CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION - A ROAD LESS TRAVELLED.

The description and requirements for the doctorate of education at the University of New England (1995, p. 1) indicate that

> the program is intended for the professional who wishes to remain within the educational field as a professional rather than as an academic worker (for whom the PhD is possibly more appropriate) ... The Doctor of Education (EdD) thesis thus has a clear focus. It is directed at a problem or problems related to practice in education ... Drawing out the practical implications of the research is an essential part of the EdD thesis.

Through reflection upon my experience as a teacher and administrator in schools over a significant period, through recent reading - Brookfield (1986), Starratt (1993), Fullan (1993), Conway (1989, 1993) - and through observation of colleagues whom I hold in high regard, it has become increasingly clear to me that the most effective educators are almost invariably those who are lifelong learners at the same time as they endeavour to foster learning in others. From my observation many of the terms which are applied to learners apply equally to educators. Their learning thrives in circumstances where they can be stimulated by new ideas and when they are able to be self-motivated, autonomous and self-directed (Chene 1983; Knowles 1980, 1984a; Field 1987). It is characterised by critical reflection upon their own experience (Schon 1983, 1987; Boud and Walker 1990; Starratt 1993), and it is enhanced through discourse and dialogue with peers (Mezirow 1991; Brookfield 1991c; Cranton 1992).

I have observed that effective educators and educational administrators, especially in times of change, are often those who are willing and able to review critically from time to time the theoretical bases out of which they operate. As a consequence of my reflection and my reading and discussions with others, the question of how and why some adults learn from their experience through critically reviewing their assumptions and mind sets, and others

seem to do so only with reluctance, if at all, has emerged as a focus of interest for me. Learning leading to significant personal change which focuses upon the self first, upon what a person has already learned and then upon what is to be learned has been variously described as "perspective transformation" (Mezirow 1978b, 1981, 1985a), "transformative and emancipatory learning" (Mezirow 1990, 1991; Loughlin 1994) and "transformation theory" (Mezirow 1991b, 1992, 1994). The use of term "transformative learning" to describe this aspect of how people learn appears now to be widely accepted (Mezirow 1991, 1994; Newman 1993; Cranton. 1992, 1994) and for this reason I have used it in the title of my thesis. The empirical study on which my research is based sets out to discern what the form of learning described in these various ways is, when, how and under what circumstances it takes place and what the implications of a growing understanding of such learning may be for learning generally and especially the learning of adults. In the first chapter I examine how the study described in this thesis came about, what motivated it, what its importance is, what its basic constructs are and how it was undertaken. Chapter 1 also sets down the boundaries of the research and considers its limitations and delimitations.

THE ORIGINS OF THE STUDY

A brief account of the practical and theoretical origins of my research seems appropriate at the commencement of the thesis. I have chosen in this and in some other areas to use the first person in a narrative form of writing. My reasons for doing so are related to the form of research I have adopted which is qualitative in nature and to the fact that it has been based at least partly upon my own participant observation as well as upon interviews and conversations with learners who are at the same time educators. In regard to terminology I have chosen throughout to use phrases such as "adult learning" and "the learning of adults" rather than "adult education", "staff development", "parent education" or "in-service education". In this I follow Connell (1985), and also Holliday (1995) who makes the point that:

> Terms such as 'staff development', 'professional development' and 'in-service education' tend to be used synonymously. Such terms, while having their own particular values, meaning and histories avoid mentioning

> 'learning' which surely is at the heart of the meaning and immediate purpose of each of them (Holliday 1995, p. 47).

Adults learn in many ways but especially through experience and through critical reflection upon experience (Boud, Keogh and Walker 1985, 1990; Brookfield 1991a; Merriam and Caffarella 1991). The adults I have been dealing with in my professional life - school principals, deputy principals, heads of academic departments, lecturers and other professionals - are aware that they have to be concerned with the learning of teachers and members of wider school communities as well as with the learning of children. In fulfilling my own roles in education for example, I have had significant involvement with parents, with parent associations and with school boards consisting of members of various professions, former students, parents and community and church representatives. In these adults I have found great goodwill but also an increasing desire to learn more about the education of their children, to contribute to that education and to participate in policy making in its regard. Understanding all aspects of how adults learn, especially in times characterised by challenge and change, has been a continuing preoccupation for me, one I see as particularly significant for my professional life as an educator and educational administrator.

In further critical reflection upon my experience as teacher and educational administrator I have remarked upon the way my own attitudes in some areas have developed and indeed changed quite radically over the past two decades. I have seen considerable development for example in my attitude to staff participation in decision making in schools, in my perception of the role of parents in the education of their children and in my views about the significance for schools of governing bodies. I have learned to think more positively about the appropriate attitude of schools to the personal development of young people and their future lives in the world of work, about industrial relations in education and about the contribution that women professionals in senior management positions can make in the schools with which I have been involved.

Sometimes these changes came about as a result of quite radical re-evaluation of assumptions about what I had thought until then were fundamental principles in regard to

the above issues. There were occasions when changes in my attitudes originated in what I perceived at the time to be situations of personal failure for me. Such perception of failure had been accompanied by certain levels of disorientation and embarrassment followed by self questioning, critical reflection and discussion and debate with professional colleagues. I now believe that many of my assumptions, attitudes, value systems and goal orientations have clearly changed over time.

At the same time and by way of contrast I have also in recent years noticed a level of frustration and sometimes even anger amongst some teachers and school administrators about the constant changes in education which characterise these times. Many educators I have known have described themselves as increasingly frustrated by the rapid rate of educational change and they speak angrily sometimes of the stress that it places upon them whilst they are trying to cope on a day to day basis with the many and varied demands made upon them. During the facilitating adult learning program which I will be describing later in this thesis the other three educators in one of the groups spent the whole time discussing not what had been suggested by the facilitator but their own personal frustration and resentment about the constant changes in education to which they saw themselves, and the people responsible to them, being subjected.

There have been occasions when I have experienced that frustration and anger myself and I have no doubt that such an attitude has affected the character of my professional work. With my background in classics and literature for example I have over time developed a deep commitment to the concept of the traditional broadly based liberal education - with preparation for the professions, induction into life in business or on the land and the learning of vocational skills being left to vocational schools or to post-school education. In recent years, however, I have come face to face with the fact that irrespective of my personal and professional preferences, the character of the student population of the schools in which I have been involved has been changing quite radically. Virtually all my students were continuing through to the end of twelve years of education, not the far smaller proportion of twenty or twenty five years ago. I knew also that society, politics, the family, the economy and the world of work were being transformed, and I realised that there was a continuing need for school staffs and school boards to consider carefully, and

on a continuing basis, the nature and purpose of their programs, the curricula of their schools and their attitudes to student learning. I read and reflected upon the reports of the Finn (1991), Mayer (1992) and Carmichael (1993) committees of enquiry into education in Australia and I attended and contributed to seminars on their implications for educators, parents, schools and above all students.

As a schools' consultant I noticed that the achievements, preoccupations and problems of many school principals, teachers and parents reflected much of my own experience. Often my work with them had to do with assisting them and their schools to come to terms with the curriculum changes necessary for changing school populations. I found that sometimes it was the school principal who seemed to resist the introduction of new ideas, often it was the teachers and sometimes it was the students' parents. I heard a lot about reform fatigue and sometimes observed its effects at first hand as in the example I have given above. In regard to the establishment of school boards by the system authority for which I worked as a way of involving the community in the education of its young people and making schools more accountable to their communities, I found that often principals and school staff were suspicious of the introduction of such boards. If they could not prevent the setting up of a board for their school they found ways of resisting sharing with it responsibilities they felt belonged traditionally to themselves as professional educators.

It also began to appear from my observation that some educational communities and their leaders were able to cope with changed circumstances much better than others. I wondered why. I felt that it was clearly not just a question of age or the stages of life about which developmental psychologists such as Piaget (1967), Kohlberg (1976), Loevinger (1976), Erikson (1959), and popularist writers such as Sheehy (1977) have written. In fact those who were older sometimes in my experience seemed less threatened by change than others who were younger. Perhaps, I thought, it was and is a more complex issue than simple conservatism. Perhaps it was a question of people lacking the ability to identify and if necessary modify or change quite radically their attitudes, preconceptions, assumptions and prejudices about society and schools and how they ought to be. What the reasons for this were and whether the ability of individuals to reconsider and if necessary transform

preconceived assumptions about their roles as educators was inherent or could be learned seemed matters worth taking further.

During these years I - and I am sure many of the colleagues with whom I was associated - made genuine attempts to understand better what our approach should be to the learning of the adults with whom we were professionally involved. A study of the processes of adult learning formed part of my master's degree studies in educational administration during the late seventies and early eighties. In dealing with the professional staff of my own school at the time as well as with those of other schools later on I was able to develop some appropriate skills which were helpful to me and which despite occasional failures seemed helpful to others. I acquired much of my knowledge of the principles of adult learning at this time from my reading and from reflection and discussion of the work of theorists and practitioners such as Maslow (1970) Rogers (1970), Argyris and Schon (1972), Knowles (1980, 1984a), Tough (1979) and Jarvis (1983). I wrote my master's thesis on school staff morale and partly as a result I began to believe that the issues were more complex than simply learning to use new approaches or new techniques, putting old wine into new wine skins.

In 1993 I decided to enrol as a candidate for the doctoral program in education at the University of New England using some of my accrued leave. The four units which I chose to undertake involved courses in advanced research methodology, professional extension at another university, a course in organisation theory and another in adult and continuing education. In pursuing the last mentioned of these I chose to make a particular study of the role of incidental learning, modelling and experience in the development of educational leaders. My reading for this purpose included some of the work of Kolb (1975), Bandura (1976), Houle (1980), Chene (1983), Sergiovanni (1984), Grady (1989), Starratt (1993), Marsick (1988) and of course the more recent publications of Knowles (e.g. 1984a, 1984b).

A very significant impact upon my consciousness as a result of the above reading and reflection upon it was made by Donald Schon's two notable publications *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) and *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (1987). One of Schon's most helpful insights I found to be the use of the phrase "conversation with experience" (1987).

Much of Schon's work based upon research in this field is concerned with the role of reflection upon experience and even more importantly with the place of "critical reflection upon experience" (Schon 1983, p 77). For Schon both "reflection-on-action" and "reflection-in-action" were vital to learning from experience. Adults did indeed learn through experience, Schon said, but it was not the experience itself whether favourable or unfavourable that mattered, it was what the learner did with the experience that was important. I began to see the link between what Schon (1987) was saying on the basis of his research into the learning patterns of organisational leaders and the questions I have already raised above about why some educators seemed to be able to grow, to be somehow transformed, to learn from their experiences and become genuine leaders in their respective fields and others did not.

As a consequence of my interest in critical reflectivity and as part of the requirement of the professional extension unit for the doctorate, I undertook a study of the use made of critical reflection upon experience in the master's degree program in educational administration at the Australian Catholic University - a study which I found both relevant and stimulating (Carrigg 1994). By way of preparation I read widely in the area of experiential learning, including Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985), Boud and Griffin (1987), Sergiovanni (1987), Duignan (1988), Brookfield (1990, 1991), Tennant (1993) and Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993). Most particularly however I came across Jack Mezirow's articles "Perspective Transformation" (1978b) and "A Critical Theory of Adult Education and Learning" (1981) in which he identified from his empirical research involving a study of women returning to formal education in mid-life a new way of considering learning which he described as "perspective transformation" and later "transformative learning".

At the conclusion of the report on my professional extension (Carrigg 1994) I found that I had a very real desire to take further Mezirow's concepts of perspective transformation and transformative learning - and as indicated above, I noticed that the latter term seemed increasingly to be used in the literature (Boyd and Myers 1988; Collard and Law 1989; Hart 1990; Clark and Wilson 1991; Mezirow 1991, 1994; Newman 1993; Tennant 1994 and Taylor 1995). Mezirow's concepts of perspective transformation and transformative learning appeared to me at first sight at least to have something significant to contribute to

my understanding of particular aspects of how adults learn which I had already noticed from my experience. All of these writers were putting forward ways of taking into account not just personal experience and critically reflected experience but also the personal and often deeply held assumptions, attitudes and values which had underpinned and become major factors in interpreting that experience in the first place. They were also indicating that an inability to at least acknowledge how the depth of commitment to inculturated assumptions and habits of mind might be related to why some people are unable or unwilling to evaluate their own attitudes and practice and the attitudes and practices of their schools. It appeared to me that an understanding of these concepts might be particularly relevant to the practical problems I had already experienced as a school principal, supervisor and adult educator.

It also became clear to me that there had been considerable debate about the concept of transformative learning, leading to a large number of articles and books being published over the past fifteen to twenty years - as recently as those of Mezirow (1990, 1991, 1994), Brookfield (1993, 1994), Tennant (1993), Nelson (1993, 1994), Newman (1993, 1994) and Cranton (1994). I became convinced that I had indeed found "a problem of practice in education", research into and explication of which would be of assistance to me, and hopefully also to other professional educators. I believed too that I might be able to draw out from an appropriately designed research project some of those "practical implications" which are "an essential part of the Ed D thesis". My present study and this thesis had their origins in that conviction.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of my study has been to clarify as far as possible what the term transformative learning means, what the processes and procedures or strategies for promoting transformative learning are and what are its implications for practice. I proposed to explore these issues empirically by posing carefully developed questions to two groups of experienced educators - one group consisting of scholars who are significant contributors to the published literature on transformative learning, and who are also "practitioners" -

facilitators, lecturers involved in adult learning programs, and the other a group of adults, also educators, who were "participants" in a program which uses transformative approaches to learning. Through an analysis of the perceptions of these people, and my own reflections based upon actual experience as a "participant observer" in the same program, I proposed to explore and clarify the issues referred to above, and to address the research questions.

From recent literature on the subject (Bennis 1984; Boyd and Myers 1988; Duignan 1988; Antonio 1989; Collard and Law 1989; Clark and Wilson 1991; Hart 1990; Mezirow 1985, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1994; Tennant 1993; Allman 1994 and Newman 1994) it would appear that there is significant difference of opinion about the precise meaning of such terms as "emancipatory and transformative learning", "perspective transformation", "meaning perspectives" and "meaning schemes" as they are used in the literature. Moreover how the concept of transformative learning relates to a more general theory of learning and whether the emphasis should be upon individual or collective learning appear from the literature to be problematical. Mezirow for example, the theorist who has written most on the issue of transformative learning since 1977, gave the title "Transformation theory: Critique and Confusion" (1992) to an article in the *Adult Education Quarterly*. Other articles by Mezirow have been entitled "Transformation Theory and Social Action: a Response to Collard and Law"(1989), "Transformative Theory and Cultural Context: a Reply to Clark and Wilson"(1991) and "Response to Mark Tennant and Michael Newman"(1994). A dialogue has clearly been established on the issue.

By way of further example of the topical and controversial nature of these issues the 1994 summer edition of the *Adult Education Quarterly* contained the following contributions on the subject of transformative learning: a response by Mezirow to an article the previous year by Tennant, separate responses to Mezirow's article by Tennant and Newman and responses to those responses by Mezirow. The fact that Michael Newman's 1993 publication *The Third Contract: Theory and Practice in Trade Union Training* had received the Cyril O. Houle Award for what in the opinion of the selection committee was the outstanding book on adult education published in English in 1993 seemed to indicate that the issue of transformative learning was of considerable contemporary interest.

Newman's book deals at length with the relevance and application of transformative learning in the training of Australian Aboriginal and trade union leaders and offers "one of the clearest explanations of both the usefulness and the limitations of Mezirow's work" (Scheid 1994, p. 247). In reading these articles it appeared to me that a number of issues in regard to the nature and processes of transformative learning still remained to be resolved. Moreover, most of the published material was theoretical in nature and very little of it was based upon new empirical research. It seemed worthwhile undertaking an empirical study of experienced adult educators and adult learners with a view to clarifying the concepts involved and discerning these persons' perceptions of the nature, processes, procedures and implications of transformative learning.

The research questions

To achieve the purposes of my research I posed the following three research questions:

- What is transformative learning?
- How does transformative learning take place?
- What are the implications of transformative learning for facilitating the learning of adults?

The second question, which refers to how transformative learning takes place, I decided for purposes of clarity to divide into two parts, the first referring to "processes" and the second to what I then called "procedures". The questions therefore as addressed to all those interviewed were:

1. What is your perception of transformative learning?
2. What is your perception of the internal processes of transformative learning?
3. What is your perception of the procedures or strategies which facilitate transformative learning?
4. What is your perception of the implications of transformative learning for facilitating the learning of adults?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Mezirow's initial definition of what he described as "perspective transformation" was that it is "an emancipatory process involving our becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of our psycho-cultural assumptions has become the way we see ourselves and our relationships" (Mezirow 1981, p. 6). He went on to say that such transformation of perspectives was "a most distinctly adult domain of learning" because it involved transformation of personal "meaning perspectives" built up over time which formed for the individual the "structure of psycho-cultural assumptions within which new experience is assimilated" (Mezirow 1981, p. 6). In subsequent articles Mezirow (1985) went on to describe transformative learning as a self-directing and very personal learning process involving critical reflection upon experience and attention to personal feelings yet supported by group learning situations. He saw it as stimulating an individual's awareness of how past experiences had been processed and incorporated into a highly personal view of the world. Such a view of the world, he maintained, affects and "filters" (Mezirow 1991a p.34) what individuals learn, and may well determine what they refuse to learn - especially when individuals are "caught in their own history and are re-living it" (Mezirow 1978b, p. 108). The most significant thing about transformative learning was that it considered learning from the perspective of the learner first and only then from the perspective of what was being learned.

Given Mezirow's initial definition, transformative learning seemed to be learning which was intensely personal and unlikely to be imposed upon individuals or groups, or structured within learning programs. At the same time however transformative learning has been associated from 1978 with group work, discourse and dialogue (Mezirow 1981, 1990; Boyd and Myers 1988; Clark and Wilson 1991; Deshler and Selener 1991; Cranton 1994; and Nelson 1995). All these writers have taken the view that it is through group work, discourse and dialogue that transformative learning often occurs and may also be validated. Mezirow (1985b, p. 142) saw discourse and dialogue as "the extension of one's ability to make explicit and elaborate, contextualize, validate and/or perform some aspect of one's engagement with the world". These views, and others, will be considered and documented at greater length in Chapter 2.

Transformative learning appeared to me to have characteristics related closely to those which at various times have been described by theorists as "emancipatory" (Habermas 1971), "liberating" (Freire 1971, 1972), "double loop learning" (Argyris and Schon 1978), "becoming aware of our awareness" (Mezirow 1981) and "looking at ourselves looking at the world" (Newman 1993). As a study of perceptions of transformative learning the present research has been designed with a view to providing opportunity for analysis of actual adult learning experiences situated within a group context, whilst at the same time being personal, reflective, democratic respectful of individuals and open in its orientation. Such an empirical investigation seems both appropriate and timely. Taylor (1995) who recently published a comprehensive review of studies on the subject of transformative learning indicated that in his view:

> Most of the discussion about Mezirow's theory has been theoretical critique centering on issues of power, context, rationality and adult development within a cultural and social perspective. There has been a real need to get beyond the rhetoric and to explore how transformative learning holds up in practice. ... there has been a paucity of publications and little discussion about empirical explorations of transformative learning theory or related premises (Taylor 1995, p. 313).

The significance of the study described in this thesis lies in the fact that it is empirical and that it affords opportunities for discerning insights into how individuals actually perceive their own learning, in what manner and what circumstances they see it occurring and whether or not they find the concept of transformative learning matches their own experience. The study endeavours to contribute to an enlarged understanding of why identifying and evaluating assumptions and inculturated value systems may be for some individuals a difficult, disorienting and at times painful experience. In regard to "implications for practice", being based upon actual group experience with peers, the study has particular significance for educators in situations educational and otherwise which are characterised by a need for responsiveness to societal, technological and educational change.

Transformative learning as an approach to particular aspects of the learning, and especially the learning of adults has been considered by researchers in such diverse areas as personal

and vocational discernment, (Keane 1985; Nelson 1994), learning for personal rehabilitation, learning for community workers involved with third world peoples (English 1991), educating leaders for social transformation (Clark 1991; Elias 1993), learning associated with critical life-events (Pierce 1986; Sveinunggaard 1992), and learning in regard to women's role in society (Hart 1990a; Thompson 1988, 1993). These research projects and their applications relative to transformative learning will be considered in further detail in Chapter 2.

TITLE OF THE THESIS AND METHODOLOGY

The title of my thesis is "Perceptions of the Nature and Processes of Transformative Learning and Implications for Practice." The use of the word "perceptions" in the title is quite deliberate. The perceptions are those of adult teachers and learners in actual learning situations discerned from recorded interviews with them and my own recorded observations. I clarify from the literature what theorists and researchers say transformative learning is, how and when it occurs and what implications for practice may be drawn from it. I consider how this accords with the actual perceptions of people who have experienced and reflected upon the concept over a sustained period, both as teachers and learners.

In order to provide information which is up to date and well focused on the research questions, I decided after a thorough review of the literature to seek interviews with seven prominent academics who have published in books and internationally refereed journals on the subject of adult learning and especially on critical reflection upon experience and aspects of learning for personal transformation. The decision to follow this approach in putting together a research design was influenced to a significant extent by the fact that five such persons were available to me within Australia. The sixth (Nelson) was a doctoral candidate at the University of Technology, Sydney, and had recently completed research and submitted a doctoral thesis, to which I had access, entitled "*The Role of Imagination in Autobiography and Transformative Learning*". The seventh was Professor Jack Mezirow whose original research published in 1978 had sparked the whole debate on transformative learning and who was scheduled to visit Australia and New Zealand in September -

October 1995. Because all of these academics are professionally involved in facilitating the learning of other adults on a continuing basis I have described them for the purpose of my research as "practitioners".

As the learners or "participants" for the research I chose a group of experienced educators, some of them school principals and teachers, others involved in related areas of educational administration and consultancy, who had elected to undertake an experiential learning program conducted for six days over a period of ten weeks and entitled "*Facilitating Adult Learning*" (F.A.L.). The program has been offered each year for the previous four years by Dr. Ross Keane, one of the "practitioners" whom I interviewed twice before coming to a decision about using his program for my research. Keane explained to me the influence upon his thinking of the work of Griffin (1987) and Mezirow (1978, 1981) especially, some of whose papers are circulated as preparatory reading for F.A.L. He also made it clear that he informs participants beforehand that F.A.L. uses experientially based and transformative approaches to group learning. Further details about the F.A.L. program and about both groups, and why they were chosen, will be given in Chapter 3.

I decided to join the group undertaking the F.A.L. program as a participant observer so that at the same time as I was conducting the research I could also experience at first hand its effect upon myself and others, particularly in regard to all aspects which had reference to transformative learning. Thus my position was similar to that of the other participants, except that I was much more aware of the theoretical principles of transformative learning and of the technical language used to describe them. I was also unobtrusively recording during breaks in the program my perceptions of what was going on in the group, and what was going on within myself. Finally I assumed, correctly as it turned out, that the participants would be much more prepared to share their experiences with me during subsequent interviews if I were known to them as a fellow learner and fully involved participant as well as researcher.

KEY CONCEPTS

There are diverse definitions and theories of learning, diverse theories about motivation to learn, and diverse theories about the personal and intellectual development which results from learning. Because the present research and thesis are fundamentally about learning, and more particularly about transformative learning as a particular aspect of learning, significant attention will be devoted to these concepts in Chapter 2. In the interests of clarity I have decided that for the purposes of my study I will consider transformative learning from the perspective of adult learning, and adult learning in turn in relation to learning theory generally. What follows here are brief definitions of what I mean by learning, adult learning, experiential learning and transformative learning. I also define precisely the meaning of the terms "processes" and "procedures" as I have used them throughout.

Learning

Implicit in the approach to learning I have adopted in this study is the notion that learning occurs when individuals construct their own understandings through interaction with their environment and through critical reflection. This is certainly Mezirow's view:

> I have found it useful to think of learning as the extension of one's ability to make explicit and elaborate, (to spell out), contextualize, (to make associations within a frame of reference), validate (to establish the truth or authenticity of an assertion) and/or act (to perform) upon some aspect of one's engagement with the world (Mezirow 1985b, p. 142).

This pro-active attitude to learning has been described as "constructivist" (Candy 1989). From the constructivist viewpoint individuals are seen not as shaped by environmental circumstances beyond their control but as self-searching and self-constructing, and they have the capacity to acquire power for themselves from their knowledge. Their learning is "a constructive process which involves actively seeking meaning from (or even imposing meaning upon) events" (Candy 1989, p. 107). It is worth noting here that Mezirow also describes learning which is transformative for the individual as constructivist.

> Transformation theory's ... assumptions are constructivist, an orientation which holds that the way learners interpret their sense experience is central to making meaning and hence learning (Mezirow 1994, p. 222).

I define learning therefore as the process through which an individual constructs new meaning for her/himself as a result of the experience of appraising and at times re-appraising reality which results in an active and sustained change in understanding, values and behaviour. My perception and use of the term learning therefore has a purposive emphasis upon "making meaning", and assumes an active role for the learner. I see learning not as the mere acquisition of knowledge and not simply as something that happens. My approach to learning implies an active role for the learner in building personal understandings through processes of interpretation, assimilation and application.

Adult learning

All human beings learn from observation of the world around them and from their experience of life. They learn from reflection on what they experience and because most learning has a social context, they learn through communication with others. People make meaning for themselves of what they experience - so much so in fact that one could almost say that to live is to learn. All individuals, children and adults, learn incidentally through the very processes of living. Both children and adults learn through the daily experiences of life but unlike children who have little choice but to be part of formal learning situations in schools for up to twelve years, most adults participate and learn in formal learning situations only when and if they really want to. Adults come to terms with particular aspects of knowledge and make meaning of that knowledge for themselves if it is important to them. They learn best when they are motivated to learn and they are motivated to learn as they cope with the problems of their daily personal and working lives and experience new needs that learning will satisfy.

The most widely known attempt to form a model for understanding how adults learn is probably that of Malcolm Knowles to which he gave the term "andragogy". Knowles (1984a, p. 62) maintained that andragogy was not in fact "an ideology - it is a system of

alternative sets of assumptions" which "act as a glue to bind its (adult learning's) diverse institutions, clienteles, and activities into some sense of unity". Knowles went on to describe the characteristics of andragogy by contrasting it with "pedagogy", the art of teaching children. The work of Knowles in regard to adult learning has been further developed by Brookfield (1986, 1991) Boud and Griffin (1987), Mezirow (1981, 1991), Merriam and Caffarella (1991), Newman (1993), Cranton (1992, 1994), and many others who have described adult learning as "life centred", "autonomous", "problem centred", "self directed", "based upon experience", "critically reflective" and "emancipatory". These concepts will be considered at greater depth in Chapter 2. However one particular aspect of the learning of adults, critical reflection upon experience, is so significant to the present study that it needs to be considered here in this initial clarification of terms.

Learning as critical reflection upon experience

A significant aspect of adult learning is that it can be strongly influenced by the actual experience of the learner's life and work situations (Knowles 1984b; Boud, Keogh and Walker 1985; Merriam and Caffarella 1991). Adults have great reservoirs of practical experience, some of which they feel positively about and some negatively. They are strongly influenced by experience which forms the basic parameters of what for them is "real". A great deal of adult learning, perhaps the majority in fact, takes place outside organised educational settings (Tough 1979; Jarvis 1987). Adults are conditioned by their experience and they tend to repeat their reactions to experience, a characteristic which may have many positive aspects. But such experience can at times also be quite unhelpful and may lead to unthinking repetition and compounding of error through inappropriate responses - "reliving their history" as Mezirow described it (1978, p. 108).

A significant development in understanding the effect of life experiences upon how adults learn has been the development of the concept of "critical reflection upon experience". Donald Schon (1983, 1987) conducted research into the importance of such critical reflection in relation to the learning of adults in positions of leadership and he put forward the idea of the truly effective leader as a "reflective practitioner", that is, one who comes to

new understandings through shared critical reflection upon his/her own experience. Schon was particularly interested in the dilemma of practitioners who were subject to restrictions on their freedom of action in organisational settings. He developed the concepts of "reflection-on-action" and "reflection-in-action" because he believed that critical reflection by leaders was important as they were acting (reflection-in-action), and not only after activity had come to an end (reflection-on-action). His work and that of other theorists such as Jarvis (1983, 1987) and Brookfield (1986, 1989) has contributed to clarifying this and other matters, and to moving the adult learning debate "beyond andragogy" (Cranton 1992) in the direction of personal transformation.

Transformative learning

During the early 1970s Mezirow conducted research in the United States into why mature women in far more significant numbers than ever before were returning to study in community colleges and universities and subsequently following new careers. Mezirow was interested in finding out how it was that these women came to revise their traditional and inculturated roles in family and society and embark upon courses of personal development and professional study which had the potential at least to change radically their whole way of living and relating. His research resulted in the development of a concept of learning which he first described as "perspective transformation" (1978a, 1978b) and his published findings gave a lively new thrust to aspects of the debate amongst scholars about the ways in which people learn and about how and whether that learning involved changing what Mezirow termed their "meaning perspectives".

As already indicated, the achievement of a clearer understanding of the meaning of transformative learning through an empirical study of teachers and learners is the major objective of the research described in this thesis. In reporting his original research Mezirow (1978a, 1978b) applied the theory of knowledge and human interests developed by the German philosopher Habermas (1971) to the processes of learning in which he believed the women he was studying were engaged. Mezirow described the inculturated assumptions, frames of reference and habits of mind through which individuals make meaning as their

"meaning perspectives". He went on to define meaning perspectives as "the psychological structures within which we locate and define ourselves and our relationships" (1978a, p. 7). In a more complete definition he defined meaning perspectives as "generalised sets of habitual expectation which act as perceptual and conceptual codes to form, limit, and distort how we think, believe and feel, and how, what when and why we learn" (Mezirow 1991, p. 34). Meaning perspectives, in Mezirow's view, structure and "filter" how a person perceives the world. They are often the result of primary socialisation and if accepted uncritically they "constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships" (Mezirow 1981, p. 6).

In his seminal 1978b and 1981 articles Mezirow saw meaning perspectives as constitutive of individual experience. Such perspectives Mezirow believed contributed significantly to an individual's personality, in fact in many ways they made an individual what she or he was. But these same perspectives on life, these assumptions and value systems, may also at times be inconsistent with reality or with changed circumstances. They make it possible in certain situations for an individual to look at something and see something else, they act as filters which have the capacity to distort an individual's perceptions of reality. Meaning perspectives encourage individuals to see what they want to see, or what they think they ought to see.

The other key term Mezirow used in his 1978 description of the results of his research was "meaning schemes". The principal characteristic of meaning schemes in Mezirow's view is that by contrast with meaning perspectives they are particular and specific, and clusters of meaning schemes go to make up a particular meaning perspective. Although Cranton in her recently published book indicates that: "Each meaning perspective is made up of sets of meaning schemes: specific knowledge, beliefs, value judgments feelings and assumptions" (Cranton 1994, p. 29) she does not indicate clearly how the relationship between the two concepts operates.

Mezirow gave the following definition which seems an appropriate description of his position at the time in regard to transformative learning:

> It (transformative learning) is the learning process by which adults come to recognise their culturally induced dependency roles and relationships and the reasons for them and take action to overcome them (Mezirow 1981, p. 6)

For my purposes at this stage it will suffice to say that transformative learning involves the identification, critical analysis and appraisal of an individual's meaning perspectives. It is often associated with discourse and dialogue ["the social process of construing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience (Mezirow 1994, p. 223)], and it can result in the creation of new value systems which in turn influence and change perception, learning and behaviour. It is reflexive as well as reflective and involves in Mezirow's terms "becoming aware of our awareness and critiquing it" (1981, p. 13).

The processes and procedures of transformative learning

Clarifying what is meant by the "processes" and "procedures" of transformative learning, and establishing the differences between them, is important for the present study and the subject of the second of the research questions cited above. As noted above, by "processes" I mean what is going on within the consciousness of the learner at the time of the learning. What do learners think and feel, for example, about what is for them the "disorienting experience" which in Mezirow's (1978b) terminology is often the stimulus for transformative learning? What, in the opinion of learners is the importance of self-disclosure and how does an individual feel about that? What happens to the image of self whilst the disclosure is going on? What is the role of the imagination and where are the strong levels of personal energy often associated with re-appraising one's personal positions coming from? How can a person know if a change is temporary, one made in a surge of enthusiasm, or a permanent transformation in one's perspective on an aspect of one's life? How large or significant does a change have to be for it to be described as a transformation?

By way of contrast, I define "procedures" as strategies or structures which are associated with enabling and facilitating transformative learning, activities which facilitators use to

empower others in coming to terms with assumptions, habits of mind and even prejudices which screen or "filter" their learning. During the interviews for my study I was at pains when asking questions to make sure that the interviewees understood the meaning I was giving to these two terms. I asked questions related to those aspects of the learning environment which they saw as energising learners, challenging individuals and groups and assisting them to focus on what was really going on, helping them recognise and acknowledge the binding power for example of personal assumptions, value systems and mind sets. By procedures therefore I mean the approaches, strategies and techniques which those interviewed perceive as enabling and promoting, stimulating and facilitating the processes of re-examining and evaluating one's meaning perspectives.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research I have undertaken for this thesis is essentially qualitative in nature. It endeavours to place transformative learning within a general context of adult learning and to explore its nature, processes, procedures and implications. The study is delimited in the sense that it is confined to an analysis of the perceptions of two separate and relatively small groups of informed persons gained through interviews, and to my own personal observations. The strength and relevance of the study lie in the fact that it is empirically based. My decision not to use written questionnaires addressed to a greater number but to seek out one and in several cases two interviews with the people available to me was taken principally in order to base my findings upon accounts of actual lived experiences of learning.

The practitioners interviewed for my study are scholars and practising adult educators, all of whom have made significant contributions to the literature of transformative learning and they include the person who developed the original concept. There are of course other scholars writing in the area of transformative learning, notably Griffin (1987), Brookfield (1992c, 1993b), Cranton (1992, 1994) and Merriam (1991, 1992), none of whom it was possible for me to interview because of constraints of cost and time since all live in North America. Whilst I had access to the published material of these writers my study is

delimited in the sense that I include for the purposes of my actual research only those persons whom I was able to interview personally. I had access to the unpublished doctoral research of Nelson (1995), whom I did interview, but not to the unpublished theses of Boyd and Fales (1983), Pierce (1986), Lytle (1989). Clark (1991), Elias (1993) and Sveinunggard (1992), who live and work in the United States or Canada. In regard to the last seven mentioned, however, I obtained copies of their dissertation abstracts and in the case of Boyd and Fales, Clark and Sveinunggard, to papers on microfilm which they had delivered at conferences and which dealt with the results of their doctoral research. All of this is considered in Chapter 2.

It proved most stimulating for me to interview at length the educators involved as participants in the F.A.L. program. All the persons within this group were senior professional educators in leadership positions as school principals or senior personnel engaged in other forms of educational management. It was my original intention to consider how their educational leadership may have been affected by their understanding of transformative learning but it soon became clear to me that this would broaden my study too greatly. Such research would have required in addition to what I was already undertaking, a major study of the nature of educational leadership and in all probability a longitudinal study of some leaders over a considerable period. It would be research well worth doing. However after some months I made a decision to exclude this possible direction of my study and to consider the participants simply as adult learners. That decision is another of the present study's delimitations.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study considers aspects of transformative learning within the contexts outlined above as a "slice of reality" (Cohen and Manion 1993). My research findings are based upon a detailed analysis of perceptions arising from actual learning situations. This "slice of reality" approach to research does not have the capacity to establish truth in an ultimate and definitive sense and my thesis is limited to that extent. Cohen and Manion (1993, p. 17) observe, however, that one of the valuable contributions of such studies is that when

appropriately conducted they "give precise meaning to a set of concepts which enables them (social scientists) to shape perceptions of the world in a particular way". In this context, moreover, it is worth citing Beck's (1979) observation about the value of qualitative studies.

> While the social sciences do not reveal ultimate truth, they do help us to make sense of our world. What the social sciences offer is explanation, clarification and demystification of the social forms which man [*sic*] has created about himself (1979, p. 54).

Another limitation of the methodology used for my research as far as the participants were concerned was that I relied upon interviews with a limited number of persons, choosing only six out of fourteen participants in one experiential program, conducted by one practitioner, Dr. Ross Keane. There was a possibility that as a result the views of my participants may have been unduly influenced by those of Keane. However, I conducted and recorded interviews with these persons at considerable depth and my decision to interview the six practitioners in addition to Keane was taken partly in order to acquire information from a broader range of informed contemporary experience. For similar reasons I decided to undertake the program (F.A.L.) myself as a participant observer. My research therefore has involved an empirical study moderated by my own participative observation and conducted through extensive structured interviews with two limited but carefully chosen groups of teachers and learners. By identifying and clarifying the meaning of key concepts used in reference to transformative learning and teasing out their implications for practice my research endeavours to make a contribution to understanding this particular aspect of how adults learn.

CONCLUSION

This introductory chapter has outlined the origins, purpose and significance of my research in the area of transformative learning. In designing and conducting the project and writing the thesis I have endeavoured to fulfil the demanding criteria for research at professional doctoral standard. I have been mindful of the fact that as a "professional in the field" my thesis should also be "directed at a problem or problems of practice", and have an eye to

"drawing out practical implications" - hence my concerns with situations arising from my own experience as an educator. My research questions as the focus for the research have been articulated and the methodology briefly described. Initial definitions of significant terms used throughout have been given - learning, adult learning and transformative learning as well as what is meant by "processes" and "procedures". This first chapter has also outlined the qualitative nature of the research and pointed out its delimitations and limitations. All these issues will be dealt with in greater detail in later chapters. The thrust of the thesis now moves towards building a theoretical framework for adult and transformative learning from an analysis of the relevant literature.

CHAPTER 2

TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING - THE LITERATURE

This second chapter begins with a consideration of the relation of knowledge to learning, making reference to experience, reasoning and research as three ways in which learners appropriate knowledge and make meaning of it for themselves. It extends the definitions of learning and adult learning given in Chapter 1 and considers transformative learning in the context of learning generally and especially learning arising from critical reflection upon experience. It enlarges the brief account given in Chapter 1 of the original research (1978a) on which Mezirow's theoretical work on perspective transformation (1978b, 1981) was based and outlines the influence upon his thinking of the work of Freire (1970, 1972b) and Habermas (1970, 1971) and the theoretical and practical contributions they have made in the area of learning for personal liberation and emancipation.

Chapter 2 then makes an analysis of the literature relevant to the development of what Mezirow described in his definitive 1981 article as "A Critical Theory of Adult Learning and Education" and which he developed at greater length in his 1991 book, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. It devotes particular attention to the terminology developed by Mezirow in reference to transformation theory as "an evolving theory of adult learning" (Mezirow 1996b, p. 162), and to its processes and procedures. It considers especially two key areas, critical reflection and discourse, and the steps or phases through which Mezirow sees transformative learning taking place. Chapter 2 then turns to the research on transformative learning as published in the literature and especially to the role of the emotions and the imagination in its regard. It considers the relevant contributions of other theorists in the field, most notably Brookfield (1984, 1990a, 1994), Boud (1985, 1987, 1992), Tennant (1988, 1995), Newman (1993, 1994) and Cranton (1992, 1994), and the research of Keane (1985), Pierce (1986), Clark (1991) Sveinunggaard (1992), Elias (1993), Brady (1993), E.W. Taylor (1995) and especially Nelson (1994, 1995), and their relation to transformative learning. Finally Chapter 2 reviews some of the critiques and qualifications expressed by scholars in regard to transformative learning and the ethical considerations

which have been raised in its regard. This leads to the research design for the present empirical study of teachers and learners which forms the subject of Chapter 3.

KNOWLEDGE AND ITS RELATION TO LEARNING

A discussion of the relationship between knowledge and learning begins with the questions What is knowledge? What can be known? What does it mean to know? What are the limits of knowledge? How and when does knowledge become learning? The three means by which human beings learn to make meaning of knowledge for themselves are experience, reasoning and research (Kerlinger 1973; Mouly 1978; Burrell and Morgan 1979, Borg and Gall 1989). Experience, reasoning and research are by no means unerring avenues to learning, especially when taken in isolation, but they offer useful frameworks for considering how knowledge can be verified and appropriated into an individual's consciousness. Logically, when experience, reasoning and research support one another the learner can be more certain of the truth.

Human beings learn through experience. Rogers (1961, p. 276) pointed out that knowledge gained through experience becomes learning when it is constructed and self-appropriated. Experience once appropriated into the consciousness of the learner contributes to forming the basis for individual ways of thinking and perceiving. Such learning forms in turn the basis of understandings and assumptions described variously by Mezirow as "meaning perspectives" (1978b, p. 103), "frames of reference" (Mezirow 1978b, p. 103) and "habits of mind" (Mezirow 1996a, p. 1) out of which individuals see, judge and act.

Reasoning, like experience, is a valid way of learning through appropriating knowledge, comprehending the world and understanding and explaining what is going on within it. Reasoning can be either deductive or inductive. A problem with deductive reasoning in relation to learning is that when adults perceive, make judgements and act deductively out of inculturated assumptions and value systems which have for them become "first principles", they may be reasoning from uncritically accepted and invalid premises, and as a result be "caught in their own history and reliving it" (Mezirow 1978, p. 101).

Inductive reasoning, on the other hand, a movement from the particular to the general, provides the philosophical basis for the experimental method which has led historically to the third means cited above through which people are able to think about and understand the world, namely empirical research. The empirical study of learners undertaken for this thesis has built upon three sources of information - my own experience and that of two groups of practitioners and participants briefly identified in Chapter 1, these individuals' reasoning about their learning processes discerned through interviews, and all this within a framework of disciplined research. My argument turns now to theories of learning and adult learning within which this study of transformative learning is being considered.

THEORIES OF LEARNING

Learning theories provide a means of formulating and understanding the complex series of phenomena which constitute learning. They bring together in a consistent and scholarly manner the results of many investigations about different aspects of the learning process. For the purposes of my study, transformative learning is considered within a general context of learning theories and as an aspect of learning especially relevant to adults. I deal briefly with four significant ways of considering learning all of which have particular relevance in relation to transformative learning. These views of learning are behaviourism, cognitivism, humanism and learning theory derived from developmental psychology. Each concentrates on a particular aspect of the learning process and each has something significant to contribute to an understanding of transformative learning.

Behaviourism

A common view of learning, at least until the 1950s, was that it can be considered to have taken place when there is a verifiable change in the learner's behaviour. A group of learning theorists - Watson, Thorndike, Guthrie, Pavlov, Skinner, Ellis and others - are described as belonging to the behaviourist school of learning. Watson (1930), generally considered to be the founder of behaviourism believed that studying learning deductively

through introspection and reasoning alone was unreliable as a method of acquiring verifiable knowledge. To be truly scholarly in their approach Watson believed, social scientists needed to conduct research involving exploration of indicators which are reliable enough to be objectively measured. One such indicator is observable behaviour and Watson's behaviourist approach to learning was encapsulated by psychologists such as Ellis into appropriate definitions - for example:

> Learning is a process that is not directly seen but is something inferred from the behavioural changes in the individual. ... Learning is a relatively permanent process that is inferred from behavioural changes due to practice (Ellis 1972, p. 4).

Other theorists, for example Hergenhahn and Olson (1993), have pointed out that learning does not necessarily have to result in behavioural change but in a potential for change. As a result they modified Ellis' definition to read that "Learning is a relatively permanent change in behaviour or in behavioural potentiality that results from experience, and which cannot be attributed to temporary body states" (Hergenhahn and Olson 1993, p. 7).

Although behaviourism has its place as a means of considering how individuals learn aptitudes and skills which are important in their everyday lives a major problem with over-emphasising behaviourist approaches to learning is that it fails to take into account the complexities of the human situation, especially where adults are concerned. Critics of behaviourism such as Bruner (1964) and Ausubel (1969) have pointed out that whilst valuable for some forms of learning and especially psycho-motive learning by children, excessively behaviourist approaches can reduce learning to "conditioning", a manipulation of stimuli to achieve a desired response which may then be described as an appropriate behavioural change. For adults especially, learning needs also to be seen as involving ways in which people acquire skills and abilities which will enable them to be critical of their own situations and to find out things for themselves.

An understanding of the behaviourist approach to theorising about learning is relevant to this study of transformative learning in that it offers valuable insights into considering how individuals may almost imperceptibly have been conditioned into ways of thinking and

acting, into assumptions about reality and about the world which are not valid or may no longer be valid but out of which they continue to think and behave. This learning may then form the "structure of psycho-cultural assumptions which constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships" (Mezirow 1981, p. 6). Transformation of such ways of thinking and acting and assumptions about the reality which they imply are not always easily achieved and require a particular kind of learning for which behaviourist approaches are inappropriate.

Cognitivism

If behaviourism represents an approach to learning which emphasises environmental conditioning of responses producing a relatively permanent change in behaviour or behavioural potentiality, a cognitive approach to learning is concerned more with questions relating to receiving, storing, retrieving, processing and transmitting information, and with problem solving and decision making. Cognitivists such as Bruner (1961) and Ausubel (1969) believed that a great deal of learning occurs because people look for similarities, differences and connectedness within the information and the concepts which come to them in all manner of ways. According to Piaget (1967), educational experiences are best achieved when built around the learner's cognitive structures. Cognitivists look to the processes of acquisition, organisation and acceptance of knowledge (Tennant 1988). They observe these processes in individuals as they attempt to extract common threads of meaning from their acquired knowledge and experience. Historically, cognitivists have attempted to understand the nature of concepts, how they are formed and organised by learners and how they can be recalled, modified, analysed and applied (Merriam and Caffarella 1991, p.182).

Witkin (1978) described ways in which a number of cognitive styles have been identified and investigated in what he termed the "new look" movement in perception, a re-establishment of a focus upon the individual in perceptual studies arising from a concern for personal and social factors. From this viewpoint the primary emphasis in a cognitive approach to learning is on the individual learner's mental and psychological processes.

Cognitivism is concerned with memory, both long term and shorter term memory. By contrast, behaviourism looks at learning primarily in terms of its consequences. Unlike an extremely behaviourist attitude to learning which tends to see individuals as equally susceptible to the effects and the consequences of behaviour a cognitivist approach emphasises that people may derive different meanings from the same experiences and as a consequence learn different things.

A cognitivist view of the learner is one of a person open to trial and error, testing alternatives and accepting or rejecting them on the basis of outcomes. Cognitivism thus welcomes research because research places emphasis upon hypothesis testing and allows for divergent ideas which leads to convergent thinking, inventive problem solving and logically correct answers (Knowles 1984a). Each individual learner, cognitivists maintain, has a pre-existing network of concepts, strategies and understandings that will give his/her learning experiences an individual character. Cognitivism envisages learning as culturally relative with the primary socialisation of the learner affecting what and how he or she learns. Because of its emphasis on the networks of meaning involved in the cultural background of the learner and on memory and the processing of remembered experience cognitivism has a significant contribution to make to understanding transformative learning.

Humanism

By way of contrast to behaviourist theory which places emphasis upon observable behaviour as it is shaped by the learning environment, and theories of cognition which deal with critical reasoning and the processing of knowledge, humanist approaches to learning consider it from the perspective of the drive towards an individual's self-actualisation and potential for growth. A humanist approach to learning is concerned with the uniqueness, the individuality and the humanity of the learner as an individual. Rogers (1961, 1970), Maslow (1970), Egan (1982) and others sought to redress the balance away from reasoning and the clinical observation of behaviour towards the affective and imaginative elements of learning. Their influence upon learning theory derives from that orientation.

The shift to the affective as well as the cognitive dimensions of learning was in part influenced by Freud's psychoanalytic approach to the study of human behaviour. However humanists rejected Freud's view that behaviour or change in behaviour are determined either by the environment or by the learner's sub-conscious. The approach of the humanist psychologists may be described as phenomenological in that they are concerned with what they see as the "phenomenal" as opposed to the "real". For them the phenomenal world is the environment as it is perceived by the individual. Humanists believe that self-actualisation is a prime motivating force in human behaviour. The process of achieving maximum development of an individual's potentiality they see as ensuring healthy and creative personal functioning.

A humanistic approach to learning places great emphasis upon the individual learner and especially on how the learner feels and imagines the world. Humanists are concerned with the importance of the self-concept for the learner whether adult or child. They have traditionally devoted their attention insofar as it affects learning to the development of positive motivation and appropriate, sensitive, interpersonal communication. Rogers (1961) wrote initially of the concept of self-actualisation of persons in therapy but this led him to address the effects of the self-concept upon the learning of people generally and the circumstances in which learning takes place. Rogers' attitude to therapy as a psychologist was always "client-centred'. He saw the role of learning as one of supporting self-actualisation for the individual through personal maturation. Like Maslow (1970), Rogers (1983) emphasised the role of the relationship between significant, self-chosen learning and personal growth and development. His attitude to learning therefore was that he saw it as facilitating self-growth and encouraging change in self-perception and self-concept.

A humanist approach to learning emphasises feeling as well as thinking and the acquisition of information. It is concerned especially with the development of positive self concepts, positive human relationships and honest interpersonal communication. It recognises the importance of personal values, believes that learning should be learner-centred and is best when it is discovery oriented. Its critics, Lefrancois (1985) for instance, maintain that a strongly humanist approach to learning is open to criticism in that it is highly dependent upon the wisdom and integrity of the teacher or facilitator, it can be imprecise about its

objectives and their achievement and it has so far provided little experimental evidence to support the validity its arguments. A humanist approach to learning is important to an understanding of transformative learning because it draws attention to the role of the feelings and the imagination in learning, and it concentrates upon the learner's self-awareness, the learner "looking at himself (*sic*) looking at the world" (Newman 1993, p. 178).

Learning and developmental psychology

Developmental psychology is not a theory of learning in itself but a branch of psychology. In recent times a number of researchers and theorists have drawn attention to the possible links between learning and the stages or phases through which individuals move during their lifetimes. These phases may be related to particular key events in an individual's life such as the first experience of going to school, becoming employed, becoming self-supporting, leaving home, getting married, retiring from work and so on. Many of these events have in different societies been marked by formal "rites of passage" which celebrate changes in the expectations societies place upon individuals about what they should know and how they should accept responsibility for their behaviour. Psychologists have endeavoured to formalise these "life phases" and the learning associated with them by focusing upon issues of personal maturation - personal growth (Piaget 1970), ego development (Erikson 1959; Loevinger 1976), general personality development (Levinson 1976; Gould 1978), moral development (Kohlberg 1976) and religious development (Fowler 1981).

Identified weaknesses in these approaches are that they are limited in scope, they often accept a patriarchal view of the world and they reflect existing power structures within society rather than basic differences in the ways individuals learn (Hart 1992, Cranton 1992). A particularly valuable insight of developmental psychologists into learning, however, has been that they see the learner and especially the adult learner as a social being, as one whose learning is affected and conditioned by a community. Merriam and Caffarella (1991, p. 105) describe three concepts from the literature of personal

psychological development which they believe affect the learning of individuals as they grow through life changes - sequential patterns of change related to chronological time, individual or cultural life events, and transitions involving disorientation and reorientation which result in periodic transformations.

The idea that particular forms of learning are associated with certain stages of life in which individuals look differently at themselves and their world is related to why people learn rather than how they learn. However it is relevant to the concept of transformative learning in that both may in fact involve confrontation with psycho-cultural assumptions derived from an individual's primary socialisation and life experience. A number of developmental psychologists (Sheehy 1977; Cross 1981; Kolb 1984) have expressed the conviction that at these stages or "passages", becoming independent of one's parents for example, or retiring from work, individuals may be provoked by circumstances into a radical re-look at their lives, much as did the women in Mezirow's study which led to the formulation of his initial theoretical work. Certainly the two would seem to be related at least, and that relationship needs to be explored, as will be done later in this thesis.

From the above relatively brief consideration of four ways of looking at learning it may be said that each provides a particular perspective on learning as a phenomenon. Each has a particular contribution to make to our understanding of how individuals "become critically aware of how and why the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions has come to constrain the way they see themselves and their relationships" (Mezirow 1981, p. 6). There are behaviourist ways of thinking and learning into which individuals have been conditioned, either by their own continued practice or by others, and cognitivist ways of learning which individuals have consciously developed for receiving, storing and transmitting information in ways satisfactory to them. There are humanist approaches to learning which focus on the individual and drawing attention to the role of a person's feelings and imagination in learning and there are stages in life in which individuals may be particularly susceptible to looking at themselves from new perspectives.

ADULT LEARNING

Adults learn in such a variety of formal and informal learning environments that if one believes that context is important it is hardly possible to provide a theoretical model which comprehensively covers all learning circumstances. All the comments made above about learning and theories of learning apply in some respects at least to the learning of adults but adult learning has nuances and emphases peculiar to itself which need here to be considered further. One approach to adult learning is that it is "driven" by the personal, social and economic interests and needs of learners (Knowles 1980). Theorists such as Jarvis (1987b) have drawn attention to the social dimension of those involved in the adult learning process. Jarvis saw learning as at the heart of life itself. Tough (1979) went so far as to assert that 98% of the adult population was engaged in purposeful learning at any one time:

> It is common for a man or woman to spend 700 hours a year at learning projects. ... About 70% of all learning projects are planned by the learner himself [sic], who seeks help and subject matter from a variety of acquaintances, experts and printed resources (Tough 1979, p. 1).

This perhaps takes the identification of life with learning to an extreme. However, earlier in the present century Dewey (1938) began writing about learning as life-long rather than as something which was confined to specific projects and courses and that came to an end at the conclusion of formal schooling or university education. Although Dewey did not explicitly address the issue of adult learning he did so implicitly by emphasising the importance of adults coming to terms with continuing change and development throughout their lives. Learning according to Dewey starts from what has actually been experienced, rather than from what some authority imposes and Dewey saw continuing evaluation of experience as a way in which adults expand the scope of their lives and adapt better to the world. He drew attention to the fact that the way people define and solve problems and assess the grounds of their beliefs is central to the process of lifelong learning. These issues have been taken up strongly by more recent writers on adult learning theory.

Another view of the learning of adults centres around readiness to learn. An understanding of this approach has its origins in the work of the developmental psychologists, as

previously indicated. Havighurst (1972) referred to "the teachable moment" for individuals which created a climate for learning for which the readiness is all. Theorists of adult learning have generally maintained that as adults grow and develop they find that they have personal imperatives which new learning can satisfy and from around 1970 autonomy or "self directedness" became a significant issue for adult learning theorists. In dealing with the concept of the autonomy of the adult learner it is necessary to refer to the work of Knowles (1975, 1980, 1984) who adopted the term "andragogy" in reference to adult learning, as distinct from "pedagogy', the teaching of children.

Andragogy

In a bold attempt to put together a theory of adult learning for which he appropriated the name "andragogy" Malcolm Knowles drew upon the work of Lindeman (1926), Tough (1971) and others in identifying the key assumptions about adult learners that he considered to have been supported by research. Knowles asserted that the difference between pedagogy and andragogy was almost entirely based on the assumptions on which each is postulated. Andragogy in Knowles' view has to do with helping adults learn whilst pedagogy refers to the teaching of children. For the sake of argument Knowles unquestionably polarised the issues, caricaturing the process of the education of children as a pedantic model which

> assigns to the teacher the full responsibility for making all the decisions about what will be learned, how it will be learned, and if it has been learned. It is teacher-directed education, leaving to the learner only the submissive role of following a teacher's instructions (1984a, p. 53).

Few good teachers of children in primary schools today would agree with such a view of the way in which children learn. Nevertheless, Knowles went on to contrast andragogy with pedagogy on six separate criteria: the need to know, the learner's self-concept, the role of experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning and motivation. The key aspect of adult learning in Knowles' model of andragogy as Merriam and Caffarella (1991) have indicated is the level of dependence upon teachers:

> This model (andragogy) ... is le arner centred versus instructor centred. Although on the surface the mc del's process elements are similar to those of other instructional design mc dels (diagnosing learning needs, formulating objectives, designing a pattern of learning experiences, evaluating results) there is one key difference: the learner is viewed as a mutual partner in each of these steps (Merriam and Caffarella 1991, p. 25).

Merriam and Caffarella also see the issue of the independence of the adult learner to be crucial to an understanding of andragogy and they go on to quote Knowles (1980)

> The ideal situation is when a group is small enough for all participants to be 4involved in every aspect of planning every phase of the learning activity. The teacher, of course, retains responsibility for facilitating the planning by suggesting procedures and co-ordinating the process. But conditions are likely to be right for this maximum degree of participation only in small courses, action projects, workshops, and club programs. With larger groups the ideal situation can be approximated, however, by an imaginative use of sub-groupings (Knowles 1980, p. 226)

The question of autonomy and self-direction in relation to adult learning is central to Knowles' theory of andragogy and seems to have created more controversy than perhaps any other aspect of his work. Knowles acknowledged his indebtedness in the matter of the importance of autonomy and self-direction in adult learning to the research of Tough (1979) who was concerned not only with what and why adults learn, but with how they learn, and the benefits they see themselves as obtaining from learning. Tough defined self-direction as the assumption by adult learners of responsibility for planning, directing and moderating the course of their own learning (1971). He was convinced that adults as adults have a wide range of abilities which enable them to choose, plan and take responsibility for their own learning.

Tough proposed strategies which he believed could very effectively be incorporated into adult learning programs to help participants learn what they needed to know and how to apply the benefit of that learned knowledge in their lives and work. In reflecting on Tough's position, Knowles made the point that adults in their normal life situations see themselves as responsible for decisions about their own learning. In this he saw them as expressing "a deep psychological need to be seen by others and treated by others as being

capable of self-direction" (1984a, p. 56). The problem for Knowles was how to transfer this need constructively to the learning situation. A number of researchers have developed instruments to "measure" readiness for self-direction in learning. These include Guglielmino's Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (1977) and the indices of Oddi (1986).

The issues at stake in the area of autonomy and self-direction in adult learning are clearly important and likely to be debated for some time. A way forward in the impasse has been indicated by Cranton (1992) who points out that when Knowles wrote of adult learners as needing an awareness of being self-directed, of being in control of their own learning, such awareness arose from their wanting to shake off the dependence into which they had been conditioned by years of learning in a pedagogic mode in traditional school situations. Cranton insists that Knowles does not in fact say that successful adult learners are always self-directed learners, and that Knowles is often misunderstood on this point. She points out that what Knowles does say is that adults "have a need to be self-directed learners" (1992, p. 15). Merriam and Caffarella say much the same thing - "Self direction is more a desired outcome than a given condition" (Merriam and Caffarella 1991, p. 251). This seems to be a particularly helpful way of looking at the need for autonomy and self-direction in adult learning.

Other theorists have suggested ways of looking at adult learning which place the emphasis in areas other than autonomy and self-direction. Cross (1981) offered a theory of adult learning based upon the characteristics of adults as distinct from those of children. In contrast with Knowles' theory which is concerned more with the principles of good practice, Cross' model concentrates upon the what and the how of adult learning. Jarvis on the other hand has suggested a model based upon the social context of learning. He sees three forms of learning forming a hierarchy in which the third, reflective learning as distinct from unreflected learning, is the more sophisticated and the more adult. However, as Merriam and Caffarella (1991, p. 264) point out, none of these theories of adult learning is supported by a substantial body of empirical research and only Knowles' principles of andragogy have been widely applied

Beyond Andragogy

The theorists most identified with moving theoretical thinking about adult learning "beyond andragogy" are Brookfield and Mezirow. Brookfield (1986) makes the point, as Cranton (1992, p. 53) has done, that Knowles' assumptions are in fact just that, and further:

> They are not an empirically based theory of learning painstakingly derived from a series of experiments resulting in generalisations of increasing levels of sophistication, abstraction and applicability (Brookfield 1986, p. 91).

Jarvis (1984) highlights the same issue:

> It (the theory of andragogy) has acquired the status of an established doctrine in adult education, but without being grounded in sufficient empirical research to justify its dominant position (Jarvis 1984, p. 32).

Brookfield (1985) believes that accepting Knowles' principles of andragogy as established theory and translating them into criteria for practice is difficult to justify and he has been critical of the use made by others of Knowles' propositions for that purpose. He does, however, view positively constructive questioning of Knowles' assumptions and systematic collection of data about them as a way forward. In his 1986 volume *Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning* Brookfield considers at some length the actual written reactions of a group of adult learners to one of his own courses in which he had endeavoured to implement andragogical principles. Included amongst these principles was his requirement that the learners should generate criteria by which their own work as a group ought be assessed. He found that far from demanding more opportunity for autonomy and self-direction:

> Participants were uncomfortable about being required to assume a degree of responsibility for designing their curriculum, negotiating their assessed piece of work and judging their own efforts (Brookfield 1986, p. 111).

In Brookfield's view there are implications in this for the role of facilitators of adult learning:

> To act as a resource person to adults who are unaware of belief systems, bodies of knowledge or behavioural possibilities other than those that they have uncritically assimilated since childhood is to condemn such adults to remaining within existing paradigms of thought and action. It is misconceived to talk of the self-directedness of learners who are unaware of alternative ways of thinking, perceiving and acting (Brookfield 1986, p. 124).

Brookfield believes that the challenge for the adult educator is to persuade, insist and cajole adult learners into accepting responsibility for their own learning, and then to challenge them to become critically reflective of both the process of their learning and its content. He makes it clear that in his view technical proficiency and a willingness to meet learners' needs are of themselves insufficient.

> If we ... regard facilitator roles and responsibilities as being primarily those of technicians of design, we denude practice of any philosophical rationale, future orientation, or purposeful mission. ... If we accept the view that we should serve only felt needs, then our priorities, purposes and primary functions will be wholly determined by others (Brookfield 1986, p. 287).

What Brookfield is encouraging facilitators of adult learning to do is to develop from rigorously evaluated theories of learning a thoughtful and critical philosophy of practice which focuses upon and encourages in all manner of ways the adult learner's developing sense of control and autonomy. Brockfield points out that this is an approach to which there is often considerable resistance on the part of many learners. Mezirow expresses much the same view of the challenges involved:

> Andragogy as a philosophical orientation of adult educators refers to the process of fostering learning effort so as to progressively enhance the adult's ability to become increasingly autonomous and responsible, to become more self-directed as a learner (Mezirow 1985b, p. 142).

In other words, it is the learner who must engage in the often difficult task of making meaning out of knowledge and the facilitator of the learning of adults "is not always engaged in a warm and wholly satisfactory attempt to assist adults in their innate drive to achieve self-actualisation" (Brookfield 1986, p. 125). Brookfield goes on to enunciate a basically constructivist attitude to learning, seeing the facilitator as

> charged with the imperative of assisting adults to contemplate alternatives, to come to see the world as malleable, to be critically reflective, and to perceive themselves as pro-active beings (Brookfield 1986, p. 125).

As indicated previously, Mezirow (1994, p. 222) too adopts a fundamentally pro-active and constructivist approach to transformative learning describing it as "central to making meaning and hence learning". The question of constructivism as a critical view of learning is very relevant to transformative learning and needs now to be considered at somewhat greater length.

A constructivist approach to adult learning

An approach to adult learning which sees learning as the result of the active processes each adult learner follows in making meaning of his/her experience through processes of interpretation, assimilation and application has been described as "constructivist". A constructivist approach to learning takes the view that it occurs when individuals construct their own understandings through interaction with their environment and critical reflection upon their experience. From the constructivist viewpoint adults are not mere receptacles of knowledge, they are not shaped by environmental circumstances beyond their control. They are self-searching and self-constructing in their learning, they become active construers of meaning and they have the capacity to make power for their lives out of the knowledge they acquire. This approach has been described by Candy as "a constructive process which involves actively seeking meaning from (or even imposing meaning upon) events" (Candy 1989, p. 107).

Learning from the constructivist perspective is a very personal thing and different people may construe the same reality in different ways. Candy (1989) had earlier made the point that knowledge gained through personal experience is susceptible to being construed differently by different people, depending upon what Mezirow would call the individual's existing frames of reference.

> It is common experience for people to misconstrue each other's motivations. Such misunderstandings might be based on past experience,

> on information provided by a third person, on some small gesture or on a number of fragments of evidence (Candy 1989, p. 103).

From a constructivist viewpoint, therefore, individuals learn by constructing their own idiosyncratic meaning out of knowledge through appropriation, that is, through integrating that meaning into their personal frames of reference or habits of mind which Mezirow (1978b, p. 103) called their meaning perspectives.

TRANSFORMATIVE DIMENSIONS OF ADULT LEARNING

Mezirow developed from his basically constructivist view of how adults learn the conviction that meaning perspectives, inculturated frames of reference and habits of mind which adults learn almost imperceptibly influence how they process their everyday experience, in fact how they learn and what they learn. In his view this is a very significant understanding for people involved in facilitating the learning of other adults.

> The agent brings to the situation her own frame of reference which is an integral element constituting the experience. To understand others, one must gain access to their lived experience so as to clarify and elucidate the way they interpret it (Mezirow 1996b, p. 160).

It is appropriate now to consider in greater depth the conclusions Mezirow drew from his initial research and which prompted his 1981 article "Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning and Education".

As a result of the research he undertook in the 1970s, and his reading of the Brazilian educator Paolo Freire and the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas, Mezirow came to the conclusion that "the most distinctively adult domain of learning, that involving emancipatory action, is probably the least familiar to adult educators" (1981, p. 6). From this position Mezirow constructed a theoretical position which he at first called "perspective transformation" (1978a; 1978b; 1981) and later "emancipatory and transformative learning" (1985, 1991). He also developed an idiosyncratic terminology to describe such learning. Amongst the terms he used the meaning of which needs to be

clarified were "instrumental, communicative and emancipatory learning", "disorienting dilemma", "meaning perspectives" and "meaning schemes".

Mezirow's original research was undertaken with women undertaking re-entry programs in community colleges and universities across the United States during 1975-77 and it was this research which prompted the development of his theoretical constructs. In reflecting upon the findings of his research, Mezirow noted that there were elements in the reactions of these women to the challenges they had experienced which constituted radical new learning which was often unique and disturbing for them. This was the case even though from many other aspects they found the new challenges stimulating, emancipatory and liberating.

Many of the women Mezirow interviewed reported that they were becoming increasingly aware that certain cultural and psychological assumptions out of which they had been operating up to that point in their lives were being strongly confronted in their changed circumstances. Although, in some areas of their lives at least the beginnings of the women's movement in the 1960s and 70s had created a supportive climate for such personal re-appraisal, the women reported that they found that negotiating new ways of thinking, acting and learning was at times "painful and treacherous" (Mezirow 1978a p. 14). They believed this was at least partly because, up till then so much of their sense of integrity and personal worth had been invested in inculturated ways of thinking, in supportive but unchallenging employment, and in the conventional domestic roles into which their lives had been cast. The experience of having all this suddenly up for reappraisal constituted for them a disorienting experience.

Mezirow also found that the women were indicating that in the College programs in which they were involved they were in many cases being subjected to opposition, frustration and in some cases outright discrimination by those in authority, almost invariably males, who had their own inculturated frames of reference and habits of mind about women and their roles in academia. Conway's (1993) experiences in Australian and American universities of the sixties and early seventies were very similar. The re-entry courses the women undertook included independent and non-traditional sequences of both academic and non-

academic courses and involved learning experiences of self-exploration, career planning and personal growth. Yet the women reported that in many cases

> they found themselves ignored, sometimes viewed with suspicion and occasionally with hostility by faculty and even college administrators. Program directors too have often been made to feel like outsiders (Mezirow 1978a, p. 7).

Mezirow (1978a, p. 11) found that despite their many negative experiences, for these women the learning which they were undergoing had a distinctive and catalytic function. In the great majority of cases it encouraged in them a critical reappraisal of culturally determined gender stereotypes into which they had been socialised from childhood. Suddenly new insights, roles and frames of reference were open to exploration, occasions for new career opportunities were emerging and the perspectives on life and learning which up till then had given meaning to the women's lives were being opened up. Apart from his seeing the value in human terms of such experiences, for Mezirow the crucial focus of interest became the learning processes which the women had experienced.

In reflecting critically upon the findings of his research, Mezirow (1978b) came to the conclusion that whereas in childhood, growing to maturity is a formative process, one devoted primarily to learning roles such as those appropriate to being male or female, in adulthood new learning has in many circumstances the capacity to be entirely disorienting for the individuals concerned and he believed that it was important that this type of learning be thoroughly explored. For the women in his research certainly this form of learning offered new and challenging avenues for reflecting upon how they perceived themselves and their worlds and considering critically what Mezirow now called their "meaning perspectives". As Mezirow indicated:

> By becoming aware of hitherto unquestioned cultural myths which they had internalised, women came to find a new sense of identity within a new meaning perspective which led to greater autonomy, control and responsibility for their own lives (Mezirow 1978b, p. 102).

As a result Mezirow and his co-researchers "were encouraged to believe that we may have identified a salient dimension of adult development and a significant derivative function of continuing education" (1978a, p. 7).

Mezirow's first sustained analysis of the theoretical implications of his research appeared in an article already referred to, published in 1981 and entitled "A Critical Theory of Adult Learning and Education". In this article Mezirow again reflected upon the results of his research especially in regard to precisely how and why the significant transformations he believed he had observed had taken place. Crucial to the process for him was "critical reflectivity" which he saw as reflection not only upon one's experience but upon the self as having the experience and this had a social dimension:

> Awareness of why we attach the meanings we do to reality, especially to our roles and relationships - meanings often misconstrued out of the uncritically assimilated half-truths of conventional wisdom and power relationships assumed as fixed - may be the most significant distinguishing characteristic of adult learning (Mezirow 1981, p. 11).

Mezirow critically reflected upon the implications which could be drawn from his research for adult learning generally. He began with the a consideration of what he described as "the disorienting dilemma".

The disorienting dilemma

Many of the women he interviewed for his research had told Mezirow that their response to the disorientation they were experiencing raised what were for them serious personal dilemmas which had to be faced critically and honestly. For some the dilemma had begun with some external event, children leaving home, the death of a husband, divorce, a crucial career setback or the scarcely veiled obstruction and discrimination they were experiencing in the community colleges. For others, however, it was

> an internal, subjective experience - the feeling that life is not fulfilling, a sense of deprivation, the conviction that being a housewife forecloses access to other rewarding experiences ... 'I was planning my life around

> soap operas ... the only topic I had to discuss with my husband was what I saw on afternoon TV' (Mezirow: 1978a, p. 13).

Mezirow was encouraged to believe that the painful reappraisal many of the women were describing might well be a significant derivative function of their continuing education which had been "triggered" in their consciousness by what he now called "an experience of disorientation". It was not an entirely new reaction. Rogers had earlier written:

> Many people seem to feel that change in one's self-concept and one's behaviour can come about smoothly. This is not true in any person, nor is it true of change in an organisation. All change involves turbulence and varying degrees of pain (Rogers 1970, p. 94).

The occurrence of just such a "disorienting experience" was recorded also by Keane (1985) who in research into the question of "doubting" amongst men in middle life noted the importance of recognising and addressing the levels of strong feeling associated with the disorientation arising from doubt. Keane described this as involving

> a period of confusion, of inner struggle with self-esteem, and a certain amount of withdrawal associated with strong negative feelings. It is far from being merely a cognitive, rational process (Keane 1990, p. 14).

During his research Mezirow also came to the conclusion that valuable insights into the processes of learning he was describing could be found in the work of the South American educator and sociologist Paolo Freire (1970, 1972). In his earlier article "Perspective Transformation" published in the latter half of 1978 Mezirow referred to the way in which Freire had created learning situations in which "illiterate peasants could arrive at a new perspective from which to see themselves and familiar relationships" (Mezirow 1978b, p. 103). He continued:

> Conscientisation is the name Freire gave this movement to a new level of awareness which occurred as villagers became conscious of their old perspectives for the first time, came to see themselves as having options for controlling their own lives and dealing with constraints which had before been seen as given and beyond their control (Mezirow 1978b, p. 103).

Freire's attitude to learning was based strongly upon critical reflection and Mezirow's acknowledgment of his indebtedness to Freire's thinking on personal transformation is significant and needs to be considered further.

Conscientisation and praxis

Mezirow made specific reference to Freire's work on the question of self-direction in the learning of adults both in the report of his research (1978a, p. 58) and in his article of the same year following publication of his results:

> Freire saw the limitations of attempting to develop an educational enterprise solely upon the expressed needs of learners. Felt needs were seen only as points of departure. The needs of learners were defined to include the causes of these needs, and the educational task was designed to respond to this extended definition (Mezirow 1978b, p. 103).

Freire had been involved with adult learning and especially adult literacy programs in Brazil and other parts of South America. He saw adult learning as requiring not only literacy but personal growth and "a transformation of consciousness" (Grundy 1987, p. 190). Freire called the process "conscientisation", which he saw as learners becoming aware that they had options for controlling their own lives and learning and dealing with constraints which up to then were perceived as beyond their control. He defined conscientisation as

> the necessary means by which men [*sic*], through a true praxis, leave behind the status of historical subjects ... a process of transformation in which knowledge and action are dialectically related through the mediation of critical reflection (Freire 1972b, p. 128).

In reflecting upon what Freire had written, and on the findings of his own research, Mezirow came to the conclusion, which the later work of Keane (1985), Pierce (1986) and Sveinunggaard (1992) supports, that the disorientation arising in the situations he was considering related to a process similar to "conscientisation", a changed state of consciousness following personal confrontation with long entrenched assumptions, value

systems and beliefs. Sveinunggaard (1992), in her research into the transformative learning experiences of six adults following a self-identified critical life event also found that major perceptual changes did occur in these circumstances and that for such individuals they were characterised by:

> (a) the development of a sense of personal power over the direction and purpose of their lives; (b) a clear sense of 'self' as separate from others and gained through increased self-awareness; (c) a re-examination and redefining of roles and priorities; (d) an adoption of increasingly higher order values; (e) the development of a critically reflective perspective of their social, political and cultural context (Sveinunggaard 1993, p. 293).

Sveinunggaard went on to assert that, based upon what the people interviewed told her:

> Affective learning and development was necessary for cognitive learning and development to be consolidated and acted upon. One could not ignore the very real emotional pain and turmoil that accompanies such cognitive learning. Critical reflection upon their beliefs, values, feelings, thoughts and goals, as well as upon their social contexts led to increased self-awareness and development of personal power (Sveinunggaard 1993, p. 295).

Mezirow himself had come to much the same conclusion, that the women he interviewed were going through a form of conscientisation that resulted in changed meaning perspectives. He came to the conclusion that

> it (perspective transformation) is a process in which you make choices that are to shape your own destiny. It is more accurately thought of as a praxis, a dialectic in which understanding and action interact to produce an altered state of being. One must go beyond the exploration of options to formulate a plan for action (1978a, p. 18).

Freire's thinking had also pointed strongly to the power of conscientisation as a liberating force and on the question of the radical alternatives to existing "narrative" and "banking" approaches to learning and teaching Freire believed there could be no neutrality. If education was not for "liberation" it was for "domestication", that is, unthinking acceptance of the status quo. Whereas "conscientisation" involves the awakening of critical consciousness, "praxis" involves a combination of critical reflection and practical action.

For Freire (1972b, p. 106) therefore adult learning so conceived had potential for personal liberation from unjust social structures leading to action.

In his own research, Mezirow was struck by the number of times that the women reported that despite their real feelings of distress and disorientation, they also found the experiences of re-appraisal they were undergoing ultimately "liberating" and "emancipatory" (1981, p. 6-7). Although these women were on the whole middle class and the outward circumstances of their oppression were in many ways far removed from those of their South American counterparts what they were experiencing was for them, in a very real sense, liberating and emancipatory. It was at this stage that Mezirow (1981) saw what he perceived to be significant theoretical support for his interpretation of the findings of his own research in the theory of knowledge constitutive interests developed by Jurgen Habermas. This needs now to be considered.

A theory of knowledge-constitutive interests

Habermas, a philosopher rather than learning theorist, described his position in regard to human knowledge as "a theory of knowledge-constitutive interests" (1970, 1971). He wrote of "fundamental human interests" which influence how knowledge is constituted and constructed. He called such interests "knowledge-constitutive" because they guide and shape the way knowledge is constituted through different human activities. Habermas' view is essentially constructivist in that he sees knowledge as something which people construct for themselves and in dialogue with others rather than as an absolute which exists apart from people (Ewert 1991). In Habermas' view, because it is rooted in past as well as in existing social structures human knowledge can only be understood in relation to the problems humanity continues to encounter in regard to its own survival and welfare.

Habermas identified three basic cognitive interests, which he maintained constitute the three ways by which knowledge is generated and organised in our society, namely the "technical", the "practical" and the "emancipatory". The technical cognitive interest is

> the interest of human beings n acquiring knowledge that will facilitate their technical control over natura objects. The knowledge resulting from this interest is typically instrume tal knowledge taking the form of scientific explanations (quoted by Carr and Kemmis 1986, p. 135).

Habermas saw knowledge as also b ing achieved through the "practical" cognitive interest arising from the human desire to un derstand and be understood (Ewert 1991, p. 351). The practical cognitive interest is con erned with human interaction and communication. Whereas the basic orientation of the technical interest is towards control and mastery, that of the practical interest is towards interaction and communication through dialogue. Like Freire, Habermas saw dialogue betw een adults as central to the practical interest. He drew a distinction, however, between the s peech of common communication and what he called "discourse" which is critically orient ed and not unlike Freire's "conscientisation".

> Discourse helps test the truth claims of opinions (and norms) which the speakers no longer take for g anted. In discourse, the 'force' of the argument is the only permiss ble compulsion, whereas co-operative search for truth is the only permissi le motive ... The output of discourse consists in recognition or rejection of problematic truth (Habermas 1973, p.168).

Habermas' practical interest gener ated subjective rather than objective knowledge. To quote Grundy, he saw this as "the fundamental interest for understanding the environment through interaction based upon cor sensual interpretation of meaning" (Grundy 1987, p. 14).

The emancipatory interest, the third and in regard to Mezirow's preoccupation at the time, the most significant aspect of Haber mas' th nking derives from an individual's analysis of ideas and propositions through criti al reflectivity. Habermas saw this interest as oriented to critical self-reflection, and as ema ncipato y and liberating for the human spirit.

> Self -reflection is at once in uition and emancipation, comprehension and liberation from dogmat c dependence. ... The methodological framework that determines he meaning of the validity of critical propositions of this categor is established by the concept of self-reflection. The latter releas s the subject from dependence on hypostatized powers. Self-r flection is determined by an emancipatory cognitive interest (Haberma s 1971, p. 310).

The attitudes of Freire and Habermas to knowledge both personal and social which is emancipatory are not identical. They do, however, have much in common as Mezirow (1978b, 1981) has pointed out, especially in the way they consider the emancipatory and liberating potential of certain aspects of learning. Mezirow was particularly concerned with the way such learning is inhibited by particular "habits of mind", by libidinal, institutional and environmental forces which limit an individual's options and rational control over his/her life (Mezirow 1981). Both Freire and Habermas are critical theorists in that they believe that people can free themselves from dependencies which can and ought be challenged through critically oriented self-reflection, conscientisation, discourse and action. Both believe that it is possible for individuals and communities to be released from dependence, to be liberated, emancipated and freed from "the culture of oppression" (Freire 1972b). Mezirow took Habermas' three areas of cognitive interests and postulated three corresponding domains of learning which he called instrumental, communicative and emancipatory.

Instrumental, communicative and emancipatory learning

Mezirow believed that the theoretical work of Freire and Habermas had implications for how adults learn, and for how that learning can be facilitated. Instrumental, communicative and emancipatory learning are terms developed by Mezirow to describe the learning of adults and they offered him a helpful framework for explaining his new model of perspective transformation. The three terms Mezirow chose, instrumental, communicative and emancipatory, avoided the problems of translation from Habermas' German, especially in regard to the use of the word "practical" which in English seems too close in meaning to "technical". The following figure taken from Cranton (1994) sets out the relationship between Habermas' theory of cognitive interests and knowledge, and Mezirow's learning domains.

Figure 2.1. Interests, knowledge and learning domains (Cranton 1994, p. 45)

Interests (Habermas)	Technical (work)	Practical (language)	Emancipatory (power)
Knowledge (Habermas)	Instrumenta (causal explana ion)	Practical (understanding)	Emancipatory (reflection)
Learning Domains (Mezirow)	Instrumental	Communicative	Emancipatory

Cranton's diagram shows a derivation of Mezirow's three domains of learning from each of Habermas' areas of knowledge and human interest which is lineal and direct in each case. The change in terminology from technical to instrumental, and from practical to communicative (in some earlier writing Mezirow used the word "dialogic") Mezirow made in the interests of clarity. His particular focus is on the emancipatory or transformative domain.

In his 1991 volume Mezirow defined "instrumental learning" as involving "determining cause-effect relationships and learning through task oriented problem solving" (1991, p. 82). Communicative learning, in the dialectical tradition, Mezirow described as learning to understand what others mean and to make ourselves understood as we share ideas through speech, the written word, moving pictures, television and art (Mezirow 1991a, p. 86). "Emancipatory learning" Mezirow defined as

> emancipation from libidinal, linguistic, epistemic, institutional or environmental forces that can limit our options and our rational control over our lives but have been taken for granted or seen as beyond human control (Mezirow 1991a, p. 87).

From the responses of the women involved in his research Mezirow came to the conclusion that it was possible for individuals to become caught in the web of their own history even

whilst under the impression that they were learning something new. What they were perceiving, or thought they were perceiving, was being "filtered" (Mezirow 1991a p.34) by their meaning perspectives, assumptions and inculturated value systems, the things which personally and socially they had always taken for granted. It was not simply a matter of rightness or wrongness. As Brookfield (1992) has pointed out:

> Assumptions are rarely wholly right or wholly wrong. Most assumptions have more validity in some situations than in others and a crucial component of reflective practice is coming to recognise the conditions and contexts that render assumptions more or less valid (Brookfield 1992c, p. 13).

Mezirow saw a direct link between such emancipatory learning and what he then called perspective transformation which during his research he had perceived many of the women he interviewed to be undergoing.

In 1985 in his contribution to Brookfield's book on self-directed learning, Mezirow modified his earlier view to the extent that he then saw his previous threefold division as not necessarily constituting three totally separate domains of learning but as three helpful ways of considering this very complex human phenomenon. Whilst the three domains had certain characteristics in common, in his "Response to Collard and Law" (1989) Mezirow reported that

> rather than posit emancipative learning as a third learning domain, I suggest that critical reflection, which is central to emancipatory learning, is applicable to both instrumental and dialogic learning ... my having designated emancipatory learning as a separate domain of learning was confusing (Mezirow 1989, p. 175).

This was a very significant change because it broadened the whole concept of emancipatory or transformative learning in relation to learning generally. It is arguable that this extension weakened Mezirow's concept, especially in its liberating and emancipatory aspect and this matter will be taken up at greater length in Chapter 6. I turn now to some of the specific technical terms Mezirow has used to explain perspective transformation and

transformative learning, and in particular his adoption and continuing use of the terms "meaning perspectives" and "meaning schemes".

Meaning perspectives and meaning schemes

Mezirow defined an individual's structure of psycho-cultural assumptions and value systems as his/her meaning perspectives. He saw meaning perspectives as "frames of reference" (1978b) and "habits of mind" (1996a, p. 1). They are "the psychological structures within which we locate and define ourselves and our relationships" (1978a, p. 7), and "the structure of cultural assumptions within which new experience is assimilated and transformed by one's past experience" (1978b, p. 101). In 1991 Mezirow wrote that

> meaning perspectives or generalised sets of habitual expectation, act as perceptual and conceptual codes to form, limit and distort how we think, believe and feel; and how, what, when, and why we learn. They have cognitive, affective and conative dimensions. These habits of expectation filter both perception and comprehension (Mezirow 1991a, p. 34).

Just as meaning perspectives are 'generalised sets of habitual expression", "meaning schemes", another technical phrase Mezirow has used since 1978, are seen as specific and particular, they are "the specific beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions articulated by an interpretation. They are derived from earlier, often unreflected interpretations" (Mezirow 1991a: p. 35). Elsewhere, however, Mezirow has defined meaning schemes as

> the constellation of concept, belief, judgment and feeling which shape a particular interpretation (e.g. what we think of abortion, black people, the Muslim religion, free market capitalism or liberalism). Meaning schemes are specific manifestations of our meaning perspectives
> (Mezirow 1994, p. 223)

In developing this line of thinking Mezirow indicates that he sees a cluster of meaning schemes as making up a particular meaning perspective. "Meaning schemes serve as specific habits of expectation; meaning perspectives are groups of related meaning schemes" (Mezirow 1991a, p. 35). This is an important connection between the two which Cranton has accepted in her recent publication - "Each meaning perspective is made up of

sets of meaning schemes: specific knowledge, beliefs, value judgments feelings and assumptions" (Cranton 1994, p. 29).

I find Mezirow not always clear and convincing on the relationship between meaning schemes and meaning perspectives, as in the following explanation:

> Meaning schemes (schema) are sets of related habitual expectations governing if-then, cause-effect, and category relationships, as well as event sequences, goal orientations and prototypes. Meaning schemes are rules and principles of strategy. A meaning perspective is an orienting frame of reference made up of sets of theories, propositions, beliefs and evaluations. Both selectively order and delimit what we learn (Mezirow 1988, p. 236).

The problem here is that both meaning schemes and meaning perspectives are defined in broad and comprehensive terms. The distinction and the relationship of meaning perspectives and meaning schemes would I believe be more readily understandable if Mezirow continued to describe meaning schemes as "specific beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions" (Mezirow 1991a: p. 35). This would be consistent with his assertion that "meaning perspectives are groups of related meaning schemes" (Mezirow 1991a, p. 35), a statement which Cranton endorses (Cranton 1994, p. 29). I return to this matter in Chapter 6 after considering the results of my research.

Perspective transformation and transformative learning

The process of "becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions has come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships ... and changing them" Mezirow (1981, p. 6) described as "perspective transformation". Perspective transformation is the transformation of an individual's meaning perspectives. For Mezirow it meant liberation from "cultural myths" which constituted "previously unchallenged and oppressive cultural expectations" (Mezirow 1978b, p. 102). For perspective transformation to occur, meaning perspectives and meaning schemes in Mezirow's view had first to be critically re-appraised. Such re-appraisal paves the way for reconstructed and more valid meaning perspectives and "an integration into society on

one's own terms with a new, inner-directed stance" (1978a, p. 8). Although Mezirow conceded that there was a sense in which perspective transformation was something which happened for the learner, "it is more accurately thought of as a praxis, a dialectic in which understanding and action interact to produce an altered state of being" (1978a, p. 15). Mezirow then offered a definition of perspective transformation as a process.

> Perspective transformation is the process by which adults come to recognise culturally induced dependency roles and relationships and take action to overcome them. ... It can lead progressively toward increased autonomy, self-determination, and responsibility - important gains in personal identity (1978a, p.20).

By 1981 Mezirow was prepared to give a more comprehensive definition of perspective transformation, defining it clearly in terms of critical consciousness and seeing it as (italics Mezirow's)

> the emancipatory process *of becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions has come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships, reconstituting this structure to permit a more inclusive and discriminating integration of experience and acting upon these new understandings* It is the learning process by which adults come to recognize their culturally induced dependency roles and the reasons for them and take action to overcome them (Mezirow 1981, p. 6-7).

In thus defining perspective transformation - a term he used almost exclusively during the first decade after his original research - as a "process", Mezirow appears not to distinguish between "transformation" (used as a noun as in "perspective transformation"), and "transformative" (used as an adjective as in "transformative learning"). Since about 1985, whilst not abandoning the use of the term "perspective transformation" Mezirow and others have increasingly used the second term "transformative learning" to stand for both the process and the event of transformation.

To use the two terms - perspective transformation and transformative learning - interchangeably is inappropriate and in my thesis therefore, from this point onwards I will use the term "transformative learning" to mean both the process I have described above and the transformation itself - as indeed Cranton does in her recent book *Understanding and*

Promoting Transformative Learning (1994). By way of example, if I were to say that as a result of significant learning for me I had abandoned a perspective in which I had been brought up and to which I had been strongly committed and radically changed my view of the value of school boards for primary and secondary schools, the process through which I would have moved I would describe as transformative learning. But I would also say, from my transformed meaning perspective, that my new position constituted an example of transformative learning in my life following which I would see certain specific and particular issues in an entirely new light. Mezirow's 1990 anthology, significantly, is entitled *"Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood: A Guide to Transformative and Emancipatory Learning"* and as is clear from the transcript of the interview I had with Mezirow (Appendix B) this reflects his current practice in the use of terminology.

Mezirow has made very substantial claims for transformative learning. It is "the central function for adult education" (Mezirow 1981, p. 7) and "the most significant distinguishing characteristic of adult learning" (Mezirow 1981, p. 11) and "the mode of learning characteristic of adulthood". Following his change of view in 1985 referred to above, in seeing the emancipatory or transformative domain of learning as applying also to both instrumental and communicative learning as well, Mezirow maintained that transformative learning should be very broadly understood as the transformation of either meaning perspectives or meaning schemes.

> Transformative learning involves reflectively transforming the beliefs, attitudes, opinions and emotional reactions that constitute our meaning schemes or transforming our meaning perspectives (sets of related meaning schemes) (Mezirow 1991a, p. 223).

Mezirow recently re-emphasised this: "Learning occurs by elaborating meaning schemes, learning new meaning schemes, transforming meaning schemes, or transforming meaning perspectives" (Mezirow 1996a, p. 1). His decision to describe transformation of both meaning perspectives and meaning schemes as transformative learning seems to have been taken because he believed that transformative learning had implications for the whole spectrum of learning, and not just for the emancipatory domain. It is arguable, however, that by extending the concept in this way to include instrumental and communicative

learning as well as the transformation of the "specifics and particulars" of meaning schemes, some of the original character of perspective transformation may have been lost. This issue too will be taken up again in Chapter 6 after consideration of the results of the research.

THE PROCESSES OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

In Chapter 1 I defined "processes" in reference to transformative learning as what is going on in the consciousness of the learner at the time of the learning. Mezirow has used process in a similar way: "Learning may be defined as the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience" (1990, p. 1). In his earlier writing, based on his first research, Mezirow emphasised the significance of the initial "disorienting experience" which the women in his research had described, and in fact the use of the word "disorienting" indicates that it had an emotional component for them. Nevertheless for Mezirow the processes of learning for perspective transformation emphasised critical reflectivity, and were predominantly rational and cognitive:

> The full transformation cycle involves three phases. First is alienation from prescribed social roles. Then there is a stage of reframing, restructuring one's conception of reality and one's place in it. This involves a redefinition of problems and the need for action and new criteria for assigning values and making judgements. ... Finally there is the stage ... of contractual solidarity within which it becomes possible to participate again in society - or its reconstruction - but on one's own inner-directed terms as defined by the new meaning perspectives (Mezirow 1978b, p. 105).

Mezirow's 1990 anthology, begins and ends with his own chapters on transformation theory but includes also articles on the relevance of transformation theory in such practical situations as learning in the workplace, consciousness raising, social change, autobiography, journal writing, the potential of literature for emancipatory learning, and metaphor analysis. In an introduction Mezirow outlines the three functions of critical reflection which are to guide action, to give coherence to the unfamiliar and to reassess the justification for what is already known. Like Schon (1987) and Boud and Walker (1990)

Mezirow sees simple reflection of itself as of little value without the critical emphasis. This explains why in this and in other contexts Mezirow continues to define the processes of transformative learning in terms of critical reflection, discourse and reformulation.

In 1981 Mezirow was more specific about the processes of transformative learning than in his earlier work of 1978, articulating them in detail:

> From our research on re-entry women the dynamics of perspective transformation appeared to include the following elements:
>
> 1. a disorienting dilemma;
> 2. self examination;
> 3. a critical assessment of personally internalised role assumptions and a sense of alienation from traditional social expectations;
> 4. relating one's discontent to similar experience of others or to public issues - recognising that one's problem is shared;
> 5. exploring options for new ways of acting;
> 6. building competence and self-confidence in new roles;
> 7. planning a course of action;
> 8. acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans;
> 9. provisional efforts to try new roles and to assess feedback; and
> 10. a re-integration into society on the basis of conditions dictated by the new perspective (Mezirow 1981, p. 7).

Despite the predominantly cognitive flavour of these "elements", Mezirow acknowledged an emotional as well as a critically reflective component in the processes of transformation: "The traumatic severity of the disorienting dilemma is clearly a factor in establishing the probability of a transformation" (Mezirow 1981, p. 7). The issue of the role of the emotions in the whole transformation process needs now to be addressed.

Transformative learning - the emotional component

Mezirow's model (1981, p. 12) illustrating the "levels of reflectivity" associated with perspective transformation includes "affective reflectivity" but in association with perceiving, thinking and acting, and discriminant, psychic, conceptual, theoretical and judgmental reflectivity, all of which are associated with the intellect, the judgment and the will rather than with the emotions. Keane, however, based on his research in 1984 - 6 into

doubting and transformation in men in middle life emphasised strongly the importance of the emotions in transformative learning

> Transformative learning is often disorienting, confusing, emotional, and stressful. It can cause feelings of resistance, resentment, and anxiety in the learner. Perspective transformation involves a period of confusion, of inner struggle with self esteem, a certain amount of withdrawal and very strong negative feelings. The more basic an assumption or perspective of oneself that is being challenged, the stronger the feeling reaction is likely to be. Perspective transformation is far from being merely a cognitive, rational process (Keane 1991, p. 3).

Similarly Taylor (1987), postulated six steps in the process: encountering trigger events, confronting reality, reaching a transition point, making a shift or leap of transcendence, making a personal commitment, and finally grounding and development.

Mezirow responded to criticism on the issue of the emotional component of transformative learning and in both his 1991 volume and in an earlier address (1988, p. 224) he made subtle changes to the phases of transformative learning mentioned above. To (2) he added "with feelings of guilt or shame" and he altered (9) to read "building competence and self-confidence in new roles". It seems therefore that Mezirow has acknowledged the affective and emotional element in regard to the personal disorientation associated with transformative learning but he has not given it the emphasis in the whole learning process which some of his critics would prefer to see. For my own part I believe the matter is important and it was certainly an issue I resolved to consider closely in the analysis of the interviews I conducted for my research.

PROCEDURES FOR FACILITATING ADULT LEARNING

The emphasis in Mezirow's work on learning theory is almost always upon the learner rather than upon the teacher or facilitator of learning. However as indicated from the beginning of this thesis, I have been encouraged by the EdD terms of reference to pursue my interest in the "practical implications of the research". In Chapter 1 I defined the term "procedures" in reference to transformative learning as those learning approaches or

strategies through which a facilitator seeks to create a learning environment which will facilitate identifying and coming to terms with key meaning perspectives and deciding whether or not to change them. Such procedures would have much in common with those elements of good practice encouraged by Knowles and others - working individually and in small groups, individuals sharing with one another, facilitators sharing with learners control of learning situations, asking the right questions, creating imaginative situations, expressing and sharing emotion and using effectively such strategies as journal writing. The use of discourse and dialogue is central and needs now to be addressed

Transformative learning - the role of discourse and dialogue

From the outline quoted above of the ten steps or phases of perspective transformation, Mezirow postulates a key role for discourse and dialogue. It is discourse and dialogue, combined with critical reflection and "consciousness raising" (1978b, p. 102), which in Mezirow's view makes possible re-appraisal and validation of meaning perspectives and meaning schemes. This does not mean that those so engaged need all be at the same position, in fact quite the contrary in Mezirow's view - "The reason people with different perspectives can enter into rational, critical discourse is because there is always some overlap between them in observations, concepts, problems or standards" (1988, p. 226). Mezirow believed strongly in the value of the learning group for transformative learning because

> discourse is central to human communication and learning ... it is that special kind of dialogue in which we focus on content and attempt to justify beliefs by giving and defending reasons and by examining the evidence for and against competing viewpoints. We search out those we deem to be best informed, objective and rational, to seek a consensus in the form of a best collective judgment (Mezirow 1994a, p. 225).

Accepting therefore that critical reflection and discourse are the keys to identification and transformation of meaning perspectives I turn now to those commentators who have pointed to the value of the creative imagination and the use of autobiography - "telling one's story" - in relation to transformative learning.

Transformative learning - imagination and the use of autobiography

Nelson (1994) in his research on the imagination and use of autobiography for transformative learning with a group of adult men in middle life based his approach to personal transformation upon the theoretical constructs of Mezirow. Nelson's research revealed a significant potential role for the imagination in personal transformation and he put his theoretical position as follows:

> Autobiographical learning is a form of on-going self-formation and life-construction. It finds expression in narrative which relates the questions and answers, dilemmas and decisions, grief and elation which are part of the human story. Narrative lists the autobiographer's times of movement, stagnation and waiting, not only as a temporal record but also as a particular account of the author's imagining (Nelson 1994, p. 262).

Nelson came to the conclusion that it is the autobiographer's imagination which promotes his/her ability to create symbols which bridge the domains of conscious and unconscious knowing. The imagination in Nelson's view has the potential to become an equal partner with critical reflection and discourse in interpreting life in its social context:

> Imagination is as significant for adult learning as is memory. In its turn imagination leads autobiographers to revalue their life and to create personal meaning through the interpretation of their experience. By connecting the authors of life stories with the metaphor and myth of their lives, imagining draws them into deep reaches of themselves and the world of their experience (Nelson 1995, p. 45).

A number of other recent writers (Finger 1988; Lukinsky 1990; Thomson 1995; Usher 1995) have written of the transformative potential for adults of an imaginative use of autobiography. Powell (1985) in writing of his use of autobiography with adult learners justified his use of such an approach by reference to the earlier theoretical work of Abbs. Abbs saw critical reflection upon experience as being very appropriately carried out through personal journal writing and especially through autobiography:

> The discipline of autobiography which I am advocating is primarily an inward and creative discipline centred on the related acts of reflecting on and recreating the personal past. It is not academic. It begins and ends with what is given to the experience (Abbs 1974, p. 12).

Lukinsky's article "Reflective Withdrawal through Journal Writing" was included by Mezirow in his 1990 anthology on transformative learning. Lukinsky cites the long history of autobiography (Augustine, Wesley, Franklyn, Pepys, Newman, Dostoievsky) for achieving personal transformation as well as its use in psychoanalysis. He maintains that journal writing and autobiography are not merely intellectual exercises but that they have a strongly emotive element. They can arise "from the gut". Lukinsky took the view that autobiographical writing has the greatest potential for personal transformation when it places its emphasis upon the re-creation of meaning rather than upon merely giving an account of what has happened. He sees autobiography as centred around what he calls "turning points", situations where there are options - "there is nothing to prevent one from returning in the journal to the past and taking the road not taken" (Lukinsky 1990, p. 222). Autobiography Lukinsky saw not as an account of what happened in one's life but as an imaginative experience of autobiography, of being "in dialogue with one's life" (Lukinsky 1990, p. 221). All these writers make a cogent case for including the imaginative use of autobiography in any consideration of adult learning which involves personal transformation, but they also point to the question of associated ethical considerations.

Ethical considerations

The question of professional ethics must inevitably arise for facilitators in any learning situation in which individuals may be invited to discern, evaluate and perhaps transform aspects of their lives including psycho-cultural assumptions held deeply in their psyche. Mezirow was aware of the fact that transformative approaches to adult learning, if inappropriately used, could be used for manipulation.

> Helping adults construe experience in a way in which they more clearly understand the reasons for their problems and understand the options open to them so that they may assume responsibility for decision making is the essence of education ... but education becomes indoctrination when the educator tries to influence a specific action as an extension of his will, or perhaps when he blindly helps a learner blindly follow the dictates of an unexamined set of cultural assumptions about who he is and the nature of his relationships (Mezirow 1981, p. 20).

In regard to the threshold between trans ormative learning and therapy Mezirow comments:

> Many of the contributors to this book (the 1990 anthology) have noted the threat to psychological security that transformative learning poses: the challenge to comfortably established beliefs and values - including those that may be central to self-concept - and the changes in long-established and cherished relationships (Mezirow 1990, p. 359).

Perhaps for this reason, Mezirow included in his 1990 anthology an article entitled "The Therapeutic Learning Program" by psychoanalyst, Roger Gould. Gould acknowledged a keen interest in Mezirow's writing in the area of transformative and emancipatory learning over a period of ten years. He saw growth and change as concomitant with adult life but pointed to the possibility of harm to the individual in challenging deeply held attitudes and assumptions in an emotionally charged atmosphere. Gould takes the view, however, that although inculturated assumptions and value systems may for the adult individual be the source of comfort and security, such security may just as well be an illusion which is ultimately counter-productive. Gould developed a learning model to bridge the two and he emphasised the fact that without at least some level of tension associated with learning, very little if any new learning was likely to take place. All adult learning situations are at least implicitly based upon acceptance of the basic premise that adults will decide for themselves what they learn and what they are interested in learning - they are in this sense self-motivated and self-directed.

A number of commentators, whilst accepting Mezirow's overall position that adults often do experience learning situations which result in transformations of personal assumptions and value systems nevertheless have reservations about transformative learning as an overarching theory of learning. These critiques and reservations need now to be considered.

CRITIQUES AND QUALIFICATIONS OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

Writers such as Brookfield, Griffin and Boud and Walker, whilst being well aware of Mezirow's research and subsequent theoretical writing have not on the whole adopted his terminology. In some respects this is understandable. Transformative learning is very much

a Mezirow concept and has been so for twenty years. Brookfield (1991) warned against what he calls the practice of "intellectual pillage".

> The educational success of an idea - that is, the extent to which it guides theory and practice within a particular field - often rests upon its chameleon like character. The greater its conceptual malleability, the wider its interpretive latitude, the more chances an idea stands of being claimed by ideologically diverse groups to be their standard bearer (Brookfield 1991, p. 1).

In an article entitled "Uncovering Assumptions: The Key to Reflective Practice" Brookfield (1992) makes no reference to Mezirow, nor does he use any of Mezirow's customary terminology, yet it is difficult to avoid the impression that his article owes much to Mezirow's thinking and he may well be taking his own advice about "intellectual pillage". Boud and Walker (1985, 1990, 1993) who have published widely in the area of critical reflection and experiential learning deal with "assumptions and world views" which become "barriers to learning" - which require the learner "to re-visit past experiences and examine them from their present, more powerful perspective" (Boud and Walker 1993, p. 82). They too, however, avoid the actual use of Mezirow's terminology.

Other critics, notably Griffin (1988), have expressed scepticism about what they see as Mezirow's entering too readily into theoretical speculation about adult learning theory, based upon empirical research undertaken ten or more years earlier. Griffin maintains

> The derivation of principles of professional practice such as perspective transformation or critical thinking from critical social theory should be treated with caution. In the haste to create a distinctive body of adult education knowledge we should beware the temptation to take from sources which are too radical to assimilate to professional practice without distortion (Griffin 1988, p. 179).

The lack of further empirical research to support Mezirow's theoretical work after his initial study of women returning to full-time study in 1975-6 is an aspect of Mezirow's work in which he is vulnerable and Taylor's comments on this matter have already been cited in Chapter 1 (p. 12). There have been a number of other criticisms which need to be dealt with and these are now considered briefly.

Transformative learning and normative psychological development

A specific criticism of Mezirow's work in the area of transformative learning is that he is simply using new terminology to describe personal and human development which is characteristic of all adults as they grow older, more mature and presumably wiser, about their life experience. The work of the developmental psychologists in this area has been described earlier in this chapter. Mezirow has been aware of the criticism and he devotes a substantial chapter of *"Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning"* (1991a) to a consideration of perspective transformation in the context of adult development:

> Transformation can lead developmentally toward a more inclusive, differentiated, permeable and integrated perspective and, insofar as it is possible, we all naturally move toward such an orientation. This is what development means in adulthood. It should be clear that a strong case can be made for calling perspective transformation the central process of adult development (Mezirow: 1991a, p. 155).

Tennant (1993) takes Mezirow to task on this assertion. He asks whether Mezirow is merely giving new names to processes already well understood. He questions whether Mezirow has distinguished sufficiently between a significant and extraordinary shift in world view and the normal adult experience of personal change in reaction to changed personal circumstances.

> Mezirow does not sufficiently explore the social origins of the life course, which leads him to consider examples of what I would call normative psychological development as instances of perspective transformation ... he does not explicitly address the distinction between normative and fundamentally transformative change in relation to adult development (Tennant 1993a, p. 34).

Tennant's comment expresses his reservations about Mezirow's extension of emancipatory learning to include instrumental learning as well. It is worth noting, however, that as early as 1981 Mezirow had chosen to describe perspective transformation as the central process of psychological development:

> Perspective transformation also appears to best account for the process of transition between stages of adult psychological development in major life-span theories. A heightened sense of critical reflectivity is crucial to

> Erikson's 'identity crisis' of late adolescence and to 'integrity' in adulthood. It is probably the factor in Lawrence Kohlberg's adult stage of principled morality which separates this stage from those that precede it (Mezirow 1981, p. 13).

It is difficult to accept such cursory treatment as dealing adequately with the issue and in his response to Tennant Mezirow agrees to differ (Mezirow 1994). He believes, however, that "there is no apparent reason to contend that transformations in meaning schemes are more inherent in normative psychological development than in perspective transformation as Tennant asserts" (Mezirow 1994, p. 228) - and he maintains his position that "perspective transformation is the engine of adult development". This issue is considered further in Chapter 4.

Transformative learning - an individual or a social process?

Another area of controversy found in the literature relevant to transformative learning is the question of whether the process of transformative learning is one which primarily concerns the individual, or whether it has also an essentially social orientation. Mezirow often writes as if particular areas of transformative learning were unique to the individual, although as already indicated above, discourse and dialogue are always for him intrinsic to the process. This is at least partly because of Mezirow's dependence on the theoretical constructs of Freire and Habermas, Freire particularly being concerned with social problems and the question of justice. From Mezirow's consistent use of such terms as conscientisation and praxis there is an understandable expectation that social transformation should be an essential part of the concept. It should be remembered too that Mezirow's initial research was into a significant aspect of the movement involving the status of women in society emerging at the time, and he himself has seen transformation as having relevance for other social issues.

> Perspective transformation can be personal, or group or collective as in the civil rights, Vietnam protest and women's movements. . . . one can come to understand how an old way of seeing, understanding or feeling has been dependency-producing or otherwise unsatisfactory without being able to act upon this insight because action is too threatening (1988, p. 237).

Several writers have criticised Mezirow for not prescribing collective social action as the most significant outcome of transformation theory (Collard and Law 1989; Hart 1990; Clark and Wilson 1991; Newman 1993). The basis of this criticism is that Mezirow has drawn so many of his ideas from critical theory but has failed to follow this through with a promotion of radical action. Collard and Law take Mezirow to task because of "his failure to address adequately ... the radical needs embodied in popular struggles denies perspective transformation the power of an emancipatory theory" (Collard and Law 1989, p. 106).

Tennant on the other hand sees it as ironic that the main criticism of Mezirow's theoretical work is that it places too much emphasis on the individual and overlooks the social dimension of adult transformation and points out that

> his theory is directed at the intersection of the individual and the social. His concern is with the social within the individual, especially its capacity to generate dysfunctional meaning perspectives which distort or limit our understanding of experience (Tennant 1993, p. 36).

Although Mezirow makes reference to attitudes to the Vietnam war and other movements in collective consciousness in recent decades (Mezirow 1988, p. 237), to have moved in this direction without further substantial empirical research would seem to be to lay himself open to extended challenge.

CONCLUSION

This second chapter has been devoted to a review of the relevant literature in the field of learning, adult learning and transformative learning in order to fit the present research into a comprehensive theoretical framework. It has considered especially the meaning and development of the concepts of perspective transformation and transformative learning, terms which have been used by Mezirow and others working in this field since 1978. Mezirow has continued to base much of his conceptual work on the theoretical constructs of Freire and Habermas and this relationship has been considered in some detail.

The meaning of a number of Mezirow's concepts has been addressed, most notably his three domains of learning, the disorienting dilemma, assumptions, value systems and beliefs, meaning perspectives, meaning schemes and perspective transformation. These concepts have been considered against a background of current theory in relation to experiential learning and critical reflection upon experience. It has been noted that Mezirow has refined and developed his attitude to these concepts over a period of two decades, often in response to criticism but without further empirical research. This has at times led to some clouding on his part of the issues, especially in regard to the meaning of "transformative learning" and its relation to the instrumental, communicative and emancipatory domains of adult learning. An analysis of the transformative process has been made and a necessarily brief description of some of the key terms such as meaning perspectives and meaning schemes, and procedures employed in facilitation has been undertaken. Some account has been given of recent theoretical studies and research in relation to the imaginative use of autobiography in the personal transformation of adults. Reference has been made to the ethical considerations which inevitably arise from consideration of processes involving significant shifts in life-views and value systems for individuals.

Chapter 2 has also considered the more significant criticisms of Mezirow's theories as they have developed, most notably the view that far from being new theories of adult learning, perspective transformation and transformative learning are merely different ways of looking at relatively normal psychological development. Reference has been made to the significant role of the emotions and the imagination in regard to transformative learning experiences and the problems arising from an over-concentration upon transformative learning as a predominantly rational process.

An area of major significance related to transformative learning which has been considered is its role in questioning and transforming economic, cultural and political assumptions in times of significant social and political change. A number of Mezirow's critics, whilst accepting the significance and general thrust of his work seem to want it to be devoted almost exclusively to such collective social, economic and political issues - the transformation of inculturated perspectives of society as a whole. Reference has been made

to the more significant of these c iticisms and to Mezirow's general position that all societal transformation must begin vith transformation of the individual. The thesis turns now to the question of how the issues raised in these first two chapters have been investigated for the purposes of answering the research questions.