**Factors Relevant to the Affective Content in Literature
Survey: Implications for Designing an Adult
Transformational Learning Curriculum**

Megan A. Taylor
Jerome M. Fischer
Linda Taylor

Abstract

Current directions in transformational learning theory incorporate
the concept of emotional intelligence. The purpose of this study was
to understand emotional intelligence as it relates to transformational
learning by identifying factors related to individuals' emotional
responses to literature. Specifically, the study investigated the
relationship between gender, age, personality factors, and emotional
responses, as measured by the Schutte Self-Report Inventory and
Affective Response to Literature Survey. Gender was determined to
be a significant factor, along with the personality factors of
Agreeableness and Openness in the International Personality Item
Pool Five Factor Model. Implications of the results suggest that an
adult transformational learning curriculum could be designed using
the identified factors and thereby increasing learning opportunities
for students.

Introduction

The concept of emotional intelligence has been the topic of much
discourse among many researchers (Davies, Stankov & Roberts, 1998;
Fischer & Fischer 2003, 2006; Goleman 1995; Izard, 2001; Roberts,

Megan A. Taylor is a graduate student in Counseling and School Psychology,
University of Idaho, Moscow, ID. Jerome M. Fischer is Chair, Department of
Rehabilitation Services, University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, TX. Linda
Taylor is Assistant Professor, Counseling and School Psychology, University of
Idaho, Moscow, ID.

Zeidner, & Matthews 2001; Salovey & Mayer 1990). Salovey and Mayer (1990) were the first to coin the term emotional intelligence. According to their definition, emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to accurately perceive, express, understand, and manage emotions. The usefulness of the construct of EI is important. Moreover, measures of EI have been able to predict theoretically relevant outcomes including leadership, work attitudes, and moral reasoning (Barbuto & Burbach, 2006; Carmeli, 2003; Newsome, Day, & Catano, 2000; Sivanathan & Fekken, 2002).

Adult Education and Emotional Intelligence

There have been many developments in the field of adult education recently. Educators and researchers alike have concentrated their efforts on the development of comprehensive conceptual frameworks that foster adult learning. One of the more prominent of the theories is Mezirow's (1991) transformational learning. Mezirow's transformational learning theory seeks to be a comprehensive theory of adult learning based on the fundamental principle that adults make meaning and learn from their life experiences. While many theorists agree with Mezirow, others pose that the theory underestimates the role that emotions play in transformative learning (Taylor, 1997).

In a review of related empirical studies, Taylor (2007) uncovered inclusive transformational processes that involved not only cognitive processes of critical reflection but also emotional processes of exploration and resolution of feelings. Several of the studies reviewed (Berger, 2004; Jarvis, 2003; King, 2003) indicate that affective learning must take place before critical reflection can occur. Furthermore, meaning structures were transformed on an unconscious level without a rational examination of assumptions. As such, Taylor argues that there are many factors central to the transformative learning process: affective learning, non-conscious learning, relationships, and the collective unconscious. Taylor (2001) supported his findings by examining the neurobiological connection between emotion and cognition (Drevets & Raichle, 1998; LeDoux, 1989).

Expanding Taylor's contributions, research on adult transformational learning theory now posits emotion as essential in either decreasing or increasing the motivation to learn (Dirkx, 2001; Yorks & Kasl, 2002). Moreover, Wlodkowski (1999) encourages adult educators to deal with and encourage the expression of emotion during learning. Emotion creates a sense of purpose that guides adults' learning and shapes the context of their

learning experiences (Dirkx, 2006; Merriam & Caffarella, 2007; Reeve, 2001). Furthermore, recent developments provide a recognition of the overlap between transformational learning and the development of emotional processing skills that are a part of emotional intelligence (Taylor, 2008).

Incorporating the concepts of Taylor, Fischer and Fischer (2003) designed an adult transformational learning curriculum that aimed to address the emotional as well as the cognitive stages of transformative learning. The semester-long curriculum was created for a university freshman literature class. The curriculum was designed to increase emotional intelligence through reading and responding to literature. Fischer and Fischer implemented the curriculum and evaluated the program by administering Emotional IQ test as a pre-test and post-test. The results yielded significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores.

Gender, Culture, Personality, and Age

Although much has been gained in understanding the connection between emotional intelligence and transformational learning, a more refined perspective is now needed. Gender and culture have been correlated with the expression of emotion. Accordingly, emotions are experienced through a cultural lens, which includes gender socialization (Matsumoto, 1993; Vrana & Rollock, 2002). Accordingly, if emotions are mediated by meaning systems, social learning, and social expectations, it is important to explore the relationship of those factors with emotional intelligence. Understanding the impact of gender, culture, personality, and age on emotional skills is vital to comprehending transformational learning, given the overlap between the two.

The research on improving learning through expression and understanding of emotion may give educators insight into developing more effective educational experiences for students. While research has identified a curriculum that can increase emotional literacy and an instrument has been developed to explore relevant factors affecting emotion and learning, current research has not explored individual factors that can influence emotions and learning. The purpose of this research was to explore the relevance of gender, culture, personality, and age on the emotional aspects of transformational learning via emotional intelligence. The research sought to determine the degree of relationship (a) between gender and emotional responses to literature, (b) between age and individuals' emotional intelligence and their emotional responses to literature, and (c) between

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personality factors and individuals' emotional intelligence and their emotional responses to literature.

Methodology

This study was conducted at the University of Idaho. Data were collected from the 289 undergraduate students taking freshman psychology class. Permission was granted to conduct the study by the instructor, and the students were informed of their rights as research participants. In addition to the data collected related to three questionnaires, the following demographic information was collected: age, gender, cultural identification, grade level, and intended major. A majority (51%) of the 289 participants were male (N = 147) with 91% reporting their ages as being between 18 and 22. The predominant cultural group participants identified with was white (88%) with 5% identifying as Latino, 2% Asian American, 1 % African American, 1% American Indian, and 3% other.

This study employed the use of three instruments: the Schutte Self-Report Inventory (SSRI) (Schutte et al.,1998), the Affective Response to Literature Survey (ARLS) (Fischer & Fischer, 2006), and the International Personality Item Pool Five Factor Model (IPIP) (Goldberg, 1999).

Self-Report Measure of Emotional Intelligence. The Schutte Self-Report Inventory (SSRI) was the measure of emotional intelligence employed in this study, and was created by Schutte et al. (1998). The SSRI was used to validate the findings of the Affective Response to Literature Survey (ARLS) and the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP). The 33 items in the SSRI were chosen through factor analysis conducted on 62 items, which were based on Salovey and Mayer's (1990) model of emotional intelligence. The measure consists of questions such as "I know when to speak about my personal problems to others," "other people find it easy to confide in me," and "I arrange events others enjoy." The respondents indicate to what extent each item describes them using a 5-point scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Test-retest reliability was conducted over a two-week period and yielded 0.78. A criterion validation study was conducted utilizing 64 first year college students to assess the predictive ability of the instrument. Results indicated that scores on the instrument significantly predicted grade point average, r (63) = 0.32, $p<0.01$.

Affective Response to Literature Survey (ARLS). The ARLS was created by Fischer and Fischer (2003) as a psychological instrument to

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measure people's emotional responses to literature. The instrument consists of 18 items chosen by a panel of 10 experts. The questions varied from "When I read literature about characters I feel I know them" to "I think about the relationships between characters in literature even after I have finished reading." Responds are on a 5-point Likert-type scale: 1 = Almost Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, and 5 = Most of the Time. To assess the psychometric properties, the researchers administered the ARLS to 165 individuals. The findings indicate that the ARLS has high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .90) and test-retest reliability ($r = .90$, $p < .001$). Validity was established by conducting a factor analysis in which four factors were obtained: Reflective Synthesis, Acting with Volition, Processing, and Empathetic Reasoning.

International Personality Item Pool Five Factor Model. The International Personality Item Pool Five Factor Model (IPIP) (Goldberg, 1999) is an online personality inventory used to assess the personality factors of Emotional Stability, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, and Openness. It contains 50 questions, which yield an overall score for each factor. Participants are instructed to score each item on how accurately it describes them. They answer questions such as "I accept people as they are," and "I don't talk a lot" using a 5-point Likert-type scale: 1 =. Very Inaccurate, 2 = Moderately Inaccurate, 3 = Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate, 4 = Moderately Accurate, and 5 = Very Accurate. Validity was established by a factor analysis indicating the expected 5-factor structure. Using Cronbach's alpha, internal consistency was found to have acceptable levels: overall = .84, Agreeableness = .82, Conscientiousness = .79, Extroversion = .87, Emotional Stability = .86, and Openness = .82 (Goldberg, 1999).

Results

The research was a relational/comparison study utilizing descriptive survey methods. To investigate the relationship between gender and emotional responses to literature, the independent variable of gender (male and female) and scores from the ARLS as the dependent variable were analyzed using ANOVA. This analysis found a significant difference ($F = 16.36$, $df = 1/289$, $p < .001$). The females ($M = 52.62$) scored significantly higher than the males ($M = 47.47$) on the ARLS. Table 1 reports the means and standard deviations of the ARLS items.

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Table 2: Male and Female Scores on ARLS Items

ARLS Items	Female		Male	
	M	**SD**	**M**	**SD**
1. I have cried while reading literature.	2.3	1.1	1.6	1.7
2. I have laughed out loud while reading literature.	3.2	0.8	3.1	0.8
3. I have felt more connected to other people while reading literature	2.8	1.1	2.4	1.0
4. I have learned about how people from other cultures express their feelings through reading their lit.	3.2	1.0	2.8	1.0
5. When I read literature about characters I feel I know them.	3.8	1.0	3.5	1.0
6. I read about characters in literature because how they solve their problems intrigues me.	2.7	0.9	2.8	1.1
7. The stronger the tensions between characters in literature, the more I like it.	3.2	1.1	3.5	1.0
8. I think about the relationships between characters in literature even after I have finished reading.	3.4	1.2	3.4	1.1
9. I enjoy reading about complicated relationships in literature.	3.4	1.1	2.8	1.2
10. I have changed the way I feel about people from another culture because of reading their literature	2.7	1.1	2.4	1.1
11. I have changed the way I feel about sign. people in my life because of what I have read in literature.	2.6	1.0	2.5	1.1
12. I have supported an organization or group after reading about it in literature because I have stronger feelings of support for its purpose.	2.4	1.1	2.2	1.0
13. I have joined an organization or group after reading about it in literature because I have stronger feelings of support for its purpose.	1.8	0.9	1.7	0.9
14. I feel I have a better understanding of some of my emotions after reading literature.	2.8	1.1	2.5	1.1
15. I have asked myself why I feel the way I do after reading literature.	2.8	1.1	2.6	1.2
16. I have analyzed my relationships with significant people in my life after reading literature	2.9	1.1	2.5	1.1
17. I have talked to someone else about my feelings after reading literature.	2.7	1.2	2.4	1.2
18. After reading about emotions expressed in literature I have sought to read similar literature because I enjoy it.	3.7	1.1	2.8	1.3

To investigate the relationship between age and individuals' emotional intelligence and their emotional responses to literature, age was correlated with the scores on the ARLS. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis indicated that there was no relationship ($r = .02$) between age and the ARLS score.

Multiple regression was used to investigate the relationship between personality factors and individuals' emotional intelligence and their emotional responses to literature; for this analysis, personality factors of the IPIP Five Factor Model were used as the predictor variables, and scores on the ARLS was the criterion variable. Using a stepwise method, two personality variables entered the equation. Agreeableness entered first, and Openness entered second. The equation was statistically significant ($F = 21.30$, $df = 5/289$, $p < .001$). Overall, 12% of the variance in the ARLS score is accounted for by the personality factors.

Discussion

Caution must be used when interpreting the results of this study. Because of its limited population, the findings are limited and should not be extrapolated to other populations. However, the demographic breakdown among participants represented a relatively normal distribution with regard to gender: 147 males to 142 females. This is consistent with the proportion of males and females in attendance at the university. However, the age demographic was skewed with a majority of students falling into the 18-22 age range; while information gathered cannot be given about a diverse range of ages, important concepts may be said relative to this specific age group.

Gender and the ARLS

The results of this study did in fact find a significant relationship between gender and individual's affective responses to literature with females scoring higher on the ARLS. These findings are consistent with previous research on gender differences in emotional responses. Through observation of female and male responses to individual questions, a pattern emerged in relation to the emotional content in the wording of the question. Females in general, tended to respond more favorably to items that were openly emotional whereas males tended to score lower on these items. Females scored highly on item 18 "after reading about emotions expressed in literature I have sought to read similar literature because I enjoyed it."

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This is an overtly emotional question. Males scored a full point lower than females on this particular question. This pattern is repeated in the following items; item 1 "I have cried while reading literature" (Females $M = 2.3$, Males $M = 1.5$), item 4 "I have learned about how people from other cultures express their feelings through reading their literature" (Females $M = 3.1$, Males $M = 2.7$), and item 9 'I enjoy reading about complicated relationships in literature (Females $M = 3.3$, Males $M = 2.7$).

Additionally, males scored highest on item 7 "The stronger the tensions between characters in literature, the more I like it." This could reflect the socialization of men's restricted emotionality, which only allows for the expression of anger. Interestingly, females and males scored high on question 5 "When I read literature about characters I feel I know them." This specific question could be interpreted emotionally or cognitively. The phrase "I feel I know them" may be interpreted in one of two ways, "I feel [emotionally] that I know [on an emotional level]" or "I feel [cognitively] that I know [understand who they are on a surface level]." It is possible that females could have interpreted this question on a more emotional level than males, which would account for the similarity in male and female scores. Future research may ask the question in a more refined way to elicit these differences. Both females and males scored lowest on item 1, "I have cried while reading literature" and item 13, "I have joined an organization or group after reading about it in literature because I have stronger feelings of support for its purpose." Item 1 is one of the most emotionally loaded questions on the ARLS. The male responses were consistent with the emerging pattern. Females on the other hand, while scoring above males, scored this item the lowest of all the items. It might be that females also feel the social pressures that dissuade the emotional expression of hurt; open emotionality tends to put people in very awkward situations. However, a curriculum that addresses such emotional responses (i.e., men and women openly crying) might be an excellent starting point to normalize expression of emotion.

In summary, the pattern of individual responses may reflect societal messages regarding emotions and gender. Male are encouraged to restrict their emotional selves. Consequently, men may be reluctant to answer in the affirmative to the more emotionally loaded questions. Additionally, anger and conflict are more encouraged for males than for females. Females' emotional lives are much more open, and it is socially accepted to understand and express emotions; therefore, females tended to respond more favorably to the questions with more emotional content.

Personality and ARLS

The personality factors of Agreeableness and Openness were significantly related to affective responses to literature and accounted for 12% of the variance in ARLS score. Characteristics associated with individuals who are Agreeable include trust, amiability, generosity, agreeableness, tolerance, courtesy, altruism, warmth, and honesty (Goldberg, 1999). Given the predisposition for being agreeable, participants' responses may have been more congruent with the items in the ARLS. However, these individuals' tendency for honesty perhaps could have prevented them from blindly agreeing when in fact they may have disagreed. Those characteristics associated with Openness include wisdom, originality, objectivity, knowledge, reflection, and artistic. These individuals may in fact enjoy reading to increase their knowledge. Additionally, reflecting on the emotional content in literature would be natural for these individuals. A successful curriculum for a group of students with mainly open and agreeable personalities would encourage unimpeded discussion and an open forum.

Gender and Personality

Males tended to score higher on the personality construct of Emotional Stability, which includes characteristics such as durability, poise, self-reliance, callousness, and candor (Goldberg, 1999). This trend coincides with research that indicates men typically score higher than women on the emotional intelligence abilities such as self-confidence, optimism, and ability to handle stress (Bar-On, 2000). Females tended to score more highly on the Agreeableness construct which includes the characteristics of being empathetic, considerate, friendly, generous, and helpful.Whereas a more open and less structured curriculum would be necessary for more Agreeable and Open individuals, a structured curriculum in which emotional and interpersonal abilities are honed through organized activities might be necessary for a group such as this.

Emotional Intelligence, Gender and Personality

Neither males nor females scored higher on overall measures of emotional intelligence. This is consistent with previous findings of gender and emotional intelligence, which indicate that male and females score

similarly on overall measures of EI but that each gender has distinct strengths and weakness on the different abilities of EI (Bar-On, 2000).

Previous research on the mental ability model of emotional intelligence noted low correlations between four of the five personality structures and emotional intelligence (Roberts, Zeidner, & Matthews, 2001; Schutte et al., 1998). However, there was one personality structure that was more strongly correlated to emotional abilities, Openness (Roberts, Zeidner, & Matthews, 2001, Schutte et al., 1998). Analysis of Schutte's self-report of emotional intelligence yielded mild correlations with the personality structures of Extraversion ($r = .48$) and Agreeableness ($r = .56$).

Implications for Transformational Learning

In the creation of a curriculum in adult transformational learning, which seeks to increase emotional intelligence, it is important to consider the findings related to gender. It would be important to address each dimension of emotional intelligence and recognize the individual differences that exist due to gender. Given that males tend to score lower than females on the dimensions of emotional awareness, empathy, and interpersonal adeptness, a curriculum with pertinent literature that specifically addresses each of these areas could strengthen these characteristics through reflection and discussion. Likewise, a curriculum that fosters the abilities of self-confidence, optimism, and ability to handle stress could improve these dimensions for women. A curriculum that utilizes literature that depicts males exhibiting empathy and interpersonal adeptness or self-confident females could begin to deconstruct these restrictive gender stereotypes.

Additionally, it is imperative that educators be aware of the gender differences in emotional competency. The use of bibliotherapy to address the above-mentioned issues would be pertinent as well. It is important to also recognize the social stigmas that are associated with males who are more empathetic in nature and females who are more confident. Until the societal messages change, individuals who do not necessarily fall into the stereotypic pattern will likely feel like outsiders and have the potential for ridicule. By increasing individuals' emotional abilities, it becomes possible to deconstruct the restrictive gender stereotypes of emotion.

The social implications of increasing individuals' abilities to perceive, express, understand, and manage emotions are provocative. Individuals face multitudes of difficult situations that could be eased by an increased ability to deal effectively with emotions in areas such as communication issues,

conflict management, family/interpersonal relations, clinical issues such as anxiety and depression, intolerant attitudes, and violence. Violent crime, drug abuse, and family violence are only a few examples of social problems that can be linked to individuals ineffectively dealing with their emotions. By fostering emotional intelligence, a proactive stance on focusing on the prevention of these issues may be taken rather than exhausting resources dealing with the consequences. Seeking to change the social climate may improve conditions to be more open, accepting, and psychologically healthy.

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