**EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING IN THE APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY EVENT**

A dissertation submitted

by

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Experiences of Transformative Learning in the Appreciative Inquiry Event

by

Kelley Douglas Wood

Abstract

In a review of the current literature and research on the practice of appreciative inquiry, it is evident that changes in meaning schemas reported by participants are consistent with the process of transformative learning as described by Mezirow. In this qualitative research, I explored and described how AI participants understand and make meaning of their transformative experiences, comparing these experiences to Mezirow’s TL theory. The sample population consisted of self-selected participants who reported a positive change they attributed to an AI event. First, I used a method of constant comparative analysis suggested by grounded theory. Then a deductive analysis using a transformative learning coding key, later, I triangulated the data.

My research revealed that 73% of the participants who attended an AI summit experienced TL. Overall 38% of the participants experienced a change of perspective consistent with TL, while 62% experienced an alignment of their values with AI. The process of TL followed Mezirow’s model and other unique models of TL. Positive emotional experiences played a significant role in offsetting the experience of negative emotions. This research resulted in a new model of TL, which better describes the experiences of the research participants, and may be more inclusive and complete. This research increases our understanding of the process of TL, how AI might promote and foster TL, and the role of positivity and positive emotions in the process of TL.

*Keywords:* Transformative Learning, Appreciative Inquiry, Organizational Behavior, Positive Psychology, Positive Emotions, Qualitative Analysis, Grounded Theory

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the research participants for sharing so willingly their very personal experiences with me. Their stories of courage, positive change, and possibilities gave me the strength to continue.

This work is also dedicated to the next generation of my family; Emily, Julia, Tommy, Nicole, Evan, JJ, Adam, and Holly. I hope this inspires you to reach further, and further, from what is comfortable and toward what is possible. Further, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family, one and all. Especially to my Grandmother, Helen Roy Hall, and my Mother, Janet Hall Jefts for teaching me the importance of education. My Uncle and Aunt, Robert and Valerie Hall, they are examples of great educators, who showed me a wider world. My Brothers, Thomas Wood whose encouragement and support started me on this path, and Robert Wood, my first student. My Grandfather, Richard Hall, Father, Douglas Wood and Stepfather, Carl Jefts, for teaching me to be patient, pay attention to details, do it right the first time, and don’t be afraid to ‘crack a smile.’ I would like to thank My Sisters-in-Law, present and former: Lori Knox, Beth Croteau, and Wendy Frazer, for the couches to sleep on, meals, and for listening.

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*“Appreciation is a wonderful thing: it makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well.”* Voltaire

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## Introduction

While teaching Organizational Behavior in a local MBA program I realized that the students of my class were expressing signs of transformative learning (TL) (Mezirow 1978; 1990; 2000) after an experiential exercise using appreciative inquiry (AI) (Cooperrider 1986; Cooperrider and Srivastva 1987; Srivastva and Cooperrider 1999). Three of the students expressed changes in their viewpoints, changed significant relationships, and integrated the learning from the AI exercise into their professional lives. This led me to question the relationships between AI as a organizational development initiative (Weisbord 1987; 1992; Hatch 1997; Holman and Devane 1999; Bowditch and Buono 2001) and TL as a means of describing participant’s experiences of AI events.

## Theoretical Constructs

### Transformative Learning

The theory of TL, as defined by Mezirow (1978; 1990; 1991; 2000), is a model for transforming problematic frames of reference into new and more dependable frames of reference. From this perspective, TL occurs through a process of critical self-reflection, reflective dialogue, and reflective action, in which deep-seated assumptions are questioned, new assumptions are tested for validity, and new assumptions are integrated into a new reality for the learner. Mezirow postulates that these reflective processes occur through ten stages: a disorienting dilemma, self-examination of feelings, a critical assessment of assumptions, and the recognition of one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared. The stages continue as the student begins an exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions, planning a course of action, acquiring knowledge and skills, provisional trying of new roles, building competence and confidence, and a reintegration into one’s life (Mezirow 2000). While these steps are experienced in a variety of orders all ten stages must be satisfied to accomplish TL (Mezirow 1990; 2000).

These transformations result in the acquisition of new perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors integrated into new roles and relationships, and these changes are integrated into the subject’s life (Mezirow 1978; 1990; 1991; 2000). These transformations are evident both to the participant and to others.

In the classroom and other learning environments, TL is practiced with groups of learners. Learners may not be at the same point of readiness for TL. Research (Lytle 1989; Cesar 2003) of TL shows not all learners will experience stages of TL. Only those who experience the first nine steps will meet the final stage of TL: a re-integration into the participant’s life. Research has also shown the transformative learning of the individual may lead to greater transformations for the other members (O'Hara 2005) and the individual’s transformation may co-emerge with the organization’s transformation (Scott 2003). Yorks and Marsick (2000) in a case study of learning programs stated individual transformational learning should be a goal of all organizational initiatives, despite the possible conflict between the goals of the individual and the organization.

If individual transformation might lead to greater organizational transformation then organizational development initiatives might increase the opportunities for more successful outcomes. With this in mind, it will be useful to understand how TL might be experienced and reported in the literature of organizational development. To narrow the scope of this research I will review the literature of appreciative inquiry, one of many organizational development initiatives. Appreciative inquiry is unique among organizational development initiatives in its focus on finding and promoting the organizations positive core of success. AI uses a unique methodology and principles to achieve this result, which will be discussed further in the next section.

### Appreciative Inquiry

In the field of organizational development, AI is recognized as a method for catalyzing or achieving lasting change in teams, groups, organizations, or communities (Cooperrider 1986; Cooperrider and Srivastva 1987; Srivastva and Cooperrider 1999). AI is a organizational development method introduced by Cooperrider in 1986 as a means of dialogic discovery with the purpose of uncovering the egalitarian organization (Cooperrider 1986). Guiding AI are five principles: the *Constructionist Principle,* the *Principle of Simultaneity,* the *Poetic Principle,* the *Anticipatory Principle,* andthe *Positive Principle.* These principles are applied through a 4D design model in an AI summit. The four elements of this design are: *Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny* (Cooperrider and Whitney 2000)*.*

The literature of AI shows that individuals do experience transformations in perception, attitude, and behavior that can be compared to TL. These transformations have a positive and beneficial effect on the organization as a whole as seen in the following studies. Bushe and Khamisa (2004) found that many of these studies represent organizations that exhibited signs of transformation consistent with transformative learning resulting from appreciative inquiries. At the organizational level, these transformations consist of a major shift in the state of being or the identity of the organization, development of persistent generative metaphor, and development of a new set of background assumptions.

These case studies of appreciative inquiries also reported individual transformations consistent with TL including increased confidence and competence in addition to increased transfer of learning and data (Mohr, Smith et al. 2000). These transformations improved gender relations, and appreciation for gender issues (Schiller 2002), and lead to increases in morale, profitability and sustainability (Trosten-Bloom 2002). Personal transformations in relation to past experiences, others best experiences, and the organizations traditions were also reported (Van Buskirk 2002) but it is not made explicit that all ten of Mezirow’s stages are met in any of these case studies (Mezirow 1978; Lytle 1989; 1990; 1991; 2000; Cesar 2003).

## Research Questions

My primary research questions are:

How do participants of appreciative inquiry summits or training understand and make meaning of their experiences of change relating to their participation in an appreciative inquiry event?

How do the AI event participants’ experiences compare to the theory of TL as defined by Mezirow, and how does TL theory describe their experiences?

Of secondary interest to this study, is the research question: How does appreciative inquiry’s focus on positive emotions compare to TL theories emphasis on the examination of feelings of anger, guilt, and shame?

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

In chapter two, I expand on the theoretical construct by discussing the relevant research in the fields of TL, and AI. The discussion also includes the possible correlations between the theories of AI and TL, a critical analysis of TL theory and an exploration of other theories of TL, transformation, adult learning, and adult development. I then expand upon the theoretical construct of my research as suggested by the research questions, and discuss the implications this research might have.

## Chapter Three: Methods

This was an exploratory, qualitative, and descriptive research study. I interviewed people who self-reported they experienced changes in their attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, relationships, or actions resulting from participation in an appreciative inquiry. This research study was designed to discover and explain how AI participants understand and make meaning of these experiences. After the inductive data analysis, I conducted a deductive analysis of the data using a key code I developed for TL. Later I triangulated the findings of the inductive and deductive coding sessions back to the original transcripts to ensure the validity of my analysis.

This study consisted of semi-structured in-depth interviews with twenty-one research participants who indicated by self-selection that they could attribute positive changes in their lives to an AI event. The research participants discussed their understandings in depth and the meaning they made of their experiences, which resulted from their participation in an AI event. With this research design I pursued emergent patterns and themes that relate to the study through both an inductive method of open and axial coding and a deductive method of coding for TL in the data.

This study is exploratory and qualitative in nature. It is intended to describe and categorize the participants’ experiences of their participation in an AI event. This approach allowed for the exploration of emergent patterns and themes. It also supported the incorporation of the early findings into the data collection process through several iterations of data analysis. This approach is common in qualitative research.

## Chapter Four: Data Analysis

Data analysis was based on transcriptions of the interviews, notes made during the interviews and summarized afterward, and by my reflection on the data after the interviews. I analyzed the data collected in this research over the respondent’s complete interview in a holistic approach. Interpretation of segments of the respondent’s story was made against the whole transcript ensuring that the participants’ words are kept in context. The analysis of the data collected in this research is interpretive and intuitive. I will introduce the research methods used in this data analysis here further describing and explaining the method of analysis in sections below.

For the data analysis, I used a method suggested by Glaser and Strauss, grounded theory, which uses a constant comparison of concepts in the data to develop hypotheses and eventually a theory grounded in the data (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1998; Glaser 2002). While this research is not intended to develop a theory, the rigor of this method will lend validity to the findings.

The data analysis revealed that participants either experienced a direct positive effect (DPE) or expressed a non-direct effect (NDE). These participants also reported that they felt an alignment or reinforcement of their personal values with the principles and methods of AI (AV) or they experienced a change of perspective (CP). Those who experienced a change of perspective followed Mezirow’s model of TL (MTL) or followed other paths to TL (OTL).

## Chapter Five: Findings

In this chapter I discuss the categories of data revealed in the data analysis. The experiences of AI event participants are discussed with regard to the increase in positivity and positive emotions reported by the AI event participants and the increase in insights resulting from their attending the AI event. These insights included issues of power, connection to others, discovering their own voice, the importance of stories and a common language of positivity.

## Chapter Six: Discussion

In this chapter, I discuss an alternative to Mezirow’s model of TL, which is not entirely descriptive of the experience of all the participants who experienced TL resulting from their participation in the AI event. Current models of TL are also learner centric. I propose a more descriptive model of TL that includes both the learner and the educator in the process of TL. This model of the process of TL includes insights from Mezirow, Cranton, and others. This model of the TL process more clearly describes the participants’ experience by including the mentoring role of the educator and includes the role of positivity and positive emotions in the TL process.

## Implications

This research has several implications for practitioners of TL, including the inclusion of positivity and positive emotions in the self-examination involved in the TL process. Positivity and positive emotions might be fundamental in fostering TL among learners. TL practitioners must also recognize their active participation in the learner’s TL process. Their participation includes, challenging, supporting, providing vision, assisting with personal issues, while attending to the power relationships and maintaining the health of the learner educator relationship.

This research also has several implications for practitioners of AI, including awareness that accepting AI principles and methods might require a change in meaning schema for some AI event participants and can initiate the TL process. AI practitioners need to be aware of the participant’s engagement in TL and need to be educated in the theories and processes of TL. Then the AI facilitator can be of assistance to their participants who become engaged in the process of TL. This presents the AI practitioner with an opportunity to develop longer-term relationships with their AI event participants as mentors, formal or informal. This research also presents the AI practitioner with ethical questions concerning their involvement in the participant’s TL process, and how far that involvement should go.

# Chapter Two: Literature Review

## Introduction

In this chapter, I begin with a review of TL to establish a common viewpoint and the meaning of key concepts, as they will be used in this paper. This will help establish the common goals and outcomes of AI and TL. Once I have discussed TL, and appreciative inquiry, I examine the possible correlations between the AI and TL theories. Then I discuss how the field of positive psychology might explain the participants’ experiences of positive emotions in the study. Later I discuss the gaps in the available literature and the implications for the research questions. Many of the terms used in this study have multiple meanings so I have provided a glossary as a reference tool. Please refer to Appendix (H) for a glossary of operational definitions and terms.

## Transformative Learning

### Transformative Learning History and Context

Mezirow’s (1978) theory of TL has its beginning in his study of adult women who returned to the classroom after an extended absence. Mezirow’s research revealed these women had experienced significant changes in their meaning perspectives and their ways of being. His research findings suggested these experiences might be similar to the experiences of other adult learners. Since 1978 much research has been done to show TL’s application to many other situations: adult learning (Mezirow 2000), curriculum development (Taylor 2000) group learning (Imel 1999), and organizational learning (Yorks and Marsick 2000). Mezirow defines TL concisely:

Transformative learning refers to transforming a problematic frame of reference to make it more dependable in our adult life by generating opinions and interpretations that are more justified (Mezirow 1990a; 1990b).

TL occurs through a process of critical self-reflection, reflective dialogue, and reflective action. *Critical Self-Reflection* is the cornerstone of this process and is initiated when the individual is confronted with a disorienting dilemma that causes a questioning of the deep-seated assumptions that make up the individual’s meaning perspective. Mezirow uses the term meaning perspective to define a frame of reference or a collection of meaning schemas.

A meaning perspective is a habitual set of expectations that constitutes an orienting frame of reference that we use in projecting our symbolic models and that serves as a (usually tacit) belief system for interpreting and evaluating the meaning of experience (Mezirow 1991).

A meaning perspective is a structure of assumptions that are used to assimilate past experiences into expectations of new experiences defining our attitudes, establishing our view of our world, and guiding our actions. Mezirow notes that there are six types of meaning perspectives or habits of mind: *Sociolinguistic, Moral-ethical, Epistemic, Philosophical, Psychological,* and *Aesthetic*. Mezirow theorizes that TL is a cognitive rational process, and can only truly be transformative if it effects a change in the cognitive nature involving reasoning, critical reflection, and a critical dialectic. For Mezirow TL is essentially an epistemic TL experience.

*Reflective Dialogue* is the process by which the individual tests the validity of or justification for these assumptions and becomes a negotiation with others to develop a consensual validation of the assumptions that make up the frame of reference. *Reflective Action* is action based on the critical self-reflection of the previously held assumptions and is intended to integrate the resulting new set of assumptions (Mezirow 2000).

Mezirow postulates that these reflective processes occur through a process of ten stages. These stages are experienced in a variety of orders and depths, and all ten stages must be satisfied to accomplish TL. Please refer to Table 1 for Mezirow’s model of TL.

Table 1

*Mezirow’s Model of TL*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | Disorienting dilemma |
| 2 | Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame |
| 3 | Critical assessment of assumptions and relationships |
| 4 | Recognition of one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared |
| 5 | Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions |
| 6 | Provisional trying of new roles |
| 7 | Building competence/confidence in new roles and relationships |
| 8 | Planning a course of action, Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans |
| 9 | Acquire knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan |
| 10 | A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective |

It is interesting to note that Mezirow’s TL calls for an examination of emotions that are construed as negative, while Cooperrider’s AI is designed to focus on positively construed emotions. This could prove to be a significant difference between the two theories in this study. Antonacopoulou and Gabriel’s (2001) study explored the extent to which emotions and learning are interdependent and highlights many of the subtleties of individuals' reactions to change. The authors note that there is a predominance of research and literature on the negative emotions involved in change efforts, but that little research has been done on the role of positive emotions in organizational change.

Another interesting characteristic of TL is that those who experience it are conscious of their change in perspectives, and others can recognize that a fundamental change has occurred in them also (Scott 2003). While research on AI reports individual transformation it does not report of others noticing the transformation.

## Research on Transformative Learning

There is much research available on the theory of TL, much of which is narrowly focused and not comprehensive in nature. Taylor’s (2000) analysis of TL research found that while the theory of TL is widely applied to a diversity of situations very little of the research available provides data supporting Mezirow’s comprehensive model. For example, the research available focuses on portions of the theory, critical reflection, context, or perspective transformation. Taylor has also found most research was retrospective, based on reflecting on an experience, rather than being conducted during the experience. Retrospective research is subject to the participant’s preferred vision of the experience and may not be accurate. Taylor cites Lytle’s (1989) dissertation research as supportive of Mezirow’s model and the most thorough of the research into perspective transformation.

Lytle (1989) uses a questionnaire based on Mezirow’s ten stages in semi-structured interviews and found thirty percent of a class of nursing students experienced all ten of Mezirow’s stages. All participant’s in the study experienced the first four stages, but only those who had experienced all nine of the previous stages experienced stage ten, a reintegration back into one’s life. Cesar’s (2003) dissertation research, which clearly uses Lytle as a model, of adult learner motivation found forty percent of his subjects experienced all ten stages. Cesar found consensus was less in the early stages of TL compared to Lytle’s findings. Cesar did find that ninety-seven percent of his subjects experienced stage three, ninety-three percent experienced stages one and four, and seventy-three percent experienced stages two and five. Cesar found a clear trend of fewer students experiencing stages six through ten.

This research will explicitly compare the participants’ experiences of the AI event to Mezirow’s model of TL. While Taylor is concerned with the retrospective nature of TL research in general, the constraints on this research project do not allow me to study AI event participants during the AI event. My methods will vary from Lytle and Cesar’s formula, but Lytle’s questionnaire can assist in developing my research protocol and can provide an example of quality research on the theory of TL. In the next several sections of the literature review, I will review TL research and literature to better understand where this research project will fit and how it might enhance the theory of TL.

## Transformative Learning in the Group Context

Education and training have used a group setting as a vehicle for delivering learning. Historically the group setting can be viewed as foundational to adult education (Imel 1999; Scott 2003). Modern study of group learning owes much to Eduard Lindeman (Mezirow 1978) who advocated the use of facilitation and discussion in groups to connect learning with experience and social action. TL was conceived as a description of adult learning experiences in an educational setting, which was primarily conducted in the classroom (Laiken 2002). As such, TL is researched and discussed in a variety of group learning settings, classroom, workplace training, and mentoring pairs. In this section, I will review the Literature and research on the theory of TL as it relates to the group learning context, which is similar to the context of my research participants’ experience.

Laiken’s (2002) classroom research shows that it is possible for individuals to experience TL in groups if the balance between the polarities of action and reflection, or task and process, is managed or facilitated to promote TL. This balance is maintained through critical reflective dialogue. Laiken’s critical reflective dialogue is based on Mezirow’s practice of reflective dialogue. Laiken’s research describes the role of the facilitator, learning environment, and factors that are promoted in the AI event to manage the movement between reflection and problem solving. This research raises awareness of the importance of the educator’s role as a facilitator, attending to the learner’s need for both reflection and problem solving, in the learning environment although it requires further research. Laiken offers self-reported evidence of TL, resulting from her narrative inquiry, and does not compare these reports to Mezirow’s model of TL. This research does not make clear whether Mezirow’s definition of TL was met. AI events often move the participants from action to reflection through one on one, small, and large group discussion and planning exercises, and might lead to TL for its participants.

Eisen (2001) reports in her case study, that a peer to peer coaching model promoted epochal TL through rational dialogue between coaching pairs consisting of practiced professionals rather than group learning or individualized instruction. Eisen equates rational dialogue with Mezirow’s practice of reflective dialogue and uses the terms interchangeably. Eisen’s research shows that reflective dialogue in the learning environment may lead to TL. Rational dialogue is encouraged in the AI among pairs in the appreciative interviews and in the small and large group discussions. While Eisen’s definition is based on Mezirow’s model of TL, she makes no comparison of the subject’s statements of transformation to Mezirow’s model. This research does not make clear whether Mezirow’s definition of TL was met. For this research, it may be helpful to know at what stage or point this dialogue should occur to promote TL. Since Eisen does not compare her findings to Mezirow’s model, we do not know when this dialogue might have been most helpful. AI participants begin the AI event with positive interviews that could be a place for rational dialogue between peers might occur.

Sokol and Cranton (1998), using Mezirow’s definition of TL, found that perspective transformation in the classroom was a result of: how well the facilitator handled their role, the positive nature of the group, and the self-awareness gained through psychological self-assessment. Sokol and Cranton found that TL resulted from face-to-face interaction between the teacher and student and between the student and their study group in a social context whose purpose is reflection, learning, and change. Sokol and Cranton show that critical self-reflection and reflective dialogue might lead to TL. Sokol and Cranton make no comparison in their research to Mezirow’s model. AI events are also dependent on the factors of facilitator skill, positive group nature, and self-awareness and self-assessment for success and cause the participants to engage in reflection, learning, and change. AI makes a conscious effort to cultivate these factors. This research does not make clear whether Mezirow’s definition of TL was met. This research also does not make clear when these reflective processes might be helpful, or what stages of TL they might facilitate or promote.

Yorks and Sharoff (2001) propose that collaborative inquiry as a practice in group learning creates the context for TL, as defined by Mezirow, by providing easier access to diverse and challenging perspectives, social support for the construction or reconstruction of meaning, and the sense of connection resulting from learning in relationship. Yorks and Sharoff assert the goals of the AI event should provide such a context for its participants. AI events also promote collaborative inquiry in small and large group discussions, and in action planning. The authors do not compare the participant’s experiences of TL to Mezirow’s model, and this research does not make clear whether Mezirow’s definition of TL was met. This research does show that the goals and values of an AI event might promote TL.

Scribner and Donaldson’s (2001) quantitative study of a group of educational administrators in preparation through their course of studies to determine how factors of group dynamics might effect the group’s learning and whether that learning might be transformative. A group climate that was inclusive of difference, norms that encouraged the surfacing and resolution of difference, clearly defined roles, and free and open communication led to students reporting changes in their attitudes and behaviors toward group learning and qualitative research methods. This research highlights the positive group dynamics encouraged in the appreciative inquiry, which may lead to TL experiences for its participants. The changes described are not compared to TL as described by Mezirow. The authors do not compare the participant’s experiences of TL to Mezirow’s model, and this research does not make clear whether Mezirow’s definition of TL was met.

Many researchers of group and team learning cite Mezirow as an influence or they claim TL as a by-product or end result of the research projects. For example, Kasl, Marsick(Kasl, Marsick et al. 1997), et al’s team-based learning model, which posits a team-based learning process of *framing, reframing, experimentation, crossing boundaries,* and *integrating perspectives.* The team-based learning process if successful leads to a *synergistic learning* stage, which provides the context where the team’s members are likely to experience TL, as described by Mezirow. AI events allow for the creation of teams that design and plan action to solve issues uncovered by the AI event process.

Yorks and Marsick (2000) postulate that groups can learn as discrete entities, transcending individual learning with in a group. Yorks and Marsick further state that organizational transformation’s goal of more effectively reaching its performance goals might be in conflict with the individual’s goals of TL, but also that the individual’s TL should be desired in meeting the organization’s goals. Yorks and Marsick examined two case studies for evidence of TL. One case study was a learning event using the critical reflection school of action learning and the other case was a learning event based on collaborative inquiry. While the authors report evidence of TL as reported by the participants and observed by the authors, they do not compare the participant’s learning experiences to Mezirow’s ten stages of TL. This shows TL might occur in an AI event where it is not a stated goal of the initiative and that the individual’s TL goals should be respected even if they are opposed to the group’s goals.

O’Hara (2005) argues that the individual and the group frame of reference commingle to beneficial effect in transformative group experiences. O’Hara reports that there are certain moments in the transformative group’s life, where there is a balance between high individual awareness and high interpersonal acceptance. In this place of balance, the group becomes a higher order entity. O’Hara labels these as *integral groups*, which enable the balance in this way:

The group as an entity gives up its exclusivity, transcends its own boundaries, and opens itself to membership, participation, and interconnection in even higher order entities of which it, too, is but a part. The community takes care of its own members but/and it also gives to the larger world.

Members of these integral groups often describe themselves as being lifted beyond their personal best while participating in these groups and that they achieve deeper learning and experience a sense of flow that is transcendent, which O’Hara compares to Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1997; O'Hara 2003). Individuals in this expanded state of consciousness unfreeze and reconfigure old cognitive, emotional and possibly spiritual patterns to learn at deep and transformative levels. O’Hara’s integral groups might be useful in describing the AI event participants’ experiences. The relationship between Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of flow and TL would be an interesting topic for another research project.

Scott (2003) postulates that transformation takes place as a result of structural changes in the psyches of the individual and in the social structures of society, which includes the context of the group. The personal and social transformations co-emerge and in their dyadic relationship transform simultaneously.

The transformation involves a change in the interrelationship among the higher mental functions, particularly in form of perceptions that include a conceptual mind, as well as sensations that create a world through ideas, concepts, images, and more bodily ancient archetypes constellated as emotions. The social and the personal transformation (change in structures) co-emerge at the same time (Scott 2003).

Scott theorizes that the individual and organizational transformations are interrelated, each enabling the other to happen. From Scott’s perspective of TL, transformation takes place on at least two levels, for the individual participants and for the social unit it takes place in, whether that relationship is the teacher – student, class – student, member – organization. One cannot transform without the other. Scott’s conclusion implies that organizational development initiatives cannot effect transformation without effecting individual transformation.

O’Hara’s and Scott’s studies show that the group setting may do more than provide a context for critical self-reflection and reflective dialogue. The group might play a part in transforming the individual members into a group entity, which enables a transformation for both the group and the individual members. In this study, I will focus on the individual transformations that might result from participation in the AI event.

In this section, I have established that TL can occur in groups, if attention is paid to the balance of the action reflection polarity (Laiken 2002), and if opportunities for critical self-reflection and reflective dialogue are provided (Eisen 2001). TL in the group learning context is also dependent on the facilitator or educator’s skill in their role, the positive nature of the group is encouraged, and the group experience provides opportunity for self-assessment leading to greater self-awareness (Sokol and Cranton 1998). Educators might make use of collaborative inquiry to create a context for TL (Yorks and Sharoff 2001). Educators should encourage an inclusive group climate, clearly defined roles, and free, open discussion to encourage TL (Scribner and Donaldson 2001). Team or group learning may lead the group to a synergistic learning stage where TL is more likely to occur (Kasl, Marsick et al. 1997). Individual TL goals may be opposed to the group’s learning goals but should be respected and encouraged (Yorks and Marsick 2000). The group and the individual’s frames of reference can commingle in integral groups, which enable individual transcendence, lifting the individuals beyond their own capabilities (O'Hara 2005). Personal and group transformations can co-emerge and transform both simultaneously, with TL happening in relationship between the group and the individual or the learner and the educator (Scott 2003). Without direct comparison to Mezirow’s model of TL researcher’s are creating confusion concerning the terms used to describe TL and the model of TL.

The research in this section reveals that the group learning context contains many similarities to the AI event. Practices such as balancing action and reflection, critical self-assessment, collaborative inquiry, a positive group climate, and open discussions, which are encouraged in an AI event, might provide a context for TL to occur in the AI event. I will further discuss the AI event in the section on AI.

## Critical Analysis of Transformative Learning Theory

Mezirow theorizes TL is essentially an epistemic TL experience, theorizing that TL is a cognitive rational process. Mezirow further theorizes TL can only truly be transformative if it effects a change in the cognitive nature involving reasoning, critical reflection, and a critical dialectic. Mezirow’s theory of TL leans heavily on Habermas’ model of knowledge types and in particular his definition of emancipatory knowledge. Mezirow states that Habermas defines three types of knowledge based on the nature of its learning goals: instrumental knowledge with the goal of instructing scientific, rational, and objective learning; communicative knowledge is focused on social norms, values, developing interpersonal understanding; and emancipatory knowledge where learners revise their underlying assumptions and perspectives. Habermas’ description of emancipatory knowledge is much more wholistic and integrated, while Mezirow conceived of this as a predominately cognitive process (Mezirow 1991). Scholars question how a transformative, and emancipatory learning experience can involve less that the whole person, the emotive and affective, or even spiritual person (Taylor 1997).

## E. Taylor’s Critique of Transformative Learning Theory

E. Taylor (1997; 1998), in his critique of Mezirow’s theory and model of TL, asserts that research points out the unresolved issues in the discussion of Mezirow’s theory. Although this critique is nine years old it remains a seminal work and is the most comprehensive review of TL theory to date. I will use Taylor’s work as a foundation for this critique of TL theory since his categorization of the issues inherent in TL are still relevant today. Taylor classifies these unresolved issues into seven categories in a meta-analysis of forty-four published research studies focused on Mezirow’s theory. The seven categories of issues are: individual change versus social action, decontextualized view of learning, universal model of adult learning, adult development: shift or progression, emphasis on rationality, other ways of knowing, the model of perspective transformation.

*Individual change versus social action.* Taylor’s critique of Mezirow’s theory will be discussed based on these seven issues. The relationship between TL and social action and social power is the most controversial of the unresolved issues. Taylor (1997) states Mezirow’s link to Habermas’ critical learning theory does not adequately explain the relationship between perspective transformation and social emancipation. Critical learning theory’s emancipatory knowing emphasizes knowing to free one’s self from oppression. Mezirow’s theory presents perspective transformation as a more individual and personal experience of emancipation from the oppression of distorted and dysfunctional meaning schemas. Social action then becomes the choice of the transformed learner.

*Decontextualized view of learning*. Taylor (1997) reports Mezirow ignored the personal and sociocultural factors of the learner’s context that influence the learner’s meaning schemas and the process of transformation. By decontextualizing the subjective influence of social, cultural, and historical discourse creates an imbalance toward the individual dimension of TL.

*Universal model of adult learning.* Mezirow in his goal of developing a universal theory of TL attempts to define universal conditions and rules while adhering to *cultural determinism* where culture acts as a template of organic processes. Mezirow’s theory cannot be both decontextualized on the one hand and culturally deterministic on the other hand. Including cultural and social influences might make a universal theory impossible (Taylor 1997).

*Adult development: shift or progression.* Taylor (1997) argues Mezirow also sees the process of perspective transformation as parallel with the process of adult development, which assumes that a perspective transformation is a move through a series of steps or phases (Mezirow 2000). This position does not consider the normative psychological development of the adult or the socially constructed nature of development. Further Mezirow states that perspective transformation can be either incremental or epochal, occurring is stages or in one transcendent shift of perspective.

*An emphasis on rationality.* According to Taylor (1997) Mezirow’s model relies too heavily on critical reflection based on premise reflection, which is a reflection of why we perceive. Mezirow asserts that premise reflection is a rational examination of assumptions and presuppositions. Mezirow (2000) does acknowledge that TL can take the path of subjective reframing and asserts this subjective reframing generally involves an ‘intense emotional struggle’ as the subject challenges and transforms old perspectives. The transformation takes place on a cognitive-rational level. It can be argued that this is an overly western view of how knowing is constructed, which disregards emotions and intuition.

*Other ways of knowing.* Taylor (1997) also argues that Mezirow has given little attention to the role of other ways of knowing, such as relational learning. For Mezirow the learner’s perspective transformation impacts their relationships. Those relationships are not a source of knowing, nor are they regarded for the influence of trust, support, and caring that relationships can provide to enable or encourage learning. Scholars argue perspective transformation is not the individual and autonomous process described by Mezirow.

*The model of perspective transformation.* Mezirow’s model of TL is supported by some research (Lytle 1989; Cesar 2003), but there may be other stages of perspective transformation not reported by Mezirow. Some studies show Mezirow’s model to be more recursive or spiraling in nature rather than a hierarchy of self-fulfilling steps (Taylor 1997; Scott 2003). Many studies show that the learner needs to express and confront feelings that arise during the critical assessment and resolve them before they can move toward perspective transformation (Coffman 1989; Saavedra 1995; Taylor 1997). In some studies, the learner had to accept with some measure of blind faith the new directions and assumptions would lead to their desired outcome (Morgan 1987; Taylor 1997). These learners suspended their need to assess critically their assumptions.

The disorienting dilemma as a first step is debated by some critics of TL theory. The debate concerns the intensity or how profound in nature the dilemma must be, and why some disorienting dilemmas lead to perspective transformation and others do not (Clark 1993; Pope 1996; Taylor 1997). Scholars also debate the definition of a perspective transformation. Mezirow does not clearly address the implications and consequences of perspective transformation (Clark 1993; Saavedra 1995; Pope 1996; Taylor 1997). Perspective transformation can affect the psychological, the convictional, and the behavioral aspects or the person, lead to spiritual or mystical experiences. Perspective transformation can also increase the learner’s sense of connection with and compassion for others, increase creativity and the sense of freedom (Morgan 1987; Coffman 1989; Clark 1993; Saavedra 1995; Pope 1996; Taylor 1997; Scott 2003).

There is much current research being done on TL for dissertations and theses concerning Mezirow’s model of TL. Much of this research shows other paths to TL. For example, Frank (2005) reports that her research subjects experience of TL was highly individual, hinged on a key insight or learning, involved the emotional and spiritual selves, was assisted in some cases by mentoring, and had an affect on others in the participants’ lives. Wilson (2004) reports that TL was a result of related knowing, that narratives and stories played a large part, participants used metaphors to describe their experience, the process of TL was both emotional and rational, and an external event triggered the process of TL. Wasserman (2004) found that reflection, storytelling, and dialogue fostered TL. McEwen (2004) found that her experience of TL involved multiple intelligences: emotional, intuition, spiritual, body-awareness, and cognitive learning. Harvie (2004) reports the TL process was primarily social in nature rather than individual, and the results were cognitive–affective and cognitive-behavioral.

Taylor’s seven categories of issues with Mezirow’s theory of TL have become the basis of most scholarly critique of Mezirow in the intervening years. Taylor’s critique of Mezirow’s theory of TL reveals many endemic and inherent conflicts, many issues to clarify and resolve, and points to new research directions, all of which will be considered during this research and the subsequent data analysis. At this point, I continue with other critics of TL theory to round out the critique of TL theory.

## Other Critiques of Transformative Learning

Other scholarly critics of TL theory consider the psychological and cognitive development of the subject and the holistic nature of TL. Merriam (2004) asserts that while TL leads to a more mature, autonomous and developed level of thinking, it should also be noted that Mezirow neglects to mention it requires a certain level of cognitive development before TL can be undertaken by the learner. Critical self-reflection and reflective dialogue require a learner to be able to assess critically their deeply held assumptions, fundamentally questioning and reordering how they act and think. Not all learners will be ready to make this critical assessment and educators must be prepared for these learners.

Tennant (1993) reminds us that while perspective transformation can lead to cognitive development it does not lead to psychological development and that educators need to be wary of expecting too much of their learners. Pietrykowski (1996) argues that Mezirow, along with Freire and Habermas, claim an emancipatory end state that Foucault and other postmodern theorists assert is impossible when considering how deeply embedded the concept of power is in the discourse required. Scholars are also challenging the obvious exclusion of the whole person in effecting transformational learning. Illeris (2004) theorizes that a comprehensive learning theory should include cognition, emotion, and environment as a reflection of a whole person in society.

Taylor (1997) cites the difference between Habermas’ description of emancipatory knowledge and TL and Mezirow’s use of emancipatory knowledge as a flaw in Mezirow’s theoretical underpinning. Habermas’ language is much more inclusive of the whole person and their social and historical context, while Mezirow sees TL as a cognitive process. Taylor (1997) shows that this basic difference reveals several endemic and inherent issues for research on TL to investigate and resolve. Robinson (2004) proposes including the spiritual aspect of the self. Yorks and Kasl (2002) propose that TL occurs in a phenomenologically-based frame of reference, which is more congruent with the human experience of holistic learning.

Merriam (2004) points out that not all adult learners will be in the right stage of cognitive development for TL, which may explain why many learners do not experience all ten stages of TL or achieve integration of that learning into their lives. Tennant (1993) shows that TL does not equal psychological development. Pietrykowski (1996) argues that the concept and role of power is too deeply ingrained in the social and historical context of the learner for them to engage fully in the reflective dialogue required to experience TL. Other scholars question whether Mezirow’s theory and model of TL are inclusive of the whole person (Illeris 2004; Robinson 2004), and is not congruent with holistic learning (Yorks and Kasl 2002). This critical analysis of TL theory reveals an emphasis on issues of cognitive and psychological development, along with issues of power and emancipation, and including he whole person in TL are necessary for defining a comprehensive theory of TL.

Critical analysis of the theory of TL as described by Mezirow reveals that Mezirow’s theory should not be viewed as a complete and universal theory of adult learning and adult development. However, this critical analysis of TL theory shows that this theory should remain open to further questioning and further research to clarify Mezirow’s language for describing it and its theoretical underpinnings (Cranton 1994; Taylor 1998; Mezirow 2000).

## Other Models of Learning and Development

In addition to TL, there are other theories of adult learning that might inform my analysis of the TL participants’ experiences of AI events. Much of adult learning theory is derived from Dewey’s (1938) concept of experiential learning, which holds that learning is as much a physiological process as it is a cognitive process and that combining hands on experience makes the learning experience more meaningful. The theories discussed in this section may inform the analysis of the data collected in this research project and may also suggests topics for further research and new research directions for TL.

Mezirow’s theory of TL is often compared to Freire’s (1993) theory of liberation education*, Conscientization*, in which the instructor consciously intends to engage in liberating the student from oppression. The oppressed student is not an abstract concept isolated from the world but an active participant in their world. The oppressed and the oppressor actively create and sustain the systems of oppression.

In traditional education, the instructor deposits wisdom and knowledge and the goal of education is producing a student who fits the existing systems of oppression. In liberation education, the instructor becomes a problem-poser rather than one who deposits wisdom and knowledge. In the role of problem-poser, it is the instructor’s goal to develop the student’s critical consciousness of their assumptions and their context. The instructor assists the student in developing critical consciousness through the skill of dialogue. It is through open and honest dialogue conducted with humility, love, and respect that the *praxis* of action and reflection occurs. Critical consciousness leads to conscientization, in which the student moves from complete unawareness of how their assumptions and their context shape one’s life through dialogue and praxis. Critical consciousness empowers the student in how they name the world and the phenomena they encounter.

Freire differs from Mezirow in seeking freedom from oppression through liberation education, where Mezirow’s TL treats emancipation from oppression as an ancillary benefit of education. Freire also sees the student as a contextual being, connected, dependent on, and defining their world. As noted above in the critique by Taylor, Mezirow is often criticized for not including the whole person and decontextualizing the process of TL.

Revans (1982) sees the link between critical reflection and action and uses it to define a theory of learning designed originally for management development called Action Learning. Action learning requires participants to partake in real and complex problems while asking questions about what knowledge exists and reflecting on their actions during and after the problem solving. Action learning’s goals are well defined by the organization and individual change is directed at achieving those goals. This leaves little room in the literature of action learning for personal stories of transformation. The focus on organizational learning may provide a basis for comparing the data collected in this research to Revans’ theories.

Some adult development theorists begin with Carl Jung’s model of life stages: *youth, middle age, and old age.* Theorists such as Levinson (1978) describe development in well-defined stages of life based on age. Erikson (Erikson and Erikson 1997) describes development in terms of a questioning of assumptions. While I will collect in my research age and sex data for each research participant, this research project may not collect enough detail concerning these theories and any similarities to these theories in my analysis of the data will suggest further research topics.

Gould (1979) views adult development as a passage between the resolution of four key assumptions that drive four well defined age groups. In Gould’s model, there is no defining crisis; developmental movement through stages depends on questioning the key assumptions:

I’ll always live in my parents world

Doing things my parent’s way, with persistence, will bring results

Life is simple and controllable; I have no contradictions within me

There is no death; there is no evil

In the fifth and final life stage, there are no questioning of assumptions, only an acceptance and appreciation of what one has and has accomplished. This research may not collect enough detail concerning Gould’s theories and any similarities to these theories in my analysis of the data will suggest further research topics.

Gould believes that we develop as adults by solving personal problems based in the dilemmas created by adhering to the statements defining each of the stages. Through a process of experimentation, experience and learning to make good decisions we master bad habits, fear and misconceptions. This development reduces the impact of the left over childhood consciousness, which is an act of confronting layer after layer of buried childhood pain. Gould’s definition of Adult development states that personal change generates internal conflict as the childhood unconscious is uncovered and its issues are resolved. This happens in a three-stage process. First, we are confronted with a demand for a new pattern of behavior. Then, we change our pattern of behavior while sorting out the confusion between current reality and the pain of the past. Last, we arrive at a clear and grounded understanding of current reality. This process helps us resolve each stage and prepares us for the next.

Rooke, Fisher, and Torbert (Rooke and Torbert 1998; Rooke, Fisher et al. 2001) propose a model which compares the personal development stages of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) to the organizations stages of development. After several decades of studying manager and executive levels of personal development Rooke, Fisher and Torbert developed eight stages of personal development, which they match to eight corresponding stages of organizational development. Rooke, Fisher and Torbert theorize that it is at the sixth stage of personal development, the *Strategist/Leader*, when CEOs can begin to effect transformation with in the organization, which is in the *Collaborative Inquiry* stage. The authors use the Washington University Sentence Completion Test (SCT) to assess the CEO’s personal development stage. Critics of this theory state that it focuses too strongly on the CEO and ignores the organization as a whole and the other key players in organizational transformation (Rooke and Torbert 1998; Porter 2002). Since I will not be conducting the SCT with the participants of my study comparisons to Rooke, Fisher, and Torbert will be difficult, although their descriptions of the personal development stages might be useful.

Bronfenbrenner (2004) looks at human development as it is influenced by ecological spheres, the *microsystem, messosystem, macrosystem*, and how they effect several key dimensions. As it applies to an organization, the ecology of human development would consider how the members interact with each other (microsystem), then how the members interact with their immediate external stakeholders (messosystem), and finally how the organization interacts with its greater environment (macrosystem). The AI event may be inclusive of, or representative of, each of Bronfenbrenner’s systems so it may be possible to compare the data collected in this research to his theories.

Another model of TL is proposed by Jane Taylor (1989) in her master’s thesis. Taylor’s model of the process of TL is more general in nature and does not include many of the specific process or events that Mezirow’s model proposes. Taylor sees the process of TL proceeding of three phases in which the learner becomes conscious of a new reality, transforms their consciousness, and integrates the new consciousness into their life. Please refer to Table 2 for J. Taylor’s model of the process of TL.

Table 2

*J. Taylor’s Model of TL*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Phase I: Generation of Consciousness |  |
| Step 1 | Encountering trigger events |
| Step 2 | Confronting reality |
| Phase II: Transformation of consciousness |  |
| Step 3 | Reaching the transition point |
| Step 4 | Shift or leap of transcendence |
| Phase III: Integration of consciousness |  |
| Step 5 | Personal commitment |
| Step 6 | Grounding and development |

Taylor reports the disorienting dilemma may be internally induced by the learner as well as externally induced and is a result of confronting a new reality through a trigger event. Transcendence can be sudden or gradual but the learner is aware of a conscious leap of faith. Personal commitment to the new perspective and acting on the new perspective integrate the change of meaning perspective into the learner’s life.

Other theorists, such as Cranton (1994), Kolb (1984), Boyd (1989; 1991), and Dirkx (2000; 2001), base their theories on Carl Jung’s theories of personality type. Cranton (1994) uses Jung’s eight basic personality types based on the functions of *extroversion and introversion, thinking and feeling, sensation and intuition.* These types were developed in Jung’s study of differentiated individuation based on the interaction of internal subjective forces and external circumstances. Differentiation is the ability to use one function independently of another and individuation is a process of differentiation with the goal of developing the individual personality. Since these personality types have been well studied and are supported in much research they provide a solid basis for determining how TL varies among adult learners. Cranton uses these types to show how personality type can influence personal learning styles. Cranton compares each type to a series of components leading to TL and the likelihood that they would engage in each component of TL. Cranton’s model is a variation of Mezirow’s model of the process of TL, which Cranton has used without reference to the MBTI personality types. Please refer to Table 3 for Cranton’s model of TL.

Table 3

*Cranton’s Model of TL*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | Awareness of values and assumptions |
| 2 | Receptiveness to trigger events |
| 3 | Questioning of values and assumptions |
| 4 | Content and process reflection |
| 5 | Premise reflection |
| 6 | Rational discourse |
| 7 | Revision of values and assumptions |
| 8 | Revision of meaning perspectives |

Cranton finds each personality type is likely to engage in some of the components but none will engage in all of the components. Yet TL does occur. This implies that the path of TL will be different for each adult learner. Cranton finds the learner’s personality type, how differentiated or individuated each learner is, should be accounted for in promoting TL. I will collect basic background data for each research participant, I do not expect each participant to know their Jungian personality type, although the MBTI assessment is common. Any similarities concerning Cranton’s theories in my analysis of the data will suggest further research topics, or new directions for research concerning TL.

Kolb’s (1984) theory of experiential learning is based on the creation of knowledge as it relates to learner’s experiences. Learners accomplish their transformations by moving through four learning phases: *Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation.* This process facilitates learner’s full integration of their experiences into TL. Kolb (1985) also theorizes learners have a natural learning style based on these four phases, which can reveal strengths and weaknesses in their ability to integrate their experiences into TL. Kolb and others have found that this learning style preference is linked to Jung’s basic personality types. The experiential nature of the AI event may lend itself to comparison with Kolb’s theory of experiential learning. The data collected in this research project may reveal the research participant’s natural learning preference and may provide a basis to compare the data to both Kolb’s theories and to Cranton’s theories.

Boyd (1989; 1991) defines transformative learning, from a Jungian perspective, as a fundamental change in personality resulting from both the resolution of a personal dilemma and the expansion of consciousness fostering a greater integration of the personality. Boyd finds this is a result of individual conflicts within the psyche. Boyd describes a whole person centered process including the ego and the collective unconscious. TL is a process of discernment, or contemplative insight involving listening, recognizing the need to choose, and confronting and reconciling grief*.* Boyd’s transformation is transpersonal, where the ego is a servant of the spirit, while Mezirow’s transformation is personal and the ego is dominant. The rational nature is vulnerable to the unconscious and unable to realize fully the new perspectives gained from critical reflection. Comparison of the data collected in this research to Boyd’s theories of transformation may yield fruitful results.

Dirkx’s (2000; 2001) exploration of TL begins with Boyd’s (1989; 1991) use of Jungian theory, but moves to another of Jung’s concepts. Jung suggests that it is helpful to look for the image that lie behind and ultimately drive emotions and behavior. Dirkx theorizes that emotional experiences are the link between the unconscious and the conscious and enable deep TL experiences. Emotions are often associated with voices or images that convey a deep, inner life that cannot be controlled by force of will or connected to reason. Spontaneously appearing images are gateways to the unconscious self. These images often connect the inner and outer self, through emotions and help make meaning of the world. These images are tied then to our initial construction of meaning and are constructed through imagination and fantasy. Mezirow’s TL theory, with its preference for the cognitive, asks how or why of our transformative experiences. Dirkx suggests we ask ourselves during learning experiences what the emotions we are also experiencing remind us of in our past. When have we felt these emotions before? What was going on then? Who was involved? Asking these questions might surface the image that connects these emotions to the experience at hand. Dirkx suggests a strategy for making use of these images in a positive and transformative manner.

Describe the image as clearly as is possible

Associate the image with other aspects of our lives

Amplify the image through stories, poetry, fairy tales, or myths

Animate the image by allowing it to talk or interact with us through additional fantasy or imagining.

Dirkx’s research suggests interesting means of coping with the negative emotions that Mezirow’s model suggest must be engaged and provides some basis for the use of appreciative inquiry’s positive principle and poetic principle in providing a context for TL. Dirkx’s theory may prove useful in analyzing the data collected in this research.

## Summary of Transformative Learning

TL is the change in the meaning schemas, accompanied by changes in ways of being, resulting in new perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors integrated in new roles and relationships as these changes are integrated into the subject’s life. TL takes place through critical self-reflection, reflective dialogue, and reflective action, over a series of ten stages (Mezirow 1978; 1990; 1991; 2000). Lytle (1989) and Cesar’s (2003) research shows that while most students will experience some of the stages of TL not all students will experience all ten stages of TL. Lytle shows us that a student must experience all nine previous stages before they will be able to experience stage ten, a reintegration of the learning into their life (Lytle 1989).

Yorks and Marsick (2000) confirm that TL does occur in organizational learning initiatives and recommend that TL for the individual members of the organization’s organizational learning initiatives despite the possible conflict between the organization’s goals and the individual’s goals. O’Hara (2003) finds that group and individual transformations co-mingle, leading the individuals participating to a higher state that enables deeper learning and transformations of greater impact for both.

Scott (2003) proposes that social transformation is a result of changes at the individual level, happening in an interrelationship where transformation of the social and personal co-emerge simultaneously. O’Hara’s and Scott’s findings describe the interdependence between organizational transformation and individual transformation. If TL does occur at the organizational and individual level and personal and organizational transformation are interdependent, then individual TL might be a result of participation in organizational development initiatives.

Mezirow’s theory of TL is not a complete and universal theory of adult learning and development so this research will consider other theories of TL, transformation, adult learning, and adult development. Theorists such as Gould (1979) Cranton (1994), Kolb (1984; 1985), Boyd (1989; 1991), and Dirkx (2000; 2001) may describe the experience of AI participants as well as, or more fully than Mezirow.

## Appreciative Inquiry

### Appreciative Inquiry History and Context

The field of organizational development has promulgated many organizational change and intervention models since Trist and Emery’s Bristol-Sidderly search Conference in the early 1960’s. A few examples of these are the Search Conferences, Participative Democratic Design, Preferred Futuring, Future Search, Whole-Scale Change, and Appreciative Inquiry. These models are often based on Lewin’s field theories of social organizations and his theory that an organizational change would follow the model of an un-thawing, changing, and refreezing of the organization (Weisbord 1987; 1992; Lewin 1997; Holman and Devane 1999). Organizational change requires an organizational design for change, and an individual level of awareness to accomplish TL at an individual level.

This level of individual learning might be confused with a field of organizational development known as organizational learning. Organizational learning’s goal is the improvement of the organizations performance, restructuring of values, and enhance the organization’s capacity for learning (Argyris and Schon 1978; Senge 1994; 1996). The focus of this research is at the individual level, not the organization. In this section, I will discuss the theories, design, and methods of AI to show AI as an appropriate organizational initiative for this research project.

Appreciative inquiry’s use as an organizational development initiative has grown exponentially since Cooperrider introduced the concept in 1986. AI was used as a means of dialogic discovery used to uncover the egalitarian organization (Cooperrider 1986). Cooperrider states appreciative inquiry’s basic premise:

Human systems construct their worlds in the direction of what they persistently ask questions about, and this propensity is strongest and most sustainable when the means and ends of inquiry are positively correlated. The single most prolific thing a group can do, if it aims to liberate the human spirit and consciously construct a better future, is to make the “positive change core” of any system the common and explicit property of all (Cooperrider 2002, p. ix).

AI is more than a method of appreciative questioning or a positive mindset, AI is a new paradigm for viewing our relationships with knowledge and learning capital in organizations and other social relationships. AI applies its unique philosophy through five principles (Cooperrider 1986; Srivastva and Cooperrider 1999; Cooperrider, Sorrensen et al. 2000; Fry and Barrett 2002).

*The Constructionist Principle:* Meaning, knowledge, and learning are constructed through “discursive interchanges and social interactions, through processes of negotiation, conflict, improvisation, and the like (Gergen 1999)” thus the way we know is fateful.

*The Principle of Simultaneity:* Inquiry and change in organizations are not separate incidents but are the self-fulfilling destiny of the questions we ask and the images of the future that they provoke, change begins with the questions we ask and at the moment we ask them.

*The Poetic Principle:* Organizational systems are not closed books but are narratives constantly unfolding in a never-ending story, constantly being co-authored by its members, and AI writes the next chapter in that story.

*The Anticipatory Principle:* In human systems the anticipated or projected future state influences the expectations, language and behaviors of the members, thus deep change is a result of changing the system’s imagery of the future.

*The Positive Principle:* Hope, interest, motivation, caring, positive effect and social bonding, long lasting and sustainable change are a response to the unconditional positive question. Positive inquiry creates positive anticipation, positive images of the future, and leads to positive response freeing members of the system to construct a new positive reality and positive expectations, positive language, and positive behaviors (Cooperrider 1986; Srivastva and Cooperrider 1999; Cooperrider, Sorrensen et al. 2000; Fry and Barrett 2002).

The AI event is generally delivered in a *summit* format, which includes four stages in which participants are facilitated through a discovery of their organization’s positive core, and then participate in designing the intervention that will yield their desired end state. Some practitioners start with a Fifth D: Define, in which the facilitators and the client organization clearly define the topic or focus of the AI in advance of the event (Leadership 2000). Here I describe each of the four stages in general terms to show how AI might be a context for TL.

*Discovery* is a search to understand the "best of what is" and "what has been." This phase begins with collaboration in constructing appreciative interview questions, and constructing an appreciative interview guide. AI questions are written as affirmative probes into an organization’s positive core, in the topic areas selected. They are written to generate stories, to enrich the images and inner dialogue within the organization, and to bring the positive core more fully into focus. *Dream:* is an exploration and envisioning what might be in light of the best of what the system might be. Participants express their hopes and dreams in sessions that enable them to think beyond their current boundaries and experiences of the past. *Design:* Participantsdesign through dialogue the ideal future state for the system, or what should be. These plans often begin with ‘provocative propositions’, which expand the expectations of what their organization should be aligning the positive past with the highest potential. *Destiny:* Participants commit to plans and action steps that will create and sustain the highest potential of the organization, co-constructing the future designed above, and leading to ‘inspired actions (Cooperrider, Sorrensen et al. 2000; Cooperrider and Whitney 2000; Ludema, Whitney et al. 2003).

## Appreciative Inquiry and Transformation

In a seminal study of transformations reported as resulting from AI events Bushe and Khamisa (2004) conduct a meta analysis of twenty AI case studies searched for the presence or absence of transformational change. The authors defined transformation in the context of their study as a major shift in the state of being or the identity of the organization, developed a persistent generative metaphor, and developed a new set of background assumptions. This is very similar to Mezirow’s definition of TL. Not all case studies examined by Bushe and Khamisa offered evidence of a transformation. In the cases studied, thirty-five percent reported cases transformational outcomes and in all of the positive cases new knowledge, models or theories, and a generative metaphor, which compelled action, resulted. Bushe and Khamisa also found eighty-three of the positive cases used an improvisational approach to the destiny phase of the Appreciative Inquiry.

Bushe and Khamisa’s focus is on the organization and its transformation. Many of the author’s they cite discuss individual reports of transformation as an outcome of participation in appreciative inquiries. Since these studies are focused on organizational transformation, they do not specifically compare their findings to theories of adult learning and development. I will discuss some of the transformations reported in these research projects individually below. The case studies cited by Bushe and Khamisa are collected together in Fry, Barrett, and et al’s (2002) edited work.

Mohr, Smith, et al in their case study, report changes in behavior and attitude, an increase in confidence and participation, along with an increase in the transfer of learning and data in their case study of an intervention based on AI (Mohr, Smith et al. 2000). For example, this passage shows that some of the participants of Mohr, Smith, et al’s case study had the opportunity to provisionally try new roles and relationships, which lead to an increased experience of confidence.

It was a bit like doing rehearsals. Now I have greater confidence in what I’m doing. I feel assurance about my own decisions. Now I ask more confidently in real life (Mohr, Smith et al. 2000).

While Mohr, Smith, et al report transformations consistent with TL they do not report of participants experiencing all ten stages of TL (Mezirow 1978; Lytle 1989; 1990; 1991; 2000; Cesar 2003).

In Schiller’s case study reports of changes in the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of the members of an organization toward issues of gender and the women members of that organization are cited, including integration into the lives of participant’s (Schiller 2002). For example in this study, some of the participants have clearly critically reassessed their roles and relationships and experienced a transformation in their meaning perspectives.

Individuals reported that the AI way of thinking and asking questions affected other parts of their lives, including profoundly changing their relationships with their families. “This works,” said a human resources manager. “I tried this at home with my kids. Now I am ready to try it at work (Schiller 2002).”

Schiller’s study is important for showing appreciative inquiry can lead to the integration of transformation into the participant’s life but does not report all of Mezirow’s ten stages of TL (Mezirow 1978; Lytle 1989; 1990; 1991; 2000; Cesar 2003).

Trosten-Bloom’s case study describes changes in perception and ways of being that led to an organizational change that had an effect on both the internal and external stakeholders of the Windows Fashion Division of the Hunter Douglas Company, which included dramatic increases in morale, performance, profitability, and sustainability (Trosten-Bloom 2002). For example, Trosten-Bloom reports provisional trying of new roles and responsibilities and the empowering effect of exercising power for the greater good.

Our key finding is that AI gives people the experience of personal and collective power. It gives them practice exercising power – and doing so responsibly, for the good of the whole. Having once experienced this liberation of power and the effect it has on their lives and the world, people are permanently transformed (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2003).

Trosten-Bloom shows that these transformations are sustainable over several years (Trosten-Bloom 2002), but does not report of participants experiencing all ten stages of TL (Mezirow 1978; Lytle 1989; 1990; 1991; 2000; Cesar 2003).

Van Buskirk’s (2002) case study provides an analysis of an AI conducted in an urban school system includes a discussion of the individual transformations that resulted from the AI experience. For example, Van Buskirk describes the transformation experienced by some of his case studies participants.

Its power is exerted through three transformations: (1) it transforms perceptions of how individuals relate to their past experiences in the organization, (2) it transforms how they relate to the best experiences of others, and (3) it transforms how they relate to the cherished traditions of the organization (Van Buskirk 2002).

Van Buskirk attributes these individual transformations to the shift from a negative to positive resulting in the positive aspects becoming explicit rather than tacit. Privately held assumptions become public, and energy, creativity, and spontaneity are unleashed to reframe the new vision of the organization at its best (Van Buskirk 2002). These individual transformations described by Van Buskirk also indicate TL as defined by Mezirow but do not report if any of the participants experienced all ten stages of TL (Mezirow 1978; Lytle 1989; 1990; 1991; 2000; Cesar 2003).

The studies outlined by Bushe and Khamisa (2004) give anecdotal confirmation that transformations do take place at an individual level. They also confirm stages of TL are experienced by participants of appreciative inquiries. These studies, however, do not show that any of the participant’s have experienced all ten stages of TL as described by Mezirow (Mezirow 1978; Lytle 1989; 1990; 1991; 2000; Cesar 2003). Schiller (2002) and Van Buskirk’s (2002) studies report AI participants have integrated their transformations into their lives, implying stages of TL have been experienced by some participants of the AI event. Schiller and Van Buskirk’s studies do not make explicit that these participants have experienced all ten stages of TL. This analysis of AI case studies reveals a need for research that makes explicit the relationship, or the lack of relationship, between the AI event participants’ experience of transformation with the theory of TL.

## Discussion of the Critique of Appreciative Inquiry

Although the theory of AI is twenty years old, there is very little scholarly critique of this theory. Scholarly literature has been focused on methods and success stories. Golembiewski offers the most thorough critique. First, Golembiewski (1999; Livingston 1999; 2000) states that AI’s basis in social-constructionism limits its ability to develop an empirical base of research and leads researchers to a form of advocacy rather than a scientific approach. Golembiewski notes the tendency for practitioners to be satisfied with asking,

What is your best experience of X and what are you doing to support it?

This minimizes the power of narrative and storytelling endemic to true AI. Second, Golembiewski notes that the enthusiastic exploration of the positive is ‘heliotropic.’ This positive focus may be ignoring the whole of the organizational unconscious and the very real and important negative or neutral internal dialogue necessary to institute organizational change. This may lead to a ‘crisis of agreement’ or an ‘Abilene paradox’ and lead to benchmarking only positive progress.

Bushe (1998) worries that any inquiry with a positive focus might be called AI while neglecting the theoretical foundations of AI leading to a dilution or corruption of the practice and dooming it prematurely. Bushe is also concerned that the zeal for positive appreciation without a practical foundation can disappear as quickly as the energy and enthusiasm grew to begin with.

These critiques caution the AI practitioner to attend to the theoretical foundations of AI and follow through completely in its practice. AI practitioners should also be aware of the tendency to see situations through rose-colored glasses to the exclusion of the whole dialogue necessary for organizational change.

## Summary of Appreciative Inquiry

The literature of AI shows that individuals experience transformations in perception, attitude, and behavior that can be compared to TL. Mohr, Smith, et al (2000) found these transformations resulted in increased confidence and competence in addition to an increased transfer of learning and data. Schiller (2002) reports improved gender relations, and appreciation for gender issues. Trosten-Bloom (2002) reports increases in morale, profitability and sustainability. Van Buskirk (2002) reports transformations in relation to past experiences, others best experiences, and the organizations traditions.

Bushe and Khamisa (2004) found these studies represent organizations, which exhibited signs of transformation consistent with transformational learning: a major shift in the state of being or the identity of the organization, developed a persistent generative metaphor, and developed a new set of background assumptions. The case studies in Bushe and Khamisa’s meta-analysis also report individual transformations consistent with TL but do not show all ten stages being experienced by the participants of the appreciative inquires studied. In this section, I have discussed AI outcomes for the organization and for the participants and found them similar to TL. I have also discussed critiques of AI. In the next section, I will discuss the possible relationship between AI and TL.

The Relationship between Appreciative Inquiry and Transformative Learning

As I have discussed in the previous sections, the experiences of individuals participating in AI events can be viewed as similar to experiences of TL as described by Mezirow. In this section, I describe the possible theoretical relationships between appreciative inquiry and transformative learning by comparing the 4D design of the appreciative inquiry summit, as defined by Cooperrider, et al. (Cooperrider and Whitney 2000) and the phases of transformative learning as defined by Mezirow (1981).

The AI event is focused on a specific topic, which could be construed as a disorienting dilemma in TL. In the AI event’s discovery phase the appreciative interviews, positive core mapping, and the continuity search create a climate of critical assessment of assumptions and self-examination of feelings along with developing the recognition that their desire for change and the process of change are shared. This context also promotes reflective dialogue in the AI interviews and in small and large group discussions. It is of interest to my research that AI event causes the participants to self-examine their positive feelings of hope, strengths, competencies, relationships, etcetera, while TL encourages the self-examination of fear, anger, guilt, and shame.

In the AI event’s dream phase the participants are encouraged to share, bring to life, and enact their dreams. This provides summit participants the opportunity to explore and provisionally try new roles, relationships, and actions. In the AI event’s design phase, the participants select high impact design elements and craft provocative propositions. This affords them a chance to acquire new knowledge and skills and build their sense of competence and their sense of confidence in their new roles, relationships and courses of action. In the AI event’s destiny phase participants generate lists of possible actions, select inspired actions, and form emergent task groups to begin a reintegration into their lives their new perspectives.

## Positive Psychology

The field of *positive psychology* was introduced by Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in an effort to understand and foster the factors that allow individuals, communities, and societies to survive and flourish. Research in the field of positive psychology is quickly gaining empirical evidence that positive emotions, character strengths, and virtues are vital to human creativity and resilience (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Fredrickson 2001). Seligman (1995) theorizes that positive psychology might be used to help gain *mastery, positivity,* and an *explanatory* s*tyle* that build optimism, an important trait in mental health. Positive Psychology might hold clues to the role of positive emotions in the AI event experience and the role of negative emotions in TL. Fredrickson’s (2001) research shows that positive emotional experiences invoke a broadening of responses and an increase in the creativity in problem-solving. Positive emotions also motivate the subject to continue in a line of reasoning or course of action longer than subjects experiencing negative emotions. This indicates that subjects experiencing positive emotions are more likely to find more viable, and more sustainable solutions to their problems.

## Summary of the Literature Review

According to Mezirow, TL is a transformation of meaning schemas, which takes place through three reflective processes: critical self-reflection, reflective dialogue, and reflective action, and they occur over ten stages. These transformations result in the acquisition of new perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors integrated into new roles and relationships as these changes are integrated into the subject’s life (Mezirow 1978; 1990; 1991; 2000). These transformations are evident both to the participant and to others. Many, but not all participants will experience TL, and only those who experience the first nine steps will meet the final stage of TL: a re-integration into the participant’s life (Lytle 1989; Cesar 2003). For the transformative learning of the individual leads to greater transformations for the other members (O'Hara 2005) and the individual’s transformation co-emerges with the organization’s transformation (Scott 2003).

Mezirow’s theory of TL is not a complete and universal theory of adult learning and development, so this research will consider other theories of TL, transformation, adult learning, and adult development. Theorists such as Gould (1979) Cranton (1994), Kolb (1984; 1985), and Boyd (1989; 1991) may describe the experience of AI participants as well as, or more fully than Mezirow. These theorists among others will be considered when analyzing the data collected in this research project.

The literature of AI shows that individuals experience transformations in perception, attitude, and behavior, which can be compared to TL. These transformations have a positive and beneficial effect on the organization as a whole. Bushe and Khamisa’s (2004) meta analysis of AI case studies report organizations whose participants exhibited TL. At the organizational level, these transformations consist of a major shift in the state of being or the identity of the organization, developed a persistent generative metaphor, and developed a new set of background assumptions.

These appreciative inquiries resulted in individual transformations consistent with TL, including increased confidence and competence in addition to increased transfer of learning and data (Mohr, Smith et al. 2000). These transformations improved gender relations, and appreciation for gender issues (Schiller 2002), and led to increases in morale, profitability and sustainability (Trosten-Bloom 2002). Personal transformations in relation to past experiences, others best experiences, and the organizations traditions are also reported (Van Buskirk 2002). None of these studies report all ten of Mezirow’s stages were met (Mezirow 1978; Lytle 1989; 1990; 1991; 2000; Cesar 2003).

The field of positive psychology might also give insight into the ability of learners to complete the process of TL while engaging in a self-examination with negative feelings. The field of positive psychology (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000) might help explain the differences between the positive emotional experiences of AI participants and TL emphasis on a self-examination with negative feelings, and explain how the AI event becomes so significant for the creativity and insight claimed by its participants.

## The Gaps in the Literature

It is apparent that during an appreciative inquiry, transformation for some participants co-emerges with the organization’s own transformation and that these transformations are consistent with TL. It is also possible that the AI summit enables TL for some of the participants. While this review of the literature supports these conclusions, I have not found research that specifically compares Mezirow’s theory of TL to the experiences of participants of organizational development initiatives, in particular appreciative inquiry.

## Research Questions

The review of the literatures and research concerning the theories of TL and AI with the possible relationship between TL and AI, and the gaps in the literature lead me to the following research questions, which I will address in this study. My primary research questions are:

How do participants of appreciative inquiry summits or training understand and make meaning of their experiences of change relating to their participation in an appreciative inquiry event?

How do the AI event participant’s experiences compare to the theory of TL as defined by Mezirow, and how does TL theory describe their experiences?

Of secondary interest to this study, is the research question: How does AI’s focus on positive emotions compare to TL theories emphasis on the examination of feelings of anger, guilt, and shame?

# Chapter Three: Methods

## Introduction

The literature review indicates changes occur in individuals during organizational development initiatives such as an AI event, and that some of those changes might be described as transformative learning (Mohr, Smith et al. 2000; Schiller 2002; Trosten-Bloom 2002; Van Buskirk 2002). This study explores, describes, and analyzes these experiences as described by the participants in this study. In this chapter, I explain the research design, including the interview protocol and the methods of data collection and the method of data analysis.

## Research Design

This study consisted of semi-structured in-depth interviews with twenty-one research participants who indicated by self-selection that they could attribute positive changes in their lives to an AI event. The research participants discussed in depth their understandings and the meaning they made of their experiences. Using this research design, I pursued emergent patterns and themes that relate to the study through both an inductive method of open and axial coding and a deductive method of coding for TL in the data. This approach allowed for the exploration of emergent patterns and themes. It also supported the incorporation of the early findings into the data collection process through several iterations of data analysis. An iterative approach is common in qualitative research.

### Sample Selection

After receiving Institutional Review Board approval for my research methods and interview protocol, I recruited potential participants who indicated they could speak to the dissertation topic. They indicated they were available for interviews, both face-to-face and by telephone. Please refer to Appendix A for the Institutional Review Board Approval form. I approached potential research participants through facilitators of appreciative inquiries, whom I found on the AI Commons, a web site dedicated to the sharing of knowledge and resources related to AI, and by searching the Internet for consultants and consulting groups using AI. I also contacted research participants through the AI Commons list serv and with a posting to a university’s community web site. I used the written recruitment script for these postings. Please refer to Appendix C for the written recruitment script. Consultants and students who saw and responded to my recruitment postings also referred potential research participants. The recruitment process included emailing and telephoning potential research participants. I selected a sample population of twenty-one research participants based from those who responded to my recruitment. All participants were able to commit to an interview during the interview period. Since the sample was limited to respondents who met my criteria and agreed to be interviewed in the research timeframe available it is a convenience sample.

It was important to limit the participants to those respondents who believed changes in their behavior, attitudes, or values were related to their positive experience of an AI event. Since this population was self-selected, it may not be representative of other populations or the population of AI participants as a whole. Nineteen of the interviews were conducted by telephone, one was conducted by telephone and instant messaging, and one interview was conducted face-to-face. The variation in the interview approach was due to the geographic dispersion of the population sample and time constraints. The sample population included people who were participants of AI summits, facilitators of AI summits, and participants of AI foundations training. Some participants were both participants and facilitators of AI Summits.

A risk of interviewing a self-selected population is that some of the interviewees may not be able to articulate their experiences, or be able to be sufficiently introspective, to express themselves concerning the topic of this study. I mitigated this risk by presenting multiple examples from the literature reviewed and from early interviews. It was important to present these as examples of possible experiences, not as an indication of the limit of possible experiences. For example, some of the early interviews indicated changes in physical appearance, the loss or letting go of negative relationships, a sensation of energy and the feeling of enthusiasm. All research participants indicated they were willing to be interviewed again if I needed to clarify something in their transcript.

### Procedure

*Recruitment.* Research participants were recruited through referrals by AI facilitators who identified potential research participants. There were participants who self-selected by responding to postings on the AI Commons list serv and a university community site. Those who nominated potential research participants, and the potential research participant’s group or organization, did not learn who ultimately chose to participate, or did not choose to participate, in this study. Potential research participants were approached by email, in person, or by phone to determine their interest and availability for this study. The verbal recruitment script, Appendix B, was read to each research participant to inform his or her decision to participate in the study. I was aware of the possibility of influencing the participant early in the process so I provided the same information to all potential participants during this phase. The research participants were encouraged to discuss their experiences in their own manner and without regard to the language of the theories of TL and AI.

Participants were informed that procedures are in place to ensure their anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses. I explained to participants they would be referred to by a pseudonym and their actual names will not appear on any of the research materials. Pseudonyms were provided for their organizations and other people mentioned in their interviews. Interviewees were told the Informed Consent Forms are stored separately from other research materials. I explained that access to their data is controlled by placing the data in a locked filing cabinet in my home office and that their audio recordings will be stored in an encrypted folder on a hard drive on my personal computer. I explained that transcripts, recordings, and other research materials may be used in future research and publications, maintaining the same confidentiality and anonymity.

Once participants indicated their willingness to participate in this study, an appointment was arranged for conducting the interview. Arrangements were made to ensure the meeting locations would protect the confidentiality and security of the participant.

*Informed consent.* Before beginning the interview or collecting any data, I read the implied consent document to the potential participant. I explained, in detail, how confidentiality and security of data are addressed and maintained. The research participants who choose to sign the informed consent form were thanked for their willingness to participate in the voluntary study and were given a signed copy of the form. Please refer to Appendix D Informed Consent Form.

*Data collection.* I conducted the interviews in a semi-structured format, which provided enough structure to maintain a focus on the research participant’s AI event experience. This semi-structured format allowed me to remain present and alert, and to adapt the interview to the participant’s responses. I prepared for each interview by reading the Literature Review and the interview protocol. The semi-structured interview schedule included introductory comments, key questions, associated probing questions, and closing comments. The semi-structured interview schedule allowed me to remain directive and responsive during the interview maintaining a focus on the research topic through the careful use of the probing questions: for example, “Can you explain what that felt like to you?” And, “Do you have any specific examples of …?” The research participants expressed divergent thoughts and experiences, which were recorded. The interview schedule assisted in managing and organizing the data collected.

I carried out twenty-one qualitative, in-depth interviews of sixty to ninety minutes in length. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed later. I took notes during the interview to contribute to my recollections of the interview. I noted tone and hesitation in the telephone interviews, and tone, hesitations, facial expression, and body language in the face-to-face interview. I also noted themes as they emerged. I followed the semi-structured interview protocol described. I used clarifying and probing questions to clarify a key question for a participant or to probe deeper into a participant’s response. I conducted the semi-structured interviews in a manner that gave the participants enough freedom to speak honestly from their experience while maintaining enough control of the interview to stay on topic. The sequencing of the key questions and use of the probing questions were responsive to the research participant’s comments and receptiveness.

### Setting

The setting for the interviews was dependent on the availability of a suitable setting that ensured privacy for the research participant. I conducted nineteen interviews by phone due to the geographic disbursement of the research population and time constraints. I conducted one interview by both phone and instant messaging. Instant messaging is a form of internet communication where participants communicate synchronously rather than asynchronously as is done in traditional email. For this interview, I conducted the introduction to the interview and read the oral recruitment script and the informed consent documents to the research participant over the telephone. I then posed the questions in the interview protocol in instant messenger sessions. As each posting was answered, I posted the next question or a probing question. I conducted one interview face-to-face in a conference room. All research participants were able to be in a quiet room, which evoked a safe environment, free from interruption, disturbance or eavesdropping. This setting was designed to allow the research participant to speak freely and comfortably.

*Background information questionnaire.* Each potential participant was asked to complete a basic background information questionnaire before conducting the interview. The basic background data collected was used for locating trends or patterns in the data. Please refer to Appendix E for the Background Information Questionnaire.

### Interview Protocol

*Introduction to the interview.* To provide structure and direction for the interview, I developed a series of questions designed to elicit a descriptive narrative of their AI event experiences. The questions also were concerned with the process and stages of Mezirow’s TL. Basing the interview protocol on a theoretical foundation provided direction and structure for the interview and allowed me to understand the responses in relation to the research study. I opened the interview by thanking the participant, making her or him feel welcome, and briefly describing the research study with some introductory remarks.

To make the interview more personal and relevant I sometimes substituted words and phrases in questions. The interview protocol included questions relating to the context of the experience, the emotions they felt during the experience and the stages of TL. The phrase *AI event* was replaced with the name or the topic of the event the research participant attended. For example, “Revisioning Any Corp for the year 2000: Becoming more competitive in a global market place,” the group or organization would become “Any Corp”, and the AI topic was changed to “Becoming more competitive in a global market place.”

Question 1 is open-ended and intended to allow the research participant to tell the story of their participation in the AI event (Wengraf 2001; Fontana and Frey 2003). The questions that follow are moderately structured and are intended to probe and clarify the research participants’ response to question 1. I concluded the interview by inquiring if there was anything the research participant would like to add to the interview. Some of the interviews covered a wide range of emotions and sensitive topics for the research participants. To be responsive to the research participants I inquired if there were any questions that I could answer, or if there was anything I could do for them before the interview was considered finished. Asking these questions put the research participants at ease. Most asked for details of the research I was conducting and when they might see the summary of the results.

### Research Protocol

In this section, I present the primary interview protocol minus the clarifying and probing questions that I will use to further delve into the participants’ experience of the AI event.

1. I would like you to tell me in your own words about your experiences in the (insert the name of the appreciative inquiry event), such as how you came to participate and what it meant to you to participate? What significant events occurred? Who was involved?
2. What were you thinking about or focused on during the (insert the name of the AI event)?
3. I would like you to tell me about any changes in your relationships, personally or professionally, you have experienced since you attended the (insert the name of the AI event)?
4. How would the people close to you characterize you before you participated in (insert the name of the AI event)?
5. Please describe for me in what ways might you have changed since you participated in (insert the name of the AI event)?
6. Has anyone noticed and commented on a difference in you since you attended the (insert the name of the AI event)?
7. What emotions did you experience during the (insert the name of the AI event) and how did you express them?
8. Did you become aware of any issues or problems during the (insert the AI event)?
9. Do you have any stories you can share of people you developed a sense of camaraderie with at the (insert the name of the AI event)?
10. How would you characterize your role in the organization that you attended the (insert the name of the AI event) with?

Body language, non-verbal cues, tone of voice, hesitations, and facial expressions provided supplemental data, which aided me in interpreting the verbal response. I shared my observations with the research participants and asked them to verify their meaning to ensure they are understood. I listened for both explicit and implicit messages during the interview process. I avoided discussing personal knowledge of AI and TL so I did not influence respondents or any implicit data interpretation during the interview. Please refer to Appendix F for the complete interview protocol.

### Debriefing

I shared the outcomes of the research with the research participants by sending a summary of the final research findings to each participant who expressed interest. I have also made myself available to discuss the research outcomes with each participant. The participants were made aware that the research outcomes are presented in a summarized fashion not including individual results. Any direct quotes used were attributed to a pseudonym in accordance with the informed consent form. The participants were reminded that there is no link between them and their data, and their participation in the research is confidential.

### Data Management

I took handwritten notes throughout the interview. Following the interview, my notes were marked with their pseudonym and were placed in a locked file. I referred to these notes later when transcribed materials were available. I managed the data in a manner that ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of responses. I refer to the research participants by a pseudonym and their actual names do not appear on any of the research materials. Access to the data is controlled by me and the data is locked in a security file in my home office. Audio recordings are stored in an encrypted folder on my personal computer. Audio recordings were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The transcripts were formatted in Microsoft Word documents, which allowed for a comprehensive and structured analysis of the transcripts. The transcriptionist completed a Professional Assistant Confidentiality Form. Please refer to Appendix G the Professional Assistant Confidentiality Form.

## Pilot Study

I tested my research design and the interview protocol in a pilot study. This pilot study gave me an opportunity to assess the quality and effectiveness of my interview questions and to practice my skills as an interviewer. The six respondents to my initial recruitment provided me with much data and a clear idea of what I could expect from an interview. The pilot research participants were open and giving of their stories. They taught me the value of hesitating before asking the next question, and the value of silence. I learned to let go of a line of questioning, which had run its course. During this pilot study, I practiced the sequencing of questions and practiced using open-ended questions and direct questions.

I made no changes to the research design and only minor changes to the interview protocol to make the questions more open-ended. The open-ended questions coupled with my own effort to remain silent and listen, yielded more and richer data. The pilot study was successful in gathering appropriate data to the research study and in addressing the research questions. All the pilot research participants were included in the dissertation research.

## Method of Data Analysis

The data analysis consisted of a series of open and axial coding in a constant comparative analysis with the data similar to the methods used in *grounded theory* (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Glaser and Bassok 1989; Strauss and Corbin 1998). Grounded theory as originally conceived by Glaser and Strauss (1967) is an inductive means of data analysis used where theory is being *discovered* rather than verifying an existing theory or theories. Grounded theory is used in areas where little or nothing is known, the study is conducted with no preconceived theory to guide it. The researcher defines codes and through constant comparative analysis of the codes with the data develops the codes into multiple comparison groups. Comparing these groups to the data leads to concepts and eventually a hypothesis based on what is found in the data. The researcher achieves this through a four step process: 1) comparing incidents to each category, 2) integrating categories and properties, 3) delimiting the theory, 4) writing the theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

Glaser and Strauss vary greatly in their subsequent definitions of grounded theory. Glaserian grounded theory relies heavily on *emergence,* or having no preconceived theory, and avoiding hypothesis until as late in the analysis of the data as possible (Glaser and Bassok 1989; Glaser 2002). Glaser prefers that there is no literature review prior to the study to prevent premature hypothesizing of the data into theory. Glaser also states that the results need not be reproducible or verifiable beyond the original study because the human systems being studied are constantly changing. Strauss and Corbin (1998) have developed a highly rigorous process for developing a grounded theory. Straussian grounded theory uses several data analysis methods in a specific order: open coding, axial coding, selective coding, coding for process, matrix for conditions and consequences, theoretical sampling, then memoing and diagramming. Scholars debate the merits and limitation of each school of grounded theory, Glaserian and Straussian, as it is used in a wider variety of settings and methods every year.

This research study relies heavily on a priori knowledge of two theoretical schools of thought, AI and TL. I preconceived no theory of how they might be related, beyond my initial intuition. There is little or no knowledge of this possible relationship, or theory to test and verify. Like grounded theory, I am starting with no more than a grand tour question. Unlike grounded theory, I have a literature review, which will inform my analysis of the data. My research calls for both an inductive analysis and deductive analysis of the data to both describe the AI event experience and to compare the resulting descriptions to TL. Since this study is not a *pure* grounded theory, using all of the methods above would not fit well with the needs of this study.

First, I read each transcript individually. Then I conducted an open coding which led to discrete concepts, and then to clusters of concepts. Please refer to Table 4 for an example of the initial open coding.

Table 4

*Sample of Coding for Clustered Concepts.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Concepts* | *Clustered* | *Stage of AI* |
| Beginning, its about where you start, hard to get your head around, process felt sloppy, what is going on? time constraints, hopelessness, in a real pissy mood, I was so nervous, desperate, it was a hard time for me, very nervous, I was still reeling, feeling put upon, I'm not so happy, livid, brainwashing day, ready to find a new job, I was bitter, I was angry, I was done, I was furious, They're not hearing me, not a lot of patience, felt superior, didn't have a voice, kind of stuck, felt stagnant, Job is beneath me, I was a snob, going through a terrible break up, fear of failure, anxiety, concerned, feeling anxiety, chewing nails, if you haven't walked in my shoes, dismissive, didn't want others to say this sucked, afraid of being heavy handed, just there for the AI education piece, disengaged how to engage energy? how to get real ownership, etcetera | Emotions, sensations, and descriptors | Before |

Then using axial coding I looked for relationships between the clustered concepts. This revealed a pattern of relationship between the research participants’ experiences before, during, and after the AI event. See Table 5 for clustered concepts from the axial coding. In a second round of coding, I developed a TL coding key of five categories, which included the three reflective practices and the ten stages of TL. I used this TL coding key to analyze the transcripts. For this study, it is important to establish operational definitions for each of the thirteen points in the TL coding key. These definitions illustrate how I determined if the research participant expressed or indicated points of the TL coding key. Please refer to Appendix (H) for a glossary of operational definitions and terms.

Table 5

*Clustered Concepts from the Axial Coding.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Clustered Concepts* | *Stage of AI* |
| Organization; emotions, sensations, descriptors; focus; actions; insights; relationships; beginning | Before |
| Emotions, sensations, descriptors; relationships; insights; actions; stories; focus | During |
| Relationships; emotions, sensations, descriptors; actions; insights; sharing; organization; continual learning and process; stories; mentoring; connections; trauma and tragedy; realities; focus; change; opportunity and professional growth; forward intent, learning; confidence; spiritual; creating/making: personal attributes: general results | After |

I placed these thirteen points into five descriptive categories to analyze the data: *Reflective practices, Examination of self, Examination of roles and relationships, Planning according to the new perspective, Re-integration of new perspective.* These five categories of TL represent the thirteen points of Mezirow’s model. Please refer to Table 6 for the TL coding key.

Table 6

*The Transformative Learning Coding Key.*

| *Categories of TL* | *TL points* |
| --- | --- |
| Reflective practices |  |
| 1 | Did they experience Critical Self Refection? |
| 2 | Did they experience Reflective Dialogue? |
| 3 | Did they experience Reflective Action? |
| Examination of self |  |
| 4 | A disorienting dilemma? |
| 5 | Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame? |
| 6 | A critical assessment of assumptions and relationships? |
| 7 | Recognition of one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared |
| Examination of roles and relationships |  |
| 8 | Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions? |
| 9 | Provisional trying of new roles? |
| 10 | Building competence and confidence in new roles and relationships? |
| Planning |  |
| 11 | Planning a course of action? |
| 12 | Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans? |
| Reintegration of new meaning schema |  |
| 13 | A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective? |

In a third round of coding, I triangulated the results of the first two coding sessions back to the original data and developed profiles of each participant to increase the accuracy and validity of the research findings. This triangulation of the data shows the appropriateness of the categories assigned to each participant.

## Summary of the Methods

The focus of this research was to explore and to describe how the participants understood and made meaning of changes in behavior, attitudes, or values they attribute to their participation in an AI event and to compare these findings to Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning. This was accomplished through an exploratory, qualitative and descriptive research methodology. It was not be the purpose of this research to validate theory or to determine a truth. This approach allowed for the exploration of emergent patterns and themes and for incorporating the early findings into the data collection process in several iterations of data analysis as is common in qualitative research. The research design, interview protocol, data management and data analysis were described and explained. I also discussed the sample selection and the resulting sample.

# Chapter Four: DATA Analysis

## Introduction

In this chapter, I begin to discuss the analysis of this research project. In the following chapter, *Findings,* I present the findings specifically in relation to my research questions. I began analyzing the data in several coding sessions, using a constant comparative analysis, including open and axial coding, coding for TL, and triangulation of the data. I present a profile of each research participant, which represents their experience of the AI event, and includes discussion of the categories of their experiences. The research participants’ profiles show their understanding of the AI event and the meaning they made of the AI event. I discuss the experiences of negative emotions, which exists in the data.

## Data Analysis

The open and axial coding revealed a large number of concepts. After the initial coding, I coded the transcripts by clustering concepts into related groups. As I clustered these concepts, I realized that the clustered concepts related to the participants’ experiences at the beginning of the AI event, other clustered concepts related to the participants’ experiences during the AI event, and other clustered concepts related to a participant’s experiences after the AI event. I coded the data accordingly.

An example of the open coding for concepts, clustered concepts, and categories is shown in the following quote.

Overall, I am appreciative and look for the best in myself and in others. It’s changed my relationships in my family, socially, and professionally. It’s refreshing and I do things now that I enjoy, Mary.

This statement yielded the concepts *appreciative* and *I enjoy*, which I coded into a clustered concept I labeled *personal attributes.* This also yielded the concept of *changed relationships,* which I coded into the clustered concept of *relationships*. In the axial coding, I placed *personal attributes* and *relationships* in a category labeled *After*, which represented concepts Mary expressed as resulting from attending the AI event. Please refer to Table 4 in Chapter 3 for an example of the open coding for concepts, clustered concepts, and categories.

Then using axial coding I looked for relationships between the clustered concepts. This revealed a pattern of relationship between the research participants’ experiences before, during, and after the AI event. Clustered concepts such as, Emotions, sensations, and descriptors; relationships; insights; and etcetera emerged from this analysis. Please refer to Table 5 in Chapter 3 for clustered concepts from the axial coding.

## Coding for Understanding and Meaning Making in the AI Event

The axial coding revealed a variety and diversity of understanding and meaning making of the positive experience. There were marked differences between the participants who said they were impacted directly and positively by their AI experience, and the participants who said they were not directly affected by their AI experience

*No Direct Effect* (NDE) refers to participants who said the AI event discussed in their interview had no direct effect on them or their lives, or that it was difficult to attribute changes in them or their lives to the AI event. For example,

Yeah, but I don’t know if it is attributable to this event or appreciative inquiry, I have gone through a lot of growth in the last three or four years and a lot of changes. How much of that is appreciative inquiry and that experience? It’s impossible to relate to, Laurent.

*Direct Positive Effect* (DPE) refers to participants who expressed a positive change in their perspectives and expectations of the future and directly attributed this change to their participation in the AI event. For example,

I have gotten better, and that confidence, and [the] confidence I have has made it more possible for me to increase [my] knowledge and experiences to take me to the next levels, Annie.

To clarify the analysis, I entered the clustered concepts into a spreadsheet divided between the Categories DPE and NDE. This analysis revealed a tendency for the participants to express or indicate concepts based on the phase of their experience, *Beginning, During,* and *After*. I further divided the clustered concepts by these categories. Please refer to Table 7 for the clustered concepts by experience and phase.

Table 7

*Clustered Concepts by Experience and Phase.*

|  | *Direct Positive Effect (DPE)* | *No-Direct Effect (NDE)* |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Before | Organizational State: Emotions and Sensations: Insights: Focus: Actions: Relationships | Beginning: Emotions and Sensations: Constraints |
| During | Emotions and Sensations: Insights: Action: Stories: Relationships | Emotions and Sensations: Insights: Focus |
| After | Relationships: Actions: Insights: Emotions and Sensations: Sharing: Organizational State: Stories: Mentoring: Learning: Connection: Trauma and Tragedy: personal attributes: Create Reality: Focus: Change: Opportunity and Professional Growth: Forward intent: Confidence: Spiritual | Learning: Confidence: Spiritual: Create Reality: Forward Intent |

To reduce the data further I made note of common clustered concepts by circling and drawing lines between them on a printed copy of the spreadsheet. This action revealed common and unique clustered concepts between the DPE and NDE research participants. Please refer to Table 8 for the common and unique clustered concepts by experience type.

Table 8

*Common and Unique Clustered Concepts by Experience.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Common to both DPE and NDE* | *Emotions and Sensations Insights: Focus: Learning: Confidence: Spiritual: Create Reality: Forward Intent* |
| Unique to DPE | Organizational State: Action: Relationships: Sharing: Stories: Mentoring: Trauma and Tragedy: personal attributes: Change: Opportunity and Professional Growth |
| Unique to NDE | Beginning: Constraints |

As I analyzed the data, I made note of the volume of data reported in each clustered concept. Some clustered concepts were more voluminous in the quantity of concepts represented in the data and I considered those as major clustered concepts. I found that there was some difference between the DPE and NDE research participants. Please refer to Table 9 for the major and minor clustered concepts by experience

Table 9

*Major and Minor Clustered Concepts by Experience.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *DPE Major concepts* | *Emotions and Sensations: Insights: Relationships: Organizational State* |
| DPE Minor concepts | Focus: Action: Sharing: Mentoring: Learning: Connection: Trauma and Tragedy: Personal attributes: Create Reality: Change: Opportunity and Professional Growth: Forward Intent: Spiritual: Confidence |
| NDE Major concepts | Emotions and Sensations: Insights: Forward Intent |
| NDE Minor concepts | Beginnings: Constraints: Focus: Learning: Confidence: Spiritual: Create Reality |

At this point, I realized that the coding for DPE and NDE were representational of the research participants’ whole experience. I returned to the data. There I discovered a difference in the experience of change between two groups of research participants, which separated the category of DPE into categories of a*ligned values* (AV) and c*hanged perspective* (CP). Please refer to Figure 1 for the Categories of participant experience.

NDE

DPE

AV

CP

Research participant’s assessment of their experience

*Figure 1.* Categories of participant experience*.* NDE = no direct effect, DPE = direct positive effect, AV = aligned values, CP = changed perspective.

During the coding of the transcripts for TL I found that many of the DPE participants also indicated or expressed an alignment or reinforcement of their personal values with the principles and methods of AI. Other DPE participants expressed or indicated a change in meaning schema or perspective consistent with Mezirow’s description. I then coded the DPE research participants as *aligned values* (AV) or c*hanged perspective* (CP).

*Aligned values* (AV) refers to research participants who indicated that their experience of the AI event aligned with or reinforced their own personal values. For example, Sarah said of her AI experience in response to inquires about how her participation might have changed her:

I don’t know if it’s heightened my awareness of using that style or made me more aware of when things are going well to be more vocal about it or more positive. It may have, you know. It’s hard for me to point out specific increases or, you know what I’m saying, Sarah.

*Changed perspective* (CP) refers to research participants who indicated their experience of the AI event had a positive effect and changed their meaning schema. For example, Igor expressed some of the changes in his perspectives:

And so, for me, I’m going through personally, to a certain extent professionally, a real, I don’t know whether you want to call it a renaissance, that’s a little more of a word than I would chose to describe anything I do, but I’m going through a tremendous amount of reflection and personal growth, Igor.

## Coding for Transformative Learning

I used the TL coding key seen in Table 6, Chapter 3, to code the data for expressions of or indications of Mezirow’s model of TL. During the coding of the data for TL, I discovered the category CP contained two subsets of research participants. I realized some of the CP research participants had also reintegrated their change in meaning schema but did not follow Mezirow’s model. I coded these participants as other transformative learning (OTL). Then, I coded the CP research participants to include a subset of Mezirow’s TL (MTL). Please refer to Figure 2 for the Categories of participant experience.

NDE

DPE

AV

CP

MTL

Research participant’s assessment of their experience

OTL

*Figure 2.* Categories of participant TL experience*.* NDE = no direct effect, DPE = direct positive effect, AV = aligned values, CP = changed perspective, OTL = other transformative learning, MTL = Mezirow’s transformative learning.

*Other transformative learning* (OTL) refers to changed perspective (CP) research participants who expressed or indicated their experience of the AI event was positive, they could attribute changes in their meaning schema to the AI event, and they re-integrated their new meaning schema into their lives, but did not follow Mezirow’s model. For example, Sulaiman’s meaning schema was changed to become more open and tolerant of those who do not practice his religious beliefs and that change was re-integrated into his life. Sulaiman did not express or indicate a disorienting dilemma or the self-examination with negative feelings.

My experience interacting with Jewish people was great. We can find common ground, we can share views, we can share our beliefs, we talk about the Old Testament and there are certain common threads in our literary fields, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Sulaiman.

*Mezirow’s transformative learning* (MTL) refers to changed perspective (CP) participants who expressed that the AI event had a positive effect on their life, expressed or indicated a change in their meaning schema, and they experienced the three reflective practices and the ten stages of TL. For example,

I am a different person, and [I] have spent the past two years talking about AI, and using it wherever it fits both professionally and personally. I think its just part of me, and I find myself encouraging others to look at thing from what it is that they do well, Mary.

Please refer to Appendix (I) for the results of the coding of the data for TL by research participant.

## Triangulating the Coded Data

In this section of the data analysis, I triangulated the data by comparing the two sets of results from coding the transcriptions and then compare that analysis back to the original transcripts to test for accuracy and validity in my data analysis. First, I compared the categories of *No-Direct Effect (*NDE) and *Direct Positive Effect* (DPE) and the clustered concepts found in the open and axial coding of the data. Then I compared the categories found in the open and axial coding of the data to the categories of *Aligned Values* (AV), *Changed Perspective* (CP), *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL), and *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL) resulting from the coding for TL.

The triangulation of the data revealed several of the research participants engaged in a re-examination of their roles and relationships, planning new courses of action, acquiring new skills and knowledge, and acted on their plans using their new skills and knowledge. The triangulation of the data also revealed a progressive increase of the research participants, by category AV, OTL, and MTL, to engage in reflective dialogue, a disorienting dilemma, and the self-examination with feelings of fear, guilt, shame, and anger. The AV research participants were least likely to engage in these points of the TL coding key, while the OTL research participants were more likely to engage in these points. The MTL research participants engaged in all these points in the TL coding key.

To show the result of the triangulation of the data, I present a profile of each research participant, which represents their experience of the AI event. The research participants’ profiles show their understanding of the AI event and the meaning they made of the AI event, and the appropriateness of the categories assigned to the participants.

## Profiles of the Participant’s AI Event Experience

In this section, I will profile each of the research participant’s experiences. These profiles are offered as a synopsis of those experiences grouped by category: *Direct Positive Effect – Aligned Values* (DPE-AV), *No*-*Direct Effect – Aligned Values* (NDE-AV), *Direct Positive Effect – Other Transformative Learning* (DPE-OTL), and *Direct Positive Effect – Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (DPE-MTL).

*Direct Positive Effect – Aligned Values* (DPE-AV) research participants are research participants who expressed that their AI event experience had a direct positive effect on them and their lives and found that the principles and methods of AI aligned with or reinforced their personal beliefs.

*Annie* had taken an AI foundations course and was co facilitating and AI summit with an experienced AI facilitator at a major children’s hospital. Annie was an experienced executive coach but had never worked collaboratively on a large project such as this. Annie gained many skills and an opportunity to work with a well known AI consultant. Annie flowered under this attention and her sense of competence and confidence grew.

And I felt sometimes myself like a low sunflower turning toward XXX to see how she was doing it because I was just aware that there was so much energy and yet I think XXX is very masterful. XXX herself encouraged the greatness and others and as a recipient of that I felt my strength in greatness and I felt the strength in greatness in her, Annie.

Annie mentioned several times during the interview that AI was a natural extension of who she already was.

*Sarah* has a Ph.D. in psychology and is the Director of Research at a K - 12 school for orphaned children. Sarah was influenced to attend an AI foundations course after seeing the effect it had on Hillary and how AI meshed with her own sense of ‘positive psychology.’ Several times during her AI foundations training Sarah reminded herself and others:

One of the things that I said was to remember that as you’re going through the experience, it is a simulated experience and that you have to constantly be observing yourself, Sarah.

Sarah was also not interested in the emotional and spiritual side of AI. She was worried that it detracted from the practical use of AI and was concerned with becoming an AI cult member.

So when, you know, you talked about sort of emotional changes, I feel like I’m coming at this personally from a very cognitive place without denying the emotional part of it, Sarah.

Sarah has created a cohort with Hillary and their VP to bring AI to their work. Sarah indicated changes in relationships with other board members, and how she uses AI to keep the board focused on positive outcomes.

*Burt* is a Director of Human Resources for a large private enterprise and a student in a Ph.D. program at a major northwestern university. Burt was intrigued by his class work in AI and put AI into practice as a practical experience by facilitating and participating in an AI summit at his place of employment. Burt found that AI matched his natural inclinations toward being positive.

It struck me as something that has a lot of merit for human resources activities, which is my career field, because so much of what we do is either preventive or reactive or from a negative perspective. And I liked the whole idea of an organization development intervention that emphasized the positive side of things, the focus on positive organization scholarship, Burt.

Burt initiated an AI event at his workplace with buy-in from the CEO. The event was successful and he has been asked to ‘do more AIs.’ Burt reported being a little nervous at the beginning but felt he had reached a ‘decision point’ and his ‘reputation was on the line.’ Burt did receive some assistance and guidance from his professor and his classmates.

*Ding* is the director of a large and geographically dispersed state agency governed at its highest levels by ‘politically appointed bureaucrats.’ Ding’s organization is populated with ‘long-term,’ ‘dedicated’, ‘practical’, and ‘scientific minded’ employees. Ding planned an organizational intervention to help redefine the purpose and vision of his organization in the face of changing needs and use of his agency in which he both participated and co-facilitated the AI summit. He was introduced to AI by the consultant he hired and found AI an ‘interesting fit with my own management style.’ Since Ding played a dual role he felt he was not able to fully experience the AI event.

I was the instigator and I had the most at stake because I convinced this whole room of people that this was a good thing to do and my fingers were crossed that in fact at least most of them would agree with me when this was all done. That was mostly what I focused on is how things are being presented, how things are being explained, watching for signs of positive support for it, that’s what I was doing, Ding.

Ding found the AI event experience ‘satisfying’ and ‘rewarding.’ Ding also recommended AI to a sister agency who, which was panning an organizational intervention similar to Ding’s agency. Ding helped develop and co-facilitate the AI event with the lead AI consultant.

*Valdez* was a professor of organizational behavior at a major university. His students were upset at the school’s administration for what they perceived as a lack of performance of their basic duties. Valdez decided to use this as an opportunity for an experiential exercise in AI, hoping its focus on the positive would offset the student’s ill will. Although this was Valdez’s first attempt at facilitating an AI event he was confident until he realized that the ‘students didn’t grasp the concept’ of the principle of positivity. Valdez felt ‘anxious’ and knew his ‘reputation was on the line.’ He returned to the subject several times before the group finally hit on the metaphor ‘of running a marathon’. They were then able to think in terms of how the university faculty could support them as marathon runners. Since Valdez was part of the administration also there had been some resentment expressed toward him until that classroom exercise.

We had a more of a bonding between me and the class, that is the individuals in the class…. [We had] greater camaraderie, freer and easier conversations, because I was one of the administration. They weren’t focused on me thank goodness in terms of their anger, Valdez.

Valdez now teaches at a different university and he plans and prepares AI events over the western United States.

*Ian* was a senior manager in a US Government agency who attended an AI event as a professional development opportunity. Ian found that he ‘understood AI’ and it was a ‘natural fit’ with his personality because ‘I have always considered myself an optimist anyway.’ Ian also could apply it to his own personal life when he began to see AI as more than a business tool and a methodology.

As I went through the course, I started looking at it in a different context, from my personal view of the world. I started looking at it from how I would view my family, how I dealt with personal issues within my family or how I dealt with personal issues in my family or in my personal relationships, Ian.

Ian began to apply AI freely at work and found that his clients began to like working with him almost too much, making it difficult to change to new projects. They often ‘became possessive of my attention.’

*Jerry* taught conflict resolution at a graduate level when he became exposed to AI as a model for conflict resolution. Jerry is an active consultant on the East Coast using his J.D. and AI to resolve conflicts in municipalities and schools. Jerry led an AI summit at a public high school where violence and racial tensions were flaring. The AI event was open to the entire community and was well attended. Jerry was sure the event would work after a short time. Jerry encountered many negative emotions at the start of the AI event. By the end of the AI interviews many of the participants had forged ‘new friendships’ and ‘alliances.’ The ‘anger and hatred’ gave way to ‘joy’, ‘elation’ and ‘relief.’ In his role as an observer Jerry was able to witness changes in attitude and behavior first hand.

And it was an emotional experience because you watched the layers of guarding come down… Some of the highlights were people began to say I never had a friend who was Hispanic or I never had a friend who was Asian, and people were reaching out from across the room verbally, Jerry.

As the facilitator of the AI event Jerry had other concerns that occupied him also. Jerry’s concerns ranged from promoting the event, identifying and inviting stakeholders, attending to the logistics, and building interest and participation of the parents. The event met Jerry’s expectations and reinforced his confidence in AI as a method for mediating situations of conflict.

We slotted it in and promoted it. I promoted it and anybody who would stand still long enough to hear about it, from the internal stakeholders in the school district to community leaders, religious leaders, social action groups, anyone that I felt had a stake either got a call or an email or both from me…. No, I always knew it would work. I trust the process and I had worked with AI often enough to know that all the ingredients were there, Jerry.

Jerry mentored many of his former students as co-facilitators of the event and mentors some of the high school faculty. Jerry has made ‘new friends’ in the community and was ‘honored by the NAACP’ for his role in averting certain conflict.

*Hall* co-facilitated and participated in an AI event designed to revision his state government agency’s purpose and direction. Hall’s organization is a ‘top down bureaucracy’, ‘geographically dispersed’ with a mix of ‘long-term employees’ who are ‘dedicated’ and ‘practical.’ Hall was initially concerned that the AI event would produce results of value. The AI event was successful in developing a common sense of purpose and direction and that caused Hall to feel a closer bond with his co-workers.

We’re a very results-oriented group…. I think a lot of my colleagues would have questioned it’s value so I was concerned with that…. Like I said before, the biggest thing was feeling close. We’re all in this together; we’re all pulling in the same direction. We all value the same things and the whole positive emotion of feeling part of a single group whereas it is real easy like I said to spend an entire career, everybody is busy and you don’t connect on that group level in your day to day work, Hall.

*Carr* was a middle manger for an outdoor leadership and group development organization when he attended AI foundations training for professional development. Carr found he was not really engaged and then became interested when faced with the appreciative questions in the AI interview.

But it wasn’t until being asked those questions that that’s what really brought me in, and seeing the power that this person I’d never met suddenly were, you know, really engaged in this conversation and pulling these things out of each other. And from then on I was just really hooked, Carr.

While Carr said he was ‘blown away’ by AI and its positive approach, he also expressed that AI matched his ‘optimistic’ and enthusiastic’ nature. Carr brought AI back to his organization, and is now using AI in his current position as an organizational development specialist at major northwestern university.

*Emily* is a minister for a major protestant denomination in the northeast. Emily participated in AI foundations training as an optional class for her Ph.D. She found it ‘interesting’ but was not sure of its ‘practical’ nature. Emily was taken with the example of living AI her AI event facilitator personified, and how she handled some men who were not enthused about being at the AI event. Emily also realized that AI contained what her mission in the church was really about.

They were… totally obnoxious, and I watched XXX, who I just totally fell in love with cause she’s just absolutely brilliant. I mean she’s just a wonderful teacher and a wonderful person, and watched her just, she was so kind and so patient and so just careful with them…. It is, has, the potential to really shift people’s perspective, to really transform how they view the world, to really move them to a different space. And, I just saw that in the training and I saw it in myself, and I became totally enamored with appreciative inquiry and I started studying it and reading it and doing it and became a certified facilitator, whatever that means, through the company of experts, Emily.

Emily now studies AI at a well-known Midwestern university while still working on her Ph.D. Emily also uses AI in her position as an interim minister to assist congregations in healing after poor relations with their prior pastor.

*Zöe* attended an AI Summit as an experiential exercise for an organizational behavior class in a Ph.D. program at a major northwestern university. Zöe and her classmates learned about AI and then conducted an AI event at a local not-for-profit. Zöe was interested in the realization of potential in the interview results, and how it felt natural to her. Zöe realized that AI enabled her natural dialogue and facilitation style of conversation to include fully hearing other people’s stories. Zöe carries this over from her profession as an executive coach to her personal life now also.

The part of an AI where it talks about… your potential to be resides within the people, you could just see it… You could just kind of look at the interviews and the transcripts and see in front of you the richness and the really untapped potential of the organization. And the future direction was just… it was there…. So, I’ve done lots of interviews in my career and would walk out feeling drained, and I had none of that experience with this, I mean, you’d walk out just feeling like, “Wow, this is exciting stuff.”…. I think they’ve changed in the way that I strive more to ask questions and I’ve even found myself, like, I took the cab from the airport the other day and say, “Well, tell me your story. How did you get here?” Zoë.

While these quotes illustrate a shift in Zoë’s communication style, Zoë expressed that this indicates something deeper. Zoë felt AI allowed her to ‘operate from a different part of my being’ and get back to ‘my more bohemian self.’ This shows the importance of stories in maintaining her interpersonal relationships with everyone in her life.

The *Direct Positive Effect –Aligned Values*  DPE – AV are research participants who expressed that their AI event experience had a direct positive effect on them and their lives and found that the principles and methods of AI aligned with or reinforced their personal beliefs. Additionally, the DPE – AVs were a mix of research participants who were participants, facilitators, participant/facilitators of both AI summits, large and small, and AI foundations training. The DPE-AV participants show a high level of interest in the AI methods and principles. They have made AI a part of their work lives and personal lives. However, they are not as deeply affected by their AI event experience as the *Direct Positive Effect – Other Transformative Learning* (DPE-OTL) and *Direct Positive Effect – Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (DPE-MTL) participants were. This is revealed in the DPE-AV’s reported lack of experience of conflict or strong negative emotions. This may show that for many AI event participants AI represents an alignment of values and principles, which does not require the process of TL.

*No Direct Effect – Aligned Values* (NDE – AV) research participants are research participants who expressed that their AI event experience had a no direct positive effect on them and their lives and found that the principles and methods of AI aligned with or reinforced their personal beliefs.

*Sophia* was a practicing AI consultant when she attended a community building AI summit with an organizational development group to which she belonged. Sophia stated her purpose was to observe the outside facilitator of this event, express her positive self, and to connect with others in this community. In her role as a participant, Sophia was a keen observer of the others at her AI event.

Sure, collaboration happens as it always does. So for instance, there were two people who discovered that they were doing similar work. They wanted to get together after that. There was somebody that recognized that they could bring some expertise that somebody else needed right there in the room. I need his expertise I have it. I need this so piece of software I have it, that kind of thing, Sophia.

Sophia expressed that the AI event did not have any direct effect her or her life. Sophia did express that the AI event was an opportunity to ‘expand’ on her personal beliefs and values.

To that degree, I was not changed in terms of my appreciative outlook on life and my more abundant outlook on life. But afterwards, I would have had even more, more of that outlook on life, Sophia.

*Laurent* was attending a major university in California studying organizational behavior in an MBA program. Laurent was exposed to AI in a one day training session with a well known AI consultant. On the next day, with his classmates, conducted part of an AI summit for a real client. Laurent expressed some initial confusion and difficulty with the concept of AI. Laurent was also focused on his role as a student and his responsibility to the client when he spoke of the experience and the AI interviews. Laurent did express that AI also aligned with his ‘spiritual practice.’

It probably clouded that part of it… That made it a little harder to get to our around it. Saying, what is this all about? Where do I start? And she said you can use it in a number of ways, and that was frustrating…. Because this is kind of like a split in two kinds of experience. That's why we're really focused on a methodology and its application including our own experience in it….

Personally, I went from, you know, I really enjoyed the interviews. After doing nine or 10 of them I was tired…. The philosophy and what it does really matched the processes I'd been through with my spiritual practices. So it was for me, a great alignment, and I felt this great relief, because I found something that my values totally aligned with, Laurent.

*No Direct Effect – Aligned Values* (NDE – AV) researchparticipants are research participants who expressed that their AI event experience had a no direct positive effect on them and their lives and found that the principles and methods of AI aligned with or reinforced their personal beliefs.Additionally, the NDE – AVs included a participant of an large scale AI summit and a participant/facilitator of a large scale AI summit and AI foundations training. While the NDE-AV participants have made AI a part of their work and personal lives, they experienced no conflict within themselves or extremes of emotion, positive or negative. These participants might represent AI event participants who experience their alignment with AI in a more cognitive-rational manner than the other categories represented in this research. It might also be that Lauren’s two roles in the AI event experience and Sophia’s long association with AI prevented them from fully engaging in the AI event.

*Direct Positive Effect – Other Transformative Learning* (DPE-OTL) research participants are research participants who expressed that their AI event experience had a direct positive effect on them and their lives and expressed or indicated that their experience of the AI event changed their perspective but did not follow Mezirow’s model of TL.

*Hillary* is a student in a Ph.D. program for psychology and is a senior research assistant at a large K - 12 school for orphaned children when she attended AI foundations training for professional development. Hillary’s work was used to support decisions and long-term plans without addressing how the successful students achieved their success or what success meant. Hillary was frustrated to the point where she felt ‘I had been hammering my head on the desk all day.’ The VP of Organizational Development introduced Hillary to AI and she then attended AI foundations training as a form of professional development. During the AI event, Hillary experienced ‘joy’ ‘tears’ and ‘the peace which passeth all understanding.’ Hillary has also shared her new viewpoint with her husband who wishes he could have participated also. She also cut her hair by a drastic length to reflect her new positive self. Hillary felt reconnected to her childhood self and focused on positive outcomes.

I fully recognize that AI brings that kind of thing in but to imagine this, which is, [it] just makes it appear so different to you, it takes you back to your childhood. I think. A lot of days I think about this is how I felt as a kid that I was an artist and I love music I love to being creative I love building a fort those kind of things they're not allowed. This brings you back to that place where you say I can think in that way, Hillary.

Hillary discovered in AI a means to bring her whole self to her work and use AI to address her research. Hillary instituted a new pattern of research where AI based research is done first, then further planning and research is based on the initial findings. These changes have led the executives and the planning boards to find new uses for the research department and to begin looking at student success rather than student failure and how to support that success. This includes a new project based on AI, and the facilitator from her AI event assists her informally.

*Gwen* was a personal and executive coach in an uncertain relationship with her boyfriend who introduced her to AI and then conducted an AI summit with just the two of them to explore their relationship and their future together. Gwen was feeling ‘very sensitive’ ‘independent minded’ and like she ‘didn’t really need man in her life.’ Gwen also felt ‘vulnerable’ and ‘fearful of looking like a fool.’ Gwen also realized how ‘fragile their relationship had been’ until that point where she discovered ‘how much they had in common.’

I can remember the bubbles just, you know, in my stomach and the butterflies thinking, oh my God what if I have a future image he doesn’t, and lucky for me he went first, and I was…. I can remember [being] just moved to tears thinking about realizing that what he wanted and what I wanted were the same thing, and how close and how fragile our relationship was, how close it came to not even existing anymore until we had engaged in this conversation to realize that we both wanted the same thing, Gwen.

Gwen has indicated a change in perspective and has successfully integrated this new perspective into her life. Gwen is now an AI consultant with an international firm and is actively engaged in living her new perspective. Gwen also discussed an AI summit she recently led with her husband Tom in Guyana in her interview. The content of this portion of the interview was not included in this research.

*Igor* in his position as a senior executive in a military organization and in his profession as a commercial airline pilot, now retired, was used to a top down command and control hierarchy of organization. These are also organizations that are not open to expressions of emotions. Igor was introduced to AI through some executive training and found it interesting. He decided to attend an AI foundations training certification course as a form of professional development. During the AI event he was initially disengaged and was ‘focused on the AI piece.’ As the event progressed Igor realized that he ‘learned more when I was engaged.’

Igor found a new language and means to make himself ‘more emotionally accessible’ to his wife and coworkers. Igor also found a common language he could use to improve his relationships with his wife and co-workers.

What this has done for me is to get me to talk a language that she understands. It’s given me a way of communicating that makes a lot of sense to her because, you know, frankly, I’m not a terribly emotionally available person…. Just saying, “You know when I signed in I noticed you had 6,000 hours in this airplane. You must be awfully tired of looking over here and seeing some old guy like me sitting here.” That, just engaging in that conversation would create a pretty good working harmony, Igor.

*Marie* was required to participate in an AI summit to improve the culture of the not-for-profit organization where she worked. As part of the administrative staff she felt overworked and under appreciated by the leadership. The only leader she got along with was laid-off when some funding ran out days before the event. Marie was hostile, angry and not willing to participate. During the event, she realized that she had been accepted at her workplace as if she were family in a short time and was given responsibilities that made her indispensable. She realized also that her personal style of dress, behavior and communication were ineffective and caused others discomfort. During this event Marie saw that she was so rebellious because of what she held back. Marie became willing to speak her mind without her usual attitude and also to listen to others. Her break through came when she noticed she was chiding a co-worker for not trusting others and she realized felt the same way.

And has there ever been an instance where someone complains and gets fired and has there ever been an instance where someone is unhappy with their job and gets fired for it. And so there was a lot of hold on what’s the reality here and then I think that point was when the room started to change, Marie.

Marie learned to confront her director when she was overloaded, gained a supervisory position, learned how to direct her co-workers appropriately. She bought a small house and began reconciling her relationship with her mother.

*Sulaiman* is the head of a religious based not-for-profit organization for the Muslim community in a South American country. Sulaiman attended an AI foundations training voluntarily as part of a community building event. Sulaiman would normally have sent a junior person to this event but he was intrigued with the stated principles of AI and how they matched his own faith. Sulaiman found it easy to accept the AI philosophy but had difficulty with the concept of working with people of other faiths and moral convictions he felt were inferior to his own.

Let me put it this way. As I mentioned earlier, some of my own philosophy, my own way of looking at things were addressed and AI gives me a framework through which, what do we call it, a theoretical framework through which I can put my personal beliefs into practice in a practical way…. Ok those people they consume alcohol, they party and so on. AI opened that world for me, to look at people from another perspective, rather than to just look at some of the things you are not happy with they may be doing. Look at the things that make you happy rather than the things that do not make you happy, Sulaiman.

Sulaiman also reported changes in his personal relationships and with the members of his community. His teenage daughters call him ‘Super-dad.’ In his community people are more likely to interact with him. ‘I get more interrupted by people in the open society more, Sulaiman.’ Sulaiman has co-founded a multi-religious and multi-racial foundation to build community in his country, which is rife with violence, kidnapping, death squads, and murder.

*Direct Positive Effect – Other Transformative Learning* (DPE-OTL) participants are participants who expressed that their AI event experience had a direct positive effect on them and their lives and expressed or indicated that their experience of the AI event changed their perspective but did not follow Mezirow’s model of TL.The DPE – OTL participants’ were participants of large or small AI summits, AI foundations training. Most of the DPE-OTL participants experienced some level of conflict or negative emotion, with the exception of Hillary and Sulaiman. With further investigation, these participants might reveal how personality type might influence the AI event experience of the participants. They may also reveal how life stage, psychological, or cognitive development might influence the participants’ experience of the AI event.

*Direct Positive Effect – Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (DPE-MTL) research participants are research participants who expressed that their AI event experience had a direct positive effect on them and their lives and expressed or indicated that their experience of the AI event changed their perspective and follow Mezirow’s model of TL.

*Mary* was required to attend an AI summit and approached it with mistrust and skepticism. Her first thought when hearing the AI principles was ‘This is absurd.’ Mary’s organization had recently experienced some lay-offs and just prior to the event information was leaked that many executive had received bonuses resulting from the lay-offs. Additionally, Mary’s organization is a major children’s hospital treating many children in their final stages of life. The internal culture of this organization was very negative and the AI event was planned to attempt to change this. Mary felt there were better uses for her time than attending the AI event. Although, Mary was struck by the facilitator’s statement ‘If you are open to it appreciative inquiry can change your life.’

During the event, Mary realized how she envied others for their competence and their happiness, and she felt unworthy of her position. Mary then realized she shared a strong bond of camaraderie with her fellow nurses. Mary also realized that the most important times to her as a nurse were had at the bedside of dying children where she could offer comfort to the patients and their families. After the event, Mary felt she should try applying AI to her own life. Mary changed her position at work to work at the bedside again. Mary joined a weight loss program and had lost seventy pounds at the time of our interview. Mary also stopped taking anti-depressants, took up pottery as a hobby again, and became more socially active. Mary started a mentoring program for senior nurses using AI principles and stories as a means of communicating AI values. Mary continued to work on applying AI in her life with the assistance and encouragement of the AI facilitator, although many of the AI champions were later fired or quit, leaving Mary somewhat alone in her new perspective.

Mary describes her experience as important in initiating and maintaining her new positive outlook on life. Mary describes her change in perspective and AI’s role in her transformation this way:

I began to see that I did not value me... Somehow through the AI process, I could see that I did not appreciate the things that I was doing good in my life, I was always putting myself down, and felt that I didn't measure up to others. Going through this process helped me to see that I deserve to care for me, and I lost 70 lbs the year after this process and really became a happier and more appreciative person overall, Mary.

*Chris* was attending an organizational behavior class at a major southern university when she participated in an AI summit as a classroom experience. She had previously worked as a rape crisis counselor and was herself raped by a group of men after work one night. Chris became withdrawn, ‘gothic’ and ‘fearful of others’ and wouldn’t leave her home without an escort. This event caused her to become very vocal about allowing women to tell their stories of surviving rape as a form of healing. Chris was ostracized from the rape crisis community for this viewpoint. Chris left this position and returned to school in search of a new direction.

She was initially unimpressed with AI as it was presented to her in class because it appeared too passive. After the classroom exercise, Chris decided she had nothing to loose by applying AI to her life. Chris began to exercise, became more socially active, and lost weight.

There was like, biological and physical changes that took place at that time. So the people said, well I didn't even recognize you…. That AI was kind of the impetus to start this biological change, and the biological changes changed my mental makeup. Does that make sense? Chris.

Chris joined a music heritage center and soon initiated an AI event, which she facilitated. The AI event was successful and Chris is now the president of that organization. She credits AI with opening her up to new experiences and new friends she would not have made in her past.

It's kind of inspired in me this kind of lifelong learning process is kind of constantly looking at where can I make things better working to make things different event also the beauty of this is I've really started to think about how we face challenges and what's the best solution for that challenge, Chris.

*Bev* is a student in a Ph.D. program in leadership in the Northwest. Bev is also the Director of Human Resources at major northwestern telecom firm. Bev attended an AI summit as a classroom exercise and initially though ‘oh God, this is so foo foo.’ She soon found herself feeling extremes of emotions.

It was truly a gut feeling that I’ve never felt before, like moving through my whole body. A physical feeling of charging, almost electricity coming through me and to actually proclaim it out loud, what we had just done I broke into tears and actually I went into a hysterical crying where I couldn’t stop. I had never experienced that before and I was just like ‘wholly cow,’ Bev.

Bev soon began to examine her childhood of physical and mental abuse by her parents and realized that her classmates and her professor had created a ‘safe container for her.’ Bev regained relationships with her estranged sisters, reconciled her self with her dead parents, and found her personal relationships impacted. Bev is also using AI to mentor co-workers through her position at work where tensions are high as the firm openly seeks a buyer. Bev has lost ‘old and dear friendships’ with people who find her new attitude ‘too Pollyanna.’

*Direct Positive Effect – Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (DPE-OTL) research participants are research participants who expressed that their AI event experience had a direct positive effect on them and their lives and expressed or indicated that their experience of the AI event changed their perspective but did not follow Mezirow’s model of TL.Additionally, the DPE – MTL’s were participants of AI summits, one was a large-scale summit and two were small scale-summits. With further research, it may be discovered that the DPE-MTL participants might represent a specific personality type, life stage, psychological, or cognitive development. It should also be noted that the DPE-MTL participants are all women. It may be that Mezirow’s model of TL more fully describes a particular subset of women’s experiences of the AI event.

While the *Direct Positive Experience-Changed Perspective* (DPE-OTL and DPE-MTL) participants were both women and men, and attended large or small-scale AI summits, or AI foundations training, there are some interesting patterns revealed in this analysis of the data. Of the eight DPE-CP participants six were participants of large or small-scale AI summits and two were participants of AI foundations training. Only three of thirteen *Aligned Values* AV research participants were participants of an AI summit. Three AV research participants were participants of an AI foundations training. The remaining seven AV research participants were facilitators or participant/facilitators of AI summits, with the exception of Laurent, *No-Direct Effect – Aligned Values* (NDE-AV), who was a participant of an AI foundations training on one day and a facilitator of an AI summit on the next day. All eight of the DPE-CP participants were engaged in the AI event in the role of participant. This study reveals that eight of eleven (73%) participants who attended an AI summit experienced a change in perspective and were able to integrate that change into their lives. Two participants out of ten (20%) who attended AI foundations training experienced a change of perspective. No facilitator of an AI summit experienced a change in perspective.

## Summary of the Data Analysis

In this chapter, the data analysis was conducted in a constant comparison of the data in several coding sessions. The initial coding session included open and axial coding and revealed the categories DPE and NDE to describe the research participant’s experience of the AI event. This initial coding further revealed the research participants could also be divided into categories of AV and CP to reflect their alignment with AI or that AI could be attributed to a change in meaning schema. A second coding session for TL in the data revealed that the CP research participants could be divided into two categories MTL and OTL representing those who followed Mezirow’s model and those who did not.

A triangulation of the data between the two coding sessions with comparison to the transcripts was also conducted. The triangulation revealed the AV research participants were least likely to engage in reflective dialogue, express or indicate a disorienting dilemma and engage in the self-examination with negative feelings, while the OTL research participants were more likely to have engaged in reflective dialogue, expressed or indicated a disorienting dilemma and engaged in the self-examination with negative feelings. Profiles of each research participant were presented to provide a more full understanding of the appropriateness of the categories the participants were assigned to during the data analysis.

# Chapter Five: Findings

## Introduction

In this chapter, I continue by discussing the findings in the context of each of the research questions. In response to research question one, I discuss the significance of the AI event experience for the participants and the categories and themes developed in the data analysis. In response to research question two, the findings of the coding for TL in the data were compared with the five categories in the TL coding key. In response to research question three I discuss the findings in relation to the field of positive psychology.

## Research Question 1

“How do participants of appreciative inquiry summits or training understand and make meaning of their experiences during the appreciative inquiry event?” To respond to this question I will discuss the categories and themes discovered in the data analysis, which show the significance and meaning of the AI event experience for the participants. While the profiles of the research participants in the previous chapter show how they understood and made meaning of their AI event experience, individually, an analysis of the results of the open and axial coding shows how they understood and made meaning of their AI event experience collectively.

### The significance of the participant’s AI event experience

Many of the research participants described their AI experience as an opening of their minds and hearts to a deeper learning and understanding of their roles and relationships and the importance of using appreciative questioning and positive imaging of the future. There are many examples of individual experiences where the participants expressed an opening of the heart and mind to a deeper learning. Sulaiman found he could work with non-Muslims toward the settling of unrest in his country. Marie found she could assert herself without compromising her individuality and became more effective in her presentation of self at her workplace. Igor found a new language and means to make himself more emotionally accessible to his wife and coworkers. Ding and Hall were able to accomplish a sense of common vision and direction for coworkers in a decentralized and geographically disperse organization.

These personal changes occurred although many of the research participants came to the event in uncertain or negative circumstances. Mary described her organization as ‘negative’, ‘mistrustful’, and ‘skeptical.’ Mary’s first thought was “This is absurd!” Gwen described her relationship as fragile and close to nonexistence at the point before she participated in an AI event. Travel in Sulaiman’s country is dangerous: murder, kidnapping, violence, and overt racism threaten everyone. Many of the research participants expressed skepticism, mistrust and doubt when they first encountered the principles and methods of AI. Ding and Hall felt concern for delivering tangible results in organizations driven by “Doers.” Sarah was concerned with the spiritual side of AI, “…Don’t want to be sucked into the vortex, become a cult member of AI.”

Other research participants expressed a curiosity with or an attraction to AI. Burt said, “I liked the whole idea of an organizational development intervention that emphasized the positive side of things, the focus on positive organizational scholarship.” Emily said, “I mean it sounded like an interesting thing to do…”

For most of the participants, the AI event experience was a time of positive emotions and increased insights, which had an impact on their relationships with and views of others. An examination of the major clustered concepts by volume of concepts expressed or indicated in data revealed that the AI event experience was emotionally involved for the participants, with the most concepts related to emotions, insights, relationships, and actions being found during and after the AI event. Please refer to Figure 3 for the categories of experience by stage of experience.



*Figure 3.* Categories of experience by stage of experience*.*

This analysis shows an interesting relationship between the participant’s reports of predominantly positive emotions and the number of insights reported during and after the AI event. The increase in reports of insights may show an increase in the creativity of the participants. Their engagement in the positive emotions may have fostered and promoted the creativity, openness, ability to make connections, and broad-minded thinking necessary for the insights to occur.

AI’s use of a positive lens to view the world we see and the world we would like to see is helpful in promoting the factors leading to insight. Figure 3 shows a significant increase in the reports of concepts related to relationships and views of others along with an increase in reports of action. Figure 3 shows an interesting decrease in reports of concepts related to the participant’s organization and a similar change in reported concepts related to the participant’s focus. Figure 3 also shows a progressive increase in the number of reported insights over the AI event experience, with a 500% increase overall. The increase in the number of reported insights is accompanied by a broadening of the categories of insights, with more than double the categories of insights reported after the AI event. This increase indicates the AI event caused the AI event participants to become more insightful and broadened their thought responses.

The increase in reported insights might also be a result of this study’s retrospective nature. Many of the participants were removed in time from the AI event by three months to six years. This length of time may have given the participants a chance to reflect on the experience more fully.

The emotions reported were predominantly negative in nature at the beginning of the AI event experience and became less numerous as the AI event progressed. Positive emotions spiked during the AI event and remained well reported after the AI event. Please refer to Figure 4 for the changes in reported emotions by stage of experience.



*Figure 4.* Changes in reported emotions by stage of experience.

At this point, a discussion of the major categories: Emotions, sensations, and descriptors; Insights; Relationships and others, might be beneficial to further the understanding of their effect on the participants. The research participants indicated many clustered concepts in common, from emotions and insights to positive changes in their roles and relationships. The following clustered concepts yielded the greatest volume of data.

*Emotions, sensations, and descriptors.* In this category, I included sensations and descriptors of states of being since most of the research participants used those to answer questions related to emotions. Some of the research participants only experienced positive emotions and sensations. Many of the research participants expressed that they experienced both positive and negative emotions. For many of the research participants mistrust, anger, fear, bitterness and skepticism gave way to tears cried, laughter, joy and peace. Gwen said, “The joy had a physical presence.” Hillary experienced, “The peace which passeth all understanding.” Bev cried openly, then felt a new sensation, saying:

It was a gut feeling that I’ve never felt before, like moving through my whole body. A physical feeling of charging, almost electricity coming through me, Bev.

For some the AI event became a forum where negative emotions were surfaced, confronted, and coped with. For example, Marie became willing to ‘express anger’, experience ‘a sense of hope’, and a sense of ‘relief’. Many research participants spoke of a sense of energy, and how it built up and manifested it self.

I was just aware that there was so much energy… Annie.

And I guess the other example is, that there really comes a feeling, I don't know if you want to call it a feeling, but you really feel an incredible energy, Hillary.

It is clear that the AI event was for most of the participants an emotional experience and for some an intensely emotional experience. While the AI literature emphasizes the positive emotional experiences it is clear that a broad range of negative emotions are also experienced during the AI event by some participants. Negative emotions might be required to be experienced and resolved before some participants can achieve a positive emotional state. It is important for AI practitioners to be aware of this process of experiencing and resolving negative emotions to enable more AI event participants to attain positive emotional states. It was shown in the section above that positive emotional experiences may lead to increased insight.

*Insights.* Many DPE research participants said they experienced new insights. Hillary said, “This is powerful.” Marie said, “I realized I had supports.” And, “I am ready to hear the truth.” Igor realized he was ‘learning more while I was engaged.’ Others expressed that ‘my voice had meaning,’ ‘we are working together toward a common goal’ and that ‘is powerful.’ Many research participants expressed a sense of ‘connection to their organization,’ they realized ‘the power of the group’, and they had ‘common bonds with others’.

For example, Burt reported that many of the participants of the AI summit he led at his workplace discovered a sense of empowerment.

Once they saw those themes, they began to recognize that they had a very powerful voice in the direction the company might head with the new program... One of the participants said, ‘I did not realize that I had so much power, that my voice meant so much,’ Burt.

Bev said that she began to see patterns and connections in a very visual way that affected her sleep and helped her in her transformative process:

I was able to physically and mentally feeling-wise see the patterns and the connections. It was really interesting, as I was going through these processes at night, I had I was going through these very strange dreams, that I would wake up and I was exhausted from. And it was colors and numbers and words and things going into boxes and moving very fast, Bev.

These insights empowered the research participants to continue on their new path of positive outlook. These insights also contained the new visions of empowerment and positive future outcomes that gave the participants hope. These insights coupled with positive emotions were powerful in their ability to guide and strengthen the participants.

*Relationships.* All the DPE research participants expressed positive changes in their relationships, either personal or professional. These positive relationship changes include: improved bonding with others, a greater sense of camaraderie, improved communications, and an increased sense of value in the others whom they interacted. For example, Mary said, “As the event progressed, I was feeling that I had so much in common with the thirty-two people in the room” and “it’s changed my relationships in my family, [also] socially and professionally.” Igor spoke of improved relationships with his co-pilots resulting from his willingness to be more open and frank with them. Sulaiman spoke of improved relations with his two daughters, and of feeling able to initiate and maintain relationships with non-Muslims:

They may have values different from mine and in my own interaction with Gwen and Tom, I visited them in RI at their home and I felt as if I was at one of my relatives homes, because of the bond and relationship that developed and people at the AI foundation workshop…. And there are other people I reached later on that came to Guyana promoting AI, Christian, Jewish, and we interact so well…. My experience interacting with Jewish people was great. We can find common ground, we can share views, we can share our beliefs, we talk about the Old Testament and there are certain common threads in our literary fields, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Sulaiman

Some of the research participants said they lost or ended relationships that were either negative or non-supportive in nature. All the research participants who indicated this loss or ending of relationships indicated that they were now ‘too Pollyanna’ for some of the others in their lives. For example, Mary ‘lost AI champions’ she had formed close bonds with, and Chris was ostracized from her community of sexual abuse counselors for ‘advocating that victims tell their stories openly.’ It is important to note that all changes in relationships were not positive and did cause some of the participants’ distress. Nevertheless, these participants, who might have explained these events differently before the AI event, were able to say the changes were for the best.

There are some minor categories, which may be interesting to discuss here: Language, Stories, Turning point, Mentoring, Organization, and Focus.

*Language.* Many DPE research participants expressed a discovery or learning of a common language that enabled or reinforced their positive viewpoint and enabled better communication in their relationships, personal and professional. This common language also enabled better workplace communications and reinforced stronger relationships in their organizations.

What this has done for me is to get me to talk a language that she understands. It’s given me a way of communicating that makes a lot of sense to her because, you know, frankly, I’m not a terribly emotionally available person, Igor.

If anybody got too negative, so forth, we had the shared language to say well what’s working, you know, Carr.

This research makes it apparent that many AI event participants gain linguistic tools to better describe and explain their newfound realities and future expectations. These linguistic tools are important in improving relationships, strengthening interpersonal connections and clarifying communications.

*Stories.* Many of the DPE research participants also mentioned the importance of stories, both the telling of stories and of listening to stories in the positive changes they experienced resulting from their participation in the AI event. Igor used stories to develop relationships with his co-pilots and encourage their best performance. Igor also used the theme of stories to illustrate how he used AI in his work:

The minute I said, “Tell me a story” his entire body relaxed into the sitting around the campfire look to tell a story and every junior officer who’d been looking out the window, looking at their notes, looking at something else, heads immediately swung to him, Igor.

Zoë often engages in conversations with new people she meets by asking them to tell her their story, from the taxi driver to the appliance repairman. Mary also speaks of stories and their importance in mentoring at her workplace.

This repair guy comes over and he’s really great and, you know, I get to hear his story about how he started this little repair business, and it’s, like, wow, it’s not all for naught because I got to hear this great story, Zoë.

Everyone loves it, it's emotional and it connects us…. I also believe that nurses love to tell their stories and talk about what brings them back day after day...its not the pay, benefits or hours...no one ever asks them these questions and we always run out of time with many stories untold, Mary.

This category shows that stories are more than forms of entertainment. They help redefine, share, maintain, and support positive visions of the present and future outcomes. Some participants use these stories as forms of meditation, reinforcing their positive visions and as explanations of good that comes from negative happenstances.

*Turning point.* Many research participants said they experienced a sensation of reaching a turning point in their lives. This was a point where they were so open and ready to embrace a positive viewpoint in life that it was easy to change on the spot and they could go forward without their old negative or cynical selves. Others felt the approach of the turning point as more gradual, but just as deeply.

It was a turning point for me in the way that I looked at what I did for a living, and how important the experiences that I had as a nurse really shaped my values and who I was, Mary.

So I would say there wasn’t a particular event. It was much more about a sort of building up to the place where they could change, appreciative inquiry in a nanosecond…. It wasn’t really a nanosecond because it took a while to take us to the nanosecond in which change would occur, but it was once we got to that space, Emily.

Turning points gave some of the participants strength in their sense of hope and positivity. In a sense, it was like reaching a turning point in a journey or a hilltop. The way home or downhill is always easier. The participants who expressed this category reported feeling a sense of relief and peace, or building of energy after the turning point.

*Mentoring.* All of the MTL and OTL participants expressed or indicated they were being mentored, and/or were mentoring others. Some of these mentoring relationships are formal arrangements and others are informal in nature. For example, Mary mentors the senior nurses, while teaching them mentoring skills. Mary is also mentored informally by the AI event facilitator. Sulaiman mentors the members of his community and maintains a formal and informal relationship with the AI event facilitators. Igor is coached by the faculty person who recommended AI training to him. Mentoring may be a key social support in furthering the AI journey of the participants and may also support and maintain perspective changes.

*Organization and focus.* It is interesting to note that during the AI event there were no reports of concepts in the categories of the organization and focus. The participants might have been caught up in the AI event experience enough that they were not narrowly focused on cause and effect relationships and specific actions. The participant’s mode of thinking may have been broad-minded. These topics are opportunities for further research.

Many of the research participants also expressed other aspects of the positive effect the AI event had on them and their lives. They mentioned a ‘tendency for acting on their new knowledge and skills’ or the ‘intent to act on it soon,’ and ‘positive changes in their organizations.’ The research participants also referred to their role as ‘mentors to others’ or in ‘being mentored,’ the ‘opportunity for learning and professional growth,’ ‘being AI is a continual process’, ‘connection’ and ‘being connected’, ‘increased confidence’, gaining a ‘positive focus,’ and the experience of ‘spirituality.’

The participant’s positive experiences occurred although many of them came to the event in uncertain or negative circumstances and states of mind. Mary described her organization as negative, mistrustful, and skeptical. Mary, like others, was also skeptical of AI and the claims of the AI event facilitator and her first thought was “This is absurd!” Gwen described her relationship as fragile and close to becoming nonexistent before she participated in an AI event. Travel in Sulaiman’s country is dangerous: overt racism, violence, kidnapping, and murder threaten everyone’s safety. Many participants of this AI event came under gunfire on their way to the AI event. Sulaiman traveled outside the safety of his community and though these dangers to participate.

Other participants were preoccupied with the success or logistics of the AI event. For example, Ding and Hall felt concern for delivering tangible results in organizations driven by “Doers.” Sarah was concerned with being overwhelmed by the spiritual side of AI and said,

[I] Don’t want to be sucked into the vortex, become a cult member of AI.

Other participants expressed a curiosity with or an attraction to AI, Sarah.

I liked the whole idea of an organizational development intervention that emphasized the positive side of things, the focus on positive organizational scholarship, Burt.

There are apparent long-term effects of the AI event experience on the participants. Twenty participants were three months to six years removed from their AI event experiences. At the time of our interview, Sarah had just returned from an AI foundations training event the previous week. All of the participants continue to practice the principles and methods of AI in their personal and/or professional lives. For some participants this required a conscious effort, but they were willing to continue to engage in AI principles and methods.

I suppose I can say that for AI to work you have to live it...it's a continual process for me but one that has really made a difference in my life and hopefully in the people I come in contact with, Mary.

It really can be, it can be very powerful in the way that it has an impact on people. It really can. I’m still wrestling with all that I learned, Igor.

Many of the participants have made AI a part of their work life also. Gwen, Laurent, Sophia, Annie, Igor, and Jerry are AI facilitators. Mary, Hillary, Sarah, Burt, Bev, Ding, Hall, Ian, Valdez, Carr, Emily, and Zoë are making AI principles and methods part of their practices at their workplaces. Sulaiman, Chris, and Marie use AI in their personal lives. All of the participants in this study still involve AI principles and methods in their lives and this indicates the durability of the AI event experience in the participant’s life. It should be pointed out the research population for this study was self-selected for a positive AI event experience. These results might be common for the population this sample is drawn from. This indicates an opportunity for further study involving more diverse research populations.

## Research Question 2

“How do the AI event participants’ experiences compare to the theory of TL as defined by Mezirow, and how does TL theory describe their experiences?” In this section I will discuss the participants experiences by category of TL experience and by comparing the categories to each other.

### The participants’ experiences of TL

To understand the participant’s AI event experiences in terms of TL I compared the data to a TL coding key, which is comprised of Mezirow’s three reflective practices and ten stages of TL. I also kept in mind the two central objectives of TL. First, a change in meaning schema that effects a positive reappraisal of the subject’s expectations of the future, and secondly, a successful integration of that new meaning schema into the subject’s life. Using these criteria, I found interesting patterns in the data for the *Direct Positive Effect – Changed Perspective* (DPE-CP) participants, those who expressed a direct positive benefit from their AI event experience and expressed or indicated a change in perspective.

In this deductive analysis of the data, I found that three DPE-CP participants, Mary, Chris, and Bev expressed or indicated the thirteen points of the TL coding key. These participants were coded as *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL). For example, Mary changed her meaning schema to include a more positive and realistic viewpoint of herself and the importance of her work and successfully integrated her new perspectives into her life. Mary no longer sees herself as unworthy and less capable in relation to her coworkers. Mary has reassessed what is important to her about her work. She has given up her administrative position as a senior nursing manager to care for the dying children at the children’s hospital where she works. Mary has also undergone some physical changes as well. Mary enrolled in a weight loss program within two days of the AI event and over the year and a half between the AI event and our interview had lost 70 pounds. Mary reports that she no longer needs anti-depressants, and she stopped taking them shortly after the AI event. Mary also reports improved relations with her family, and her coworkers.

Chris reclaimed her normally proactive and outgoing self after several years of fear, withdrawal from others, and cynicism after suffering the trauma of being raped by a group of men. Chris describes herself in this period as gothic, fatalistic and realistic. After her AI event, Chris became an active member of a local not for profit, encouraged the organization to hold an AI summit and is now the president of the organization. Chris has changed the focus of her Master’s of Public Administration program to include organizational development. Chris has also become more physically active and has lost a noticeable amount of weight since the AI event.

Bev has resolved conflicts with her family regarding physical and mental abuse, which allowed her to normalize relations with her sister. Bev was then able to attend to her sister during her fight with breast cancer. Bev, as a senior manager, also is applying AI principles and methods to her workplace where strife, confusion, politics and poor communication are the norm as the senior executives seek to sell the telecom business where she works. Bev is actively applying her knowledge of AI to other long-term personal relationships. Bev has quit smoking and gained some weight since the AI event.

I found that five of the DPE-CP participants, Hillary, Gwen, Igor, Marie, and Sulaiman, expressed or indicated a change in meaning schema and successfully integrated it into their lives, which is consistent with the two central objectives of TL. These participants were coded as OTL, or Other transformative learning. For example, Hillary experienced a disorienting dilemma, a changed meaning perspective, and successful integration of the new meaning schema. Hillary expressed an intense frustration with her position at work where she felt as though she was suffering from an “identity crisis” and was left feeling as though she had been “slamming my head on my desk” by the end of her day as a disorienting dilemma. Hillary discovered the power of positive imagery and positive questioning at the AI foundations training and was instrumental in initiating a new research methodology at her workplace. The k-12 school for orphaned children where she works now looks at the factors for student success and builds the one-year and five-year plans to support and accommodate those successes. She also uses AI principles in her relationship with her husband, who notices and appreciates the difference.

Gwen experienced a change in meaning schema and successful integration of that meaning schema without experiencing a disorienting dilemma and self-examination with negative feelings. Although Gwen described her relationship as fragile before her AI event she did not consider it a disorienting dilemma. Gwen’s change in meaning perspective came in the form of her understanding how she behaved in intimate relationships and what she expected of those relationships, and in what effect she wanted her career to have on society. After the AI event Gwen and Tom, who conducted the AI event with Gwen, actively pursued the life together that they envisioned and planned for during the AI event. Gwen is now an AI consultant and facilitator working internationally. She is also married to Tom and is a mother to their daughter.

Igor experienced a change of meaning perspective and integration without a disorienting dilemma and a self-examination with negative feelings. Igor, a senior level officer in a military organization and pilot for a commercial airline, who was used to a very top down, hierarchical, command and control style of communication and driving initiatives. Igor did not express or indicate a disorienting dilemma. Igor learned a new language and style of communication that enabled him, “to talk a language that she understands.” Igor used the new language and communication skills to set his co-pilots at ease and improve relationships with them. Igor also initiated some training programs within his military organization, “And I know I wouldn’t have done that a couple of years ago.” Igor’s co-workers describe him as more collaborative and participative since the AI event. Igor expresses how the AI event has affected him:

My wife pointed out that I have lived my life in a left brained world…. Well, what she says she’s watching is somebody whose right side of his brain has said, “It’s my turn,” Igor.

Marie experienced a disorienting dilemma, self-examination with negative feelings, a change in meaning schema, and successful integration of the new meaning schema, without experiencing planning. Marie faced internal crises on many fronts before her AI event. Her fiancé abandoned her, she was forced to take a job she felt was beneath her and she had a poor relationship with her mother. This caused her to act out at work distancing her from and angering her coworkers. She often left work in tears. Many times Marie had to pull her car over on the way home to vent before she could continue on her way home. Days before the AI event the only manager Marie identified with, was laid off due to budget shortfalls. Through the AI event, Marie discovered she could express her individuality and that she was respected for the quality of her work. Marie became more willing to express herself in a manner appropriate to her workplace. Marie also discovered an avenue of communication and a level of friendship with the acting CEO of her organization. Marie has bought her own home and has begun working on improving her relationship with her mother.

Sulaiman represents a change in meaning schema and successful integration of the new meaning schema without a disorienting dilemma or a self-examination with negative feelings. Sulaiman, as a conservative and moral Muslim leader of a community based not for profit had little experience with members of Guyana’s general society, limiting himself to interactions with others of his faith and convictions. Through his AI event experience, he was able to discover that everyone had his or her own truth and this meant there might be multiple truths with which to interpret the world. Sulaiman also discovered common ground with others he might have avoided in the past. Sulaiman has co-founded a community wide organization designed to teach AI to the people of Guyana, and to use AI to resolve the issues that inhibit the growth of society in his country. He is partnered with Jews, Christians, fellow Muslims, Indo-Guyanese, men and women in this effort.

## Comparing the AV, OTL and MTL Research Participants

In this section, I will begin by comparing the categories of *Aligned Values* (AV), *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL), and *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL) to the categories of the TL coding key in a series of charts, which reflect my analytic process. In an effort to define the differences between the AV, OTL and MTL categories, I placed them in tables for comparison. While the population size of this research is small for developing generalizations it helps in understanding the data more fully. Please refer to Figure 3, for categories of experience by TL category.

In this analysis of the AV, OTL, MTL research participants by TL category I found the following trends data. First, the AV research participants were least likely to engage in the reflective practices, and the self-examination. The OTL research participants were more likely than the AV research participants to engage in the reflective practices and the self-examination. In the remaining three categories of the TL coding key there is significantly less difference between the AV and the OTL research participants. The MTL research participants scored 100% on the TL coding key.

To understand these differences between the AV, OTL and MTL research participants more thoroughly I examined categories by comparing the TL points that make up the TL categories of reflective practices and self-examination. Those TL points are: critical self-refection, reflective dialogue, reflective action, disorienting dilemma, self-examination with negative feelings, a critical assessment of assumptions and relationships, recognition of one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared. In this analysis I could see the specific TL points that define the difference between the AV and OTL research participants. Please refer to Figure 5 for *categories of experience by TL category.*



*Figure 5*. Categories of experience by TL category*.*

The AV research participants were least likely to express or indicate a disorienting dilemma or the self-examination with feelings of guilt, shame, fear, and anger. The AV research participants were also less likely to express or indicate reflective dialogue or critical self-reflection. The OTL research participants were less likely to express or indicate a disorienting dilemma and the self-examination with feelings of guilt, shame, fear, and anger. The OTL research participants were slightly less likely to express or indicate reflective dialogue also. Please refer to Figure 6, Categories of experience by TL categories of reflective practices and self-examination.



*Figure 6.* Categories of experience by TL categories of reflective practices and self-examination.

This shows a progressive trend among the categories with the AV research participants least likely to express or indicate the points in the TL coding key analyzed above. The OTL research participants more likely to express the points in the TL coding key analyzed above. The MTL research participants by definition met all of these points.

This analysis revealed several of the research participants indicated a re-examination of their roles and relationships, planning new courses of action, acquiring new skills and knowledge, and acting on their plans using their new skills and knowledge. This analysis of the data revealed a progressive increase, by category, from AV to OTL and then MTL to express or indicate reflective dialogue, a disorienting dilemma, and the self-examination with feelings of guilt, shame, fear, and anger. The AV research participants were least likely to engage in these points of the TL coding key, while the OTL research participants were more likely to engage in these points. The MTL research participants completed 100 percent of the TL coding key. The AV research participants were also least likely to express critical self-reflection.

## Research Question 3

“How does appreciative inquiry’s focus on positive emotions compare to the emphasis in TL theory on the examination of feelings of anger, guilt, and shame?” To respond to this question I will discuss the emotional experiences of the participants, and how positive psychology might explain how the participants coped with or avoided negative emotional experiences.

*The role of negative and positive emotions for the research participants*. Most of the research participants expressed or indicated they experienced positive emotions. Common was a sense of energy and excitement that was palpable. Others shared laughter and a sense of joy. For example, Gwen felt a sense of energy that was physical. Hillary felt ‘a peace which passeth all understanding’ and joy in the possibilities in the positive viewpoint.

It’s like the joy in the room is physically touching you and you see the widening eyes and the open mouths and the contentment, beyond contentment, the real hope that just reverberates across the room, Gwen.

And that's what happened in the NEW BEGINNINGS training was in the community of the other folks in this training it was a time of creating joy and imagining the possibilities and the creativity that existed it just filled me with utter joy, Hillary

The AV research participants tended to experience personally positive emotions and only reported negative emotions expressed by others when asked in the interview. The MTL and OTL research participants expressed both positive and negative emotions, which they personally experienced. Some research participants also experienced or encountered negative emotions, which might not be expected when AI is focused on the positive. Annie saw resentment and people who refused to participate.

There were some pretty cranky people and they were not feeling very appreciative about their working experience in the hospital and basically viewed our workshop, as… as an annoyance. Why is the hospital asking us about things that were happy about when actually we're cranky they were being divided. And so it was interesting saying, and we really let people go, you know if you're not interested in participating in this you can head out, Annie.

Igor experienced anger with a fellow participant at his AI event who ‘should walk a mile in my shoes.’ Igor saw another participant at his event have a panic attack:

One of the people in my group had a near death experience and had had to have an emergency tracheotomy. And it still would cause her to have panic attacks, if you will, where she just couldn’t breathe and in the midst of the group she began to have one of those panic attacks and the entire group began to breathe for her, Igor.

It appears that for some research participants AI allowed them to experience or confront negative emotions. AI gave Mary the strength to confront her own depression and lack of self-worth and change to fit her new self-image.

Depressed. I was sad, felt sorry for myself, looked at others and wished that I had a life like theirs...overweight and physically drained. On antidepressants. Now, I still have a few pounds to lose but otherwise, I am content, positive, more satisfied and grateful for all that I have. Off antidepressants, happier overall. Now I feel that others see me as a positive confident person, Mary.

Bev went from a sense of mild ‘irritation’ to ‘crying hysterically, and a sensation of energy that was ‘physically charging.’ Bev also confronted her own physical and mental abuse as a child. Expressions of positive and negative emotions that were personally experienced might be an indication of or a result of perspective change in AI event participants.

## Additional Findings

Results such as those presented above should be expected of a research population that self-selected for a positive AI experience. Many of the research participants expressed a heightened awareness of their relationships and connections to others, along with positive changes in relationship. There are some clustered concepts from the initial coding session that might be significant, including *mentoring* and *loss of relationships.* These concepts may be key factors in the TL experience of AI participants.

### Mentoring

The OTL and MTL research participants expressed mentoring and its importance in sustaining their new perspectives and the reintegration into their lives. For MTL research participants Mary and Bev and OTL research participants Hillary, Gwen, Igor, Marie, and Sulaiman mentoring meant maintaining a relationship, formal or informal, with the facilitator of the AI event. For MTL research participants Mary, Bev, and Chris and for OTL research participants Gwen, Igor and Sulaiman it meant being a mentor others. For some research participants this expressed it self as being in both types of mentoring relationships. For example:

I found a place to use AI as part of a mentoring program for nurses that I developed with another nurse. We teach a 4 hour workshop to train nurses to be mentors, and we spend the last hour talking about our personal experiences, our values, what it means to be a nurse, and we tell stories. Everyone loves it...it's emotional and it connects us. Mary.

### Loss of relationships

Several of the research participants spoke of relationships changed for the positive. For example Gwen’s relationship progressed from uncertainty to engagement, marriage, and running an AI consulting practice together. Igor is better able to communicate with his wife. Ian has a renewed understanding of his son’s enthusiasm as it is expressed through ADD. What might be unexpected is that the MTL research participants expressed that they lost relationships that were negative or non-supporting because they were perceived as being too ‘Pollyanna.’ Others in their lives who did not participate in the AI event were unable or unwilling to accept the MTL research participant’s new positive viewpoint. Mary lost AI champions, who she became close to, in her organization to lay-offs, and changed her ‘social interactions to focus on the positive relationships.’ Bev has lost ‘old and dear friends.’ Chris was ostracized by fellow crisis counselors after speaking up about her new perspective on expressing experiences of rape as a form healing.

I’ve lost some really good friends…. Well it made me look at myself and go “wow, why are you allowing this person to do this to yourself?” That was pretty hard on a couple of them…. I was sad when it happened but now it’s like there’s not so much responsibility and I’m a little bit more freer now, Chris.

## Summary of the Findings

In this chapter, I explained the significance and meaning of the AI event for the participants by discussing the categories and themes developed in the data analysis. Then I analyzed the differences between the categories AV, OTL, and MTL, which revealed a progressive tendency to engage in reflective dialogue, express or indicate a disorienting dilemma, and engage in self-examination with negative feelings. Additional findings reveal the categories of experiencing negative emotions, mentoring, and loss of negative relationship might be key factors of the AI event for some of the research participants.

# Chapter Six: Discussion

## Introduction

To understand more fully the discussion to follow, first I summarize the research study to this point. This establishes the context and findings of this research. In Chapter 2, the Literature Review, I discussed several studies, which indicate the experiences of AI participants were similar to TL (Mohr, Smith et al. 2000; Schiller 2002; Trosten-Bloom 2002; Van Buskirk 2002). This research study was designed to explore, through qualitative interviews, the experiences of twenty-one participants who attended an AI summit or foundations training. Through a constant comparative analysis of the data in a method suggested by grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1998; Glaser 2002), emergent patterns were pursued as they were presented by the data. In this chapter, I will discuss the findings of the data analysis.

The initial inductive coding revealed the general categories of D*irect Positive Effect* (DPE) and *No Direct Effect* (NDE). The two NDE participants and eleven of the DPE participants who reported they found AI principles and methods aligned with or reinforced their personal values and were therefore categorized as A*ligned Values* (AV). The eight remaining DPE participants expressed or indicated a change of meaning perspective, which they attributed directly to their participation in the AI event, and were coded as C*hanged Perspective* (CP).

In the second round of deductive coding for TL the direct positive experience – changed perspective (DPE-CP) participants were further categorized as *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL) or O*ther Transformative Learning* (OTL). Both the MTL and the OTL participants experienced a change in meaning schema and successfully integrated it into their lives. The three MTL participants expressed or indicated the thirteen points of the TL coding key, which included Mezirow’s three reflective practices and Mezirow’s ten stages of TL (Mezirow 1978; 1990; 1997; 2000). The remaining five DPE-CP participants, who were coded as OTL, did not express or indicate all thirteen points of the TL coding key. The OTL participants expressed or indicated a different path to their change in meaning perspective. While all thirteen points of the TL coding key were expressed or indicated by the individual OTL participants, as a group, did not experienced all thirteen points. The OTL participants were less likely to express or indicate reflective dialogue, a disorienting dilemma, and self-examination with negative feelings than the MTL participants.

NDE

DPE

AV

CP

MTL

Research participant’s assessment of their experience

OTL

*Figure 7.* Categories of participant’s experience*.* NDE = no direct effect, DPE = direct positive effect, AV = aligned values, CP = changed perspectives, OTL = other transformative learning, MTL = Mezirow’s transformative learning.

## Discussion of the Findings

Participants indicated by their agreement to participate in this study that their experience of the AI event was positive. This positive experience of the AI event had either a direct positive effect (DPE) on them and their lives or a non-direct effect (NDE) on them and their lives. The DPE participants were affected in two general ways. They experienced an alignment or reinforcement of their values (AV) with the principles and methods of AI, or they experienced a change in perspective (CP). The NDE participants experienced an alignment or reinforcement of their values (AV) with the principles and methods of AI.

### Discussion of the Significance of the AI Event Experience

AI’s intent is to initiate organizational change by changing the focus, narrative, and dialogue of the organization. Although AI’s intent is to affect an organizational change, the AI event had profound effects for some of the individual participants. Most of the participants in this research study reported a direct positive effect resulting from their participation in the AI event. For thirteen of the participants in this AI event experience aligned with or reinforced their values. For eight of the participants the AI event resulted in changes in their perspectives.

Participation in the AI event led many of the participants to experience a wide range of emotions. These emotions changed in focus from negative or neutral to become predominantly positive. The experience of positive emotions and positivity might have enabled the increase in the number of and breadth of insights that were reported during and after the AI event. Insights reported, such as ‘empowerment,’ ‘I am ready to hear the truth,’ ‘a common bond with the group,’ a sense of connection,’ and ‘the power of voice’ reveal how powerfully the AI event affected many of the participants.

The major and minor categories of AI event experience developed in this research reflect the principles of AI. Language and stories relate to the poetic principle. The wave of positive emotions and energy experienced, the emphasis on positive focus and positivity in general relate to the positive principle. Visions of positive outcomes and a positive future reflect the anticipatory principle. Insights such as ‘we create our own reality,’ ‘patterns of interconnectivity,’ and ‘knowledge is power’ reflect the constructionist principle. The insights ‘self-fulfilling destiny,’ ‘we are what we ask about’ and ‘it is all about the questions’ relate to the principle of simultaneity. While these insights and categories of experience reinforce the goals of AI they might also reflect a recitation of instrumental knowledge passed from an authority figure. This might be expected of a group of AI event participants who self-selected for a positive experience.

The AI event is designed as a finite experience with clear parameters of time. Yet all but one of the *Changed Perspective* (CP) participants has maintained a relationship with the facilitator of their AI event. Many of the CP participants are also engaged in mentoring others using the principles of AI. The mentoring relationship might serve as an opportunity for role playing or reinforcing new attitudes and behaviors. This relationship might also signify some form of personal commitment to acting on the new skills and knowledge gained in the AI event. Mentoring AI event participants might promote long-term relationships, provide opportunities for networking, and strengthen the AI community.

## Discussion of the Critique of Appreciative Inquiry

Golembiewski’s assertion that social-constructionism prevents AI from developing a basis in empirical research is certainly arguable. Empirical research can include rigorous qualitative analysis, which this research has revealed in the methods chapter, and through this research study.

Golembiewski is concerned the focus on positive appreciation might inhibit the examination of the organization’s full internal dialogue might be reconsidered when the negative thoughts and emotions of the participants of study are examined. Many of the research participants moved from negative or neutral thoughts and emotions to a sense of positivity and positive emotions while remembering their original states of thought and emotion. Some of the participants moved freely back and forth from negative to positive before settling on a positive outlook. Many of the participants were clearly able to relate negative states of being, attitudes, and behaviors after settling into their new positive frame of reference. They could ‘benchmark’ their progress against these negative states with confidence. For example, Mary was able to relate her beginning state of depression, mistrust and frustration clearly a year after adopting her new positive outlook. Bev moved from disdain and worry that AI was ‘foo-foo’ and a ‘waste of her time’ to experiencing a positive physical and emotional charge, to an overwhelming sadness and anger with her parents, to reconciliation and an adoption of a positive outlook.

All of the participants in this research study have applied AI to their professional and personal lives, and are pursuing further knowledge of AI methods and theory through academics and practice. For example, despite the stressful situation where Laurent experienced only the first two stages of AI for the first time he has attended AI certification and practices AI in his consulting firm. Some of the participants in this study may lose their zeal for AI having only recently been exposed to AI. Many of the participants have maintained their interest and active participation in AI over periods of years. For example, Bev, Mary, and Chris are two, two and a half, and three years removed from their AI event experience respectively and are actively involved in learning more about and practicing AI. The participants’ increased interest in the theory, practice, and application of AI offsets Bushe’s concern for the practice of AI being diluted or corrupted.

While this study appears to disagree with Golembiewski and Bushe’s critiques of AI practitioners and scholars of AI should attend to the expressed concerns in their practice to ensure the validity of AI. The positive results these participants experienced might be the result of skilled facilitation of the AI event on the part of the practitioner and not the result of the good intentions of the participants.

Discussion of the MTL and OTL Participants

The three *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL) participants support Mezirow’s theory that TL requires the subject to engage in the three reflective practices and to experience the ten stages of TL. The *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL) participants support critics of Mezirow’s theory by revealing other patterns in the process of TL.

The OTL participants expressed or indicated eleven or twelve of the thirteen items in the TL code key. The five OTL participants show four patterns in the process of TL, they might represent several patterns for attaining TL. Hillary did not report a disorienting dilemma, reflective dialogue, and self-examination with negative feelings as part of her process of TL. Marie did not express or indicate planning a course of action to implement her TL. Sulaiman’s pattern did not include a disorienting dilemma or the self-examination with negative feelings in his process of TL. In their process of TL Gwen and Igor did not express or indicate a disorienting dilemma.

Mezirow’s model requires the disorienting dilemma as a starting point for the critical self-reflection that motivates the subject toward TL. Mezirow also requires self-examination with negative feelings such as guilt, shame, fear, and anger to promote the process of TL in the subject. The AI event experience may promote or facilitate TL in the participants without their experiencing strong negative effect and may not require a disorienting dilemma to initiate a change in meaning schema. It should also be stated it is possible that the interview protocol, or my qualitative interviewing skills may not have revealed the TL points not expressed or indicated for the OTL participants.

Another interesting factor is the difference in the levels or amounts of reflective dialogue, disorienting dilemma, and self-examination with negative feelings reported between the *Aligned Values* (AV), *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL), and *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL) research participants. The AV research participants were least likely to experience these three points in the TL coding key, while the OTL participants were more likely to experience them. The MTL participants experienced all three points fully. This may indicate that the process of perspective change requires engaging in these points of Mezirow’s model of TL for most participants. It may also show that realizing your values are being reinforced or aligned with AI does not require these points in Mezirow’s model of TL. Experiencing these points from Mezirow’s model may also indicate a depth or level of TL that is measurably different than it is for those who do not experience them.

## Discussion of E. Taylor’s Critique of TL

In the literature review, I discussed Taylor’s seven issues with TL theory: individual change versus social action, decontextualized view of learning, universal model of adult learning, adult development: shift or progression, emphasis on rationality, other ways of knowing, and the model of perspective transformation. In this section, I will discuss those seven points in relation to the findings of this research.

### Individual Change Versus Social Action

Critics of TL question whether the goal of individual TL is enough. Should it be the goal of TL to inspire social action? Should TL be an instrument of social change and used to free people from oppression? In this research, all the participants who experienced TL were motivated to act on behalf of, or with others. For example, Mary mentors others and speaks at Healthcare related AI events. Chris mentors some of her former colleagues in the crisis-counseling field in the use of AI to give victims hope and promote their sense of healing. Gwen has led AI events in Guyana, which have inspired positive social changes in a country burdened with violence. Sulaiman, who attended Gwen’s first AI event in Guyana, was instrumental in founding a non-sectarian positive change organization, which has accomplished many positive social changes in a short year. He also has plans to take the knowledge and skills he is gaining to other South American and Caribbean countries. This study indicates that while AI may or may not lead to social action, TL for the individual may lead to social action.

### Decontextualized View of Learning

The *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL) and *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL) participants engaged in the process of TL while remaining or becoming aware of their context. They were aware of their organizations and others around them at the beginning of their event and became aware of their connections to and interdependence with others in the AI group, their organization, families and friends. The TL experienced by these participants was not decontextualized but occurred in the context of their relationship with others. For example, others at the AI event reminded Igor to become engaged in the AI process. Igor learned about his own anger with people who empathized with him regarding his learning challenged son when another participant said, “walk a mile in my shoes.” Igor’s TL also occurred in relationship with his wife, with whom he was better able to communicate. Igor’s TL also occurred in relationship with his subordinates at his workplace, who had to cope with Igor’s new emphasis on a collaborative leadership style. These new relationships and ways of being in relationship did as much to cement the TL as they did to foster it. For example, Sulaiman has become a ‘super dad’ to his daughters and Igor has a new language for communicating with his wife. Bev’s husband has noticed the change and appreciates it. Mary and Chris have become more active within their families and socially. This research shows that TL is dependent on context.

### Universal Model of Adult Learning

The *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL) participants reinforce Mezirow’s model of TL but the *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL) participants show that Mezirow’s model is far from universal. The five OTL participants represent four variations of the TL model. This indicates that other paths to TL do exist. Cultural, social, and personal influences and preferences may foster a myriad of possible TL models and may make the definition of a universal model difficult. These findings are similar to those of other current research (Harvie 2004; McEwen 2004; Wasserman 2004; Wilson 2004; Frank 2005).

### Adult Development: Shift or Progression

While Taylor maintains that Mezirow sees TL as a parallel process with adult development this study did not investigate the participant’s stage of adult development, the normative psychological development, or the socially constructed nature of their development. Mezirow does however state that the process of TL can be either epochal (shift) or incremental (progression). The *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL)and *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL) research participants in this study reported their TL as occurring in short periods, which might be defined as epochal. Many of the research participants reported they felt themselves approaching a turning point over a period during the event and then experienced a sudden change in their perspective. For others the awareness of their changed perspective caught them off guard. The *No-Direct Effect* (NDE) participants might indicate the existence of AI event participants who experience TL over much longer periods. This research may indicate three forms of TL: epochal, a short progression to an epochal event, and progression.

### An Emphasis on Rationality

Taylor argues that Mezirow relies too heavily on critical self-reflection in the model of TL and that this is an overly western view of knowledge construction. All of the *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL) and *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL) participants did report critical self-reflection, supporting the claim of rationality in the process of TL. Of the MTL and OTL participants, only Sulaiman and Hillary reported they experienced only positive emotions. The other six research participants reported negative emotions of varying intensity. For example, Marie, Gwen, and Bev reported their experience as a catharsis of emotional release ranging from anger or tears to crying. Igor reported some anger and irritation, Mary reported shame and feelings of inadequacy, Chris expressed fear, isolation, and dread. All the TL participants experienced a move from negative emotions and feelings to joy and energy, and some a reported a sense of peace. Overall, this was a very emotional experience for the participants who were coded for TL. This research supports the argument that TL involves more than the rational aspect of the subject. This confirms Mezirow’s assertion that TL make involve subjective reframing, which can be very emotional as old perspectives are challenged and transformed. This research supports the assertions that the process of TL involves the cognitive-affective along with the cognitive-rational.

### Other Ways of Knowing

Taylor states that Mezirow sees TL as something that impacts the student’s relationships but does not acknowledge that TL might occur ‘in relationship’ with others in the student’s life. As I discussed in the section on Mezirow’s decontextualized view of TL, the *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL) and *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL) research participants learned in relationship as much as they learned about their relationships. Their new positive views of relationships and their new ways of being in relationship with others led to insights and understandings of themselves and others for the participants coded as TL.

## Other Models of Perspective Transformation

As I discussed in the section on Mezirow’s universal model of TL there were four other variations of the TL model exhibited in this research. The research protocol’s bias toward Mezirow’s model may have prevented the research from revealing other complete patterns of TL along with the four variations reported here. I was able to discover the four variations reported in this research by distilling TL down to its basic assumptions: a change of perspective and the successful re-integration of the new perspective into the subject’s life. Emphasizing Mezirow’s model of TL might prevent other models from being discovered. For example, Yorks and Kasl (2002) redefine Mezirow’s meaning schema as *habits of being*, which is more inclusive of the learner’s whole person experience of the process of TL. I suggest future researchers base their research on the basic assumption of TL’s outcomes: a change of meaning schema and its integration. Researchers should de-emphasize Mezirow’s model of TL, and focus on the learner’s experience of TL inclusive of their whole person experience. This will no doubt uncover models of TL that are more descriptive and adaptable, and might lead to a clearer understanding of the process of TL.

Scholars theorize that TL might effect the psychological, convictional, behavioral, and spiritual aspects of the person leading to mystical experiences, increased sense of connection with others, increased compassion for others, increased creativity, and an increased sense of freedom (Morgan 1987; Coffman 1989; Clark 1993; Saavedra 1995; Pope 1996; Taylor 1997; Scott 2003). This research supports at least some of these claims. Since the research did not include any psychological testing or investigation, I can make no statement of psychological changes although they are indicated. For example, Chris ended her self-imposed exile and became her natural outgoing self, which shows a change in her psychological state from fear to happiness, her conviction of dread changed to hope, her behaviors changed from introverted and withdrawn to out going and engaged in life, expressing her freedom. Hillary reported a spiritual experience. All the *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL) and *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL) participants reported feeling a greater sense of connection with others. Mary expressed compassion for others in her new role as nurse to the dying patients at her hospital and returned to her hobby of pottery.

## Discussion of Other Models of Adult Learning and Development

In this section, I will discuss other theories of learning from the literature review as they relate to this research. Cranton (Cranton 1994; Cranton 2006), used Mezirow’s model of TL as a benchmark to determine how individual learners might experience the model of TL. Cranton defined eight components of TL: awareness of values and assumptions, receptiveness to trigger events, questioning values, content and process reflection, premise reflection, rational discourse, revision of values and assumptions, revision of meaning perspectives. Cranton determines the subject’s likelihood of engaging in a component of TL based on their Jungian Archetype, or MBTI assessment. I did not gather information regarding the participant’s MBTI assessment. Cranton’s components of TL are useful in analyzing the TL experiences of the *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL) and *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL) participants and I will discuss them here.

## Discussion of Cranton’s Model of TL

### Awareness of Values and Assumptions, Questioning Values, Revision of Values and Assumptions

Through the AI event and the process of TL the participants coded as *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL) and *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL) engaged in critical self-reflection, which caused these participants to be come aware of their values and assumptions along with an awareness of the values and assumptions of others. This critical self- reflection led the participants to question their values and assumptions, and later to plan and act to change values and assumptions that were not valid. For example, Sulaiman became aware of his value on religious conviction and clean living, and his assumption that if others were not as strong in their convictions nor lived as clean a lifestyle as he did they were not able to contribute to the solution of his countries issues. Sulaiman began to question these values and assumptions when he realized there might be more than one truth. Sulaiman revised his values and assumptions when he saw that others, different from himself, were able and willing to contribute to solving his countries issues and they were as committed as he was to solving them.

### Responsiveness to Trigger Events

Not all of these participants indicated a receptiveness to trigger events specifically, although some of the participants may have indicated receptiveness to change prompted by trigger events. For example, Mary, although mistrustful and cynical of the claims of AI, noticed when the AI facilitator said, “If you are open to it, AI will change your life.” Chris, Hillary, Igor, and Bev may have indicated receptiveness by willingly attending the classes where they had their AI event experience. Gwen and Sulaiman willingly attended the AI event they participated in. Marie attended her AI event unwillingly, was very angry, and was in a state of agitation but she realized through the AI event experiential exercises that there might be more truths than her own and she became interested in hearing from the other participants in her AI event.

### Content, Process, and Premise Reflection

Those engaged in TL will examine the *construct* of an issue or problem they are facing. They will also examine alternatives for the *process* of overcoming the issue or problem, and they will question the *premise* of the assumptions that define the issue and the solutions. Cranton, like Mezirow, asserts this takes place through critical self-reflection. The *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL) and *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL) participants indicated critical self-reflection. For example, Marie realized her basic assumptions about her job being beneath her caused her to examine the assumptions she held concerning her self-worth and the value of the tasks she performed. She examined the process of changing her behavior and attitudes, seeing how others had supported her and nurtured her at her workplace. This led Marie to question her premise of isolated superiority. She could build a new set of assumptions about the nature of her work, its value, the community of co-workers and friends who made it possible, and how the workplace could function more like a happy family.

### Rational Discourse

Cranton equates rational discourse with Mezirow’s reflective dialogue, which is engaged with others. This is one item in Cranton’s model where there is variation in my research. The *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL) participants and all but one of the *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL) participants, Sulaiman, reported engaging in reflective dialogue. Examples of rational discourse are Igor’s dialogues with his class cohorts, his wife, and his faculty mentor. Hillary engaged in reflective dialogue with her husband and her father on the nature of the universe. Chris had a sincere talk with her brother and engaged in dialogue with her friends from the crisis-counseling field. Sulaiman did not report reflective dialogue. He may have been able to hold this dialogue internally or it was not necessary for him. Cranton might say that Sulaiman was high in *feeling, sensing,* or *intuition* functions as defined in Jung’s personality archetypes. This raises the question of whether rational discourse might occur internally or not at all. It may also mean that the research protocol or my interview skills did not reveal Sulaiman’s use of rational discourse.

### Revision of Meaning Perspectives

The *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL) and *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL) research participants indicated a perspective change and a re-integration of the meaning schema into their lives. They can be considered to have revised their meaning perspectives. For example, Bev revised her understanding of family and her role in her family. She was then able to reconcile with her sister and assist her in a time of need. Gwen revised her definition of herself as a strong and independent woman to include being relationship with a man working toward the same dream of family, and married her partner. Mary revised her value as a senior nurse, her self-worth, and changed her position to include more fulfilling work and take better care of herself, physically and emotionally.

Cranton’s model of TL describes the MTL and OTL participants more completely than Mezirow’s more largely accepted model of TL. Cranton’s model warrants further attention from researchers and may lead to a more descriptive or adaptable model of TL.

## Discussion of J. Taylor’s Model of TL

J. Taylor’s (Mezirow 2000) model of the process of TL is more general in nature and does not include many of the specific process or events that Mezirow’s model proposes. Taylor sees the process of TL proceeding of three phases in which the learner becomes conscious of a new reality, transforms their consciousness, and integrates the new consciousness into their life. Taylor reports the disorienting dilemma may be internally induced by the learner or externally induced and is a result of confronting a new reality through a trigger event. Transcendence can be sudden or gradual but the learner is aware of a conscious leap of faith. Personal commitment to the new perspective and using grounding experiences reinforces the new perspective in its integration of the changed meaning perspective. Hillary became aware of positivity as a viable outlook on life, changed her outlook to include positivity, and integrated positivity into her work life, where she now does ‘appreciative’ research.

## The Role of Positive Emotions

Barbara Fredrickson’s work on the value of positive emotions (Fredrickson 2001; 2003) may have relevance to the findings of this study. Fredrickson, among others, has found that positive emotions broaden people’s patterns of thought. People experiencing positive emotions have patterns of thought that are more unusual, flexible, integrative, open to information, efficient and people experiencing positive emotions have an increased preference for variety and accept a broader array of behavioral options. Fredrickson theorizes positive emotions produce a broader thought-action repertoire, while negative emotion focus on a narrow thought-action repertoire. For example, fear leads to thoughts of fight or flight, in other words a specific set of actions. Fredrickson’s research shows that positive emotions such as joy broaden the thought-action repertoire into creativity, play and boundary exploration. Interest broadens the thought-action repertoire into the urge to explore, take in new information, and expand the self.

Fredrickson states that experiences of positive emotions build on each other to build enduring personal resources, which can be used later to buffer and manage future threats to well-being. The personal resources accrued while experiencing positive emotions are durable and outlast the transient positive emotional states that produced them. Fredrickson calls this the *Broaden and Build* theory of positive emotions. Fredrickson’s broaden and build theory also states the experience of positive emotions and accrual of personal resources has an *Un-doing* effect on the damage caused by negative emotions. Positive emotions may assist in placing negative events and emotions into a broader context, lessening their impact, enabling the regulation of negative emotions and leading to personal resilience. This has a spiral effect: the more positive emotions experienced, the more personal resources accrued, the more likely one is to experience positive emotions in the future, accrue more positive emotions, and the more negative emotional damage is undone. Frederickson’s theory also states positive emotions lead to the accrual of durable positive resources and the un-doing of negative emotions.

### Positive Emotions and the AI Event Experience

In the discussion of research question one the participants described their AI event experience as a time of positivity: positive emotions, energy, thoughts, insights, bonding, relationships, and problem solving. This study revealed a marked increase in positive emotions during the AI event and an increase in concepts reported after the AI event. This research supports Fredrickson’s theory that positive emotions broaden people’s patterns of thought and their preferences for variation in behaviors, which leads to an un-doing of negative experiences.

### The Role of Positive Emotions in TL

It is possible that the experience of positivity and positive emotions, which facilitates broad-minded thinking, creativity and finding positive meaning may allow some AI event participants to change their focus from the narrow, response specific examination of a disorienting dilemma and self-examination of negative feelings (Fredrickson 2001; 2003). For the *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL) and *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL) participants the AI event experience may have led to a broader-minded focus on positive solutions to problem solving and enabled their ability to experience TL.

Fredrickson’s theory of positive emotions might explain how the MTL and some of the OTL participants were able to experience strong negative emotions, confront negative attitudes and behaviors, which resulted in positive solutions to their personal issues and experiencing TL. This may have been a result of experiencing a sufficient level of positivity, which enabled broader minded thought patterns, a sense of positive connection to others, positive solutions, and a positive outlook. Fredrickson’s *Broaden and Build* theory of positive emotions might explain the AI event experiences apparent un-doing of the negative damage done to these participants. For example, Chris was able to explore a personal tragedy, her resultant behaviors, attitudes, and expectation of future experiences in a new positive light. This may have enabled her ability to change he outlook, behaviors and attitudes, and the integration of her new meaning schema.

Fredrickson’s theory may also explain how some of the OTL participants experienced TL without experiencing strong negative emotions. The experience of a sufficient level of positivity may negate or alleviate the experience of negative emotions for some of the AI event participants. This study has shown reports of negative emotions experienced by some participants at the beginning of the AI event dropped during the AI event and were almost non-existent after the AI event. Some AI event participants did not experience negative emotions during the AI event and experienced TL. For example, Sulaiman realized that his view of religious truth might only represent one truth among many, and that his preferred lifestyle was not the only source of people who wished to do good works. Sulaiman was able to reconcile this dilemma without experiencing negative emotions or the need to examine negative emotions. He was able to come to new conclusions about working closely with people who did not share his religious convictions and lifestyle. Sulaiman has initiated positive solutions to his country’s problems and issues with those people.

The TL theories of Dirkx (2000; 2001), in which emotions play a significant part in the process of TL, may also explain how positive emotions might ameliorate, alleviate, or negate strong negative emotions in the TL experience for the *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL) and *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL) participants. Dirkx theorizes that emotional experiences are a direct link between the conscious and unconscious self and they enable deep TL experiences. Emotions suggest inner voices or images that are a direct link to the inner life and our initial construction of meaning. Spontaneous images are often able to link the inner and outer lives, the unconscious and the conscious. If the participants of an AI event experience positive imagery, that positive imagery might reconnect her or him with their initial positive constructions of meaning and expectations of the future making them available in the present for use in coping with negative emotions, and for creating a new vision of the self and the future. The experience of negative or positive emotions in the process or TL might be dependent on the spontaneous images or voices experienced by the participants and might reveal their initial meaning constructions at the earliest and deepest levels.

It is clear in this study that positivity and positive emotions have a role in the experience of TL for the *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL) and *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL) participants. Positivity and positive emotions experienced in the AI event may assist the MTL and OTL participants in gaining a sense of *mastery* in roles, relationships, skills, and knowledge; gaining a sense of *positivity*; and developing a positive *explanatory style* (expectation of the future). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi suggest these are necessary for humans to survive and thrive (Seligman 1995; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000). The theory of TL may benefit greatly from research in positivity and positive emotions in the process of TL. Mastery, positivity, and positive explanatory style might provide a means for defining and describing TL. Positive emotions and positivity may be necessary to enabling TL.

## Implications of this Research

This research has implications for both the theory and the practice of transformative learning and of appreciative inquiry. In this section, I will discuss the implications for each of these areas and I will suggest some directions for future research.

### Using AI to promote TL in the educational setting

In Mezirow’s (2000) edited work, *Learning as Transformation,* educators and scholars propose methods and processes for promoting or fostering TL. In this section, I will review those that apply to this study and discuss them in light of the findings of this research. Educators interested in promoting TL among their students are interested in more than sharing knowledge and experience with their students. These educators teach with the intent to promote the development of their students. Taylor, Marienau, and Fiddler (Taylor 2000) describe this development as a movement on the student part along five major dimensions of development:

Toward knowing as a dialogical process

Toward a dialogical relationship to oneself

Toward being a continuous learner

Toward self-agency and self-authorship

Toward connection with others

Since there is no guarantee that students will respond to these outcomes, Kathleen Taylor (2000) calls the outcomes, intentions, and it is with *developmental intent* that educators interested in promoting and fostering TL design their curriculums. Educators design their curricula to include experiential exercises that begin with the student’s beliefs and ideas, and move to exploring those beliefs and ideas through several frameworks of analysis, then reassessing the initial beliefs and ideas. The educator becomes a facilitator of, partner with, and catalyst for the student’s engagement in his or her own development.

Cohen and Piper (2000) propose the following process for promoting TL in learners of a residential adult learning program: a setting that evokes adventure, exploration and reflection; a detachment from the student’s everyday roles, an extended time for reflection and developing relationships with peers and educators, a student determined and student designed study plan, a self-assessment of their work.

Cranton (2000), focuses on individual differences in responding to TL and theorizes that different Jungian personality types will engage or not engage in different stages of Mezirow’s model of TL based on their personal preferences. With these differences in mind Cranton recommends that educators foster their student’s self-awareness of their psychological predispositions, encourage individuation, promote transformation, and become more self-aware themselves.

Educators have a special advantage over practitioners of AI in their relationship with the learner is generally for longer periods and affords them the time to develop a relationship wherein the learner finds empowerment, discourse, and support and for engaging in mentoring of the kind defined by Daloz. Mezirow, Cranton, and Taylor’s models of the process of TL do not address the role of, or the actions required of the educator in promoting or fostering TL for the learner.

It is apparent that educators have some new choices in providing the context and in promoting or fostering TL in their learners. AI events and AI summits in particular can provide a context, which promotes and fosters TL. Eight out of eleven (73%) participants who attended an AI summit experienced TL. These participants made use of the positive emotional experiences generated in the AI event to promote their TL experience. Educators interested in teaching with developmental intent should learn AI methods and principles and engage them in the practice of their craft. Researchers should further investigate the role of positive emotions in fostering and promoting TL. They should also explore AI as a methodology for fostering and promoting TL in the learning environment.

### Supporting TL in the AI event

In this study of the experiences of AI event participants, I have shown that the participants experienced an increase in positive emotions and insights. For most of the participants, the AI event reinforced their meaning schemas. For many of the AI event participants, the AI event led to a change in meaning schema that was successfully integrated into their lives, or TL. For these participants in the research study the process of TL was enabled or enhanced by being mentored or mentoring, in either formal or informal arrangements, and by acting on their new meaning schema. This process of TL (change and integration of a new meaning schema) often takes more than the period of the AI event.

Practitioners of AI, particularly facilitators of AI events and of AI foundations training should be aware that a change in meaning schema might occur for some AI event participants to accept and embrace the principles of AI might begin the process of TL for them. AI practitioners should become aware that TL is a possible component of the participant’s experience of the AI event and educate themselves in the theories and processes of TL to prepare for assisting participants through the TL process. AI practitioners can make use of the participant’s experience of TL to establish longer-term relationships with the participants in the form of mentoring. This mentoring relationship might be formal or informal. These longer-term relationships might also offer the opportunity to encourage or enable positive action using the AI event participants’ new meaning schema.

For some practitioners of AI this may raise ethical questions: should they engage in promoting or fostering TL in their AI events? How far does that responsibility go? These questions should be examined in further research and be debated among the scholars and practitioners of AI. The practice of AI is not limited to organizational or community based interventions, it is often applied in a wide variety of fields and practices. If AI practitioners wish to have the greatest possible impact, they must be able to focus on the needs of both the larger entity and the individuals that comprise them. Avoiding the emotional intimacy on the person to person level required of mentoring as Daloz suggests, and fostering and promoting TL as Cranton suggests leaves the task of initiating positive change partially done for some of the event’s participants. Leaving those engaged in the process or TL to their own devices would be a disservice to the gains achieved in the AI event.

## Toward a More Complete Model of TL

In her most recent work, Cranton (2006) outlines a set of suggestions for promoting TL in the educational setting. These suggestions include empowering learners, fostering critical self-reflection and self-knowledge, and supporting transformative learning. Cranton proposes that students must become empowered as agents of self-authoring or self-agency to undertake the tasks required of TL. To empower the learner the educator must be aware of the power relationships that might enable or inhibit the student from undertaking TL, including their own exercise of power.

Educators can foster TL by offering learning activities that cause the learner to begin questioning their beliefs and assumptions in discourse with themselves, with their peers and their instructors. Supporting TL once it is underway requires the educator to be authentic in their relations with the learners and within the context of the class. Supporting TL also requires a supportive environment where self-expression and questioning can take place in a safe but dynamic environment. The educator must be willing to help the learners with personal issues and actions based on their new insights. Cranton’s suggestions propose key elements for promoting TL that apply not only to the educational setting but also to the practice of AI. I will discuss those in the next section. Please refer to Table 10 for Cranton’s model for promoting transformative learning.

Table 10

*Cranton’s Suggestions for Promoting TL*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Empowering Learners | Awareness of power relations; exercising power responsibly; empowerment through discourse; learner decision making; considering individual differences |
| Fostering critical self-reflection and self-knowledge | Questioning; consciousness raising activities (journal writing, critical incidents, arts-based activities, experiential learning, exploring individual differences) |
| Supporting transformative learning | Educator authenticity; group support, learner networks; help with personal issues; supporting action; awareness of conflict and ethical issues; awareness of individual differences |

Laurent Daloz (1999) further defines the role of the educator in empowering, dialoguing with, and supporting the learner. Daloz defines the Mentor’s role as one of *supporting* the student in acts that build trust in the relationship and validate the learner’s present experience. Mentors also *challenge* the learner to see contradictions and question assumptions, which creates tension and calls for closure. Finally, mentors *provide vision* by enabling self-reflection and proof that the journey can be made. Supporting, challenging, and providing vision all occur in a mix, moving back and forth as the situation calls for according to a set of principled tasks: engendering trust, see the student’s movement, give the student voice, introduce conflict, emphasize positive movement, and keep an eye on the relationship.

As this research study has shown, AI might be a method for the educator to make use of when teaching with developmental intent. AI events begin with some training in the principles of AI and methods for conducting the AI event in a way that respects and empowers the individual. AI provides the opportunity to surface the learner’s beliefs and ideas through the initial appreciative interviews, which could be conducted in the context of the curriculum’s context. AI events are generally conducted in a setting separated from the everyday demands and lives of the participants, over a suggested four days (although AI events are held for various lengths of time) providing some time for reflection and developing relationships. As the event progresses, small and large groups examine these interviews for patterns and themes, and engaging in self-assessment of the initial beliefs and ideas. The discourse around these patterns and themes as the AI event progresses allow the student opportunities for engaging in TL as described by K.Taylor (2000), Cohen and Piper (2000), and Cranton (2000; Cranton 2006).

Educators have a special advantage over practitioners of AI in their relationship with the learner is generally for longer periods and affords them the time to develop a relationship wherein the learner finds empowerment, discourse, and support and for engaging in mentoring of the kind defined by Daloz. Mezirow and Cranton’s models of the process of TL do not address the role of the educator, or the actions required of the educator in promoting or fostering TL for the learner. I propose a more complete model of TL, which is an amalgam of the models of TL from Mezirow, Cranton, and Taylor, Cranton’s suggestions for supporting TL, Daloz’s work on mentoring, and my insights based on this research. It has become obvious to me that the previous models of TL and the model of TL proposed above are learner centric. The model should include the educator also. The educator becomes essential to the process of TL through their roles and actions, which promote and foster TL. Including the educator emphasizes the dialogic nature of the TL process.

This model is limited in that it does not account for all forms and processes of TL that might be experienced. It is possible that individuals experience TL on their own and with no intercession or assistance from an educator or a mentor. This model does not account for the process of TL experienced communally within a group where multiple people might have held the role of educator or mentor.

## A Proposed Model of the Process of TL

In previous sections of this chapter, I have explained how Mezirow’s model of TL did not universally describe the experience of the participants in this study. In this section, I propose a refinement of Mezirow’s model of TL. My proposed model is not a negation of Mezirow, Cranton, and Taylor’s work, nor is it a new model of the process of TL. This model is intended to flesh out and make more complete the understanding of the process of TL and the learner’s experience of that process. This model will reflect Mezirow, Cranton, and Taylor’s models of the process of TL and significant points learned from this research project. I begin by discussing my proposed model and its basis in Mezirow, Cranton, and Taylor’s work.

Mezirow’s model proposes that TL begins with a disorienting dilemma, but not all participants who experienced TL reported a disorienting dilemma. I propose that the process begins with *awareness of dissonance between our currently held meaning schema and a new experienced reality.* This dissonance results from failed or inconsistent meaning schemas. This awareness might be triggered by experiencing of a new contrary truth or truths through critical self-reflection, rational discourse, a disorienting dilemma, and etcetera. The resulting awareness creates a dissonance between the previously held meaning schema and the new experienced reality. This dissonance is similar to Festinger’s *cognitive dissonance*. Cognitive dissonance occurs when the subject holds two cognitions that are psychologically opposed or inconsistent and a drive to resolve the dissonance is experienced (Festinger 1957; Festinger 1964; Aronson and Thibodeau 1992).

Although, Mezirow has more clearly defined the disorienting dilemma as covering a broad range of experience, from subtle to overwhelming, his use of the term implies a sense of being lost in a predicament or choice between two undesirable outcomes. Several participants in this study reported that disorienting dilemma did not describe their experience. For example, Gwen described her experience as ‘more of a paradigm shift’ and Igor thought of disorienting dilemma as a ‘grieving process,’ which did not fit his experience. Sulaiman described his cognitive dissonance as a ‘curiosity’ he wished to explore when he realized that Christians, Jews, Women, and Indo-Guyanese might have something valuable to offer. Cognitive dissonance better describes the experiences of the participants in this study.

Next, the learner is faced with a decision to continue exploring this dissonance or retreating from the new experienced reality. The outcome of this decision may depend on the emotions experienced, which result from this awareness and our explanatory style. If the learner chooses to continue exploring the dissonance, they will begin a process of *reflection, self-examination, examination of their roles and relationships, planning to re-integrate the new meaning schemas, transitions.* This leads to the final stage, *re-integration of the new meaning schemas.* The proposed model would progress in a linear fashion moving from Phase I: awareness of dissonance, the Phase II: TL processes would be met in no particular order, then Phase III: re-integration. When the learner moves from Phase I to Phase II they might address any of the first four processes in any order, then moves to *transitions*. The events in each stage may or may not be experienced as the learner engage in that TL process in Phase II. The learner may engage in multiple stages of Phase II concurrently.

This model of TL describes the TL experience of both the MTL and OTL participants in this study more fully than Mezirow or Cranton’s models. The stages and processes of TL in this model are more descriptive of the MTL and OTL participants’ experiences and may be universal to a larger population of TL experiences. The events in each stage of this model may not be inclusive of the TL experiences of a larger population of TL experiences.

The model I propose is a more complete model of TL, which amalgamates Mezirow and Cranton’s models of the process of TL, Cranton’s suggestions for supporting TL, Daloz’s work on mentoring, and my insights based on this research. Please refer to the section above entitled *Using AI to promote TL in the educational setting*. It has become obvious that the previous models of TL and the model of TL proposed above are learner centric. The model should include the educator also. The educator becomes essential to the process of TL through their roles and actions, which promote and foster TL. Including the educator emphasizes the dialogic nature of the TL process.

It should also be noted that several of the research participants reported engaging in mentoring others as a part of their TL process. It may be possible that the role of mentor is a form of role-playing or an expression of commitment on the part of the learner. Some participants, Igor and Bev, mentioned the importance their class or learning cohort played in encouraging, supporting, and challenging them during the process of TL. Members of the learning cohort or class might also engage in the educator’s role.

I would also like to note that the process of TL does not occur in the vacuum of a classroom or learning cohort, and among learner, the educator, and the members of the class or learning cohort. The participants in this study engaged in rational discourse and the provisional trying of roles with members of their families, friends, other educators, and coworkers and in the context of their real world lives. Please refer to Table 11 for Wood’s proposed model of TL including the educator’s role and actions.

Table 11

*Wood’s Proposed Model of TL.*

| Phase of TL | TL process in the phase of TL process | Events in the phase of TL process | Educator’s role in the phase of TL process | Educator’s actions in the phase of TL process |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Phase I | Cognitive dissonance |  |  |  |
|  | Awareness of dissonance between our currently held meaning schema and a new experienced reality | Encounter trigger events, confront a new reality or experience of a new contrary truth(s) through a disorienting dilemma, critical self-assessment, etcetera | Encouraging and supporting | Engendering trust, suspend agendas and judgments, surface reflections, maintain awareness of power relationships, encourage learner decision making, attend to individual differences |
|  | Decision to continue or turn back |  |  |  |
| Phase II | Engaging in the process of TL |  |  |  |
| Phase II (cont.) | Reflective practice | Critical self-refection; reflective dialogue; reflective action; content reflection; process reflection; premise reflection | Encouraging, supporting, challenging, and providing vision | Maintain awareness of power relationships, see the students movements, initial diagnosis for growth, give the student a voice, introduce conflict, watch the growing edge, emphasize positive movement, encourage self-reflection… |
|  | Examination of self | Self-examination in a critical assessment of assumptions, beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors with Positive feelings of joy, hope, elation, and peace and/or negative feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame; rational discourse, experience of spirituality | (continued) Encouraging, supporting, challenging, and providing vision | (continued) Questioning; consciousness raising activities (journal writing, critical incidents, arts-based activities, experiential learning, exploring individual differences), encourage critical self-reflection… |
| Phase II (cont.) | Examination of roles and relationships | A critical assessment of assumptions and relationships; recognition of one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared; exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions; provisional trying of new roles; Building competence and confidence in new roles and relationships; experience a deeper sense of connection to others | (continued) Encouraging, supporting, challenging, and providing vision | (continued) Educator authenticity; group support, learner networks; help with personal issues; supporting action; awareness of conflict and ethical issues; attend to individual differences |
|  | Planning | Planning a course of action; acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans, personal commitment to the new meaning perspective | (continued) Supporting, challenging, and providing vision | (continued) Encourage self-reflection, personal commitment, and reflective planning |
|  | Transition | Reaching a transition point, Shift or epochal transition | Supporting action and providing vision | Encourage personal commitment, and reflective action |
| Phase III | Reintegration and Action |  |  |  |
|  | Re-integration of new meaning schema | Acting, or enacting plans, with regard to the new meaning perspective, A re-integration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective, make personal commitments, and ground one’s self in experience | Encouraging, supporting, challenging, providing vision, and celebrating | Support actions, encourage self-reflection and reflective action, celebrate the learner’s accomplishments |

## Comparing Wood’s Model of TL to Other Models of TL

My proposed model of the process of TL restructures Mezirow’s model of TL by breaking it into distinct phases, clarifies the initial event where the learner experiences dissonance and decides to explore the dissonance toward its resolution. The second phase includes the experience of positive emotions, which may sustain her or his experience of the process of TL. This model also includes Cranton’s suggestions for fostering and promoting TL, and Daloz’s suggestions for mentoring in the role of educator. These changes assist in understanding more completely the process of TL and more completely describes the experiences of the participants of this study.

### Phase I

In Mezirow’s model of the process of TL, the learner experiences a disorienting dilemma that causes them to begin the process of TL. In Cranton’s model of TL, the learner becomes more aware of their values and assumptions. With this new baseline of awareness, the learner is able to see that their values and assumptions might be unique or not shared by everyone. The learner is receptive to trigger events. In Taylor’s model of TL, the learner also becomes aware of trigger events, and confronts a new reality. The key differences in Phase I of my proposed model of the process of TL are that the learner becomes aware of a cognitive dissonance and makes a decision to continue exploring the dissonance for a resolution. The learner is joined in the process by the educator. The educator’s role is to support and encourage the learner in her or his reflections, engendering trust.

### Phase II

In Mezirow’s model of the process of TL, the learner engages in self- examination with negative feelings, examines roles and relationships, tries new roles, and plans for a new future. The learner becomes aware that her or his experience is shared, and develops confidence and competence in their new skills, knowledge, roles, and relationships. In Cranton’s model of the process of TL, the learner begins questioning their values and assumptions, reflecting on content, process, and premise of assumptions, and engaging in rational discourse. In Taylor’s model of TL the learner reaches a point of transcendence and then has an epochal or shifting transcendent experience.

In Phase II of my model of TL, the learner begins engaging in reflective practices such as critical self-refection, reflective dialogue, reflective action, content reflection, process reflection, and premise reflection. The learner makes use of these reflective practices to begin an examination of themselves, their roles and relationships, acquiring new skills, and planning for a new future. The key differences in Phase II of my model is the self-examination can include positive emotional experiences that offset or exclude negative emotions and sustain the TL process. The learner’s experience of Phase II is rather fluid, she or he can experience any of the events in the phase in any order or may not experience some or the events. In addition, the educator joins the learner in this phase by continuing to support, challenge and provide the learner with motivating visions. The educator must maintain awareness of power issues in their relationship and attend to their individual differences. In this role the educator must balance her or his role between educating and counseling the learner. Educators must maintain a greater awareness of their own knowledge and abilities where the learner’s development is concerned. Once they become aware that they are not able to be of help educators should be ready to intercede or advocate on the learner’s behalf, or recommend qualified counselors or therapists as it is appropriate.

### Phase III

In Mezirow’s model of the process of TL, the learner re-integrates their new perspective into her or his life. In Cranton’s model of the process of TL, the learner revises her or his values and assumptions and exhibits a change in meaning perspective. In Taylor’s model of TL, the learner makes personal commitments to their new meaning schema and grounds herself or himself in experiences that reinforce the new meaning schema. In Phase III of my model of TL, the learner reintegrates a change in meaning schema. The key difference in Phase III of my model is that the educator is supporting the learner’s actions and reflections, providing vision, and celebrating the learner’s accomplishments. At this point in the journey of transformation the educator is helping the learner prepare for their own further journeys through providing vision, interceding or advocating on behalf of, and supporting the grounding experiences of the learner. Under any circumstance, the educator and student should be free to maintain their relationship as long as it is comfortable and practical for each of them.

## Summary of the Discussion of the Findings

This research has revealed that participants of AI events experience this event in two general ways, *No Direct Effect* (NDE) and *Direct Positive Effect* (DPE). The two NDE participants and eleven of the DPE research participants also experienced the AI event as an alignment of or reinforcement of their personal values, and were coded as *Aligned Values* (AV). The eight remaining *Direct Positive Effect*-*Changed Perspective* (DPE-CP) participants experienced a change in their meaning perspective. This change in meaning perspective was successfully integrated into their lives, which meets the basic definition of TL for these participants. The DPE-CP participants experienced the process of TL in two general ways. Three DPE-CP participants experienced Mezirow’s ten stage model of TL and reported Mezirow’s three reflective practices and were coded as *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL). The remaining five CP participants experienced four different patterns of TL and were coded as *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL).

The *No-Direct Effect* (NDE) and *Direct Positive Effect* (DPE) participants of AI events described the AI event as an opening of their hearts and minds. This is exhibited by the increase in reports of emotions and insights over the course of the AI event experience. The emotions experienced during this event moved from negative or neutral to overwhelmingly positive. For many the AI event was an opportunity to express and experience strong negative emotions. For example, several participants cried openly, examined feelings of anger, revisited experiences of shame and guilt, and felt fear. For many of the participants the AI event was a time of positivity. For example, all the participants reported experiencing an irresistible sense of positive energy, a sense of enthusiasm, joy, and laughter. Some of the participants reported feeling a sense of peace or contentment.

The insights reported by the participants increased progressively from the beginning to after the AI event. Participants reported insights ranging from a sense of personal empowerment and discovering their voice to being better able to hear and understand others. Insights also included realizations about their relationships with others, their views and understandings of others, and their connection to others. Participants also reported learning or discovering a new language with which to communicate with others in their lives. Participants also realized the importance of stories in communicating values and insights to others.

The *Changed Perspective* (CP) research participants experienced TL. They experienced a change in meaning schema, and integrated the changed meaning schema into their lives. The process of TL was expressed in two general ways. The *Mezirow’s Transformative Learning* (MTL) participants followed Mezirow’s model of TL and the *Other Transformative Learning* (OTL) participants followed other paths in their process of TL. For the MTL participants the AI event inspired them to confront ant resolve disorienting dilemmas in their lives through Mezirow’s reflective practices. The TL process for the MTL participants included self-examination with negative feelings. The OTL research participants were less likely to experience the disorienting dilemma and self-examination with negative feelings. For some of the OTL participants the experience of negative emotions was not of strong negative affect, rather were acknowledged and resolved. For two OTL participants there were no reported negative feelings associated with their participation in the AI event. It might be possible that not all who experience TL will experience disorienting dilemmas or strong negative affect.

This research shows that positive emotions and positivity were dominant themes in the experience of AI event participants. These experiences of positivity and positive emotions broaden the participant’s thought-action repertoire, leading to more experiences of positive emotions, insights, creative problem solving, and for some and un-doing of the effects of negative experiences and negative emotions. It is possible that the experience of positivity and positive emotions promoted or fostered the TL process and TL experiences for some of the participants in this study.

During the course of this research, it became clear that a new model of the TL process could be proposed that was more descriptive of the experiences of the participants in this study. This model includes insights from both Mezirow’s model of TL and Cranton’s description of the TL process and moves the focus from learner centricity to include both the learner and the educator. This model also includes self-examination with positive feelings as a counterpoint to the self-examination with negative feelings. An individual’s experience of TL might include an examination of both positive and negative emotions or include only self-examination with positive feelings.

This research has several implications for practitioners of TL. Among them, the inclusion of positivity and positive emotions in the self-examination involved in the TL process. Positivity and positive emotions might be fundamental in fostering TL among learners. TL practitioners must also recognize their active participation in the learner’s TL process. Their participation includes, challenging, supporting, providing vision, assisting with personal issues, while attending to the power relationships and maintaining the health of the learner educator relationship.

This research also has several implications for practitioners of AI, including awareness that accepting AI principles and methods might require a change in meaning schema for some AI event participants and can initiate the TL process. AI practitioners need to be aware of the participant’s engagement in the TL process and need to be educated in the theories and processes of TL to be of assistance to their participants who become engaged in the process of TL. This process might include surfacing, confronting and resolving negative experiences and emotions, from which AI practitioners should not shy away. This presents the AI practitioner with an opportunity to develop longer-term relationships with their AI event participants as mentors, formal or informal. This research also presents the AI practitioner with ethical questions concerning their involvement in the participant’s TL process, and how far that involvement should go.

This research has further defined the experiences of AI event participants and the role of positivity and positive emotions in that experience. This research has provided a more descriptive model of TL, which includes positivity and positive emotion in the process of TL and further describes the educator’s role and responsibilities in that process. This research has also described a new role and responsibilities for the AI facilitator in fulfilling that role of mentor to the AI event participants who are inclined to engage in the process of TL.

## Limitations

This research study has the following limitations, which should be considered along with the data analysis, findings, and discussion presented here. This study consists of a small sample size, twenty-one participants, based on a self-selection for a positive AI event experience. This study does not include any participants who reported a negative AI event experience. This study is also retrospective in nature. The retrospective examination of personal experience is subject to bias, romanticism, and advocacy for a preferred memory of the experience.

Implications for Future Research

This research study has implications for future research. Scholars and practitioners of AI should examine the role of mentoring suggested earlier in the discussions. Mentoring may be an opportunity to extend the length of their relationship with AI event participants, improve the odds of successful adoption of the principles and methods of AI, and strengthen the AI community. AI scholars and practitioners might also focus more research attention on the role of positive emotions in the AI event experience and their role in promoting and fostering TL for the AI event participants who experience a change in meaning perspective and in reinforcing the positive experience of the *Aligned Values* (AV) participants.

Researchers should also study the experiences of the *No-Direct Effect* (NDE) participants and those who have a negative AI event experience. Such research might yield further information on how to make the AI event more inclusive still. Research should also focus on the relationship between negative and positive emotions experienced, and how they promote a successful AI event experience.

I encourage scholars and practitioners of TL to further research the model of TL proposed here in this research. TL does not happen in isolation. It happens in relationship, often with an educator and a class or learning cohort, and affects the other significant relationships of the learner. Further defining and clarifying the relationships involved in promoting and fostering the process of TL might make the theory and practice of TL more accessible to a wider arena than adult education.

Researchers should also explore the role of positive emotions and positivity in promoting and fostering TL. Positive emotions and positivity might give confidence and fortitude to those who encounter strong negative emotions during the process of their TL. Positive emotions and positivity may attract other learners and educators to TL who might otherwise have avoided it due to the negative emotional content reported in the process. Additionally, researchers should focus some attention on learners who experience cognitive dissonance and turn away from the process of TL, or those who change their minds once they have begun the process of TL. There may be much to learn from them and their experiences of the process of TL.

## Researcher’s Reflections on the Study

The dissertation process and the accomplishment of any major research project such as this one must necessarily have an impact on the learner and the researcher. For me the effects and impacts are numerous enough to be difficult to relate to others. Much of what I gained from this process was a sense of competence and confidence in the techniques and process of qualitative research and the skills of scholarship.

This process has often been arduous and emotionally tasking, leaving me physically and emotionally drained. I brought a certain natural tendency toward persistence and a motivation toward completing tasks, lessons well learned from Grandparents who survived two world wars and the great depression. I often felt my Grandfather’s hand on my shoulder.

Throughout the interviews, I often heard remarkable tales of courage, strength and survivorship, which in themselves were inspirational. Yet these qualities were not what really affected me. I did not expect to share experiences of tears, heartbreak, positive energy, joy and enthusiasm the participants so freely shared with me, a stranger on the other end of a phone conversation. Hearing how positivity and positive emotions were used to create a new narrative and expectation of future outcomes began to affect me. I often found myself thinking, ‘If Mary or Chris could…’ or ‘How did Sulaiman or Igor…’ I also began to meditate on the physical qualities of the positive energy that Bev experience and the physical presence of joy and peace that Gwen and Hillary described.

I began to construct positive narratives for the obstacles and roadblocks that presented themselves. I made a ‘positive’ playlist in all the forms of music I enjoy to listen to while reading research, coding the data, and writing. I soon found myself listening to this playlist more often and noticed that I began to react differently to setbacks at work and in my life. I have begun working actively on developing my sense of optimism through mastery, positivity, and a positive explanatory style as described by Seligman (1995).

These changes in and of themselves may not be easily seen by others, but I have found that I am more apt to take good care of myself, have more energy, and rebound from setbacks more quickly. As Annie said, ‘I am stronger for it.’ This represents my own process of TL inspired by the research participants’ stories given so freely.

What I have learned to appreciate most is hope. Optimism, along with future mindedness and future orientation are constructs of the positive trait *Hope*, as defined by Peterson and Seligman (2004) when defining the character strength *Transcendence.* Hope is the reasonable expectation that desired outcomes will come to pass and that thinking and acting in ways to make them occur gives confidence and sustained optimism. It is clear to me now that hope must come first in the process of transformation. Hope enables us to confront dissonance. Hope enables us to continue experimentation until we gain mastery. Hope enables us to use a positive explanatory style in the face of negative outcomes. It is hope that allows us to envision a new and different future. It is hope that buffers us, sustains us, and lifts us from who we are to who we would be. And, it is hope that within us dies last. Little did I know how portentous Voltaire’s quote would be when I choose it to begin Chapter 1 and set the tone and tenor of my research. Appreciation of the participants’ sense of hopefulness has given me hope.

Appreciation is a wonderful thing: it makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well, Voltaire.

Encourage and support hope, optimism, and positive emotional experiences in your practice. Hope, optimism, and positive emotional experiences sustain, assists in maintaining positive direction for learning and growth when faced with challenges and difficult times.

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**Appendix (A)**

**Fielding Institutional Review Board** **(HOD Subcommittee)**

**Request For Review of Proposed Research**

**COVER PAGE FORM**

Complete this form and attach to the front of your application. Submit this via email attachment (Word .doc or Rich Text Format (.rtf)) only to Peggy Collins at [pcollins@fielding.edu](mailto:pcollins@fielding.edu). Please type all materials and number all pages sequentially. Please use one set of page numbers and one set of line numbers from the beginning of the application to the end. Thank you.

**Researcher's Name**: Kelley D Wood

**Email address**: [kdwood@hotmail.com](mailto:kdwood@hotmail.com)

**Telephone:** 603-443-8449 (d), 802-356-2166 (n)

**Researcher is a student, please also provide:**

**KA Reader and Dissertation Chair Name**: Dr. Steven Schapiro

**Program**: HOD

**Title of Proposed Research**: Appreciative Inquiry Participant’s Understanding and Meaning Making of Transformative Experiences and Transformative Learning

**Project is a**:

\_\_X\_\_ Dissertation

\_\_\_\_ Pilot Study

\_\_\_\_ Assessment (specify area) \_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_\_

**Project Involves**:

**\_\_**X**\_\_** Prospective data collection (will collect data after full approval)

\_\_\_\_\_ Analysis of archival or existing data set

**Submission Date**: January 23, 2006

Review by KA Assessor or Dissertation Chair: "I have read this application and find that it meets the Fielding Research Ethics Guidelines and that it is ready for review by the Institutional Review Board."  (Please ensure approval is sent to the IRB prior to submitting the application.)

**KA Assessor and Dissertation Chair Signature**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Date**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Last updated 2/10/2005

**Appendix (B)**

**Verbal Recruitment Script for Research Participants**

As a doctoral student in the School of Human and Organization Development with the Fielding Graduate University, I am recruiting interested people who have participated in an AI to volunteer to participate in my dissertation study. Your organization was referred by (X), who facilitated an AI with your group or organization. Your group or organization has given me permission to solicit people to interview. The facilitator and your group or organization will not know if you choose to participate in the study or not.

I am interested in talking to people who have experienced changes in their attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, relationships, or actions resulting from participation in an AI process. I want to learn how you understand and make meaning of these different experiences. In my dissertation research, I will analyze whether or not the understandings and meanings from some or all of the research participants adheres to our current understanding of a theory of TL.

I will be conducting confidential interviews that will take approximately 60-90 minutes of your time. We could meet at a location that is convenient to you that would ensure privacy and be free of distraction. I will be taking notes and I will audio record the interview solely for academic and research purposes. The research data will be stored and evaluated in a way that will prevent your interview responses from being connected to you.

You will have an opportunity to review the entire transcript and to remove any portions of it that you choose. In addition, you may choose to withdraw from this study at anytime, without any penalty and all of your data will be removed from the study and destroyed. If you choose to participate in this study, you will receive a summary of the results if you choose.

If you are interested in participating in this research, we can set up a time to conduct the interview, which will include further explanation of confidentiality and a thorough explanation of the informed consent materials.

**Appendix (C)**

**Written Recruitment Statement for Research Participants**

Dear Research Participant,

As a doctoral student in the School of Human and Organization Development with the Fielding Graduate University, I am recruiting interested people who have participated in an AI to volunteer to participate in my dissertation study. Your organization was referred to me by (X) who facilitated an AI with your group or organization. Your group or organization has given me permission to solicit participants for this research. The facilitator and your group or organization will not know if you choose to participate in the study or not.

I am interested in talking to people who have experienced changes in their attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, relationships, or actions resulting from participation in an AI process. I want to learn how you understand and make meaning of these experiences. In my dissertation research, I will analyze whether or not the understandings and meanings from some or all of the research participants adheres to our current understanding of TL.

I will be conducting confidential interviews that will take approximately 60-90 minutes of your time. We could meet at a location that is convenient to you that would ensure privacy and be free of distraction. I will be taking notes and I will audio record the interview solely for academic and research purposes. The research data will be stored and evaluated in a way that will prevent your interview responses from being connected to you.

You will have an opportunity to review the entire transcript and to remove any portions of it that you choose. In addition, you may choose to withdraw from this study at anytime, without any penalty and all of your data will be removed from the study and destroyed. If you choose to participate in this study, you will receive a summary of the results if you choose.

If you are interested in participating, we can set up a time to conduct the interview, which will include further explanation of confidentiality as well as a thorough explanation of the informed consent materials. I can be reached by email at [kelleywood\_FGU@Yahoo.com](mailto:kelleywood_FGU@Yahoo.com), or by phone at 802-356-2166 at your convenience if you wish to participate. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Kelley D. Wood

**Appendix (D)**

**Informed Consent Form**

**Appreciative Inquiry Participant’s Understanding and Meaning Making of Transformative Experiences and Transformative Learning**

My name is Kelley D Wood and I am a Human and Organization Development doctoral student with Fielding Graduate University, Santa Barbara, California. I am conducting this research study. The research supervisor for this study is Dr. Steven Schapiro. Our contact information is available at the end of this form.

You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Kelley D Wood, a doctoral student in the School of Human and Organization Development at Fielding Graduate University, Santa Barbara, CA. This research involves the study of how participants understand their transformative leaning experiences in appreciative inquiries, and is part of Kelley's Fielding course work and may be included in his dissertation research. You have been selected for this study because you have participated in an appreciative inquiry in your organization. The facilitator of that appreciative inquiry has recommended that I solicit participants for this research from your organization and your organization has agreed to allow me to ask for research participants from the participants of that appreciative inquiry. No one will know who has chosen to participate or who has not chosen to participate in this research.

This study involves a basic background information questionnaire, an interview, a possible follow up interview, and a debriefing and verification of my findings to be arranged at your convenience, each of which is expected to last approximately of 1 – 1.5 hours. The total time involved in participation will be approximately 1.5 – 2 hours

The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. The informed consent forms and other materials will be kept separate in locked file cabinets, on a computer with special encrypted access. The audio recordings will be listened to only by the researcher and Faculty Supervisor, Dissertation Chair and possibly a confidential Research Assistant or transcriptionist, who will sign the attached Professional Assistance Confidentiality Agreement. Emails and instant messenger transcripts will be copied without any identifying text. Only the body of the interview will be saved, all other information will be destroyed.

I will seek your permission, and use a pseudonym for you, before using any direct quotes, which might be included in the final research report or published. I will also use pseudonyms in the place of your organization’s name and for your appreciative inquiry event to prevent readers from identifying you with the direct quotes used. You will also have the opportunity to review a transcript of your interview and remove any material you do not wish to have used by the researcher. In addition, all related research materials, including the audio recordings, will be kept in a secure file cabinet. The results of this research will be published in the researcher's dissertation or used in a Knowledge Assessment paper and possibly in subsequent journals or books.

You may develop greater personal awareness of your own personal and professional learning and development goals resulting from your participation in this research. The risks to you are perceived to be none, or minimal.

You may withdraw from this study at any time, either during or after the interview, without negative consequences. Should you withdraw, your data will be eliminated from the study and will be destroyed.

There is no financial reward for participating in this study.

In addition to discussing the preliminary results with the researcher by phone, you also may request a copy of the summary of the final results by indicating your interest on the attached form.

If you have any questions about any aspect of this study or your involvement, please tell the researcher before signing this form.

Two copies of this informed consent form have been provided. Please sign both, indicating you have read, understood, and agreed to participate in this research. Return one to the researcher and keep the other for your files.

The Institutional Review Board of Fielding Graduate University retains access to all signed informed consent forms.

I have read and understand the above and agree to participate in this study.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT (please print): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the study results, please send a copy to:

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research,

Kelley D Wood

256 Route 5 South

Norwich, Vermont 05055

(802) 256-1044

[KelleyWood\_FGU@yahoo.com](mailto:KelleyWood_FGU@yahoo.com)

The research supervisor for this study is Dr. Steven Schapiro and he can be reached at:

Dr. Steven Schapiro

School of Human and Organization Development

Fielding Graduate University

2112 Santa Barbara Street

Santa Barbara, CA 93105

805-687-1099

**Appendix (E)**

**Background Information Questionnaire**

Each potential participant will be asked to complete a basic background information questionnaire before being selected for interviewing. The basic background information questionnaire follows:

How is your group or organization characterized?

For profit Not for profit Education

Health Care Community based

Did you volunteer or were you required in some way to attend?

Volunteer Required

What organization did you participate in this event with?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What is your position with this group or organization?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been associated with this group or organization?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Was there a stated purpose for this appreciative inquiry event?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How long has it been since the appreciative inquiry event?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How many of the 4D Appreciative Inquiry stages did you participate in?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Sex of the participant:

Female Male

Approximate age of the participant

Under 18 18-25 26-35 36-45

46-55 56-65 66-75 Over 75

**Appendix (F)**

**Interview Protocol**

Thank you for taking time to participate in my dissertation study. I appreciate your willingness to contribute to my research project. Would you like a beverage, a snack, or to make use of the rest room before we begin?

I am interested in talking to people who have experienced transformations in their attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, relationships, or actions resulting from participation in an appreciative inquiry. I want to learn how you understand and make meaning of these different experiences. I will compare the understandings and meanings to a theory of TL.

I recognize that it is sometimes difficult to talk about yourself, your experiences, and your feelings so openly to someone who is unfamiliar to you and in an interview situation. This interview will be conversational and not highly structured so that you are free to speak about your experiences, and your thoughts and feelings about those experiences. It will be helpful for you to provide as much detail as you can. To assist in drawing out that detail I will be taking some notes and I may ask related clarifying questions. If at any time you are uncomfortable, or if you do not wish to answer a question, you may feel free to say so and we will, take a break, change subjects, or stop. Would you like to ask any questions or make any comments at this time?

Question 1.a is open-ended and intended to allow the research participant to tell the story of their participation in the appreciative inquiry event.

1. Lightly structured open-ended question.
   1. I would like you to tell me in your own words about your experiences in the (insert the name of the appreciative inquiry event), such as how you came to participate and what it meant to you to participate? What significant events occurred? Who was involved?
2. Moderately structured open-ended questions.
   1. What were you thinking about or focused on during the (insert the name of the AI event)?
   2. I would like you to tell me about any changes in your relationships, personally or professionally, you have experienced since you attended the (insert the name of the AI event)?
   3. How would the people close to you characterize you before you participated in (insert the name of the AI event)?
   4. Please describe for me in what ways might you have changed since you participated in (insert the name of the AI event)?
   5. Has anyone noticed and commented on a difference in you since you attended the (insert the name of the AI event)?
   6. What emotions did you experience during the (insert the name of the AI event) and how did you express them?
   7. Did you become aware of any issues or problems during the (insert the AI event)?
   8. Do you have any stories you can share of people you developed a sense of camaraderie with at the (insert the name of the AI event)?
   9. How would you characterize your role in the organization that you attended the (insert the name of the AI event) with?
   10. Let me take a moment to review my research questions to see that we have covered everything I intended to in this interview.

*Concluding the interview*

Would you like to add to anything you have said, or to say anything you feel has been unsaid? Is there anything that you feel we did not cover sufficiently enough? Is there anything that we did not discuss that you feel is important? Is there anything that I can do for you before we consider this interview finished? Let me thank you again for your participation in my dissertation study. I will be in touch with you when I have a completed transcript of the interview for review. I will also send you a summary of the research findings when my dissertation research is completed and approved. Would you like to offer a pseudonym that I will use to code your data?

**Appendix (G)**

**Professional Assistance Confidentiality Agreement**

**Title of Research Project:** Appreciative Inquiry Participant’s Understanding and Meaning Making of Transformative Experiences and Transformative Learning

Kelley D Wood, School of Human and Organization Development, Fielding Graduate Institute, Santa Barbara, Ca

I have agreed to assist Kelley D Wood in his research study of how participants of an appreciative inquiry make meaning of their transformative learning experiences during the event in the role of [research assistant, transcriptionist]. I understand that all participants in this study have been assured that their responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. I agree to maintain that confidentiality and anonymity. I further agree that no materials will remain in my possession beyond the operation of this research project and I further agree that I will make no independent use of any of the research materials from this project.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix (H)**

**Glossary of Operational Definitions and Terms**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Method of data analysis** |
| Open coding | Coding the data by noting incidents and codes in the data as they emerge without forcing to meet a preconceived theory through constant comparative analysis |
| Axial coding | Selectively coding the data in a constant comparative analysis looking for relationships between multiple groups of codes and developing clustered concepts |
| Triangulating | Comparing the data to the results of the open/axial coding and the TL coding |
| Grounded Theory | A method of data analysis that begins with no preconceived theory to validate, from which a theory emerges |
| Constant comparative analysis | A means of data analysis where the researcher constantly moves back and forth from codes and concepts to the data to test for accuracy and generalization |
|  | **Categories of participant experience of the Appreciative inquiry event** |
| Direct positive effect (DPE) | Refers to participants who expressed a positive change in their perspectives and expectations of the future and directly attributed this change to their participation in the AI event. |
| Non-direct effect (NDE) | Refers to participants who said the AI event discussed in their interview had no direct effect on them or their lives, or that it was difficult to attribute changes in them or their lives to the AI event |
| Aligned values (AV) | Refers to research participants who indicated that their experience of the AI event aligned with or reinforced their own personal values |
| Changed perspective (CP) | Refers to research participants who indicated their experience of the AI event had a positive effect and changed their meaning schema |
| Other transformative learning (OTL) | Refers to changed perspective (CP) research participants who expressed or indicated their experience of the AI event was positive, they could attribute changes in their meaning schema to the AI event, and they re-integrated their new meaning schema into their lives, but did not follow Mezirow’s model |
| Mezirow’s transformative learning (MTL) | Refers to changed perspective (CP) participants who expressed that the AI event had a positive effect on their life, expressed or indicated a change in their meaning schema, and they experienced the three reflective practices and the ten stages of TL |
|  | **Transformative learning** |
| Critical self-reflection | A critical assessment of the self concerning prior learning, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, behaviors, or values |
| Reflective dialogue | An engagement in discourse with another or others with the intent to understand others or themselves more clearly or in greater depth. Other researchers refer to this as Critical Reflective Dialogue or Rational Dialogue, i.e. Laiken, Eisen, Cranton. |
| Reflective action | An informed and reflective decision to act on the insights gained from critical self-reflection and reflective dialogue, which could be immediate, delayed, or a reaffirmation of an existing pattern of action |
| Disorienting dilemma | An event that causes the research participant to begin questioning their currently held learning, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, behaviors, or values |
| Self-examination with negative feelings | An examination of learning, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, or values that causes the research participant to confront or experience strong negative affect or emotions |
| Critical assessment of assumptions and relationships | The discovery and exploration of the basic subconscious and underlying assumptions that define their meaning schemas and relationships with others |
| Recognition of one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared | When the research participant expresses or indicates that others are involved in their transformative process, or a new understanding of other’s perspectives and meaning schemas in relation to their own process of transformation |
| Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions | Exploring new and different ways of being in the world, in relationship with others, or of behaving in the world and in relationship |
| Provisional trying of new roles | Engaging in role playing or experimenting with new and different ways of being in the world, in relationship with others, or of behaving in the world and in relationship |
| Building competence and confidence in new roles and relationships | Expressing successful behaviors, actions, and roles for acting, and ways of being in relationship according to insights gained in the process of transformation |
| Planning a course of action | Evidenced by the active planning for putting the insights gained in the process of transformation into action |
| Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans | The research participant has identified and is actively acquiring new knowledge or skills with which to put into action their plans |
| Re-integration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective | Evidenced by the research participant successfully acting on the insights gained in the process of transformation |
|  | **Appreciative inquiry** |
| The Constructionist Principle | Meaning, knowledge, and learning are constructed through “discursive interchanges and social interactions, through processes of negotiation, conflict, improvisation, and the like (Gergen, 1999)” thus the way we know is fateful |
| The Principle of Simultaneity | Inquiry and change in organizations are not separate incidents but are the self-fulfilling destiny of the questions we ask and the images of the future that they provoke, change begins with the questions we ask and at the moment we ask them |
| The Poetic Principle | Organizational systems are not closed books but are narratives constantly unfolding in a never-ending story, constantly being co-authored by its members, and AI writes the next chapter in that story |
| The Anticipatory Principle | In human systems the anticipated or projected future state influences the expectations, language and behaviors of the members, thus deep change is a result of changing the system’s imagery of the future |
| The Positive Principle | Hope, interest, motivation, caring, positive effect and social bonding, long lasting and sustainable change are a response to the unconditional positive question. Positive inquiry creates positive anticipation, positive images of the future, and leads to positive response freeing members of the system to construct a new positive reality |
| Discovery | A search to understand the "best of what is" and "what has been." This phase begins with collaboration in constructing appreciative interview questions, and constructing an appreciative interview guide |
| Dream | An exploration and envisioning what might be in light of the best of what the system might be |
| Design | Participantsdesign through dialogue the ideal future state for the system, or what should be |
| Destiny | Participants commit to plans and action steps that will create and sustain the highest potential of the organization, co-constructing the future designed above, and leading to ‘inspired actions |

**Appendix I**

**Results of Coding for TL in the Data by Research Participant**

|  | *Mary* | *Chris* | *Hillary* | *Annie* | *Sophia* | *Laurent* | *Gwen* | *Sarah* | *Igor* | *Burt* |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Critical Self Refection | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Reflective Dialogue | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Reflective Action | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Subtotal Reflective Practices | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 |
| Disorienting dilemma | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Self-examination with negative feelings | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| A critical assessment of assumptions and relationships | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Recognition of one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Subtotal Examination of Self | 4 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Provisional trying of new roles | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Building competence and confidence in new roles and relationships | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Subtotal Examination of roles and Relationships | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Planning a course of action | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Subtotal Planning | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Reintegration into one’s life based on new perspective | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Subtotal Reintegration | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Total TL experienced | 13 | 13 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 12 | 10 | 12 | 9 |
| Expressed Change in Meaning Perspective | CP | CP | CP | AV | AV | AV | CP | AV | CP | AV |
| Type of TL expressed | MTL | MTL | OTL | - | - | - | OTL | - | OTL | - |

*Coding for transformative learning in the data by research participant* (continued)*.*

|  | *Bev* | *Ding* | *Marie* | *Valdez* | *Ian* | *Jerry* | *Sulaiman* | *Hall* | *Carr* | *Emily* | *Zoë* |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Critical Self Refection | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Reflective Dialogue | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Reflective Action | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Subtotal Reflective Practices | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Disorienting dilemma | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Self-examination with negative feelings | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| A critical assessment of assumptions and relationships | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Recognition of one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Subtotal Examination of Self | 4 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Provisional trying of new roles | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Building competence and confidence in new roles and relationships | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Subtotal Examination of roles and Relationships | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Planning a course of action | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Subtotal Planning | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Reintegration into one’s life based on new perspective | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Subtotal Reintegration | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total TL experienced | 13 | 9 | 11 | 6 | 9 | 6 | 11 | 8 | 11 | 10 | 9 |
| Expressed Change in Meaning Perspective | CP | AV | CP | AV | AV | AV | CP | AV | AV | AV | AV |
| Type of TL expressed | MTL | - | OTL | - | - | - | OTL | - | - | - | - |