2017

Adolescents' Self-Described Transformations and Their Alignment with Transformative Learning Theory

Katie Titus Larson

Antioch University - PhD Program in Leadership and Change

ADOLESCENTS' SELF-DESCRIBED TRANSFORMATIONS AND THEIR ALIGNMENT WITH TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY

KATIE TITUS LARSON

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Ph.D. in Leadership and Change Program
of Antioch University
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

October, 2016

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled:

ADOLESCENTS' SELF-DESCRIBED TRANSFORMATIONS AND THEIR ALIGNMENT WITH TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY

prepared by

Katie Titus Larson

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Leadership and Change

Approved by:

Jon Wergin, Ph.D., Chair date

Lize A. E. Booysen, DBL., Committee Member date

Carolyn Kenny, Ph.D., Committee Member date

Sharon Daloz Parks, Ph.D., External Reader date

Acknowledgements

It is not lost on me that I was fortunate enough to experience a proper *Hero's Journey* as I wrote this dissertation—complete with mentors, allies, tests, and the big dragon!

Mentors:

Mom for giving me life, instilling in me a love of reading, and encouraging me to embrace my role as an educator even when I doubted my calling. Thank you for joining me on my journey out in the bigger world and enjoying the ride along the way—I hope you never forget that heroine inside of you!

Dad for encouraging me to trust in God, believe in myself, and dare to dream—no matter how big and how far those dreams were. Thank you for buying me my first backpack to travel the world and reminding me to stay out there and keep exploring. Although I know this too shall pass, I am glad you were able to enjoy the journey with me!

Al Guskin for being my first mentor at Antioch and encouraging me to trust my instincts in and out of the program. Thank you for inspirationally guiding me with wisdom and humility and showing me we all create our own destinies.

Lize Booysen for being my rock during my most difficult phase in the program—and giving me the support I needed during those tear-filled nights! You were a role model for me more than just scholarship, but a way of being in the world. Thank you for reminding me to laugh and not take myself too seriously as I explored depths of my soul.

Marty Schmidt for coming serendipitously into my life just when I needed a mentor! For reigniting my endless search for wisdom and opening the doors to new paths I had I yet to discover. Thank you for inviting me into your world and allowing me to learn and grow from

what you have created—you are a threshold figure for many souls—guiding others to their own search, please keep that up!

Carolyn Kenny for being my archetypal Great Mother figure in the world of phenomenology and gently guiding me to explore this method and myself passionately and wholeheartedly. You warmly held space for me to 'go deep' and to expand my current understandings and validated any changes I came back with. Thank you for being a role model in scholarship and life!

Jon Wergin for being my archetypal Great Father during this entire journey and guiding me with paternal and fraternal generosity through the dark forests, blinding deserts, and winding rabbit-holes. Your genial attitude never failed to get me back on track and keep me smiling regardless of how thick the forest felt. Thank you for opening the veil for me as a student, guiding me through as a candidate, and welcoming me back from it as a scholar.

Allies:

Sophia for taking the risk to dance in the dark with me in and out of this study! Your contemplative and adventurous nature inspired me to continue seeking my own truth so I can keep sharing what I have found. I hope your journey continues to bring you likeminded allies and opportunities to be others' mentor. No matter what you choose, you will do it with commitment and pride.

Laurel for enthusing this study with positive energy throughout the entire process. Your smile and optimism allowed us three to really enjoy the process as we worked. Watching your growth as you went inward was inspiring, and I hope you continue to nourish this reflective yin to your active yang. I cannot wait to see what you do next, I have no doubt it will be remarkable.

Blake for first encouraging me to pursue this degree and then being the continuous support and ear I needed throughout. You never stopped believing in me, and feeling your eyes of admiration on me through the defense carried me through with pride. I thoroughly enjoy watching your journey and hope I can be as strong of an ally to you on yours as you have consistently been to me on mine. I love you.

Lisa and Brooke for sending me endless support through images of Brooke's first year. Whenever I needed a break, I would watch a video of her first laugh, crawl, or giggle to get me through. I cannot wait to be a mentor for her when she begins her journey. Thanks, Poody.

Cohort 12 for shaping me into the woman I have become through our relationships in and out of class. Your poignant questions, challenging assertions, and comforting reassurances pushed me forward in ways only fellow PhD students could! I will miss our deep conversations and light-hearted banter; there was no better group to go through this with than you.

Holly for taking the chance to room with me that first residency, starting a lifelong friendship that I value more and more as time passes. You are not only my role model for motherhood, but you have inspired me to become a better woman through openly communicating my hopes, fears, and needs. I hope our paths continue to cross in the world as we dance our pants in two.

All the baristas at my 'office coffee shops' for making the perfect brews I needed to survive the long hours of writing, editing, and rewriting.

Abstract

This phenomenological, collaborative inquiry explored the depth of two adolescent girls' lived experiences during their high school years and the degree to which their self-described transformative incidents aligned with transformative learning theory. Traditionally this theory has been reserved for adults, yet the current paradigm may have overlooked the capabilities of modern adolescents to not only experience, but to describe and interpret transformative learning in ways both similar to and unique from adults. My two 19-year-old co-researchers and I examined four years of their self-identified transformative incidents by breaking them into components, analyzing the language within, and seeking evidence of critical self-reflection throughout; and then compared the extent to which the incidents aligned with the frameworks of adult transformative learning theory. Findings indicate that the co-researchers did experience transformative learning as defined by several theorists and exhibited both adult-like capabilities of: critical self-reflection, rational discourse, and reflective action; and adolescent-like aspects of: the development of identity, self-authorship, and empathy. This study challenges current assumptions in the theory and adds to the holism of the field. This Dissertation is available in Open Access at AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive, http://aura.antioch.edu and OhioLink ETD Center, http://www.ohiolink.edu/etd

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Chapter I: Introduction

Introduction and Background

> You can almost feel yourself changing . . . It's like you feel like you have added a new layer somehow . . . it's a big shift in my understanding . . . that is how I sense that something is important because I am consciously aware that something is changing and it's not because I am wanting to change, but because of the moment.
>
> –Laurel, age 18

> The physical jump is kind of symbolic—it's almost like you are occupying a different mental space, like you get in a different mindset.
>
> –Sophia, age 18

Laurel and Sophia have experienced what many people would describe as an extraordinary adolescence. As *third-culture kids* born to Western parents and raised in Asian countries, they have had many unique experiences: living in diverse cities, traveling to exotic locations, and working with multi-cultural peers and adults. It was during some of these experiences the young women felt what they describe as an undeniable shift in consciousness—ones they have labeled *transformative*.

Although unique, Sophia and Laurel's transformative experiences are remarkably similar to those of other adolescents I have worked closely with throughout the past decade as an educator and mentor. While each individual's description varies, there are common attributes that indicate the "shifts in understanding" (O'Sullivan, 2012) during the years of 14–19 are very meaningful, yet may not be fully captured by the current transformative learning theory literature. I have been intrigued by this for some time, especially when some of the adolescents' descriptions are reminiscent of my personal engagement with transformative learning. Yet, are these adolescent experiences truly *transformative learning* by definition, or something else?

Transformative learning is a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is this shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world, allowing for the development of our self-knowledge; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body-awareness, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice, peace and personal joy (O'Sullivan, Morrell, & O'Connor, 2002). Are these the types of shifts the young women experienced in adolescence?

Sophia and Laurel's personal experiences of adolescence are representative of a universal, precious time in the human life cycle: one of dynamic physical, cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and sociocultural development (Davey, Yücel, & Allen, 2008), which brings unique opportunities for self-discovery and growing self-awareness (Blakemore, 2010). Adolescence is a time of meaning-making, when many individuals first recognize their dreams while searching for significance in their outer and inner worlds. In fact, there may be no time within a human lifespan more devoted to searching for oneself than adolescence (Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1978). And it is during this search that many young adults will experience moments that stand out, are considered more significant, have deeper meaning, give greater growth—feel transformative.

Regardless of how transformative these moments may feel, one would expect that only acutely self-aware, highly cognitively-developed adults could recognize, describe, and interpret a true transformative learning experience (Brookfield, 2003; Merriam, 1998); yet recent research within and tangential to the field is beginning to indicate otherwise (Adamson & Lyxell,

1996; Arnett, 2000; Blakemore, 2012; Kramarski, 2004; Yurgelun-Todd, 2007). These implications will be further explored in Chapter II.

The fields of transformative learning and adolescent development have both seen rapid growth in recent years; but little research has been done at their intersection. By deeply examining the lived experience of Laurel and Sophia, we can better comprehend what exactly is occurring in a young woman as she undergoes transformation—and to what extent these experiences align with the field of adult transformative learning.

Purpose of the Dissertation

The purpose of this study is to determine how an adolescent experiences and describes self-identified transformative incidents and to what degree these align with the frameworks of adult transformative learning theory. I will detail the process that two 19-year-old young women used to determine which moments in their adolescence they considered to be transformative, and how they described and interpreted those experiences from cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual perspectives. Also, I will highlight how the young women, acting as co-researchers, interpreted the incidents and their alignment to transformative learning theory.

Sophia and Laurel were active co-researchers, giving the study a more authentic and comprehensive first-person interpretation of self-identified transformative experience. They provided a holistic essence of when, where, why, and how these occur, as well as with whom. While there were only two co-researchers, the goal of this study was not to represent a wide array of individuals' experiences, but instead to dive deeply into the most profound incidents of two young women's adolescence in order to gain a better understanding of their lifeworlds and the complex connections that make up a transformation. This has enabled us to determine the

extent a 14–18-year-old's transformative experiences align with the frameworks of adult transformative learning theory, and the attributes that exist in a parallel framework that may be more specific to adolescence.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were:

1. How does an adolescent experience a self-identified transformative incident?
    a. What are the components of a self-identified transformative incident? Where, when, why, and how do they occur? What makes them particularly stand out?
    b. What language is used to differentiate between how one experiences transformation from a cognitive, emotional, social, physical, or spiritual perspective?
    c. How does a young woman—acting as a co-researcher—interpret her adolescent transformative incidents compared to the author?
2. To what extent do transformative learning experiences occurring in adolescence align with the literature's definition of adult transformative learning?
    a. What features of transformative learning may be unique to adolescents?
    b. What other frameworks of human development may be relevant in the interpretation of adolescents' transformative experiences?

When Does Transformative Learning Begin?

This was an interdisciplinary study designed to determine to what extent two fields—transformative learning and adolescent development—should overlap, specifically with regard to when adult transformative learning may begin. Its findings are intended to inform further study, research, and practice in both fields.

Currently, transformative learning is considered a theory of adult learning, due in large part to Mezirow—considered to be the founder of transformative learning theory—and his 1978 study that initially focused on adults in the field of adult education. Thus, adolescents and young adults are not typically included in the field of study. Yet, the term adult can be rather ambiguous, causing debate in the literature as to when one achieves this status (Taylor, 1998). For example, Kegan (2000) cited age 20 and Mezirow (2000) stated age 30 is most likely when one is most capable of true transformative learning, yet there has been little research to fully establish this age-limit (Taylor & Cranton, 2012).

While Mezirow (2000) defined an adult as "a person old enough to be held responsible for his or her acts" (p. 24), others such as Kegan (2000) and King and Kitchener (1994) argued it is one's cognitive development that should be the key indication of adulthood; and Merriam (2004) maintains one's ability to critically reflect is central to both adulthood and transformative learning.

Regardless of which indicator one uses to define adulthood, we are still left with the question: when does transformative learning actually begin? Are there earlier indications of this type of adult learning in adolescents? If so, these experiences may have been overlooked by the field due to limitations in the current theory of transformative learning. If not, there may be a distinctive type of learning occurring in adolescents that resembles transformative learning, but is unique in its own right.

The Formative Years of High School

This research is centered on a timeframe many remember as being formative to their personal development: high school. We accompany Sophia and Laurel on a journey through the

meaningful experiences they have identified as transformative during the four years they spent in Asian international high schools from 2011–2015, when they were between 13 and 18 years old.

Because of the several different descriptions for young people, I want to declare that when I am referring to the time-frame specific to this study (ages 13–18), I will use the term *adolescence* and when I am referring to development, I will use the term *adolescent development*. Yet, the term *emerging adult* (Arnett, 2000) is currently the most accepted description of individuals between the ages of 18 to 35, thus when I am referring to Laurel and Sophia in their current age, I will refer to them as *emerging adults* as well as *young women*.

As I am a former high school teacher, determining the time frame for this study was a clear choice for several reasons: high school provided a finite period of time from which my co-researchers could draw reflections; it usually has no shortage of diverse, dynamic experiences that occur during these four years (Benner, 2011); and it is usually the first time an adolescent grapples with self-reflection and identity development (Arnett, 2000).

However, this study is unique from other high-school focused studies because it was not confined to curricular experiences, but instead encompassed any moments in the co-researcher's lives, in and out of school. This allowed for a more realistic indication of how transformation actually occurs in formal and informal situations. In addition, because the co-researchers were a year out of high school looking back at memorable moments, the progression of time allowed for deeper reflection.

Definitions Relevant to this Study

The definitions specific to this work are in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1

Definitions of Terms

Term	Definition
Adult	A person old enough to be held responsible for his or her own actions (Mezirow, 2000, p. 24).
Adolescent	For the purpose of this work: A person in the age range between 13 and 18 years old.
Adolescence	The time period of life in which a child develops into an adult; in this work between the ages of 13 and 19 years.
Perspective transformation	The process through which learners develop different frames of understanding and action, which results from a transformative learning experience (Mezirow, 1978).
Self-identified transformative incident	A specific experience chosen by co-researchers that was particularly meaningful, life-changing, and the cause of a noticeable shift in consciousness.
Transformative learning	A deep, structural *shift* in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions that dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world (O'Sullivan, Morrell, & O'Connor, 2002).

Transformative Learning Theory

Beginning with Mezirow's foundational 1978 study on perspective transformation in returning female adult students, transformative learning has gone from an adult learning theory to a rapidly growing learning field, owing much of its growth to its applicability in diverse contexts. Mezirow first defined his theory as "a structural change in the way we see ourselves and our relationships" (Mezirow, 1978, p. 100) and later widened it to, "the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change,

and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 7). Like all strong theories, it has been critiqued, tested, revised, and retested throughout the past four decades to arrive at a definitive framework for describing how adults learn best (Kitchenham, 2008). Thus, as the principles of transformative learning persistently reach new audiences, it will undoubtedly continue to be shaped by those who consume and practice this theory, becoming more holistic as it grows.

In fact, there have been many requests for increased holism since Mezirow's early work. Several voices including: Boyd and Myers (1988), Cranton (2006), Dirkx (2006), Illeris (2004), Snyder (2008), Tisdell (2012), and Taylor (2007), have called to widen the approach to transformative learning from various perspectives. Yet, as the theory becomes more holistic, it runs the risk of diluting the tenets that make it unique from other learning theories (Kegan, 2000). Within the *Handbook of Transformative Learning,* Taylor and Cranton (2012) described how the process of integrating and unifying the theory must be one that is both open to and discerning of new voices and ideas. This is due in part to Kegan (2000) cautioning about the indiscriminate use of the term transformative, which makes the exposition of the theory increasingly unwieldy. He contended Mezirow made the concept so appealing that it has been used far too widely, running the risk of being corrupted by those who do not fully understand the complexity of the theory.

Therefore, it is with respect for maintaining the integrity of the theory, as well as answering the call for holism, that this study finds itself. While it is vital to the growth of the transformative learning theory that all experiences of perspective transformation be included in the body of literature, it is also important that we are able to determine if the self-identified transformative incidents of adolescents are more reminiscent of transformative learning, or are

perhaps as Tennant (1993) would suggest, more aligned with one's normative, predicted adolescent development. Mezirow (1998) emphasized transformative learning is rooted in the way human beings communicate, and did not link it exclusively with significant life events of the learner; but other theorists such as Boyd (1989) interpret transformation from a Jungian perspective and describe it as a lifelong process of discovering new talents, developing confidence, becoming more empowered, deepening an understanding of the inner self, and developing a greater sense of self-responsibility (Taylor, 2007). Additionally, others see transformative learning as a shift in consciousness that allows individuals to dramatically and irreversibly alter their way of being in the world (O'Sullivan et al., 2002).

Prior to this study, it has been commonly accepted that transformative learning theory is uniquely-adult due to the assumption that "adults have acquired a coherent body of experience—assumptions, concepts, values, feelings, conditional responses—frames of reference that define their world" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 5). However, Taylor (2007) noted little research has actually supported the claim that these meaning structures are firmly established only in adulthood. While Kegan (2000) argued at least twenty years of life experience are required to be capable of thinking abstractly in any situation, he also encouraged researchers to study how transformative learning occurs across the lifespan.

Nevertheless, the majority of the empirical literature has focused on the process of transformative learning in adults over 25 years of age (Taylor, 1998, 2007; Walsh, 2007). Recently, the work of Grider (2011), Hodgson (2007), Kerr (2014), Schmidt (2009), Walsh (2007), and Whalley (1995) confirmed various aspects of transformative learning are present in the experiences of those less than 25 years of age. Furthermore, transformative learning has been identified as a potential impetus for cognitive and emotional development, facilitating the

process of maturity in young adults (Walsh, 2007), which has significant implications for the actual foundation of the theory (Grider, 2011). Despite these findings, few studies have ventured into the transformative experiences of adolescents who are less than twenty years of age (Taylor, 1998, 2007).

Adolescent Development

Those who are under 20 years of age are more likely to be studied by the field of adolescent development. The study of adolescent development is truly an interdisciplinary one. Researchers in many fields including biology, psychology, sociology, and anthropology have considered the phase of adolescence through their unique lenses (Hodgson, 2007). Each of these fields contributes its own unique perspective to this topic, a few of which will be discussed further in the following chapter. Within these diverse contributions, there are some notable similarities to the study of transformative learning, specifically studies of identity development, transitions, turning points, and rites of passage. These are introduced below and elaborated upon in Chapter II.

Brain Development

Particularly relevant to the field of transformative learning is the recent research in adolescent brain development. As technology has improved, our ability to access images of the teen brain in-situ has shown us adolescence is one of the human brain's most active time in one's life (after infancy and pre-school), as one's synapses not only strengthen, but also prune away to only include the pathways most used (Blakemore, 2012). This, combined with the fact that there is a unique symbiotic relationship with one's development of empathy, meta-cognition, and self-reflection and one's exposure to diverse experiences, suggest the teen brain not only is

capable of developing the preconditions for transformative learning, but it actually craves them (Dahl, 2016).

Cognitive and Identity Development

These brain development findings corroborate cognitive science theories that an adolescent's cognitive abilities have increased capacity for complexity when they reach age 11 (Piaget, 1969). While a young adolescent may not be able to self-reflect, with the help of peer and adult support, older adolescents should have the mental frameworks necessary for early stages of self-awareness and critical-reflection. This, in turn will affect their identity development, further aiding in their ability to distinguish themselves from others.

Marcia (1966) and Erikson (1968) recognized that a universal process of adolescence is identity development: a period of fluctuation and experimentation, which allows an individual to establish a clearer concept of who she is and what she wants to become. This is normally done by trying on different roles in various settings: school, home, work, or with friends. Through this process adolescents explore their values, beliefs, ethnic identity, gender roles, and sexuality (Arnett, 2000). This active exploration can be complemented by reflecting on experiences (McLean & Pratt, 2006) that may feel especially impactful, like a life transition or turning point.

Life transitions and turning points. When Tennant (1993) suggested Mezirow's original theory did not sufficiently review the literature of human development, he described that many of the reported transformative learning experiences could actually fit quite neatly into normative expected life-cycle patterns. He continued to explain that from an individual's perspective, a transformative experience might feel particularly significant, but these normative life cycle changes—or transitions—may be common and predictable.

Transitions can be distinguished from normal life events in that transitions are inherently stressful, bringing major changes to one's daily context of life (Dombusch, 2000), and can cause the breakdown of habitual patterns, and the reorganization of one's self (Kagan, 1984; Rutter, 1989). Adolescence as a life stage itself can be considered a transition, as well as several moments within one's adolescence. However, a transition does not always constitute a turning point (Clausen, 1995; Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996; Wheaton & Gotlib, 1997). To be recognized as a turning point the transition should be personally significant, as well as promote change in an adolescent's developmental trajectory; at the very least, an individual must have the feeling that new meanings have been acquired (Clausen, 1995; Rutter, 1989; Thurnher, 1983).

Rites of passage. Similar to a transitions and turning points, a rite of passage can be intertwined with multiple aspects of the lives of young adults in Western society (Hodgson, 2007), but can also hold more significance because they tend to represent a universal, metaphorical inner journey one takes from childhood to adulthood (Mayes, 2010). Modern rites of passage do not always take on the sacred meaning their historical sources did (Hodgson, 2007), yet they do represent significant moments in an adolescent's life.

Methodology

A qualitative approach was used in order to deeply understand and represent Laurel and Sophia's experiences. Creswell (2007) described qualitative research as an "intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of material" (p. 35). This study resembled a woven tapestry derived from heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990), cooperative inquiry (Heron & Reason, 2006), and hermeneutic methods (Gadamer, 1975).

The three-phased study was a collaborative effort between the three co-researchers with some sub-phases being led by me, and others by Sophia and Laurel. The first phase used heuristic and cooperative inquiry methods to compile an in-depth description of how my co-researchers experienced self-identified transformative incidents. Using semi-structured interviews, we uncovered moments from their adolescence these young women considered to be transformative. The co-researchers then used interview transcriptions to search and interpret the themes they used to report the meta-themes. The second phase focused on the degree to which the themes aligned with a currently accepted definition of transformative learning (O'Sullivan et al., 2002). The third phase further interpreted the transformative incidents, breaking them down into their components, analyzing the language used to describe them, and critically reflecting on the impact they had on the co-researchers.

Phenomenology

I chose a phenomenological approach because it is the best methodological framework for capturing one's awareness of a change in meaning perspectives. Phenomenology is the study of essential lived experience (van Manen, 1990), and does not seek to explain a phenomenon, but describe it instead. Within the branch of phenomenology, I used the specific strands of cooperative inquiry and heuristic inquiry with my co-researchers.

Cooperative inquiry. This study used a participative methodology that conducts "research *with* people rather than *on* people" (Reason, 1994, p. 11). Cooperative inquiry encourages participants to be both the researchers and the researched. Referred to as co-researchers—someone who is considered an expert in her own experience (Heron & Reason, 2006)—the two young women joined me in the entire meaning-making process from contributing data to generating interpretations and making decisions about the dissemination of

their experiences. By empowering Laurel and Sophia to be co-researchers, the study has a more in-depth depiction of their lived experience and also lessens the traditional imbalance of control over the production and distribution of the findings. While I will be considered the main author in this dissertation, the co-researchers will have the opportunity for co-authorship in future publications.

Heuristic inquiry. The strand of phenomenology we used most was heuristic inquiry, which seeks to explore the inner meanings of experience from the subjective perspectives of the co-researchers. Specific to this strand is the fact that the phenomenon chosen to be studied must always arise first from the autobiographical experience of the primary researcher. Then, the research team combines this tacit knowledge with research on the topic, self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery to provide society with a better understanding of a critical human experience (Moustakas, 1990).

Hermeneutic methods. My co-researchers and I used hermeneutic methods as it is described by van Manen (1990) and Gadamer (1975), because it was the most appropriate method to use when interpreting interview narratives. Van Manen suggests co-researchers recall a phenomenon of importance, investigate the experience as it is lived, reflect on essential themes of the phenomenon, describe the phenomenon by speaking and writing, and finally balance the research context by considering parts and whole. This approach does not attempt to seek an objective truth, but rather as Stringer (2004) described,

> understand the ongoing, experienced reality of people's lives . . . and make the world of lived experience directly accessible to an audience, capturing the voices, emotions, and actions of those studied and focusing on those life experiences that shape the meanings persons give to themselves and their own experiences. (p. 98)

Normally, a final interpretation is done by the primary researcher, but this study used the co-researchers' interpretation throughout all phases of research, giving a multi-layered interpretation of the experiences and their meanings.

Although this study only features the stories of two individuals—Laurel and Sophia—this purposive sampling was used to indicate my belief that these co-researchers have both a genuine knowledge of and "verbal eloquence to describe the subculture to which they belong" (van Manen, 2007, p.18). Despite their youth, Sophia and Laurel have given every indication they are mature, capable, and articulate co-researchers who are enthusiastic to share the essence of what made specific moments in their high school experiences particularly transformative.

Researcher's Position

I experienced transformative learning long before I knew the name for it. My first memory of a disorienting dilemma was as an emerging adult when I was transitioning into college and my taken-for-granted frames of reference (Mezirow, 2000) were questioned daily. Because I lived at home, my external surroundings did not change much, but my internal changes were so dramatic, I brought myself to a psychologist's office in order to check my mental health! At the age of nineteen, I physically felt transformation in the forms of anxiety and depression before I was able to cognitively reflect on how my ongoing perspective shifts were influencing my identity.

As I matured into adulthood, I continued to experience both incremental and epochal transformation (Mezirow, 2000) as I found myself in academic, professional, and personal situations that again caused me to question my frames of reference, critically reflect on my assumptions, and revaluate my beliefs. My new careers, relationships, and choice to move overseas were the major catalysts for my personal transformations—some of which were more difficult than others—but through each one, I became more self-aware of the process of change in myself as well as in others.

It was not until the early stages of my doctorate degree that I finally learned that the name for this process was transformative learning. Suddenly, I had a theoretical lens from which to view my experiences, and once I understood the disorienting dilemmas that previously gave me anxiety are normally followed by several additional phases of growth (Mezirow, 2000), my worries lessened, I trusted the process, and allowed myself to further individuate (Jung, 1964).

Upon reflection, I began noticing aspects of my personal engagement with transformative learning in my former high school students—who would often come to me with growing-pains of all sorts— especially the kind involving their transforming identities. I had spent many nights after school counseling my students through their disorienting dilemmas, and then later I would watch them examine their assumptions (usually with help from friends or teachers), try on new roles, and later reintegrate new perspectives into their lives (Mezirow, 2000). They may have only been between the ages of 14 and 18, but my high school students seemed to be experiencing aspects of transformative learning without even knowing it.

Later, working as a consultant at an Asian international high school, I was assigned as a mentor to 18-year-olds Sophia and Laurel, who were creating an empowerment curriculum for students in rural India for their senior year project. As our relationship strengthened, I could not help but notice the terms the girls consistently used as they described much of their high school experience: “life-altering,” “consciousness-raising,” “mind-shifting,” and “transformative.” It seemed as if they were much more mindful of how they were developing than I was at their age, and they already had the vocabulary and emotional intelligence to describe it to others. I was intrigued by their self-awareness and motivation to share their experiences.

Perhaps one of the reasons why I feel so passionately about my work with adolescents is because I recognize we are both in a state of becoming. Just as an adolescent is transitioning

from childhood to adulthood, I also find myself navigating an ambiguous territory between my first and second adulthoods. Borrowing the sentiment from Plotkin (2003), I believe most people have more than a single adulthood; and during each one, we explore and establish different aspects of ourselves in order to individuate (Stein, 2006). As I have transitioned from my role as a full-time high school teacher in my first adulthood, to that of researcher and a small-group mentor in my second adulthood, I am overtly aware of the inner changes that are occurring as I continuously question my assumptions and try on new roles. It is with this self-consciousness for my own transformation as well as the awareness of others' that I approach this study.

Significance of the Study

Several audiences will find theoretical and practical significance in this study including, but not limited to: professionals working with adolescents and young adults (teachers, social-workers, coaches, facilitators, guides, mentors, and parents); professionals working with adult transformative learning concepts (university professors and researchers, teacher-educators); and individuals committed to lifelong personal growth and leadership development.

This study gives a more accurate portrayal of how adolescents experience transformative learning from multi-dimensional perspectives, which allows us to better recognize, foster, support, and reflect on the process both as learners and learning companions (Cranton & Wright, 2008). Many transformative learning studies have focused primarily on formal, controlled classroom settings, which have made it unclear as to how the process unfolds under more natural circumstances (Grider, 2011). Therefore, while the fields of transformative learning and adolescent development will benefit from this additional research into how adolescents make meaning outside of the classroom, the education field will also gain further insight into how these informal transformative experiences may be used to elicit reflection inside the classroom.

In addition, this study has further fostered self-awareness in the co-researchers. This quality is central to personal development in all areas of life, especially for leadership roles. Specifically, the young women as co-researchers have already proven they are poised for future leadership positions and their self-awareness is a vital component to continued authentic leadership development (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroeck, & Avolio, 2010). Self-awareness allows a leader to better recognize her or his individual competencies, attitudes, values, assumptions, and beliefs, which can significantly influence their ability to lead others honestly and effectively. In fact, a leader who can understand the difference between their own worldviews and those of their followers will be more open to dialogue that can advance authentic relationships (Cunliffe, 2004).

As the co-researchers interpreted their significant life events, they actually participated in a process similar to the initial activities Mezirow (1978) led with his female students in his groundbreaking theory. Like the women in his study, who experienced "new vistas of self-realization" (p. 8) as they reflected on their old and emerging perspectives of themselves and the world (Baumgartner, 2012), the co-researchers experienced additional perspective transformations about themselves, their relationships, and the world while they are interpreted their former transformations. These new perspectives will no doubt affect the cognitive development, competency and leadership abilities of the co-researchers (Cunliffe, 2009).

Therefore, not only will this study be significant for those who partook in it, but also for those readers seeking to better understand how an individual's perspective shifts can influence their leadership abilities.

Scope and Limitations of Study

This study is highly influenced by the local context, selected participants, and timeframe in which it focused. For example, the study is mostly located where the co-researchers resided during their high school years: within international schools in two major Asian cities. The ecosystem of the international community outside of the United States of America during 2011–2015 plays a significant role in the types of experiences that the co-researchers interpreted. Thus, the specificity of their international upbringing may not be as applicable to audiences unfamiliar with this community.

In addition, as is the case in all qualitative studies, my co-researchers and I interpreted the data through our own lens of subjectivity. To some, this is a limitation; yet it is also an honest form of engaged subjectivity, a selective collection and interpretation of information based on a deliberate, personal process (Schram, 2003). As the co-researchers tell their personal stories, it is imperative their voice be heard authentically throughout the research process.

As this is a phenomenological-based study, the choice to focus only on the adolescent experiences of two young women was purposeful. By keeping the participant number low, we were able to go much deeper into the descriptions, take additional time to interpret what the meanings were, and have a more robust dissemination in the final report. Yet, this also means the young women's experiences may not be as representative of the majority of individuals and cannot be generalized to other adolescent populations.

As mentioned, I have worked with Laurel and Sophia in the role of mentor; therefore our relationships have already been established as something other than researcher-participant. However, because this study was dependent on establishing a comfortable rapport as co-researchers—one in which they can describe honest, deep responses about their lives

(Moustakas, 1994), as well as feel confident enough to share in the interpretation—the foundations of trustworthy relationships were imperative to the success of the study.

Organization of the Dissertation

This chapter has established (a) the purpose of this dissertation, (b) the specific research questions, (c) the theoretical frameworks from which I worked, (d) the significance of the study, and (e) the scope and limitations. In Chapter II, I will deeply review the theoretical and empirical literature associated with adolescent development, transformative learning, where their intersection may be relevant to my study, and where it is underdeveloped. In Chapter III I will further establish why the qualitative methodology of phenomenology is the most appropriate for this research, outline my methods, and re-introduce my co-researchers. Chapter IV will display the data and how it addresses the research questions. Chapter V will describe the unique research method that unfolded through the perspective of all three co-researchers; and Chapter VI will summarize my findings, share the implications, and suggest future areas of research.

Chapter II: **Literature Review**

This chapter will review the literature relevant to this study. Specifically, I will first discuss the field of adolescent development: how the physiological, cognitive, affective, and social aspects of development may influence transformative learning, how an adolescent's budding identity is connected to transformation, and which normative development models may be aligned with ideas found in transformative learning theory. Then, I will discuss the field of transformative learning: its background and evolution, the empirical studies that have shaped its development, and preconditions for engaging with transformation. I will introduce critiques to transformative learning and how they have influenced the gradual increase of holism that is illustrated through a five-lens approach to the field. Finally, I will highlight significant studies that have tried to bridge the gap between these two fields, but establish there is still more potential for them to further intersect through an in-depth, cooperative inquiry such as this.

Adolescent Development

In a grand metaphorical sense, the entire life stage of adolescence can mimic the process of transformative learning! As people navigate from childhood to adulthood, they are forced to question their immature ways of being in the world as a child and renegotiate their identity repeatedly until they feel whole as an emerging adult (Adamson & Lyxell, 1996). This is likely also one's first exposure to components of transformative learning.

In this section, I will focus on the implications of adolescent development specifically as they pertain to an individual's capacity to engage with transformative learning. Here, I will (a) highlight specific physiological, cognitive, affective, and social elements unique to the time span of adolescence; (b) highlight some female-development theories that are especially relevant to

this study; and (c) align these with human development frameworks that complement transformative learning.

Physiological, Cognitive, Affective, and Social Development

As Kegan (1982) explained, "No framework can hope to supply a theory of the developing person without some profound acknowledgment of our biological reality" (p. 43). Thus, I begin with the biological changes that occur during adolescence, then move on to how these highly influence other areas—including cognitive, affective, and social development.

Symbiotic relationships within the body. Adolescence begins during puberty, and once begun, a unique biological relationship between the brain and the endocrine system evolves (Blakemore, 2012). For instance, testosterone and estrogen will affect both genders' brains: specifically estrogen will increase the concentration of neurotransmitters such as serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine (Archer, 1999); while testosterone will affect neural pathways associated with external bodily threats. As the brain and endocrine system of the adolescent interact, individuals are likely to experience dramatic, unpredictable mood swings that can leave them (and their loved ones) confused and frustrated (Arnett, 2000). Yet, as much as these mood swings can disrupt an adolescent's life, they do not necessarily prevent them from engaging with transformative learning, as shown by recent discoveries in rapidly developing brain science (Dahl, 2016).

Brain development. Perhaps the most fascinating research of the 21st century has been on adolescent brain development. As a result of the greater availability of the non-invasive neuroimaging technique known as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), we have been able to view and understand adolescents' brains more deeply. Some of this new research has

confirmed what cognitive psychologists have theorized for many years, while other findings are contradictory to traditional thought.

Rapid growth. An example of a surprising finding is that adolescence is the second time one's brain will experience such immense, rapid growth (the first being the period of life between fetus and infant) (Blakemore, 2012; Dahl, 2015). In fact, scientists used to think much of one's brain growth was stagnant after early childhood (Abbott, 2010), but now it is obvious that a considerable thickening of myelin sheath synaptic connections occur around the time puberty begins, a process neuroscientists call exuberance (Giedd, Blumenthal, & Jefferies, 1999). This exuberance is occurring in the gray-matter of the brain; specifically in the frontal lobes and pre-frontal cortex, which are involved with the higher functions of the brain (Keating, 2004), such as planning ahead, making moral judgments, and solving problems. The gray-matter development peaks at different years for girls and boys due to the puberty differences (Blakemore, 2012), with girls tending to develop these areas sooner than boys.

This exuberance causes a higher efficiency in decision-making and one's ability to communicate by up to a hundred-fold (Casey & Tottenham, 2005). This suggests that adolescence is the first time an individual (young women especially) would be able to use the parts of the brain needed for higher-level thinking skills like critical reflection and rational discourse, which are Mezirow's (1991) preconditions for transformative learning.

Pre-frontal cortex and behavior regulation. Despite the immense growth in the prefrontal cortex (directly behind the forehead) during adolescence, it should be noted that full development of this area of the brain will not occur until one is in their mid-20s or older (Arnett, 2000). One's prefrontal cortex can be considered the control center of the brain (Blakemore, 2012) and is attributed to the regulation of behavior, emotion and how one evaluates risk and

reward (Steinberg, 2005). Because the pre-frontal cortex is still ongoing in its development, it is one of the most significant (and obvious) differences between adults and adolescents. Signs of a still developing pre-frontal cortex include: an inability to control impulses, difficulty planning and using foresight, ineffective judgment and decision-making, and lesser developed metacognition (Blakemore, 2012).

Yet on the other hand, it is important to note that the plasticity of the developing pre-frontal cortex that gives one a lack of inhibition on decisions, judgment, and planning that can also allow adolescents to be more spontaneous, adventurous, and open to new ideas (Abbott, 2010) than their adult counterparts (Dahl, 2016). This suggests young adults who engage with transformative learning will be more willing and able to entertain other ways of thinking and being in the world, perhaps more so than any other time in their lives, which according to Bruner (1990) is vital to one's engagement with transformation.

Amygdala and emotional intelligence. Emotionally, adolescents are often perceived as immature, and when looking at their amygdala, it is easy to see why. When comparing adults' and adolescents' amygdala in an fMRI, Baird, Gruber and Fein (1999) found that adolescents' brains are more responsive to faces that show anger. This overexcites the emotional centers in the brain, and without the pre-frontal cortex to calm it, causes strong reactions in teens.

Following up on this study, McGivern, Andersen and Byrd (2002) tested adolescents' ability to recognize facial emotions and the feelings associated with them by having participants aged 10–17 attempt to match a variety of emotional face images to emotional words. They found while adults could read all of the faces, teenagers were significantly less likely to be able to correctly identify many emotions outside of the four "primal" emotions sensed in the amygdala: fear, anger, joy, and sadness.

What made this study unique was that the fMRI results indicated adults were actually using parts of their pre-frontal cortex to identify the emotions, not their "primal" brains like researchers had assumed. Because adolescents did not have a complete pre-frontal cortex yet, they did use the most ancient parts of their brains, like the R-Complex (reptilian) and limbic system, which are actually not capable of discerning the context or range of emotions on one's face. These findings suggest that as one matures, they tend to transition from using reactive, primal parts of their brains that understand basic "survival" emotions (Blakemore, 2012) to using their pre-frontal cortex to proactively identify a wider range of empathetic emotions. The most important point to note is that there seems to be a symbiotic relationship between one's exposure to complex emotional situations and the development of their pre-frontal cortex to give them more context of the emotion (Dahl, 2015). As the cortex matures, one is more likely to be proactive in their emotional response, which is a prerequisite to emotional empathy.

While this may seem to implicate teenagers are incapable of empathy, which Belenky and Stanton (2000) argued is a precondition of transformative learning, it actually validates the importance of environment and experiences (Grider, 2011; Logan, 2013) on the adolescent brain's empathetic development. Because the cortex is particularly malleable and absorbent, it is actually craving emotional stimulation and complex social experiences (Blakemore, 2010; Dahl, 2016), which can give it the context it needs to create new understandings of the intricacies of human emotion. Again, there is a symbiotic relationship between the brain developing the cortex and an individual's life experiences. Therefore, while an early-adolescent may begin experiencing emotions in their primal brain, with exposure, guidance and support in young adulthood, they will experience the necessary brain growth for empathy to develop (Dahl, 2015).

Emotions and affect play a significant role in transformative learning (Cranton, 2006; Dirkx, 2000), with Mezirow (2000) even stating one must have the "precondition of emotional intelligence" (p.15) as well as be "emotionally able to change" (p. 58), in order to be open for perspective transformation. This is likely because transformative learning commonly involves an intensive and difficult emotional struggle as old perspectives become challenged (Taylor & Snyder, 2012). Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that an adolescent's oversensitive and underdeveloped emotional areas of the brain are the most troubling to transformative learning theorists.

Yet, the adolescent brain's extreme sensitivities to emotion and thirst for social contexts may make it the most impressionable and open to learning than any other time in one's life (Dahl, 2016). This means the underdeveloped cortex may not necessarily prevent them from experiencing transformative learning, but as a result of an overactive amygdala, they may be doing so in a unique way that is much different to what adults would experience. In fact, if a young adult participates in a peak experience (Maslow, 1968) they are more likely to feel shades of joy, great meaning, and motivation (O'Sullivan, 2008), which can even be interpreted as emotionally charged energy from one's unconscious sending the message that this experience was needed for growth (Mayes, 2010).

Additionally, placing adolescents in complex social environments will give them the context they need to help recognize more of the dimensional, nuanced emotions perceived by their continuously developing pre-frontal cortex (Blakemore, 2012; Dahl, 2016). Fostering emotional intelligence, no matter the stage an adolescent is in, will also help prepare them for the emotional components of transformation they will encounter as adults.

Striatum and stimulus-reward. An interesting difference between adults and adolescents is their brains' preference for rewards. The striatum, the reward-center of the brain will "light up" in an fMRI machine when one receives what is perceived as a reward (Galván, 2013). In studies with teen and adult brains, teenage brains are significantly more excited by a rewarding stimulus than adults (Galván, 2013). This may explain adolescents' attraction to rewards they perceive in sugar, speed, music, thrills, and all things "fun." A negative consequence of this stimulation is: again, without the pre-frontal cortex to regulate the consumption of the reward, adolescents are much more likely to overconsume than adults.

However, a positive consequence to a more sensitive rewards area is that a teenage brain is more likely to feel "alive" and moved by new experiences than at any other point in their lives (Dahl, 2016). This is particularly relevant for transformative learning if the activities that elicit a disorienting dilemma are more active and engaging, aligning with what Grider (2011), Logan (2013), and Kerr (2014) uncovered in their studies with young adults. More interestingly, by participating in rich, multi-dimensional experiences during adolescence, one may prevent a loss of important neural pathways during the act of synaptic pruning (Blakemore, 2012).

Synaptic pruning: "Use it or lose it." An especially significant component of brain development in adolescence is the process called synaptic pruning. Neurons actually look like bushes or trees (Abbott, 2010) with branches and roots communicating through chemical neurotransmitters—and although exuberance quickens neural pathways, neurons are also going through a process that strengthens those most frequently used and prunes away those that are not (Blakemore, 2012). This causes many adolescents to lose processes and connections from childhood that the brain assumes no longer serve it (Abbott, 2010).

This normally occurs during the ages of 12–20 and can cause up to 7% to 10% loss of one's brain gray matter (Sowell & Thomson, 1999). It tends to be a "use it or lose it" concept that favors synapses that are well-used and discards those that are rarely used. Evolutionarily speaking, synaptic pruning makes the adult human brain one of the most efficient and quick processors of the animal kingdom. As the main branches of the brain are given more resources for speed, one is able to make quicker decisions, but unfortunately this trimming of smaller branches can also make the brain less flexible and amenable to change and new ideas (Blakemore, 2012). This is significant to this work, because it implies that adolescence may be one of the last times an individual can be introduced to new ways of being and thinking before the rigidity of the brain decreases motivation to try or think something new (Abbott, 2010).

These developmental aspects to the brain complement significant cognitive changes that occur during adolescence, which allow for more sophisticated, logical, abstract, hypothetical thought as well as the ability to engage in dynamic identity work.

Cognitive and psychological development. While brain science has contributed significantly to cognitive studies, developmental psychology theories are still very influential in the field of adolescent development. Here, I will highlight some of these theories and the implications they have on the intersection with transformative learning.

Piaget and cognitive development. One of the most respected voices in childhood development, Piaget (1969) established that a child's cognitive development is a progressive reorganization of mental processes that result from biological maturation along with environmental experiences. He believed children go through cycles of constructing and understanding the world around them, and then experience discrepancies between what they already know and the new information discovered in their environment (Piaget, 1969).

When exposed to new information, children will then either assimilate, or correspond to a new event in a way that is consistent with an existing schema, or accommodate, which occurs when a child either modifies an existing schema or forms an entirely new schema to deal with a new object or event (Ormrod, 2012). If we think of this in terms of file folders, children who assimilate will put the new information into an existing file folder, while accommodation requires creating a brand new file folder. Piaget (1969) felt assimilation and accommodation cannot exist without one another—to assimilate an object into an existing mental schema, one first needs to take into account or accommodate to the particularities of this object to a certain extent (Block, 1982). How one accommodates (interprets new concepts, schemas, and frameworks) was very important to Piaget, as it is a continuous process of "decentration," the loss of an old center, and "recentration," the recovery of a new center (Kegan, 1982) that can be analogous to the process of adult transformative learning.

Perhaps most significant to the field of cognition was Piaget's (1972) stages of development. Piaget explored how cognitive development influences an individual's ability to remember, perceive, and make meaning of themselves and their world (Block, 1982). A child of roughly 12 years of age must first go through the stages of Sensori-motor, Pre-operational, and Concrete Operational in order to exist in Piaget's Formal Operations stage, which coincides with adolescence. It is only in the Formal Operations stage, which would also align with the early stages of Kegan's (1994) third order of consciousness, that one is finally able to think abstractly and hypothetically and can test out different ideas based on logic and rationality—allowing for more sophisticated problem-solving (Arnett, 2000). Piaget (1972) described the formal operating adolescent as one who is able to apply the rigor of the scientific method to cognitive tasks, which he termed *hypothetico-deductive reasoning*.

While growing logic is important during the Formal Operations stage, different types of thinking are also developing: specifically abstract thinking, complex thinking, critical thinking, and metacognition (Arnett, 2000). Central to Mezirow's definition of TL is one's ability to engage in critical thinking and critical reflection (Mezirow, 1998). Some critical thinking skills that adolescents continuously improve with time and experience are: (a) being able to question assumptions about what is true, (b) viewing arguments as open to debate, and (c) drawing appropriate conclusions about what is fact and opinion (Rahimi & Sajed, 2014). In other words, while an individual in early adolescence may not be able to use critical thinking, one in late adolescence who is in the later Formal Operations stage should be able to use it to critically reflect on their assumptions, and hence engage with transformative learning.

Erikson and identity development. As one's metacognition develops, he or she is more likely to ask key identity-based questions such as, "Who am I?," "Where do I fit in?," and "What will I become in the future?" (Parks, 2011), which Erikson (1968) recognized as a universal process of adolescence. Similar to the views of transformative learning theorist Parks (2011), who contended transformative learning occurs best within a supportive social environment, Erikson also recognized that society played a significant role in identity development, explaining that "societies offer, as individuals require, more or less, sanctioned intermediary periods between childhood and adulthood, institutionalized psychosocial moratoria, during which a lasting pattern of 'inner identity' scheduled with relative completion" (Erikson,1968, p. 161). During this time, adult responsibilities can be postponed and adolescents can find a niche in some section of their society, one which would give them an assured sense of inner continuity, bridging their childhood and adulthood sense of self (Erikson, 1968).

Biologically, an adolescent's brain is actually forming a sense of self in a different way than adults do (Sebastian, Burnett, & Blakemore, 2008) with adolescents using fewer memories of past selves and more social cues to develop a more present-minded "looking glass self" adapted to social surroundings (Dahl, 2016), which can lead to common adolescent behaviors like heightened self-consciousness and susceptibility to peer pressure. A significant component to transformative learning is one's growing awareness of her/his own identity (Boyd, 1989; Cranton, 2006; Flavell, 1982). Unlike children, adolescents are able to reflect on current, but also on infinite possible identities—which allows them to experiment with linking internal images, thoughts, and feelings about her/himself and gradually uniting them to become a functioning whole (Adamson & Lyxell, 1996). The ability to self-reflect does begin in late adolescence (Sebastian et al., 2008), which is vital to the kinds of critical self-reflection required for transformative learning. As Hodgson (2007), Grider (2011), and Kerr (2014) confirmed—given the right context, opportunities, and critical friends—young adults are enthusiastic about reflecting on how their experiences influence their fluctuating identities.

Identity formation neither begins nor ends in adolescence—it is a lifelong process—largely unconscious to the individual (Erikson, 1968). Thus echoing Sartre's (1956) suggestion that human being is not a fixed state, but instead one of becoming; at first we are nothing, but we make ourselves who we are by imagining and reimagining who we will be, which is one of Boyd's (1989) preconditions for transformative learning.

Social development. As many theorists have suggested (Taylor, 2007), much of transformative learning is a relational process. Regardless of age, one's social skills are intimately related to brain and cognitive development in such a way that it can be difficult to determine where each's influence ends. For example, one of the driving forces behind the

development of the prefrontal cortex is increased social complexity (Dunbar, 2003), which can then influence one's self-concept as the regions involved in self-processing are also found in the pre-frontal cortex (Sebastian et al., 2008). As mentioned earlier, the development of emotional intelligence that accompanies the development of the cortex also increases an adolescent's ability to empathize with others, solidifying social ties (Blakemore, 2012). Thus, adolescents are actually in the early stages of developing empathy, which is quite valuable to transformative learning because, as the work of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule (1986) and Belenky and Stanton (2000) suggests, those who are more empathetic are better able to try on another's point of view during critical reflection, which aids in receptive, rational discourse.

Imaginary audience. A unique aspect of adolescence is the high level of importance relationships have on one's daily life (Dahl, 2016). Beginning at around the age of 11, individuals are more likely to compare themselves with others, as well as assume others are making comparisons and judgments about them (Arnett, 2000). In effect, adolescents create an "imaginary audience" they think is watching them, most likely because an individual in the Formal Operational development stage has a hard time distinguishing between their own perceptions and other people's perceptions (Arnett, 2000). If the imaginary audience is given too much credibility, it can decrease one's self-esteem due to the perceived judgments of a fictional crowd.

Social lives. The real audiences in an adolescent's life tend to affect self-esteem as well. Studies show peers and non-relative adults (i.e., teachers, coaches, mentors, etc.) play as much if not more of a role than parents (Arnett, 2003) in one's overall sense of self. Adolescents search for social cues from their peers that help them measure their own development (Dahl, 2016). While peers tend to bring the most social comfort during developmental milestones, adolescents

also seek out non-parental approval especially when in reference to life's Big Questions (Parks, 2011). Adult relationships take on a more dimensional quality in adolescence, with many teens yearning for adults to ask about their lives and support their independent decisions (Adamson & Lyxell, 1996). This illustrates Cranton and Wright's (2008) call for access to a learning companion to help individuals along in the transformative process.

Exposure to the community. A significant amount of an adolescent's ability to engage with transformative learning will align with the amount of and complexity in the social opportunities in their life (Kerr, 2014). This makes sense biologically, as the pre-frontal cortex's inability to damper the felt-sensations of the body with risk-evaluation allows adolescents to be more spontaneous, adventurous, and open to new people, places and things (Blakemore, 2012). Hence, early exposure to other cultures, people, and ideas through travel, field trips, or reading are significantly more impactful for adolescents than adults (Arnett, 2003) and can be especially influential in the development of perspective taking and empathy.

As elder-provoked initiations of traditional societies are now lacking, modern young adults are either self-initiating into adulthood (Arnett, 2000), or searching for connections in the new commons (Parks, 2011)—the metaphorical space modern young adults seek to navigate adolescence and their impending adulthood amongst peers and experienced elders.

Throughout history, humans have found meaning through rituals that celebrate the universal truths of birth, death, love, light, dark, love, and grief. Often these were held in the commons of villages or cities, yet, in the 21st century, many of these commons are changing shape, hailing the creation of a new commons (Parks, 2011). The new commons are a modern version of what used to be Main Street, bodegas, the wharf, the synagogue, the marketplace, or the ball field—anywhere that used to embrace the best and worst of multi-generational human

life—where shared experience helped individuals anchor and shape themselves within a manageable frame (Parks, 2011). Yet, because of the rapidly growing complexities of modern life, many of these have disappeared, leaving us to make or find new commons, often non-stationary places – some virtual, others mobile found in non-local or global spaces.

If adolescents can experience the new commons through domestic and international travel, they are likely to interact with the *"Other"* (Daloz, 2000); allowing them to experience a concept Taylor (1997) calls *cultural disequilibrium*, which is analogous to a disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1991). Being in a foreign context tends to shift the way people understand themselves, their relationships with other humans, their place within the natural world, and any power relations that influence structures of class, race and gender, leading to a broader sense of possibilities for social justice, peace, and personal joy (O'Sullivan, 2012).

Sharing experiences in the new commons can be a modern interpretation of Freire's work; and theorists like Torres (2007) argue transformative learning should help unveil unfair conditions of exploitation through personal first-hand experiences within it, allowing individuals to recognize when they have been marginalized or contributed to others' marginalization. By recognizing how one may be inadvertently contributing to others' oppression, individuals are introduced to the shadow side (Stein, 2006) of their persona, which, along with one's soul, is vital to recognize and integrate as part of individuation (Dirkx, 2000).

What About Soul?

Dirkx (2000) views transformative learning as a relationship with one's soul, which creates a conscious participation in the individuation journey, explaining, "when we take seriously the responsibility of developing a more conscious relationship with the unconscious dimensions of our being, we enter into a profoundly transformative, life-changing process"

(p. 19). When engaging in Erikson's (1968) psychosocial moratorium, adolescents will experiment with various roles and identities, which allow some to encounter their inner soul and develop their first Big Questions (Parks, 2011) about themselves, existence, God, and more meaningful and significant topics.

If we are unable to make the *conscious cooperation* (Spear, 2014) between our unconscious and conscious self at a young age, some argue our soul will force it traumatically at a later time. As Plotkin (2003) described:

> All too often the soul finds that the ego has become too hardened, too entrenched in its routines, so that almost nothing can budge it . . . If in our youth, there had been elders about, they would have provided initiatory experiences to soften us up or crack us open. Without elders, the soul waits for—or creates—a trauma, something extreme that will loosen the ego's grip on its old way of belonging to the world. (p. 50)

Thus, Plotkin's assumption that aiding young adults in their early engagement with soul may be aligned with Cranton and Wright's (2008) learning companion and Grider's (2011) *critical friend* with whom younger adults can speak about their transformative experiences. Plotkin (2003) continued by suggesting that traditional ceremonies, rituals, and nature festivals can also serve as pathways to the soul; as they can "open the gates to transpersonal experience, alter consciousness, facilitate communion with the Other, and help us see ourselves and the world from a perspective more resonate with soul" (p. 191).

While elders and critical friends are helpful in finding soul, adolescence also sets the stage for the beginning of Magolda's (2009) self-authorship model, which encourages young people to listen to, cultivate, and trust their internal voices (instead of external authority) to create foundations for knowing themselves and building a life. While young adults "listen" to their internal voice, Dirkx (2000) would remind them that not all of these "voices" will actually communicate in words, but will manifest through "dreams, fantasies, myth, legends, fairy tales,

stories, rituals, poetry, and performing arts, such as dance" (p. 1). These magic moments transcend rationality and words, but still manage to give depth, power, mystery, and deep meaning to the connection between the self and the world (Cranton, 2006). Because of the difficulty of putting them to words, there is still little research on transformations of soul (Taylor, 2012), thus it would behoove researchers to recognize if adolescents may be experiencing these ineffable forms of inner-change, and just have not been able to describe them as of yet. Perhaps this could be an example of what Kuhn (1999) described when she said, "our existing vocabulary is insufficient to characterize the many forms of change that are part of the human experience" (p. 293).

Young Women

As this study focuses on the stories of two young women, we would be remiss if we did not account for the fact that there are significant gender differences in how adolescent girls and boys develop. While many of the developmental theories discussed above have come from Western, white, middle-class, male perspectives (Greene, 2014), it is important to note young women may not experience being in the world (Belenky et al., 1986) the same way as the men from whom many studies are based. Yet, because girlhood and womanhood are socially constructed, our understanding of these concepts has changed continuously (Johnson, 2014).

A pioneering theorist in this field of understanding girlhood is Gilligan (1982), and later with her colleague, Brown, who used a female voice-centered, longitudinal study to interpret the lives of girls aged 6–16 years old in order to develop theories of female development not based on male-centered frameworks (L. Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Some of their findings suggest girls have a gender-unique experience when they reach the ages of 11–15, specifically that their level of outspoken opinions decreased significantly. "For girls at adolescence to say what they are

feeling and thinking often means to risk, in the words of many girls, losing their relationships and finding themselves powerless and all alone" (L. Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 217). This can often been seen through girls' tendencies to preface their opinions with apologies or their reluctance to share them at all, for fear of fracturing friendships.

Although many young girls have strong relationships as children, as they grow into young women, they recognize relationships as less of an asset and more of a hindrance to their success in an independent-focused male-framed workforce (L. Brown & Gilligan, 1992), overlooking their natural relational ability as positive aspect of transformation. Echoing this work is Dickerson's (2004) assertion that many maturing young women encounter self-doubt as a result of conflicting personal desires and relational expectations. What this can do for many young women is to create what "psychoanalysts have called 'a compromise formation'—a compromise between voice and relationships" (L. Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 218), effectively silencing them in daily life—which in turn affects their representation in developmental research. Hence, much of the already androcentric nature of psychological theory has left girls and women out, and when females are included, if they are asked to self-report, they may not be honest about their experiences, for fear of sacrificing connection.

As the body of research on adolescent girls' experiences grows, we are also learning valuable concepts about the relational processes of maturation and development in girls and young women that is not limited to feelings of self-doubt or inhibition, but resilience instead (Jordan, 2013). For example, females tend to place high emphasis on relationships, which in turn tends to foster individual hardiness, growth, and resilience (Johnson, 2014). As girls and young women mature, they face a gauntlet of peer, family, and societal pressures to conform to a status-quo of femininity, but as Jordan (2013) noted, "relational resilience involves movement

toward mutually empowering, growth-fostering connections in the face of adverse conditions, traumatic experiences, and alienating social-cultural pressures" (p. 83). In fact, though relationships are pluralistic, they actually encourage autonomy in developing girls as they learn to resist unwanted societal messages that may not promote their overall holistic health (Johnson, 2014).

Many of these threats to a young woman's holistic health can be found in the literature. Historically, studies focused on female-adolescent experiences have often found girls actually tend to find the transition from childhood to adulthood to be quite difficult to navigate (Hirsch & Rapkin, 1987). Some issues that are uniquely female include girls' reports of: (a) confusion surrounding their complex and contradictory sexuality (Schaffner, 1998), (b) experiencing higher levels of aggression toward other girls (Simmons, 2002), and (c) a general lack of confidence (Orenstein, 1994). This may be because of a significant emotional difference in coming-of-age for boys and girls, in that boys tend to revel in the expansion of the newfound privileges previously reserved only for men, while girls tend to withdraw due to the new social restrictions observed for women (Mensch, Hewett, & Erkular, 2003).

Often adolescent girls report more symptoms of negative-affect: depression, anxiety, eating-disorders, and other psycho-social issues than boys (Arnett, 2000). While these maladies can be linked to a number of biological and contextual sources, social pressures tend to be more explicit and inhibiting for adolescent girls. Even girls who have been identified as gifted cognitively, affectively, or socially are not likely to be recognized for their talents (Noble, 1987), causing many young women to question whether their innate abilities are useful to society at large.

In regards to this study, it is important to note how the advantageous and challenging aspects to a young woman's life make the co-researchers' voices that much more relevant to the fields of adolescent development and transformative learning. As L. Brown and Gilligan (1992) remind us, often young women receive the cultural message that girls' thoughts are not to be heard, thus the disconnection between girls' experiences in the literature, "mirrors the inner division we have been tracing—the tendency for girls, as they become young women, to dismiss their experience and modulate their voices" (p. 217). In the spirit of L. Brown and Gilligan's work, this study brings the authentic voices of all the co-researchers forward in an honest, open manner.

Adolescence as a Transition

While researchers are only now beginning to explore how the very young and the very old experience transformative learning (Taylor & Snyder, 2012) theorists in closely-related fields like developmental psychology and human development have consistently captured how individuals experience transitions. Adolescence is one of life's most impactful transitions, bringing with it several shifts of consciousness (O'Sullivan, 2012) that can alter one's sense of being, beliefs, and core sense of self (Tisdell, 2012)—all of which can correspond to normative developmental stages (Tennant, 1993), or perhaps one's first experience with transformative learning. While it is important to note they are not synonymous with one another, here I will briefly explore the concepts of transitions, turning points, and rites of passage in order to establish the commonalities between these normative developmental experiences (Tennant, 1993) and transformative learning.

Transitions and turning points. Similar to a disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1991), a transition is considered to be inherently stressful, causing discomfort and confusion as it brings

major changes to one's daily context of life (Dombusch, 2000). Specifically, the passage from adolescence to young adulthood represents a major psychosocial transition that carries with it the task of reevaluating, adjusting or relinquishing formerly held beliefs (Shulman & Ben-Artzi, 2003)—not unlike the process of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991).

Transitional periods are also characterized as times of reflection and self-evaluation, which allow for the reassessment of current values and goals and the exploration of options for growth in the self and the world (Levinson, 1986). This definition actually parallels some of Mezirow's phases of transformative learning: self-examination; exploration of options for new roles; and provisional trying of new roles (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009). Adolescence as a life stage itself can be considered a transition, as well as several moments within one's adolescence. Transitions are similar to, but not exactly turning points (Clausen, 1995; Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996; Wheaton & Gotlib, 1997).

A turning point is differentiated from a transition in that it should change an individual's developmental trajectory and alter the normal flow and direction of one's life (Pillemer, 2001). These events are regarded as significant life experiences that cause changes in one's behaviors and attitudes, not unlike the outcome of transformative learning (Cranton, 2006). It is important to note that turning points may vary in valence (positive or negative), severity, and duration across individuals (Tavernier & Willoughby, 2012). Noteworthy of turning points is their ability to have a higher sense of meaning when they are characterized by high tension and conflict (Thorne, McLean, & Lawrence, 2004), which is not necessarily indicative of rites of passage.

Rites of passage. While more popular in traditional societies, a rite of passage has modern interpretations in the lives of young adults in Western society (Hodgson, 2007) as well. They tend to hold more significance than turning points because they can represent the universal, metaphorical inner journey one takes from childhood to adulthood (Mayes, 2010). A rite of passage can be a structured, guided process to help young people become conscious of their transition into adulthood, or it can be a formal initiation into the community of adults that have gone through a similar process (Kessler, 2000).

There are different rites of passage in each community, with some modern high school-based examples including learning to drive, finding a first love, experiencing a first heartbreak, attending an event such as summer-camp, prom or graduation. Modern rites of passage do not always take on the sacred meaning their historical sources did (Hodgson, 2007), yet they do represent significant moments in an adolescent's life. The participants in this proposed study have described some of these rites of passage in their lives as "transformational," which leads us to ask: Could there be an interesting symbiotic relationship between one's first encounters with transformative learning and rites of passage? In order to better assess the role these arguably "normative" (Tennant, 1994) adolescent occurrences have to transformative learning, we must now deeply explore the theory: its origins, theorists, critiques, and the empirical studies that most influence this research.

Transformative Learning

Mezirow (1978) explained that in general there are three forms of learning adults and children can engage in: 1. how to do something; 2. how something works or how pieces fit together, and 3. how to work with others. However, there is a fourth kind of learning—mostly an adult practice—one that encourages fostering an evolving concept of self. "It is within this fourth

form of learning that we learn to become critically aware of the cultural and psychological assumptions that have influenced the way we see ourselves and our relationships and the way we pattern our lives" (Mezirow, 1978, p. 101). From this early definition of transformative learning, the adult learning field has embraced Mezirowian-based concepts, as well as established post-Mezirowian approaches to transformation.

The *Handbook of Transformative Learning's* currently accepted definition of transformative learning is "the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action" (Taylor & Snyder, 2012, p. 76). The field also has several varied definitions and lenses from which to view transformation, some of which will be explored in detail below. In order to do so, it is imperative one first understands the origins of transformative learning theory and the impact of its founder, Jack Mezirow.

Origins of transformative learning. Many people associate transformative learning with Jack Mezirow, who first described this learning theory after interpreting the lived experiences of women returning to higher education after an extended hiatus (Mezirow, 1978). His theory of adult learning suggested a perspective transformation is required when dilemmas of life cannot be solved through the acquisition of new information, refinement of problem-solving abilities, or by increasing one's skills or competencies (Mezirow, 1978). Mezirow (1978) initially referred to the women experiencing "new vistas of self-realization" (p. 8) as they reflected on their old and emerging perspectives of themselves and the world. This led Mezirow (1978) to outline a

theory of adult development, which he called perspective transformation, "a structural reorganization in the way that a person looks at himself and his relationships" (p. 162).

Later, Mezirow coined the term *transformative learning* to describe changes in "meaning perspectives," which he defined as, "psychological structures with dimensions of thought, feeling and will" (Mezirow, 1978, p. 108). Mezirow has been credited with profoundly changing the direction of the field of adult education with this theory (Cranton, 2006), with much of his work being influenced by the philosophical and educational theorists of his time.

Transformative learning's philosophical underpinnings. Mezirow (1991) explained transformative learning theory "does not derive from a systematic extension of an existing intellectual theory or tradition" (p. xiv); rather it is an assimilation of his earlier research with concepts and theories from a wide array of disciplines. Some of these disciplines include psychology, sociology, philosophy, adult education, human development, and science—among others. While he may have felt the idea was new, not derived, Mezirow's transformative learning theory is still based on constructivist assumptions, with the roots in humanism and critical social theory (Taylor & Cranton, 2012).

Constructivism. Mezirow (1991) was explicit about the strong constructivist assumptions within his theory. He described his "conviction that meaning exists within ourselves rather than in external forms such as books, and that personal meanings that we attribute to our experience are acquired and validated through human interaction and experience" (p. xiv). Transformative learning theory is based on the notion that we interpret our experiences individually, which is a result of our perceptions of our experiences. We use these perceptions to construct our reality; yet many of these perceptions are often uncritically assimilated from our social world, community, and culture, and include distortions, stereotypes, and prejudices. Transformative

learning is a process of critically examining, questioning, and revising those perceptions (Taylor & Cranton, 2012).

Humanism. Similar to constructivism, humanism supposes reality is defined by each human; yet humanists also assume human beings are free and capable of making personal choices within the constraints imposed by heredity, personal history, and environment (Elias & Merriam, 1995). Humanist principles stress the importance of the individual and their growth and development. Major assumptions underlying humanism are: human nature is inherently good; individuals are free and autonomous, thus capable of making major personal choices; and human potential for growth and development is virtually unlimited (Taylor & Cranton, 2012). Many humanists of Mezirow's time viewed learning as creating interpersonal relationships, which contributes to the common good of humanity (Cranton, 2006).

Mezirow was influenced by humanists Maslow (1968) and Rogers (1969), specifically Maslow's concepts of self-actualization and having peak experiences that lead to personal transformation; and Rogers' learner-centered self-directed adult education (Taylor & Cranton, 2012). Transformative learning is largely based on the concept that adults can be self-directed learners who participate freely in dialogue in order to test their own perspectives against those of others and modify them accordingly (Mezirow, 1981). Through this process, we become closer to Maslow's (1978) description of self-actualization, or the need to be good, to be fully alive and to find meaning in life.

Critical social theory. While constructivism and humanism describe human thinking and behaviors, critical social theory's goal is to critique and change society as a whole. Brookfield (2003) gives three core assumptions of critical theory related to how the world is organized:

1. That apparently open, Western democracies are actually highly unequal societies in which economic inequity, racism, and class discrimination are empirical realities
2. That the way this state of affairs is reproduced and seems to be normal, natural, and inevitable (thereby heading off potential challenges to the system) is through the dissemination of dominant ideology
3. That critical theory attempts to understand this state of affairs as a necessary prelude to changing it (p. viii)

At the center of Mezirow's theory is the notion that we tend to (often unknowingly) adopt the dominant ideology as a normal way to think and act; and when we are able to recognize that these beliefs are often oppressive and not necessarily in our best interest, we can enter into a transformative learning process (Taylor & Cranton, 2012). While Mezirow's work can seem at first glance to be based mostly on the individual, the influence of Freire's (1970, 1993, 1998) conscientization and emancipatory education allow for transformative learning to be a vehicle for social change as well. When an individual experiences a perspective transformation, they are often more able to recognize which social constructs may be preventing them and others from liberation from oppressive forces.

Mezirow's 10 phases and common terminology. Perhaps Mezirow's (1991) most influential contribution to the field of transformative learning is his 10 phases of transformation. Prior to Mezirow's transformative learning theory, many adult learning theories used a stage approach to interpret adults' development, notably Piaget (1969), Maslow (1968), Gould (1975), and Kegan (1982); however, Mezirow approached adult learning less as a naturally-staged process, and more of an individual's intentional act toward perspective transformation—meaning, one's actions are not necessarily tied to a particular age range or universal set of

circumstances, such as puberty, or leaving the family home (Snyder, 2008), but the individual has to make an active "decision to negate an old perspective in favor of a new one or to make a synthesis of old and new" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 161).

Mezirow (1991) chose to create phases rather than stages in part because he recognized that transformations are not linear, but could be experienced in fits and starts, epiphanies and failures, regressions and stalemate. Mezirow also pointed out that transformation will not only happen once, but instead will occur over and over again in a person's life and that, "reaching this point of full understanding and commitment can be extremely difficult, however, and many people do regress before they reach this point" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 152).

Although the phases have gone through several iterations and revisions, Mezirow is confident most individuals' transformations follow some variation of the following:

1. A disorienting dilemma;
2. Self-examination (with feelings of shame or guilt);
3. A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions;
4. Recognition of a connection between one's discontent and the process of transformation;
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions;
6. Planning a course of action;
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan;
8. Provisional trying of new roles;
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships;
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective (2012, p. 86).

It should be noted not all phases will be sequential; nor will all individuals experience each phase (Gunnlaugson, 2005), but Mezirow (1978) believed elements such as, "taking the perspective of others" (p. 104), "making a critical appraisal of assumptions underlying our roles, priorities, and beliefs" (p. 105), and deciding to take (not necessarily taking) action, were most vital to these phases (Baumgartner, 2012).

Mezirow (2000) also explained transformative learning occurs in one of four ways: by elaborating on existing frames of reference; by learning new frames of reference; by transforming points of view; or by transforming habits of mind. These terms are specific to the field and can best be defined through an example of an imagined transformation.

Example of Mezirowian terms. For example, if we were to imagine a woman named Lynn engaging in transformation, she first must: (a) become critically aware of how she views both herself and the world; and (b) understand that her underlying beliefs, assumptions, and values can influence her interpretation of incoming information (Mezirow, 1991). These ways of interpreting herself and the world are called her frames of reference, which are synonymous with meaning perspectives. These are both culturally and personally influenced (Mezirow, 2000). For example, Lynn grew up in the Midwestern United States, the youngest in a family of four, therefore her frames of reference will align with her interpretation of her experiences growing up in her specific family as well as the values, beliefs, and assumptions dominant in that part of the country. Most of the time, frames of reference are subconscious, and are the result of one's passive and active indoctrination in the cultural paradigms they were exposed to during the developmental years of their youth. In Lynn's case, some of her specific frames of reference may be, "The USA is a promoter of freedom and peace," "Religion is necessary for spirituality," or "Neighbors should help one another."

These frames of reference are composed of two dimensions: 1. Lynn's habits of mind, which are a set of assumptions (broad, generalized, or orienting) that act as a filter for interpreting the meaning of experience, and 2. Lynn's points of view, which are how habits of mind are expressed to others (Mezirow, 2000). For example, if Lynn has a frame of reference that the USA promotes freedom and peace, she may only use the habits of mind that corroborate this as she reads the newspaper or travels the globe. She is unconsciously filtering any evidence to the contrary as she interprets the meaning of her experiences (Mezirow, 2000). When Lynn expresses her point of view to others, she may also only speak of the experiences she has had that show the USA promoting peace; or she may choose to display a sticker that reads, "USA: Bringing Freedom to the World!"

If Lynn were to engage in transformation, her changes could take place gradually over a period of time (incremental), or they can be sudden and dramatic (epochal) (Mezirow, 1991). Transformative learning will occur when one identifies a "problematic frame of reference" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 20) that is no longer dependable or accurate in one's adult life. This is usually catalyzed by a triggering event or disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 2000). The nature of the disorienting dilemma can be either positive or negative and also be epochal or incremental (Mezirow, 1991). For example, Lynn may encounter an epochal experience while traveling outside of the United States that challenges her frame of reference that the USA promotes freedom and peace. After being exposed to the aftermath of the Vietnam War in several Southeast Asian countries, Lynn is suddenly faced with a disorienting dilemma: She must critically reflect on whether her frame of reference is still accurate in spite of new, overwhelmingly contrary information.

Lynn must now engage in what Mezirow (1991) described as the three essential conditions to transformative learning theory: critical reflection, rational discourse, and reflective action. The first, critical reflection is the examination of deeply rooted, socially constructed beliefs, assumptions, and values (Merriam, 2004). Critical reflection can be differentiated from content reflection (thinking about an event or experience), and process reflection (thinking about how the event or experience was handled) in that it is the only type of reflection that can actually foster transformation. Key elements of critical reflection are critical thinking and metacognition—the ability to think about thinking (Mezirow, 2000). Once Lynn visits a museum devoted to showcasing the victims of Agent Orange, a harmful chemical used by Americans in the Vietnam War, she becomes unsettled with her frame of reference that the United States promotes peace and freedom. She begins to question the assumptions she has held about her country's diplomatic intentions in Asia, and begins to try on the point of view (Mezirow, 2000) of Vietnamese victims. As she begins to critique a previously unexamined belief, she is changing her habits of mind.

Critical reflection is not enough to enact transformation. As Mezirow (1991) explained, one must engage in the second condition: rational discourse, which he defines as a specialized use of dialogue devoted to searching for common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief. Rational discourse involves a critical assessment of one's assumptions, which can be done by analyzing supporting evidence and examining alternate perspectives. Ideally, in order to engage in reflective discourse, one would have: accurate and complete information, freedom from both internal and external manipulation, openness to other points of view, awareness of context and assumptions, and equal opportunity to participate in said discourse (Mezirow, 2000). In Lynn's case, once she has critically reflected on her beliefs,

she would partake in a rational discourse—a conversation—with someone about the role that the United States played in the Vietnam War, openly listening to and examining all evidence offered by her conversation partners. Then, instead of only trying to confirm her beliefs, she will both engage with other points of view and allow herself to communicate how her point of view was developed and why it may be flawed.

Lastly, Mezirow's third condition for transformation is referred to as reflective action, which involves an individual reintegrating their perspective transformation with the world (Mezirow, 1990). It is imperative that this action reflects one's changed frame of reference. For example, once Lynn has critically reflected on her beliefs, and engaged in rational discourse with others who share different beliefs, she will then be able to change the way she makes meaning. Specifically in this case, Lynn will be able to recognize that in light of new information, she is no longer able to filter her experiences with the belief that the USA only promotes freedom and peace. She has transformed her perspective into one that is more "inclusive, discriminating, open . . . and capable of change" (Taylor & Snyder, 2012, p. 76). She will now be able to include more critical beliefs of her original frame of reference (and later, her current frame of reference). Or, as Cranton (2006) described it nearly anything can allow an individual to know they are holding a limiting or distorted view—it can be as traumatic as losing a job or as ordinary as an unexpected question—and "if the individual critically examines this view, opens herself to alternatives, and consequently changes the way she sees things, she has transformed some part of how she makes meaning out of the world" (p.1). Like one may assume, there are some preconditions that allow individuals to best engage with these processes of transformative learning.

Preconditions for Transformative Learning

While not a stage theory, there do seem to be some developmental prerequisites and essential qualities one must have to begin the journey of transformation (Snyder, 2008). Mezirow (2000) calls these preconditions: "maturity, education, safety, health, economic security, and emotional intelligence" (p.15). Many of these preconditions are specifically adult qualities, yet there are also others that are less age-dependent, extending the possibility for further engagement to adolescents.

Critical discourse. One skill Mezirow felt was especially dependent on age was one's ability to fully engage in critical discourse. For instance, Mezirow (2000) described that while adolescents may be able to think hypothetically as well as critically reflect on the assumptions of others, becoming critically reflective of their own assumptions appears to be reserved for adults. This sentiment is echoed by King and Kitchner (1994), who found that it is well into adulthood when one develops the type of reflective judgment required to participate fully in critical discourse. Because Mezirow highly valued discourse in the process of transformation, he listed a set of conditions especially important for one to be able to fully participate, including:

- Freedom from coercion and distorting self-deception
- Openness to alternative points of view; empathy and concern about how others think and feel
- The ability to weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively
- Greater awareness of the context of ideas, and more critically, reflectiveness of assumptions, including their own
- An equal opportunity to participate in various roles of discourse
- Willingness to seek understanding and agreement and to accept a resulting best judgment as a test of validity until new perspectives, evidence, or arguments are encountered and validated through discourse as yielding a better judgment. (Taylor & Cranton, 2012, p. 80)

While some of these skills, such as the ability to weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively, can be easily done by adolescents, it should be noted many of Mezirow's conditions are only possible if one is in later stages of developmental consciousness (Kegan, 1982).

Developmental consciousness. Kegan's (1982, 1994, 2000) theory of developmental consciousness can provide further clarity of how transformative learning theory fits within the larger context of adult learning. There is a unique relationship between Kegan's theory of developmental consciousness and Mezirow's theory of transformative learning, mainly that Kegan defines development as a transformative process. Kegan (1982) describes one's rotation in consciousness as a transformation from an unselfconscious lens through which one views the world to a conscious lens that allows one to see and reflect upon their place in the bigger world. In other words, Kegan (1994) explained that,

> transforming our epistemologies, liberating ourselves from that in which we are embedded, making what was a subject into object so that we can 'have it' rather than 'be had' by it—this is the most powerful way I know to conceptualize the growth of the mind. (p. 34)

Recognizing the world through a self-aware lens is an example of someone in later stages of developmental consciousness.

Kegan (1994) believed there is "a qualitative distinction between the mind of the child and the mind of the adult" (p. 5), and that as we go from a child to an adult we undergo an "evolution of consciousness, the personal unfolding of ways of organizing experience that are not simply replaced as we grow but subsumed into more complex systems of mind" (p. 9). One's growth involves progressing through five ways of knowing, which Kegan referred to as stages of development in 1982, orders of consciousness in 1994, and forms of mind in 2000. Kegan's Five Orders are based on different stages of meaning making. For Kegan, transformation occurs when

someone is newly able to step back and reflect on something and make decisions about it—or in other words, someone can change "not just the way he behaves, not just the way he feels, but the way he knows—not just what he knows, but the *way* he knows" (1994, p. 17).

Kegan's (2000) forms of mind (or orders) have successively more complex cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal components, which begin with instincts and perceptions in the first and second order (the impulsive and instrumental mind), move to abstractions in the third order (the socialized mind), then to abstract systems in the fourth order (the self-authorized mind), and then to the dialectical in the fifth order (the self-transforming mind). Within each new form of mind, one is better able to reflect on their previous ways of being. Mezirow would argue that transformation as he defined it would not be possible in the first and second orders of Kegan's theory because these involve childhood and early adolescence, and a child would not have had sufficient life experience to create and substantiate frames of reference (Snyder, 2008). It is only within Kegan's third order of consciousness (the socialized mind) that Mezirow's transformation could become possible, which Kegan (2000) has explained usually does not happen until one is over twenty years of age. Interestingly, Mezirow's and Kegan's theories can be understood symbiotically in that achieving greater autonomy in thinking is both a prerequisite to and a byproduct of transformative learning.

Cognitive development. While Kegan's level of development is aligned with the development of one's socialized mind, Merriam (2004) made the argument that transformation is dependent on a certain level of cognitive development as well. In particular, one must have mature cognitive development in order to critically self-reflect on assumptions, as well as to be able to engage in reflective discourse (while examining alternative perspectives, withholding premature judgment, and thinking dialectically). Surprisingly, despite this developmental

prerequisite, according to several studies (Bee, 2000; Cameron, 1983; Kasworm, 1983; King & Kitchner, 1994; Wilson, 1996), individuals do not always operate at these high-levels of cognitive functioning. In fact, Merriam (2004) explained that the majority of adults are found to be at lower levels of development than are often necessary for the kind of cognitive abilities needed for transformation. It can be noted that one's ability to mature in cognition can often be age and education-dependent, which precludes many people from marginalized groups.

Life experience. Age and education come with life experience—which may also influence an important skill Brookfield (2000) described as being able to think critically enough to assess the truth when he explained:

> We cannot critically scrutinize the validity of our unquestioned assumptions about interpersonal relationships, work and politics until we have lived through the building and decay of several intimate relationships, until we have felt the conflicts and pressures of workplaces, and until we have acted politically and lived the consequences of our political actions. How can we assess the truth of rules we learned in childhood regarding relationships, work and politics, until we have experienced directly these complex, contradictory and ambiguous realities? (p. 95)

In other words, understanding the cyclical nature of life experiences is vital to one's ability to recognize how the "truths" we have been told and believed in childhood may not be true to our current existence. Mezirow (1991) himself suggested the age-dependent nature of this type of thinking, when he described that the "transformations likely to produce developmentally advanced meaning perspectives usually appear to occur after the age of thirty" (p. 193).

Therefore, it is clear there are specific developmental components to transformation that are quite age-dependent, perhaps excluding young adults from the experience. However there are also other qualities that are less so—including but not limited to: open-mindedness (Bruner, 1991); empathy (Belenky & Stanton, 2000); imagination (Boyd, 1989); interaction with the Other (Parks, 2011; Daloz, 2000); relationships with the natural world (O'Sullivan, 2012); a

relationship to the soul (Dirkx, 2001); and access to a learning companion (Cranton & Wright, 2008)—all of which seem to be able to occur in different contexts occurs across all age-spans. These exceptions can also be found in some of the critiques of transformative learning.

Critiques of Transformative Learning

What began as criticism of Mezirow's work specifically has expanded to thoughtful critiques of transformative learning field in general. This in turn has continuously shaped the theory to become more holistic, which has paved the road for this study. The following sections explore the critiques that have had the most influence on the current state of the theory, which has led to the development of a multiple-lens approach to transformative learning.

Social action. Although Mezirow has stated that individual transformation and critical reflection precedes social transformation; several writers and theorists (Collard & Law, 1989; Hart, 1990) have criticized individual transformation without social action as a "self-indulgent form of speculation that makes no real difference to anything" (Brookfield, 2000, p. 143). In fact there is still a disagreement as to whether the role of transformative education is to "help people uncover and challenge dominant ideology and then learn how to organize social relations according to non-capitalist logic" (Brookfield, 2003, p. 224), or to make a difference in the world by helping learners learn how to make a difference in the world (Mezirow, 2000). Either way, this lens is a modern interpretation of Freire's work and theorists like Torres (2007) argued transformative learning should help unveil unfair conditions of exploitation in society, allowing us to better understand the limitations and possibilities of being a self-in-the-world.

Social contexts. Collard and Law (1989) disagree with the view that transformative learning should be considered emancipatory by design, arguing the process lacks context of what individuals are being emancipated from. Kegan (2000) agreed context is crucial for

transformation to occur, stating "the form that is undergoing transformation needs to be better understood; if there is no form, there is no transformation" (p. 48). However, Gunnlaugson (2005) recognized that the non-contextual nature of the theory may have actually served as a positive catalyst for further developing the theory, with Taylor consistently calling for additional attention to the context of transformation, and methods to recognize its impact (Taylor, 1997, 2007).

Privilege and inclusivity. As the theory shifted down a more humanist focused path of self-directed learning, research did not necessarily reflect the contexts of race, class, gender, income, or sexual orientation as critics would prefer (Clark & Wilson, 1991), leaving marginalized groups out of the literature. Transformative learning has been accused of being a theory reserved for those of privilege (Elias & Merriam, 1995), which was not ignored by Mezirow (2000), who admitted that "hungry, homeless, desperate, threatened, sick, or frightened are less likely to be able to participate effectively in discourse" (p. 15) reflecting Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs—which too places self-actualization out of reach for those still attempting to meet their basic needs of survival.

When Merriam (2004) asked if a "Western (male) model of cognitive development with its pinnacle of independent, autonomous, critically reflective thought [was] the only place to situate transformational learning" (p. 66), major theorists in the field (Taylor, 2007) responded by calling for studies that widen the representations of transformative experiences of those in various sociocultural, interpersonal, temporal, and situational contexts (Baumgartner, 2012).

Other ways of knowing. Collard and Law (1989) were early to point out that transformative learning theory does not account for the less cognitive, more instinctual ways that people know. They were drawing from the work of Belenky et al. (1986) who obtained data

through an interview study of 130 women on how they acquired knowledge and information, citing intuition and deep frames of reference that lay outside the cognitive domain. Their study addressed the fact that much learning occurs in the affective domain, but the majority of the theoretical literature still does not account for these ways of knowing (Gunnlaugson, 2005; Taylor, 2007). In their study, Kasl and Yorks (2002) suggest the term habits of mind privileges the cognitive approach to learning and would better capture the process of TL with a different phrase, habits of being.

The role of critical reflection. It is still debated in the literature how relevant the role of critical reflection is to the process of transformative learning. For example, Mezirow himself acknowledged, "transformations may be focused and mindful, involving critical reflection . . . or of mindless assimilation—as in moving to a different culture and uncritically assimilating its canon, norms, and ways of thinking" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 21). However, theorists like Brookfield (2000) disagree with Mezirow, stating the term "critical" has been overused to a point of disrespect to its actual meaning. For Brookfield (2000), reflection that involves the affective domain of emotion, spirituality, and feeling cannot be considered critical because it "lacks rigor in identifying assumptions that are self-deprecating" (p. 126). He warns it is important to maintain a strict adherence to an exclusive and rigorous definition of the term critical. He continues to note that critical reflection and transformative learning are not synonymous—transformative learning still requires critical reflection, but critical reflection does not guarantee transformation (Brookfield, 2000, p. 142). This thought was substantiated by Taylor (2007) who cited several empirical studies in which critical reflection occurred, but meaning perspectives and schemes remained largely unaffected.

Identity vs. consciousness. Newman (2010) expressed multiple criticisms of transformative learning theory, one of which is the lack of a clear distinction between identity and consciousness. Stating that many authors use them interchangeably, he argued the difference should be noted because:

> Identity manifests itself in our actions, the context and companions we choose, our physical appearance, and the objects we gather around us. It is an aspect of the self that we can deal with rationally; and from an early age on we become adept at adjusting and even changing it significantly. Consciousness is another phenomenon altogether. It is fluid, utterly insubstantial, and not so easily subject to rational control. It is the experience of existence. We develop our consciousness in the continual encounter between our self and the social and material world. (p. 42)

Newman worried that when attempting to describe learning and consciousness, there is often no discernible beginning or ending, making it difficult to measure. Quoting Nelson Mandela, "I had no epiphany, no singular revelation, no moment of truth, but a steady accumulation of a thousand slights, a thousand indignities, a thousand unremembered moments" (Mandela as cited in Daloz, 2000, p. 106). Thus, how can one determine what is transforming their consciousness? In addition, studies focusing on changes in consciousness also tend to contain what is most troubling to Newman . . . spirituality issues.

The issue of spirituality. When writers examine the use of image, symbol, metaphor, archetype, myth, and dreams to help learners delve into their psyches in search of self-understanding and change, they often use the term spirituality (Tisdell, 2012) or soul (Dirkx, 2000). Specifically, Newman criticizes Dirkx for introducing the term "soul work" to describe our relationship with our "inner world" (Dirkx, Mezirow, & Cranton, 2006). He explained this spiritual language "lies beyond the reach of reason, and has no place in educational practice except as the subject of dispassionate examination" (Newman, 2010, p. 47).

On the contrary, spiritual matters are what Tisdell (2012) argues is still missing from the discourses of adult education and transformative learning. Specifically, she argued there has been too limited attention given to the Big Questions (Parks, 2011) of life in transformative learning, those that ask what gives life meaning, why we're here, and the meaning of the universe. She went on to state there is surprisingly little published in the field of adult education literature "dealing with two very fundamental aspects of human life that [are intricately] related to the most significant of transformative learning experiences: love and death" (Tisdell, 2012 p. 28).

Diluting the term. So, if we begin to include these discussed aspects and continuously widen the reach of transformative learning, Kegan (2000) suggested this indiscriminate use of the term transformation will continue to make the exposition of the theory increasingly unwieldy. He noted Mezirow made the concept so appealing that it has been used far too broadly, and can become corrupted by those who do not fully understand the complexity of the theory, which can make it difficult to understand what transformation is.

May we transform the other? Perhaps most intriguing of the criticism is Wringe's (2013) question, "May we transform the other?" In his essay, Wringe makes the case that regardless of how worthy or benign an educator's motives and intended outcomes may be, transformative education may actually infringe on the learner's rights. Cultural traditions, morals, values, and meanings change with time, and at any given moment an educator may be unwittingly (or worse, knowingly) interfering with the course of development that is proper for that learner.

In other words, although transformative educators usually portray their work as "emancipatory" (Freire, 1970, 1993, 1998; Mezirow, 1991). Wringe (2013) argued perhaps they should be concerned with

> whether we are entitled to subject individuals to a process that will substantially affect the kind of self they will eventually become. Do we have the right to make this kind of choice for the Other, however impeccably benevolent our intentions and however benign we consider its predictable outcomes? (p. 59)

While educators think they may be giving learners tools to evade the indoctrination of the current status quo, they may in fact be indoctrinating youth and their development into the next generation as well. This criticism gives educators an impetus to critically reflect on their intentions while encouraging the same in their learners.

Answering the Call for Holism

In general, the field has become more holistic as a result of these critiques. In fact, Gunnlaugson (2005) created a meta-analysis of what he called the first-wave and second-wave contributions to the theoretical framework of transformative learning. The first-wave contributions have built on, critiqued, or only slightly departed from Mezirow's account, while second-wave contributions have yielded integrative and holistic perspectives.

Three and four-lens approaches. This holistic expression accepts there are generally different types of transformative experiences, and different "forms that transform" (Kegan, 2000, p. 35). Tisdell (2012) described three types, or lenses from which to view transformation. First are types that can alter our very being, our beliefs, and our core sense of self, which is the key theme by which we live, move, and define our being. A second type moves our hearts and our moods and give us a glimpse of the Big Questions (Parks, 2011) in life, like what it means to be human, why we're here, what makes the universe go on, and the nature of human consciousness itself (Tisdell, 2012). Often, these Big Questions instill awe and wonder within us, yet they do not necessarily change our core identity or our core theme. Rather, they take our breath away in their profoundness as we move to living more deeply (Schlitz, Vieten, & Amorek, 2007). And a

third type of transformative learning experience involves working for social change in a community. People working together to make their communities better as they challenge systems of privilege and oppression (Horton & Freire, 1990) will often transform communities as well as the individuals within (Tisdell, 2012).

Through the broadening of the definition of transformation, the possibility for young people to engage with transformative learning also broadens. By looking through more than just a Mezirowian lens, one is able to more authentically capture and categorize a young adult's self-described transformative experience. While Dirkx (1997) and Baumgartner (2001) described four lenses from which to view transformation (Liberation from Oppression, Cognitive-Rational, Developmental, and Spiritual), Cranton (2006) has suggested there may be five lenses we can use to describe transformative learning. These can provide a framework with which I will detail empirical studies.

Some of the empirical studies that will be featured have been uncovered as a result of the work of Taylor and Snyder (2012), who have analyzed an abundance of transformative learning empirical studies that took place between 2006 and 2011. This work complemented Taylor's independent meta-analysis work from 1997 and 2000. In the latest meta-analysis, Taylor and Snyder (2012) described current trends in the field, including: the continued preponderance of qualitative studies, a growing body of work outside of the Mezirowian first-wave (Gunnlaugson, 2008) frameworks, studies beginning to focus on contexts outside of the adult classroom, increasing interest in the relational side of transformation, and the continued move toward a more holistic theory. In addition, they acknowledged gaps in the research; some of which are specific to this proposed dissertation: like the fact that few studies are detailing what makes the contexts of transformation so unique; likewise the participants' background, and culture; how

one's age affects how one experiences transformation; as well as how the lesser-known "second wave" (Gunnlaugson, 2005) theorists (such as Boyd, 1989; Boyd & Myers, 1988; Dirkx, 2000; and O'Sullivan, 1999) would interpret research (Taylor & Snyder, 2012).

The five-lens approach. While she did not name it the "five-lens approach," Cranton (2006) summarized her understanding of the transformative learning field by grouping the body of work into five categories that represent different directions that the theory has developed. Each is defined by several contributors, but each lens shares ideology and themes. It should be noted that the existence of these multiple lenses from which we can view transformative learning is evidence of just how much the field has grown since its inception. True to the increasing holism of the field, there is no preferred lens, but simply various ways in which to view transformation.

In this section, I will describe each of Cranton's (2006) lenses theoretically, and within each, I will highlight specific empirical studies that have relevance to this work. Then, outside of these five lenses, I will feature additional empirical studies that exist at the intersection between transformative learning and adolescent development that have significantly influenced this study.

***Lens 1: Connected knowing*.** While Cranton (2006) warns one needs to be cautious of approaches that draw stark gender differences, she does recognize the validity of several writers' feminine-centric descriptions of transformative learning as a relational, connected process (as opposed to an individual, disconnected, rational approach). In the perspective of Connected Knowing, unlike traditional learning theories that focus on the individual, the focus is on the role relationships have on one's development. Drawing from the work of Belenky et al. (1986), Belenky and Stanton (2000), and Tisdell (2012), Cranton reminded us that while Mezirow presumes the relationships among participants in discourse are equal, most human relationships

are actually asymmetrical, which causes dualistic "valued vs. devalued" partners. This significantly affects women, who are at risk of being marginalized in the very conversations designed to liberate them. However, as Belenky and Stanton described, women tend to have specific ways of knowing that when illuminated can strengthen the way they approach discourse.

For example, Connected Knowers (Belenky & Stanton, 2000) tend to use empathy and imagination when trying to "understand how that person could imagine such a thing" (p. 87), which is a holistic approach to conversations and changing frames of mind. Perhaps the field will give more credence to a more relational, empathetic approach to transformation inspired by feminist writers. Studies that illustrate the role relationships play in transformative learning also highlight the way females experience transformation.

*Connected knowing empirical studies***.** In her phenomenological study Carter (2002) engaged nine midcareer women as co-researchers in exploring how transformative learning occurs in professional-developmental relationships. She was clear that her collaborative heuristic inquiry had a female-focused lens as she and the co-researchers were all women, using feminist literature that emphasized growth in connection with others as a companion theoretical framework to transformative learning theory. Some significant findings of their study were: talking was a vital component to transformation, but it was just as valued in peer-relationships as in mentor-protégé relationships; journal keeping was integral to the kinds of self-reflection needed for transformation; and not a single woman in the study described a competitive environment as conducive to her transformative learning experiences (but rather described those that fostered feelings of mutual respect and acceptance).

Carter (2002) and co-researchers also found that often the relational nature of transformations is unrealized or taken for granted until the women are engaged to become aware

of how talking with other people can provide critical learning resources for personal and professional development in themselves and others. Giving a voice to those who may feel silenced resonates with V. Brown's (2015) study on military spouses who experienced perspective transformations through caring for their war-wounded partners.

Using a qualitative approach, V. Brown's (2015) study intersected theories of transformative learning and feminist-inspired theories of women's development. By interpreting the lived experiences of 15 spouses of wounded-warriors, she uncovered significant findings with respect to how women experience transformation, including the fact that her participants' transformations were not a linear approach as outlined in the preponderance of the existing transformative literature. Also, although firmly established in an institution, their resistance to that institution served as a catalyst for perspective transformation, which then propelled them into action—due mostly to a feeling of responsibility to their community. One's relationship to their community can also be addressed through the lens of social change.

Lens 2: Social change. The social change lens of transformative learning is based on Freirian perspectives of social justice and liberation from oppression. Known for his work with oppressed adult learners, Freire's (1970) terms conscientization, and critical transivity (demonstrated by individuals who are able to think globally, critically assess perceived contradictions, and engage as agents of change) significantly influenced Mezirow's transformative elements of disorienting dilemma and critical reflection (Kitchenham, 2008).

Many of the contributors to this lens have addressed how important it is to critically reflect on the current social structures, and then challenge uneven power relations based on gender, race, class, sexual orientation, dis/ability, or religion (Brookfield, 2000). The main focus of this lens is less on one's individual transformation, but more so how one can use their personal

transformation to contribute to a greater social transformation (Tisdell, 2012). Newman (2010) suggested one need not necessarily focus on those who are oppressed, but the system of oppression in general. Brookfield (2003) suggested one must recognize the uncritically assimilated assumptions and beliefs they may have absorbed before they can recognize systems of oppression. Sometimes a first step in identifying these systems is to reflect on how one's gender, race, economic advantage, or privilege, may influence how one views and acts in the world.

Social change empirical studies. My co-researchers are self-admittedly privileged: they are daughters of successful families living in an Asian country; they attended a prestigious, diverse, competitive international school; and have had several opportunities to travel and participate in unique experiences. Two studies that focused on what role privilege may play in a social-change transformation were Curry-Stevens (2007) study of educators assisting privileged-learners and Doucet, Grayman-Simpson and Shapses Wertheim's (2013) study of white women enrolled in a diversity course. These studies highlighted specific actions those with privilege can take in order to alter their frames of reference.

Curry-Stevens (2007) qualitative life-history study looked at 20 Canadian educators who worked with privileged learners in organizations that focus on antiracism/diversity training, human rights development, leadership training, sensitivity training, and organizational development workshops. While she was more adamant that context determines privilege, Curry-Steven's participants defined those who were privileged as male, white-skinned, and in a higher social class. Her study gathered what educators of privileged-learners believed to be most vital to transformations, which helped clarify the best pedagogical practices to foster transformation.

There is more emphasis on social action than thought in this pedagogical framework because Curry-Stevens (2007) clearly articulated that unlike popular education, pedagogy of the privileged "is not neutral. Rather, it is counterhegemonic in its goals and works within a framework of praxis, whereby assisting in transformation is linked with becoming an ally in struggles for justice" (p. 34). Thus, participants in her study remarked that in order to enact the kinds of spiritual, ideological, psychological, emotional, behavioral, and intellectual transformations needed to fight injustice, learners must engage in what Curry-Stevens created as a ten-stage model of privileged-learners transformation. Stages include fostering a learner to be aware of oppression, understanding the benefits that flow from privilege, planning an action, finding supports for this action, and declaring intentions for future action. Noteworthy in her study was the importance of privileged learners building compassion and empathy for others while still understanding how they may also personally be implicated in systems of oppression. As Boyd and Meyers (1988) predicted, this may elicit feelings of shame, guilt, discomfort and grief as one transforms their frames of reference. This is similar to Doucet et al.'s (2013) research on privileged undergraduate students.

In their study of white, female undergraduates (aged 18–21) assigned to engage with those culturally different from them, Doucet et al. (2013) established that if one engages with unfamiliar "Others," critically self-reflects, and participates in discourse about inequality, oppression, and prejudice, they are more likely to have a transformation consistent with Mezirow's process of transformative learning. A significant finding in the study was that some students' experiences with negative emotional affect seemed to be a trigger for cognitive transformation, meaning those who traveled further into the complexities of their journeys were more likely to articulate greater complexity in their affective response. For example those who

reported feeling more deeply uncomfortable, nervous, apprehensive, stressed, awkward, scared, or fearful were able to transform more so than those who remained in positive emotions.

A noteworthy finding was that some participants' disorienting dilemmas occurred not as a result of their own experiences, but because of their friends' identity transformation (i.e., changes in religion, sexual orientation, etc.), which again suggests the power of relationships to catalyze change. In Curry-Steven's (2007) and Doucet et al.'s (2013) research, it is important to note both studies took place in formal education settings and did not account for transformations that may have occurred outside of the pedagogical context. Also, with respect to age, although Doucet et al. (2013) did not describe their research as a young adult study, the ages of their participants suggested it was.

Lens 3: Groups and organization. Like the social change lens, the groups and organization lens is focused less on an individual's transformation, and more on the transformation of the whole system. Although learning in groups is firmly established, the idea a group can learn as an entity is relatively new.

In general, this lens promotes that a group, as a system, can make knowledge for itself (Kasl, Marsick, & Dechant, 1997) and that this knowledge can transform the group as a whole. This usually occurs when members work cooperatively towards answering a question or completing a task important to them, mostly through repeated reflection and action (Yorks & Kasl, 2006). Thus, transformative learning is a change in consciousness in any human system, which can be a collective or individual. Thought leaders in this lens, Kasl and Elias (2000) expanded on the work of Argyris and Schon (1992), Senge (1990) and Watkins and Marsick (1993) to better understand how TL occurs within the context of small groups that have a group mind.

Groups and organization empirical studies. There are not necessarily empirical studies that align closely with the aims of this proposed study, but it is important to highlight the study that best represents this lens in general. Kasl and Elias's (2000) case study of a faculty group to which they belonged focused on how the faculty increased their capacity for learning, particularly by engaging "constructive marginality" (p. 238). They identified a change in the consciousness of the group, specifically as the group responded to the disorienting loss of institutional autonomy, and simultaneously understood through conflict that engaging diversity is imperative for learning (p. 246). Like an individual's transformation, Kasl and Elias (2000) point out that within a group, critical reflection and discernment are also central processes of transformative learning because discernment calls for receptivity and appreciation, which enables recognition of patterns and relational wholeness. Then, transformation becomes more of an expansion of collective consciousness as "frames of reference are transcended rather than analyzed" (p. 231). This change in consciousness and transcendence of frames of reference resemble the integral, ecological lens from which to view transformative learning.

Lens 4: Ecological view. As one could infer from its title, an Ecological View of transformative learning spans the individual, relational, group, and societal perspectives to include a planetary model (O'Sullivan, 2008). In other words, as one transforms, she or he is growing internally while also influencing all external systems they are a part of. Leading this work is O'Sullivan and colleagues from the Transformative Learning Centre at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, who believe we are part of a whole, and our personal transformation affects the planet's whole, collective transformation.

This approach is reliant on individuals recognizing their connection to the collective and learning to love all life forms. It is also strongly connected to a more integral (Gunnlaugson,

2007) approach that calls for contemplating humanity's relationship with an all-encompassing energy, and identifying what we need to learn to live well—ecologically, peacefully, and justly (O'Sullivan, 2012). This is actually reminiscent of more ancient traditions of transformative learning that come from indigenous perspectives (Singleton, 2010).

Indigenous education often centers on a transformative process of learning how to establish and maintain relationships between self, place and community (Cajete, 1994). It tends to promote active engagement in life-long trials and tribulations that will teach one how to be in the world through reflection on their experiences in a greater community (Cajete, 1999). Indigenous epistemologies focus on the inter-relationships within nature and the bigger world, which aligns with O'Sullivan's (2008) planetary view of transformative learning. This approach parallels the field of service learning, which promotes going beyond just personal growth and toward environmental and societal transformation (Singleton, 2010). What makes service unique is that it can both give individuals an experience of self while also giving a larger context of the bigger, interconnected world (Kiely, 2004).

*Ecological empirical studies***.** The co-researchers in this study are very active in the service community. Both have engaged in international and local service initiatives, which if they are similar to the participants in the studies described below, may have contributed to their webbed, ecological experiences of transformation. Exploring the unknown world inside and out can lead toward shifts in consciousness.

For example, Chang, Chen, Huang, and Yuan (2011) studied the role international service can play in one's perspective transformation. Using the qualitative method of significant event review, Chang et al. interviewed 10 Taiwanese adult (age 24–35) international service volunteers about significant events they had experienced while volunteering. Analysis of the data identified

three components that enhanced transformation through environment-person interaction in cross-cultural settings: exploring the unknown world, relearning from the basic levels, and the unknown self revealed.

For Chang et al.'s (2011) participants, the action of exploring the unknown outside world initiated the process of exploring the unknown inside world of their self—which demonstrated the intertwined relationship between an individual and her or his environment. Chang et al. explained an important trigger for transformation was a sense of self-revelation that arose as a result of losing a connection with one's original interpersonal network, and having to become more self-reliant on their most basic levels of understanding as they engaged in mental dialogue with themselves. Although this disconnection brought participants loneliness, it also provided opportunities to more closely study themselves and reorganize their perspectives and values. This ecological view highlights how the relationship between ones' inner and outer worlds may change through active service.

As Bamber and Hankin (2011) note, this service does not have to be international in order to influence transformation. Building on Kiely's (2004) longitudinal studies of perspective transformation in those who had done international service, Bamber and Hankin tested whether students who served locally would still experience the types of transformation described in Kiely's work. Using an ethnographic methodology to study UK undergraduate students who volunteered in a local service-learning initiative, Bamber and Hankin (found that 75% of those who participated reported a perspective transformation in at least one category of Kiely's framework.

The framework Kiely (2004) created identified six areas within students' worldviews that changed as a result of international service: political, moral, intellectual, cultural, personal, and

spiritual. Despite originally being developed for international service, Bamber and Hankin (2011) claimed Kiely's framework was easily applicable to local service and helped identify transformations that can sometimes be illusive to researchers (Taylor, 2009). Bamber and Hankin were adamant that perspective transformations cannot be claimed to have occurred simply if a person considers something they have not thought about before. Instead they must not only report profound changes to their worldview, but begin to include steps to social action. In their study, only 25% of students involved in local service were able to take social action, suggesting it is easier to report a change in worldview than take action. Key to this study was the fact that participants who had not demonstrated the ability to critically analyze in previous assignments were less likely to experience perspective transformation, suggesting one's development of critical analysis is a key component to transformative learning—which can be considered a more rational perspective to transformative learning and would not necessarily be included in the extrarational approach.

Lens 5: Extrarational approach. Although the term extrarational approach suggests it is in opposition to a rational approach, it is more accurately a proponent of other ways of knowing in addition to (not instead of) pure rationality. Cranton (2006) believes working to integrate this understanding of transformative learning with that of Mezirow's work will be most helpful for unifying and creating a more holistic theory (Taylor & Cranton, 2012). Most writers in Cranton's extrarational lens do not necessarily refer to their work by this term, but she uses this expression because of the importance placed on non-cognitive ways of knowing, such as imagination, emotion, and mythopoetic symbols (Dirkx, 1997).

Much of the foundational work of the extrarational approach has its roots in Jungian psychology, with Boyd and Myers (1988), Boyd (1989) and Dirkx (1997) as early proponents of

incorporating symbols, images, and archetypes to play a role in personal illumination. Here, images are thought to symbolize powerful motifs that represent—at an unconscious level—deep-seated emotional or spiritual issues and concerns (Dirkx, 2000). Because images do not exist as words, our cognitive aspect may interpret them differently than they are intended, which as Dirkx (2000) explained, is a representation of "Our imaginative engagement with the world, expressing what is not known or knowable through words alone in the self-world relationship. They are manifested through dreams, fantasies, myth, legends, fairy tales, stories, rituals, poetry, and performing arts, such as dance" (p. 1). It is these magic moments that transcend rationality and words, but still manage to give depth, power, mystery, and deep meaning to the connection between the self and the world (Cranton, 2006).

In Jungian psychology, the *Self* (Jung, 1921) differentiates itself from the collective society as one undergoes the process of individuation. Jung (1921, as cited in Jacoby 1999) defined individuation as a "process by which individual beings are being formed and differentiated . . . having as its goal the development of the individual personality" (p. 94). The forces associated with individuation are largely unconscious and manifest themselves, independent from the conscious ego, within the emotional, affective, and spiritual dimensions of our lives (Dirkx, 2006).

The process of individuation can be seen as complementary to transformative learning, as one of the central components of Mezirow's theory is that individuals must come to question their assumptions and perspectives that were uncritically absorbed from their personal contexts. Yet there are different views on how that can occur—according to Mezirow, this is a conscious, cognitive, rational, problem-solving process—and according to a Jungian perspective, it is an intuitive, emotional, and often not even voluntary journey (Cranton, 2006). In other words,

transformation through individuation occurs whether we are conscious of it or not. Therefore, if one is not necessarily conscious of it while it occurs, in order to study these transformations, researchers would have to encourage participants to remember which past moments were most influential to their individuation.

Extrarational empirical studies. Plumridge and Thomson (2003) created a longitudinal study which focused on adults identifying critical moments in their adolescence they believed were vital in in the construction of their adult identities. Using Giddens (1991) framework of fateful moments, which are "transition points which have major implications not just for the circumstances of an individual's future conduct, but for self-identity" (Giddens, 1991, p. 143), the study found that indeed adults did have fateful moments that shaped them, but also that Giddens' fateful moment framework was unable to support all of the data, making it difficult to validate to what degree turning points in one's narrative are truly fateful moments.

Nonetheless, due to the longitudinal methodology used, a significant finding was how provisional the identity work participants reported was. For example, what had first appeared to researchers as fulfilling of Giddens' criteria for a fateful moment in one round of interview data looked messier and more complex with the benefit of time. Thus, it can be quite difficult to determine which moments in one's life are truly identity-building, but in Plumridge and Thomson's study (as opposed to this study), participants only reported the moments to researchers, without the opportunity for co-research and co-interpretation, which may have added a dimension of meaning to the results.

Also noteworthy, this research did not use a transformative learning framework, but instead used narrative theory as a guide to better understand how young people's identification of critical moments in their adolescence could aid in the construction of their adult identities. This

suggests there is still ample opportunity for overlap between transformative learning theory and the study of critical or meaningful moments in one's adolescence. By including this extrarational interpretation of transformation, we are able to build on the handful of intersectional studies that have especially shaped this proposed dissertation.

Intersectional Studies

Through Cranton's (2006) holistic five lenses, I have laid out the theoretical and empirical concepts that frame this proposed study. However, these lenses do not fully capture the relatively unestablished intersection between transformative learning and adolescent development, specifically how adolescents may experience transformation. Therefore, it is imperative to highlight the handful of studies that have somewhat addressed this connection in important and relevant ways. The following section will describe specific studies that have been especially influential to this dissertation because of their insights into understanding how adolescents engage with transformative learning.

Little research has been done to support the claim that transformative learning can only occur in adults over thirty (Mezirow, 1991). Taylor's (2000) comprehensive review of the research and literature concluded that whether "age is a factor in transformation is not known and needs to be better understood" (p. 289). Since Taylor's call for more research in 2000, there have been a handful of studies that have explored the connection between young adults and transformative learning. There is still little research on how the participants experience self-described transformation from multiple perspectives and even fewer studies that have engaged the participants in co-research.

Whalley (1995) was one of the first researchers to focus on young adults engaging in transformative learning (Taylor, 2007). Whalley's cross-cultural study examined journal entries

of Canadian and Japanese high school exchange students and determined the group of young adults was able to partially transform their habits of mind through critical reflection. Whalley concluded that their transformations were only partial because the exchange students knew they would return to their native countries—therefore they may have only temporarily modified their meaning schemes, noting that their newly acquired perspectives would be out of place once their time as an exchange student was over. He suggested the capacity for perspective transformation in cross-cultural settings is high, even for young adults. Particularly relevant to this my study was Whalley's (1995) request for more researchers to "include students in the phase of data analysis" (p. 259).

Another cultural-immersion study was done by Hodgson (2007) who researched at-risk students who experienced transformative learning while being enrolled in experiential education programs (made up of international cultural immersion, service, and outdoor adventure activities). Using an emergent case-study methodology, she studied 17 high school students aged 15–20, to understand which critical components of the individuals and the program allowed for growth, learning, and "experiential transformations." Qualities that were deemed transformative included changes that were "inward," "outward," and "upward," or intrapersonal, interpersonal, and holistic. Hodgson reported participants experienced each kind of transformation, which increased senses of self-awareness and clarity, commitment to sobriety, developing self-confidence, and an appreciation of growth through discomfort (Hodgson, 2007). Factors that attributed to this transformation included aspects of adventure, cognitive challenge, social and emotional development, and service learning. Hodgson's findings provide significant insight into how young adults can be affected developmentally, yet her context was quite different from this proposed dissertation.

Incidentally, there is one study that has the same context as this proposed research: Schmidt's (2009) work with developing social conscience in high school aged students. In it, Schmidt interviewed 78 students from two Asian international schools for insights into how students develop their social conscience, or one's personal consideration of their role and responsibility in society in the context of an emotionally-engaged understanding of the world. A major finding of his research was that one of the impacts of social conscience education is that it is transformative in nature. For example, certain students in the study summarized experiences that matched Mezirow's (2000) and Parks' (2011) descriptions of adult transformative learning. Schmidt described students reporting long-term shifts in meaning schemes as a result of social conscience curriculum, which encouraged students to develop, "a sense of individuation over time, progressing from awareness to perspective transformation; from emotional engagement to empathy; and from action to self-efficacy" (Schmidt, 2009, p. 244). Schmidt's work makes a solid claim for the possibility of young adult transformative learning in the same context that this study will take place.

The most similar transformative learning based-study to this one comes from Logan (2013) who used grounded theory to explore the confluence between transformative learning, education for sustainability, and Expeditionary Learning. Twelve high school graduates who had been out of school for at least one full year were interviewed about their most memorable learning experiences and how these changed, "what they believe, how they see the world, and how they act/behave in the world" (Logan, 2013, p. 78). She determined students not only portrayed evidence of transformative learning that included changes in identity, paradigmatic or mental modal changes, and/or behavior changes, but also these occurred in and outside of the

classroom. Logan highlighted that transformation happens at the nexus between self-discovery, discovery of others in the larger world, and one's confidence and abilities. She described,

> In this space students are able to fully unify their questions of self (who am I? Do I belong?) with their beliefs (what do I believe?), and their abilities (what can I do?) and apply them in action through integration of their whole being with the way they chose to be in the world . . . from this space of happiness and well-being students are able to integrate their entire selves and to realize their fullest potential as human beings. (Logan, 2013, p. 167)

Logan's study represents how transformative learning can be both a self-discovery as well as an expansion of consciousness, one that is "facilitated through consciously directed processes such as appreciatively accessing and receiving the symbolic contents of the unconscious and critically analyzing underlying premises" (Elias, as cited in Mezirow & Taylor, 2009, p. 25). Mezirow did address transformative learning from an extra-rational perspective when he wrote, "through a dialogue between the conscious and unconscious, mediated through symbols and images, learners gain insight into aspects of themselves that are outside conscious awareness but influence their sense of self, as well as their interpretations and action" (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009, p. 25).

Logan's study complements the work of Grider (2011) who studied young adult pool lifeguards responding to drowning victims, and Kerr (2014) who researched adolescents on a cultural immersion trip; both of whom concluded transformative learning experiences can be triggered and processed by those under 25 years of age.

Grider (2011) determined that young adult lifeguards, as young as sixteen years old, were able to experience Mezirow's (2000) criteria for transformation after reflecting on critical incidents that brought about disorientation, but they were not necessarily able to apply the perspectives gained in the aquatics environment to other areas of their lives. One of Grider's

significant findings echoed Carter's (2002) assertion that relationships are vital to transformation, thus he named this figure a critical friend, who like Cranton and Wright's (2008) description of a transformative learning companion, can help young adults process the transformative experience. Grider (2011) used Mezirow's (2000) descriptor of critical (as in critical reflection) in his phrase critical friend in order to underline the importance of participants sharing their experiences relationally in order to better process the transformation. In regards to the participants' age, he explained there is a benefit to "bringing transformational experiences into the consciousness at an early age, [in that] there is significant opportunity to assist young adults towards individual efforts of meaning making, identification of values, and the overall process of 'growing up'" (Grider, 2011, p. ii).

Likewise, in her grounded theory study of 28 young adults, Kerr (2014) created a theoretical model that outlines the phases of "growing up" that accompanied her participants' transformative experiences in an experiential education program. The comprehensive model is based both on "first-wave" Mezirowian theories as well as "second-wave" concepts. The model's four zones are differentiated by specific phases of transformation. Zone 1 sets the foundation for transformation and begins with an experiential event that prompts mutual learning. Zone 2 is most analogous to Mezirow's phases, as it describes a storming stage that disrupts affective and cognitive patterns, creating a value dilemma; and encourages critical reflection, which allows for perspective shifts. Zone 3 is also based on Mezirow, described as a reforming stage in which mindfulness assists in learning "how to negotiate and act upon [one's] own purposes, values, feelings and meanings rather than those [one has] uncritically assimilated from others" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 8). It is in Zone 3 that someone is able to reestablish a sense of identity, place, and meaning-making. Lastly, Zone 4 is returning to a state of being where one

can feel complete and whole again without "needing to become anything other than what or who they already are" (Kerr, 2014, p. 96). Kerr established that while all 12 of her participants were able to navigate Zone 1, only three were able to arrive at Zone 4, due in part to maturity, but also due to a what the author described as a personal decision—because "ultimately, the extent of transformational change or personal shift in the participants is entirely their choice" (Kerr, 2014, p. 110). This is reminiscent of the Doucet et al.'s (2013) findings with adults who were reportedly more deeply transformed when they allowed themselves to journey deeper into the affective realms of experience.

Both Grider's (2011) and Kerr's (2014) study substantiated Walsh's (2007) findings, which stated that not only are young adults able to experience transformative learning, but those who experienced transformation in the high school years felt the experience facilitated their process of "growing up" (p.164), suggesting that transformative learning itself could be a catalyst for cognitive development and maturity (Grider, 2011).

In fact, Walsh's (2007) study may give most credence to one's ability to experience transformative learning regardless of age. Walsh used two quantitative surveys: the Adult Age Development Experience Survey (AADE), which examined responses of participants from five different age groups in relation to Mezirow's 10 steps leading to transformational learning and the participants' meaning perspectives; and the Learning Environment Preferences Survey (LEP) developed by Moore (1989), which assesses cognitive development. Through these, she found that while cognitive development was higher in older participants than in younger participants, there was not a direct relationship with whether or not an individual had experienced transformative learning. In addition, age did not affect the number of Mezirow's steps young or old participants experienced, which suggests transformative learning is not just an adult

phenomenon, because one's greater life experiences can compensate for their young age (Walsh, 2007). While Walsh's work directly challenges Mezirow's (2000) and Merriam's (2004) assertion that higher cognition is necessary for transformative learning, she also recognized her study needs additional corroboration by others in the field, stating this is "one avenue that is ripe for future research" (Walsh, 2007, p.170).

Therefore, from the perspective of the field of transformative learning theory, the proverbial stage was set for this study, with emerging research on young adults beginning to gain critical mass, but not yet depth. This makes it clear that even with all of this expanding research, there has yet to be a study that probes deeply into the personal experiences of young adults engaging with transformative learning. Also, within the majority of this research, the participants have not been empowered as co-researchers, which can provide an irreplaceable insight into their lived-experience that may otherwise be missed. This phenomenological study's findings can fill the gaps in depth in the literature and illustrate the benefits of cooperative inquiry.

Conclusion

From my comprehensive research on transformative learning and adolescent development, I am confident there is still untapped potential for these two fields to intersect. Despite remarks to the contrary (Mezirow, 1991), there is a growing body of research that suggests adolescents are able to experience something that can alter their very being, beliefs, and core sense of self (Tisdell, 2012). They are also able to partake in something that shifts their consciousness (O'Sullivan et al., 2002), moves their hearts and moods and give a glimpse of the Big Questions (Parks, 2011). Additionally, they are able to work with others for social change in a community. While their brain development precludes them from having adult-like abilities for critical reflection, perspective taking, and rational thinking, it affords them the opportunity to

experience transformation from a uniquely adolescent perspective with much richer, emotion-laden sensations than those only a few years older (Blakemore, 2012; Dahl, 2016). Through a depth-study of the experiences of two young women, the field will be able to understand from an intimate perspective just how this may occur.

Chapter III: Methodology

Now that I have laid out the theoretical framework for this research, in this chapter I will describe how my co-researchers and I performed the study. I will restate the purpose of the study, declare my positionality, introduce the philosophical frameworks and methods we employed, reintroduce the co-researchers, describe how the preliminary study influenced the formal study, detail the procedure of data collection, and outline the quality and trustworthiness of this type of research.

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study was to determine how an adolescent experiences and describes self-identified transformative incidents and to what degree these align with the frameworks of adult transformative learning theory. By engaging two young women to describe the moments of adolescence they considered to be transformative, we can better understand how an adolescent engages with transformative learning from cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual perspectives. Having actively engaged co-researchers allowed this study to have a more authentic and accurate first-person interpretation of lived experience as well as allowed the subjects of the study to assert their opinions on how the representation of their transformations should influence the field of transformative learning. Specifically, the research questions were:

1. How does an adolescent experience a self-identified transformative incident?
    a. What are the components of a self-identified transformative incident? Where, when, why, and how do they occur? What makes them particularly stand out?
    b. What language is used to differentiate between how one experiences transformation from a cognitive, emotional, social, physical, or spiritual perspective?

c. How does a young woman—acting as a co-researcher—interpret her adolescent transformative incidents compared to the author?

2. To what extent do transformative learning experiences occurring in adolescence align with the literature's definition of adult transformative learning?
    a. What features of transformative learning may be unique to adolescents?
    b. What other frameworks of human development may be relevant in the interpretation of adolescents' transformative experiences?

Summary of Research Phases

The phases of research will be explored in detail below, but here I will offer a summary of the research. Although this study was planned to only consist of two phases, it evolved into three highly cooperative phases. The first phase employed the phenomenological approach of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990), which sought to describe the diversity of experiences that occurred during my co-researchers' high school years. After I led the phone interviews to gather descriptions of their transformations, my co-researchers used hermeneutic methods (Gadamer, 1975) to interpret the transcript data and identify the themes and meta-themes within their words. The second phase built off of these themes as my co-researchers compared their experiences with a currently-accepted definition of transformative learning (O'Sullivan et al., 2002) and grouped their incidents into categories that did, did not, and possibly matched the requirements of adult transformative learning. We worked cooperatively to break down the components of the experiences to better understand how an emerging adult experiences transformation from several angles. The third (and unexpected phase) arose after my co-researchers proved to be more eager than I anticipated to further engage with transformative learning theory and the research process, and consisted of both young women giving deeper reflections of how the study influenced them

personally as well as their opinions on how the theory represented their experiences. Then, the research team personally reflected on their experience from-start-to-finish in order to provide narratives that can describe the overall essence of the study as a whole.

Researcher Positionality

It is important to note this study was firmly rooted in the philosophical approach of phenomenology, which largely influenced not only the methods used, but the interpretation of data and reflection of the research process itself. Here I will review the defining aspects of phenomenology and explain how these influenced my positionality as lead-researcher in this study.

Phenomenology is described by Sokolowski (2000) as "the study of human experience and of the ways things present themselves to us in and through such experience" (p.2). Essential to the field of phenomenology is the term intentionality, which Husserl (1999) described as the inseparable connection between the mind and the world of objects. Human consciousness is considered intentional when an individual moves from directly experiencing the world to focusing their consciousness on phenomena of that world. In phenomenological research this is called parenthesizing (Husserl, 1999) or bracketing.

Bracketing, as described by Husserl (1999), involves shifting our attention to our own consciousness of phenomena. In other words, rather than putting aside our judgments, bracketing involves actively reflecting on those conscious acts (i.e., perceiving, analyzing, valuing) in order to move from being an object in the external world to the object of our own consciousness (Perry, 2013). Thus, researchers are able to bracket their own assumptions, and practice epoché, a Greek word used in phenomenological research to mean the process by which one attempts to hold their presuppositions, preconceived ideas, biases, and assumptions from what is being

studied (Langdridge & Butt, 2004) in order to allow new knowledge, experiences, and phenomena into one's consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). By holding the presuppositions one is not ignoring them, but acknowledging them enough to understand how they may influence one's interpretation.

This said, it is important to note within qualitative research in general that objectivity cannot be the goal because the researchers are the main data collection instrument (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) and it is reasonable to assume that their life experience, beliefs, and assumptions will create a subjective filter (Creswell, 2013). However, by representing one's positionality, a researcher may regain a space in which objectivism and subjectivism meet. By reflecting on one's positionality, a researcher examines how her own lived experiences may influence the ways she approaches her study, and should set up a more mindful practice of research (Fine, 1994). As van Manen (1990) suggested, it is not to forget our assumptions, but to be deliberately mindful of how they interact with the phenomenon being studied. Therefore it is with mindfulness that here I will briefly describe some of my experiences with the phenomenon of transformative learning in order to establish my position as a researcher and to provide critical background on why I have chosen the specific definition of transformative learning that will be used for this study henceforth.

My personal experiences with transformation. My personal engagement with transformative learning has been multi-faceted and multi-dimensional. Prior to entering the field of transformative learning, I had previously recognized some moments in my life as turning points or rites of passage, yet as my theoretical knowledge has deepened, my ability to identify which of these were actually transformative learning experiences has grown to include epochal moments in my young adulthood and gradual shifts in consciousness in my adulthood.

Growing up in a small, middle-class, Midwestern town in the United States, I was not necessarily exposed to many diverse people, ideas, or experiences—as a result, I cannot report any particularly transformative experiences from my adolescence. In fact, a review of my adolescent journals confirms that although I did report internally changing as a result of: my first love and heartbreak; responsibilities I held as a leader in the school; and my relationships with peers and adults—it did not seem that any of these specific examples were actually transformative learning as defined by first-wave theorists (Gunnlaugson, 2005). I think this is largely due to the fact I was quite sheltered as an adolescent and while I was able to self-reflect, I was not given the tools or taught how to engage in critical self-reflection.

In fact, it was not until I was 19 years old and a freshman in university that I faced my first disorienting dilemma that called for critical self-reflection. University life presented an introduction to diverse people, thoughts, and ways of being, which caused me to question my values and beliefs. This spurred engagement with Mezirow's (2000) phases of transformation in a very visceral way: I felt mental symptoms of confusion; physical and emotional symptoms of anxiety and depression; a familiar spiritual connection to something greater than myself; and a newfound sense of identity unlike anything I had experienced previously. In fact, from that point forward, it is with this same visceral holism that I tended to personally experience perspective transformation—a process more than just rational and mental—but a whole-body, whole-heart, shift of consciousness (O'Sullivan, 2012)—one I am only occasionally conscious of as it occurs.

Furthermore, I am confident that if I had never been given the tools of critical self-reflection from a university professor, I would not even be as aware of these inner-shifts—or interested in the field of transformative learning in general. When a professor challenged our class to identify a personal prejudice, better understand where it came from, and enact a plan to

lessen it, I experienced an extremely memorable, impactful transformative learning experience. This incident forced me to use the tool of critical-reflection and challenge all assumptions I had about myself and the world, and then try on new ways of being until I could feel comfortable with those whom I had prejudice for. As a result, I felt alive, empowered, and more connected to my humanity (Maslow, 1971) than before, which encouraged me to continue the process of self-reflection often enough to consciously recognize other ways I needed to grow and transform.

From then on, as I have aged, I have experienced additional epochal and gradual transformative learning moments in my adulthood—some inside, but most outside of a curricular setting. Some catalysts to this learning include: making a career change that caused me to reestablish my identity as something other than a full-time science teacher; learning to shift my scientifically-trained mindset to a more well-rounded one; traveling to and living in countries with very different cultural traditions from those I was raised in; recognizing my white-privilege after having misunderstandings with colleagues of other races; and experiencing spiritual incidents that have made me reconsider the universe and my place in it. Most recently, I have been experiencing a gradual, but profound shift in how I understand and experience my femininity as a result of participating in activities that promote using non-verbal intuition. It is clear to me that my shifts in consciousness have been multi-dimensional—some occurring unconsciously in the emotional, affective, and spiritual dimensions of my life (Dirkx, 2000) and others occurring consciously as a result of my choices to transform. Yet they all have contributed to my overall individuation (Jung, 1921), the process of uncovering a more authentic, realized version of myself.

My personal engagement with transformation has caused noticeable shifts in my understanding of what transformative learning is. Admittedly, as someone from a scientific

background, my initial epistemology aligned with Mezirowian, first-wave theorists (Gunnlaugson, 2005), but as I have continued to experience incidents that are difficult to describe from a rational perspective, my concept of transformative learning has shifted to further align with second-wave, extra-rational theorists (Cranton, 2006). This epistemological shift in my understanding of transformation influenced my choice of transformative learning definition for this study.

Transformative Learning Definition for This Study

The definition of transformative learning that will be used in this study embraces a holistic, lifelong representation of transformation. It comes from the work of O'Sullivan et al. (2002):

> Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body awareness, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. (p.11)

O'Sullivan (2012) remarked this definition indicates one has had a profound change in worldview, or a conceptual framework of beliefs, assumptions, attitudes, values, and ideas of who we are and the world we live in (Schlitz, Vieten, & Miller, 2010). O'Sullivan (2012) argued this type of personal perspective transformation is needed not only to transform individuals, but in order to shift the collective consciousness of our planet toward one that no longer destroys but instead heals. A shift in consciousness must occur not only in the cognitive dimension, but in all holistic ways of knowing: emotionally, somatically, and spiritually.

I have chosen this definition specifically for the term shift in consciousness. Despite some theorists' (Newman, 2010) criticism of the term consciousness not having enough of a discernible beginning or ending, it is exactly this lack of rigidity that makes it most appropriate to describe the fluidity of a developing adolescent. O'Sullivan et al.'s (2002) definition does not necessarily use one's life experience to preclude them from shifts in consciousness, but instead recognizes that it is through transformative learning that one comes to know themselves and the world. This would assume that transformative learning would occur differently across the lifespan, but would still consist of shifts of consciousness that bring individuals to the next phases of their personal development. Like individuation, these transformative moments are non-linear and occur continuously at different points across one's lifetime, within several dimensions of one's inner and outer worlds.

This brings us to how best to measure these shifts in consciousness, which I will explore by describing the philosophical and methodological frameworks used by this study.

Phenomenology

A phenomenological framework aligns well with the study of an individual's awareness and change in meaning perspectives. Phenomenology is the study of essential lived experience and how these essences allow us to discover a deeper understanding of the human experience (van Manen, 1990). In fact, Mezirow's (1978) original study of perspective transformation was phenomenological—and he noted phenomenology allows researchers to better represent those who are of special interest to perspective analysis, but often left out of quantitative studies.

Phenomenological studies are qualitative in nature, and seek not to explain a phenomenon, but describe it instead. In other words, my co-researchers' description of their adolescent engagement with transformation is an important element to better understanding the

"perspectives of those involved in the phenomenon of interest, to uncover the complexity of human behavior in a contextual framework, and to present a holistic interpretation of what is happening" (Merriam, 2001, p. 203). This allows the reader to enter into the lifeworld of those being studied, to more fully understand their humanity. Bentz and Shapiro (1998) defined lifeworld as:

> The lived experiences of human beings and other living creatures as formed into more or less coherent grounds for their existence. This consists of the whole system of interactions with others and objects in an environment that is fused with meaning and language (for human actors) and that sustains the life of all creatures from birth through death. It is the fundamental ground of all experience for human beings. (p. 171)

A good phenomenological study is written to evoke dialog, like a piece of art or poetry that can capture hearts and elicit discourse (van Manen, 1990). It is a goal of this study to provoke the field of transformative learning to further discuss how adolescents' experiences may fit into the increasing holism of the theory.

This is why a high level of engagement from the co-researchers was vital as it represents their active voice and portrays them as whole people instead of symbolic tokens (Thomson, 2008), which is a form of cooperative inquiry.

Cooperative Inquiry

Similar to transformative learning theory, cooperative inquiry has its roots in humanistic psychology (Maslow, 1968), with the central focus being on the belief that individuals can determine how they live their lives free from the distress of early conditioning and restrictive social custom (Heron, 1977; Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1969). Popularized by Heron (1971), who critiqued orthodox inquiry by pointing out that its methods are neither adequate nor appropriate for the study of persons (due to their self-determining factor), cooperative inquiry recognizes all involved in the research process as co-researchers, whose thinking and decision-making

contributes to generating ideas, designing and managing the study, and drawing conclusions from the experience (Reason, 1994). In cooperative inquiry, the main researcher is also responsible for teaching the co-researchers methods and tools with which they can use to interpret the phenomenon being studied and their experience being in the study.

This method's frameworks align well with both the aims of the study and the philosophy of transformative learning, as it supports the co-researchers' critical self-reflection and encourages them to explore the systematic patterns of their thinking, in order to "penetrate one's logic, find contradictions and loose ends, and make necessary connections with what else is known about the matter at hand" (Wennberg & Hane, 2005, p. 269). In fact, as explored in Chapter V, my co-researchers continued to reflect on their experiences throughout the study, which allowed for further transformation even after the data collection was finished. As Dirkx (1997) noted the actual study of one's transformations can be an additional form of transformative learning, as the process of reflection requires one to construct and reconstruct their current understanding of self.

This priority to uncover the holistic lifeworld of the co-researchers is known as a specific strand of phenomenological research called heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990).

Heuristic Inquiry

Heuristic inquiry is a term that originates from the Greek word heuriskein, meaning to find or discover, and is likely closely related to the Greek word for eureka, the exclamation for an excited discovery. As a strand of phenomenology, heuristic inquiry seeks to explore the inner meaning of experience from the subjective perspectives of study participants, or co-researchers. However, in contrast to other types of phenomenological studies, the phenomenon chosen to be studied by heuristic inquiry always arises first from the autobiographical experience of the

researcher. Moustakas (1990) explained this is because for virtually every question that matters personally, there is also a social, and perhaps universal, significance as well (p. 15). A successful heuristic researcher will engage her passion for self-understanding through the process (Patton, 2005) pairing research of the topic with self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery (Moustakas, 1990). Along with this greater self-awareness comes the ability to insightfully provide society with a better understanding of a critical human experience (Moustakas, 1990).

Similar to the more holistic interpretations of transformative learning (Dirkx, 2012; O'Sullivan, 2012), heuristic inquiry encourages researchers to not only acknowledge visions, images, dreams, and synchronicities in conversations and relationships, but to honor these valuable insights into the phenomenon's complex connections (Moustakas, 1990). This is because heuristic inquiry is an organized and systematic approach to investigate human experience, but instead of seeking linear, causal analyses, it offers a "holistic perspective that describes the interdependence and relatedness of complex phenomena" (Patton, 1990, p. 424). Human experiences are complex, which is why it is important for the main researcher to have well-rounded, internal exploration of the topic herself in order to make meaning of how the topic connects with other phenomena. This immersion into the phenomenon can also be called indwelling (Moustakas, 1990) and it describes the primary researcher's responsibility to turn inward to understand the deeper meaning of a theme in human experience, in order to make the invisible visible and graspable (van Manen, 2014) within the research report.

It should be noted that despite using visions and dreams as essential components to the research, heuristic inquiry's validity should not be discounted; on the contrary, it is a demanding process requiring "Rigorous definition, careful collection of data, and a thorough and disciplined

analysis—it places immense responsibility on the researcher" (Frick, 1990, p. 71). The process cannot be hurried, and takes total presence, honesty, maturity, and integrity of the researcher (van Manen, 2014), and as Moustakas (1990) explains, if done passionately can become a "heuristic journey" that will lead to personal transformation among all co-researchers. These personal transformations will be explored in Chapter V.

While other phenomenological methods emphasize a detached researcher stance to avoid bias, heuristic inquiry emphasizes connectedness and relationship, both to the phenomenon being studied and to the research participants as co-researchers (Patton, 2005). Trusting, open relationships are vital to the collection of data, as many of the co-researchers' data contain sensitive, vulnerable information (Moustakas, 1994). When co-researchers have had prior relationships, it tends to give a study more depth and authenticity (Patton, 1990).

While phenomenology seeks to discover the essence of an experience, heuristic research seeks to discover the essence of the person in the experience. Rarely is one example or situation sufficient enough to depict one's essence, thus heuristic research encourages co-researchers to create composite depictions that remain as close to the individual's stories as possible (Moustakas, 1994). Some of this requires a level of interpretation that alludes to the use of hermeneutic methods.

Hermeneutic Methods

Phenomenology becomes hermeneutical when its method is concerned with the interpretive explication of texts, rather than direct lived experience (van Manen, 2014). As co-researchers used the texts of their interview transcripts much of their work became hermeneutical.

Gadamer (1975) developed a method of hermeneutics to uncover the meaning in texts and life. He claimed hermeneutics is less of a method for understanding and more of an attempt "to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 263). Thus, the co-researchers not only attempted to make meaning of their experiences, but understand the conditions for how they made meaning. In order to better understand this process, it is important to note why I felt it was so valuable to have Sophia and Laurel as co-researchers in this study and not simply participants.

The Role of Co-Researchers

This self-reflection on behalf of the main researcher illustrates part of the heuristic process of self-discovery, as I am continuously uncovering my own beliefs, motivations, and assumptions for the research (Moustakas, 1990).

A belief I held strongly was the importance of upholding the guiding and supportive role I had begun as a result of the mentoring relationship I had already established with Sophia and Laurel. Because of the content of the interviews, I was also sensitive to the delicacy of our conversations and how important it was for my co-researchers to determine which portions of them were to be shared with an audience. In addition, both Laurel and Sophia are interested in pursuing graduate studies after they finish their undergraduate work, thus it was a privilege to be able to introduce them to qualitative research both as a subject and a researcher. My motivation to guide them through reflection, interpretation, and reporting was obviously to help them understand the process of inquiry, but even more so to mentor them through their own development into adulthood (Grider, 2011).

In my own experiences, I needed the tools and modeled-behavior to fully grasp critical self-reflection and transformative learning, thus I was especially sensitive to the way I modeled

my own self-reflection during the process. Sophia and Laurel further describe their understanding of reflection and of being co-researchers in Chapter V.

On another note, as a result of my professional experience working closely with young people for the majority of my career, I recognize that seldom do adults actually listen to youths' voices with a contemplative ear. Oftentimes, instead, decisions are made for and regarding young people without actually consulting them first. I wanted my co-researchers' voices to be prominently featured in this study so those within the field of transformative learning will recognize the value of young women's stories in a body of literature largely dominated by adult, male voices (English & Irving, 2012). This said, let's further introduce the co-researchers, Sophia and Laurel.

The Co-Researchers

My co-researchers are gifted young women who have been exposed to many diverse ideas, people, and places. By choosing only these two specific co-researchers, I have used purposeful sampling, which is "based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2004, p. 77). I was confident that these two young women were able to offer much to be learned and the criteria I used to ensure that they were capable of co-research are further outlined below, but it may be best to allow Laurel and Sophia to first introduce themselves to illustrate their upbringing, character, and interest in the study. The following descriptions were written by them, and one can see that despite their personality differences, they both share similar motives for wanting to participate in the research.

Sophia. Sophia was born and raised in a large Asian city. She is half American and half Filipino, and considers herself a third-culture kid without a definitive home country. Sophia spent her entire educational career at an Asian international school where she excelled in academics, participated in numerous team sports, and was active in several extracurricular activities including the school newspaper, tutoring in a local nursery, and leading school service trips.

Sophia currently attends a prestigious American university where she has continued to pursue her passions in the social sciences, community service, and team sports. She tends to enjoy spending time with a small number of close friends, rather than with larger groups, but also enjoys time on her own. She is independent and values making decisions based on her own values, over the expectations of others, but she also relies on close friends and family for emotional support. Sophia was interested in participating in this study because it provided an opportunity for personal introspection and a taste of the research she may participate in during graduate studies.

Laurel. Laurel has had an international upbringing—living in several American, European, and Asian cities. She is Caucasian and was raised in a mixed-faith household, with a Christian mother and Jewish father. Laurel spent the majority of her formal education at an international school in Asia, where she recently graduated. In high school, she was involved in the highest governance body as Senator of Service, while also working for an international social enterprise, co-founding her own organization, and acting as the swim team captain.

Laurel especially enjoys finding new challenges in unique corners of the world, including Madagascar, Timor-Leste, and Lapland. She also enjoys adventurous activities like sky-diving, bungee jumping, and scuba diving. She was interested in being in this study due to her

fascination with the area of transformative learning. Through the study, she also hopes to develop a new understanding of post-graduate research, which she hopes to pursue in the future. Prior to that, she will be attending a prestigious, international university in the United States from 2015–2019, where she intends to continue dedicating the majority of her time to service involvement, community outreach, leadership initiatives, and swimming.

Relationships Among the Research Team

As stated earlier, heuristic research relies on a strong foundation of relationships among all of the co-researchers (Moustakas, 1990). In interest of fair disclosure, it is important to note the nature of the relationships between the young women, their relationship with me, and the implications these have to the research. These relationships will be further explored in the following chapters as the data uncovered a shift in consciousness regarding this aspect of the co-researcher's lives as well.

Relationship among Sophia and Laurel. Before the study began, I would describe the relationship between the two co-researchers, Laurel and Sophia as a long-term, cooperative, devoted friendship. Sophia and Laurel have known one another for over seven years, and although they are quite different—Laurel admittedly extroverted and Sophia admittedly introverted—they get along quite well. They cooperatively wrote this description of their relationship:

> Laurel and Sophia have been best friends since seventh grade. They share a passion for service and have worked on community outreach projects together throughout their friendship. As they've grown up, Sophia and Laurel have developed different personalities and interests but have maintained a strong friendship based on mutual support and understanding of each other.

At the beginning of the research, they both indicated that one of the reasons they wanted to be a part of this study is to work with one another again, since they have not seen much of each other since they began studying at different universities.

My relationship with Sophia and Laurel. I was first put into contact with Laurel and Sophia as a result of working for their international high school as a professional consultant. Our task was to design an empowerment curriculum for young people living in India. While our relationship began as a formal professional commitment, our roles have since grown from mentor-protégé to one of mutual respect and admiration, due partly to the "Magic of Interim" that occurred during our time working together.

Interim is a weeklong, required, off-campus (international) learning experience that features a range of courses including community service, outdoor adventure and cross-cultural learning. The foreign surroundings and novel tasks combined with an abundance of adult and peer-led reflection time allow for the wonderment of life to return to young people who are normally entrenched in the fast-paced, competitive lifestyle of international schooling. The experience of Interim is often referred to as "magical" by the students because real and metaphorical thresholds are crossed, allowing for a noticeable growth-spurt physically, mentally, and emotionally.

As student-leaders of our Interim, Laurel and Sophia engaged their peers in making meaning of their service work in India. Each night, I observed them initiate several DMCs (Deep Meaningful Conversations—a term the students coined) to help process the day's events. These peer-led conversations were contemplative and growth-oriented discourse laced with cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and somatic references about how students were experiencing their trip. Throughout the DMCs, Laurel and Sophia used terms like life-changing, transformative, and

meaningful with such ease that I took note of their potential to share their unique lived experiences with others, and recognized their self-awareness suggested they would be capable of, and would likely enjoy the process of a phenomenological study.

Implications of our relationships. The implications of our relationship are two-fold. On one hand, the young women and I established a trusting, open friendship that allowed them to divulge sensitive details about their adolescence they would not have necessarily shared with a different researcher. In fact, because of the deep, cooperative nature of this study, our established relationship was vital. On the other hand, because of our closeness, the young women could have been more likely to try to appease me with the topics of discussion. However as I describe below, their insight was used advantageously as a research tool as they became more adept co-researchers and even added another dimension to the research.

Preparing the Co-Researchers

As Giorgi (2006) implored, it is necessary to teach co-researchers phenomenological techniques, specifically the hermeneutic circle, so they are prepared to interpret and represent themselves in the final report. Learning to recognize units of meaning separately and within the whole transcribed text was of most importance to this study. Though, like van Manen (2007) describes, regardless of the theoretical preparation, often it is not until one does phenomenological research that they can more fully understand it. Therefore, prior to the formal study, my co-researchers actually practiced phenomenological research methods by doing a shortened study that allowed them to practice finding themes within a transcribed text.

Laurel and Sophia each independently interviewed a friend of theirs for 30 minutes, transcribed the text, and then identified themes within. Afterwards we each discussed how the process felt, what insights they gained, and what questions they had going forward. We also

discussed how their interpretive skills could be used similarly in the formal study. An additional preparation the co-researchers had was their participation in a preliminary study with me.

Preliminary Study

One year before this study occurred (during the spring of 2015), the co-researchers and I engaged in a preliminary study with aims of: strengthening our relationships; initiating a foundation of inquiry; and determining how to move forward with the formal study. According to Kezar (2004) this is a valuable tool to use to begin the hermeneutic circle, as well as determine which philosophical, methodological, and logistical adjustments may need to be made. Here, I will briefly detail key insights from the preliminary study and how it influenced the design of the formal study.

Insights from preliminary study. The preliminary study occurred in the spring of 2015, and at this time my co-researchers, Sophia and Laurel were still considered participants, meaning they were the subjects of the interviews, but were not asked to partake in any data interpretation. Originally, the focus of the study was on the participants' engagement with an annual service project in India called Interim that they had co-led for four years. The research questions of the preliminary study were:

1. What exactly is occurring during this "magical time" of Interim?
2. How would the two adolescent girls co-leading the trip describe this short, extraordinary experience in India as well as the ordinary life surrounding it?
3. How does the "Magic of Interim" fit into the normal life of an adolescent?
4. Is this experience an example of transformative learning?

This was also a phenomenological study with several sources of written, spoken, and observed data. The participants had kept four years of journals during their experiences on

Interim, which were read, coded, and given themes used to establish further interview questions. Then a series of interviews with one participant and both participants present provided roughly ten hours of spoken data, which was read for meaning, coded, and established into themes. Although the majority of the interpretation was from data derived from the spoken interview sessions, many of the themes were supported by over 50 hours of my additional observations in India (as I shared the experience of their final year of Interim with them).

Through interpreting this data and observations, individual and shared themes emerged. Individually, each participant had three specific themes that described their personal self-development and self-awareness. Collectively, both participants shared five themes that explored the topics of:

1. Evolving identity and self-discovery,
2. The role of others,
3. Leadership,
4. Beliefs and assumptions about the world and
5. (Development of) service.

These themes depicted the lifeworlds of Laurel and Sophia primarily through the lens of the event of Interim, yet during the interviews it became clear there were several other multi-dimensional lenses from which to view the participants and their experiences that we did not give enough attention to. This is indicative of a shift from a purely phenomenological study to one of heuristic inquiry, as the focus is being moved more toward the people experiencing the event, rather than the event itself (Moustakas, 1990).

Thus, while the themes of this study had given me a helpful foundation to better understand Interim and Laurel and Sophia, as a result of input from the young women, the focus

for the formal study was pivoted. In fact, the following section details how the preliminary study influenced the aims of the formal study.

Preliminary Study's Influence on Formal Study

Firstly, the main focus of the preliminary study was on an event (Interim) that both participants shared; however as their individual themes indicated, Laurel and Sophia experienced it from very different perspectives, thus their unique descriptions gave insight into how two seemingly similar adolescent girls will find distinct meaning in their shared experiences. Also, the scope of the shared experience of Interim—while spanning four years—was too narrow to encapsulate all of the internal and external changes occurring in the participants outside of this experience. Comments in these interviews such as, "well, in order for me to explain that, I first need to tell you about " indicated the formal study would need to represent a larger swathe of Sophia and Laurel's adolescent years. In fact, it was they who suggested the formal study should review a timeline of their most "transformative" incidents in high school in order to better understand how each influenced their development. It is partly because of these suggestions and their eagerness to explore and articulate their experiences that I recognized they would be fitting candidates for co-researchers.

Therefore, after the research was finished, I cooperated with a colleague to describe the responsibilities associated with co-research to my participants. After reflecting on the task, they each enthusiastically agreed to collaborate, citing the valuable learning experience being both a participant and researcher afforded them. Laurel and Sophia described wanting to have a space where they could talk about the experiences that were meaningful to them in a safe, supportive environment.

The overall findings of the preliminary study indicated that both co-researchers experienced events during high school that felt transformative in nature. The fidelity and significance of these events were different for each of them, yet both described meaningful experiences—indicating that while unique, transformative learning is also a universal process. This paved the road for the formal phases of research described below.

Detailed Phases of Research

Originally, the study was planned as two phases of research; however, it evolved into three distinct phases once my co-researchers proved to be more eager to dive deeper into the data and theories than I had anticipated.

The first phase (See Figure 3.1) compiled in-depth descriptions of how the co-researchers experienced self-identified transformative incidents during their time in high school. Through several in-depth phone interviews, we uncovered self-described transformative moments from their adolescence, which were then further explored in the interview transcripts when the co-researchers used hermeneutic methods of interpretation to identify themes and patterns to follow up on in the next phase. During the second phase, special attention was given to the style of language in the transcripts, and as the main researcher, I coded for how the co-researchers described the events from cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual perspectives.

Collaborative examination of the events continued when all three researchers met in person and compared the self-described experiences to O'Sullivan et al.'s (2002) definition of transformative learning and then broke down twelve of the events into their components. The unexpected third phase came about as a result of the co-researchers' enthusiasm to further understand the theory and how the study was affecting their self-awareness in real-time. This phase consisted of: The co-researchers discussing key components of the theory and how it did

or did not represent their experiences; the main researcher looking for evidence of critical self-reflection in the co-researchers; and all researchers reflecting on and writing about the transformative nature of the research process itself.

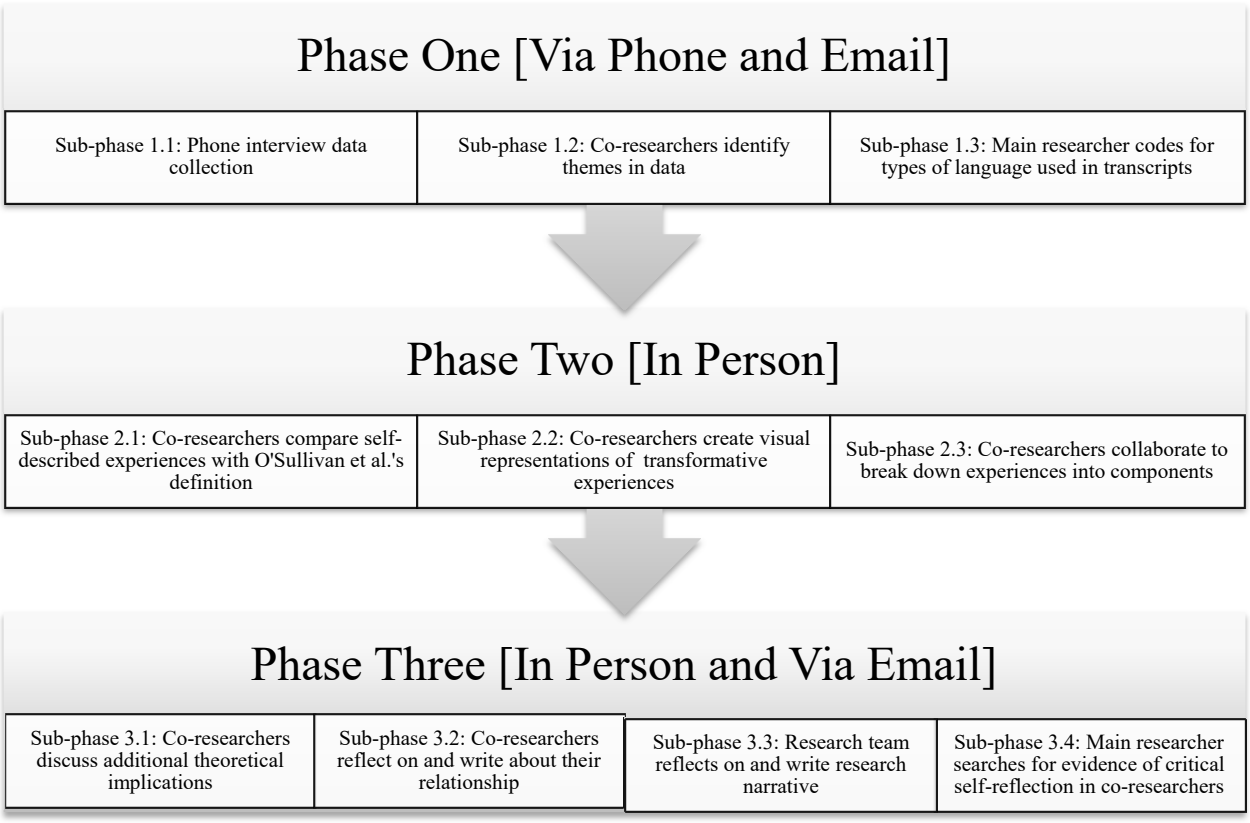

Figure 3.1

A diagram of the phases of the research.

Phase one. Phase one used heuristic and cooperative inquiry methods to configure an in-depth portrayal of the co-researchers' lifeworlds. Within this phase were two sub-phases: one that gathered data through fourteen phone interviews; and the second, which engaged the co-researchers in identifying themes within the interview transcription data.

Sub-phase 1.1. During the first sub-phase, I used phone interview methods as described by Stringer (2004), which allowed my co-researchers' lived experiences to become directly accessible to an audience by "capturing the voices, emotions, and actions . . . of life experiences that shape the meanings persons give to themselves and their own experiences" (p. 98). The majority of the conversations captured the lively memories of one's adolescence.

If a conversation is a basic mode of human interaction, an interview can be considered "a purposeful conversation" (Bogdan & Bilken, 1998, p. 93). The purpose of our conversations was to further explore the list of self-identified transformative experiences the co-researchers provided to me at the end of our preliminary study. In total there were fourteen interviews, seven for each co-researcher. On average, each interview lasted from between one hour to one and a half hours. I audio recorded them, transcribed each manually, and sent them via email to each co-researcher for review.

During the interviews we discussed the self-described transformative events of high school in chronological order, with the exception of the first interview that explored a summary of middle school years in order for us to get a better sense of a Laurel and Sophia's "baseline" prior to beginning high school. For the high school interviews, Sophia discussed 21 specific events and Laurel discussed 24. I tended to allow each co-researcher to lead the conversations so I could determine the meaning of each moment based on the momentum and excitement with which they spoke about it. I asked several follow-up questions related to the research questions

when I felt we had drifted too far away from them and during some interviews, the co-researchers would ask to go back to certain events so that they could add specific details. The interviews took place roughly one week apart from one another, and the co-researchers received the transcript of each before the beginning of the next interview.

Sub-phase 1.2. Upon receipt of the transcripts, Sophia and Laurel identified themes and meta-themes that were relevant to the study. They described their process similarly to how Wertz (2005) defined theme identification in phenomenological research, consisting of: transcribing data; differentiating it into meaningful units; eliminating redundancy; and coding these units into specific themes. While each co-researcher organized their themes differently, they tended to contain approximately six to ten themes per interview and provided between five to 15 relevant supporting quotes for each.

After all interviews were finished, approximately 35 themes were reduced into more concise descriptions, with both co-researchers creating seven meta-themes that represented the entire interview data. Again these meta-themes were matched with supporting quotes from all of the interviews that best represented the topic. It should be noted that this entire process was done individually by Sophia and Laurel without assistance from me.

An interesting development in this phase of the study was that despite the instruction to look for themes that corresponded to the research questions, Laurel and Sophia instead tended to choose themes that actually described attributes of their personalities and changing identities. After I noticed this was misaligned to the original purpose of the study, I also could not help but feel these identity-based themes were relevant on several levels. After Sophia asked if her themes were beginning to get too far from the research questions, I suggested they continue

working with the themes in the manner they had been and said we would decide as a group how to address them once the interviews were through.

After the culmination of the interviews, we decided to use the meta-themes for several aspects to the study: to help me decode which types of language were used to describe these events; and then in the second phase of the study to collaboratively determine gradual transformations from epochal transformations; and to help us gauge—as Kegan (2000) would ask—"what form was transforming."

***Sub-phase 1.3*.** Once I had the co-researchers' meta-themes and corresponding quotes for each, I began a process of coding these files for five categories of language use, specifically those focused on a cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual perspective. My motivation for this was two-fold: (a) to further suggest the relevancy of how one describes their transformative experiences to the field, and (b) to help distinguish if language can indicate any unique aspects to how an adolescent experiences transformation.

This process was not emergent as I specifically chose four of these five categories prior to beginning the study because I felt they were most holistically representative of transformative experiences. Upon beginning the coding, I recognized that those four (cognitive, emotional, physical, and spiritual) could not represent the relational and social aspects of the transformation, and therefore added the fifth, social. I chose to define each as the concepts they conveyed, and are roughly as follows:

1. Cognitive: thoughts, ration, opinions, assumptions, and ideas
2. Emotional: feelings, moods, enthusiasm, reactions, and passion
3. Social: relationships, community, family, friends, and the Other
4. Physical: bodily sensations, somatic responses, and biological conditions

5. Spiritual: wisdom, instincts, inner-knowing, beliefs, connection to higher power.

I manually coded more than 40 pages of dialog, and then each category's code was added together and used to calculate the percentages of each category found in the meta-themes. Originally, I had planned on sharing the coding duties with my co-researchers, but decided some of the other work they were producing was more valuable to the study (specifically the visual representations described in phase two); therefore, I took the main responsibility for this task in order to give them more time for those contributions.

Phase two. Much of phase one's research occurred over the phone and via email, but during the second phase of research, my co-researchers and I were able to meet in person for five days and perform what we nicknamed a data crunch. During the data crunch, our work evolved to be more than just the planned task of comparing the self-described events to O'Sullivan, et al.'s (2002) definition. In addition, our research team created visual representations of the experiences, and broke down the components of the experiences in order to better understand what exactly was happening in a self-described transformation.

Sub-phase 2.1. It was an impressive sight to watch my co-researchers compare their self-described experiences with O'Sullivan et al.'s (2002) definition of transformative learning. The night before our first in-person data crunch, I provided them with the definition and asked them to come prepared to place their (approximately 20) experiences into columns that represented whether Yes, No, or Maybe their experiences represented this specific definition. My choice to refrain from offering the definition until this point in the study was so my co-researchers would not allow it to influence them during the interviews.

Armed only with a printout of the definition, each co-researcher took index cards with the descriptions of events on them (e.g., 10th grade volleyball team, 9th grade humanities class) and

placed them into the Yes, No, and Maybe columns. While this process was aimed to be collaborative, it began rather solitarily as each co-researcher keenly focused on the task at hand. I was available for questions, but those that were directed at me were for clarifying the language of the definition, which prompted us to revisit a complementary idea of a gradual versus epochal transformation. It was then determined by the research team that some of the meta-themes from the interviews (e.g., identity, relationships) were considered to be gradual transformations and given their own index card and added into the columns.

After the columns were filled, each co-researcher reported her list to the rest of the team, and the young women talked candidly about how differently they perceived some of their shared experiences—because up until this point they were not privy to one another's interview data, and did not know they had such different perceptions. Most notably, they mentioned that many aspects of their relationship were beginning to make more sense in light of this new information. In fact, this candid discussion actually prompted me to recognize the value of further reflecting on how this process was transformative for their relationship, which is explored in phase three.

Because of the existence of a Maybe column, several discussions ensued on what would or would not make those chosen experiences go into the Yes or No columns. Some were moved definitively, while others were left there permanently. An interesting assertion that kept some events in the Maybe column was that it was unclear if those experiences were more confirming of the young women's identities or if they represented a change to them. We discussed this confusion may be indicative of their age group because many of their chosen experiences were considered foundational to the forming of themselves versus transforming. This is further explored in Chapter IV and Chapter VI.

Once the columns were finished, I asked my co-researchers to choose six of the 10–12 self-described transformative experiences from the Yes column to break down into components for sub-phase 2.3. They also wrote short descriptions on each for why they believed those six experiences were aligned to the definition. My choice to have only six incidents per co-researcher to dive deeply into was purposeful because it allowed us to spend equal amounts of time breaking them down into components as well as maintain the interest levels of the team while finishing the rest of the study.

Sub-phase 2.2. As conversations evolved during the multi-day data crunch, the young women realized simply discussing transformation was not sufficient to represent their experiences. At first metaphors like "journey" and "adventure" were used, but soon it was clear there were both inner and outer changes occurring that needed to be addressed in different ways. Thus, both co-researchers decided to translate their columns and meta-theme data into visual representations of how they experienced transformation.

Several drawings emerged to represent ideas: the difference between a gradual and epochal transformation; how a gradual transformation unfolds chronologically; how transformations are intertwined; and how they are triggered and resolved. Sophia's visuals tended to look graphic in nature, with clear X and Y axes and dynamic lines that rose and fell with specific incidents, while Laurel's tended to look like time-lines with periods of overlap between incidents. These rough drafts evolved into final drafts that are featured in Chapter IV.

An interesting discussion that evolved during this sub-phase was why the O'Sullivan et al.'s (2002) definition use of the term "consciousness" was a difficult concept to explain or draw. I laughed as I explained I purposely chose the definition based on the fluidity of the term consciousness, only to find it was to my co-researchers' dismay! We discussed what the term

meant to each of us and this influenced how the visual representations were drawn from that point forward. I humorously noted we were experiencing Newman's (2010) criticism of this specific definition in real time!

***Sub-phase 2.3*.** While all six experiences that were chosen in sub-phase 2.1 to be broken down were placed in the Yes column, not all firmly believed to be transformative learning by my co-researchers. Three of them were ones they were very confident were aligned to the O'Sullivan et al. (2002) definition, while the other three were ones they were less confident of, but still had placed in the Yes column. This allowed us to differentiate between the components of the events to see if there were any patterns separating the two.

My original motivation for the component breakdown was largely practical in purpose—if a transformative event can be understood from several dimensions, adults working to illicit or support transformation can better understand when, where, how, with whom, and why they occur. It was determined later it could also help our team to determine which components were more unique to their age frame.

On a large poster board we subdivided sections into When, Where, How, With Whom, and Why. Then focusing on one event at a time, we used corresponding colored sticky notes to collaboratively ask questions (e.g., Laurel and I asked Sophia, and Sophia and I asked Laurel) about the experiences, mark the answer on the note, and place the note in the appropriate column. This was the most time consuming activity of the data crunch, taking over ten hours to complete.

Once the in-person collaboration was finished, I took the components and analyzed them for specific commonalities and discrepancies. Then, I took these patterns and broadened the language to be less personally identifying and more general: by removing names and giving titles

(e.g., “teacher,” “peer”); by recognizing symbolic interactions (e.g., rites of passage, disappointments); and by grouping common patterns from different experiences.

Phase three. In the original proposal, the research process finished at phase two, however during the in-person data crunch it became clear there were additional paths that could be explored that would deepen the research team’s understanding of both themselves and the theory. Therefore—true to heuristic inquiry—I felt it necessary to explore these paths in order for our own self-illumination to advise the study.

Unique to this phase of research was the beneficial role our close relationships played as we were able to take much of the theoretical ideas into a more informal conversation and discuss them in applicable, personal manners. At times I felt as if I wore three hats: one of researcher, another as mentor, and a third as friend. I made sure to announce when I was wearing each hat as a preface to statements, for example “I am wearing my mentor hat when I say that is a normal feeling and I remember having it too” or “I am wearing my researcher hat when I tell you that phrase is similar to this person’s theory” The conversations we had in this phase of research took place during the final two days of our in-person data crunch, so it fair to say we had all let down our guard and felt extremely comfortable with one another. Sophia and Laurel even nicknamed one of the days “honesty day” as the open and relaxed candor we practiced together spilled over into all of our social lives, to the surprise of family and friends!

Sub-phase 3.1. Knowing how studious and committed Laurel and Sophia can be, I am not sure why I was so pleasantly surprised by their eagerness to examine transformative learning theory further than just O’Sullivan et al.’s (2002) definition, but it likely stemmed from my own assumptions about how interesting others find the theory. Thus, this phase of the research addressed my own changes in meaning perspectives that arose as a result of the study in general.

In the sub-phase 3.1, we explored several aspects of transformative learning theory in order for the co-researchers to give their thoughts on how these aspects influenced their understanding of themselves, their experiences, and the theory in general. Once Laurel and Sophia requested we do this during one of the earlier in-person data crunch sessions, I compiled a document consisting of excerpts from my literature review covering approximately 11 topics. I chose these because they seemed to have the most relevance to how my co-researchers had been experiencing the study. These topics were:

1. Comparing the difference between the Mezirowian-based Taylor and Snyder (2012) definition of transformative learning to O'Sullivan et al.'s (2002)
2. Understanding Mezirow's 10 phases of transformation
3. Descriptions of Mezirowian terms
4. Tisdell's (2012) descriptions of holistic transformative experiences
5. The difference between transitions, turning points, and rites of passage
6. Theories on young woman development
7. Maslow's (1968) concept of peak experiences
8. Kegan's orders of mind
9. Brookfield's (2000) assertion that one needs life experience for transformation
10. Identity and self-narrative development
11. Comparing lenses of transformative learning

Then, during our final data crunch session, we sat down with the document, read each excerpt aloud and Laurel and Sophia shared their thoughts as I took notes.

Some of the concepts required more explanations than others (e.g., Kegan's orders of mind) and I used textbooks and diagrams to help my co-researchers make sense of how the

different theorists approached transformative learning theory. Yet, it was not difficult for Sophia and Laurel to give their thoughts, and I remarked several times how impressed I was with their insight. This portion of the study highlighted their increased confidence with the topic well. Perhaps one of the most remarkable exchanges occurred when Sophia patently disagreed with one of the theorists' criticism on age limitations (that I previously agreed with) noting he was discounting the lived experience of young people, causing the marginalization of non-adults.

In addition to discussing transformative learning theory, I also introduced the section of my literature review that explored alternative adolescent development frameworks such as transitions, turning points, and rites of passage. The research team further discussed how to differentiate between the adolescent development theories and transformative learning theories and came to the conclusion that the presence of critical self-reflection and the unpredictability of transformative moments were most relevant to differentiating between a transformative learning experience and these adolescent development frameworks. The depth of our conversation will be covered in Chapter IV.

Once the discussion was over, I asked my co-researchers to reread the document several days later and add any additional thoughts that may have come to mind. Each of them added or clarified their thoughts in writing. Later, I reread some of these thoughts for evidence of critical self-reflection, which was explored further in sub-phase 3.4.

Sub-phase 3.2. This sub-phase arose as a result of the candid conversations that took place between Sophia and Laurel in sub-phase 2.1. This and a conversation during "honesty day" in which Laurel and Sophia explained their abilities to communicate with one another had significantly improved as a result of this study. It became clear to me that their relationship

presented an obvious example of a gradual transformation that affected not only their identities, but their idea of what a relationship is and how one communicates within one.

Consequently I asked both of them to write a narrative that explored their relationship from the beginning to present, centering on how it has changed them throughout and how it has been affected by this study. Some of this information is represented by the data in Chapter IV and their narratives Chapter V.

Sub-phase 3.3. By the third phase of this study, I recognized our research process was not only unique, but also was affecting each of us individually in interesting ways that were not being captured by the other phases of the research. Therefore, I felt it necessary for us to create narratives that described how we personally experienced the research process in order for us to share with the reader just how multi-dimensional this type of study can be.

Sophia and Laurel wrote their narrative directly after our in-person data crunch, but I wrote mine several weeks later once I had more time to interact with the data privately. I have shared these narratives in full in Chapter V.

Sub-phase 3.4. A key criticism of adolescents' ability to engage with transformative learning from theorists is that they are not necessarily developmentally mature enough to be capable of critical self-reflection. Therefore, while not specifically addressed in my research questions, I felt it was sensible to search for evidence of this form of reflection within this study in order to make the most robust argument about the capabilities of adolescents.

In order to do so, I examined three main sources of data combined with my observations: the meta-themes from sub-phase 1.2; the transformative experiences that were considered most aligned with the definition from sub-phase 2.1; and the comments from our discussion on other aspects of the transformative learning theory from sub-phase 3.1. Here, I searched for noticeable

aspects of critical self-reflection such as: uncovering assumptions, analyzing unequal power distribution, identifying limiting beliefs, and investigating the degree with which their emotional responses are learned or innate. I created a list of evidence from the study I felt was definitely aligned with examples of adult critical self-reflection, and another list of evidence I was not sure of, which are further explored in Chapter IV.

Quality and Trustworthiness of This Study

As with any study, issues of quality and trustworthiness should be addressed. Here I will outline which threats to quality and trustworthiness exist and how my co-researchers and I addressed them.

Marrow (2005) described that the criteria for trustworthiness and credibility in qualitative research should be specific to the paradigm. Phenomenological research falls within the paradigm of Constructivism-Interpretivism, which according to Ponterotto (2005) means this research deals with the subjective nature of human phenomena. Human phenomena are difficult to describe, and because phenomenology seeks to describe the essence of the co-researchers' lived experience, there cannot be verification from an outside source, but instead the validity must be judged through the quality of description presented within the study (van Manen, 1990). In other words, Churchill (2000) explained that the validity of phenomenological research is based on whether a study can achieve congruency with the co-researchers' original experiences. My co-researchers were able to take into consideration the possibility of distortion that occurs as a result of reflexive reporting, but they accounted for this by acknowledging the level of fidelity in their memories.

To address this concern, when asked to reflect back on a past occurrence, I often asked my co-researchers to report their ease of recollection so they could re-read their answer in the

transcripts and use it to determine their own fidelity of memory. My co-researchers were responsible for the majority of reporting their experiences: from initially recalling it, to discerning which quotes were most relevant in smaller and meta-themes, to choosing which quotes were featured in the data report. Therefore, a reader can be confident that the validity of Laurel and Sophia's experiences are direct-from-source with little to no distortion from me.

As alluded to in earlier sections, while the relationships among co-researchers can be viewed as an asset, they can also pose issues within the process of collaborative inquiry. As in any human group, co-researchers will face issues of inclusion, influence, and intimacy (Reason, 1994). Because of the earlier mentor-protégé relationship, one could argue a lingering power differential between the young women and me existed, which could be exacerbated by the differing levels of expertise. For example, I have more life experience, theoretical knowledge, and exposure to the field of transformative learning. However, my co-researchers have a rich, tacit knowledge based on their life experiences, which is just as valuable in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In fact, Reason (1994) argued in an ideal co-research situation, each person's agency would be fully honored in both the exchange of ideas and in the action and that the team should also recognize that not all co-researchers will contribute to the process of inquiry in identical ways. I believe this quality and trustworthiness issue was well addressed by the multiple phases of research in which all members of the research team were responsible for significant aspects of the collection, interpretation, and reporting of data, with little interference by other members.

A common threat to cooperative inquiry is when co-researchers unknowingly project their own versions of reality onto one another (Reason, 1994). Much of this was prevented by all members of the research team working independently before cooperating, so that their initial

perceptions were preserved in writing in order to be reflected on and brought to the group setting for discussion. In fact, it was through this shared dialog that we experienced additional perspective transformations addressed in Chapter V.

In Summary

In this chapter I have described how my co-researchers and I performed the study. I have described the purpose of the study, introduced the philosophical and methodological frameworks we employed, further described my co-researchers, revisited the preliminary study and its implication to the formal study, and outlined the trustworthiness and implications to this type of research. In the following chapter I will share the results of this study and the research team's interpretations.

Chapter IV: Research Data

In this chapter I will present the data as it pertains to the research questions by re-introducing my co-researchers' lifeworlds, exploring their self-described transformative incidents, breaking their experiences into components, and determining which are most aligned with the concepts of transformative learning theory. In addition, I will showcase my co-researcher's visual and verbal descriptions of their transformative incidents and determine which aspects of them may be unique to adolescents, or may represent alternative developmental frameworks.

How Does an Adolescent Experience Transformative Incidents?

After co-researchers reviewed over 20 hours of transcribed interview data, each was independently responsible for interpreting her own interviews and determining which individual themes fit into larger meta-themes. These meta-themes (Table 4.1) indicate how Sophia and Laurel perceived themselves during the timeframe of the study, as well as establish personality traits and tendencies that may have influenced how they chose which self-described incidents were most transformative.

Sophia and Laurel both created seven meta-themes, with two shared meta-themes of Identity and Relationships and two similar themes of Positivity for Sophia and Positive Reconstruction for Laurel; and Leadership for Sophia, and Relational Leadership for Laurel. Here I explore these meta-themes in detail.

Shared meta-themes: Identity and relationships. Although the young women discussed unique experiences in the interviews, they each identified an abundance of quotes indicating meta-themes of identity and relationships.

Identity. Adolescence is a dynamic point of self-discovery punctuated by moments of clarity and confusion. Both Laurel and Sophia recognized the tumultuous nature of identity development during their high school experience and shared moments when they either realized or questioned who they were.

Laurel described enjoying the discovery of a multi-faceted self during high school—some facets came naturally to her, and others were only detectable after having space from her friends and family. Nicknamed "Mama-Laurel" by her girlfriends in middle school, she had embraced the nurturing facet of herself because it came naturally to her, but beginning in 9th grade, she also began to recognize a quick-witted, playful facet that seemed to come out when she spent time with her male friends. She explained,

> I really like it when people don't expect me to drop a joke or a slightly innuendo-charged comment, because they expect me to be Ms. Sweet or Ms. This or That . . . but it's kind of nice every once in a while to have a bit of individuality so I'm not . . . everybody's mother . . . or I'm not older than myself but instead reverting back to crude, young humor.

As someone who enjoyed and thrived in the daily pressures of an Asian international high school, Laurel had always felt mature enough to handle her "motherly" responsibilities, yet discovering her knack for playful banter was figuratively liberating. She enjoyed this light-hearted side of her so much, that when she was temporarily stationed at a new school, she decided to consciously find outlets that allowed her to express this facet and "recalibrate, figure out what groups I needed to have, and reconfirm what I thought I needed socially."

Recalibration of identity was a common theme for Laurel, and it tended to work best if she could physically distance herself from her friends and family. As seen by her other meta-theme, Laurel values relationships so highly that at times they can preclude her from

focusing on her own needs. She explained she tended to have the most inner-growth on trips or experiences she purposely went on without people she knew,

> I think that when I spend time around other people, I spend most of my energy thinking about everyone else. And I am being Mama-Laurel, making sure that everyone's needs are met, and that everyone is happy, and I do everything I can to maximize enjoyment for everyone else that I do not do it for myself. So sometimes I need a total removal from everyone to say 'You are going on this trip because YOU want to go on this trip.'

Laurel's need for distance to understand her authentic inner-self was only first recognized during the interpretations of the interviews—indicating that both physical distance from others and temporal distance away from the experience is what allowed her to best reflect.

While Laurel's authentic identity seemed strongest when she was away from people most similar to her, Sophia seemed to thrive when she found them. Modestly proud of her intellect and aptitude for academics, Sophia admitted to still having some residual, middle-school self-consciousness for being considered a "nerd." Yet, once she began meeting people who also valued learning, she began to embrace that natural part of her identity. She described joining a summer camp focused on intellectual activities,

> It was really important for me because they were all really smart kids, but they were normal as well . . . and I saw that it was okay to be smart . . . and you are not a nerd because you like to learn, because there were plenty of super-cool people there who also liked to learn. And I learned that I liked spending time around people who have that same kind of mindset and have that same passion for learning.

Sophia's passions led her to many new experiences in high school that reinforced the conscientious, prudent qualities in herself that she was proud of. Some of these are further explored in her meta-theme on core values, but the same internal qualities she was pleased with also posed disorienting dilemmas for her. For example, with self-deprecating honesty, she describes how she felt taking part in an unavoidable adolescent rite of passage—Truth or Dare:

> I remember they were playing Truth or Dare, and they were talking about all these things that I thought were really scandalous . . . I was trying to play it cool, and I was trying to pretend like I was okay with what was going on, but inside I was very unsure and scared .

Self-exposing games like Truth or Dare can cause disorienting dilemmas for an adolescent who is comparing her values with others'. Times like these were memorable to Sophia because they tended to illuminate not only who she was, but who she was not.

In fact, Sophia took her search for identity seriously, commenting several times she was not sure exactly what her authentic self would be because she never felt inauthentic. She did, however dislike reducing her identity to a short description. When tasked with writing about herself for college application essays, she explained,

> I know that I am pretty self-reflective anyway, but having to write all those essays and think about what is important to you, and to say how you summarize yourself in three words, and the first thing I learned was that I am not someone who can be summarized in three words, and probably no one can.

Sophia's recognition that she was more than just simple statements aligned with her preference for strong relationships that have helped define her through her adolescence.

Relationships. Both young women identified relationships as an overarching meta-theme in their transcripts, but with slightly different meaning to each. Sophia gradually reassessed her middle school-derived definition of an ideal relationship as a tight-knit, small group of supportive girls into one that was more open and adaptable. Laurel recognized the potential relationships had to open other facets of her personality, and also connect her to a wider world.

In the beginning of high school, Sophia's self-described introverted nature preferred a small group of close friends (which included Laurel) who had similar values—nicknamed the "Inner Circle"—because they offered her a strong support system that helped guide and advise her. Yet as friendships do, this circle of friends slowly changed and members of the group began

developing values that were not always aligned with Sophia's, which caused her to question whether this should affect her relationships. Here Sophia describes a time she realized Laurel was developing differently than she was,

> I was worried that we didn't share the same values anymore, and we were not looking for the same things, and that meant that we couldn't get along and that we couldn't be friends . . . yet I think that because we both developed very strong identities and very strong sense of who we were, we could kind of go at our pace, do our own thing and still share those feelings and experiences with each other.

Later, her realization that it is acceptable for friends to have different values began to infiltrate Sophia's other relationships, causing her to befriend people that earlier she would not have been open to. For example, she approached older students who had previously intimidated her, she enjoyed the multi-age friendships in clubs and on sports teams, and she sought out a group different to her "Inner Circle" when she began losing a connection with them.

Like the summer camp she had found a few years before, later in high school Sophia found another group that offered support to her newer sense of self,

> I started trying to find other places, rather than spending time around this group I didn't want to spend time with. So, I started going to this Humanities center, and I started to know these other people. And it was really great to be able to spend time with people who were very likeminded, who would go in there and have debates about controversial topics for fun, or they would talk about cool projects that they had done for classes, so it was very much fun and academically minded space, which I really appreciated.

As high school progressed, Sophia became more comfortable with consciously creating friendships that were more aligned with her dynamic values, while still respectfully maintaining those that were less aligned. Laurel also became conscious about her relationships and which ones allowed her to be her best self.

As a self-described extrovert, Laurel explained she needed many relationships with various types of people to fulfill her. Yet, the friendships that influenced her most were those that

were emotionally intimate, private, and often with her male friends. As described earlier, Laurel naturally gives care to others, yet it was in her boyfriends that she found her capacity to receive compliments,

> When I am around other people, I am almost always the one delivering the words of affirmation, but I am really uncomfortable receiving them, as it feels almost selfish, or wrong to accept the praise . . . but it is different when I am with someone as girlfriend-boyfriend. In a relationship, there is the expectation that you mutually hold each other to those standards. The reason you are with that person and have chosen to make a commitment to them is that you trust that they see you in that way, because you see them in that way. And if you don't reaffirm that belief, it doesn't reaffirm the relationship . . . Therefore the only time I have found myself comfortable accepting affirmation has been in a setting with a male partner.

The introduction of romantic relationships allowed Laurel to feel affirmation and to recognize all relationships can be based on mutual-receiving rather than only giving. This carried over into her non-romantic relationships as well, but it was notably often with her male friends rather than females. By exploring her closest relationships, Laurel identified a sub-theme of intimacy. She described it as, "not the physical kind, but the emotional intimacy . . . like if you are spending a lot of time with someone and having a conversation that you can't have regularly, where you are really expressing yourself and being honest." This kind of intimacy was at the core of Laurel's best friendships, regardless of gender and she realized she needed this connection to be vulnerable and act most authentic. For example, she described a special bond between her and a group of guys,

> It was always really nice to have people I could be open and really expressive with—and that is how I always saw these guys. They were my go-to-people who nothing was hidden from . . . because around people I tend to act in a way I see as best suited to them. But around these boys, I felt removed and that I didn't have to act differently and I otherwise would.

Laurel realized her extroverted personality allowed her to fit into many social circles, but she tended to grow most when she was able to share her deepest feelings with others. In a

relationship with her mentor Jon, she was introduced to positive qualities in herself that he noticed first,

> I had a hard time understanding 'how could he even see these things?' . . . and I think that is because I don't often take the time to recognize that I have those qualities. But when he so firmly expressed his belief in those qualities in me, it made me more comfortable embracing them, and appreciating them myself.

Laurel and Sophia remind us it is often through our relationships with others that we come to understand ourselves. The specific characters in their relationships and their roles are readdressed in forthcoming sections.

Similar Meta-Themes: Positivity, positive reconstruction and leadership, relational leadership. While the themes are not exactly alike, Sophia and Laurel also shared similar themes of positivity and positive reconstruction; and leadership and relational leadership. Their similarities and differences are explored here.

***Positivity and positive reconstruction*.** Though they share the same root-word, these two themes have a distinctive difference. Each signifies the young women's preference for positive energy, yet Laurel's theme of positive reconstruction also confesses a tendency to remember only positive memories.

While reading her transcripts, Laurel recognized she purposely chose positive memories to speak about because they were easier to remember, but later she was able to recall shades of frustration, sadness and despair she had previously ignored. She realized this was a common habit of hers,

> I censor my own memories. I think back to high school and in my memory, everything is brilliant. I loved every moment—it was an awesome time—I never cried, I was never unhappy—that sort of feeling. But I definitely self-censor both in hindsight and in current times. It's just that I have a very, very strong belief in positivity and optimism as the way you get through things.

Yet, Laurel's positivity also had the ability to mask some real feelings that needed to be understood, which tended to emerge later. She described she would, "really suppress those negative emotions and I really didn't deal with them at all. Then suddenly, they would rise up to the surface and completely overwhelm me." Learning to deal with a wide-variety of emotions was a meaningful process for Laurel that influenced her ability to reflect on her transformative experiences.

Sophia on the other hand, had little trouble remembering non-positive memories for those were the ones that were often quite disorienting for her. She spoke about wanting to partake in positive activities—those that aligned with her values—and preferred atmospheres of support and optimism over cynicism and drama. This extended beyond her friend groups and into her extra-curricular activities. A specific experience in volleyball allowed her to discover she did not respond well to her coach's approach to motivation,

> She was a very negative person and her feedback was all negative, and kind of screaming and not a lot of encouragement, and I think one of the big things I learned that year was that I don't respond to that negative feedback. I knew that I could take constructive feedback, but when it was kind of surrounded in that such negative environment, it really just brought me down and it didn't help me at all.

This main coach was juxtaposed by the assistant coach, who gave Sophia the opposite attention,

> She was so much more positive, and she gave me good feedback, and because she was so encouraging and positive, without her I don't know what I would have done, because she really helped balance out the negativity from the main coach.

Sophia consciously recognized her preference for positive interactions and as a result, allowed that to influence her leadership style.

Leadership and relational leadership. Inspired by role models and her own preference for inclusivity, as Sophia explored her leadership development she noticed a symbiotic relationship between her own confidence and her ability to bring many diverse types of people

together, “My leadership style in general was very much trying to include everyone, and trying to create a positive atmosphere.” Seemingly she longed to create the kind of atmosphere she would be most comfortable in, thus increasing the confidence of everyone. Sophia explained that the moment this was most obvious to her was when she and Laurel led their final trip to India and she became aware of how others appreciated her leadership style,

> I think it naturally came out that I really cared about this project because I am really enthusiastic, and this project was my baby, so I think that it was pretty clear. And definitely as a senior, I was trying to be a role model and someone that they could look up to, and when one of the girls started looking up to me—and even though we didn’t get super-close, just knowing that somebody saw me as a role model, really warmed my heart.

Similar to Sophia, Laurel based some of her leadership style on how she would have liked to experience being led. Specifically, that included relational components.

During the interpretation process, Laurel recognized the majority of her most successful leadership experiences involved her using her relationships to inspire and guide others. For example, although she was not the fastest swimmer, Laurel was captain of her swim team, in part because she was able to connect and unite the team in a unique way. She described,

> For me, it was a way to see my natural leadership emerge and to confirm how important building and maintaining the relationships can be even when you are not necessarily the most qualified. I really think it helped me cement that identity of being a motherly figure who helped guide and take the lead and who wasn’t overbearing, and yet still was collected and able to really help.

This role reinforced Laurel’s belief that she did not necessarily need to be the most skillful to impact the team, but one who could work closely with all types of people to help solve problems and encourage cooperation. She labeled this relational leadership and identified this as a skill of hers. The young women’s’ preference for positivity in leadership is relevant when viewing the

events they considered to be self-described transformative incidents because sometimes these beliefs were challenged.

Sophia's Meta-Themes: Core Values, Commitment, and Social Confidence

Sophia's individual meta-themes speak to the fact that she is one who is aware of her value-set and acts with reverence to them as she explores her emerging self.

Core values. As indicated thus far, it is obvious Sophia holds certain core values very dear to her identity, and it was when these were threatened she felt most disoriented. For example, after a ninth grade influential humanities course asked students to re-evaluate their lifestyles for the benefit of the Earth, Sophia grappled with how her conservative values conflicted with her desire to travel,

> I was having an inner conflict about how to live a sustainable lifestyle while not giving up things I like to do, and being an active member of my family and going along with the school and their expectations.

This type of inner conflict plagued Sophia more than she perceived it did her peers, and it would occur several more times in high school, usually when Sophia found herself in social situations where she needed to choose between her morals and peer acceptance.

She was not immune to peer-pressure, but somehow avoided making decisions not aligned with her values. She describes a party in ninth grade,

> Back then, I think I was a little more susceptible to what everyone else was doing. But at the same time, I think I still had a very strong sense of 'I will not be peer pressured into anything'. I have always been very strong-willed in that regard. And I don't know if any lessons of peer-pressure got to me, or if it is my character in general, but I guess in most situations in which people said, 'Oh, try this' and I didn't want to, I had no trouble saying, 'No thanks'.

This commitment to her beliefs could be considered the norm for Sophia, but of course there were also exceptions. As she began to write essays for her college application process, she explained there was a conflict between,

> Wanting to be someone who places a lot of value on name recognition versus someone who values a good education . . . I think I felt more peer pressure to get into a top named school and I think I let that peer pressure affect me much more than in almost any there decision I made in high school . . . it was really one of the only times where I let that pressure get to my head.

Recalling Sophia's themes on identity and relationships, she felt most authentic when she surrounded herself with other intellectual people, thus her desire to go to a top school makes much more sense. This means that one could argue choosing between two of her internal values may be less representative of external peer pressure than she originally thought.

Commitment. Of the values that Sophia mentioned, one in particular stood out—her appreciation for commitment in herself and others. Credited to her father's influence, Sophia committed herself to nearly everything she put her mind to: sports, school, jobs, and relationships. She viewed commitment as a responsibility not just to oneself but to something greater—whether that was a team or the entire world. There were times it was difficult for her to recognize this was not always valued by others and she explained, "It just baffled me! I just didn't understand how you couldn't value or honor the commitment you made!" She described an experience during a service opportunity when her peers did not know how to interact with a group of disabled people as they worked,

> I was feeling a bit more disappointed that they were not taking it more seriously, and I felt that specifically when we would go to see the kids with disabilities, a lot of people tried it at first, but then they did their own thing, because they didn't really understand how to play with those kids because they thought it was too hard.

Watching her peers disengage because of their discomfort was noticeably disheartening to Sophia because she too felt uncomfortable, but persisted through it. This sentiment was recaptured years later when she pushed through a tedious task during her summer internship at an orphanage,

> I was determined that even if it was boring, I was going to do it well. I remember getting into this flow one of the days I had to clean the high chairs for the babies, and I remember that I sat there for two hours cleaning and I was really proud of myself for being so hard working—because some of the other interns were really complaining. And internally I was not happy about it, but externally I was quite proud that I was able to kind of put my head down and just work, even if I didn't like it all.

It is important to note Sophia's strength of character in all these examples, because it provides a foundation for the assumptions and beliefs that can be questioned in her self-described transformative incidents explored in a future section. Also notable is that despite her confidence for commitment, Sophia struggled all throughout high school with social confidence.

Social confidence. If asked to describe herself before 9th grade, Sophia would say she was, "very shy, very awkward, I had a hard time talking to new people, and being in new social situations with people I was not used to." She was admittedly insecure and unsure of herself in the beginning of high school, and this residual lack of confidence caused her to be especially sensitive to her social standings in both the small groups she was a part of and the whole school in general. She had a fear of the upper-classmen as a freshman—thinking they were more "cool and accomplished" than she was. She explains it eloquently,

> Well depending on my perceived disparity between our social capital, or social-levels between us, I was more and more reluctant to get involved. Or I think it is just that when I felt less confident, and not in my element or if I felt less powerful I was definitely very reluctant to get involved.

She described being overtly aware of when she was on the bottom of the "social food-chain" and would rarely interact with anyone perceived to be more "prestigious, powerful, or more socially

prominent" than she. This was especially uncomfortable when she would attend school trips where she would be forced to spend time with people she was intimidated by. She relives a trip from ninth grade,

> I think that I probably felt at least mildly uncomfortable the whole trip . . . I was mildly on edge and guarded and very aware of the situation . . . Once I was in the doorway and remember being so paralyzed because I had my tray and I didn't know where to sit down and I was so scared and anxious and I think that was the feeling that happened a lot . . . those feelings of being anxious and really scared and lonely.

Again, this anxiety is relevant to note as it gradually decreased over time and specific incidents where it was less obvious to her felt especially transformative for Sophia.

Laurel's Meta-Themes: Perceptiveness, Non-complacency, and True Service

Laurel's individual meta-themes speak to the fact that she is aware of her dynamic, adaptable nature and how it can influence others.

Perceptiveness. One of the personal qualities Laurel was unaware of until this study was just how perceptive she is. She explained she had the tendency to be "really aware of what other people saw me as, and interpreted me as, it really shaped the way I acted myself." Mostly her adaptability has been helpful to Laurel, but at times is also can feel as if she wears several masks. In fact, this explains why she prefers to spend time with friends she feels most comfortable with, where all masks are unnecessary.

This perceptiveness extended to more than just people, but places as well. She describes this ability,

> I think I am perceptive of the energy of people and my surroundings, and I believe that manifests itself through how I build my relationships and also how I read locations, and then adapt myself to fit them better. So I think that a lot of what I see as a changing personality that I have, or changing needs, actually may potentially be me reading my environment, and then acting in response in the best way to adapt to that location.

This skill is important to note because it comes so naturally to Laurel that when it is not present, it causes her to pause and question her discomfort and disorientation. This is also captured by her tendency to choose action over inaction.

Non-complacency. Upon first read, Laurel was not sure what to call this meta-theme, perhaps because it could have been given other names like, "high-achievement," "wanderlust," "visionary," or "non-stagnation"; but instead she prefers non-complacency. Overall, Laurel is not one to sit still and let life pass by her. This comes in many forms: her academics, relationships, service, and a general lust for life. Her excitement for the "next thing" or "something new" is contagious, which is also why she notices when she is stuck in between two phases of her life and is forced to reflect and reassess.

She explains that she is the type of person who, "wants to figure something out right away and move on. I don't like having to wait and grapple with it and figure it out." She elaborates that it is not necessarily the reflection that bothers her, but the inactivity,

> If I am not doing something or being productive, I feel like I am not making progress. I really don't like stagnation . . . or that idea that I am not using the tools that I have to do something—especially for someone else. I think that is why I have been trained and have access to these materials, so I can DO something with them. So it makes me frustrated with myself more than anything else, or anyone else, when I can't reconcile something personally, so cannot act.

When Laurel has had moments of grappling, they have stuck out in her mind because she admits she is still confused about how life's ambiguity fits with her habit of non-complacency.

While participating in a service opportunity in Ecuador, Laurel had an ambiguous moment where she felt she needed to choose between two personas: A "cowboy," someone who personally engages with those she serves; or a "statistician," someone who works with populations from afar. This seemingly dualistic choice plagued her for the entire trip, causing her

to become disoriented by the lack of action she was able to take. She further describes this moment,

> I found for myself where I personally stand and how I balance my actions in service as statistician versus the emotion I invest in it [as a cowboy]. And I think that really did impact how I moved forward with things . . . I now analyze how I can be most effective for a community, because the community has something that they need to develop themselves. And they may need assistance in attaining the tools to achieve that development, which is where I can help.

This need to take action in a responsible, balanced way is illustrative of Laurel's definition of true service.

True service. Laurel chose the adjective true to describe service, because she is overtly aware there are more and less effective forms of how to serve others. Like Sophia, she seems to have an idealistic view of true service that consists of sharing, exchanging, and empowering others versus giving—or worse, taking. She explains part of her philosophy of true service comes from the fact that she was given tools she believes she now must share with others,

> I believe it is my responsibility. I am not a believer in taking. I am believer in exchanging. When I see how much these tools helped me, it means that they can help other people just as much . . . because if I break the cycle and say, 'Thanks for all the resources you have given me, and thanks for the tools, but I am going to go do something different that is just going to better myself . . . ' the resources haven't been wasted, but they haven't been used to their full potential. We are all really connected and if the last generation had invested in me, I need to invest in the next generation if I want them to be able to do what I am doing and more.

This mutualistic exchange is Laurel's form of true service because everyone is benefitting.

One of the benefits Laurel receives is the tendency for these experiences to be transformative for her, bringing her to a new level of understanding during and after participating, which is how she can differentiate true service from normal service. Here she describes how her first trip to India teaching an empowerment curriculum had this effect,

> For me, I finally found a type of service that I felt was filled with much more meaning . . . We were going in and instead of saying. 'Listen to me, I have done this correctly' . . . we said, 'I have been empowered by someone else and I want to see you reach that same stage. Because it has made a huge difference in my life and I think it can make a huge difference in yours' . . . That first India trip was a transformative experience for my understanding of service . . . it was a program that felt very even – it felt like a sharing of knowledge more than an act of service. Which to me, made more interconnectedness or true progress, as we were helping another person develop, not through having to serve them, but through allowing them to serve themselves by providing them the tools.

This preference for sharing what she has learned with others is relevant to Laurel's choices of self-described incidents discussed below.

How Does an Adolescent Experience Self-Described Transformation?

The interviews offered an in-depth look at how adolescents experience high school and the self-described transformative incidents during that time. Here, we explore which of these incidents the co-researchers believed were most aligned to the literature's definition of transformative learning.

Self-described incidents. After being introduced to O'Sullivan et al.'s (2002) definition of transformative learning, Laurel and Sophia were able to determine which of the self-described transformative incidents from their interviews were most aligned with the theory. Below is each co-researcher's table of incidents, with columns that represent a Yes, No, and Maybe alignment with the definition. In order to highlight the term self-described, I have chosen to keep Laurel's and Sophia's descriptions of the incidents full length and unedited.

While this section does not contain background information on the incidents, the richness of the young women's descriptions offers the reader an indication of the perceptions and meanings these events held for Sophia and Laurel. Detailed information about the specific components of the each will be covered in forthcoming sections. Also, before detailing twelve of

the incidents that were definitely considered transformative, it is important to also know why the co-researchers determined some were not aligned with the definition.

Of the 21 experiences discussed, Sophia chose 10 incidents from high school to include in her Yes column, seven incidents in the No column and four in the Maybe column (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Sophia's Transformative Incidents

Sophia's Transformative Incidents		
Yes	No	Maybe
Thailand HFH (9)	Captain Volleyball + Basketball (10)	MMLA (9)
Humanities 1 in Action (9)	India #2 (11)	Foshan (9)
Ecuador (10)	Basketball (11)	APAC Band (9)
India #1 (10)	Unproductive Summer (11)	Crossroads Project (9)
Softball Dream Team (10)	Softball (11)	
Mother's Choice (11)	Taiwan (12)	
Volleyball (11)	Productive Summer (12)	
College Application Process (12)		
Senioritis (12)		
Senior Project + India #3 (12)		

Sophia explains why she determined these seven incidents were not aligned with O'Sullivan's et al. (2002) definition,

> When I was deciding whether my self-identified significant events were in fact transformative, as portrayed by the definition provided, I asked myself whether I could clearly identify a change in my thoughts, feelings, or behavior that could be credited to the event, even if that change manifested itself within a larger time frame. I saw this as the fundamental idea behind the transformative event definition we were working with. The events I placed in the No column were events I felt didn't significantly change any part of me. I think I had initially chosen a lot of them because they were especially memorable and important at the time, but once I reconsidered them I realized that after experiencing the event I remained largely the same person. Many of these events took

> part outside of my normal routine, in foreign countries or special one-time events, and so provided an opportunity to test what parts of myself I carried to new environments and what parts were dependent on my normal environment. So although they were great opportunities to test out previous transformations in new environments, the events themselves did not cause transformations.

As mentioned, Sophia could not determine that these events had actually transformed her, but instead were more memorable or significant moments in her life when she was able to recognize how prior inner changes had manifested externally.

Of the 24 experiences discussed in the interview, Laurel chose 12 incidents for her Yes column, 11 incidents in her No column and one in her Maybe column (see Table 4.2). She explains why 11 incidents were considered not aligned with the definition,

> The events I deemed not transformative were classified as such as they were either: a) part of a larger period of transition and not the most defining or impactful moment, or b) confirmation of a transformation that had already begun to occur within me. One example of the first type is GuFuPu. This trip was important because I met Jon on it, but it wasn't until I spent the summer in China and developed my relationship with Jon that his mentorship and presence caused transformation in me. Other experiences with the same justification for not being transformative include: Foshan, Humanities in Action, and the swim team in grades 10-11. I labeled Hamara Sapna as "not transformative" for the second reason. I visited Hamara Sapna about a year after piloting the Empowerment Program, and it was my first time seeing an empowerment model being used in the "real world"; however, it did not expose me to the idea of empowerment, but instead reinforced my new belief that it was a more true form of service than what I had previously done. Other events that confirmed previous transformations include: Teaching4Tomorrow, India #2, Senator of Service, and India #3.

Table 4.2

Laurel's Transformative Incidents

Laurel's Transformative Incidents		
Yes	No	Maybe
India #1 (9)	Foshan (9)	Swim Team (12)
SAS (10)	Humanities in Action (9)	
Ecuador (10)	Hamara Sapna (10)	
Relationship with Jon (11)	Swim Team (10)	
Empowerment Handbook (12)	Swim Team (11)	
Israel (12)	GuFuPu (11)	
Mama Laurel (gradual)	India #2 (11)	
Relational Leadership (gradual)	Teaching4Tomorrow (11-12)	
Identity (gradual)	Senator of Service (12)	
True Service (gradual)	India #3 (12)	
Relationships/Boyfriends (gradual)	Me to We + Craig (12)	
Working with Katie (gradual)		

Similar to Sophia, Laurel sensed the No-column events were more of an indication of her growth and transformation from previous experiences, rather than catalysts for new transformation. Now, each co-researcher will describe why she chose six of the incidents as particularly transformative.

Sophia's self-described transformative incidents. Sophia explains both why she chose these six (of ten) events in general and then specifies how each event aligns with her understanding of O'Sullivan et al.'s (2002) transformative learning theory's definition:

> I identified these events as transformative because when I compared versions of myself from before and after the event I could clearly identify differences in my perspective, thinking, or actions that could be attributed to the event. These changes didn't always occur within the time frame of the event itself or even immediately after the event occurred, but looking back I can trace certain changes in myself back to these events.
>
> Humanities 1 in Action (Grade 9). I knew immediately that my freshman Humanities 1 in Action class was transformative because I could easily and clearly identify differences in my thinking and worldview from before and after taking the class. Before taking this class, I'd already developed a strong sense of the poverty present in the world and a passion for addressing that inequality. However, I had felt very removed

from other people's suffering and I felt responsible to address it because I was lucky enough to live a privileged life and not because I felt any guilt or blame for the inequality. This class totally changed my perspective in that regard. I learned about the darker sides of human nature, about atrocious genocides that were happening around the world even as we learned about them, and about the environmental degradation that seemed to be unsolvable. All of a sudden, I could see that so many of my lifestyle choices were contributing to the inequality and environmental destruction that we were learning about. At the same time, I didn't want to give up luxuries like travel and meat even though I knew that they had negative impacts on the environment. I ended the class feeling very overwhelmed and conflicted between my yearning to make a positive impact on the world and living a comfortable lifestyle that contradicted those goals.

Thailand Habitat for Humanity (Grade 9). Although I didn't fully realize it at the time, the Thailand HFH was extremely transformative because it challenged my view that all I needed to make a change in the world was passion and a belief that I could. Then, although I brought both of these on the Thailand trip I was still dissatisfied with the service we were doing. Through reflection and other more fulfilling service experiences, I realized that this was because I was seeing that my passion and good-intentions weren't enough and that I needed to contribute real skills to the community I was working in.

India #1 (Grade 10). While I think my involvement with the India trips and subsequent empowerment program has been transformative as a whole, I think the first time I attended the India interim trip was especially transformative because it first introduced me to the concept of empowerment. The trip showed me a more efficient method of service that I felt was more fulfilling than the types of service I had been exposed to before, especially my interim trip the year before when I'd felt dissatisfied with my Habitat for Humanity experience. On the India trip, I felt that I was matching my talents with a real need in the Ambur community, rather than barging into a community with good intentions but without the real skills needed to help. Another reason the trip was so impactful was because I felt like I was doing "real service." The teaching was often tough and frustrating but when I persisted through I felt that I was really making a difference with my students. I think the challenge of the teaching made the experience feel like a "truer" and more "authentic" form of service. It allayed a lot of the fears I had built during the previous year in Humanities 1 in Action and on the Habitat for Humanity interim trip about not finding an appropriate outlet where I could use my personal skills to make a difference. In India, I felt that my leadership and teaching skills were directly connected to the cause we were addressing.

Volleyball season (Grade 11). I chose my 11th grade volleyball season as a transformative event because I could see that the event dramatically challenged basic assumptions I had about myself and how the world worked. Prior to this season, I strongly believed that if I worked hard enough I could achieve anything I wanted to. I also had an image of myself as a top performer who could push past any barrier thrown my way, but after I failed to push past the challenges I faced in this season I saw that the world is much more random and complicated than I originally thought. I saw that I couldn't control everything that happened to me and that I had to learn to try my best and accept that some factors were out of my control.

College application process (Grade 12). I identified the college application process as a transformative event because while going through the process I remember many of my usual routines, moods, and perspectives were disrupted and warped as I became completely consumed by thinking about applying to college. I felt especially that the life-work balance and positive thinking strategies I had developed throughout high school fell apart, and I found myself extremely unproductive and unhappy for a majority of the school year. After the process was over, I think I carried those memories with me and they pushed me to prioritize a healthy and happy lifestyle more than I ever had before. Another reason I thought the application process was transformative is because it challenged my belief that if I worked hard enough towards a goal I could achieve it. This belief was challenged by my experience with volleyball in 11th grade, but the application process further facilitated the transformation of my perspective. During the process, I saw students get accepted and rejected from top schools in a way that seemed random and unrelated to their achievements. In my high school environment, almost everything I strived for could be realized through hard work, but in the college application process I saw that despite my, or any students' hard work throughout high school, they might not be accepted to their top choice school while seemingly unqualified students were. Throughout the process and afterwards I became much more aware that outside of the school environment I could not totally control my fate, that many factors were controlled by other people, and that I could only control my reaction to the outcome.

Senior project empowerment handbook (Grade 12**).** I identified my senior project experience as a transformative event because it felt to me like a "removal" from regular life where I was able to demonstrate creativity and mastery on a level I had never achieved before. After the experience was finished I knew that this kind of work, that combined real passion and an application of the academic and personal skills I've accumulated, was the kind of work that satisfied and fulfilled me. Since the senior project experience I've tried to chase the same kind of fulfilling work in other aspects of my life.

These specific six events caused a noticeable, deep structural shift in Sophia's thoughts, feelings, and actions. Laurel also experienced these types of changes.

Laurel's self-described transformative incidents. Laurel explains why she chose these events as transformative incidents, and details six (of 12) of her Yes incidents below:

> These events were identified as transformative because from them I can trace definite changes in my identity, worldview, or actions. Each event can be clearly linked to one or multiple personal changes. In some cases, these transformations were obvious as they occurred, but in others, I only became aware of the changes as I reflected on them at a later time.
>
> India #1 (Grade 9). My first time delivering the Empowerment Program in India answered the pressing question, "What is true service?" for me. It came as a resolution to a long period of questioning about the idea of voluntourism versus "true" service. Subsequently, the program provoked a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of my

actions regarding service work by teaching me how to deliver empowerment programs, instead of simply basic language classes, as I had been involved in before. To me, it felt like I was truly making a difference with my service, as I was not providing handouts, but was instead building skills and giving the local students tools to improve their own communities. This new knowledge and experience left me feeling empowered and like I had the potential to positively touch the lives of others. It also evolved my understanding of my relation to others in the international system of class and power and how I have the potential to bring about greater social justice and peace through providing tools to others so they are able to create their own change.

Moving to a new school (Grade 10). Moving to a new school provided the necessary distance and opportunity for readjustment that made it possible to maximize my personal joy with regards to academia and social relationships. By leaving an environment I had lived in for six years, I was given the opportunity to redefine my social and academic needs. This meant that I was able to escape the pressure to push myself over the edge academically that I had felt at my old school. It also allowed me to step back from the all-girls social group I had surrounded myself with at my old school, and realize that I needed more male friends to share my humor and relax with. Moving to the new school and entering a new environment with different academic and social expectations prompted reflection that allowed me to recognize my personal needs in these two areas, and even touched on the confirmation of my confidence in my own body image. Reflection led to subsequent action towards finding a new way of living and interacting that fulfilled my newly recognized needs.

Ecuador (Grade 10)**.** My time in Ecuador was one of overwhelming questioning. I felt that I was unable to resonate with the local community, as its socioeconomic status and access to resources were greater than those of others I had encountered in previous service experiences. This lack of external connection led me to internally question what I had previously understood as how service was to be conducted, and that it was primarily based upon relationships built with the local community. The lack of connection also made me feel that I was calloused and committed simply to decreasing the statistics of inequality instead of actually forming new bonds. Discussions with my trip leaders, personal questioning and reflection, and support from my closest friend during the trip settled the internal worldview questions raised over the course of the program. I was able to develop a new understanding of my balance between the "small" and "large" pictures in service, redefining my understanding of my own service work as well as the relationship I have with those I serve.

Relationship with Jon (Grade 11)**.** Jon is an individual who served not only as a catalyst, but also as a support and reflective partner in my development. He went out of his way to dedicate time to my personal growth through building a close and open relationship with me, pushing me into new leadership positions, while all the while walking me through the challenges I faced along the way. While working with Jon over the summer, he always made time available to talk through what I was thinking. Many nights were spent discussing personal expectations of ourselves, fears, our shared service experiences, and thoughts about potential future plans. Only ten years older than me, Jon and all he had accomplished at such a young age served as a model and motivator for me. Jon helped shift my understanding of myself through empowerment, as he is an

> individual I can discuss anything with, and who instilled in me the impetus to take greater action with regards to service and personal relationships. The confidence, time, and energy he dedicated to me has inspired me to do the same with others in order to pass on the connection that impacted me so deeply.
>
> Empowerment Handbook Senior Project (Grade 12). What impacted me so greatly about designing the Empowerment Handbook was that it provided the opportunity for Sophia and me to create a service-learning tool completely from scratch. To me, this meant a shift in my self-location, as I had come full-circle from initially piloting and leading the Empowerment Program, to now developing a curriculum and structure that would allow it to continue to flourish for years to come. It served as the culmination of my empowerment journey, as I was able to fundamentally shift my actions to put the skills and time that had been invested in me into ensuring those opportunities would be provided for others involved in the program. Furthermore, the unbelievably high level of faith and trust adults in our community placed in Sophia and I through this process shifted my understanding of myself in the community social hierarchy and my relationship with older individuals in my school. The successful development, completion, and expansion of the program left me feeling that I was even more capable of bringing about social justice and peace in the international and service-learning community.
>
> Israel (Grade 12). My family trip to Israel was a transformative experience in my spiritual journey. My personal spirituality had always been an underlying question I had faced due to my mixed-faith background, however, prior to this trip, I never felt compelled to make a decision as to what faith I dedicated myself to. It was a question that had arisen but that I had successfully suppressed in order to address other areas of interest in my life that I felt I could make better progress on. However, this trip brought the question of spirituality to the forefront of my mind and consciousness, and shifted my basic thoughts, feelings, and actions regarding religion. I felt a sense of connection to Jerusalem that I can't describe other than a feeling of having been there before, or a warmth that came from knowing that I was connecting with something greater than myself.

Laurel recognized shifts in her beliefs, self-location, and place in a greater community. Some of these changes in consciousness coincided with one-time events, while others were a gradual, incremental process. Both Laurel and Sophia were able to further illustrate these transformative events in visual representations explored in a forthcoming section. These incidents can be broken down into their components to better understand their holistic influence on the co-researchers.

What are the components of a self-described transformative incident? The hermeneutic circle of phenomenological research implores the practice of understanding both the parts and the whole to gain a more holistic interpretation of a phenomenon. Sophia and Laurel provided an articulate and intimate depiction of whole experiences above, and here I will provide a depiction of the parts. Each of the twelve incidents above were dissected into the components of Where, When, With Whom, Why, and How it occurred.

Below are the patterns of characteristics that were identified in the components of the 12 total events Sophia and Laurel dissected. This was an emergent process and all of the characteristics within each component were mentioned at least once by either young woman, but many of them were shared. Graphics depict the amount of times the specific components were mentioned in the six incidents detailed by each co-researcher. Each characteristic has a numerical frequency out of six next to it.

Where. Transformative experiences were not only found in physical spaces, but also abstract ones such as outside of a comfort zone, and within one's mind (Figure 4.1). Surprisingly, the two places one would assume adolescents spend the most time—home and school—had very few incidents of transformative learning. Instead, the data suggests novel situations and extracurricular settings outside of a comfort zone—such as foreign country or typically "adult" settings (like a bar or private apartment)—tend to have more influence on transformations. Both young women described the best environments to trigger transformations were those that were safe, but challenging.

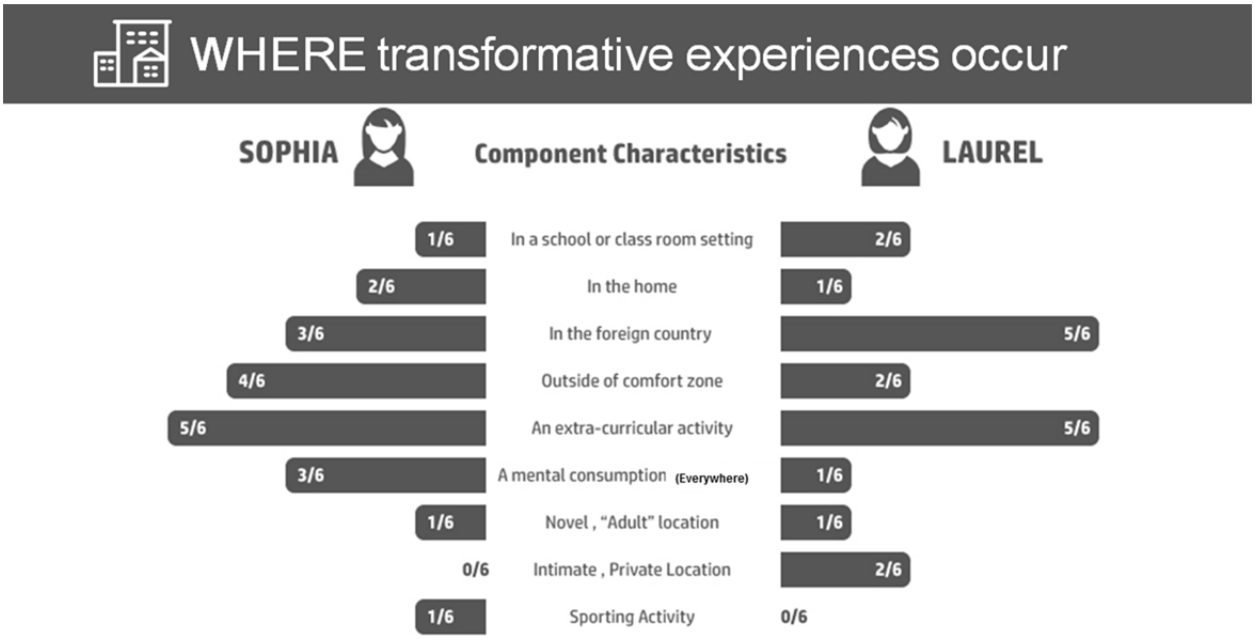

Figure 4.1. Where transformative experiences occur.

Laurel mentioned she is noticeably affected by the energy of a physical space and was particularly affected by a classroom in India and the streets of Israel, both of which seemed to give off a warm, emotional, and embracing energy. She described being able to pick up on and amplify the energy of space, for example the sacredness of Israel triggered her to think about issues of spirituality. While Sophia was less affected by the physical spaces, she was articulate about being affected by the all-consuming mental experiences that demanded her to use different types of thinking, synthesizing, and creating. Long-term projects and essay-writing prompted critical self-reflection that triggered internal identity-development and external behavior changes.

When. Figure 4.2 explores the amount of times that Laurel and Sophia's transformative experiences occurred and at which points they happened during their high school career. While they seemed to be evenly distributed throughout high school, a few occurred in as little as one day, most were between one week and one month, and some were as long as one year. While Sophia had three experiences that were intermittent, Laurel only had one.

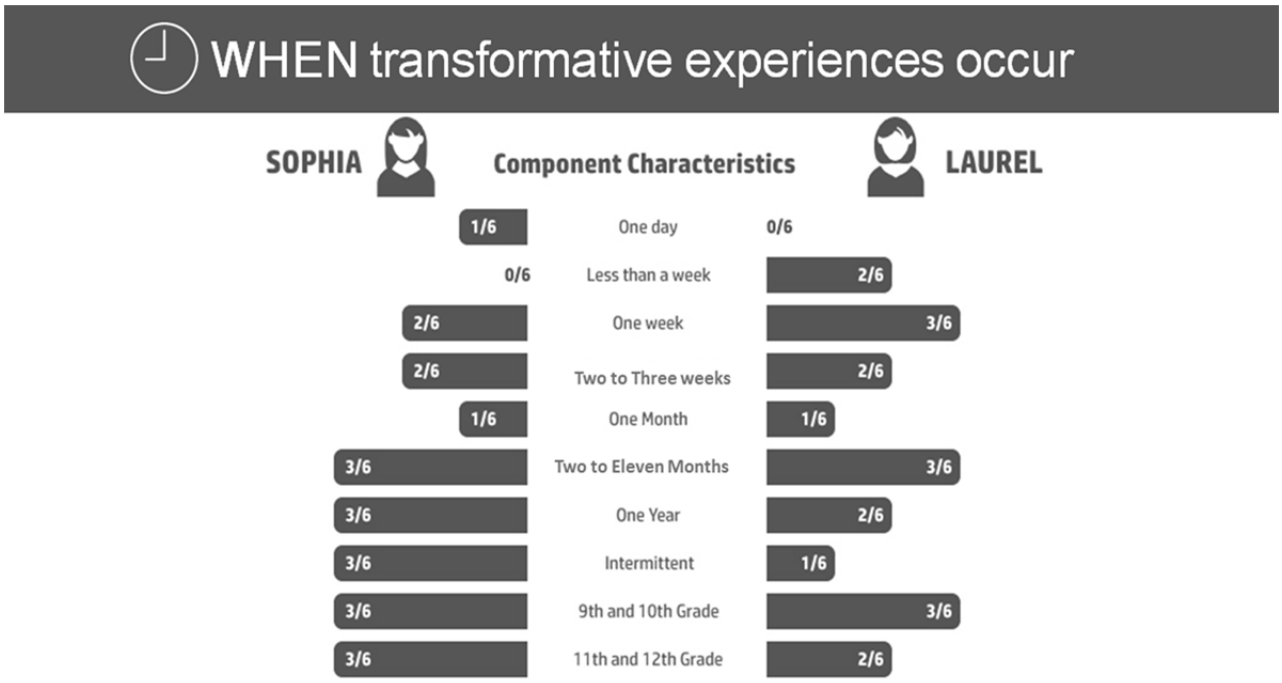

Figure 4.2. When transformative experiences occur.

The experiences that occurred in less than a week tended to be high-fidelity moments that caused the young women to question and reevaluate their assumptions about who they were. For example, Sophia's one-night attendance at a house-party outside of her comfort zone was an important moment for her to question and confirm her changing identity. Laurel's few days working with a group of adults who trusted her with "adult-like" responsibilities challenged, but validated her maturation and abilities.

Longer and intermittent experiences tended to be tied to school-based or ongoing projects that were not easily solvable and caused the young women to continuously question the processes they used to complete them. For example, Sophia spent nearly one year in a constant state of reflection while writing her college application essays, and Laurel spent nine months in a new school recalibrating to a version of herself she felt was more authentic.

With whom. Not all of the transformative experiences occurred solitarily, but some did (See Figure 4.3). The list of who my co-researchers were with highlights the diversity of social interactions that can trigger, support, or help one reflect on their transformation.

The most common person the young women experienced a transformation with was an adult of some kind, however it should be noted that the adults were not always causing the experience, but sometimes helped support them during or afterwards. Some adults were not supportive, but acted as negative catalysts, in that they caused disorienting dilemmas; such as the coach whose negative attitude influenced Sophia to try and prove her wrong, or the parent that disagreed with Laurel's newfound worldview, causing her to recognize how she had shifted while away from family.

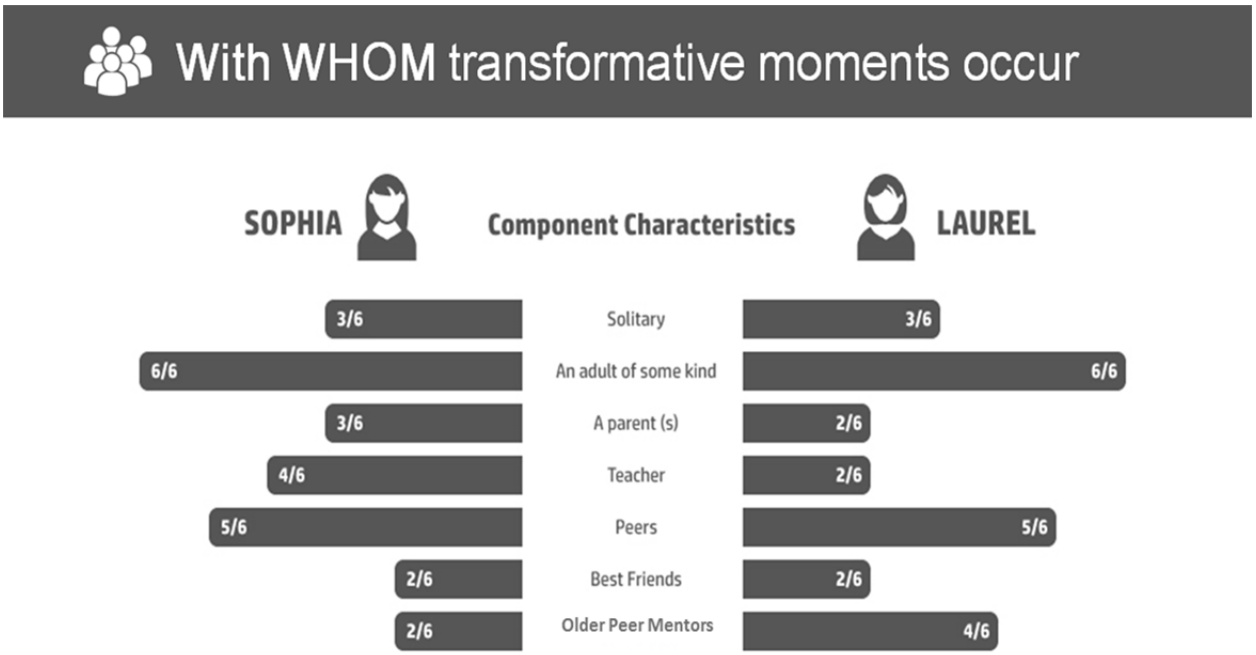

Figure 4.3. With whom transformative moments occur.

Other notable aspects of the adults mentioned by both young women were that the majority of them were male, most had charismatic or admirable qualities, and they were not only from their local environments, but were from foreign contexts as well. Sophia identified more teachers than Laurel, but both young women described teachers' roles as mostly supportive in nature—often confirming that they were on the right track—rather than overtly challenging them. However, some teachers did challenge their thinking as well, like Sophia's experience in her humanities course, which created several disorienting dilemmas.

Both Laurel and Sophia shared many experiences with peers and described them mostly as support structures, but Laurel tended to have more experiences with older peers (between five and ten years older than her), who were profoundly influential for her. Laurel explained older peers were more approachable and they tended to inspire her, and when they spent time together

in private settings, they would often point out attributes within her she had yet to realize. Sophia valued older peers because they were also more amicable than adults and because they were close enough in age to her that they offered a more realistic alternative way of being in the world. For example, both young women described it was mostly older peers or mentors who first introduced them to alternative ideas, beliefs, and ways of living different to what their parents, peers, or best friends would have offered.

Why. Some of the transformative experiences were happenstance, but most were the result of an intention (See Figure 4.4). There were more that were driven by adult motives than by self motives, but both young women felt as if they had consciously chosen to participate in the experiences without coercion.

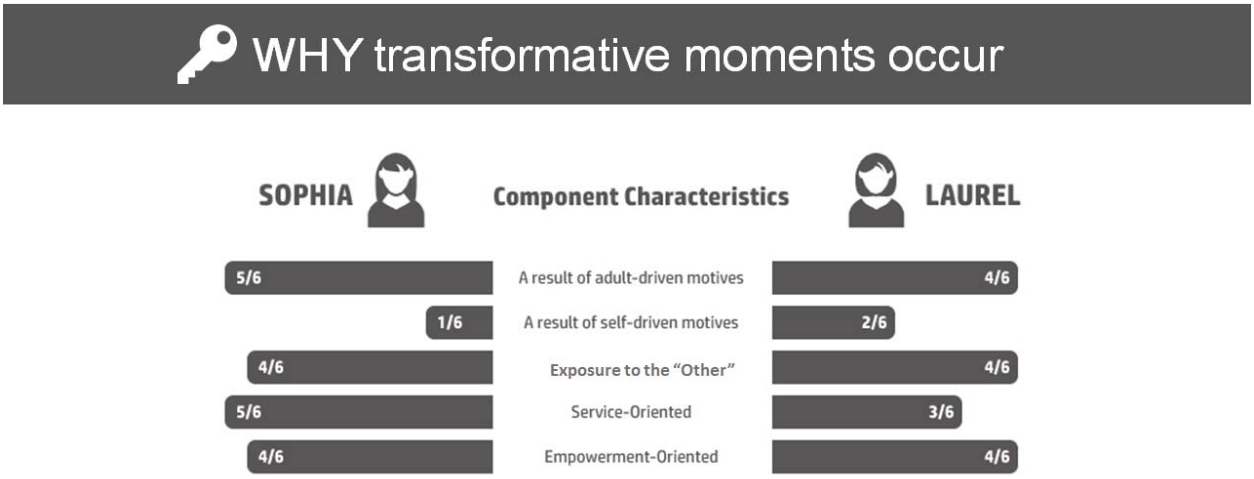

Figure 4.4

Why transformative moments occur.

Adult-driven experiences consisted of examples like teacher-driven assignments, boss-led work initiatives, and parents' choices. Some of these adult-driven experiences had the intention of exposing Laurel and Sophia to the Other, be it through service experiences, or education-based activities—both of which initiated their further development of empathy.

Also many of those service activities, including both of the self-driven ones, dealt with empowerment-based activities. Empowerment was a consistent theme for both young women, because as they designed activities for others they had to consistently reflect on their own empowerment, which caused questioning of assumptions and critical self-reflection.

How. The moments the young women chose were diverse in experience, but the components held some notable patterns (See Figure 4.5). For example both young women cited leadership opportunities, exposure to the Other, doing meaningful or service-based work, and feeling empowered as all significant factors in how a transformative moment occurred.

Specifically, Sophia tended to take advantage of resources like books, articles, and films to use as fodder for self-reflection, while Laurel tended to use more discussion, action-based opportunities. They both valued teaching others and commented it was through the creation of their empowerment curriculum that they engaged in the most critical self-reflection of their young lives.

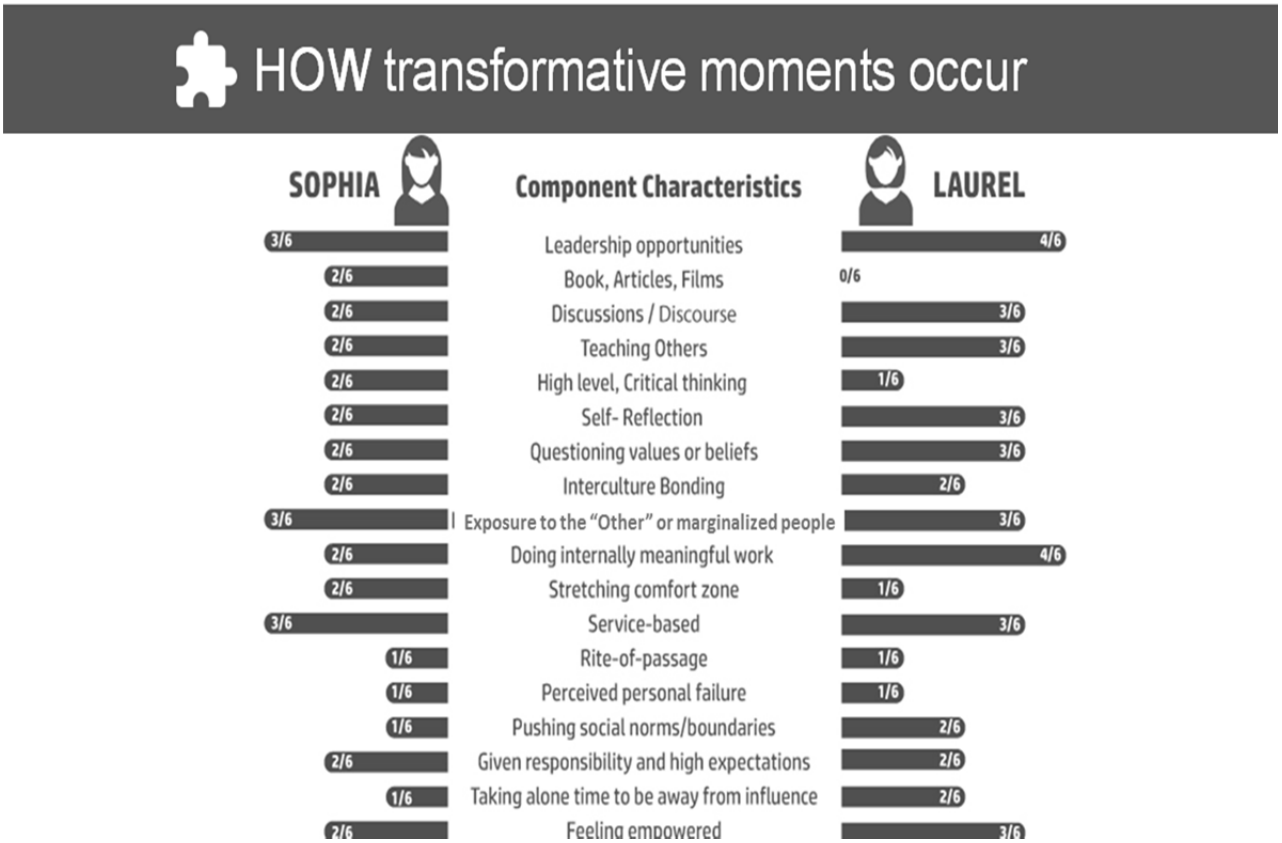

Figure 4.5. How transformative moments occur.

Many of the incidents were positive, yet each of them also experienced a transformation as a result of a perceived failure. Intercultural communication and exposure to marginalized people allowed for the development of deeper empathy. Stretching their comfort zone was considered important, but because their zones were already quite wide, not all incidents pushed that boundary. Sophia spoke more often about pushing internal boundaries, while Laurel spoke about pushing external boundaries within school or community settings.

When working on their senior project, Laurel and Sophia explained they felt extremely motivated by the fact that the project was considered a rite of passage for students at their school. Similarly being given opportunities, responsibilities, and high expectations by adults felt like a

coming-of-age experience that exposed their emerging abilities as young women. These experiences and their components can now be included as evidence for and against the alignment with the theory of transformative learning.

To what extent do adolescent transformative learning incidents align with adult transformative learning? Now that the reader has become familiar with the co-researchers' voices and their self-described transformative incidents, it is important to pull back and revisit the data from a critical lens. Laurel and Sophia have confidently made their case about which events were and were not considered transformative based on O'Sullivan et al.'s (2002) definition of transformative learning and now as the main researcher, I will assert my theoretically-based views of how the data addresses the research questions.

Certainly the young women have given articulate, thorough depictions of their adolescent life-worlds, and we have gathered the components of these experiences—now we must use these descriptions and components to decide to what degree they align with adult theories. I will focus on: comparing the incidents with the theory's concepts from O'Sullivan et al. (2002), Tisdell (2012) and Mezirow (1991, 2000, 2012); share evidence of critical self-reflection; and use the co-researchers' verbal and visual representations to highlight features of the incidents that I believe are unique to adolescents and also suggest how the incidents not believed to be transformative may fall under alternate theories of normative adolescent development.

Do these adolescent incidents align with the literature's definition of adult transformative learning? Here I will highlight the degree with which the young woman's experiences align with transformative learning theories from Mezirow (1991, 2000, 2012), O'Sullivan et al. (2002), and Tisdell (2012).

O'Sullivan et al. As Laurel and Sophia pointed out, the trouble with O'Sullivan et al.'s (2002) definition is that the term shift in consciousness can be widely interpreted, especially because there tends not to be a beginning or end to consciousness. While some of the internal changes could be interpreted as a change in consciousness, most were attributed instead to identity changes, which the co-researchers felt was distinct from consciousness. However, the phrase dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world allowed the young women to recognize there were certain moments that definitely felt irreversible to them. For example, Sophia's experience in her humanities course forever changed her worldview and her relationship with the natural world, causing her to further dedicate herself to service with an emphasis on caring for the environment. Laurel and Sophia's first trip to India permanently changed their definition of true service and also exposed them to a new understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender. They were able to convincingly explain how their India trip single-handedly influenced their pursuit of spreading the empowerment curriculum to marginalized people who historically have been ignored by oppressive forces.

In the interview data, Sophia was clear that her relationship with her assistant volleyball coach was influential because she offered Sophia visions of alternative approaches to living. The assistant coach had come from the same high-pressure international community as Sophia, but had chosen well-rounded, healthy ways of living instead of a high-stress, high-performance way

of being. According to Sophia, she can pinpoint this relationship as the first time she had considered this type of holistic lifestyle for herself and from that point forward, has been actively pursuing a healthier work-life balance.

Similarly, Laurel's relationship with Jon introduced her to a new understanding of herself and her self-locations, as well as her relationships with other humans. Prior to their relationship, she had not been able to fully value her abilities to humbly lead multicultural events, inspire others, and search for deeper meaning behind her ambitions. He also revealed her preference for deeper, less superficial relationships that hold space for exploration of complex emotions.

While those examples were clear to me, I am less convinced that either of the young women experienced a new form of body awareness despite many follow up questions to uncover how they somatically sense transformation—although Laurel was more perceptive of her sensations than Sophia, admitting to getting a "Laurel-bounce" in her body when she was excited. Sophia recalled she did not notice the bodily sensations during the events themselves, but she did note she is currently more aware of where feelings occur in her body after so many follow up questions regarding them!

Additionally, although both young women were dedicated to social justice (see below), because much of the interviews were geared toward personal matters, their shift in understanding for the possibilities for peace was too abstract for me to properly identify. However, it could be said that one of the purposes of their empowerment curriculum is to bring about peace in the communities it is introduced to, which suggests a shift in understanding of how to address peace through empowerment. This means that overall the majority of the qualities of O'Sullivan et al.'s (2002) transformative learning definition are represented by Laurel and Sophia's experiences, minus the body awareness aspect.

Mezirow. Of the 22 self-described transformative incidents, I am confident that about one-quarter of the experiences did in fact represent Mezirowian concepts. Most specifically, these were the incidents that had the presence of a disorienting dilemma, the process of critical self-reflection, rational discourse, and reflective action. Six incidents that most aligned were: Sophia's college application process, humanities course, and 11th grade volleyball team; and Laurel's trip to India #1, adjusting to her new school, and trip to Ecuador. I have broken down two of these incidents in tables to show how they specifically illustrate Mezirowian concepts of transformative learning.

In Table 4.3 I illustrate how Sophia's experience applying to colleges clearly illustrates a disorienting dilemma, critical self-reflection, and reflective action.

Table 4.3

Mezirowian Transformation Illustration

Mezirowian component	How it was illustrated by Sophia's experience applying to colleges
Habits of mind	The belief that the world is organized rationally by merit—those who are smart and work hard will be rewarded with the best college offers
Point of view	Working hard to get good grades and expecting to get into good colleges and have successfu future
Disorienting Dilemma	Not being accepted into the top colleges that she wanted to get into, and seeing her peers wh were less qualified get into them instead
Critical Self-Reflection	Reflecting on which beliefs in her life were influencing her displeasure—specifically recognizing that her habit of mind was no longer accurate
Rational Discourse	Speaking with peers about the college application process, listening to other points of view, and being open to changing her own habits of mind
Reflective Action	Becoming less judgmental about the peers who did get accepted into top colleges, becoming content with the colleges she did get into, reevaluating her belief in pure meritocracy

As shown, Sophia's process of critically reflecting on her belief in meritocracy, and then rationally discussing this and other points of view with peers allowed her to engage in the

reflective actions of becoming less judgmental of her friends and accepting the world does not always reward hard work.

Similarly, in Table 4.4 I see clear evidence of an epochal transformation in Laurel's experience with a service opportunity in Ecuador.

Table 4.4

Mezirowian Transformation Illustration

Mezirowian component	How it was illustrated by Laurel's experience in Ecuador
Habits of mind	The belief that service should come from a place of love: be relationship-based and connected to emotions
Point of view	All of Laurel's chosen service opportunities up until Ecuador were relationship-based service work
Disorienting Dilemma	While in Ecuador, Laurel did not feel emotionally connected to the work, this felt uncharacteristic of her and caused her much confusion
Critical Self-Reflection	Reflecting on the source of her discontent in her journal—discovering her belief and assumption that service should be emotionally relationship-based
Rational Discourse	Speaking with older peers regarding this dilemma, discussing other ways of approaching service from a less-emotional perspective, reevaluating her belief to be more open
Reflective Action	Going forward with a new approach to service, actively choosing projects that are based in empowerment and effectiveness over relationships

Like Sophia, Laurel also had enough self-awareness to recognize the disorienting dilemma within her, critically self-reflect using a journal as a tool to evaluate her beliefs, discuss with older peers new ways to do service, and take reflective action by changing her approach.

It is important to note that when asked in the interviews about these six incidents specifically, Sophia and Laurel indicated these were the first times they were aware of the paradoxical nature of beliefs and actions in that they can be both/and, and not only either/or. For example, Sophia realized she could be both part of the problem and solution to the world's crises in her humanities course, and her volleyball team taught her she should listen to both her coach and her own inner voice. Similarly Laurel realized she could encourage peers in India to be both empowered and not yet be fully empowered herself, as well as move to a new school and be both

her “Mama-Laurel” nurturing self and an independent, humorous self too. This is notable because Mezirow (1991) argued one’s ability to grasp contradiction is indicative of their ability to engage with transformative learning.

Not all of the Yes incidents represented Mezirowian concepts—and the ones that did not most noticeably were missing evidence of critical self-reflection (which is explored below)—but of those I recognized as Mezirowian, nearly all were solitary experiences. Despite Laurel’s trip to India #1, all of the other experiences (Sophia’s college application process, humanities course, and 11th grade volleyball; Laurel’s adjusting to her new school, and trip to Ecuador) were transformative moments perceived as occurring primarily internally. Interestingly, first-generation Mezirowian theorists tend to assume transformative learning occurs less from an emotional, relational perspective and more from an individual, cognitive perspective, which is represented in this data as well.

Laurel and Sophia also noted that the Yes incidents detailed above were easiest to recall because they felt the most viscerally—in that both of them reported feeling complex emotions with multiple people during these incidents—suggesting that these specific examples were connective, holistically-experienced transformative learning incidents, which tend to be more aligned with second-wave theorists, or from a Tisdellian perspective.

Tisdell. By revisiting some of the criteria that Tisdell (2012) used to define a transformative learning experience, we see both young women had moments that altered their being, beliefs, and core sense of self. Laurel described this as happening when she joined the new school and had to recalibrate to become a more authentic version of herself. Although Sophia asserted that generally her core sense of self has remained relatively intact, she did admit to changing her beliefs about her place in the world after her humanities class. This is also

aligned with Tisdell's second criteria of an incident: one that is able to move our hearts and our mood, give us a glimpse of the Big Questions in life—like what it means to be human, why we're here, what makes the universe go on, and the nature of human consciousness itself. Laurel described this glimpse the first time she visited India and while she visited Israel and grappled with spiritual questions, and Sophia recognized this as dissatisfaction with lazy service in Thailand and as a much stronger desire for work-life balance after her college application process was through.

Through the shared senior project of creating the empowerment curriculum, both Laurel and Sophia experienced Tisdell's (2012) third criteria of working together to make their communities better as they challenged systems of privilege and oppression. Through that project and its expression in India, not only did Laurel and Sophia attempt to help others change their beliefs, but they too critically self-reflected about what their motives were for creating the curriculum and how they could best avoid spreading the distasteful, neo-colonial motives of projects that preceded theirs. While interviewing the young women, I initially thought this type of reflection was a form of process reflection, but upon further review, both of them exhibited forms of self-examination aimed to bring awareness to potential personal biases that would negatively affect the curriculum—a sign of critical self-reflection. This was difficult at times, because it caused the young women to evaluate how their own privileged life may be inadvertently oppressing those they are seeking to empower. Yet by engaging in critical discourse with each other and mentors, they thoughtfully and actively challenged systems of privilege. Here it should be noted, that the young women were entirely capable of this kind of reflection and discourse, but needed prompting in order to begin.

In fact, some of the additional evidence for critical reflection was also a result of prompting, but much of it was a natural, self-driven process that accompanied major transformative incidents.

Is there additional evidence of critical self-reflection? There is a thin line between critical self-reflection and a general self-consciousness that accompanies adolescence. Yet, as a result of this multi-phased study, several dimensions of critical self-reflection became obvious. First, I will highlight the evidence for self-directed reflection that occurred during the incidents, and then I will describe prompted reflection that occurred during our research as a result of the study itself. All evidence meets Brookfield's (2000) criteria of the young women: uncovering assumptions; analyzing unequal power distribution; identifying limiting beliefs; and investigating the degree with which their emotional responses are learned or innate.

Self-directed critical reflection. Perhaps the most noticeable thread in the interview data was in regard to all of the young women's service experiences, when they were overtly aware of whether or not their actions were actually helping the communities they were serving. Laurel noticed it in her work in China and Ecuador, citing that based on her observations and knowledge she realized her short time working with Chinese orphans was likely more detrimental than helpful to their development; Sophia noticed it in Thailand when she recognized her building projects likely took jobs away from local people. Some of these self-reflection skills were instilled in them from their humanities course and some were a result of their lived experiences abroad.

Unequal power distribution was recognized in India by both young women (which inspired them to continue the work on the empowerment curriculum), and also closer to home—like when Laurel recognized it on her swim team, and she and her friends took initiative to create

a separate training group within the club less focused on competitive events (and an over-ambitious coach). Sophia also confronted the power differential on her volleyball team when she reflected on the validity of her coach's advice and did the opposite, following her inner voice instead.

The young women were able to identify limiting beliefs mostly in later stages of high school. Sophia confronted her belief in meritocracy during her college application process, and since has allowed new ways of judging hard work into her psyche. Laurel confronted her limiting belief that relationships are central to service during her trip to Ecuador and has since forgiven herself for what she previously believed was a "detached" way of serving others.

Prompted critical self-reflection. An unpredicted, but impressive element of this study was that Laurel and Sophia were able to self-reflect during the interview and data interpretation process, adding a dimension of critical reflection to their initial perceptions of events.

Laurel had not previously recognized how her relationships with boyfriends had given her the needed space to feel more authentic. She identified a limiting belief of hers that told her she could not be vulnerable with her other friends, but recognized during the study that she could, especially if she was in an intimate setting with them. Similarly, Sophia identified a limiting belief that she sometimes allows her values to overshadow how she feels about her friends, and that her judgment of their lifestyles was more of a defense mechanism to maintain her values than a belief in her friends' worth.

A main theme that arose during the data interpretation is how both young women practice compromise formation (L. Brown & Gilligan, 1992) in their friendships with peers and each other. In other words, they identified their tendency to sacrifice their voice for maintaining relationships. With prompting, Laurel and Sophia recognized hiding their true feelings is a

learned, not natural behavior that began as a way to keep others from getting upset. In fact, this realization paved the way for a more open, vulnerable conversation among the two of them that addressed unresolved friendship issues that were the result of compromise formation. The tendency for adolescent girls to engage in compromise formation is well-known, but what we are still uncovering is which behaviors of adolescent transformation are unique to their age.

Which features of the transformative incidents are unique to adolescents, or perhaps indicate alternate developmental frameworks? During the data-interpretation phase, two activities provided insight into adolescent transformation: my co-researchers created visual representations of their self-described incidents and I coded the meta-themes for trends in language use. By further interpreting the young women's visual and verbal representations of their transformative incidents, I have assessed which features are more likely to be unique to adolescents, and if any may actually represent other developmental frameworks. Here I will present how the young women communicated their experiences and my interpretations of these from the perspective of both transformative learning and alternative developmental frameworks.

What language does a young woman use to describe her transformative incidents? Over 40 pages of Laurel and Sophia's designated meta-themes were coded for five categories of language use: cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual, and then percentages of use were calculated in order to get a general representation of how the young women interpreted their transformative incidents.

Sophia's primary use of language was social with 37% of her comments aligned with: relationships, community, family, friends, or the Other. Laurel's primary language use was emotional with 35% of her comments aligned with: feelings, moods, enthusiasm, reactions, or passion. Both young women had low usage of physical language, which were comments

associated with: bodily sensations, somatic responses, and biological conditions—with Laurel using 4%, and Sophia only using 1%. Similarly, both young women spoke less about spiritual ideas—those that deal with: wisdom, instincts, inner-knowing, beliefs, connection to higher power—with Laurel using 8%, and Sophia using slightly more at 10%. The next similar high-usage language was cognitive, comments dealing with: thoughts, ration, opinions, assumptions, and ideas—with Laurel using 28% and Sophia 26%. The categories that most closely matched these percentages were Laurel's social use of 25% and Sophia's emotional use at 26%. These percentages are shown in Figure 4.6.

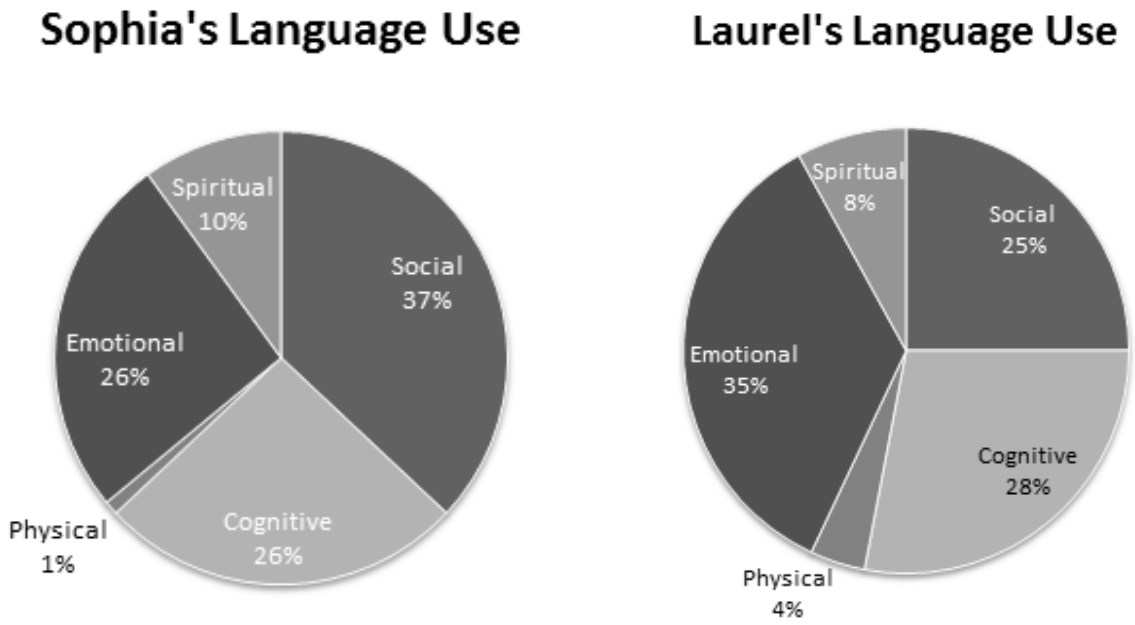

Figure 4.6. Co-researcher language use.

These percentages indicate adolescents may be more likely to experience and interpret their transformative experiences from social and emotional perspectives than cognitive lenses like adults. This aligns with adolescent development theories that report teenage brains have overactive emotional centers and underdeveloped metacognition. Similarly, with more than a quarter of the language being connected to social perspectives, this too aligns with theories that

place imaginary audiences and relationships central to adolescent development. Although I predicted physical responses would be more noticeable for young women, Laurel and Sophia did not indicate adolescents are more likely to perceive transformation through their bodies. However, they are likely to recognize their inner wisdom, instincts, and beliefs which suggest adolescents are not only aware of these dimensions of their inner-worlds, but are able to recognize when they change, which aligns to extrarational theorists of transformative learning theory.

Visual representations of transformation. Even more expressive than their language-use is how Laurel and Sophia visually represented their understandings of transformation during high school. In fact, combined with their descriptions, they offer a unique way to understand transformation that aligns with both adult and adolescent theories.

Sophia's representation. Sophia chose to show a fluid arrow (Figure 4.7) that represented her epochal transformations and how they attributed to her overall identity development.

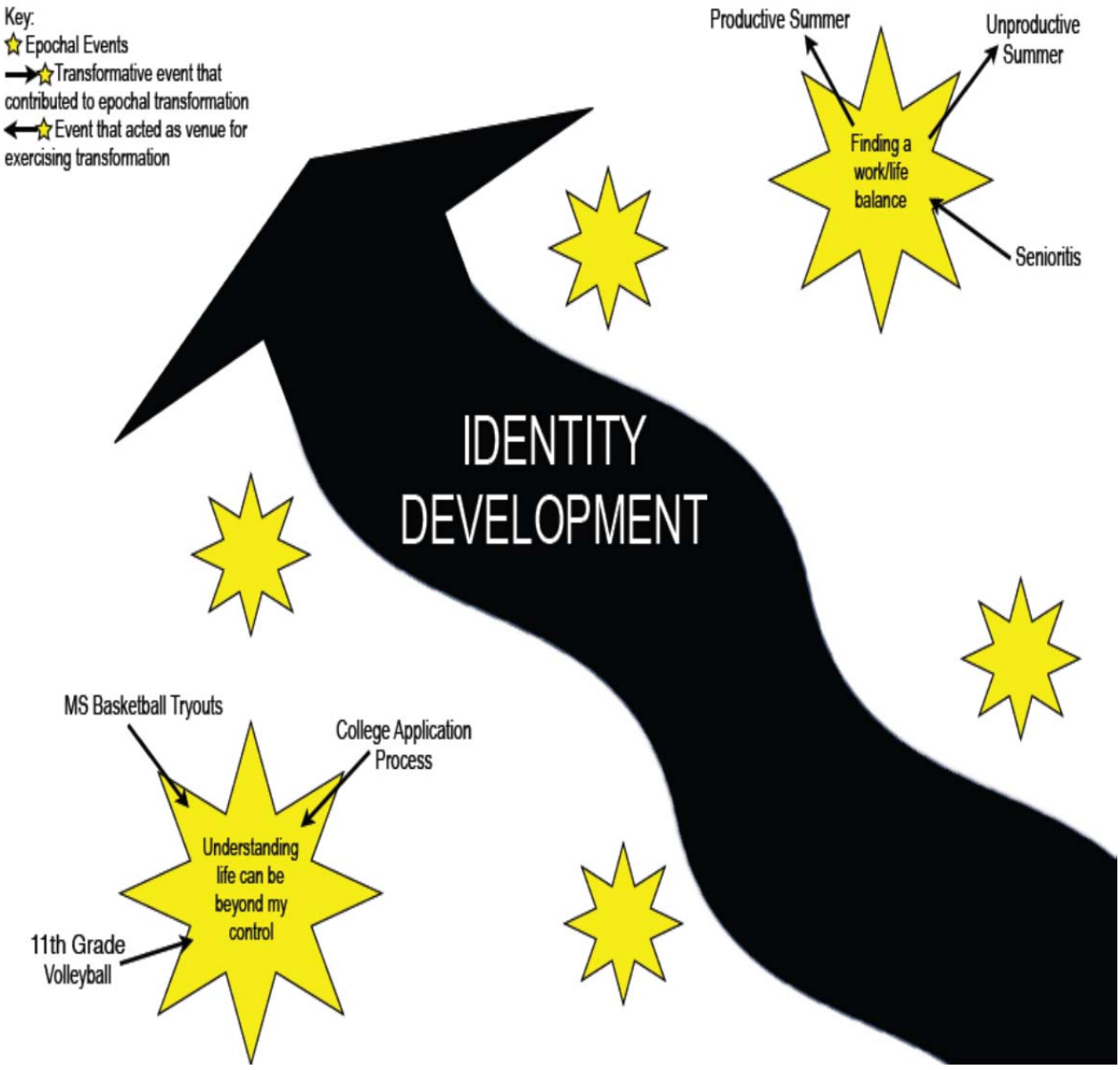

Figure 4.7. Sophia's visual representation of transformation.

She describes her image,

> My transformation in high school centered around identity development. The bulk of my self-identified transformative events each nudged different aspects of my life—leadership, relationships, service, and social confidence—in new directions. Throughout high school, these four major aspects of my identity were continually transformed and developed by different events. This process is represented by the large black arrow. At

> the same time, several epochal transformative events, represented by the yellow stars, drastically changed a specific part of my worldview. Events that contributed to the transformation are represented with arrows pointing towards the star, while events that served as opportunities to exercise the transformed thinking are represented by arrows pointing away from the star. These transformations occurred outside of the four main aspects, but were still critical in shaping my identity throughout high school.

Sophia's artwork and description can indicate many things about an adolescent's transformative experience. For example, there is awareness that identity development is the overarching incremental-transformation composed of several epochal transformations; events can either be contexts for practicing new habits of mind from older transformations or be catalysts for new disorienting dilemmas; making some transformations unconscious, and others conscious.

In my opinion, the aspect most unique to the adolescent age group is identity development. If seen as more of a formative process, identity development can be considered uniquely adolescent as teenagers are still creating the foundation of their personas, identifying their values, and establishing their way of being in the world. Yet it can also be considered a transformative process when we note that on several occasions both Laurel and Sophia spoke about uncovering a side of them that is their "essence" or "core self," which is reminiscent of an extrarational sense of transformation through individuation.

In fact, this may be the first time that one becomes aware of individuation as a complementary process of transformation, but that is not uniquely adolescent as adults also experience the conscious and unconscious aspects of individuation, according to extrarational theorists of transformative learning. Similarly, transformation being contextual is not necessarily unique to adolescents (although brain development theories state they would feel them more viscerally), but the fact they have so little life experience means epochal "peak" events would

feel more meaningful for them. These meaningful, memorable events could be confused with the developmental frameworks of turning points or rites-of-passage, but the unpredictability of the events Sophia and Laurel chose (as opposed to predictable, shared high school experiences) and the presence of critical self-reflection shows they are definitely not simply transitions.

Something unique to adolescence comes from Sophia's drawing, but not her explanation. The events that contributed to her understanding of "Things can be beyond my control" were also events when she began recognizing the balance between trusting her inner-voice and external authority. In other words, she was beginning to practice self-authorship, a stage unique to late adolescence and early adulthood, which seemingly presents itself more so in pockets as it begins to emerge than in an established stream of consciousness. Laurel also recognized these pockets of newly established self-authorship, but represented them differently.

Laurel's visual representation. Laurel chose to show a timeline (Figure 4.8) to illustrate her high school experience. Here she describes it,

> The top line tracks my service-learning-related transformations, and the bottom one my transformative journeys pertaining to self-awareness. As I began tracking these experiences, a clear pattern emerged: there was often a period of dissatisfaction or questioning that led up to an event. That event either resolved that inner questioning or helped me gain new knowledge. Following that, there were often subsequent events or actions I took that confirmed the previous knowledge I gained.
>
> On the diagram, the periods of questioning are portrayed by a thick coloured line; the periods of dissatisfaction by a series of "X"s; the confirming events by check marks; the new actions by a star; and continuing transformation by a series of . . . The events that either resolved my conflict and became transformative incidents are depicted by lightbulbs. Each of these patterns are colour-coded to show which events are related to one another.For example, the light pink pattern on the self-awareness line is referencing my grade 9 questioning of whether or not I was meeting my personal social needs.
>
> There was a moment of clarity in Foshan when I first found a social group with both males and females, but this event did not resolve my questioning. When I moved to a new school in grade 10, I clearly established a variety of friendships that met *all* of my social needs. This was a transformative experience for me, as it shifted my understanding of myself and my relationships with others. When I moved back to my old school in

grade 11, my reflective action was actively seeking out a male friend group and developing relationships that best answered the questioning that began in Grade 9.

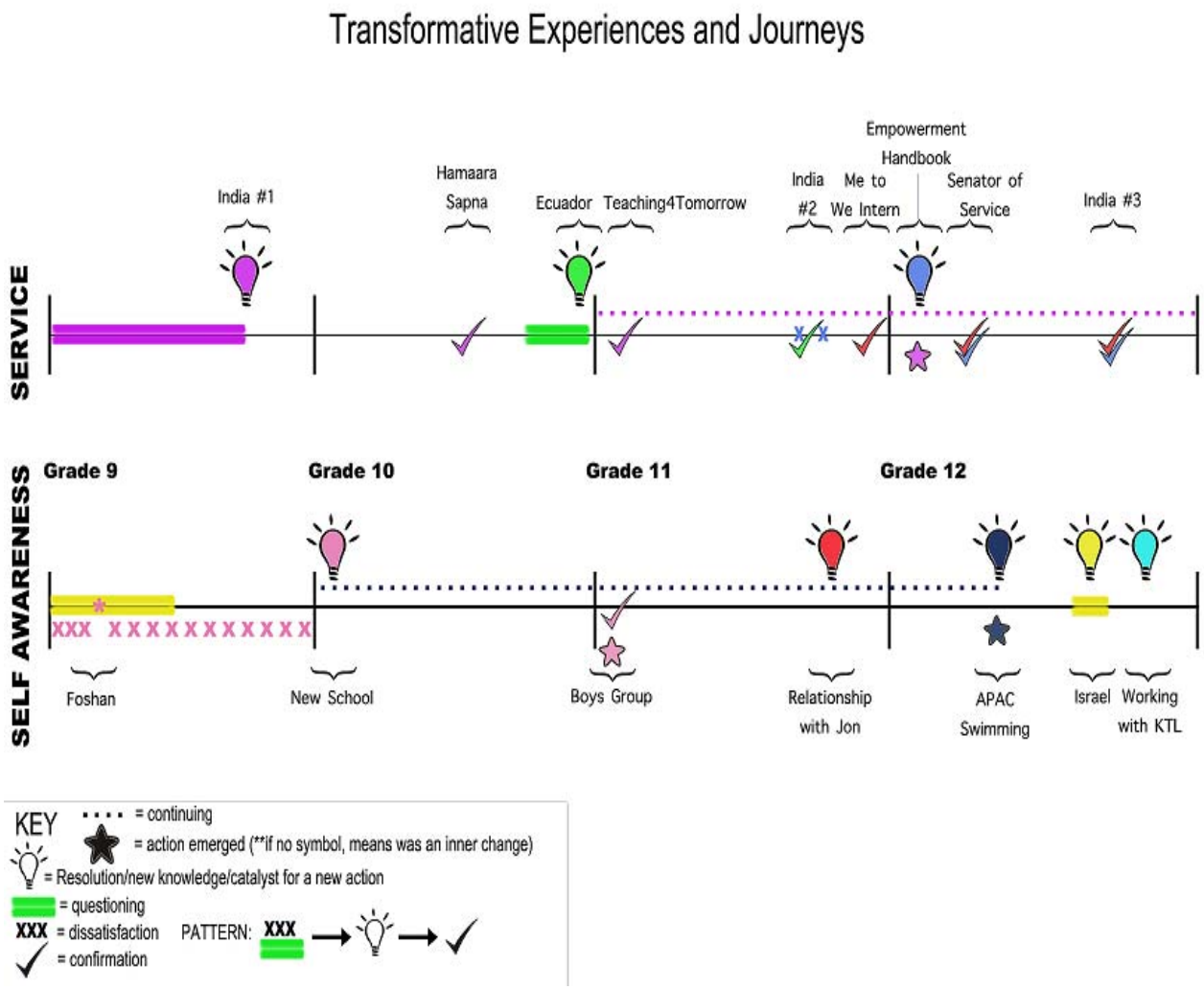

Figure 4.8. Laurel's visual representation of transformation.

Like Sophia, Laurel recognized some experiences catalyze disorientation, while others resolve it. Also, instead of using the concept of identity, Laurel described that most incidents either affected her understanding of service (an external, action-based process) or her self-awareness (an internal, thoughts/feeling-based process). Laurel pointed out the roles that

questioning and dissatisfaction play in transformation, the temporal overlap of several transformations, and that actions can confirm when a transformation is complete.

Of these qualities, very few seem uniquely adolescent (with questioning and dissatisfaction even representative of Mezirowian principles) except for the fact that Laurel was aware that some of her transformative incidents were still ongoing and have not yet been resolved. Her understanding of service is continuing to be developed and she has admitted her definition of true service has “not been figured out yet." This indicates adolescents are both self-aware enough to know transformation is a long-term process that does not always end with the completion of an action, and naïve enough to assume it eventually will have an end.

Something implied by Laurel’s “confirming check-marks” is that adolescents are just beginning to navigate and make sense of the ambiguity of their internal worlds. Thus, they may be more likely to remember the action-based external experiences because they are more concrete, and less abstract than the incremental, long-term internal transformations. In fact, Laurel’s descriptions combined with her visual representation suggests that without the tools to decipher the gradual transformations (such as those provided in humanities courses, or by parents and peers) internal transformations can go overlooked or misunderstood if there is not an action associated with them.

In Conclusion

This chapter featured the data from this study in both a descriptive and critical manner. My co-researchers eloquently described their lifeworlds during the four years of high school and as such illustrated the diverse opportunities for transformation that are available to adolescents. Then, I critically examined their self-described transformative incidents in order to determine adolescents do in fact experience several aspects of adult transformative learning, as well as

some that are unique to their age group. The collaborative inquiry in this study was so unique that the following chapter is designed to give further insight into both the processes and reflections by all co-researchers involved.

Chapter V: Research Team Narratives

As a result of the unique research methodology employed in this study, I felt it would be helpful for future studies to share the narratives of all three co-researchers in order to both give insight into the research process as well as capture the multi-dimensional influence it had on the research team.

May I remind the reader this was a collaborative inquiry in nearly all phases of data collection and interpretation and that my co-researchers' age during the time of this study was only nineteen years old. These narratives were written shortly after the data interpretation process was finished and each co-researcher authored her own reflection independently. I share all three of our narratives here in their entirety and will not offer a conclusion on this chapter.

Sophia's Narrative Reflection

I've thoroughly enjoyed participating in the research process with Laurel and Katie. I loved discussing my experiences because it's one of the few topics I am thoroughly knowledgeable about and I really enjoyed having my views and my analysis taken seriously in an academic setting.

The first step of the main research process was conducting interviews with Katie about my high school experiences. When she asked me to identify significant events from that time frame, I focused on the events that jumped out at me in my memory. Many of these events were memorable because they took place in a context different from my daily life, such as tournaments or trips abroad, or because they were significant priorities at the time, such as sports seasons and classes. Looking back, I think I may have neglected smaller moments that took place in a regular context that may have been less memorable, but were still important transformative

incidents. After learning the definition of a transformative event, I saw that many of the experiences I remember as being significant didn't change me as much as I had expected they had.

While conducting the interviews I initially felt nervous that I wouldn't have enough to say about each experience but I found that most of the memories and their significance came back to me very easily as I began to talk about them. The interview process was quite easy because I trusted Katie and felt comfortable talking about personal things with her. I've always relied on friends and mentors as ways to process my experiences and feelings and so the interviews felt like an extension of my conversations with close friends, albeit much deeper and more extensive.

My biggest worry was that I was neglecting important details or misremembering the events in a way that would influence the study's results. I was very aware that other experiences and my feelings at the time of the interview could have large impacts on the way I described each event. Throughout the study I was worried that the quality of my description, interpretation, or analysis would hinder the final product.

Although I found retelling my experiences quite easy, breaking the events down into deeper insights was more challenging. On the one hand, because I frequently reflect on and analyze my feelings and experiences in different situations, I found some trends and insights easy to identify. I have a running list of theories about my social behavior and leadership skills that come up often in my daily life, so it was easy to connect those perspectives to the relevant experiences. On the other hand, I found it really challenging when Katie asked me about parts of myself that I don't think about often. She frequently asked me how different parts of my body felt during events and how that corresponded with my feelings, which was difficult to talk about because I'd rarely made the connection between my body and feelings in the past. Most of the

time I would have a gut reaction to one of Katie's questions and be able to form at least a basic answer, but there were some questions that didn't evoke any reaction and that made me feel quite disoriented.

Identifying themes and pulling quotes from the interviews was also a mixed process. For the first few interviews I highlighted what seemed like significant quotes and then grouped them into themes. I had an idea of what I thought were themes in my life, but I didn't want to bring that bias into the interpretation process and tried to focus on creating themes out of the transcript quotes only. As I became more familiar with the process I would read through the transcript first and would be able to easily pick out the main themes. Over time, I became less strict about not letting my perspective influence the interpretation because Katie helped me see that my perspective could enhance the process as long as I acknowledged its presence. The most difficult part of the interpretations was trying to create succinct themes to encompass vague ideas. There were often quotes that I instinctively felt captured an important idea, but I couldn't articulate what that idea was. I think this difficulty resolved itself in the end when I created the final list of meta-themes because many of those smaller ideas fit under a larger meta-theme.

Processing and organizing the data was my favorite part of the process. I was able to bring together all the fragments of self-reflection that I'd accumulated throughout high school and combine them with the deliberate reflection of the interviews and interpretation process to create a cohesive framework. I started the process by looking at my significant events and determining which ones fit the official description of a transformative event. Katie had added two events that were actually continuous processes (and because I felt uncomfortable classifying them as events), so I started to think about other ways to organize the data. I started by grouping the events into categories.

Some of those categories organized events by type, differentiating service, leadership, and relationships, while two categories encompassed all the events that had contributed to a specific lesson or change in mindset. From there, I started experimenting with graphics to try to represent the significant aspects of the events and how they had changed over time. I ended up separating the initial categories into "journeys" and "life lessons." I saw journeys as important aspects of my life that had shifted and changed gradually over different experiences.

For example, I saw my service journey as the development of my passion and understanding of service into a cohesive philosophy, facilitated by a variety of service trips, classes, and other experiences. The life lessons were radical changes in my worldview that were often caused by a single or few events and then reinforced in different settings. These classifications made more sense to me than the initial list of "events" and I could see how each small experience had contributed to a larger journey or life lesson. These classifications also helped me see that many of the events I had identified as significant weren't actually transformative. Many times they were venues in which I tested out new patterns of behaviors and mindsets but not actually transformative experiences.

Once I made these distinctions, I saw that all the categories I had created fell under the larger process of creating my identity. I saw my identity as being anchored by a few core traits and values that had remained relatively stable over the years and that interacted with these journeys and life lessons. My core informed how I would react to each experience and simultaneously was shaped by each transformative event. Thus, I saw my identity as an evolving entity that was anchored by a stable core.

The analysis process felt very instinctive and organic, in that I would consider the data before me and naturally group them into categories and frameworks that made sense to me. I felt

more comfortable with the groupings I made than trying to adjust the data to fit existing theories, although some of the transformative learning theories Katie shared with us did fit the data well. At the same time, Katie and Laurel provided useful outside perspective and could identify connections that I missed because they didn't have my personal attachment to the data.

Overall, the entire research process provided me a great opportunity to reflect on my high school experience and practice real-life academic and research skills. I've always loved reflecting on and analyzing my thinking and it was fascinating to dedicate the time and effort to making sense of my high school journey. The process helped me identify my strengths and priorities, under which conditions I thrive and change in, and also how I can mitigate and improve upon my weaknesses.

The other extremely valuable aspect of the research was the chance to understand Laurel and Katie on a deeper level, including learning more about how they experience the world. This process made me more aware of the vast differences in the way that people process their experiences, and hopefully made me more patient and empathetic when dealing with people who understand the world in a different way.

Laurel's Narrative Reflection

When we set out on this journey, I didn't realize that the reflection process itself was going to be a transformative experience, but it definitely has. This experience came about after meeting Katie as a mentor for the curriculum Sophia and I were developing in our senior year of high school. For a semester we irregularly met with Katie to receive guidance and feedback; I was extremely appreciative that this woman we had only recently met was willing to dedicate so much time to helping us maximize the impact of our curriculum.

Katie travelled to India with us to implement the final program. She related to Sophia and me as both a friend and a mentor throughout the trip. Following the trip, when Katie approached Sophia and me with the idea of being the primary subjects and co-researchers of her PhD, it was a major shock. I repeatedly asked myself if my experiences were significant enough to elicit an entire academic study. But Sophia and I talked it over and realized that this was an area that fascinated us both and that Katie had become an influential figure for us, so knew we could not walk away from this opportunity.

First came the preliminary study. We met with Katie multiple times after school to record partner interviews. We discussed the India program and how being involved in it for the past four years had impacted us. Sophia and I were blind to how Katie was drawing out themes and patterns from our words, but knew she was somehow reaching "bigger-picture" conclusions from our interviews. During the pilot study, I remember coming to new realizations that I hadn't previously had, such as how I was more perceptive to my environment than the average individual, and that I required different types of social interactions in order to exercise all the sides of my identity. I was shocked that simply discussing past events with people I trusted, and placing myself in the mindset I had had when the events occurred, evoked deep personal understandings I perhaps would not have otherwise reached.

A few months passed between the end of the pilot study and beginning of the formal one. This was a time of large personal transition for Sophia and me as we started university. One of the best points in the semester was when I travelled to Philadelphia to visit Sophia and we were able to meet with Katie. It provided the perfect opportunity to stop and reflect on the semester up to that point—both the positives times and moments of growth.

The formal study began in March. The first phase consisted of six two-hour interviews with Katie. During these interviews, we chronologically discussed a photo collage I had compiled that highlighted what I thought were the most important or influential, potentially even transformative, experiences between grades six and 12. I would easily call each interview a rollercoaster: during it, I would try to return to the mental place I had been in at the time of the experiences, while also analyzing them critically as events in a greater picture. Each call evoked nostalgia, laughter, hard thought, deep reflection, and many "breakthrough" moments. One example was when I realized during an early call that I positively reconstructed the past, and then was able to see throughout the rest of the study how that tendency impacted my later actions.

Another such moment was when Katie asked me about the influence of boyfriends in my transformations. At first, I was surprised by the question, as I never thought that male relationships had any impact on my development. However, the more I reflected upon it with Katie, the clearer it became that these relationships were essential to me being able to define my own identity, away from a group setting.

Following each interview, Katie gave us a transcript. We were asked to read it and find the best method to pull out the themes and supporting quotes. We recorded our process for finding the themes and any thoughts/emotions that arose during the process. One of the first times we experienced this process was by conducting an interview with a person of our choice, which we then transcribed and analyzed ourselves. Katie had always said that after a few close readings of the interviews, themes would become clear. Until I conducted this process for my friend, I honestly did not believe her. But she was right: the themes became evident nearly immediately.

The first time running through this process with my own interview was slightly more difficult, but still the themes emerged. It was challenging to ensure I did not influence what I pulled out of the transcripts with personal emotions or thoughts. I loved this interpretive process, especially as we reached the later interviews. That is because it soon became clear that I had certain cyclical tendencies—as were demonstrated in the visual I later made for this study. I felt that I was beginning to hone in on aspects of myself I had been mildly aware of previously, but now I could pinpoint how these patterns had woven themselves into my personal narrative over the years.

As the interviews progressed, the themes seemed to become more intertwined, making distinguishing them even more difficult. At a certain point, I told Katie that I felt I needed to create a visual (a mind map) in order to express the interconnectedness of all the themes and events. Sophia and I to took the opportunity to try to compile a list of "meta-themes" from the interviews. Around this time, both Sophia and I were returning to Hong Kong, so had the chance to work with Katie in person. We set aside five full days to dedicate to the next phase of the study. During this time, we confirmed our final list of meta-themes, determined which events we thought were/were not transformational, learned the official definition of a transformative experience, broke down the components of six definite transformative events, and finally applied and disputed relevant adult and adolescent theory.

Never before have I had a time of such intense and full reflection and discovery. It was fascinating to sit along Sophia as we both grappled with determining what our meta-themes and transformative experiences were. We both turned to visuals to help us convey the patterns and cycles we noticed through the interviews—before we knew it, we both had intricate graphs and drawings to show what we had discovered about ourselves. By listening to and discussing both

of our personal realizations, it became clear how, although Sophia and I had experienced many events side-by-side, we often had opposite reactions to them. One such example was Ecuador. These discussions allowed Sophia and I to settle past points of tension in our relationship and better understand how we have been essential to each other's growth—something I am truly thankful for and I don't think would have otherwise happened.

Initially, I feared that the work we were doing would be in vain and not connect to the academic theory Katie presented. However, when we read through the theory, it immediately became clear that Sophia and I had not only experienced adult transformative experiences, but that we had also been able to successfully identify them—something I definitely hadn't expected. It was a relief and extremely exciting to be able to confirm what had sometimes felt like shots in the dark or the pulling together of strings (it even made me have the "Laurel bounce!").

I feel blessed to have had this experience. Without it, I do not think I would be nearly as in-touch with my personal identity and development over the years. I not only came to new personal understandings, but also shared ones with Sophia, which I believe will positively touch my personal actions and our collective ones indefinitely. I honestly wish everyone could have the chance to go through such an intensive reflective journey at this transition point in his or her life. I am consciously aware that this has been another transformative experience in my life, but it is too soon to tell exactly how it will impact me. For now all I can do is say thank you for this amazing opportunity.

Katie's Narrative Reflection

Once I decided on this research topic, I was simultaneously excited by and apprehensive of my choice to culminate my degree with a collaborative study, when up until that point I had been engaged in a mostly solitary pursuit. Although I had much experience with collaboration as

a teacher, for the majority of my doctorate degree, I had reveled in the independent self-indulgent exploration of a topic dear to my heart. Yet, it was this choice to collaborate that reminded me of the purpose of pursuing knowledge in the first place—to share it.

Once I had identified that the growth of these young women could be strongly influenced by my ability to share not only the topic, but the process of research with them, I took my transition from isolated scholar to cooperative researcher very seriously. I knew this study had the potential to not only educate my co-researchers about themselves, but to also empower them to take what they learned about self-discovery and apply in their own empowerment programs. This is also when I recognized the provocative power their voices had to field, because up until then I had not been exposed to many studies that predominantly featured the voices of the participants who were actually weaving the fabric of the body of literature. I put representing my co-researchers' voices as my top priority before we had even begun the first interview.

Yet, this focus on their stories did not take away the personal self-reflection that emerged for me during the interview process. I had not anticipated the degree with which I would become emotionally affected by their interviews. Suddenly my memories of high school that had lain dormant for many years began to reemerge and beg me to address them. In fact, after certain sessions when Laurel or Sophia would mention particularly difficult times for them, I would hang up the phone and be dragged back to my own unresolved emotions from adolescence. Sometimes I would cry, others I would journal, or call an old friend—but I was surprised by how many moments of theirs mirrored my own, and how their ability to articulate their adolescent experiences actually allowed me as an adult to reflect in ways I was not capable of in high school. I felt grateful that they were more emotionally mature than I was at that age, because

their ability to express their emotional lives caused me to reflect on my own past experiences, reevaluate my assumptions, and move forward as a healthier version of myself.

The interview process also allowed me to reevaluate my assumptions about adolescents in general, because as a result of primarily working with at-risk youth, up until that point I did not believe nineteen year olds would be interested in carrying out research at that depth. Yet my co-researchers were not only interested, but they were thrilled to be partaking in a project that had benefits for their growth and the field of transformative learning—and the quality of work they gave in their deliverables made me reassess the capabilities of adolescents as a whole.

This new framework gave me hope that maybe I had overlooked the depth of experiences from my own adolescence. So I returned to my teenage journals to search for evidence of critical self-reflection, growing empathy, and changing worldviews, but came away disappointed! I had considerably much less self-awareness and understanding of the world than my co-researchers did at that age, which further indicated the importance of context for one's holistic development.

Perhaps my favorite part of the entire study was all three of us working collaboratively for a five day "Data Crunch." Trying to make sense of the immense amount of data as a team felt like the ideal representation of cooperative inquiry—each co-researcher felt free to speak her mind without fear of judgment, tangents could be explored as possible relevant concepts, and each of our individual knowledge and expertise was valued. I was proud of my co-researchers for being able to take on this multi-dimensional project, and I was proud of myself for recognizing opportunities to foster their growth even more both as researchers and young women.

At the end of our "Data Crunch," I realized our collaboration far exceeded my expectations. Then, I was faced with the most difficult portion of the study: going back into isolation and patching the data together into a coherent, evocative story that accurately and

powerfully represented our journey together. What made this particularly challenging was my desire to equally honor their voices while also keeping the data brief and direct. I began to understand why other researchers choose to simply report the data when I had to make difficult but necessary cuts to specific portions of the co-researchers' contributions for brevity. While creating the dissemination of our data, I had come to the moment feared by all researchers: the realization that no report can ever truly do your study justice. Luckily, I was able to continue my communication with Sophia and Laurel through the writing process and make sure I was presenting their voices accurately. At times they were able to offer guidance on areas they felt were most important to share.

Upon completion of the data reporting, I had the opportunity to reflect again on how this study had impacted me as a researcher, a mentor, and a woman in general. Coming from a scientific background, phenomenology was a foreign, yet intriguing methodology that illuminated other ways of knowing in the world, and more importantly in me. I was able to recognize that valuing someone's lived experience gives us insight into their lifeworld, which is a microcosm of how humanity works in general. My appreciation for direct experience as a valid source of data has grown exponentially from my prior acceptable forms of data.

As a result of working with my co-researchers, I remembered the value of a mentor who sincerely believes in you. I had forgotten about the mentor I had in high school—who at that time was the only woman I had met with a doctorate degree—she inspired me to become a better leader, enter the field of education, and (probably unconsciously) pursue a PhD. Once I remembered that relationship, I wanted to do her and my co-researchers right by being a role model for the next generation of young women who might benefit from the self-discovery this

type of study would grant them. I strived to provide the kind of scaffolding for growth to my co-researchers I was given years ago.

And that, I believe, is what women excel in: paving the way for those behind them by having the courage to first move forward and pursue their passions, then turn around and guide others toward pursuing theirs. For me, this entailed the compassionate act of listening first to understand, then the persistence to create and present something to the world that could be understood. Women have done this for centuries, and as a result of doing this study, I am proud to join the ranks of those who paved the road before me.

As any PhD student will admit, this long, arduous route of research is made better by recognizing the value in the journey and not the destination. Traveling with Laurel and Sophia as my co-pilots has made the journey much more enjoyable, fulfilling, and enlightening.

Chapter VI: Discussion

Now that the reader has reviewed the data and research narratives, I will conclude this study by summarizing the findings, making the case for adolescence to be included in the transformative learning literature, citing the implications of this research for practitioners and leadership development, stating the strength and limitations of the study, and making my requests for further research.

Summary of Findings

In my study I was able to address all of the original research questions as well as provide unpredicted additional insight, holding much value for the intersection of adolescent development and transformative learning theories. Here I will review the research questions and summarize the findings of the study.

How does an adolescent experience a self-identified transformative incident?

The young women discussed a total of 45 incidents from their four years of high school, and after applying O'Sullivan et al.'s (2002) definition of transformative learning, Laurel and Sophia designated 22 of them to be in alignment with the theory and 18 not to be. Those that were not aligned with the definition tended to be meaningful or memorable, but did not significantly change thoughts, feelings, or behavior of the co-researchers. Those that were aligned tended to be epochal and incremental transformations that clearly changed the young women's identity, self-awareness, worldview, perspectives, thinking, or actions.

What are the components of a self-identified transformative incident? Where, when, with whom, why, and how do they occur? What makes them particularly stand out? Sophia and Laurel chose 12 incidents of the 22 and broke them down into components in order to determine what made them particularly transformative. Self-identified transformative incidents tend to occur in spaces that are novel, safe, but challenging. They are not always outside of one's comfort zone, but are less likely to be in the home or classroom as I had predicted. Most occur in physical spaces, but others are in the abstract space of one's mind. Short and long term experiences can be transformative, with short-term incidents tending to be experienced in higher fidelity both emotionally and socially, and long-term incidents tending to be experienced more cognitively with guidance from peers and mentors to interpret the transformation.

Most experiences will involve an adult in one of several roles: as a catalyst, support, or someone who will help with reflection. Peers are significant to the transformative process as well, with slightly older peers often providing informal mentorship by displaying alternative ways of living. Most of the incidents occurred as the result of adult-driven motives, with only a few being self-driven, but none felt coerced. The majority of them were service or empowerment oriented, making exposure to the "Other" and intercultural bonding relevant to transformation.

Both young women cited leadership opportunities, critical discussions, self-reflection, and being given adult responsibilities as all significant factors in how transformative moments occur. It seemed to be easier to identify short-term epochal transformations, especially when they were action-based, and more difficult to identify long-term gradual transformations that existed primarily in the cognitive realm.

What language is used to differentiate between how one experiences transformation from a cognitive, emotional, social, physical, or spiritual perspective? Laurel and Sophia described their experiences using language that could be described mostly as emotional (feelings, moods, enthusiasm, reactions, or passion) and social (relationships, community, family, friends, or the Other), with cognitive language (thoughts, ration, opinions, assumptions, and ideas) being the next highest frequency. There were very few physical descriptions, which suggests the young women were less aware of bodily sensations, somatic responses, and biological conditions, but they did use a noticeable amount of spiritual language suggesting they are more aware of their wisdom, instincts, inner-knowing, beliefs, and a connection to higher power.

How does a young woman—acting as a co-researcher—interpret her adolescent transformative incidents compared to the author? There are few differences between my interpretation and the co-researchers' from the perspective of their experiences aligning with the theory. It is noteworthy that all three of us agree transformative learning did occur during Laurel and Sophia's four years of high school. Perhaps the most significant difference between our interpretations is our preference for the term consciousness versus identity—I prefer the term consciousness, they prefer identity—but I will also address issues with these two terms in a later section.

To what extent do transformative learning experiences occurring in adolescence align with the literature's definition of adult transformative learning? The self-described incidents that were aligned with O'Sullivan et al.'s (2002) definition of transformative learning fit all criteria except an increase in body awareness and while there was evidence for the more abstract concept of possibilities for peace, it was less convincing. As a result of such close

alignment with O'Sullivan et al.'s (2002) concepts, the co-researchers and I wanted to compare how additional first-wave and second-wave transformative learning theories would align.

Again, many of the incidents also represented Mezirowian and Tisdellian concepts. Specifically, evidence of a disorienting dilemma, the process of critical self-reflection, rational discourse, and reflective action were present in several of the self-described incidents. Also, all types of transformation described by Tisdell (2012) were experienced, including those that: altered their being, beliefs, and core sense of self; those that moved their hearts and mood; and those that found the young women working together to make their communities better as they challenged systems of privilege and oppression.

Both co-researchers illustrated self-directed and prompted forms of critical self-reflection. During this reflection, each exhibited Brookfield's (2000) evidence of: uncovering assumptions; analyzing unequal power distribution; identifying limiting beliefs; and investigating the degree with which their emotional responses are learned or innate. Critical self-reflection occurred during the high school experiences themselves, as well as while working on the research team during the study.

Aspects of adolescent transformations that align with adult experiences are: incidents can be contexts for practicing new habits of mind from older transformations or be catalysts for new disorienting dilemmas; they tend to cause questioning and dissatisfaction; some transformations are unconscious; and there is usually a temporal overlap of several transformations with new behavior or actions confirming when a transformation is complete.

What features of transformative learning may be unique to adolescents? According to this study, adolescents are more likely to experience and interpret their transformative experiences from social and emotional perspectives. Central to adolescent transformations are the development of self-awareness, identity, and self-authorship. Most likely due to the sensitive areas of an adolescent's brain and their lack of life-experience, external, action-based incidents feel more emotionally visceral and may be remembered more concretely than the abstract, cognitive internal incidents.

Additionally, adolescent transformative incidents are more potent when there is a critical friend who helps trigger, support, or reflect on the experience with the individual. That said, many of the gradual transformations occurred within the internal space of the mind, with intermittent interaction with critical friends helping to make sense of new meanings and identities created.

What other frameworks of human development may be relevant in the interpretation of adolescents' transformative experiences? Some of the incidents can be compared to adolescent rites of passage and turning points, but the co-researchers determined the distinguishing features of self-described transformative learning compared to transitions were that they were unpredictable, not often tied to universal adolescent development, contain critical self-reflection, and can often be conscious choices that arose from disorienting dilemmas. The co-researchers determined those events that can also be considered a turning point or rite of passage were often catalysts for deeper, gradual transformative learning moments as well.

In addition, both co-researchers resonated with L. Brown and Gilligan's (1992) compromise formation theory that explained adolescent girls often sacrifice their voice for the maintenance of relationships, and Sophia specifically resonated with Jordan's (2013) relational

resilience theory that describes relationships as a way to provide individuals with resilience from societal pressures.

Including Adolescence in Transformative Learning Theory

If transformative learning is a lifelong process of discovering new talents, becoming more empowered, deepening an understanding of the inner self, and developing a greater sense of self-responsibility (Taylor, 2009) when does it begin? Childhood is most likely still too early for many aspects of transformative learning to begin, but this study indicates adolescence is not, at least in the experience of my two co-researchers in this study. Thus, by revisiting both the empirical and theoretical support for this study's findings, here I will make the case that the field of transformative learning must include adolescence as a timeframe when one is capable of transformative learning.

Empirical Support

Although Laurel and Sophia were only teenagers during the transformative incidents they have validated Walsh's (2007) assertions that life experience can be substituted for age, education can be substituted for life experience, and while cognitive development is important, it does not influence whether one is capable of having a transformative learning experience. Thus, this research joins the growing intersectional body of literature that implores the field of transformative learning to include adolescence as a timeframe that can cultivate meaningful, life-changing shifts in consciousness.

My study found a unique aspect of an adolescent transformation is the focus on identity and self-authorship development. Logan (2013) highlighted that transformation happens at the nexus between self-discovery, discovery of others in the larger world, and one's confidence and abilities—which strongly resembles Sophia's visually-depicted journey of identity development

being influenced by the epochal transformations that introduced her to contradictory ideas. Also, Laurel's focus on reflective action in her visual timeline mimics Walsh's (2007) finding that during transformative learning, older individuals tend to change attitudes, whereas younger individuals tend to change behaviors.

Like Hodgson's (2007) study that indicated adolescents are capable of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and holistic transformations, Laurel and Sophia experienced incidents that opened their minds to new ways of being, interacting, and connecting with the local and global community. Sophia's conscious shift toward a healthy work-life balance, Laurel's conscious choice to become a Christian after visiting Israel, and their shared decision to create an empowerment curriculum show Hodgson's (2007) examples of inward, upward, and outward growth.

Laurel's experience of socially recalibrating at her new school illustrated Chang et al.'s (2000) assertion that an important trigger for transformation was the self-revelation that arises as a result of losing a connection with one's original interpersonal network. Like the participants in their study, as Laurel detached from her original groups of friends, it provided her with opportunities to more closely study herself and reorganize her perspectives and values. Similarly, Sophia's experience in her humanities course represented Schmidt's (2009) findings that high school students can experience long-term shifts in meaning schemes. In fact, the course likely gave Sophia many tools with which to actively develop "a sense of individuation over time, progressing from awareness to perspective transformation; from emotional engagement to empathy; and from action to self-efficacy" (Schmidt, 2009, p. 244). She cited class discussions and activities prompting her toward the reflective action of choosing her future service projects.

In certain incidents, both Laurel and Sophia had experiences aligned with Doucet et al.'s (2013) finding that when participants reported feeling more deeply uncomfortable, stressed, awkward, or fearful they were able to transform more so than those who remained positive. Specifically, Laurel's deeply uncomfortable trip to Ecuador when she grappled with new ways of understanding service affected her more than her trip to China, which was primarily positive. Similarly, Sophia was involved in several positive sports teams, but it was not until her stressful time working with a negative coach in volleyball that she reported feeling specifically triggered into a disorienting dilemma and shift in her understanding of self-authorship.

Like Grider's (2011) study participants, by identifying transformative incidents for this study, these young women had a significant opportunity that aided in the "meaning making, identification of values, and the overall process of 'growing up'" (p. ii). Yet, unlike Grider's study that reported adolescents had a difficult time transferring their changed meaning perspectives into new contexts, Laurel and Sophia made the case that adolescents can transfer and build off of new meaning perspectives. Some examples of this are: Sophia and Laurel created visual representations that depicted meaning perspectives they changed in 9th and 10th grade influencing their actions in 11th and 12th grade, illustrating Mezirowian reflective action. Also after the young women were introduced to the concept of empowerment, they consistently reflected on and acted in ways that more effectively and authentically empowered themselves and others, even going as far as creating and facilitating a curriculum. In addition, Laurel's social recalibration at her new school was carried over when she returned to her old school and Sophia's self-authorship development in volleyball was carried over into her college application process.

In fact Laurel and Sophia's ongoing empowerment work is similar to Curry-Stephens (2007) study, which found those who are privileged tend to pass through the following transformative stages: becoming aware of oppression, understanding the benefits that flow from privilege, planning an action, finding supports for this action, and declaring intentions for future action. Both young women were introduced to concepts of oppression and privilege through service projects beginning as early as 7th grade, and through critical self-reflection encouraged by their 9th grade humanities courses, each realized they could take action and thus chose service projects that encouraged empowerment going forward. Several of the mentors they cited in interviews were those who supported their reflective action. A noteworthy similarity between Curry-Stephen's participants and my co-researchers was that they each cited transformative incidents as catalysts for development of compassion and empathy as well as the paradoxical recognition of their unwitting involvement in systems of oppression.

The majority of Laurel and Sophia's transformative incidents occurred in novel, challenging locations, which supports Walsh's (2007) assertion that context is an important factor in the manifestation of a transformative experience and that cognitive development alone is not sufficient to account for it. In fact, Laurel's connection to physical places allowed her to more easily recognize transformations because they literally "felt differently." It should also be noted that inner-location is relevant, as Lange (2004) explained because it helps individuals withstand the disorienting aspects of transformation and remain open to new threatening knowledge. This is best represented by Sophia continually explaining she needed to feel she had stable core values from which to explore other possibilities, because it was inner strength that supported her through the changes she encountered.

Lastly, Laurel's visual representation of her transformative experiences closely aligns with Kerr's (2014) four zones of transformation. Laurel's questioning and dissatisfaction phases correlate to Kerr's Zone 1 and Zone 2—which are analogous to Mezirow's disorienting dilemma and critical reflection. Then, Laurel's resolution/catalyst for new action phase mimics Kerr's Zone 3 in which mindfulness assists in learning how to act upon individual purposes, values, feelings and meanings rather than those uncritically assimilated from others; and Laurel's confirmation phase correlates to Kerr's Zone 4, which is returning to a state of being where one can feel complete and whole again without "needing to become anything other than what or who they already are" (Kerr, 2014, p. 96).

The corroboration of this research with the preceding intersectional studies indicates the field of transformative learning should now begin to include adolescence as a possible timeframe one can experience perspective transformation. Furthermore, there is theoretical support for the study's findings and a future section details the co-researchers thoughts on how the theory can address adolescent experiences, adding the direct voices of a once-marginalized demographic to the body of literature.

Theoretical Support

When new findings threaten current paradigms, it is essential that the current theory can support the claims of the research. As shown in the Chapter II, because there are several lenses with which to view transformative learning, there are ample theoretical perspectives that can explain Sophia and Laurel's transformative experiences.

Immediately we see Sophia and Laurel met Mezirow's (2000) preconditions of "maturity, education, safety, health, economic security, and emotional intelligence" (p.15). Obviously these preconditions are not available for all adolescents (or adults), but for a growing portion of

modern teenagers they are. While I still agree wholeheartedly with Kegan (1994) when he said there is "a qualitative distinction between the mind of the child and the mind of the adult" (p. 5), it is worth noting an adolescent has the unique brain development and cognition that makes their minds neither child nor adult. Thus, this timeframe between Kegan's third and fourth order mind deserves a more rigorous exploration in light of growing empirical evidence that adolescents are in fact capable of understanding the difference between not just what she knows—but the way she knows.

In fact, recalling the symbiotic relationship between transformative learning and developmental consciousness, we recall it is through transformative learning that one comes to know themselves and the world, and that these shifts of consciousness can bring individuals to the next phases of their developmental consciousness. When an adolescent engages in transformative learning, they are more likely to develop the maturity and level of consciousness necessary for adulthood. Adolescence need not be an unconscious period of biological development, but given the proper tools, it can be an active, conscious journey of changing the way one knows.

When the co-researchers' transformative incidents were conscious, such as Laurel's social recalibration and Sophia's search for work-life balance, they explained they were making active choices to think and be differently, which corresponds to Mezirow's description of perspective transformation as an active "decision to negate an old perspective in favor of a new one or to make a synthesis of old and new" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 161). With the fluidity of identity in adolescence, it would be logical to assume that after teenagers are exposed to other ways of being, many will attempt to enact those new perspectives and lifestyles. I would still argue this does not necessarily represent perspective transformation if there is no critical self-reflection, but

I would also argue that without self-reflection, these new ways of being may be more aligned with an extrarational transformation.

Returning to Cranton's (2006) five lenses (some of which are explored in the forthcoming section), we are reminded that many of the Yes experiences that were considered transformative by the co-researchers could easily be understood from an extra-rational perspective. Specifically, I see Laurel's search for self-awareness and Sophia's journey of identity development as cognates for the process of individuation. Jung's (1921) definition of it being the "process by which individual beings are being formed and differentiated . . . having as its goal the development of the individual personality" (p. 94) is reminiscent of the visual depictions in which the young women used distinct moments as markers in their journey of individuation. Transformative learning promotes individuation (Dobson, 2008), leading individuals toward a state of increasing wholeness (never reached, but increasingly approached). Although one may not always be aware of her/his own individuation (Jung, 1921); as Dirkx (2000) argues, transformative learning can be the process through which one consciously participates and directs her or his own journey of individuation.

Although many of the incidents were able to be described in their interviews, both co-researchers also mentioned that during some of them (Ecuador for Sophia and Israel for Laurel), it was as if they transcended rationality and words, but were still experiencing power, mystery, and deep meaning, which represented the profound connection between the self and the world (Cranton, 2006).

These types of transformations would be more obvious to an adolescent based on the development of their brain, which heightens emotion, felt-sensations, rewards, and social factors. And while the average adult may brush aside their adolescent experiences as less vital to the

adult they are today, one need only revisit Sophia's articulate description of her heightened social anxiety at parties to bring the reader back to when they too felt these terrifying, yet exhilarating emotions in one of their earliest disorienting dilemmas. Or by reading Laurel's perceptive description of a strangely familiar Israel, we too recall a time when we were first let in on a universal hint to the existence of something greater than ourselves. It is vital that we do not disregard the transformative learning experiences of adolescents because they are the firsts of their kind. My co-researchers recognize this and are able to express their thoughts on it as well.

Co-Researcher Thoughts on Transformative Learning Theory

After the data interpretation was finished, I offered the co-researchers the opportunity to read through and comment on several aspects of transformative learning theory from their perspectives. Here I will present some of their thoughts and opinions on how their experiences can influence the field of transformative learning.

When presented with two definitions of transformative learning—the one used in this study, O'Sullivan et al.'s (2002), and Taylor and Snyder's (2012) from the official *Handbook of Transformative Learning*—the co-researchers explained the Handbook's definition felt restrictive to adolescents because it focused mainly on the cognitive aspects of transformation, and not enough on the actions and relationships that were so vital to their experiences. Although the term shift in consciousness originally attracted me to O'Sullivan et al.'s definition, the co-researchers sided with Newman's (2010) criticism of the term citing that their experiences focused more on their identity than their consciousness. In fact, the concept of consciousness seemed to be too abstract to apply for the co-researchers, which could be indicative of their developmental stage.

However, this could also be because some of their transformations were decidedly unconscious and the young women were not aware of them occurring until the study required them to reflect. For example, when asked about the difference between the two, Sophia explained she tended to have many unconscious transformations because during high school she preferred to focus on the characteristics of herself that stayed consistent rather than changed, while in general Laurel was more aware of her conscious choice to change her traits and shift her actions. Either way if we recall, transformation through individuation occurs whether we are conscious of it or not (Cranton, 2006).

Part of Laurel's conscious choices to change came from her relationships with others, who often encouraged her ongoing search for identity. This ties to Laurel's opinion that the lens that most represented her experiences was Cranton's (2006) *Connected Knowing* perspective, which drew from the work of Belenky et al. (1986), Belenky and Stanton (2000), and Tisdell (2012), and focused on the role relationships play in transformation. Sophia agreed the majority of her transformations could be seen through this lens because they involved using empathy to understand how someone else could think the opposing viewpoint, which significantly helped in the transformation process.

Additionally, a lens both co-researchers resonated with was Cranton's (2006) *Social Change* perspective, based on Freirian principles of recognizing oppression and privilege. In fact, if I were to create single sentence summaries of both co-researchers' "Yes" experiences throughout all four years of high school, they would illustrate their transforming thoughts on how to create social change. For example Sophia's would read, "There is inequality in the world, I can do something about it, but I need more than just passion to serve—I need to match my skills in the most effective, efficient manner"; and Laurel's would read, "I think I know what true

service is, but actually my definition needs an adjustment based on my changing perceptions of efficacy—perhaps I can understand service better if I share my methods with others and readjust based on the outcomes." While the summaries are my creation, they were based on Laurel and Sophia's thoughts regarding the lens of social change being the primary lens with which they viewed their service journeys.

Perhaps the most forthright the co-researchers were with their opinions was in regards to Brookfield's (2000) criticism that young people cannot engage with transformative learning. Specifically the comment that one "Cannot critically scrutinize the validity of our unquestioned assumptions about interpersonal relationships, work and politics until we have lived through the building and decay of several intimate relationships, until we have felt the conflicts and pressures of workplaces, and until we have acted politically and lived the consequences of our political actions" (Brookfield, 2000, p. 95), Sophia took offence to the disregard of adolescent lived-experience. She explained her disagreement,

> My immediate reaction to this is that this is discounting adolescent experiences to say that we have not experienced conflicts and relationships in high school rather than the bigger world. Building intimate relationships is part of your adolescence! And everyone goes through stages where they have lost relationships, and I disagree with his premise—I think he is underestimating how much your experience in high school is a microcosm of the bigger-world . . . I can see how that will be argued that relationships in high school are less important, meaningful or concrete, but I would say that is not true because I personally feel that I have experienced meaningful and deep relationships, and maybe I am being I, but I don't think so. I also think that the fact that as adolescents we experience emotions so much more deeply means that we have feelings of affection and commitment even if we haven't known them as long and deeply.

Laurel agreed with Sophia in that high schoolers experience a microcosm of the greater world and if we assume transformative learning is a lifelong spiral, we have to assume the spiral begins somewhere—so why not adolescence? Both co-researchers warned against discounting the lived experience of adolescents who claim to engage in transformative incidents because it is

representative of past oppressive forces that have kept other marginalized groups from the emancipatory power of transformative learning. Thus with these sentiments, I explain the implications and applications of this study.

Implications of Research

All adults have experienced adolescence, but not all have experienced transformative learning during that time—in fact, I am confident that during high school I did not. However, this study indicates that some individuals do experience transformative learning as young as fourteen years old, which indicates the importance of context, opportunities, and support for adolescents during this timeframe. This has many implications for practitioners who engage with adolescents, for the field of leadership development, and for the wider world.

Implications for practitioners. This study has wide implications for any adult who works with adolescents in formal or informal settings. Essentially, it suggests adolescents are capable of adult levels of transformative learning if they feel safe, but challenged. Here I will detail how these findings can be applied by those who are not just from the unique contexts of the study, but in a more universal way, including specific suggestions of how to do so.

As explored by the breakdown of incident components, transformative learning environments are infrequently in the classroom, but instead tend to be extra-curricular, in novel or foreign locations. Adults still tend to play a significant role directing activities and acting as catalysts, support, and reflection partners for adolescents. This indicates modern learning environments should include novel situations outside of a classroom, with exposure to and engagement with the "Other," and opportunities for critical discourse among peers, older peers, and adults during all stages. Creating learning opportunities should not be solely the school's responsibility, but can be encouraged by adults in all settings.

Laurel and Sophia excelled in intrapersonal maturity due in part to the tools given to them by adults and older peers. Internal skills like critical thinking, emotional recognition, and self-reflection were fostered by several external leadership opportunities and adult-like responsibilities beginning at very young ages. These findings suggest even young adolescents should be exposed to complex cognitive, emotional, and social environments in order to help foster the development of the internal skills essential to transformative learning, yet, this does not seem to be common practice in many middle and high school classrooms.

Although young adolescents may not be perfectly capable of all of the tasks in leadership responsibilities, as the brain development literature shows, one's brain is symbiotically connected to the complexity of its environment, thus adult scaffolding can help adolescents engage as well as develop additional skills. Contexts that contain unpredictability, multiple age cohorts, social classes, ability levels, cultures, and diversity of thought can provide adolescents with opportunities to understand complexity. It should be noted the co-researchers were both adamant that part of the scaffolding adults should provide is the presence of safe "debriefing," "reflecting," and "discussion" environments created either by peer-mentors or adults who provide the space necessary for adolescents to make sense of the newly discovered complexity.

Specific application suggestions. As a former high school educator, I value the specific applications from research that instruct how to foster this kind of transformation in adolescents. Therefore, below I highlight some specific suggestions that emerged from this study that may be helpful to others working with adolescents.

Exposure to and engagement with the Other. Laurel and Sophia already attended a diverse school—with more Eastern and Western cultures represented than most American schools—yet their exposure to those not from their school community tended to be most revealing of their assumptions and beliefs. School and family-based activities such as visiting multi-faith places of worship, orphanages, and diverse schools and workplaces exposed them to Others from different ethnicities, religions, social classes, and ability levels. By exposing adolescents to the Other, we not only provide visions of alternative approaches to living but also a more realistic portrayal of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender, which can dramatically and irreversibly alter our way of being in the world. By taking the additional step beyond exposure toward engagement, adolescents are also able to better understand themselves, their self-locations, and their relationships with other humans.

This engagement can be in the complex-form as: field trips, study abroad, or cultural exchanges; or it can be as simple as: conversations with different peers, visiting and eating in different parts of town, or volunteering in parts of the community with diverse populations. However, it should also be noted engagement should always be mutually beneficial to both parties or one runs the risk of further tokenizing the Other. From my experience working with adolescents, some mutually-beneficial activities they tend to resonate with are: sharing skills with differently-abled elders or children; visiting the homes or schools of Others and sharing a meal or project; working cooperatively to solve a problem with someone they have just met; or having meaningful conversations with a foreigner (through translator or shared language).

Deep meaningful conversations. In fact, conversations can be extremely meaningful for adolescents. The co-researchers cited a specific type that they nicknamed “DMCs”: Deep Meaningful Conversations. Similar to Mezirowian rational discourse, a DMC is usually a

peer-led conversation that addresses the thoughts, beliefs, and feelings of all of the adolescents present. They work best if they are initiated by adults but occur without adults present so the adolescents can be more open with one another away from perceived judgment. In fact, Sophia and Laurel led DMCs with their friends in several settings, but admitted only when adults were absent did the most honest discussions evolve. DMCs allow adolescents to assert, compare, reflect on, and reassess their beliefs—a form of critical self-reflection.

Based on this, adults working with adolescents should provide ample time to engage in DMCs with initial guidance on how to structure a "deep, meaningful conversation" and then space to do so without adult interference. This allows adolescents to informally but authentically initiate one another into the special realm of self-exploration through conversation. Specific details most relevant to this are: allow at least one hour for the deepest conversations; allow them to occur in non-traditional spaces (outside of a classroom is best) that feel safe to all individuals (natural places like around a campfire, on a beach, in a forest, or near a body of water seem to work well as nature stokes feelings of wonderment); and as an adult, check in from time to time, but do not let your presence influence the conversation. Sometimes the best way to understand the conversation without being a part of it is to ask the adolescents to summarize what they got out of it once it is through. This provides an additional layer of reflection once they are required to verbalize the personal meaningfulness.

Critical-discourse. Going back to the roots of transformative learning theory we see the importance of critical-theory in not only shedding light on the inequalities and injustices that exist, but how when unexamined, these dominant ideologies and beliefs can unknowingly be perpetuated by us. Laurel and Sophia described curricular and extra-curricular moments that exhibited both people who unquestioningly perpetuated the harmful status quo and those who

openly critiqued and denied the current state of affairs. While DMCs are comfortable, safe spaces to explore one's inner-world without adult presence, critical discourse is less comfortable, designed to provoke cognitive dissonance with conflicting external worldviews and should have an adult guiding the process.

Sophia described articles, films, and books as sources of critical discourse in her humanities course. Lively, passionate discussions about the philosophical differences that separate humans from one another gave her and her classmates opportunities to challenge the dynamics of historic and current events. It is likely these discussions will get heated, thus it is the adult's role to create a holding environment where adolescents can feel safe enough to explore the threatening new information that will arise in the discourse.

Interestingly, I have found humor tends to be the best antithesis to the defense mechanisms that will come out when adolescents are asked to examine their worldviews. By using humorous resources to introduce topics that address the status quo, adolescents have an entry point that aligns with their developmental levels and allow engagement from a less emotionally vulnerable place. I prefer to use stand-up comedy, satirical articles/news shows, and political cartoons to engage some difficult critical discussions. Humor also has a way of allowing individuals to explore new perspectives, while still pointing out the absurdity of all absolutist views.

Being treated like an adult. DMCs and critical discourse represent the component of the co-researchers' transformative incident they valued immensely: being treated like an adult. This occurred in several ways for Laurel and Sophia: conversing without adult chaperones, spending time in adult locations (like a bar), being given the opportunity to complete difficult tasks (like during service projects)—and each provided the opportunity to feel initiated into the adult world

by older peers or adults. Spending times in adult locations like bars can represent the self-initiation practices adolescents prefer to engage in without adult presence, but, when in the company of teachers, parents or mentors, if adolescents are given adult-like responsibilities with minimal scaffolding, they are able to develop self-awareness, self-confidence, and eventually self-authorship, which aids in the transformative process.

For example, a meaningful task Laurel and Sophia felt was particularly adult-like was the creation and facilitation of their empowerment curriculum. They were given an open ended task by adults to create something they were passionate about, and the support and resources to do it independently. They were so satisfied by their success that they even surprised themselves! When educators or parents provide opportunities for adolescents to use their creativity to tackle issues they are passionate about, all three of Tisdell's (2012) conditions for transformation are present. Again, opportunities to serve must be authentic—as tokenizing adolescents and those they serve is not welcomed and detracts from the experiences.

Some examples that allow adolescents to be treated as adults that do not promote tokenization are: tasking teens to work with community/government officials to make changes that affect their demographic; presenting local real-world issues as projects in classrooms; being included in decisions that directly affect them (from family, team, and school perspectives); allowing adolescents to teach younger children valuable lessons; encouraging teens to shadow older peers and adults in informal settings; and giving access to any adult tools necessary to creatively solve a problem they are passionate about. These examples can fundamentally prepare adolescents for their leadership development.

Self-assessment over formal assessment practices. It should be noted that many of these practical suggestions are less common practices in most secondary schools as standardized

testing has become a pervasive trend in education. It should also be noted that nowhere in Laurel and Sophia's 45 self-described transformative incidents was any mention of formal assessment of any kind. In fact, part of what made certain components so transformative was the fact they were not representative of typical classroom practices, suggesting the field of adolescent education may need to reassess its practices and take guidance from the field of transformative learning. One such practice should be the use of self-assessment.

I find it imperative to assert that because transformative learning is a shift in consciousness that allows for the process of individuation, there is no place for formal assessment of this very personal process. This is especially because adolescents will reach levels of cognitive, affective, and spiritual maturity at different rates, making it unwise to set standardized expectations of transformation. Furthermore, it could be detrimental to adolescents to have their first exposure to transformative learning "graded" and compared to others, as it would likely create unnecessary stress around a process that can already be emotionally fraught. Instead, it would be best if the main priority of an educator was to encourage transformation, while creating a safe holding environment of support through the process. Scaffolding the process of self-exploration as guide and reflecting partner would be the most beneficial role an adult could play.

If assessment is a necessary component of the activity, a self-assessment should be created that allows students to critically reflect on their own holistic transformations from several perspectives. These need not even be translated into a formal assessment, but should be celebrated mostly as inner-growth and can even be tied into a rite of passage that exposes transformative learning as an act of maturation. Some forms of self-assessment I have found helpful to adolescents are: writing before and after journal entries; creating daily video or photo

blogs; writing a letter to one's "future self" detailing the qualities one hopes to acquire from now to then; interviewing loved ones about changes they have noticed in them; and mapping the stages of one's journey of personal growth.

Learning companions for mutual transformation. Lastly, adults working with adolescents need not forget that the act of engaging with others as they transform calls for one to become a transformative learning companion (Cranton & Wright, 2008). This type of learning companion is not immune to her or his own shift in consciousness and should be encouraged to partake in critical self-reflection, rational discourse, and reflective action alongside adolescents. This not only allows for the behavioral modeling that is so important to this age group, but for mutual transformation that can be shared in a community of learning.

Adults can share in this process in transparent and private ways. Transparency is valuable as it allows for the modeling of behaviors that will undoubtedly be new to teenagers, and simple actions such as announcing which phase of the transformative learning process one exists in, or sharing one's emotional state can normalize the processes for adolescents. Private actions such as journaling or meditation allow learning companions to be mindful of how the shared process of transformation not only affects them, but may be universal. Specific activities learning companions can share with adolescents may be: group conversations; shared writing or "pen-pal" exchanges; storytelling; dramatic interpretations of transformation; or artistic expressions of learning using various artistic media. Any activities shared with a learning companion are those which can also aid in the development of leadership.

Implications to Leadership Development

Leadership development can begin as young as adolescence and the results of this study show that transformative learning can be a catalyst. Not only does transformative learning

provide adolescents with opportunities to confront their external world, but their internal world as well. In fact, when we describe transformative learning as "the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action" (Taylor & Snyder, 2012, p. 76) it reminds us that leaders who are self-aware of their internal frames of reference tend to be more authentic in their thoughts and adaptive in their external actions. This study most closely aligns with authentic and adaptive leadership development because transformative learning supports self-awareness, which is at the center of authentic leadership theories (Avolio et al., 2009; Walumba et al., 2010), and contextual flexibility, which is the center of adaptive leadership theories (Heifetz, 1995; Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009).

Authentic leadership development. Authentic leadership development can occur at all life stages as one continuously becomes aware of her or his strengths, weaknesses, and the way they make sense of the world (Avolio et al., 2009). This emergent process is synonymous with transformative learning because as one acknowledges her or his unique talents, sense of purpose, core values, beliefs, and desires they can more authentically act on behalf of them (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

The outcomes of transformative learning lend themselves well to Walumba et al.'s (2010) behavioral-based definition of an authentic leader. Specifically someone who is able to: objectively assess all information before coming to a decision; be loyal to their internal values versus external pressures from peers, organizations, or society; disclose vulnerabilities and confidences with others; understand their own strengths, weaknesses and how others view their

leadership; model their self-awareness, self-regulatory processes, positive psychological states, and/or a positive moral perspective. As Laurel and Sophia illustrated, leadership and transformative learning too have a symbiotic relationship: when one is given leadership opportunities they are more likely to experience transformation, which in turn prepares them for leading.

The implications of this study to authentic leadership development remind us that: (a) adolescence is not too early to begin the process of transformative learning which aids in the development of self-awareness and authenticity; (b) when adolescents are given leadership opportunities, they are able to confront their internal and external worlds to make meaning, which leads to more authentic leadership behaviors; and (c) it is especially important to create and model safe holding environments for critical-reflection as it will be the first time adolescents are capable of this skill vital to authentic leadership and transformative learning.

Adaptive leadership development. Adaptive leadership places emphasis on context over specific behaviors, and as Laurel and Sophia illustrated, modern adolescents will face diverse contexts by choice and circumstance—many of which are unpredictable and outside of their comfort zone. Parks (2011) argues transformative learning can help prepare young people for the unpredictable contexts they will face as a leader, and by engaging with their own internal ebb and flow of change, they will be more likely to practice "anticipatory imagination"—a valuable skill of adaptive leadership.

Being able to imagine possible solutions to unforeseen issues in new and diverse contexts is a social-political art and skill that tends to be learned through experience more than anything. Within these contexts one need not be in a position of authority, because when focusing on adaptive leadership skills we recognize leadership is an action, rather than a position (Heifetz,

1995). Meaning, if leadership is approached as a verb not a noun, anyone with leadership skills within a system will be able to lead when the system calls for it (Heifetz et al., 2009). This means adolescents who may not be interested in specific leadership roles as a young person will still benefit from transformative learning as a form of leadership development for future contexts.

Transformative learning as adaptive leadership development allows one to gain comfort with consistently restructuring her existing internal equilibrium to allow for more adaptation to change (Heifetz, 1995). As Sophia and Laurel's visual representation of transformation indicated, as one's internal meaning structures evolve, so do their behaviors. The adaptive competency one can gain through transformative learning as an adolescent allows for the accommodation of diverse demands on them regardless of when they will occur.

The transformative incidents that brought Sophia and Laurel to other cultures especially fostered their ability to become more inclusive, differentiated, permeable, and open to other points of view. One could describe this type of person as an adaptive ethnorelativist (Bennett, 1993; Tesoriero, 2006) who nurtures a deep appreciation of and respect for the integrity of all cultures, values and worldviews, which is helpful when leading adaptive change—because one must be able to connect with the values, beliefs, anxieties of the people she is trying to lead (Heifetz et al., 2009). This was noticeable in the manner the young women approached editing their empowerment curriculum, adapting it for different contexts as a result of previously being exposed to those worldviews.

And lastly, becoming aware of the process of transformative learning early in life allows adolescents to be more likely to recognize the process in others, which can help them empathize through change. For example, when practicing adaptive leadership, one will likely have to help navigate others through a period of disorientation, which can manifest as conflict, frustration,

panic, or grief (Heifetz et al., 2009). When one has already experienced the disorientation of transformative learning, one can not only recognize that disorientation in others, but offer empathetic guidance (L. Brown & Posner, 2001) through the change they may have presented to the system.

Implications for the Wider World

Any researcher hopes their study will have implications further than just the immediate fields it will be presented to. Here I will share my thoughts regarding the importance of sharing the process of transformative learning with adolescents and why it's so valuable to the diverse, fast-changing, post-modern world we live in.

Can we afford not to? Nothing in our post-modern world is safe from the stroke of change, including our assumptions about what adolescents are capable of and what they can and should be introduced to. As I work with adolescents and emerging adults who yearn for a deeper connection to themselves and the world, but don't know where to get it, I am reminded of O'Sullivan's (2012) call for personal perspective transformation as a process that can transform individuals, which also will shift the collective consciousness of our planet toward one that no longer destroys, but heals.

It may be just one framework that helps shift consciousness, but transformative learning has the potential to transform individuals into what our planet needs. O'Sullivan (1999) reminds us that,

> The terror here is that we have it within our power to make life extinct on this planet. Because of the magnitude of this responsibility for the planet, all our educational ventures must finally be judged with this order of magnitude . . . Our present educational institutions which are in line with and feeding into industrialism, nationalism, competitive transnationalism, individualism and patriarchy must be fundamentally called into question. All of these elements coalesce into a worldview that exacerbates the crisis we are now facing. (p. 7)

If we place transformative learning toward the forefront of adolescent education, we have the potential to introduce these emancipatory ideas earlier than cognitive rigidity begins and shift global consciousness. Knowing we are facing a potential global crisis, can we afford not to?

Encouraging holism. This study further implied the existence of holistic ways of knowing: emotionally, somatically, and spiritually. As our planet becomes less dependent on the Western, androcentric prioritization of ration and cognition, we will be more likely to seek holistic solutions to our global and internal crises. This allows us to embrace more integral (Gunnlaugson, 2005) ways of understanding ourselves and one another, which encourages more tolerance, respect, and cooperation.

Many of Laurel and Sophia's transformative incidents could be understood from an extrarational perspective, reminding us we do not exist in a mental vacuum chamber, but instead seek holistic nourishment from a community that understands change and transformation as vital to our collective survival. By offering transformative learning to younger audiences, we normalize and encourage the holistic ways of knowing earlier, and celebrate them as they change—because changing meaning perspectives indicates one's greater awareness of what it means to be human.

Strengths and Limitations of This Study

As a result of this in-depth collaborative inquiry, only two co-researchers' experiences were studied. Thus the particularity of just these two young women's lives cannot be representative of all adolescents' experiences. As stated, Laurel and Sophia were raised in a privileged, international context with abundant personal, academic, and social opportunities. It was because of these very specific contexts that we were able to go into such fascinating depth, but as the main researcher, it is also obvious to me that these conditions are difficult for the

average adolescent to access, and thus represent a limitation of this study. As a result of this, I have made my implications and areas of further research based on the belief that while this context is specific, these findings can also be more generally applied.

An additional limitation is the focus on the female gender. Because the study focused on adolescent girls, we are missing the experiences of boys, making it difficult to explore how gender may play a role in transformation. There may be key gender-specific components and/or perspectives we have left out in this report.

Also, this study did as Tisdell (2012) warned against and focused too much on "peak experiences" instead of the everyday act of exploring and maintaining higher states of consciousness. Because the scope of the study was on specific transformative incidents, we were unable to adequately distinguish between the abstract concept of consciousness and how it transforms in adolescents. This is further explored in the following section.

Despite these limitations, our research team was able to thoroughly describe and interpret fascinating phenomena at a level of depth not found in most transformative learning studies. The validity and authenticity of my co-researchers' experiences is assured based on their active role throughout the research, interpretation, and dissemination processes. I am confident that not only do their voices shine through this report, but that they will do just what a quality phenomenological study should: evoke dialog within the fields of adolescent development and transformative learning.

This work can be used as a model for additional depth studies with adolescents and it can be used as a stepping stone for furthering the breadth of this holistic aspect of transformative learning. By offering the field the lived experience and components of self-described transformative incidents, researchers can build off the meaning-making of Laurel and Sophia to

better understand the contexts of transformation for all adolescents. Perhaps additional studies will also address the lingering questions I still have.

Questions and Further Research

The question that still lingers from this study is Kegan's (2000), "What form transforms?" It is not difficult to describe aspects the co-researchers perceived as transforming (e.g., self-awareness, understanding of service, identity), but philosophically I am still torn by whether this form is more akin to one's fluid identity or an enduring consciousness.

Perhaps this is because an aspect of the study I found particularly fascinating (and was so indicative of the topic we were studying) was that both Laurel and Sophia asserted there were occasions that did not necessarily transform them, but confirmed their essence instead. I followed up on this several times in the interviews and in each answer they explained that there seems to be a "core-self" they identify with that is not necessarily fully-formed, but is recognizable enough to elicit feelings confirming its existence—these feelings tend to manifest as a knowing, a familiarity, a warmth, or something that just "clicks." I asked them for metaphors or other ways of describing it and they vacillated between phrases like, "heart/soul," "basic characteristics," "core-self," "fundamentally me," and "my essence," which all indicate a very deep connection to something other than just one's fluid identity. Perhaps, despite their argument to the contrary the young women were tapping into their consciousness, but they were less comfortable with that vernacular.

Then after the data collection was through, Sophia wrote me that she had stumbled upon an article that challenged her assumption that we have a "core-self,"

> And I noticed that some of the things I initially thought were fundamental to who I was have changed—very slowly but those slow changes have built up to large ones—to the point where I act in almost contradictory ways. So I'm starting to question this whole idea

> of "basic characteristics." Right now I still think there are characteristics (maybe developed patterns or maybe fundamental traits) that are core to my personality and identity but I definitely think that they can be consciously and unconsciously changed.

This simple text message from Sophia represented the essence of this study! Even through all of the interviews, data collection, post-data discussions, and editing her words Sophia held the belief she had a core essence. Then, an outside article caused a disorienting dilemma that challenged her meaning perspective, causing her to question this assumption, and be open to other ways of understanding herself. This interaction confirmed the co-researchers' ability to critically reflect, but still leaves me wondering what form is transforming.

Despite my co-researcher's dislike for the term consciousness, I believe the confirmation of their "core-self" is more aligned to the process of individuation, which relates to the uncovering of their consciousness, not identity. Thus the term "shift in consciousness" implies one's consciousness is enduring, but has different access points based on changing perspectives. Consciousness as one's core-self means it is less dependent on context than identity. Identity on the other hand, is more dynamic and can (and should) change with context and time.

This leads me to question to what degree adolescents should be focusing on uncovering their stable core-self (accessing their consciousness) versus recognizing the fluidity of their identity. As it is now—in part due to Erikson's endorsement of psychosocial moratoria—the teenage years have a reputation as a time for adolescents to "find themselves," an act focused on identity. However, by not differentiating between a stable consciousness and a fluid identity we may be setting up young people for a shock when they encounter their first identity-threatening disorienting dilemma. In other words, perhaps we need to reinforce the idea that some of the very beliefs adolescents use to form their identity will actually become the meaning structures for future transformations. My personal experience with transformative learning as an emerging

adult indicates I did not know the difference between my core-self and my fluid identity, causing very anxious disorienting dilemmas. But perhaps that is the purpose of adolescence, to create the meaning perspectives that will be transformed in adulthood or as Plotkin (2010) asserts to build one's first "home" for the act of building it, not living in it—a process more akin to Jung's individuation.

Based on this, I would recommend additional research address how adolescents recognize their earliest disorienting dilemmas and how that influences the way they proceed through phases of transformative learning. Do they welcome the challenge to their assumptions or because they are still establishing their identity, do they feel threatened by it and give up critically self-reflecting? If they do not give up, which tools are they using to proceed? Do adolescents need to have the behavior modeled for them or is it intuitive? To what degree does this process resemble individuation?

From this study we can see Laurel and Sophia were in between Kegan's (1994) socialized mind and self-authoring mind. This entails a shift from the expectations and values of one's family and culture toward an internal authorship. From the co-researchers' incidents, you can see it is not a one-time initiation into the self-authoring mind, but an ongoing process. Thus, the work of Magolda (2004, 2009) and her self-authorship model, which encourages young people to listen to, cultivate, and trust their internal voices is an area of further interest for me as I am curious about how that ongoing process unfolds in one's adolescence and emerging adulthood. The co-researchers indicated the external trust of adults helped establish their internal-trust, but what are other factors that bridge the gap between these two orders of mind? What are the largest barriers to self-authorship? Which aspects of the socialized mind are the most difficult to detach from?

Although the context of this study is very specific, the depth laid a beautiful groundwork for future studies in diverse contexts. Some contexts and participants that I am specifically interested in are the marginalized groups who are being visited by foreigners like my co-researchers. Empowerment programs, service opportunities, and international travel were all methods of transformation for the privileged participants in the foundational research I used for this study, but very little of the findings were from the local people's perspective. Even if they may not meet all of Mezirow's preconditions, we may be making a false assumption that these marginalized groups are not capable of transformation. Which lenses of transformation are marginalized groups engaging with? How do foreign visitors affect the degree with which these groups may or may not engage with transformative learning?

And lastly, judging from the impressive co-researching abilities Laurel and Sophia displayed, an area ripe for further research is how initiatives that mimic this study may contribute to one's ability to engage with transformative learning going forward. Does the process of participating in the interpretation and critical reflection of one's own words have a larger carryover than just simply being a participant? Even more challenging to the status quo would be whether we can change the way we research transformative learning. Can we begin to usher in more collaborative inquiries to become the field that does more research with people rather than on people? Reminiscent of transformative learning's Freirian roots, perhaps the way we study it should be as much about conscientization as transformation.

Final Remarks

It was tempting to go through this study from a detached, theoretical perspective, avoiding the cognitive and emotional upheavals that accompany researching such a highly personal concept, but it is obvious I was unable to escape the grasp of transformation in my own

study! I have shifted my consciousness in dramatic and irreversible ways from how I approach research to my own spiritual beliefs. Yet, as harrowing as the journey was at times, having theory guide me was cathartic, and made me realize how much more helpful it would have been to have had access to transformative learning as a younger person.

This has inspired me to bring the theory to as many people as possible—especially adolescents. It is my belief that the process of individuation through transformation will happen whether we are conscious of it or not, but if we as adults can be more transparent about how the process unfolds, we can offer adolescents an initiation into the lifelong experience of transformative learning. As our world becomes even more complex—prompting many internal and external changes among us all—can we afford not to?

Perhaps the most motivating statement I received regarding this research was at the 2014 International Transformative Learning Conference. A well-known theorist in the field (who is cited several times herein) told me my study would have to be pretty remarkable to shift the current paradigm of transformative le as an exclusively adult process. Thus, it is with humility and utmost respect to her and the field that I present research that I believe to be quite remarkable. May its findings encourage further discourse and lead to even more holism to the field.

References

Adamson, L., & Lyxell, B. (1996). Self-concept and questions of life: Identity development during late adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence, 19*(6), 569–582. doi:10.1006/jado.1996.0055

Argyris, C., & Schön, D. A. (1992). *On organizational learning.* Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, *55*(5), 469–480. doi:10.1037/0003-066x.55.5.469

Arnett, J. J. (2003). Conceptions of the transition to adulthood among emerging adults in American ethnic groups. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, *2003*(100), 63–76. doi:10.1002/cd.75

Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *16*(3), 315–338. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.001

Avolio, B. J., Walumbwa, F. O., & Weber, T. J. (2009). Leadership: Current theories, research, and future directions. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *60*(1), 421–449. doi:10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163621

Bamber, P., & Hankin, L. (2011). Transformative learning through service-learning: No passport required. *Education Training*, *53*(2/3), 190–206. doi:10.1108/00400911111115726

Baumgartner, L. M. (2001). An update on transformational learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 2001*(89), 15–24. doi:10.1002/ace.4

Baumgartner, L. M. (2012). Mezirow's theory of transformative learning from 1975 to present. In E. W. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice* (pp. 37–55). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass Wiley.

Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Belenky, M. F., & Stanton, A. V. (2000). Inequality, development, and connected knowing. In J. Mezirow (Ed.), *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (pp. 71–102). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Benner, A. D. (2011). The transition to high school: Current knowledge, future directions. *Educational Psychology Review, 23*(3), 299–328. doi:10.1007/s10648-011-9152-0

Bennett, M. J. (1993). Developing intercultural sensitivity: An integrative approach to global and domestic diversity. *Handbook of Intercultural Training,* 147–165. doi:10.4135/9781452231129.n6

Bentz, V. M., & Shapiro, J. J. (1998). *Mindful inquiry in social research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Blakemore, S. (2010). The developing social brain: Implications for education. *Neuron, 65*(6), 744–747. doi:10.1016/j.neuron.2010.03.004

Blakemore, S. J. (2012). Imaging brain development: The adolescent brain. *Neuroimage*, *61*(2), 397–406. doi:10.1016/j.neuroimage.2011.11.080

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative research in education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Boyd, R. D. (1989). Facilitating personal transformations in small groups part I. *Small Group Research, 20*(4), 459–474. doi:10.1177/104649648902000406

Boyd, R. D., & Myers, J. G. (1988). Transformative education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 7*(4), 261–284. doi:10.1080/0260137880070403

Brinkman, S., & Kvale, S. (2015). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Brookfield, S. D. (2000). Transformative learning as ideology critique. In J. Mezirow (Ed.) *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (pp. 125–148. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Brookfield, S. D. (2003). A critical theory perspective on accelerated learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, *2003*(97), 73–82. doi:10.1002/ace.90

Brown, L. M., & Gilligan, C. (1993). Meeting at the crossroads: Women's psychology and girls' development. *Feminism & Psychology*, *3*(1), 11–35. doi:10.4159/harvard.9780674731837

Brown, L. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2001). Exploring the relationship between learning and leadership. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, *22*(6), 274–280. doi:10.1108/01437730110403204

Brown, V. A. (2015). *Silenced voices that cry in the night: The transformative experience of spouses of wounded warriors—Is it transformative learning? A phenomenological study* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (Publication No. 3688376)

Bruner, J. S. (1990). *Acts of meaning* (Vol. 3). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bruner, J. (1991). The narrative construction of reality. *Critical Inquiry*, *18*(1), 1–21. doi:10.1086/448619

Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the mountain: An ecology of indigenous education*. Durango, CO: Kivakí Press.

Cajete, G. A. (1999). *Igniting the sparkle: An indigenous science education model*. Skyland, NC: Kivaki Press.

Carter, T. J. (2002). The importance of talk to midcareer women's development: A collaborative inquiry. *Journal of Business Communication, 39*(1), 55–91. doi:10.1177/002194360203900104

Chang, W., Chen, C. L., Huang, Y., & Yuan, Y. (2011). Exploring the unknown: International service and individual transformation. *Adult Education Quarterly, 62*(3), 230–251. doi:10.1177/0741713611402049

Churchill, S. D. (2000). "Seeing through" self-deception in narrative reports: Finding psychological truth in problematic data. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 31*(1), 44–62. doi:10.1163/156916200746247

Clark, M. C., & Wilson, A. L. (1991). Context and rationality in Mezirow's theory of transformational learning. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *41*(2), 75–91. doi:10.1177/0001848191041002002

Clausen, J. A. (1995). Gender, contexts, and turning points in adults' lives. *Examining lives in context: Perspectives on the ecology of human development*, 365–389. doi:10.1037/10176-010

Collard, S., & Law, M. (1989). The limits of perspective transformation: A critique of Mezirow's theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *39*(2), 99–107.

Cranton, P. (2006). Fostering authentic relationships in the transformative classroom. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 2006*(109), 5–13. doi:10.1002/ace.203

Cranton, P., & Wright, B. (2008). The transformative educator as learning companion. *Journal of Transformative Education, 6*(1), 33–47. doi:10.1177/1541344608316961

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cunliffe, A. L. (2004). On becoming a critically reflexive practitioner. *Journal of Management Education, 28*(4), 407–426. doi:10.1177/1052562904264440

Cunliffe, A. L. (2009). The philosopher leader: On relationalism, ethics and reflexivity—A critical perspective to teaching leadership. *Management Learning, 40*(1), 87–101. doi:10.1177/1350507608099315

Curry-Stevens, A. (2007). New forms of transformative education pedagogy for the privileged. *Journal of Transformative Education, 5*(1), 33–58. doi:10.1177/1541344607299394

Dahl, R. E. (2016). The developmental neuroscience of adolescence: Revisiting, refining, and extending seminal models. *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience*, *17*, 101–102. doi:10.1016/j.dcn.2015.12.016

Daloz, L. A. P. (2000). Transformative learning for the common good. In J. Mezirow (Ed.), *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (pp. 103–123). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Davey, C. G., Yücel, M., & Allen, N. B. (2008). The emergence of depression in adolescence: Development of the prefrontal cortex and the representation of reward. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews, 32*(1), 1–19. doi:10.1016/j.neubiorev.2007.04.016

Dirkx, J. M. (1997). Nurturing soul in adult learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 1997*(74), 79–88. doi:10.1002/ace.7409

Dirkx, J. M. (2000). Transformative Learning and the Journey of Individuation. *ERIC Digest* Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED448306)

Dirkx, J. (2001). Images, transformative learning and the work of soul. *Adult Learning*, *12*(3), 15–16.

Dirkx, J. M. (2006). Authenticity and imagination. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, *2006*(111), 27–39. doi:10.1002/ace.225

Dirkx, J. M. (2012). Nurturing soul work: A Jungian approach to transformative learning. In E. W. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), *The handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 116–130). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass Wiley.

Dirkx, J. M., Mezirow, J., & Cranton, P. Musings and reflections on the meaning, context, and process of transformative learning: A dialogue between John M. Dirkx and Jack Mezirow. *Journal of Transformative Education 4*(2)*,* 123–139. doi:10.1177/1541344606287503

Doucet, F., Grayman-Simpson, N., & Shapses Wertheim, S. (2013). Steps along the journey: Documenting undergraduate white women's transformative processes in a diversity course. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *6*(4), 276–291. doi:10.1037/a0034334

Dunbar, R. I. (2003). The social brain: mind, language, and society in evolutionary perspective. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 163–181. doi:10.1146/annurev.anthro.32.061002.093158

English, L. M., & Irving, C. J. (2012). Women and transformative learning. In E. W. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.) *The handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 245–259). San Francisco, CA: Josey Bass Wiley.

Erikson, E. H. (1968). Life cycle. In D. L. Sills (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of the social sciences* (pp. 286–292). New York, NY: MacMillan.

Fine, M. (1994). Dis-stance and other stances: Negotiations of power inside feminist research. In A. Gitlin (Ed.), *Power and method: Political activism and educational research* (pp. 13–35). New York, NY: Routledge.

Freire, P. (1970). *Cultural action for freedom*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard.

Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Frick, W. B. (1990). The symbolic growth experience: A chronicle of heuristic inquiry and a quest for synthesis. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 30*(1), 64–80. doi:10.1177/0022167890301004

Gadamer, H. G. (1975). Hermeneutics and Social Science. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, *2*(4), 307–316. doi:10.1177/019145377500200402

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gilligan, C., & Brown, L. M. (1992). *Meeting at the crossroads: Women's psychology and girls' development.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Giorgi, A. (2006). Difficulties encountered in the application of the phenomenological method in the social sciences. *Análise Psicológica, 24*(3), 353–361. doi:10.14417/ap.175

Graber, J. A., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (1996). Transitions and turning points: Navigating the passage from childhood through adolescence. *Developmental Psychology*, *32*(4), 768. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.32.4.768

Greene, S. (2014). *The psychological development of girls and women: Rethinking change in time*. London, UK: Routledge.

Grider, C. J. (2011). *Tales and testimonies of transformational learning in young adults* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, IL.

Gunnlaugson, O. (2005). Toward integrally informed theories of transformative learning. *Journal of Transformative Education*, *3*(4), 331–353. doi:10.1177/1541344605278671

Heifetz, R. A. (1995). *Leadership without easy answers*. Minneapolis, MN: The Masters Forum.

Heifetz, R. A., Grashow, A., & Linsky, M. (2009). *The practice of adaptive leadership: Tools and tactics for changing your organization and the world*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press.

Heron, J. (1971). *Experience and method: An inquiry into the concept of experiential research*. Human Potential Research Project, Centre for Adult Education, University of Surrey. Retrieved from http://www.human-inquiry.com/Experience%20And%20Method.pdf

Heron, J. (1977). *Catharsis in human development*. Guildford, UK: University of Surrey.

Heron, J., & Reason, P. (2006). The practice of co-operative inquiry: Research 'with' rather than 'on' people. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research* (pp. 144–154). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hirsch, B. J., & Rapkin, B. D. (1987). The transition to junior high school: A longitudinal study of self-esteem, psychological symptomatology, school life, and social support. *Child Development*, *58*(5), 1235–1243. doi:10.2307/1130617

Hodgson, B. C. (2007). *Experiential approaches to personal transformations: Outward journeys and inward adventures* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (Publication No. 3266376).

Horton, M., & Freire, P. (1990). *We make the road by walking: Conversations on education and social change.* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Husserl, E. (1999). *The idea of phenomenology.* New York, NY: Springer Science & Business Media.

Illeris, K. (2004). Transformative learning in the perspective of a comprehensive learning theory. *Journal of Transformative Education*, *2*(2), 79–89. doi:10.1177/1541344603262315

Jacoby, M. (1999). *Jungian psychotherapy and contemporary infant research: Basic patterns of emotional exchange.* London, UK: Routledge.

Johnson, M. J. (2014). Girls in-between: Social, emotional, physical, and sexual development in context. In D. Barnes (Ed.), *Women's reproductive mental health across the lifespan* (pp. 27–48). New York, NY: Springer International. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-05116-1_2

Jordan, J. V. (2013). Relational resilience in girls. In S. Goldstein & R. Brooks (Eds.), *Handbook of resilience in children* (pp. 73–86). Springer US. doi:10.1007/0-306-48572-9_6

Jung, C. G. (1921). *Psychology of the unconscious: A study of the transformations and symbolisms of the libido.* New York, NY: Dodd, Mead.

Jung, C. G. (1964). *Man and his symbols: Approaching the unconscious*. London, UK: Dell.

Kagan, J. (1994). *The nature of the child.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Kasl, E., & Elias, D. (2000). Creating new habits of mind in small groups. In J. Mezirow (Ed.), *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (pp. 229–252), San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kasl, E., Marsick, V. J., & Dechant, K. (1997). Teams as learners: A research-based model of team learning. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *33*(2), 227–246. doi:10.1177/0021886397332010

Kasl, E., & Yorks, L. (2002). Collaborative inquiry for adult learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, *2002*(94), 3–12. doi:10.1002/ace.54

Kegan, R. (1982). *The evolving self*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kegan, R. (1994). *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kegan, R. (2000). *What "form" transforms*? *A constructive-developmental approach to transformative learning*. In J. Mezirow & Associates (Eds.), *Learning as transformation* (pp. 35–70). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kerr, S. P. (2014). *Personal shift: The potential for transformative learning in youth through international service education programs* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Royal Roads University, Victoria, B.C., Canada.

Kessler, R. (2000). Initiation—Saying good-bye to childhood. *Educational Leadership*, *57*(4), 30–33.

Kezar, A. (2004). Wrestling with philosophy. *Journal of Higher Education, 75*(1), 42–55. doi:10.1353/jhe.2003.0052

Kiely, R. (2004). A chameleon with a complex: Searching for transformation in international service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, *10*(2), 5–20.

King, P. M., & Kitchener, K. S. (1994). *Developing reflective judgment: Understanding and promoting intellectual growth and critical thinking in adolescents and adults*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kitchenham, A. (2008). The evolution of John Mezirow's transformative learning theory. *Journal of Transformative Education*, *6*(2), 104–123. doi.org/10.1177/1541344608322678

Kohlberg, L., & Gilligan, C. (1978). From adolescence to adulthood: The rediscovery of reality in a postconventional world. *Language and Operational Thought*, 125–136. doi:10.1007/978-1-4684-2538-3_9

Kramarski, B. (2004). Making sense of graphs: Does metacognitive instruction make a difference on students' mathematical conceptions and alternative conceptions? *Learning and Instruction*, *14*(6), 593–619. doi:10.1016/j.learninstruc.2004.09.003

Kuhn, D. (1999). A developmental model of critical thinking. *Educational Researcher*, *28*(2), 16–46. doi:10.3102/0013189x028002016

Langdridge, D., & Butt, T. (2004). The fundamental attribution error: A phenomenological critique. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *43*(3), 357–369. doi:10.1348/0144666042037962

Levinson, D. J. (1986). A conception of adult development. *American Psychologist*, *41*(1), 3–13. doi:10.1037//0003-066x.41.1.3

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Logan, R. (2013). *Getting smart to do good: Transformative learning experiences of expeditionary learning graduates* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (Publication No. 3568468)

Magolda, B. (2004). Self-authorship as the common goal. In M. B. Baxter Magolda & P. M. King (Eds.), *Learning partnerships: Theory and models of practice to educate for self-authorship* (pp. 1–35). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Magolda, B. M. (2009). *Authoring your life: Developing an internal voice to navigate life's challenges*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego-identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *3*(5), 551. doi:10.1037/h0023281

Maslow, A. H. (1968). *Toward a psychology of being.* New York, NY: Van Nostrand.

Maslow, A. H. (1971). *Self-actualization.* New York, NY: Van Nostrand.

Mayes, C. (2010). *The archetypal hero's journey in teaching and learning: A study in Jungian pedagogy*. Madison, WI: Atwood.

McLean, K. C., & Pratt, M. W. (2006). Life's little (and big) lessons: Identity statuses and meaning-making in the turning point narratives of emerging adults. *Developmental Psychology*, *42*(4), 714. doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.42.4.714

Mensch, B. S., Hewett, P. C., & Erulkar, A. S. (2003). The reporting of sensitive behavior by adolescents: A methodological experiment in Kenya. *Demography*, *40*(2), 247–268. doi:10.1353/dem.2003.0017

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education: Revised and expanded from "Case study research in education."* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B. (2001). Andragogy and self-directed learning: Pillars of adult learning theory. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, *2001*(89), 3. doi:10.1002/ace.3

Merriam, S. B. (2004). The role of cognitive development in Mezirow's transformational learning theory. *Adult Education Quarterly, 55*(1), 60–68. doi: 10.1177/0741713604268891

Mezirow, J. (1978). Perspective transformation. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *28*(2), 100–110. doi:10.1177/074171367802800202

Mezirow, J. (1981). A critical theory of adult learning and education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *32*(1), 3–24. doi:10.1177/074171368103200101

Mezirow, J. (1990). *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (1998). On critical reflection. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *48*(3), 185–198. doi:10.1177/074171369804800305

Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J., & Taylor, E. W. (2009). *Transformative learning in practice: Insights from community, workplace, and higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic research: Design, methodology, and applications*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Newman, M. (2010). Calling transformative learning into question: Some mutinous thoughts. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *62*(1), 36–55. doi:10.1177/0741713610392768

Noble, K. D. (1987). The dilemma of the gifted woman. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *11*(3), 367–378. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.1987.tb00911.x

O'Sullivan, E. (1999). Transformative learning. *Educational Vision for the 21st Century*. Toronto, CAN: Zed Books.

O'Sullivan, E. (2008). Finding our way in the great work. *Journal of Transformative Education*, *6*(1), 27–32. doi:10.1177/1541344608316960

O'Sullivan, E. (2012). Deep transformation: Forging a planetary worldview. In E. W. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), *The handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research, and practice* (pp.162–177). San Francisco, CA: Josey Bass Wiley.

O'Sullivan, E., Morrell, A., & O'Connor, M. A. (Eds.). (2002). *Expanding the boundaries of transformative learning*. doi:10.1007/978-1-349-63550-4

Orenstein, P. (1994). *School girls: Young women, self-esteem, and the confidence gap.* New York, NY: Bantam Doubleday Dell.

Parks, S. D. (2011). *Big questions, worthy dreams: Mentoring emerging adults in their search for meaning, purpose, and faith*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Patton, M. Q. (2005). *Qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Perry, D. J. (2013). Transcendental method for research with human subjects: A transformative phenomenology for the human sciences. *Field Methods*, *25*(3), 262–282. doi:10.1177/1525822x12467105

Piaget, J. (1969). *The intellectual development of the adolescent*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Piaget, J. (1972). Intellectual evolution from adolescence to adulthood. *Human Development*, *15*(1), 1–12. doi:10.1159/000271225

Pillemer, D. B. (2001). Momentous events and the life story. *Review of General Psychology*, *5*(2), 123–134. doi:10.1037/1089-2680.5.2.123

Plotkin, B. (2003). *Soulcraft: Crossing into the mysteries of nature and psyche*. Novato, CA: New World Library.

Plumridge, L., & Thomson, R. (2003). Longitudinal qualitative studies and the reflexive self. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *6*(3), 213–222. doi:10.1080/1364557032000091815

Ponterotto, J. G. (2005). Qualitative research in counseling psychology: A primer on research paradigms and philosophy of science. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *52*(2), 126–136. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.126

Reason, P. E. (1994). *Participation in human inquiry.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rogers, C. R. (1969). *Freedom to learn: A view of what education might become*. Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Rutter, M. (1989). Pathways from childhood to adult life. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *30*(1), 23–51. doi:10.1111/j.1469-7610.1989.tb00768.x

Schaffner, L. (1998). Female juvenile delinquency: Sexual solutions, gender bias, and juvenile justice. *Hastings Women's Law Journal*, *9*(1), 1–25.

Schlitz, M., Vieten, C., & Amorok, T. (2007). *Living deeply: The art & science of transformation in everyday life*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger.

Schlitz, M., Vieten, C., & Miller, E. M. (2010). Worldview transformation and the development of social consciousness. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, *17*(7-1), 18–36. doi:10.1215/08879982-2012-2015

Schmidt, M. E. (2009). *Teaching for social conscience in Hong Kong secondary schools* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia). Retrieved from http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/167362274

Schram, T. H. (2003). *Conceptualizing qualitative inquiry: Mindwork for fieldwork in education and the social sciences*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

Sebastian, C., Burnett, S., & Blakemore, S.-J. (2008). Development of the self-concept during adolescence. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, *12*(11), 441–446. doi:10.1016/j.tics.2008.07.008

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline. The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York, NY: Currency Doubleday.

Shulman, S., & Ben-Artzi, E. (2003). Age-related differences in the transition from adolescence to adulthood and links with family relationships. *Journal of Adult Development*, *10*(4), 217–226. doi:10.1023/a:1026006025155

Simmons, R. (2002). *Odd girl out: The hidden culture of aggression in girls*. New York, NY: Harcourt.

Singleton, J. (2010). Head, heart and hands model for transformative learning: Place as context for changing sustainability values. *International Journal of Sustainability Education, 9*(1), 68–86.

Snyder, C. (2008). Grabbing hold of a moving target: Identifying and measuring the transformative learning process. *Journal of Transformative Education*, *6*(3), 159–181. doi:10.1177/1541344608327813

Sokolowski, R. (2000). *Introduction to phenomenology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Spear, S. B. (2014). Conscious cooperation with the individuating adult learner. *Journal of Transformative Education, 12*(3), 226–247. doi:10.1177/1541344614544374

Stein, M. (2006). *The principle of individuation: Toward the development of human consciousness*. Wilmette, IL: Chiron.

Steinberg, L. (2005). Cognitive and affective development in adolescence. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 9*(2), 69–74. doi:10.1016/j.tics.2004.12.005

Stringer, E. T. (2004). *Action research in education*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Tavernier, R., & Willoughby, T. (2012). Adolescent turning points: The association between meaning-making and psychological well-being. *Developmental Psychology*, *48*(4), 1058. doi:10.1037/a0026326

Taylor, E. W. (1998). *The theory and practice of transformative learning: A critical review.* Information Series No. 374. Columbus, OH: ERIC.

Taylor, E. W. (2007). An update of transformative learning theory: A critical review of the empirical research (1999–2005). *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 26*(2), 173–191. doi:10.1080/02601370701219475

Taylor, E. W., & Cranton, P. (2012). *The handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research, and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Taylor, E., & Snyder M. J. (2012). A critical review of research on transformative learning theory 2006–2010. In E. W. Taylor & P. Cranton P. (Eds.), *Handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 37–54). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Tennant, M. C. (1993). Perspective transformation and adult development. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *44*(1), 34–42. doi:10.1177/0741713693044001003

Tennant, M. (1994). Response to understanding transformation theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *44*(4), 233–235. doi:10.1177/074171369404400404

Tesoriero, F. (2006). Personal growth towards intercultural competence through an international field education programme. *Australian Social Work*, *59*(2), 126–140. doi:10.1080/03124070600651853

Thorne, A., McLean, K. C., & Lawrence, A. M. (2004). When remembering is not enough: Reflecting on self-defining memories in late adolescence. *Journal of Personality*, *72*(3), 513–542. doi:10.1111/j.0022-3506.2004.00271.x

Thurnher, M. (1983). Turning points and developmental change: Subjective and "objective" assessments. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *53*(1), 52–60. doi:10.1111/j.1939-0025.1983.tb03349.x

Tisdell, E. J. (2012). Themes and variations of transformational learning: Interdisciplinary perspectives on forms that transform. In E. W. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), *The handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 21–36). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

van Manen, M. (2007). Phenomenology of practice. *Phenomenology & Practice, 1*(1). doi:10.1007/978-94-010-0536-4_24

van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing.* London, UK: Routledge.

Walsh, S. L. (2007, October). How do age and cognitive development affect transformational learning? In P. Cranton & E. Taylor (Eds.), *Transformative learning: Issues of difference and diversity*, (pp. 470–471). Paper presented at the Seventh International Transformative Learning Conference, Albuquerque, NM.

Walumbwa, F. O., Wang, P., Wang, H., Schaubroeck, J., & Avolio, B. J. (2010). Retracted: Psychological processes linking authentic leadership to follower behaviors. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *21*(5), 901–914. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.07.015

Watkins, K. E., & Marsick, V. J. (1993). *Sculpting the learning organization: Lessons in the art and science of systemic change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Wennberg, B. Å., & Hane, M. (2005). *Friständighet and partnerships.* Omslagsbild, S:Cooperation Dynamics.

Wertz, F. J. (2005). Phenomenological research methods for counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *52*(2), 167. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.167

Whalley, T. R. (1995). *Toward a theory of culture learning: A study based on journals written by Japanese and Canadian young adults in exchange programs* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C., Canada.

Wringe, C. (2013). May we transform the Other? *Ethics and Education*, *8*(1), 55–64. doi:10.1080/17449642.2013.793962

Yorks, L., & Kasl, E. (2006). I know more than I can say: A taxonomy for using expressive ways of knowing to foster transformative learning. *Journal of Transformative Education*, *4*(1), 43–64. doi:10.1177/1541344605283151

Yurgelun-Todd, D. (2007). Emotional and cognitive changes during adolescence. *Current Opinion in Neurobiology*, *17*(2), 251–257. doi:10.1016/j.conb.2007.03.009