Week 2 Reading Follow-up
CRCRTH 630

Part 1: Think-pair-share

Background: continue to think about ways that Theme 1 interests with the real concerns that you have in your work or life.

Question: What is one aspect of your work or life where you do experience/have experienced the sense of being "stuck in a rut"? This might be something where a change in direction would be refreshing, where you feel less and less enthusiastic and challenged, where what you have been doing "gets the job done" but feels stale. Focus on an issue that manifests on a personal level, rather than in your organization or field.

Think about this on your own for a few minutes (quiet reflection, freewriting, or other way to get clear for yourself first about some words/phrases that come to mind).

Pair up with someone and take turns for a few minutes each sharing your thoughts. See if you can get clear on what makes this situation challenging.

Return to the main group so that we can hear a few examples from across the class.

Part 2: Testing the principles described in recent readings

Background: use some of the ideas presented by Stokes and see if they make sense or have value when looking at real-life, specific situations.

Instructions: move through the numbered items below in a small group (it is suggested that you read the quote out loud first). For each quote from Stokes, there is an additional question to help prompt you to think about how the theory can help in addressing your real-life situation that was discussed in Part 1. Discuss your responses among your group.

1. *"Successful solutions are reliable, not surprising; predictable, not novel; already accepted, not creative. Highly rewarded for their expertise, experts get stuck in successful solutions—that's why they get bored.…Being completely free hinders solving what I call the creativity problem."*

   Question: In what ways does your expertise/amount of experience contribute to any boredom that you feel around your issue?

2. *"To persist, their work had to be generative—that is, it had to provide a basis from which Braque and Picasso developed variation...*
   …
   ...in...all well-structured problems there is little search and, importantly, a single correct goal state. This precludes creativity; creativity is only possible with ill-structured problems."

   Question: Even as the current successful solution forms a "base", what are some possibilities for variation? (Another way of asking this is, "where are there still degrees of freedom left, so that you can still have the 'successful solution' but not do everything the same way every time to get there?"). Additionally, are there any big unknowns or ambiguities that remain within this challenge?

3. *"The three characteristics of the "creativity problem…(1) it is initially ill-structured, (2) its solution depends on strategic specification of paired constraints,…(3) the selected constraints structure the problem space to preclude (or limit search among) familiar, reliable responses and promote (or direct search among) novel, surprising ones.*
   …
   Some "kinds of constraints...hinder novelty...well-structured problems with single correct solutions, like directions to memorize, calculate exactly, or copy correctly, do the opposite of constraints for creativity. They preclude the surprising and promote the expected, and should be called 'constraints for conformity'…
   …
   ...constraints for creativity [are] barriers that lead to breakthroughs. One constraint precludes (or limits search among) low-variability, tried-and-true responses. It acts as a barrier which allows the other constraint to promote (or direct search among) high-variability, novel responses that could prove to be breakthroughs."

   Question: Which constraints affecting your issue are the kind that cause conformity? Which ones seem to make room for novelty?

4. *"Imagine a situation where the variability requirements are subjectively too high. What do you feel?—the discomfort we label anxiety. Now imagine one where the requirements are subjectively too low. What do you experience?—the discomfort we call boredom."*

   Question: Where are you most bored within this issue? Where are you most anxious? What happens when you are in the space between those?

5. *"With mastery, a domain becomes what Larry Rivers (1987), a painter and musician, called the first chorus...the 'first chorus' is what he improvises on, makes variations of...*
   ...
   Sadly, development is sometimes stymied because a talented individual places too much value on novelty. I once heard a student say, "I never read anyone else's verse. I have to find my own voice first." That's certainly a constraint, but eliminating a huge first chorus on which to improvise is not a constraint for creativity."

   Question: What is the "first chorus" in your work?—the point where mastery has been achieved; where you know the "rules" quite well; where you are fluent and automatic and "can't really get it wrong"; where you feel comfortable enough to be playful?

6. *Variability constraints specify "how differently something must or should be done. High-variability constraints preclude high-probability, repetitious responses and promote less frequent, even novel, ones..."*

   Question: Extending your answers to the previous question, where are the points where you can move away from the norms and do something new, but stay fairly close to the proven method or successful solution? Where can you (or where do you want to) move far away from the norm; where something radical is due?