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Patterns in Transformative Pedagogy: Ethological Perspective

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TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING, in which students experience a paradigm shift from merely *knowing* course content to *realizing* its relevance in their personal and professional lives, is the recent focus of The University of Tennessee's Phenomenology in Education Research Team (PERT). A tenet of the phenomenological approach is that course content is most easily mastered when allied with a student's personal views, thus harnessing their intrinsic motivational and affective qualities. To more deeply explore this pedagogical approach, we identified a specific course as exemplary in evoking transformative learning by means of post-class written reflections, individual audiotaped interviews, and focus groups conducted at end of the semester. ETHOLOGY identifies and describes the many specific "units of behavior" that can be configured and manifest in countless patterns of behavior seen in closely observed research participants. These units, rendered as objectively as possible to avoid misleading assumptions about their function, provide a reliable basis for our exploration of the causes and consequences of specific patterns that are associated with outcomes of interest. A graduate course was identified, and class sessions of two sections were recorded. Units of behavior were extracted from the transcripts, enabling us to determine their frequency, circumstances of expression, and patterns. Patterns were then analyzed to determine specific actions and transactions that might reasonably be considered components of the student experience. For example, preliminary analysis reveals that a specific pattern of real world student experiences elicited by the instructor and questions asked of students is reliably associated with spontaneous recognition of the application of course content to their personal and professional lives. This study will provide clues about how phenomenologically-informed pedagogy works to enhance student experience. After comparable analysis of other classes necessary and sufficient elements and patterns revealed will indicate which patterns might be intentionally facilitated to evoke an enduring student experience.