

Structural Integration as a Model Craft: The 10-series as a learning tool.

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Abstract:

We will explore the educational path in Structural Integration and compare it to the path taken in a craft guild. Parallels between the two educational models are explored.

I would like to examine how we can learn something so challenging, profound, and revolutionary as Structural Integration and how we can learn it in such a relatively short length of classroom experience. A 650-hour program is about average in our schools - a short time compared to the undergraduate degree that I earned. The skills and questions raised in the SI classroom have kept me busy for 16 years, far longer than anything in my undergraduate experience.

How are we propelled down this path of discovery? What are the typical steps one takes on this path? How does one get “indoctrinated” into the practice of SI?

The first step: we received the work. Someone else – with his or her knowledge, intent, hands, fingers, and elbows – gave us a taste of something that significantly changed our lives. We felt more upright, at ease. Life got better. There is something that happened to us that made us want to offer this feeling of difference to other people. We may not be able to put it in words other than saying we feel “lighter” or “freer” or “changed.”

Then most of us went back to school and studied under someone who was competent in the work and taught us a series of 10 sessions,¹ each with different goals and intents. We carefully watched what they did and tried to figure it out. Next, we practiced the sessions on each other and on models in our classes. When class was over, we went out into the world and boldly tried to replicate what we saw. Sometimes we had our detailed notes out so we could brush up on them before our client arrived. Gradually we became increasingly familiar with the process of the sessions and the notebooks began to gather dust - we no longer needed that refresher on what we were about to do. Perhaps we experimented a little, adding more of this here

and less of that there and seeing what happened. Eventually we got comfortable doing the work, clung less tightly to what we witnessed, and created more of our own personal style.

SI is learned through practice and experience. Our work is a much like a craft. Although crafts produce material goods with the skilled use of the hands, we produce a more organized structure in a fellow being with the use of our hands, words, and thoughts. They provided the structure for preserving and passing on the necessary skills and knowledge base.

My neighbor, who is a blacksmith, told me about the traditional ways of training blacksmiths. One first started as an apprentice. For no pay, but room and board, the apprentice learned the basics of the craft: from cleaning up to maintaining the furnace, he watched and did what he was told. Eventually, he learned enough to be of value in the shop and make things without supervision. He would then put together a piece of work which he could carry with him that showed all the skills he could do – such as riveting, welding, shaping of the metal – and this would be called his “journeyman piece.” He could take this piece and show it to a shop master who could then judge his work and offer him a day’s work for a day’s pay (*journee* means “day” in French). After he worked as a day laborer for some time and learned more of the craft, he would then create another piece of work showing all the skills of which he was capable. This would be called his “master piece” and would be judged by other masters. If they approved it, he would gain the title of “master” and be able to open his own shop, train apprentices and hire journeymen.

I believe that the educational concepts and the learning curve in SI is probably quite similar to the craft guilds. We are students (apprentices) who work on models until we show enough competence to be let out into the world and work for a living. After some years of work, we begin to master it: to understand how it works and how to apply it in a large variety of unique situations.

Peter Melchior, who equated our work to playing jazz music, would quote trumpet player Dizzy Gillespie, who said, "First you learn the instrument, then you learn the music, then you just blow man blow." The human body is our instrument and the 10 series is our music.

Therefore, learning the 10-series is the key to transmitting the knowledge of Structural Integration in a very clear and efficient manner. It is how we learn. It gives us something to repeat over and over until we "get it." It forms the basis and core of our art.

It follows then that the essence of SI also begins to reveal itself through the practice of the 10-series. When one does an adequate first hour and the client comes in the next time and stands before the practitioner, it is obvious that the lower legs need something. When one does the session well, it is obvious what the client needs when the client comes in the next time. This gives us an understanding of how the parts are related, how they are connected, and what sequencing gets us where. It is this repetition that creates within us, consciously and/or unconsciously, the connections that eventually seem so obvious to the experienced practitioner.

The series also gives us, the practitioners, a common language. For instance, if I am talking to another practitioner and she describes her client by saying, "I just can't wait to get into his 4th hour line," I have a fairly good idea of what she is talking about. Or when looking together at a model, if one practitioner says, "I see a shortness in the left 3rd hour line," and the other may counter, "It looks a little deeper to me." Both know what the other is describing. Therefore, the series provides a metaphor for us to describe the human body. This method of describing the human is so much richer to me than the talking about anatomical landmarks. It is like my hands understand the concepts of layers and depths as described by such terms as a 3rd or 4th hour more than anatomical terms such as adductors or quadratus lumborum. This interplay of touch and language has been developed by the practice of the sessions. There is also a greater sense of continuity or flow within the system and less tendency to see just one point or area as separate.

The 10-series is not a rigid prescription. The mark of a master is someone who knows what tools to use, when a shortcut is valuable, when it isn't, and, who knows what strategies might have the most positive outcomes in

unusual situations. They can also work successfully under a variety of situations. Sometimes I am more alert and creative, and can venture out from what I learned, and other days I need the surety that the rote memorization of the 10-series gives me. I also know where I am headed, what I need to do, and what can be handled later. I begin to see the series as a whole 10-hour session process of work rather than ten related individualized sessions.

The recipe of the sessions is also not the end of our work. It is the starting point. The 10-series is significant because it is how the information of SI is transmitted in a way that can be understood by others. As this knowledge is incorporated and integrated within the individual practitioner, it leads to other discoveries: some of which are direct additions to the SI work, some of which develop into new paths of exploration.

Perhaps one could define SI as something that one learns through experiencing the work, receiving adequate instruction and practicing a series of sessions on a variety of subjects over an extended period of time. And if we do decide to look at our educational process as a process similar to a craft,² how do we insure that our apprentices have received enough education/experience to become honest journeymen? How do we give journeymen the experience and additional education needed to become masters? How do we decide if one's experience/education is sufficient to become a master/teacher? And are a master and a teacher the same thing?

Notes:

1. I am using the words "series" or "10-series" because that is the educational paradigm that I learned from. Unfortunately, I am not as familiar with the KMI 12-series, but I am assuming the same can be said about the learning process within that system.

2. The idea of training practitioners along the apprentice-journeyman-master continuum is not unusual. The training of medical doctors in the U.S still follows this formula with the medical school – intern/residency – Board Certification process.