]
"A way of being oriented in sensory awareness of purpose & meaning, curiosity & learning, relationships & Flow"
Joel Rubin
Teaching high school students how Copernicus understood the Copernican world

The work in progress aided me in modeling the contrast between how Copernicus actually scaled the outer planets vs. the method students are told he used, (a method based on counting degrees per day to find the solar parallax when when Earth is at 90 degrees between Sun and the planet of interest). That method entered the curriculum at some point prior to the 20th century, was used at Harvard and enshrined in Kuhn’s *Copernican Revolution* of 1957 (Kuhn using the weasel words that this was a method Copernicus "could" have used and failing to acknowledge that it was not the method Copernicus *did* use). The reason of course is that the actual Copernican method is exceedingly cumbersome to follow, involving the solution of multiple interrelated triangles to find the ratios of their sides, and worse, involves a deep dive into a fictitious construct, the epicycle (required to account for the observed inconsistencies in the mistaken circular model for planetary motion that prevailed until Kepler about 50 years after). This leaves the interesting question of how Copernicus determined the points of apogee and perigee and where these stood in relation to oppositions (which can occur at many different points between the orbits of Earth and the planet. Since planets are on different orbital planes from Earth, their deviations from mean latitude will be greatest at that time when closest and least when furthest. Closest to Earth is always Opposition but closest to Sun is different and Earth also runs closer or further from the Sun (closest in January).
Planets move in differing patterns against different Zodiac stars.
Apogee is planet’s furthest point from Earth’s circle & perigee is closest on “line of apsides” between them. Because the 2 circles aren’t on same plane but tilted relative to each other, extreme of difference from mean latitude crossing the sky is greatest on oppositions when Earth & Planet are closest (and brightest) and least (and dimmest) when furthest. Once this line is defined in scale to Earth’s circle, the rest of the geometry follows (though with much complexity) to determine the scale of the planet’s circle to Earth’s circle.

In the 1500s Copernicus sought a way to explain planets’ relation to Earth and the Sun.
His way is not the way it’s taught today, not for the outer planets. For at least the past 100 years Copernicus has been misrepresented as calculating the outer planets’ distances by subtracting how many degrees they moved relative to Earth.

Method for calculating inner planets substantially same as how Copernicus did it: their maximum angle constrained tangent to Earth’s orbital position, a right angle to Sun.

The challenge: outer planets take any angle, both Earth and planet moving, the needed 2nd angle is hard to determine. Copernicus, well aware of their periods, never wrote the degrees per day of planets.
Floor model manipulative I designed for students to move/compare orbits and show how the angular relationships can be measured by astrolabe.
Opposition is a position when planet and Sun are on opposite sides of the sky, rising as the other sets. It’s the time when Earth & planet are closest, the planet brightest, its difference greatest in latitude above or below the mean arc of its path across the night sky (much as in foreshortening when the close thing seems largest). Opposition, observes Copernicus, is the only time when there is no parallax (Sun, Earth, and planet in a straight line vs. otherwise triangular relationships).

Model CCT40 group provoked me into designing in session.
Over a series of 6 oppositions, 3 from his own time and 3 recorded by the ancients, working backwards from the angles, (which zodiac stars the planet was seen against in different oppositions) Copernicus determines the eccentricity of the planet’s circle relative to the Earth’s circle. Note he requires epicycles to account for the unrecognized fact (Kepler’s 1st & 2nd laws of planetary motion) that orbits are ellipses and vary in speed, fastest when closest to the Sun. As he writes: “But at this last observed opposition of Mars the planet was seen at 235º54', being 127º5' distant from the apogee of the eccentric circle, as was shown; therefore the position of the apogee of the eccentric circle of Mars was at 108º50' in the sphere of the fixed stars.”
In the 1500s Copernicus sought a way to explain planets’ relation to Earth and the Sun.

Apogee is planet’s furthest point from Earth’s circle & perigee is closest on “line of apsides” between them. Because the 2 circles aren’t on same plane but tilted relative to each other, extreme of difference from mean latitude crossing the sky is greatest on oppositions when Earth & Planet are closest (and brightest) and least (and dimmest) when furthest. Once this line is defined in scale to Earth’s circle, the rest of the geometry follows (though with much complexity) to determine the scale of the planet’s circle to Earth’s circle.
The first item is a poem that I created for an assignment in the CRCRTH 602 course this spring. This is a poem that I wrote in the style of Robert Penn Warren that includes techniques for problem solving. Specifically it refers to the 3Ms and to a problem "reduction" as Delores Gallo has mentioned in one of her videos.

The second item is a work-in-progress as our final project Powerpoint submission. This presentation is about an initial concept of creativity that I've been developing. See also 3.5 minute video https://vimeo.com/333554084
AN ENCRYPTED REFRAIN

I have traveled this route before,
Riding among the dense pines where old County Road
Hits the the fork.
I had seen it a hundred times
In my father’s old car and he with an open window
And sharply hewn elbow
Piercing the open air.

But now I am alone and dusk dims the road ahead
except for lights from the old Ford,
And I stop. Right there
Without knowing how to choose.
Even if I magnify my greatest desire,
My choice is not apparent.
Even if I minify my worst nightmare,
Or modify this knot of a situation,
the solution does not show itself.

In my head, I try a different tack,
By reducing the problem into smaller
yet manageable pieces.
Doing that I see small steps,
see the course they create for me,
One at a time, and I take the first.
For a moment I pause
To get my bearings.
Behind me a chorus of peepers has already begun
Its scheduled regimen.
Synchronized.
The warm evening air has replaced the chill of Spring
Yet the peepers endure beyond the expected symphonic close.
Their auditory messages echo among layers of scrub brush and bark.
Call and reply.
What meaning exists in their encrypted refrain?
I re-focus to my newly found course
And continue to my next solitary step.

Poem by Russell Suereth

Creative Problem Solving Techniques

For CRCRTH 602 Spring 2019

University of Massachusetts Boston
AN INITIAL CONCEPT OF CREATIVITY

BY RUSSELL SUERETH

This presentation was created as the final project for course CRCRTH 602 in the Critical and Creative Thinking Program at the University of Massachusetts Boston. The presentation focuses on a concept of creativity that I have developed during the CRCRTH 602 course. This concept is a work in progress and may be a foundation for my continuing work in this program.
WHAT IS THIS CONCEPT OF CREATIVITY

Underlying this concept is the notion that creativity is a personal activity that can be performed by anyone. Within this concept, creativity has three main components or smaller concepts.

• A FAMILIAR ENVIRONMENT
• A CLOSE CONNECTION
• A MEANINGFUL ACTIVITY
DESCRIPTING THE CONCEPT

This concept is described in the presentation by using three sample creators: a poet, a composer, and a painter.

- We will see how the creative activities of these creators fit into the components of this concept of creativity.

- We'll also see how their creative activities are important to them, and how this importance fits into the concept.
A FAMILIAR ENVIRONMENT

Why a familiar environment is important to a poet.

A poet writes a poem about ocean waves crashing upon rocks at a coastal shoreline to tell a story about his childhood.

- In this example, a poet writes about ocean waves crashing on rocks at a coastal shoreline.

- The crashing waves, and the reflective placement of words are familiar environments for him.

- He uses the waves and his words to tell a story about his childhood.
Why a familiar environment is important to creators.

Creators employ the concepts and objects within an environment to be creative. These concepts and objects are a foundation upon which creative activities are performed.

- Creators utilize the concepts and objects that exist within an environment.
- These concepts and objects are the material of creative activity.
A FAMILIAR ENVIRONMENT

*Why a familiar environment is an important component of a concept of creativity.*

The concepts and objects within an environment are the basis of creativity. They are a fundamental component of a concept of creativity.

- The concepts and objects within a familiar environment are the material of creativity.
- A familiar environment is the foundation of a concept of creativity.
A CLOSE CONNECTION

Why a close connection to an environment is important to a composer.

The concepts and objects within an environment are the basis of creativity. They are a fundamental component of a concept of creativity.

- In this example, a composer creates music that conveys her feelings about growing up in an urban neighborhood.

- The neighborhood, her feelings, and the crafting of notes and passages are an intimate part of her.

- She uses the neighborhood and her craft to convey her feelings in the music.
A CLOSE CONNECTION

Why a close connection to an environment is important to creators.

Creators utilize close connections to interact with environments. They learn about them, play with parts of them, express them, and sometimes modify them.

- Close connections enable creators to better interact with the concepts and objects that exist within an environment.
- Creators with close connections learn about the environment, disclose it, play with it, and sometimes modify it.
A CLOSE CONNECTION

Why a close connection to an environment is an important component of a concept of creativity.

A close connection to an environment gives us the awareness and knowledge to express our thoughts and feelings about it. This close connection enables us to modify an environment in a thoughtful manner. It is also this close connection to an environment that makes creativity so compelling to the creator.

- A close connection to an environment links the creator to that environment.

- Enables a creator to know about that environment, how to describe it, and how to modify it.

- A close connection can make creativity compelling to the creator.
A MEANINGFUL ACTIVITY

Why a meaningful activity within an environment is important to a painter.

In this example, a painter has created a scene of a village market not far from her childhood home. This scene is meaningful to our painter because the market links together her childhood, the romance with her future husband, her children, and her motherhood.

- A painter depicts the bustle of a village market that she has known since childhood.
- The scene is meaningful to her because the market links together her childhood, her own children, and her motherhood.
A MEANINGFUL ACTIVITY

Why a meaningful activity within an environment is important to creators.

We don't feel that we've been creative when we're performing a mundane activity. We feel that we are being creative when the activity is meaningful.

- Creators don't feel they are being creative when they are performing mundane activities.

- Creators do feel they are being creative when their artistic activities are meaningful.
A MEANINGFUL ACTIVITY

Why a meaningful activity within an environment is an important component of a concept of creativity.

We don't feel that we've been creative when we're performing a mundane activity. We feel that we are being creative when the activity is meaningful.

- Meaningful activities distinguish creativity from everyday mundane actions.
- Creators feel they are being creative when their artistic activities are meaningful.
- The meaning of the activity or product can be different for the creator than it is for the observer.
THANK YOU
FOR WATCHING

Created by Russell Suereth
for CRCRTH 602
University of
Massachusetts Boston
Spring 2019

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John Finn; Clogher Beach B&W
https://flic.kr/p/eT9M6f

Jerry Kirkhart; Pillar Rock Wave Shock
https://flic.kr/p/FxotY1

anthony kelly; Father and daughter
https://flic.kr/p/5a6gEa

Gene Chan; Bach Sonata II
https://flic.kr/p/aqa4M

Freestocks.org; A guitarist hand
https://flic.kr/p/KNyeD6

Adam Cohn; Street Market
https://flic.kr/p/YfAxVy

James Creegan; Shanghai 2006
https://flic.kr/p/cMNE3

Daniel Mennerich; Siem Reap K
https://flic.kr/p/RhaGtu

Eric Kilby; Nubble Light
https://flic.kr/p/rz8Trd
My ongoing attention to lifelong and transformative learning has led me to recognize a potential for a way of looking at the roles that we take in professional and personal life, and I call this “Transition Education” as a way of capturing the concept as a broad term. Briefly, Transition Education refers to the way that people are involved in guiding and teaching others with a goal of making significant change in their individual lives, communities, and global settings. In giving a name to the concept, my implication is that there are some common features and goals that link all of the people who are making ongoing efforts to guide others to change and that there are important opportunities that come from regarding such individuals as a group. Those in this group have a specific responsibility to influence transition as at least one element within their formally-defined role or status; further, continual improvement of the skills and capacity to carry out this part of their role needs to be addressed more specifically as a focused part of such an individual’s professional and personal development.

In professional areas, the practitioners of Transition Education range from educators to organizational leaders to human services professionals to activists to media producers. They also identify in life as mentors, coaches, advisors, counselors, parents, and other similar roles. Their professional goals, products, projects, and causes are not described by a single label. Common points among them is that all are involved in facilitating the processes of change in service of others, and they have some autonomy around the types of actions that they take to get this to happen; there is an interplay between between their own learning and development, and how they express themselves through their roles, and the choices that they make about how they practice.

Further, the communities served by such practitioners are composed of lifelong learners, especially adults who may participate in both formal and nonformal learning but may not identify themselves with such terms. In many cases, these individuals at the “need-to-know” stage around certain issues; they are confronting needs and life complexities not covered by their previous formal schooling or training, and they are seeking to live their lives fully and interdependently, pursue
curiosities, be engaged as citizens, and reach new awareness of themselves and community and global life. They have sincere intentions to grow and change.

My interest has continued around the possibilities of Reflective Practice as an approach to support the development of practitioners of Transition Education as they continue to make changes and improvements in their work, given the diverse and myriad rationales of the adult learners who have connected with them. Transition Education crosses disciplinary boundaries, and the methods and tools of Reflective Practice are fundamental. They can operate at a level beyond the functions and requirements tied to specific fields of work or formal job positions.

What is it, though, that needs “development”? In terms of the practices themselves, Transition Educators facilitate workshops or trainings, engage groups to have conversations, provide critical friendship, help establish new interpersonal relationships, listen to and respond to requests and concerns, assemble materials and resources, provide subject-matter knowledge, and many other activities. We can imagine, then, how practitioners might develop in the sense of improving their capacities and more skillfully taking these actions. We can also imagine development of practitioners with respect to their own learning about themselves and awareness of issues, for example.

Over time, a particular purpose emerged as a possible area of focus as I considered this idea. I’m quite interested in the way that practitioners specifically develop around the way that their practices and behaviors support non-violence. I use this term to refer to how people become increasingly prepared to resist the violence of the world (ranging broadly, from the physical violence of political conflict, to the verbal violence of the anonymous web, to the violence of uncaring workplaces, for example). An ongoing question becomes, “How can Transition Educators engage in an ongoing developmental process that supports them to engage in practices that help to reduce violence, as they continue to serve their constituents, as well as make their work more inclusive to adult learners?”

I’m then interested in thinking through the steps of how to invite and develop a volunteer exploratory committee that would help me to address this question, with the possible outcome of establishing a core group of peers who would pilot, facilitate, and manage a program or learning group to provide ongoing reflection and learning opportunities for the wider community of Transition Education practitioners.
WORK-IN-PROGRESS

CCT 40th Anniversary Workshop
Jeremy Szteiter
Developing Practice in Transition Education

- Background – Transition Education and community teaching
- Interests and directions – developing capacity of transition educators and forum
- Principles of non-violence and play
- Audiences: partners who wants to co-discover ways to develop practice; non-prescriptive; participants across fields who share points in common
- Questions: inviting others to participate, finding compelling names, Reflective Practice as an explicit or implicit foundation, focus on taking action but also on development of the practitioner
Teaching Roles Across Disciplines

- Transition Education refers to the development of a particular role that emerges within a number of professional and social positions:
At the time when I moved into and through the CCT program, my work life focus was on adult and community education and the ways that critical and creative thinking might involved in improving practices in this field. In the years since that time, I have continued to explore the possibilities of adult learning. In my earlier thinking, I considered how lifelong learning was about people taking agency over their ongoing development as a form of responding to their previous experience, including the ways in which they were not served well, and even misled, by their past schooling. Over time, I have come to see that certain kinds of individuals in particular either were not served well, or need additional support now to engage in learning that supports their individual needs. My concern evolved to include this element, meaning that adult learning was not only about responding to one's past learning and education, but also growing empowerment as agent of social change.

My interest relates to improving the opportunities for individuals, especially those from underserved groups, to access lifelong learning where the developmental side is emphasized – this means helping individuals to live their lives fully and interdependently, be engaged as citizens, and reach new awareness of themselves and community and global life. At the bottom of all of this, a foundational issue for me is the development of learners who are increasingly prepared to resist the violence of the world (ranging broadly, from the physical violence of political conflict, to the verbal violence of the anonymous web, to the violence of uncaring workplaces, for example).

While the paragraph above refers to the type of outcome that I value, I see the more immediate focus of my work on the support and developmental processes of practitioners who are working with adult learners toward these outcomes. My interest, then, is to better understand the steps that I can take to identify, organize, and support these practitioners. This support involves making spaces for them to bring their own concerns and then use tools and processes of reflective practice to generate their own solutions and the energy to go and enact them in their respective settings. Through the discussions in this workshop, I came to look more closely at key questions, particularly in the areas of how to convey the intention of reflective practice without compromising the room to be playful, the range of motivations and barriers that affect how people commit to regular participation in voluntary forums and communities, and how people ask and answer the question "what will this do for me?" when they are being asked to define their own problems, rather than be told going in what kind of problem a certain organized effort is designed to solve.
Noticing that my ontology and epistemology is in tension with my pedagogy
Peter J. Taylor, 19 April 2019

‘The word [curiosity] pleases me..: it evokes “concern”; it evokes the care one takes for what exists and could exist; a readiness to find strange and singular what surrounds us; a certain relentlessness to break up our familiarities and to regard otherwise the same things; a fervor to grasp what is happening and what passes; a casualness in regard to the traditional hierarchies of the important and the essential… I dream of a new age of curiosity.’ (Foucault, 1996)

This schema summarizes my ontology—I start with a view that the world is always already unruly complexity. In my 2005 book with that title I explain more what unruly complexity means. For now, the epistemological implication—how we get to know the world—is that knowledge, plans, and actions continually have to be reassessed in response to developments, predicted and surprising alike.

That idea breaks open into the five elements in color. In order to know the world, one has to be engaged within the complexity—there’s no outside position to view everything about the system and predict where it’s going to go. To be engaged within the complexity means you have to participate and collaborate with others. To collaborate well, it helps to be cultivated as a collaborator. To develop skills and to be cultivated as a collaborator, it helps to be curious—to be thinking about what else could be. Those are four of the elements in the scheme. I’ll get to the fifth shortly.
The qualities of engagement, participation, and cultivating collaborators are illustrated by the case of community planning in a district in Northern Ontario (see Taylor 2005, 207ff). However, in a postscript to that case, the community’s capacities were stretched and its plans undermined by decisions made at a distance by a multinational employer to close the region’s papermill. This experience points to the need for an additional quality to engagement, namely, that it cuts across and connects different strands, processes, and social realms. Such *transversality* of engagement means not only taking seriously the creativity and capacity-building that arises from well-facilitated participation among people who share a place or livelihood, but also incorporating knowledge-making of non-local or trans-local researchers—including knowledge about the dynamics that produce adverse trans-local decisions and about ways to try to mitigate their effects. Another way to think about transversality is to say that complexities are always embedded in larger complexities. Obviously, a person is never just contained inside their mind and body, but is always developing in relationship with others. The net result of those interactions with many people occurs in a wider context of the political-economic-cultural complexity, and so on. (More elaboration on the schema is given in second half of a blog post https://wp.me/pPWGi-10i.)

If that’s my ontology and my epistemology in one schema, what’s the pedagogy? When I think about my teaching as I direct the programs in Critical and Creative Thinking and in Science in a Changing World—programs that are mid-career personal and professional development—most of my work centers on curiosity and on cultivation of collaborators. We almost never examine the wider political economy of the world. We do point people towards Action Research, in which they participate with others and engage within the complexity, but we don’t actually do Action Research—that’s not the center of studies or research of the instructors. In sum, it’s the two bottom right elements that are central to my pedagogy.

How do I reconcile my ontology and epistemology with the pedagogy that emphasizes two things and merely points to the others? Addressing this is very much a work-in-progress. Central to a modest contribution to reconciliation at this stage is *alternatives thinking*, which we might also call *critical thinking*. To me that means understanding ideas and practices better by holding them in tension with alternatives (Taylor 2002). When I promote curiosity, I’m often promoting alternatives thinking. Typically, I’ll introduce into the discussion an alternative to the dominant or established views; we then explore the implications of that. Moreover, the subjectivity of agents that matches the ontology, epistemology, and pedagogy is a *sense that it is impossible to simply continue along previous lines*. While it is possible to continue along previous lines, it is no longer ever simple.

References

Taylor, P. J. (2002), "We Know More Than We Are, At First, Prepared To Acknowledge: Journeying to Develop Critical Thinking." *Working Papers in Critical, Creative and Reflective Practice*. 1. https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cct_ccrp/


On the weekend I got enamored with Jeremy’s idea of “Transition Education.” However, following feedback from participants in the 40th anniversary workshop on the proposal appended at the end, I am now in favor of the bolder term “Transformation,” thus the program on “Creative and Critical Transformations.” Comments welcome on the rationale that follows.

Thanks

peter
This proposal to change the name of the Graduate Program on Critical and Creative Thinking (CCT) is a response to a persistent issue, raised again by the latest AQUAD review. The review affirmed—as have previous reviews—the effectiveness and impact of the Program: CCT “fosters imagination, creativity, and intellectual vitality; it transforms lives of students and results in career opportunity and growth.” But this work, the Review noted, is not always well understood outside the Program. The name “Creative and Critical Transformations” is designed to:

- capture better the mission of the Program and dispel common misconstruals of (or uncertainties about) that mission, yet
- preserve a strong sense of continuity for a Program with a forty-year history at UMass Boston. No curricular changes are entailed by this proposal.

The byline in current publicity for the CCT Master’s program reads: “Using critical and creative thinking to develop reflective practice as we change our work, learning and lives.” Students come to CCT with aspirations to move their work and other life projects in new directions or to a new level, or to clarify what they want their projects of professional and personal development to be. In short, making changes—transformations—is the sought-after outcome, while critical thinking, creative thinking, and reflective practice provide tools to this end. (An analogy might be that students in the Conflict Resolution program at UMass Boston learn various techniques “to facilitate peaceful problem solving and collaborative decision making” with the desired outcome expressed in their Program’s name.)

Thinking in CCT’s current name invites three misconstruals:

- the Program’s primary goal is to make students into critical (or creative) thinkers (or into teachers of critical thinking or creative thinking);
- CCT claims in that regard to know how to do what other disciplines do not; and
- CCT presumes that changing people’s thinking is the path to changing people’s practice.

It is mostly the other way around: with the focus for students being transformations in practice, they adopt or adapt the ideas and processes from their CCT studies into toolboxes for lifelong learning and ongoing personal/professional/community development [*]. The Program website has, since 2003, clarified that:

Critical thinking, creative thinking, and reflective practice are valued, of course, in all fields. In critical thinking we seek to scrutinize the assumptions, reasoning, and evidence brought to bear on an issue—by others and by oneself; such scrutiny is enhanced by placing ideas and practices in tension with alternatives. Key functions of creative thinking include generating alternative ideas, practices, and solutions that are unique and effective, and exploring ways to confront complex, messy, ambiguous problems, make new connections, and see how things could be otherwise. In reflective practice we take risks and experiment in putting ideas into practice, then take stock of the outcomes and revise our approaches accordingly.

The rationale for a Master’s program of study in CCT is that an explicit and sustained focus on learning and applying ideas and tools in critical thinking, creative thinking, and reflective practice allows students involved in a wide array of professions and endeavors to develop clarity and confidence to make deep changes in their learning, teaching, work, activism, research, and artistry. By the time CCT students finish their studies they are prepared to teach or guide others in ways that often depart markedly from their previous schooling and experience. In these processes of transformation and transfer, CCT
students have to select and adapt the ideas and tools presented by faculty with diverse disciplinary and interdisciplinary concerns.

Following approval of the name change, the Program’s website would be revised to insert the following text before the paragraphs above:

The Program on Creative and Critical Transformations (CCT) recognizes that certain people become involved—often in the middle of their careers and lives—in guiding and teaching others with a goal of making significant change in their individual lives, communities, and global settings. Continual improvement of the skills and capacity to carry out this role is addressed as a focused part of such an individual’s professional and personal development. The practitioners of such transformative education range from formal educators to organizational leaders to human services professionals to activists to media producers. They also identify in life as mentors, coaches, advisors, counselors, parents, and other similar roles. Placing critical before transformations connotes questioning of established practices as well as the importance and timeliness of the changes sought, whether in the individual’s lifecourse, their community, or wider social context. Leading off with creative affirms the spirit of doing something new in practice, not simply criticizing the current state of affairs.

The Program was, for its first forty years, called “Critical and Creative Thinking” [then continue as above].

As noted earlier, no curricular changes are entailed by this proposal. However, the demand for the Program, it is hoped, may expand under the new name:

- CCT is happy to continue to attract students for whom critical and creative thinking has positive connotations.
- However, the new name would allow CCT to gain more recognition as a program in transformative education/learning/studies/research, a field referring broadly to facilitation of institutional and social change by guiding personal and professional change or transformation.
- As such, CCT could also be seen as addressing the changing demographics of graduate education, in which a growing number of students pursue education for transitioning to change or improve their employability, and, more generally, as preparation for work outside academic disciplines (see Council of Graduate Schools reports http://www.fgereport.org and http://www.pathwaysreport.org).
- CCT graduates could also be drawn into another needed role, namely, mentoring younger students who take indirect paths through their education (http://bit.ly/1fCwM4x).
- In all these ways education in CCT would continue to “meet the need for independent, creative, and compassionate… leaders who will shape the quality of individual and social life” (citing here the Vision statement of UMass Boston).

* Historical footnote: The founders of CCT often spoke of the importance of infusing the teaching of thinking into the classroom. Nevertheless, the students have, from Program’s inception, used the tools they were being introduced to in their studies to develop projects of personal, professional, and community change—to pursue transitions or transformations in their practice. The emphasis on changing practice is evident in the library of capstone projects, viewable at https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cct_capstone/.
Please use your Plus-Delta response to Believe and Doubt the name change proposal below. (In this variant of methodological believing [Elbow 1986] the commentator first captures the virtues of what has been written and suggests how to build on these before shifting to be a devil's advocate. The commentor is free to be very enthusiastic in believing because doubting will follow, and is free to be critical in doubting, because believing has gone first.)

The proposed change of name from “Critical and Creative Thinking” to “Creative and Critical Transition Education” is a response to a persistent issue, raised again by the latest AQUAD review. The review affirmed, as have previous reviews, the effectiveness and impact of the Program: it “fosters imagination, creativity, and intellectual vitality; it transforms lives of students and results in career opportunity and growth.” But this work, the Review noted, is not always well understood outside the Program. The proposed name captures better the mission of the Program and dispels common misconstruals of, or uncertainties about, that mission. Here we: 1. explain the meaning of the new name; 2. indicate its connection with the existing mission and address the misconstruals; and 3. observe the demand for what the name highlights. No curricular changes are entailed by this proposal.

1. Transition Education refers to the way that certain people become involved—often in the middle of their careers and lives—in guiding and teaching others with a goal of making significant change in their individual lives, communities, and global settings. Continual improvement of the skills and capacity to carry out this role is addressed as a focused part of such an individual’s professional and personal development. The practitioners of Transition Education range from educators to organizational leaders to human services professionals to activists to media producers. They also identify in life as mentors, coaches, advisors, counselors, parents, and other similar roles. Placing critical before transition connotes questioning of established practices; leading off with creative conveys a spirit of making changes in practice, not simply criticizing the current state of affairs. Including those two adjectives also allows the Program to preserve the initials CCT.

2. The byline in current publicity for the Critical and Creative Thinking Master’s program (CCT) at UMass Boston reads: “Using critical and creative thinking to develop reflective practice as we change our work, learning and lives.” Students come to the Program with aspirations to move their work and other life projects in new directions or to a new level, or to clarify what they want their projects of professional and personal development to be. In short, the Program is primarily about transitions in practice.

Thinking in the current name invites three misconstruals: i. that the Program is focused on making students into critical (or creative) thinkers (or into teachers of critical thinking or creative thinking); ii. the Program claims in that regard to know how to do what other disciplines do not; and iii. that the Program presumes that changing people’s thinking is the path to changing people’s practice. It is mostly the other way around: with transitions in practice as the focus for students, the ideas and tools their CCT studies introduce them to get adopted and adapted by them into toolboxes for lifelong learning and ongoing personal/professional/community development [§]. The Program website has, since 2003, clarified that:

Critical thinking, creative thinking, and reflective practice are valued, of course, in all fields. In critical thinking we seek to scrutinize the assumptions, reasoning, and evidence
brought to bear on an issue—by others and by oneself; such scrutiny is enhanced by placing ideas and practices in tension with alternatives. Key functions of creative thinking include generating alternative ideas, practices, and solutions that are unique and effective, and exploring ways to confront complex, messy, ambiguous problems, make new connections, and see how things could be otherwise. In reflective practice we take risks and experiment in putting ideas into practice, then take stock of the outcomes and revise our approaches accordingly.

The rationale for a Master’s program of study in CCT is that an explicit and sustained focus on learning and applying ideas and tools in critical thinking, creative thinking, and reflective practice allows students involved in a wide array of professions and endeavors to develop clarity and confidence to make deep changes in their learning, teaching, work, activism, research, and artistry. By the time CCT students finish their studies they are prepared to teach or guide others in ways that often depart markedly from their previous schooling and experience. In these processes of transformation and transfer, CCT students have to select and adapt the ideas and tools presented by faculty with diverse disciplinary and interdisciplinary concerns.[**]

3. Following approval of the name change, the website would be revised to include: a version of #1; a note that the Program was, for its first forty years, called “Critical and Creative Thinking,”; the existing paragraphs above. The Program is happy to attract students for whom the current name has positive connotations. However, the new name should allow us to gain recognition as addressing the changing demographics of graduate education, in which a growing number of students pursue it to change or improve their employability, and the need for graduate education to better prepare students for work outside the academy (see Council of Graduate Schools reports [http://www.fgereport.org](http://www.fgereport.org) & [http://www.pathwaysreport.org](http://www.pathwaysreport.org)). CCT graduates would also fulfil a needed transition education role, namely, mentoring younger students who take indirect paths through their education ([http://bit.ly/1fCwM4x](http://bit.ly/1fCwM4x)). In these ways CCT would continue to “meet the need for independent, creative, and compassionate… leaders who will shape the quality of individual and social life” (citing here the Vision statement of UMass Boston)

* Historical footnote: The founders of CCT spoke in terms, for example, of the importance of infusing the teaching of thinking into the classroom. Nevertheless, the students have, from Program’s inception, used the tools they were being introduced to in their studies to develop projects of personal, professional, and community change—of transitions. The emphasis on changing practice is evident in the library of capstone projects, viewable at [https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cct_capstone/](https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cct_capstone/).

** The paragraphs from the website should indicate why the names “Critical, Creative and Reflective Practice,” “Critical, Creative and Transformative Practice,” and “Creative and Critical Practice” were also considered.

Plus: Thinking about the importance of a name to capture a complex idea but also invite people into ask more when they don't understand. Delta: The use of the word "Education" might have confusing implications; if there is a perception of emphasis on Education, that could be limiting factor on how people feel connected to this idea or they are enough part of "that world" to join in.
Peter (Bobby)  Plus:  Appreciating the initiative to have the program name (more) accurately reflect "what happens" in, and as a result of, the program itself  
Delta:  Things I'm reflecting on:  In this context, I have a personal preference for the term "Learning" rather than "Education" (without being able to express why, at present).  In terms of what we do in the program, as a student addressing "outsiders", I've often used the term "learning about and practicing transformative/change processes" as a way to quickly summarize the program.

Peter (JL)  Plus:  The relationship of new name and changing demography
Delta:  Transitional education offers opportunities for life long learning

Peter (Karen)  Plus:  I appreciate the need for a change to the name of the program to better capture the mission of the program and to help people understand what it is.  
Delta:  The word "transition" doesn't seem powerful enough to me and might not fit someone who wants to stay in the same role but get better at it.  Maybe instead of "transition," something to do with "transform?"  But this might be too vague (and we're back to the initial problem).

Peter (pam)  Plus:  a name change is worth exploring  
Delta:  "education" in the title implies that the program is for educators.  I was discouraged in some of my CCT classes (2005-2007) that the focus was on teaching practice, sometimes to the exclusion of supporting other ways to utilize the CCT skills.  This interpretation is supported by Jeremy’s WIP describing an approach to training “transition educators.”

Peter on name change (Rubin)  Plus:  CCTE sounds like Critical & Creative Teacher Education (which is what I do in my adjunct work, it can still be pronounced "CCT" Tee hee.  Certainly it's accurate to say grad education promotes the development of its participants to greater capacity  
Delta:  I think it complicates something that's already complex enough.  My perception as a 1980s era alum is that CCT marks the collaborative confluence of the university's education, psychology and philosophy departments.  Perhaps that's no longer the case?
Phase 1: Arriving at the term

If an Instructional Design graduate program produces graduates who work as instructional designers, an applied sociology program produces graduates who are applied sociologists, and so on, what does a program in Critical and Creative Thinking (CCT) produce? What follows are a series of considerations that build up in due course to an answer. The components of the answer—the “slow mode” and “co-coaching” seem relevant to anyone working to take themselves seriously.

First, note that the byline of CCT at UMass Boston reads: “Using critical and creative thinking to develop reflective practice as we change our work, learning and lives.” The Program is really about changing practice; it might be called Critical, Creative, and Reflective Practice. Students come to the program with aspirations to move their work and other life projects in new directions or to a new level, or to clarify what they want their projects of professional and personal development to be.

Second, two modes of work and life can be contrasted. Students and graduates are developing their work and lives in a context in which they increasingly have to be entrepreneurial, take charge of making and taking opportunities, and generate products—including themselves as employable products. Let us, following Naveed (2014), call that the “move” mode of work and life. At the same time, in order to make best use of the one's skills, experience, and aspirations, it is important to give oneself ample time for connecting, puzzling, reflecting, and creating (CPRC) or “taking yourself seriously.” We can call that the “slow” mode (see epigrams to think-piece on Slow Ed Tech). To foster that mode, CCT introduces students to many and varied tools and processes, principles and themes, as conveyed in this book. Over the course of their studies, students build these into their own toolboxes and “studios” for lifelong learning and mindful Refractive Practice. That is, before leaving one phase/project and moving to a new one, they learn to pause to take stock (“refract”) and identify alternative paths.

The contrast and the components mentioned in the previous paragraph are summarized in the figure on next page. (Taylor 2014 provides an animated and narrated version of the schema.)

The Program wants students not to be simply driven by external context and changes. CCT as “education for critical, creative and reflective practice” spread out over a period of 2-5 years is meant to ensure that the slow mode is not eclipsed by the move mode, in contrast to what often seems to happen. Indeed, a distinctive quality of the CCT education might be captured by inserting take the time it takes to between the words “we change” in the byline cited earlier.

Third, CCT education aims to foster not only students' personal and professional development but also their ability to coach others in equivalent development. As stated in the CCT overview (CCT 2009):
Slow versus Move mode in Personal and Professional Development
(See text and Taylor 2014 for elaboration)

an explicit and sustained focus on learning and applying ideas and tools in critical thinking, creative thinking, and reflective practice allows students involved in a wide array of professions and endeavors to develop clarity and confidence to make deep changes in their learning, teaching, work, activism, research, and artistry. By the time CCT students finish their studies they are prepared to teach or guide others in ways that often depart markedly from their previous schooling and experience.

Coaching, more than training, is what instructors in the Program provide. Given the wide range of students' interests this is unavoidable. It is not possible to have, for each student, a faculty member specializing in their area of interest and able to model and mentor engagement and Action Research. Students and graduates have to bridge the gap between, on one hand, the slow mode using the general tools and processes for CPRC that CCT introduces and, on the other hand, their individually specific work and life projects. (The bridging is depicted in the schema above as the movement outwards beyond the circle.)

Fourth, limits and mutuality come into play. The combination of coaching with personal and professional development means that graduates as coaches walk their own talk. In the same spirit, instructors as coaches are committed to building and maintaining supportive spaces for their own diverse disciplinary and interdisciplinary research and engagement projects. When students see that parallel, they can accept that
• instructors have to set limits on the time they give to teaching, administering, and program development,
• the Program will always therefore be a work-in-progress, and
• instructors and students alike are teaching/coaching/supporting the work of others that is beyond their areas of comfort and competency. This contrasts with expectations that instructors are:
  • experts with a polished package of up-to-date knowledge to transmit,
  • models of working in the trenches with students, making work and lives in the move mode,
  • able to position the Program at the center of new move mode developments (whether that be MOOCs, TEDx talks, high-profile training, best selling books, etc.)

If the Teaching Mind invites life-long learners to view themselves as teachers, then students becoming coaches are invited to view their instructors through a “coaching mind.” In particular, coaches—students and instructors alike—need always to be open to being coached. Coaching becomes co-coaching.

Combining these four considerations, we have arrived at an answer to the original question. What a program in Critical and Creative Thinking (CCT) produces are “SloMoCoCos”—SLOw MOde CO-Coaches.

References

Phase 2: Incomplete draft pitch for radio show On Being—comments welcome to move this towards submission

On Being guests can be wonderfully inspiring. If we breathe deeply in the spirit that they convey through their words and actions, we can change. But do we? What do we actually know about how people bring about major changes in their work and lives?

On the show I would describe some of the journeys taken by the many mid-career, mid-life students I have advised during 20 years of directing an unusual graduate program at the University of Massachusetts Boston, Critical & Creative Thinking. On Being listeners would be reminded that the journeys people undertake in their careers and lives involve risk, open up questions, create more experiences than can be integrated at first sight, and require personal and professional change. People need support to address the inevitable anxieties and tensions that arise…. (to be continued)

Phase 3: Taking myself seriously as a co-coach
See Create Change Co-Coaching, draft publicity material for comments
https://wp.me/p1gwfa-16C