TOWARD AN EMBODIED CONCEPTION OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

by

CHRISTINE SCHLATTNER

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Department of Educational Studies

The University of British Columbia
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to discover ways in which transformative learning is embodied. Transformative learning, as described by Mezirow (1991) in *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*, is conceived as primarily a cognitive activity centred on critical thinking and rational discourse. I did the research for this study through an exploration of my own shifting sense of self in learning how to fight as a result of participating in a Model Mugging self defence course. I engaged in a reflexive process of remembering my experience and the meaning I gave to the events which took place, paying particular attention to the inter-relation between emotion, thought, kinetic and somatic elements. These reflections were supported by literature in psychology, education, the healing arts, and physiology. The research suggests that meaning perspectives are embodied and that transformation of these sets of beliefs, particularly those regarding sense of self, involves conscious thought, emotional engagement, and physiological and somatic changes. This study has significance for an emerging theoretical construction of transformative learning and for adult educators who facilitate potentially transformative activities.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In reading Jack Mezirow's *Transformative dimensions of adult learning* (1991) I was struck at how closely the subject matter resembled my own recent experiences. Mezirow describes what he calls perspective transformation, a fundamental shift in meaning of self, situations and events, that can sometimes occur in adulthood. His description of the phases which characterize perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991, p. 168-169) resonated with all I had experienced. I had been through a disorienting crisis; went through a process of self-examination accompanied by intense feelings; questioned many of my previously unconscious assumptions; recognized that others had been through similar process; explored new roles; planned new action; acquired skills and knowledge to implement these plans; tried the new roles; built self-confidence in my new sense of self; and reconciled my life with my new perspective. The change to my sense of self and the meaning it made in my life were profound, and in Mezirow I found the theoretical description of this change. However, the more fully I explored my interest in transformative learning, the more I began to experience a lack in Mezirow's theoretical conceptualization. Something didn't feel right.

At the time of reading Mezirow, I was taking a unique self defence program called Model Mugging. In this course I made deep changes in my physiological, emotional, and cognitive patterns. In two short weekends I felt what it was like to be powerful; to commit to myself; to commit to my chosen action; to be so completely in the present that neither the past nor the future mattered; to feel my true feelings of rage and then to let them go. And through

that experience I began to see myself as having the potential to make a significant contribution; to my own life, the lives of others and the earth.

Mezirow identifies transformative learning and sheds light on a common, but little-understood phenomenon. He does this mainly through focusing on the important aspect of critical thinking. He charts the intellectual process of examining the premises of one's beliefs and changing them. While he does allow that physiology, intuition and emotion are part of learning, Mezirow, pays little attention to the significance of these, and the connections they have to each other during transformative learning.

The changes I made were cognitive and also deeply emotional. I made changes to the use of my body and the way I feel as an embodied being; and this in turn changed my sense of self. It seemed to me that the behavioural changes I was making were automatically shifting my perspective, often without direct reference to the intellectual premise of my beliefs. Perhaps it is because learning to fight is such an intensely physical and emotional experience that this was the case. However, maybe also, my experience was just a very dramatic example of how transformative learning is more physical and emotional than Mezirow recognizes in his descriptions. In either case, it seemed to me that while reflection and rationality were important to transformative learning, the body and emotions also play an important part in forming and transforming sense of self.

This thesis seeks to build upon Mezirow's conception of transformative learning by building narratives about my own transformative learning experience, paying particular attention to the embodiment of learning and its effect on my sense of self.

Sense of Self

Sense of self is a good conceptual place from which to explore learning that involves body, thoughts and emotion. The development of sense of self proceeds hand in hand with knowledge of the world; the two informing each other. Sense of self is socially constructed and has an impact on how we interpret our relationship to others' actions and words, and our social context. This determines our attitudes, including our attitudes to learning and our willingness to learn.

Sense of self is embodied through experience. We come to define our selves through experience, from the time we can sense (Goleman, 1985, p. 96). We see our selves reflected back in our families, communities and political and cultural products. We feel the impact on our bodies of social rules, the actions of others, and our own actions. And we hear messages about who we are expected to be. These reflections, sensations and feelings are absorbed into our sense of self. Our construction of self is a combination of how we sense ourselves in our bodies, who we think ourselves to be, and how we feel emotionally.

Some of what may be called sense of self can be known and consciously transformed. But transformation also occurs without critical reflection, and may never be revealed to us, or may become apparent only later on. Construction of self affects what we believe in general, and therefore what we can transform. While Mezirow doesn't claim that sense of self is tied in with all other belief systems, he does credit transformation in this realm as the most important. "The most significant learning involves critical premise reflection of premises about oneself" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 224). However, Goleman (1985), from whom Mezirow borrows his psychological understanding, calls the self the "most basic grouping of schemas" (p. 96). Since construction of self is so important to how we

perceive everything and how we approach the opportunity to change our perception, it is a key component of transformative learning.

Women's Socialization

Women's sense of self, including my own, is formed in the context of a patriarchal culture. The social meaning given to male sexuality is superiority and authority over women and a hidden sexual contract which permits men open access to women's bodies (Tomm, 1991). Patriarchy defines the female form as inferior and cursed (Currie and Raoul, 1992). Learning how to fight against attempted rape helped me transform some of the effects of these cultural messages on my sense of self, including sense of self worth and personal power, the ability to keep myself safe, and my relationship with men and other women. In the process I became more aware of the ways in which I am shaped by culture. Violence against women is a particular manifestation of patriarchy which insidiously affects all women. My own experience of learning to defend myself against violence had an unexpected and far-reaching impact on my sense of self.

In spite of huge gains for women in the last 25 years, violence against women continues to be epidemic, with 60 per cent of women reporting having experienced some form of sexual assault (Report on the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1994). Some have referred to rape as a method of "social control" of women (Riger and Gordon, 1981; Bart and O'Brien, 1985). Since most rapes go unreported, statistics vary according to the reporting agency, but between one in ten and one in three women will be raped some time in her life. Women are much more likely than men to be the victims of incest, child sexual abuse, date rape, marital rape, battering and stranger rape (Koss, 1990). Figures on the actual prevalence of these crimes are unavailable due mostly to

under-reporting and discrepancies in research techniques and terms of reference (Frost, 1991).

What will change this culture of violence, and where do we begin? The women's movement has done an important job in public education about violence against women. Activists have worked hard in the public arena to try to expose the violence and oppose it. The extent of harassment, rape, child sex abuse and wife battering have been documented and publicly denounced. The police and courts have been pressured to take these crimes more seriously. Women have been encouraged and supported to report crimes against them as the spectre of shame of being a victim begins to fade. Even the label 'victim' has transformed into 'survivor' reflecting the active role women seek to take. Prisons test new methods for treatment of offenders. This significant movement toward the goal of ending violence against women contributes in an important and enduring way to shaping a culture that is intolerant of violence. It has the effect of changing the attitudes of individual men and women about their own actions and the actions of others. Without the courage of front-line workers who have taken on these important tasks, we might not now be considering what women themselves can do to prevent violence being done to them.

Meanwhile, the psychological effects of these crimes on their victims is well-documented and devastating (see Frost, 1990 for a review of the literature). Even women who have not directly suffered violence suffer the impact the everyday threat of violence holds (Gordon and Riger, 1989). Most women know someone who has been raped, if they have not been raped themselves. Many women have an overt fear of attack, or live with a subterranean anxiety about what is possible. In movies, books and on television rape is glamourized as unbridled passion and sanitized as an unfortunate, but ultimate penance we pay for being female. Newspapers report grizzly details of rape terrifying an entire

city of women until a rapist is caught, only to be supplanted by a new one. As a result, many women feel less in control of our lives and less free. Women who have been raped or battered suffer the psychological consequences of that loss of power, often for years.

In spite of the overwhelming effect that violence has in the life of every woman in this society, the message our culture promotes is that women should look outside of themselves to ensure their own personal safety. Options which are commonly presented to us include carrying an alarm, going out only when accompanied, preferably by a male, dressing down, locking doors and checking behind the seat when we get into our cars. One common response women have to the fear of violence is to restrict their freedom of movement (Gordon and Riger, 1989). I have heard law enforcement officers telling women they should not fight back because it will enrage the attacker, and if she is knocked down she has no hope. In addition, substantial evidence suggests that tendencies to attribute some blame to rape victims exists in a wide diversity of the population (Frost, 1991). All these indicate an underlying cultural belief that women are vulnerable to violence, are not capable of protecting themselves and require help, both from others and from mechanical aids. All of this suggests a strong collective meaning perspective to accept rape as a horrible, but inevitable fact.

And while violence against women is a social problem requiring massive action at all levels, the stark reality is that if a woman wishes to ensure her own safety today, she must take responsibility for it. We are taught that men are stronger than us and that rape is statistically a great possibility, but we are given few options besides avoidance, in how to prevent it. Barriers to women keeping themselves safe are established in childhood and reinforced in adulthood. Most women are not psychologically prepared to defend themselves against violence. In Susan Brownmiller's words, "...women are trained to be rape victims"

(Brownmiller, 1975, p. 309). Brownmiller points out that the main advantage men have in an assault is psychological. Perhaps today's children are taught different rules. Of my generation, and those before me, few parents taught their little girls the meaning of personal boundaries; that it is okay to defend themselves; or that they don't always have to be nice. Most of us were not allowed to say no or to express anger when our boundaries are crossed. Most women were not encouraged to use our bodies vigorously. Social convention tells us what is ladylike and feminine, and fighting back in a time of need goes against this social training. Early on, women are taught how important it is to be liked, to treat a man with deference, to take care of others' feelings, and the importance of nurturing above all else. These deeply ingrained attitudes may over-ride in a moment requiring emergency action where fierceness, aggressiveness, and the willingness to hurt another are required to keep a woman safe. The ability to be fierce and aggressive is in every woman. If we were to ask a mother if she would hurt someone to protect her child, her answer would likely be an emphatic 'yes'. But ask that same woman if she would do the hurt someone who attacks her, one will often encounter hesitation and doubt.

Women are just learning that we are not natural victims and that if we have been trained to be rape victims, we can be trained to be our own protectors. Psychological state of mind is an important factor of whether a woman who is attacked is raped or not. Bart and O'Brien (1985) found that those women who were focused on fear of death or mutilation were more likely to be raped than those who were angry about the attack and were focused on not being raped. While stressing that women's personalities do not cause rape, Bart and O'Brien show that the women who avoided rape were more likely to fight back in a number of different ways than those who did not. Women must "change their views on femininity and aggression and see themselves as capable of defending

against attack, rather than as creatures who must be, even in dangerous situations, understanding, submissive, and non-aggressive" (Klemmack and Klemmack, 1976).

Studies of what works against attempted rape indicate that aggressive physical and verbal resistance is the most effective defence (Frost, 1991). However simply teaching women physical skills is not enough. In a review of the literature, Frost found studies which indicate that some self-defence classes can do more harm than good by fostering in the students a reluctance to inflict injury. "It appears that simply teaching physical self-defense techniques is insufficient to counter the teachings of socialization" (Frost, 1991, p. 31). What is necessary is an approach which recognizes the psychological barriers women face, and which helps women transcend these barriers, thereby transforming sense of self. In my experience of learning to fight, and the self concept that shifted as a result, I became aware that I was transgressing not only personal limitations, but that these were inextricably linked to being brought up female in this culture.

Griffiths (1995), has devised a schema of "shared experience" presenting a hierarchy of distinction between women's experience and men's. This schema demonstrates the need for the consideration of gender in social research.

> 1) there may indeed be natural sex differences other than those of the body;
>
> 2) even if there are not, the metaphorical or social or psycholinguistic milieu in which children develop means that bodily sex differences are symbolized into psychosocial ones;
>
> 3) even if this were not the case, society and individuals within it habitually treat the two sexes differently and welcome or exclude girls and boys, men and women, into different social circles;
>
> 4) even if individuals, or groups of individuals, try to overcome the norms of the society in which they find themselves, they have to use a

language which is unequal with regard to the two sexes, structurally and lexically;

5) all the above is too simple if it is taken as referring to all social groups — the manifestations of symbolism, societal inclusions and exclusions, and language, are all different for different social classes and 'races'. (p. 82)

In reflecting on my own experience, I remember that I am a woman, subject to the rules of biology and culture. Through this exploration of my own experience, I in no way intend to imply a generalization of all women's experience. Each woman's experience is unique, within the context of being female in our society. I do not speak for women but my experience is that of a woman, and as such may have significance for the lives of other women.

Purpose and Problem

The purpose of this study is to discover ways in which transformative learning is embodied. I did this through an exploration of my shifting sense of self in learning how to fight as a result of participating in a Model Mugging self defence course. It will focus on the role of the body, somatic experience, the social construction of the body, the relationship between body, emotion and thought. This study is meant to contribute to expanding the conception of transformative learning, as it currently exists in the adult education literature, in order to help educators understand it more holistically.

Transformative learning is perhaps one of the most important themes in adult education today. There is a huge demand for knowledge on how to change ourselves, those things in our sphere of influence, and adapt to change, as demonstrated by a plethora of books, articles, and courses on the subject. This drive to change, or perhaps cope with change, is observable as a revolution in the literature and education of popular psychology, citizen action, and self-help.

People seem to want a higher degree of control over their lives. Increasingly this means learning not only new skills in instrumental manipulation or communication, but also learning new, more empowering ways to conceptualize oneself, the nature of knowing, social relations and other constructs.

Transformative learning itself is also crucial in a world of growing uncertainty and change. It is perhaps a cliché to say that in our rapidly changing world, each one of us must be prepared to change. Transformative learning is the essential factor for those who seek to embrace the break-down of traditional authority, choose their own destinies, help shape the destiny of our society, and give positively of themselves to others. The breakdown of tradition, technological advancement, the blurring of social roles, and the high degree of mobility are among the characteristics of a post-modern age in which adults may be confronted with expectations or assumptions which conflict with long-held beliefs. "Rather than merely adapting to changing circumstances by more diligently applying old ways of knowing, they discover a need to acquire new perspectives in order to gain a more complete understanding of changed events and a higher degree of control over their lives" (Mezirow, 1991, p.3). Transformative learning is not simply then a process of learning new skills to cope with changing circumstances, but a change in the conceptual filters which give shape and meaning to experiences, most importantly, those about our selves.

But as popular as the concept of transformative learning is, and as necessary as the phenomenon may be, it is also highly challenging for most people. Change may be desirable, but it can also be frightening. There is a need for more research which can describe the experience of change, to demystify and make it less threatening. Adult educators involved in transformative learning

need to have a more complete understanding of the phenomenon so they can become more comfortable with the often difficult process.

Mezirow's *Transformative dimensions of adult learning* explores an important theme for the theory and practice of adult education: learning which transforms one's understanding of self and the world. He focuses his conception of transformative learning on cognitive re-evaluation and meaning negotiation, based on critical reflection and rational discourse, and he gives only a small amount of recognition to the importance of emotion, intuition or physiology. Mezirow does not explore fully how these might impact learning.

From my own experience and through listening to the experiences of others, I have come to recognize a gap between written conceptions of transformative learning, and transformative practices. It is into this gap that I wish to shed some light. My goal is to tell the story of my transformation as I embodied it.

Methodology

After taking the Model Mugging course I trained to be an instructor and have been team-teaching with my partner for four years. In that time we have led around 600 women through the 25-hour 'Intensive' course I describe in this study. We also teach short workshops and have taught a couple of thousand women some basic skills in these courses. In addition, we speak to larger groups about personal safety and self defence.

I am motivated by my work in this field to do this research. I hope to deepen my understanding of the process in order to assist other women. I believe that by delving into my own experience I may come to better empathize with the experience of others. In feminist research, in particular, the intersubjectivity of self-knowing women studying others relies on a dialectical relationship.

> Women studying women reveals the complex way in which women as objects of knowledge reflect back upon women as subjects of knowledge. Knowledge of the other and knowledge of the self are mutually informing, because self and other share a common condition of being women. (Westkott, 1990, p. 61)

In a similar vein, it is through my experience in this work that I have come to see a need for a better understanding of how we engage in transformative learning. For praxis to be possible, not only must theory illuminate the lived experience of progressive social groups; it must also be illuminated by their struggles (Lather, 1991, p. 55).

In this research I take a phenomenological approach. I attempt to explain my own learning as I experienced it; and my changing sense of self as I embodied it. This approach has two benefits for the current project. First, it provides a framework which allows me to get inside my experience, to describe it as I remember it, and get a sense of my own interpretation of a learning event. Second, because phenomenology values lived experience, it allows me to explore the embodiment of my learning.

Significance

The conception of transformative learning was immediately attractive to me as much of my learning of the last decade has focused on self knowledge and discovering practices of caring for myself. I wanted to know more about the shifts in my self-perception and how and why they had occured.

Transformative learning is of growing interest, but the amount of scholarly research in the field is scant. Understanding what transformative learning is and how to facilitate it is of prime importance to adult educators who want their participation in learners' lives to contribute to personal and social

growth. Mezirow argues that transformative learning is the primary interest of adult education. With such an important role to play in the lives of adults, transformative learning must be better understood. It is hoped that this study will help in some small way to shed some light on what is a complex learning process. As such, this research will be primarily of interest to facilitators of adult learning, who are concerned with transformative learning, and will be of particular interest to those working with women.

This study will add to the growing understanding of what transformative learning is, and how it takes place. It will expand and enrich the current conception put forth by Mezirow by including the role of the body and emotions. This study will shift the view of transformative learning from one of a process of mentation to one of a lived and embodied experience. It makes the concept of learning more accessible by taking it from the realm of "higher thinking" to one of "everyday being in the world". As such, it will provide adult educators with a broader base of understanding from which to facilitate the learning of others, and themselves.

Summary

In the pages which follow in chapter two, I provide a review of Mezirow's conception of transformative learning. Also included in this literature review are examples from the field of adult education which offer alternative perspectives of transformative learning. Boyd and Meyers (1984), and Brookfield (1994) provide insight into the phenomenon which support an embodied conception of transformative learning. Chapter three outlines the method I employ in building narratives of my own experience. Chapter four is a brief background of the Model Mugging program. It is offered to situate the reader in the narratives to follow. Chapter five contains six narratives which each explore

a different aspect of my transformation in the Model Mugging course. Finally in chapter six I draw conclusions and provide a summary of the thesis.

Chapter 2

TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

Jack Mezirow's (1991) *The transformative dimensions of adult learning* is recognized as an important contribution to adult learning and specifically, transformative learning (Clark and Wilson, 1991; Paprock, 1992). It provides a theoretical outline of the conception of transformative learning to educators who often find themselves facilitating transitions in the lives of others. Mezirow pulls together sources from a variety of disciplines outside adult education to synthesize a conception of how adults negotiate difficult life transitions, and in doing so, change themselves. His model treats learning as shaped by prior knowledge and positions adults as the agents of change through the questioning and reshaping of past interpretations to give new meaning. This makes the conception of transformative learning a powerful model for personal and social change. An understanding of what transformative learning is and how it is experienced can have profound meaning for educators and learners. Mezirow's work takes an important step toward defining this important conception.

Mezirow is the leader in adult education on the subject of transformative learning, and as such this thesis builds on his ideas. Since the 1970s he has written numerous articles and books (Mezirow 1978, 1981, 1985, 1989, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1996), refining his central thesis that critical reflection is central to adult learning, and suggesting transformation as a major goal of adult education (Mezirow, 1989, p. 169). His work on the subject is perhaps the most comprehensive in the field of adult education and forms the basis for much comparison and critique. Mezirow's conceptualizations have also been challenged (Collard and Law, 1989; Clark and Wilson, 1991; Hart, 1990; Tennant, 1993). A review of these debates is beyond the scope of this paper, however some

of their individual points will be touched upon as they relate to the problem at hand.

This criticism is perhaps an indication of how well Mezirow's efforts are recognized and respected in adult education. "He provides a theory which is complex and expansive in its attempt to situate multiple levels of learning within an integrated system of knowledge" (Clark and Wilson, 1991, p. 75). Mezirow's work is unique in the wide scope of resources it draws upon, and its attempt to be a comprehensive learning theory. He goes far afield of adult education in *Transformative dimensions of adult learning,* a book aimed specifically at adult educators and researchers. "The way Mezirow weaves the ideas of other authors into a new learning theory makes a very significant contribution to our field" (Paprock, 1992, p. 196). Drawing on cognitive psychology, critical theory, and the philosophies of Habermas, Popper, Cell and Bateson, Mezirow weaves a multi-disciplinary approach to learning.

Mezirow (1996) outlines the learning paradigms which have contributed to the formation of, what he calls, 'Transformation Theory'. These include the objectivist paradigm, exemplified by the Western rational tradition; and the interpretist paradigm, exemplified by the cognitive revolution. "The Transformation Theory of adult learning is based upon an emancipatory paradigm, and constitutes a dialectical synthesis of objectivist and interpretive paradigms" (Mezirow, 1996, p. 158). Throughout the development of his theory, or conception, Mezirow has drawn from Habermas.

> Habermas transcends both the rational tradition and the cognitive revolution by grounding understanding and learning in the very structure of human communication. (Mezirow, 1996, p. 164)

Mezirow's conception of transformative learning recognizes the social construction of meaning while focusing on validity-testing through rationality to change it.

Mezirow's constructivist view of learning shows that how adults cope with transitions depends on the meanings they make from them. Mezirow positions learning, not as fact accumulation and integration, but as understanding the significance of events. "Learning always involves making a new experience explicit and schematizing, appropriating, and acting upon it" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 11). Most learning involves attributing old meaning to a new experience. Transformative learning is the reinterpretation of the meaning of one's experience from a new set of expectations. Because of its emphasis on the making of meaning, the conception of transformative learning can be called constructivist. "The theory's assumptions are constructivist, an orientation which holds that the way learners interpret and reinterpret their sense experience is, central to making meaning and hence learning" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 222). Constructivism is certainly not a new idea, however within adult education it has been under-developed (Candy, 1989). The central role of the construction of meaning in the learning process is a dimension missing from major adult learning theories (Mezirow, 1989, p. 170).

Making Meaning

Mezirow's conception of transformative learning is based on an understanding of learning as a process of meaning-making, or interpretation. Each new event is experienced through a set of learned frames of reference, paradigms, or as Mezirow refers to them, meaning perspectives and meaning schemes. Meaning schemes and meaning perspectives are frames of reference into which we normally attempt to fit all experiences. With each new experience

comes an attempt to create meaning through our meaning schemes and perspectives. The meaning we construct from the experience determines the action we will take. Meaning perspectives are the broad sets of predispositions resulting from psychocultural assumptions which determine the horizons of our expectations (Mezirow, 1994, p. 223). Meaning schemes are specific manifestations of meaning perspectives. They are the constellation of concept, belief, judgment and feeling which shape a particular interpretation (p. 223). Meaning schemes are the supports and references for the meaning perspective to which they belong. Meaning schemes and perspectives order our experience and provide the organizing principles around which we make meaning of events and objects. Meaning making is the process of interpreting, giving coherence and making sense. Meaning is the internal construction of reality, which, in turn, shapes how we organize external reality.

Mezirow identifies three types of meaning perspectives: psychological; socio-linguistic; and epistemic. Learning may straddle two or more of these meaning perspectives and Mezirow stresses that they are not discrete, but rather represent a further understanding of the realms of meaning-making we may nurture or transform.

> They serve as one of three sets of codes significantly shaping sensation and delimiting perception, feelings, and cognition: sociolinguistic codes (e.g., social norms, ideologies, language games, theories), psychological codes (e.g., personality traits, repressed parental prohibitions which continue to block ways of feeling and acting), and epistemic codes (e.g., learning styles, sensory learning preferences, focus on wholes or parts, or on the concrete vs the abstract). (Mezirow, 1994, p. 223)

These perceptual constructs are accumulated from infancy on and shape each new learning experience. "Approved ways of seeing and understanding, shaped by our language, culture, and personal experience, collaborate to set limits to our future learning" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 1). Meaning schemes and perspectives set these limits by creating order from experience in one way, rather than in another. The limits are imposed, not by the limits of experience, but by delimiting the meaning made of experience. Meaning schemes and perspectives allow us to code experience on the basis of previously acquired assumptions, sometimes faulty, and so may limit our awareness of alternate explanations. Goleman, (1985) whose psychological frameworks inform Mezirow to an important extent, documents how lacunas in awareness are common to experience and an integral part of meaning schemes. "We allow our meaning system to diminish our awareness of how things really are in order to avoid anxiety, creating a zone of blocked attention and self-deception" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 5). The current meaning we give to a reality will shape our subsequent experience. But this meaning can be transformed through learning.

Mezirow demonstrates how learning occurs in one of four ways: within existing meaning schemes, through new meaning schemes; through a transformation of meaning schemes; and through a transformation of meaning perspectives. Most learning occurs within existing meaning schemes, through their extension and differentiation. Each experience is interpreted through an existing meaning scheme, re-enforcing what is already interpreted to be true. This form of learning is the most comfortable since it doesn't challenge established belief structures. In another type of learning, new meaning schemes are created which are compatible with existing meaning perspectives. The original meaning perspective is reinforced and extended by the introduction of new meaning schemes that can resolve inconsistencies. This is like adding a new

reference to support one's existing interpretation. The third type of learning is the most common type of transformative learning and can be the forerunner of perspective transformation. Transformation of meaning schemes may allow one to begin to accumulate the experiences necessary to transform meaning perspectives. Mezirow calls the fourth type of learning perspective transformation. Perspective transformation refers to the transformation of the meaning of significant sets of beliefs and assumptions and is synonymous with transformative learning.

Perspective Transformation

Mezirow cites Freire as an illustration of perspective transformation for social action (1978, p. 102). In the early stages of formulating the conception of transformative learning, Mezirow drew parallels between Paulo Freire's conscientization and transformative learning. "The resulting transformation in perspective or personal paradigm is what Freire refers to as 'conscientization' and Habermas as emancipatory action" (1981, p. 7). However, Mezirow positions his work as a departure from Freire. He contrasts transformative learning with conscientization, by calling the former a learning theory and the latter an educational philosophy aimed at effecting social change. Thus, while Freire's work is most often associated with learning for collective action, Mezirow cites transformative learning as an idealized model which may be applied in a variety of settings (1994, p. 231). Mezirow thus distinguishes between social theory and learning theory (1991, p. 190), but maintains a connection between the two.

> I have tried to show how the internal dynamics of adult learning operate within the cultural context, how critical reflection, discourse and action can change culturally assimilated assumptions and premises which limit

> and distort understanding and give learners greater control over their lives. (Mezirow, 1991, p. 190)

While Freire's work can be taken as more overtly political, he and Mezirow share a belief in transformation through personal and collective reflection and action. Mezirow diverges from Freire in attempting to provide a model of how these take place, regardless of the learning goal.

The conception of perspective transformation attempts to explain the process often undergone by adults when negotiating difficult life transitions, or when confronted with an experience which does not 'fit' their present conceptual framework. "Specifically, it seeks to explain the way adult learning is structured and to determine by what processes the frames of reference through which we view and interpret our experience (meaning perspectives) are changed or transformed" (1991, p. xiii). Mezirow takes a developmental view of adult learning which defines transformation in positive terms. In successfully negotiating a shift, the learner will have gone through a process of transforming the way she perceives the world and herself, and will have attained a higher level of understanding.

> Perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and, finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings. (Mezirow, 1992, p. 167)

Emancipatory or transformative learning, is the examination of our own assumptions to achieve freedom from the forces that limit our options and control over our lives.

The potential for perspective transformation exists when an experience fails to fit into existing sets of beliefs and assumptions. In most circumstances when this happens the learner will dampen her awareness of the significance of the anomaly. In transformative learning, instead of ignoring the inconsistency, the learner reviews her assumptions and moves to reinterpret the meaning of her experience from a new set of expectations. Mezirow has attempted to shape a model of change by suggesting a series of stages the learner negotiates in order to integrate the new meaning.

Mezirow's (1978) research of women re-entering college, delineated the stages of perspective transformation. He used a hermeneutic approach to understand patterns of commonality in the process of perspective change. Through this research it became apparent to Mezirow that negotiating the existential challenges of adulthood caused a succession of transformations of meaning perspective. Perspective transformation may occur as a sudden insight into cultural and psychological assumptions which have shaped one's life, or as a series of smaller shifts about specific assumptions which culminate in having one's entire world view changed.

Transformation begins with an openness to change and is usually catalyzed by a crisis (Mezirow, 1991). This may be a situational crisis, such as the loss of a job or loved one or the onset of a serious illness; it may be a deep sense of being stuck and needing to move; it may be a growing intuitive sense that something is not quite right. In Mezirow's model, the process of perspective transformation has ten phases:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3. A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions

4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change

5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions

6. Planning of a course of action

7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans

8. Provisional trying of new roles

9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and

10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective. (Mezirow, 1991, pp. 168-9)

Critical Reflection

Much criticism has been leveled at Mezirow centered on his use/misuse of Habermas. Most of this has been on his understanding of rationality and his humanist/radical balance. While this section briefly covers the development of Mezirow's central ideas, based on his understanding of Habermas, it doesn't do justice either to this rich critical response or to Habermas' theories.

Mezirow developed his conception of transformative learning from Habermas' domains of human interest: instrumental, communicative and emancipatory action. In his early conception, Mezirow locates transformative learning in the emancipatory domain which involves an interest in self-knowledge, including the ways one's history and biography expresses itself in one's self concept. Inquiry in this domain are conducted through the critical social sciences such as psychoanalysis and the critique of ideology, making critical reflection the major means to emancipation and transformation. Later, while still stressing the importance of emancipatory action for transformative learning, Mezirow (1991) points out that most learning involves both instrumental and

communicative dimensions (p. 80). "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" (Mezirow, 1989, p.175). In this reworking of concepts, Mezirow positions the potential for transformative learning in both the instrumental or the communicative realm, but keeps critical reflection as the central method of learning (Mezirow, 1991, p. 225).

The most important element in perspective transformation is the critical reflection of our meaning perspectives' origins, nature and consequences. Critical reflectivity is the awareness of why we attach the meanings we do to reality. The objects of reflectivity are specific instances or habits of perceiving, thinking and acting. "Critical reflection of the presuppositions of these uncritically assimilated meaning schemes and perspectives can lead to individual and social transformation" (Mezirow, 1989, p. 170). In perspective transformation reflection is on the premise of deeply-held beliefs. This occurs when we are confronted with the realization that certain of our long-held beliefs no longer serve us. "Our meaning structures are transformed through reflection, defined here as attending to the grounds (justification) for one's beliefs" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 223). In other words, knowing how and why we hold certain beliefs may be the beginning of transformation. Reflection on the premise of one's beliefs to tease out the inaccuracies and distortions is the identifying trademark of transformative learning. Dramatic personal and social change becomes possible by becoming aware of the way ideologies—sexual, racial, religious, educational, occupational, political, economic and technological—have created or contributed to our dependency on reified powers (Mezirow, 1981, p. 6).

Mezirow makes a distinction between critical reflection, which applies to socio-linguistic and epistemic meaning perspectives, and critical self-reflection,

which is used for psychological meaning perspectives. Mezirow (1994) maintains that critical premise reflection on one's self holds the most significant learning potential (p. 224). Critical self-reflection is reflection on beliefs about one's self — how one conceives of one's self, one's roles, and social expectations, and, in the case of premise reflection, the grounds for those beliefs. "Emancipatory knowledge is knowledge gained through critical self-reflection, as distinct from the knowledge gained from our 'technical' interest in the objective world or our 'practical' interest in social relationships" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 87).

Mezirow's explanation of how this process of critical self-reflection occurs need further elaboration. He identified psychoanalysis as the model of inquiry best suited to critical self-reflection (1985, p. 21), but skims over how one might facilitate this aspect of transformative learning, suggesting that no facilitation is necessary.

Such reflection is thought of as occurring mainly in psychotherapy, but it is a natural form of transformative learning that often occurs in adult life, especially during major life transitions, without the intervention of either a therapist or an educator (Mezirow, 1991, p. 138). Although transformative learning may be a common and natural occurrence for adults in transition, Mezirow seems to have abandoned the project of facilitation or support. I would argue that while this kind of learning may occur without intervention, educators can greatly enhance the chances and significance of this learning. Knowing how transformative learning occurs and what kind of educational practices can enhance it, educators can play an important role in the unfolding of human and social potential.

In spite of this curious laissez-faire attitude to what Mezirow himself claims is the most significant kind of learning, he appears to revert to his original reliance on psychoanalysis to lead the learner to critical reflection to

resolve the natural fear of change. "To recover a blocked function, a learner must be assisted to understand the psychodynamics of his or her situation and to bring the presupposition impeding the needed action into critical reflection" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 140).

Mezirow admits to basing his understanding of psychological meaning perspectives on Freudian assumptions. The goal in changing one's meaning perspectives, at least in Mezirow's terms, is supposed to be freedom from authority. Yet Freudian psychoanalysis has its own history of power and meaning imposition through a system of categorizing "pathology" with its repressive functions. Foucault characterized psychiatry as representing the tyranny of reason over madness (cited in Sheridan, 1980, p. 12). Far from creating conditions for freedom, psychoanalysis is another system imposing conformity on its subjects. "...psychoanalysis may be seen as a theoretical attempt to bring sexuality back under the system of law, sovereignty, and the symbolic order" (p. 193).

Psychoanalysis, as described by Mezirow, meets his criteria for an emancipatory paradigm. Recall that Mezirow claims Transformation Theory synthesizes objectivist and interpretist paradigms, characterized by what he has called the rational tradition and the cognitive revolution. In psychoanalysis the patient explores her self-interpretations through critical reflection and discourse with an analyst, to arrive, ideally, at beliefs which are more rational.

> In the psychoanalytic procedure, the analyst enters into dialogue with the patient whereby fragmentary information about the patient's life is drawn out. The analyst then reconstructs these fragments and re-presents them to the patient. (Pietrykowski, 1996, p. 85).

This then leads to a process of self-formation whereby "the subject must be able to relate his own history and have comprehended the inhibitions that blocked the path of self-reflection" (Habermas, 1971, p. 260).

But psychoanalysis as an educational tool is problematic. First, its practice is limited to trained psychoanalysts and is thus out of reach of most educators. Perhaps every educator should have some grounding in counseling, especially if one is interested in assisting in perspective transformation. Asking students thought-provoking questions, providing motivational support, and giving helpful feedback, are skills which therapists and good educators share. However, the specific skills of psychoanalysis require years of study and are beyond the scope of educators. Second, psychoanalysis typically takes a very long time to complete, often years, and educators typically have a much briefer relationship with students than a therapist has with a patient. Often a few well-timed phrases and the facilitation of exercises, is all an educator can afford to give a student in the process of self knowledge. Third, psychoanalysis is imbued with certain categories and goals which may ultimately be inconsistent with an emancipatory framework. As Foucault (1965) points out, "what we call psychiatric practice is a certain moral tactic contemporary with the end of the eighteenth century, preserved in the rites of asylum life, and overlaid by the myths of positivism" (p. 276).

While Mezirow has been criticized for taking a psychological rather than a social approach to transformative learning, there is in fact a gap in this crucial area of understanding. Mezirow's lack of attention to the details of either how one negotiates her way through these transitory periods, or how she might be helped along in the process makes "Transformation Theory" fall short of its stated goal of helping educators facilitate transformative learning. If learning about one's self is indeed the most significant kind of learning, then either

educators leave this kind of learning to chance, or need to know how it occurs and then how it can be facilitated.

Freire provides some insight in his "problem-posing education", where reflection is coupled with action. "Problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality ... [it] strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality" (1972, p. 68). Essentially, "people begin to single out elements of their 'background consensus' and to reflect upon them. These elements are now objects of people's consideration, and, as such, objects of action and cognition" (p. 70). While relying primarily on reflection, Freire provides a model for dialogue between "teacher" and "student" — roles which are fluid. In this educational process goals cannot be articulated before the learner has posed questions. These questions are based on direct experience and are directed toward action. It is this link with direct experience which provides a space for considering how learning is experienced.

Through an emphasis on critical premise reflection for transformative learning, Mezirow places the major impetus for change in the realm of rationality. Critical reflection and rationality go hand in hand to establish validity of truth claims. Mezirow follows a definition of reflection which he derives from Dewey: "Reflection means validity testing" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 101). In this sense, the purpose of critical reflection is to engage in rational discourse for the purpose of arriving at a consensual understanding. Reflection is thus implicitly rational: "Reflection involves a review of the way we have consciously, coherently, and purposefully applied ideas in strategizing and implementing each phase of solving a problem" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 101).

Rational Discourse

While critical self reflection is the tool the individual uses to increase self understanding, an important part of Mezirow's conception of transformative learning is based on the communication and validation of new beliefs through rational discourse. Rational discourse involves an intentional effort to set aside preconceptions and biases. "This form of validity testing is a learning activity designed to arrive at a most informative, thoughtful, objective, and reflective judgment" (Mezirow, 1991a, p. 189).

As Mezirow shifted from considering emancipatory learning as a separate domain with its own method of inquiry, to tying it in with communicative action, validation became an increasingly important component of his conception. Collard and Law (1989) have traced this to an attempt by Mezirow to match the development of his conception of transformative learning to Habermas' evolving thought. They point to a shift in Habermas from a philosophy of consciousness to a theory of language, and an attempt by Mezirow to alter his conception of transformative learning in accordance.

> As Habermas has developed his theory of communicative action, Mezirow has sought to assimilate these unfolding ideas into his theories of adult learning and education. Like Habermas, he, too, has shifted to a paradigm of language. (Collard and Law, 1989, p. 104)

In this paradigm, rational discourse is proposed as the central process and goal of transformative learning (Clark and Wilson, p. 76).

Instrumental learning and communicative learning each have different standards for testing the validity of truth statements, and this distinction informs Mezirow's approach to transformative learning.

> We cannot make sense of the concepts of meaning, understanding, and interpretation unless we evaluate the validity claims (justifications)

implicit in our speech acts; that what I say is intelligible, that its propositional content is true, that I am justified in saying it, and that I speak sincerely, without intent to deceive. (Mezirow, 1996, p. 164)

Validating new meaning perspectives is the central process of transformative learning. Instrumental learning is concerned with the manipulation of objects for the purpose of gaining mastery of a skill set. Truth claims are proven or disproven through "control and manipulation of variables following protocols or empirical-analytical inquiry, a prescriptive form of inquiry" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 74). Communicative learning, on the other hand, relies on rational discourse to form a consensus on the validity of truth statements. For Mezirow, validity of emancipatory learning is established through a dialectical synthesis of these objectivist and interpretist paradigms (Mezirow, 1996, p. 158).

Mezirow draws from Habermas in formulating his ideal conditions for rational discourse. "Central to Habermas' later theory of communicative action is the concept of the ideal speech situation based on rational, unconstrained discourse" (Connelly, 1996, p. 244). Under the optimal conditions for rational discourse, participants will:

- have accurate and complete information
- be free from coercion and distorting self-deception
- be able to weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively
- be open to alternative perspectives
- be able to become critically reflective upon presuppositions and their consequences
- have equal opportunity to participate (including the chance to challenge, question, refute, and reflect and to hear others do the same), and
- be able to accept an informed, objective, and rational consensus as a legitimate test of validity. (Mezirow, 1991, p. 77-78)

Learning conditions should attempt to provide these ideal conditions as much as possible so that new meaning perspectives can be formed as rationally as possible.

The aim of rationality in transformative learning is to produce superior meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1989, p. 171) in contrast to those uncritically accepted meanings formed in childhood or given by traditional authorities.

> A superior perspective is more inclusive, discriminating and integrative of experience, is based on fuller information, is freer from coercion or distorting self-deception, more open to other perspectives and points of view, more accepting of others as equal participants in discourse, more rational in assessing contending arguments and evidence, more critically reflective and more willing to accept an informed and rational consensus as the authority for adjudicating conflicting validity claims. (Mezirow, 1989, p. 171)

For Mezirow then, superior meaning perspectives are those that are arrived at through rationality, characterized by critical thinking and validity testing through discourse.

Mezirow argues that "rationality should have the following characteristics: (a) beliefs should contain no logical contradictions, (b) reasons for believing them can be advanced and assessed, (c) concepts will become more intelligible when analyzed, and (d) we have criteria with which to know when the belief is justified or not" (Mezirow, 1996, p. 168). One can argue that the above characteristics represent, not a definition of rationality, but criteria for rational belief systems.

Clark and Wilson (1991) claim that Mezirow's rationality is presented as a unified set of transhistorical principles. The focus on critical discourse as a fundamental part of transformative learning, is seen as an uncritical

incorporation of the hegemonic American value of rationalism (p. 80). For Mezirow, "Rationality is a generic process of human communication and is a central value in modern culture" (Mezirow, 1991a, p. 190).

Hart (1990) argues that Mezirow has "declawed" Habermas by his failure to consider sufficiently the issue of power in his use of the conceptual language of Habermas. And Connelly distinguishes between Habermas' critical theory and Mezirow's critical thinking. "Critical theorists argue that issues of power must be placed at the centre of any theory of adult education" (Connelly, 1996, p. 246). Connelly differentiates between critical thinking and critical theory, arguing that Mezirow has adapted the "critical thinking" aspects of Habermas' "critical theory". This critical thinking reflects humanistic psychology rather than a critical social science (Connelly, 1996, p. 245). In this sense, he has also disembodied critical theory by placing his emphasis, not on social practices and the embodiment and lived experience of culture and society, but on a cognitive, reflective practice bereft of context.

Clark and Wilson (1991) make the argument that Mezirow's rationality is decontextualized, ignoring issues of power. "In an attempt to construe meaning from experience through critical reflection and rational discourse, Mezirow systematically seeks to remove the very element which brings meaning to experience: context" (p. 76). Collins (1991) argues that unlike technicists like Knowles, Mezirow is aware of how institutional, socio-political and cultural constraints influence adult education, and yet contributes to the "colonization" of lifeworld activities through this uncritical co-opting of the language of critical theory.

This demonstrates in Mezirow's critical thinking theory a lack of focus on how relations of power directly form self: body, thought and emotion. In Mezirow's explanation of the formation of meaning perspectives, psychological

codes are formed primarily by parental prohibition. So-called distortions in these meaning perspectives are cleared by reflecting on individual responses, assumptions, beliefs etc. But if a conception of transformative learning includes relations of power, and psychological codes are formed in the context of power relations, then transformative learning lies in reflection on self through a critique of those relations.

One of the central precepts of Mezirow's argument is that validity testing is central to learning. "A learning theory should be grounded in the nature of human communication. Seeking agreement on our interpretations and beliefs is central to human communication and the learning process" (Mezirow, 1996, p. 162). Mezirow's conception of transformative learning hinges on, not only the communication of new meaning perspectives but their propositional nature. In Mezirow's definition of knowledge recognizes only that which can be verified through rational discourse and consensus.

> For Habermas (1971), rationality is predicated upon the facts that knowledge has a propositional structure and that beliefs can be represented in the form of statements...Knowledge is expressed explicitly in linguistic utterance and, as such, it may be criticized as unreliable or assessed as valid. The rationality of an expression depends on the reliability of the knowledge it embodies. (Mezirow, 1996, p. 25)

Through critical reflection we become aware of the premise upon which our assumptions rest, and through rational discourse form new meaning perspectives and become free from distortions.

Mezirow's conception of rationality is clearly based on what is justifiable linguistically. "To say that one acts rationally or that a statement is rational is to say that the action or statement can be criticized or defended; we have the criteria with which to justify the act or statement" (Mezirow, 1996, p. 164). Since his

conception of transformative learning pivots around verbal communication, he stresses mainly what may be consciously understood and articulated. In the next section I will show the reader how Mezirow came to include emotion, bodily states, and intuition into his conception of transformative learning. Mezirow never labels these as non-rational. Nor does he deny that these influences may even be part of rationality. However, because critical reflection and communication are integral to his conception, Mezirow focuses mainly on conscious processes and never explores how what is unconscious affects learning.

Max van Manen (1990) shares Mezirow's definition of rationality in which communication is the basis for seeking common understanding. "To be a rationalist is to believe in the power of thinking, insight and dialogue" (p. 16). But as van Manen points out, so much of human experience is preverbal. The basic elements of lifeworld are "lived time, lived space, lived body and lived human relation". While we may strive to rationally describe lived experience, is a change in this experience necessarily the result of critical reflection and rationality? Boyd and Meyers provide another model of transformation in which reflection and rationality are less important.

Self in Transformative Learning

In response to Mezirow's 1985 articulation of transformative learning, Boyd and Meyers (1988) provide insight to his psychological assumptions and present an alternative view of human psychology. Mezirow (1991) provides credit to these authors for adding the dimension of the extra-rational or presentational to transformative learning. A review of these are contained later in this text. Boyd and Meyers' article demonstrates some implications of Mezirow's rational bias for understanding the psychology of learning. While

their model does not directly address the role of the body in transformative learning, their interpretation of the self is an expansion of Mezirow's narrowly-defined self. It is this expanded notion of self which suggested to Mezirow the importance of non-rational aspects of learning and which opens the way for exploring the role of the body.

Boyd and Meyers argue that Mezirow's psychological model is based upon the psychoanalytic theory of a Freudian framework which they contrast with the analytical psychology of a Jungian framework. While similarities exist between the models which inform Mezirow's transformative learning and Boyd and Meyers' transformative education, the differences are substantive. The former focuses on the ego as the central actor in perspective transformation through critical reflection, taking into consideration repressed personal unconscious subject matter. The latter considers "other psychic structures" working dynamically with the ego to bring about transformation using discernment as the primary orientation. While all of the differences characterizing these two approaches are interesting, this next section will look primarily at the differences which affect a consideration of the somatic dimensions of transformative learning.

Boyd and Meyers make use of the Jungian concept of the Self. "The Self is the total psychic being of an individual, which has evolved, as have other aspects of our being over aeons of human life on earth" (p. 265). This concept of the Self, they argue, is the critical difference between transformative education and transformative learning. The Self is viewed as the total personality and the ego, the centre of consciousness, is only a part of that Self. By identifying primarily rational processes as the means to transformation, Mezirow focuses on the ego as the main source of change. While Mezirow added an acknowledgment of other

aspects of Self into later versions of his conception, he remained centred on a reliance of ego-based processes as the path to transformed meaning perspectives.

Boyd and Meyers argue that Mezirow's approach focuses on the individual's relationship with the outer world. They suggest the goal of transformative education is to help the individual perceive a conscious control from within rather than being manipulated from without. "Perspective transformations are constructive moves in the individual's outward journey and, as such, they resemble the goals and functions of instrumental education" (p. 264). They see the role of transformative education as helping individuals to develop integration in their lives by seeking open dialogue between the ego and the other psychic structures within the Self (p. 267). This emphasis on the relationship between the rational mind and other knowing aspects of the Self allows space for a paradigm which values knowledge which is not rationally expressed.

Boyd and Meyers posit the existence of a dynamic structure with the ego centered in consciousness and other "entities" located in the unconscious realm of the psyche. Because the ego is the conscious component of the Self, we mistakenly come to believe that it is the directive force in our lives, when in fact this is only partially true. "Therefore, to understand ourselves it is necessary to be aware not only of the conscious dynamic in our lives but also as far as we are able, the dynamics arising from other more hidden components of the Self that influence our behaviour" (p. 268). The Self consists of the archetypes of the collective unconscious, the shadow, anima and animus, and persona. Archetypes contain both instincts and primordial patterns, and therefore express both biological and phylogenetic forces (pp. 269-270).

This collection of concepts to make up the Self provides a possible model in which to understand the mystery of human psychology, and one which

provides an important link between transformative learning and the body. The shadow, which is made up of possible aspects of our identity that we have rejected in favour of those which support a particular way of life, periodically strives to be "heard". Boyd and Meyers identify some of the ways the shadow seeks to be heard: dreams, intruding thoughts, through meditation, imagination. I would add through body cues, sensations, unexplained emotions. These concepts of the Self provide a broader range of forces which may play a part in transformative learning. Unconscious knowledge may be repressed as in psychoanalytic theory, or it may be a part of the inherent wisdom of our Selves. The body is one of the ways this wisdom can be expressed.

Collard and Law's (1991) argument that Mezirow's approach is decontextualized extends to the notion of self. "The self is understood as acting on the world and is in turn acted upon, but the ways in which the world shapes the self are not explored" (p. 80). As Welton (1990) comments on Mezirow: "the self exists separate from structure...[It] is essentially disengaged, disembodied, and dehistoricized" (cited in Clark and Wilson, 1991, p. 80). Clark and Wilson argue that Mezirow's theory is predicated on a unified, rational self because he "fails to adequately account for the formative role of the multiple contexts within which both the individual and her experience is situated and by which it is interpreted" (p. 80). This has particular significance for the current study, as one of the ways the world shapes the self is through the embodiment of knowledge.

Discernment is the term Boyd and Meyers (1988) use to identify the way of knowing and the form of its expression. It stands in contrast to the understanding gained from critical reflectivity which they characterize as insight "resulting from taking things apart, by analysing and reducing them to their basic components" (p. 274). "Discernment leads to contemplative insight, a personal illumination gained by putting things together and seeing them in their

relational wholeness" (p. 274). In perspective transformation we think our way into reformed meanings and affective, intuitive, extrarational dynamics appear on the margins. Boyd and Meyers argue that for Mezirow, emotions are not a vital source of information, but are marginalized in favour of cognitive elements. They, in turn, favour an awareness of feelings, images, symbols to discern questions of identity based upon alternative sources of meaning. The outcome of transformative education is not, they assert, primarily rational clarity but a commitment to an altered way of being with one's Self in the world.

Discernment comprises three phases: receptivity, recognition and grieving. Receptivity involves being open to expressions of meaning from psychic structures. This will involve discomfort and entering into a dialogue with certain components of the Self. Recognition involves a deepening of receptivity and a build up of emotional momentum. At this point a choice is made to recognize the meaning to the Self of these signs. As the main step in discernment, grieving involves an open dialogue with the extrarational messages. "For the person journeying towards transformation, grieving becomes the vehicle, the person's means of ensuring continuity when the familiar patterns of operation are irretrievably broken" (p. 278).

Grieving is identified as the critical condition for the possibility of personal transformation, and as discernment's central dynamic. The pattern of grieving involves four phases — powerful feelings present themselves in a cyclical manner until a new vision of Self is arrived at. The first phase involves alternating feelings of numbness and panic. In the second phase pining or yearning over what has been lost, and protest or blame as the search for something lost proves fruitless. After this feelings of disorganization and despair take over and apathy and depression may set in. The fourth and final step of

grieving is restabilization and reintegration where new patterns of thinking, feeling and acting become embedded.

Whether or not all instances of personal transformation follow this pattern, it is notable for its explicit emphasis on the affective domain. "Rather than viewing the transformative journey as a series of rational problem-solving procedures, transformative education calls attention to discernment — the holistic orientation readily observable as three distinct activities: receptivity, recognition, and grieving" (p. 280).

While the authors do not touch on the implications of extrarational on the body or the body on the extrarational, the infusion of discussion of the affective domain is important to my discussion of the body. I will argue the body and emotions are closely linked, as are both of these to thoughts. All of these together comprise the somatic dimensions of transformative learning.

The Somatic Dimension

Mezirow (1991) responded to Boyd and Meyers by providing additional depth to his 1981 conception of transformative learning and incorporating an outline of extrarational or presentational sources of meaning. With this incorporation, Mezirow provide a basic description of the structure of interpretation and comprehension, and how they are arrived at through scanning and construal. Scanning refers to exploring, differentiating, recognizing, feeling, intuiting and imagining. There are two types of construal; presentational and propositional. Meaning is construed in an interactive process involving presentational awareness through prelinguistic cues and symbolic models, and propositional awareness through language (p. 4). Presentational construal is a prelinguistic felt sense. Knowledge of our felt sense becomes conscious through our interpretation and reflection of it. Feelings, dreams,

changes in physiological state, and intuition bring the influences of presentational construal into awareness. Through intuition, presentational construal affects our efforts to apply linguistic concepts to our experience. Mezirow defines intuition as the ability to have immediate, direct knowledge without the use of language or reason. "Intuition refers to immediate recognition of the experience's meaning or significance without going through the process of intentional analysis" (p. 83). Perception as another dimension of learning, involves our ability to differentiate space, time, direction, dimensions, sequence, entity, focus, states, moods, feelings and punctuation of events. Perception is the process of reviewing and making interpretations based on prior experience, to delimit new experience (p. 16). Propositional construal is central to comprehension or cognition and introduces rational and reflective interpretations of the meaning of our propositional awareness.

This expanded view of non-linguistic domains of meaning construction add to an understanding of the importance of these domains in learning. Mezirow acknowledges that his psychological paradigm is Freudian and that what Boyd and Meyers present is an alternative.

> The Jungian formulation, as interpreted by these authors, represents an alternative approach to that presented in this book for explaining psychological distortions in meaning perspective. However, it complements the viewpoint of the book by placing an important emphasis on the significance of the presentational awareness and the centrality of the self in transformative learning. (p. 167)

However, while Mezirow names the aspects of the affective domain, he does little to explore this dimension of transformative learning. It is as if he acknowledges body, feelings and intuition in making meaning, but is unable to represent their importance in change itself.

Mezirow positions the nature of emotions as interpretations of the meaning of a feeling—a felt sense. Feelings and impulses become transformed into emotions as we learn how to interpret what they mean in relation to others and to ourselves (p. 13). Mezirow mentions the important role played by emotions in learning and remembering. "Remembering involves an object or event that usually has been associated with an emotion influential in our initial learning. How well we remember depends upon the strength of this emotion...." (p. 29). As interpretations then, emotions are expressions of our meaning perspectives, as thoughts are. "Motives, will, intuition, self-concept, interpersonal considerations, and emotions are also important ingredients of task-oriented problem-solving" (Mezirow, 1996, p. 166).

In addition, Mezirow acknowledges the embodiment of experience to forming meaning perspectives. "We adopt an interpretation, only when we embody it in behavior" (1992, p. 92). And: "The cultural context is literally embodied and gives meaning to the symbolic models and meaning perspectives central to my argument" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 190). Both these statements show Mezirow at least skimmed the surface of the somatic dimensions of transformative learning, but has not provided any explanation of how that dimension shows up in learning.

The question of how transformative learning is experienced is an important one to adult educators who may seek insight to guide them through the process of facilitating change. However, Mezirow's treatment of this subject is sketchy and incomplete. In the end, it sheds some light on some of the elements involved in interpretation, and less still on how transformative learning is actually experienced by the learner.

Brookfield (1987) stresses the importance of emotions and intuition to critical thought.

> Emotive aspects — feelings, emotional responses, intuition, sensing — are central to critical thinking in adult life. In particular, the ability to imagine alternatives to one's current ways of thinking and living is one that often entails a deliberate break with rational modes of thought in order to prompt forward leaps in creativity. (p. 12)

Brookfield (1994), attends to the lack of attention in the literature on critical thinking to "the visceral and emotional dimensions of critical reflection..." (p. 204). He explores how learners describe the experience of learning and how they give meaning to that experience. In his study of graduate students, Brookfield found incidence of transformative breakthrough accompanied by emotional turmoil, which he calls the "dark underbelly of the inspirational rhetoric of critical reflection" (p. 205). In this study, Brookfield attempts to map the phenomenon of transformative learning, taking into account the internal struggle that goes hand in hand with growth. He lays bare the process of grief uncovered by Boyd and Meyers. This look at the experience of transformative learning is a promising step toward understanding learning in this context and being better able to facilitate it. Still lacking however is an understanding of how the body, emotions and mind intertwine in transformative learning.

Summary

While Mezirow's work is an important addition to the literature in adult education, its emphasis on critical reflective thinking leaves us wondering what the lived experience of transformative learning is like. Mezirow begins *The transformative dimensions of adult learning* by lamenting that there is a gap between the theories of adult learning and how adult educators actually facilitate learning. The book's main purpose is to shed some theoretical light on the facilitation of adult learning. If a conception of transformative learning is to

assist adult educators in this complex task, it must take into account more fully, the dimensions of adult learning which contribute to meaning-making and transformation.

While Mezirow does not adequately explore the role of what he calls presentational construal in transformative learning, he does recognize its importance and inseparability from reflection.

> I want to avoid the suggestion of separation of the cognitive from the conative and affective dimensions of apperception and the psychological from the cultural in the learning process. Since all these dimensions are integrated in the concept of meaning, I have chosen the term meaning perspective to refer to the structure of assumptions within which one's past experience assimilates and transforms new experience (1991, p. 42).

Rather than refute Mezirow's important contribution to the field of adult education, this study attempts to extend his conception by exploring in more depth how the body contributes to meaning making and transformation.

The emphasis on critical thinking in transformative learning may reflect a difficulty with the language in expressing the gestalt of learning. In a critique of Mezirow, Tennant (1994) finds in Mezirow's conceptualization a separation of the personal from the political. "Basically, I don't believe that one can separate psychological codes from social codes as does Mezirow...The point of my article was to blur the boundaries between the psychological and the social" (p. 234). Tennant attempts to solve this problem by suggesting a developmental perspective in which development is understood as a dialectic between personal and social. Perhaps a similar approach can be applied to mind and body in transformative learning. Learning may be understood as a dialectical process between what we normally call our mind and our body, always recognizing the inseparability of the two. This approach takes the emphasis away from rationality

and places it on the interaction between awareness, reflection, sensation, feeling and communication.

Mezirow claims *The transformative dimensions of adult learning* "seeks to explain the way adult learning is structured and to determine by what processes the frames of reference through which we view and interpret our experience are changed or transformed" (1991, p. xiii). Mezirow has not adequately explained these processes beyond his special interest of critical reflection, rationality and validity testing. Specifically, more detail needs to be provided to determine by what processes meaning perspectives are transformed. In the case of that most basic meaning perspective, sense of self, more detail needs to be available to educators on how all the different aspects of self create change.

Knowing how this kind of change optimally occurs can lead to the development of specific technologies, interventions or processes to facilitate it. Mezirow cites Habermas' ideal conditions for rational discourse as the same conditions which would exist for optimal adult learning. One is led to believe Mezirow is suggesting the practice of adult learning will be facilitated by striving to provide these ideal conditions. Perhaps there are other conditions which would nurture learning where body, thoughts, emotions and the unconscious, all interact in a process of discernment. From a clearer understanding of the embodiment of meaning and the lived process of change, a more complete technology of facilitating can emerge.

Mezirow (1996) makes the claim that "Transformation Theory" is a reconstructive theory, focusing on adult learning and aimed at adult educators. "As a reconstructive theory, it seeks to establish a general, abstract, and idealized model which explains the generic structure, dimensions, and dynamics of the learning process" (Mezirow, 1996, p. 166). The conception of transformative

learning has far to go before it can lay claim to having achieved these goals. One of the areas that requires more exploration is the lived experience of transformative learning, how sense of self is embodied, and how this embodied self is transformed. When more is understood about these, a theory may begin to emerge which can provide links between what is experienced and what is known about transformative learning.

In the pages to come I move from this explanation of the key points of Mezirow's conception of transformative learning into an exploration of my own transformative experience. The following section details the method I used to access and communicate that experience. I then provide some background into the Model Mugging program that facilitated my change in sense of self. The narratives in chapter five provide the empirical body of the thesis. They are followed by a summary which attempts to tie my own experience and evidence from supporting literature in with Mezirow's conception of transformative learning.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from...
A people without history
Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern
Of timeless moments...
We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
(T.S. Eliot, 1970, p. 207-208)

This research explores how a changing sense of self in transformative learning is experienced somatically. Mezirow (1991) suggests qualitative methods for research in transformative learning. The methodology chosen for this study is personal narrative. It was selected as an approach that most readily allows me to examine how the body interacts with other parts of the self to create meaning. It is designed to make explicit the personal experience of change. I begin with an exploration of my own experience of transformative learning, then draw in other texts to provide a context to this experience. In this study perhaps the case for a more holistic understanding of learning can be made through one woman's experience. Transformative learning may then be seen as an embodied experience where body, mind and emotions play upon each other and the learning context to create new meaning.

In exploring the visceral and emotional dimensions of critical reflection in adult learners, Brookfield (1994) takes a phenomenological approach. Noting that the subjective voice of the learner is curiously absent in the literature on critical thinking and transformative learning, Brookfield explores and portrays how learners experience learning and how they give meaning to that experience. Brookfield's data included learning journals, personal conversations, seminar discussions and autobiography. In these, participants addressed the triggers, rhythms, resources, emotions and consequences of critically reflective episodes (p. 205).

The method I have chosen for this research also makes use of phenomenology to guide its course. Like Brookfield, I am interested in the visceral and emotional dimensions of transformative learning. However, rather than explore critical thinking per se, I focus my exploration on the shift in sense of self, which accompanies transformative learning. Also, to more deeply access those non-intellectual aspects of learning, I search out the places where feeling, sensation, movement and realization interconnect, exploring my own learning as I embody it.

Narrative

> Critical reflection on emotion is not a self indulgent substitute for political analysis and political action. It is itself a kind of political theory and political practice, indispensable for an adequate social theory and social transformation. (Jaggar, 1989, p. 164)

The specific method for gathering data for this study has been self-reflective narrative, focusing on the experience of a specific learning event; the Model Mugging course, using a framework developed by Krall (1988). This

approach has been chosen as an appropriate means of exploring sense of self in transformation. By constructing narratives around the concept of embodiment in a changing sense of self, I hope to broaden the conception of transformative learning.

First person inquiry in various forms has been called autobiography, personal history, and narrative. All approaches share the belief that meaning is constructed by story-telling. "Narrative and life go together and so the principal attraction of narrative as method is its capacity to render life experiences, both personal and social, in relevant and meaningful ways" (Connelly and Clandanin, 1990, p. 6). Narrative is the process of bringing order to the experiences of significant learning events. Nelson (1994) advocates this method as a means of achieving a more comprehensive understanding of the process of learning in times of significant personal change. Narrative, it is argued, is an important means for constructing our sense of self. "I am proposing that people make sense of their lives via narrative — by constructing life stories which serve as their identities (McAdams, 1988, p. 30). Writing a narrative then, is an ideal means for communicating that very sense of self. It also continues the unfolding of that sense of self.

The act of constructing narratives about one's life or a part of it is an act of reconstructing the meaning of one's life as it unfolds in the present. Through narrative I am remembering the meaning that feelings, thoughts, emotions and sensations had for me at the time I took the Model Mugging course. But the very act of remembering these events extends the transformative process and the embodiment of the learning which took place. Through the act of remembering, sense of self continues to evolve.

As narrative and self become intertwined, the individual reflects, revises and refines a present and future sense of self. Krall (1988) observes that narrative

takes one through Hiedigger's hermeneutic circle from experience, to reflection and back to experience where what was known is revisited. It is through this hermeneutic circle that assumptions change, and sense of self changes. Narrative extends the concept of a knowing subject, to suggest a living subject whose knowing is in transformation through its communion with life itself. To learn about one's self is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed in the process. Writing narrative brings one to question the meaning of personal and social constructions. "In doing so, the person is predisposed for a future based on a meaningful past" (Nelson, 1994, p. 396).

Narrative brings about transformation not only in the identity of the writer, but the reader too is changed from the experience. "The goal of interpretive work is not to pass on objective information to a reader, but to evoke in the reader a new way of understanding themselves and the life they are living" (Jardine, 1992, p. 61). It is my hope that those who read this will expand their awareness of themselves as a source of knowledge and strive for an integrated being and knowing. From this personal perspective one can begin to appreciate the holistic nature of learning for themselves and when designing educational projects for others.

Through narrative I have woven together six powerful stories of personal change. These stories begin with what I remember and move through stages, each contributing an added layer of meaning. In addition to what I remember of the events and my interpretation, I have added evidence from other areas of literature such as philosophy, psychology and education. These stories, I hope, will have a personal impact on the reader, and it is in part this dialogue between the author and the reader which contribute to the validity of this research.

Research Validity

As a qualitative method based in phenomenology, narrative requires a different yardstick than that applied to quantitative research (Harré, 1979). While most researchers of methodology agree that research validity in experiential research is not to be judged by the standards of scientific inquiry, few spell out exactly what those epistemic values might be. As a new form of research methodology, the literature on autobiographical narrative has even less to say about validity-testing. I have adapted from other methodologies what is relevant for the research presented in this thesis.

Lather (1991) outlines measures to ensure the validity of research with an orientation toward praxis. Arguing that many notions of validity and reliability were invented to test research which aims for objectivity, Lather none the less insists that praxis research be held accountable in order to guard against personal bias and theoretical imposition. Taking concepts from more traditional research, Lather revises them to be relevant to this kind of research.

Lather advances the notion of systematized reflexivity to establish construct validity. Construct validity refers to the integrity of the theory-building process, where constructs are tested, questioned and changed to suit the demands of the data and research participants. Systematized reflexivity is a process where the researcher reflects and documents her own preconceptions and how these are challenged and changed by the research process.

Throughout my research I have written, not only of my own experience of transformative learning, but also of my role as a researcher. I strove to be critical of my assumptions. Krall's method has a built in process of reflexivity where thick descriptions are written from the point of view of an observer, as much as this is possible. To those descriptions are added the meanings made from the experience.

Related to construct validity is the issue of face validity; how believable is the research to the reader. "Research with face validity provides a 'click of recognition' and a 'yes, of course,' instead of 'yes, but' experience" (Kidder, 1982, cited in Lather, 1991, p. 67). Research establishes face validity by recycling description, emerging analysis, and conclusions back through a sample of research participants. Once again, in this project face validity needs to be arrived at through systematic reflexivity.

Nelson (1994) suggests authenticity, and coherence are more appropriate measurements for narrative research than facticity or historicity. Howard, (1991) points out that different types of stories, which include scientific stories, have different criteria for judging their adequacy. For literary stories empathic resonance is an important test as is internal consistency. It is through the connection between writer and reader that narrative accounts have value.

As the sole researcher/participant I recycled the description, analysis and conclusion back through myself and my thesis research committee. In formulating the data for this project I have re-written many times, scrutinizing the veracity of my words. I have taken much time to be as honest as I can about my own experience and the meaning I made of it. Once again, Krall's methodology incorporates this re-reading/re-writing process. By cycling through the stages she sets out, I have had the opportunity to revisit my experience in five different ways. It is my hope that this process has allowed me to present a finished piece with face validity.

Finally, Lather presents the notion of catalytic validity for praxis-oriented research. Catalytic validity represents the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it, a process Freire (1973) terms conscientization (Lather, 1991, p. 68).

Part of the goal of catalytic validity is for research participants to gain self-knowledge and self-determination through their participation in the research.

My participation in the Model Mugging course propelled me on my current path of teaching these skills to other women, and being part of a growing anti-violence movement. Self-knowledge is an ongoing journey of discovery. I believe that by reflecting on the meaning of my experience, I have become more deeply connected to it and to my activism. I believe I will also become a better teacher, with a deeper knowledge of the learning experience that Model Mugging is, and how better to facilitate transformation.

Research Design

In the design of this research I have drawn from a number of guides to give specific direction to the general approach outlined above. The broad outline of the research approach is illustrated in van Manen's (1984) approach to phenomenological writing, which suggests a methodological structure consisting of a dynamic interplay of four activities:

- turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
- investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
- reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
- describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and re-writing. (p. 39)

These steps inform Krall's (1988) method to access phenomenological data which involve five basic, but not discrete, steps: venturing, remembering, comprehending, embodying and restoring. These steps are derived from Steiner's (1975) four-step "hermeneutic motion" to which Krall has inserted the second, remembering. These steps ask the researcher to recall significant learning

experiences and to describe and order them; in an act of critical reflection, to stand back from them; to draw in the knowledge of others and draw meaning by relating them to the greater social context; and with new understanding to act intentionally upon the knowledge gained.

I have moved through each of these steps focusing on my experiences in taking the four-day Model Mugging self defence course. As I moved through these steps I paid attention to anything related to my embodied learning. I focused on and revisited my body: how it has been shaped, how I moved through a changing sense of self, how my body is interconnected with emotions, thoughts and memories, how it is shaped by, and how it shapes beliefs.

In this type of research method, data gathering and analysis are interwoven in the steps outlined below. Reinharz (1983) has provided some clarity on the differences between data gathering and data analysis in phenomenologically-based research. Data gathering consists primarily of self-reflective writing. Data analysis is also reflective, but of patterns and basic themes arising out of these writings. It simultaneously incorporates other research literature into the experiential matrix discovered in data-gathering. These steps require a style of expression which is artistic, sensitive, integrated, intersubjective, associative, and aesthetic (p. 183). Reinharz states there are no rules for analysis except that the language be grounded in the language of the subject and must be readable — evocative and communicative. The intention is to create a dialogue between the subject, in this case the writer, and the audience. "If it succeeds it will create a 'felt response', an encounter with the reader" (p. 183).

Venturing

The first step in this methodology Krall calls venturing. This step, called 'epoché' by Husserl (1931), is meant to bring the researcher present to emerging themes in learning; in this case about the embodiment of transformative learning. Steiner (1975) writes of this step: "It is an operative convention which derives from a sequence of phenomenological assumptions about the coherence of the world, about the presence of meaning in very different, perhaps formally antithetical semantic systems, about the validity of analogy and parallel" (p. 296). In this step the researcher is meant to avoid, as much as possible, bringing a priori categories into the writing.

I began by writing thick descriptions about the Model Mugging course. I wrote everything I could remember about the experience, what happened, when, and how. The descriptions were written as an outsider might see them, not from the standpoint of 'what does this mean?', but with a more objective eye asking 'what happened?'. This distancing grounded me in my own experience and paved the way for critical reflection and self-understanding. "The point in this approach is to clarify or to discover central questions or issues indirectly through the rendering and analysis of experience freed as much as possible from preconceptions about what is to be" (Krall, 1988, p. 469).

It is worth noting that this step, and the steps which follow were written three years after the event I describe. This has both the disadvantage of inevitable lapses of memory, and perhaps the advantage that I remember only what is truly poignant. In addition, my memory will be coloured both by time and the experience I have had as a teacher of the very event I describe.

Remembering

In Remembering the goal is to recall the meaning of the events as they are now remembered. Re-membering may be distinguished between focused recollection and normal flow of consciousness. Remembering is the collection of the figures and events that belong to one's life story, and brings together one's prior selves. "The intent, in Gadamer's words, is to recall what stands out and to get at its essence, to open and keep open possibilities" (Krall, 1988, p. 470). Remembering is exploring the range of those experiences ventured into; finding what is especially effective, evocative and meaningful and giving it its own voice.

In the Remembering stage I began to describe in detail my experience of taking the course to describe what it was like. I allowed myself to feel my way through the experience I described in Venturing by focusing on how the body was involved in the learning process. By working through the material generated in Venturing I was able to recall many of my reactions, feelings, sensations, insights and thoughts, and how these were changing through learning. In this step I have taken my description of my experience in the course and added meaning to it. I also pulled in significant information about how and why the events, thoughts and feelings affected me, tying the experience into the rest of my life.

Comprehending

Comprehending begins the analysis of the material generated thus far and a further development of it into meaningful narratives. At the beginning of comprehending I re-read what I had written in the two previous stages and highlighted phrases which seemed to have significance for the somatic dimensions of transformative learning. I grouped related phrases together into

preliminary themes. I separated what I had written into several sections in order to further develop these themes. I identified six themes which held promise for further development and gave them preliminary labels. The themes overlapped and were separated only for hermeneutic convenience. I kept open for new themes to emerge, and old ones to transform.

After the themes were identified I stepped back into the experience to further develop them. In this stage I asked, what was important about these experiences? I revisited each theme area to draw out its meaning. As I read and re-read each developing theme, new connections were made and developed. I found new relationships between the themes and connected them to larger social themes. At this stage I found, consistent with my exploration, that understanding the meaning in these events and themes was a visceral as well as a thoughtful process. "Comprehension," Steiner tells us, "comprehends not only cognitively but by encirclement and ingestion" (Steiner, 1975, p. 297-98). I found that if I sat with my remembrances I found understanding on a "gut level", a sensation where my comprehension had a feeling of truth for me.

At this stage I also went outside my own experience to discover the various proclamations I was making. I analyzed each narrative and wrote out the assumptions and claims in each. I then set about to provide additional evidence to support these claims. I began to look for literature which would add dimension and comprehension to my themes. Knowledge from these I incorporated into my narratives as sources of comparison and critical evaluation of my own knowledge. Reading them reminded me of things I had felt or thought and allowed me to develop my ideas more fully.

Embodying and Restoring

Going outside my own experience, in the comprehending stage, to include other points of view put me at a kind of distance from my narratives. All along I have focused on the embodiment of my learning. Now however, I reclaim for the present, that which I have remembered and integrate what had been comprehended into my experiential matrix. In the embodying stage I returned to my original perceptions and gained a fresh perspective. I returned to my own experience and asked of the literature incorporated into the narratives, "Does this express, on some level, my experience?" and "How does what I have since learned change my understanding of my experience?" Steiner (1975) writes: "The Heideggarian 'we are what we understand to be' entails that our own being is modified by each occurrence of comprehensive appropriation" (p. 299). Embodying as part of Krall's method is simply coming at the work as I stand today and reclaim it as my own through a process of re-writing. Good research "...begins with our own experience. After delving into otherness, it takes us back to the original point where we started and asks us to reinterpret and revise our first assumptions" (Krall, 1988, p. 476). This involves taking a break and re-writing from the perspective of someone who has learned, in the narrative process, about herself and her learning.

Restoring is simply the creation of the final draft through a careful sifting of what has been uncovered through venturing, remembering, comprehending and embodying. Completing the final draft involves weaving analysis and interpretations into narrative descriptions.

Doing Model Mugging was in itself an form of narrative. It was an acting out and embodying of new meaning given to past and future action. Through it, I revisited memories and began to make new sense of them. This study is a documentation of that embodying. By deepening and strengthening the

transformative process, the narratives are transforming in their own right. Brady (1990) points out how narrative can facilitate the integration of cognition with feeling and sensing into an integrated whole. "It is also important to note that the intellect is not a separate faculty. It is an activity of the whole human organism, an activity which begins in the senses with direct experience of the world" (p. 50).

Summary

In summary, in the narratives which follow I have used a phenomenological approach to explore the embodiment of a significant learning event. I have delved into the relationship between the cognitive, physical and emotional aspects of my Model Mugging experience, and how my sense of self shifted through the interplay of these elements. Narrative is a way of arriving at, not only the meaning made from an event, but of continuing the process of transformation. It does this by making conscious and naming internal shifts, and by continuing to develop the meaning those shifts have for me.

Validity of this work is established through systematized reflexivity and hermeneutics. A significant element of Krall's methodology is moving back and forth between theory and experience, which I have done at every step along the way. It is hoped that the narratives will be perceived as a sincere effort to describe a process of change that others can relate to, at some level. Finally, catalytic validity, was achieved by refocusing me toward my goal of understanding transformative learning more fully, in order to help others through their own transformations.

What emerges from the methodology are six narratives, each dealing with a different aspect of the embodiment of transformative learning. The titles of the narratives have evolved from a working and re-working of the concepts in each

one. Each narrative was given a temporary title, usually the dominant emotion of the story. As the themes of the narratives evolved, I felt that what each one described was not a story of emotion, but a story about movement. As such, the titles evolved into words describing physical activity: Melting, Releasing, Strengthening, Turning, Stretching, Searching. Each title represents what I conceive to be the primary movement in the individual narrative. Their order also represents a sequence of movements that occured in my learning process.

Melting was the process of unthawing my own resistance to emotion and visceral experience. In Releasing my exposed emotions were given credence and allowed expression—released to the world. Strengthening was in finding my own sense of personal power and celebrating it. Turning was the point where I turned toward myself, giving myself unconditional love and acceptance. Stretching was reaching out for new meanings and paths which challenged me and provided me with a way to contribute myself to others. Searching is returning again and again to myself in a search for understanding, body, mind, emotion.

Chapter 4

MODEL MUGGING

This section will provide some background information on Model Mugging, and outline why this program has the potential to transform the meaning perspectives of the women who take it. For the purposes of studying the role of the body and the somatic dimensions of transformative learning, it would be hard to find a better learning site than Model Mugging. This program is intensely physical, usually engenders strong emotions, and contains elements of cognitive processing. It is a group program, where women can turn to each other for support, and involves a facilitator/coach who models behaviour and guides the women through necessary changes in attitude and over physical hurdles. It was certainly one of the most intense and life-altering experience I have been through. I know many other women who say the same.

Model Mugging is a well-established program, not only of self-defence, but of healing and personal growth. At least three university studies document the transformative effects of Model Mugging on participants (Ozer and Bandura, 1989; Gaddis, 1990; Frost 1991). Model Mugging, or one of its direct offspring of a different name, such as Impact, Worth Defending, and emPower, has been featured on such popular programs as *Oprah, Roseanne, Designing Women, Ellen,* and *Saturday Night Live.* Articles about it can be found in literally hundreds of publications including *Life, Psychology Today,* and *Wall Street Journal;* and references to it are found in many books including *Courage to heal, When food is love,* and *Safe in the city.* This attention is probably due to the unique nature of the program which features simulations of attacks and realistic practice on a padded mock assailant. However the real success of the program can be found in its graduates' ability to fight off a real-life attacker. Tens of thousands

of women worldwide have had the full basic training of 25-30 hours. Hundreds of women have reported to their instructors having used verbal and body language skills to deter an attack, and over 80 women have reported using the physical skills to fight off an attacker after taking the course. The reason the Model Mugging program can boast such impressive numbers is that it teaches, not only physical moves and allows full force practice, but because it addresses the social taboos to women fighting and the psychological resistance most women have to hurting.

History of the Program

Morris' (1996) unpublished manuscript documents the evolution of Model Mugging from its founding in 1971 to 1996. Model Mugging is the original name given to this training invented by Matt Thomas, a colourful and sometimes controversial martial artist. Thomas came up with the idea of dressing up in protective clothing to give women a chance to practice hitting him full force after a fellow karate student was brutally raped. While the woman felt she had let down her karate dojo (place of practice, and community of people who practice there), Thomas thought karate had let her down and was moved to do something about it.

The armour Thomas and his trainees wore protected them from most of the women's blows and so permitted a close approximation to simulated attack and effective defense. In the early days the armour was not entirely reliable, but over the years was improved to keep a well-trained instructor safe from even the hardest blows of women and later, men. To further approximate the reality of the simulations, Thomas researched police files to find out what kinds of things attackers did and said during a sexual assault. He also studied what strategies and tactics women who successfully defended themselves used. The course that

evolved from this research was offered as a credit course at various times at Stanford University, Harvard, Radcliffe, MIT, and Wellesley. The program later evolved to feature a female instructor who teaches, coaches and provides support for the emotions which inevitably came up.

In the 1980's people Thomas had worked with were forming their own chapters and developing their own teaching styles. A loose affiliation of instructors and chapters with various names, continues to define the Model Mugging lineage, with some differences existing within the family. The similarities which distinguish these programs from martial arts-based self defence courses and copy cat programs are: head to toe protection of the male instructor to allow full-out fighting; female leadership trained to provide psychological support for the full range of emotions women face; addressing the social and psychological prohibitions against women fighting; emphasis on ground-fighting as over 40 per cent of attack victims end up there before they have a chance to respond; training up to and including a knock-out blow; women and men working together to stop violence.

Course Format

Course format varies from chapter to chapter. The Model Mugging Basics, as the course is called by some chapters is between 25 and 30 hours, spread out over three to six class days. Some chapters run all classes within a ten-day period, some in several weeks. The course I attended, was a five-day, 25 hour course, over a spread of nine days. Each class was about five hours long. The class started with an "opening circle" where we talked to a partner, and then to the group about a pre-determined subject. Then after a short break to put on knee and elbow pads, we warmed up and reviewed moves previously learned, learned new moves, drilled sequences, practiced on the mugger. Muggings —

improvised fights ending in a knock-out — are peppered in throughout the day. Each class had four muggings, beginning with a warm-up review mugging, and ending with a high-spirited review mugging. The women win all the muggings. They fight until they are successful in knocking the mugger out. This success-based learning keeps the focus on the positive aspect of winning. The class ended with a closing circle, much like the opening circle, where we shared thoughts and feelings about the class.

On one day in the middle of the course the women are videotaped and are able to view their fights with each other at the end of class, accompanied by a pot-luck dinner. This helps reaffirm their power by being able to see themselves in action. On the last day of the course the women "graduate". This is a positive celebration of their power. They are able to invite people to come and witness and support their abilities and new understandings. Supporters are told what they will see. Then the women go through some intense and surprising muggings which are not rehearsed. After the supporters leave, the women celebrate amongst themselves by sharing inspirational gifts with each other. Sometime in the near future they hold a potluck to reconnect and view their graduation video.

Changing Meaning Perspectives

The primary goal of Model Mugging is to teach women effective, realistic self-defence skills. However, the program design also provides space for women to explore thoughts, feelings, and transform their meaning schemes and perspectives. This is because Model Mugging programmers recognize the fear of violence and the ability to fight back are not merely technical issues, they are deeply psychological and social — two sides of the same coin. In spite of this, many women decline to learn effective self protection skills. The range of

reasons are perhaps testament to the fear women have of facing violence; not only the chance of real violence, but the certainty of mock violence. Some women will cite their fear, asking what if they cry; lose control; are unable to react; unable to learn, become more angry; or become violent themselves?

Model Mugging seeks to transform all of the psychological barriers to self protection for women. Model Mugging works with emotional states, physiology, and cognitive learning to affect deep personal change which can be directed to social transformation. One of the primary learning approaches in Model Mugging is to reproduce as realistically as possible the kinesthetic, visual and auditory sensations of a real-life attack. This permits the woman to create an appropriate physical and emotional response to a real life attack, rather than react with her old conditioned response. Women who take Model Mugging learn more than self-defence moves. In order to come to a place of willingness and ability to fully fight back, and to prove that through engaging in these simulations, many women undergo a reformation of their sense of self in contrast to the social discourse around gender and sexuality.

Studies of Model Mugging illustrate it's effect on women as potentially transformative in that it teaches women effective physical skills, instills confidence in their ability by having them use these skills in realistic situations, and addresses the psychological barriers many women have to fighting back. Gaddis (1990) conducted a phenomenological study with six women exploring the concept of empowerment, asking what did they experience as empowering in their Model Mugging training and how did the resulting shifts become apparent in their lives. Through a series of interviews immediately after the course and six months later, Gaddis found that the effect on the individual women varied according to the contexts they brought to the course, but were generally positive. "The research suggest that this program's impact on the sample of participants

generalized into more positive self-perceptions and self-determined social behaviors" (p. i).

Frost (1991) conducted a study with women who had completed a Model Mugging program and a control group who did not. Using questionnaires, she studied women's willingness to demonstrate assertive behaviour; a particular dimension of self-esteem called performance self-esteem; an emotional sense of their physical competence; perceived interpersonal and self-defence self-efficacy; prevalence of feelings of fear, helplessness and anger; perceived right to resist and likelihood to resist attack. "As predicted, differences were found between women who participated in Model Mugging and those who did not on measures of interpersonal self-efficacy, self-defence efficacy and helplessness" (p. i). Frost also found that Model Mugging made a subjective difference in nine out of the 11 measures up to the three-month post-test.

Ozer and Bandura (1990) studied 43 women to find that Model Mugging enhanced perceived coping and cognitive control self-efficacy. The women also reported an increase in the ability to distinguish between safe and risky situations and a decrease in their perceived vulnerability to sexual assault, anxiety, and restrictions on their behaviour. They felt more confident and better able to set limits when deemed necessary. The authors conclude that "empowering people with the means to exercise control over social threats to their personal safety serves to both protect and liberate them" (p. 485).

These studies suggest the tendency of Model Mugging to have effects which might be indicative of perspective transformation. For further research, Frost suggests a similar study with a larger sample, but she also thinks a more qualitative approach would be valuable. "Anecdotal evidence form Model Mugging graduates is that the impact of the course pervades many areas of their

lives, and standardized questionnaires do not reap the rich information that is available to speak to this phenomenon" (Frost, 1991, p. 88).

Gaddis' comments have special significance for this study. He concludes that the most interesting potential for further research is related to the phenomenon he found in Model Mugging that crisis seems to carry with it the opportunity for intense learning (Gaddis, 1990, p. 205). He cites two implications of his study. "The first relates to the nature of change and the second is optimal learning. It seems that these subjects are two sides of the same coin, and that bodily experience ties them together" (p. 203). Gaddis points the way for continued research on the integration of human faculties in transformative learning.

> The challenges presented by a crisis seems to precipitate new neural pathways as part of intelligence reorganizing itself against perceived environmental threats. Change, it would seem is a result, almost a mutation, occurring through "in situ" learning experiences where the desire for survival, either physical or social, causes the person to "be here now" and to take responsibility for her choices. (p. 205)

This observation by Gaddis matched my own experience of Model Mugging and seems to be describing transformative learning. Given its history of transformative results, and its physical, emotional and cognitive nature, Model Mugging makes a good site for research into the somatic dimensions of transformative learning.

This study will take up the challenge posed by Frost and Gaddis, to conduct a qualitative study touching on how the intensity of the program helps instigate change. It will do this within the conceptual framework of transformative learning using narrative to explore the body as a site of learning.

Chapter 5

NARRATIVES

The six narratives which follow tell a story of transformation by focusing on how emotions, sensation, movement and cognition connect and relate to change sense of self. They weave description, reflection and theory to show how critical reflection and rational discourse are but a partial description of this significant aspect of adult learning.

Melting

I was in a daze when I first saw Model Mugging at a graduation of the third class held in Vancouver. Seventeen women had just finished twenty hours of intensive training in learning how to fight, and we had been invited to witness and celebrate their spirit. There were about a hundred supporters in the wrestling room at Simon Fraser University, and they all looked as nervous as I felt. Now at graduations I facilitate, I recognize the way I felt in the eyes of the supporters I see there; glazed, tentative, sometimes shocked. Kleenex boxes circulated for the not uncommon tears. I walked in that day as a passive observer, an audience member wanting to be entertained. But in this highly-charged environment, keeping passive meant emotionally shutting down, which is what I did.

Michelle, the group facilitator introduced herself as a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. The two male instructors, looking like Michelin men in their heavy padding, waddled over and introduced themselves. They were both Americans who had flown up to teach the class as no Vancouver men had yet been found to train for the job. I now know the agenda of those demonstrations, having since led dozens of them. But I have little actual memory of what

happened that day. The women entered the room as we cheered for them. They stood in a line coming out one after another to fight an attacker to a knock-out. They cheered wildly for each other, and yelled out each target the fighter was aiming for. At the end of each fight they clapped and cheered for each other. Each woman fought her own fight, but they were a united front against the violence that might be done to any one of them.

One of the male instructors encouraged us to cheer for the women, but I found I was holding my breath and couldn't. I was stunned. I had no idea women were capable of what I was seeing these women do. I didn't cry, I didn't cheer, I didn't think. At the end I felt like I had been deep-frozen; numb and dizzy. But I didn't attach any significance to this state of emotional dissociation. It didn't occur to me that my emotional shut down meant a strong emotional reaction was hiding beneath the ice. I enrolled in the next class, and in the weeks leading up to it I dutifully filled out an intake form with clinical efficiency. It asked why I was taking the class — to learn how to protect myself; what was my greatest fear — that I would hurt my lower back; what experiences of feeling powerless I remember — my father yelling. I began to don a safety shell against what this course might really mean for me, denying that it held any emotional load. I approached it as a physical training exercise to learn how to fight, and determined this was not going to be problematic for me.

We started the first day of class with introductions, first from staff and then from the 15 other participants. I have no idea what I said about myself. I do remember the shock that started through me as woman after woman recounted her horror story of rape, emotional abuse, stalking, harassment, childhood rape, wife beating, incest. These stories left me panting for breath and nauseated. Not all women told these kinds of stories. Some women knew someone to whom these things had happened and did not want to be a victim herself. Some had

been attacked but had gotten away unharmed, if not unaffected. Of course, I had known that these things happened. But I had never heard of so much suffering all at once, or been confronted with the faces and lives and tears of the women it happened to. I felt sadness, rage, horror, disbelief, and compassion—for them. I went deeper into my own denial that these stories had anything to do with me.

We began early the first day to learn how to fight. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, something began to happen to break down my resistance to feeling. Each fight brought out a little more emotion, a little more passion. We were encouraged and coached to learn to yell. We yelled for each other, we yelled to deter, and we yelled to fight. As I learned how to use my voice the freeze response which made me hold my breath was replaced. As I yelled I released my breath and I found a new source of strength. The more I breathed, the stronger I got. My breath was pure energy.

One time I was in a particularly long fight. I was panting heavily and felt as if I couldn't get enough oxygen. I was too tired to fight, and too tired to feel, but Michelle urged me to yell. I took one deep breath and yelled NO! and kept yelling. Something magical happened. My body was suddenly filled with energy. I was elated! I kept yelling and kept kicking. And when the fight was over I felt as though I could have kept fighting. As Merleau-Ponty (1962) pointed out, the voice is an important expression of the unity of mind and body "for it is wholly motility and wholly intelligence" (p. 194). I managed to connect a disconnected mind, body emotion, and became energized and alive.

The more I yelled, the more I breathed, the more I felt. There was a huge wave of energy beginning to swell inside of me, and sometimes I rode on the crest. Other times I ended up soaking my head and swallowing water as it threatened to overwhelm me. But I never drowned. The waves of emotion got bigger and I found I could handle more. I wasn't afraid of it anymore. I cried, and

I honoured my tears and kept yelling. I remember when years ago I was in psychotherapy, dissolving into tears, Lyn would tell me to breath. I had tried to hold my breath, knowing that each breath would only deepen the feeling I was having. I was afraid they would overwhelm me. Now, able to move with my emotions, to do something about them, I was not afraid to let them come.

Freud's premise that conscious thoughts and feelings represent the tip of the human mind is now generally accepted. A huge part of what we may call our mind, including emotions, is unknown to us. In a recent book summarizing current research on emotions and the brain, neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux (1996) tells us conscious feelings are only part of what constitutes emotions. Unconscious mechanisms generate physiological and behavioural action which are perceived consciously as feelings. (p. 18). Emotions are directly linked to the centres of the brain which are responsible for bodily sensation and action (p. 40). This connection, established early in human evolution for survival, makes emotions and the body intimately related. Linked to emotions are species specific behaviours (freezing, fleeing, fighting, facial expressions); autonomic nervous system responses (changes in blood pressure and heart rate, sweating); hormonal responses (release of stress hormones and peptides into the bloodstream); responses of the internal organs and glands (LeDoux, 1996, p. 291). These responses create signals in the body that return to the brain. What allowed my unconscious emotions to become conscious was intensifying the emotional load and physiological response. Too great to ignore, my emotions intruded onto consciousness to be dealt with.

I have had difficulty in defining what emotions are because of the wide range of phenomena to which this word is regularly applied, from a startle reaction to an aesthetic response. Furthermore the concept of emotion, like the concept of mind, is a cultural artifact. Jaggar (1989) traces the recent development

of the definition of emotion. She critiques the positivist view of emotions as merely bodily sensations. She also shows how the more recent cognitivist accounts, which emphasize that intentional judgments as well as physiological disturbances are integral elements in emotion, maintain the separation between thought and emotion and privilege cognition. "When intentionality is viewed as intellectual cognition and moved to the center of our picture of emotion, the affective elements are pushed to the periphery and become shadowy conceptual danglers whose relevance to emotion is obscure or even negligible."

Jaggar distinguishes between physical feelings and involuntary bodily movements, and emotions. Feelings, while often used colloquially to mean emotion, refers here to physiological sensation. She characterizes physiological 'disturbances' that characterize emotions as continuous with instinctive responses. There is considerable debate on whether these accompany all emotion. Recent research, possible with new technology, indicate that physiological responses do accompany emotions (LeDoux, 1996). Furthermore, different types of feelings accompany different emotions. But Jaggar (1989) points out that mature human emotions, while they may have developed out of presocial, instinctive responses, are socially constructed. "Thus, there are complex linguistic and other social preconditions of the experience, that is, for the existence of human emotions. The emotions that we experience reflect prevailing forms of social life" (p.151) What I refer here to as 'emotions' then are complex learned states.

Jaggar suggests it may be helpful to think of emotions as habitual responses that we may have more or less difficulty in breaking. "Emotions, then, are wrongly seen as necessarily passive or involuntary responses to the world. Rather, they are ways in which we engage actively and even construct the world. They have both mental and physical aspects, each of which conditions the other.

In some respects, they are chosen, but in others they are involuntary; they presuppose language and social order. Thus, they can be attributed only to what are sometimes called 'whole persons,' engaged in the on-going activity of social life" (p. 153). Emotions involve inward feelings, beliefs and judgments. They also involve outward signs, or we would not be able to learn them. Emotions then, form a nexus of thoughts, movement and feeling; connecting body and mind, and communicating all these to others.

As I learned the energizing power of emotion, I developed a conscious strategy to get me through the exhaustion of standing, fighting, cheering, and adrenaline pumping for 5 hours. Fighting was tiring and anger came out of pure exhaustion. I found it was easier to keep going and finish the fight when I attached some feeling to it. In a way, I beckoned myself to get angry, knowing this would allow me to hit harder and with more intention.

In one mugging, the feelings in my body made me remember a time from long ago. According to Goleman (1995), memory is state specific (p. 85). In other words, we tend to remember events which provoked emotions and sensations similar to the emotions and sensations we currently experience. The mugger wasn't listening to me and I began to feel backed into a corner. Right there in the SFU wrestling room, I was 15 in a boyfriend's car and he wasn't listening to me say no. Sixteen years earlier, I denied anything was wrong even though I felt uncertainty and shame. Suddenly I was back there, only now with the support of 15 other women. With the power of their love, instead of taking the blame on myself, I now felt powerless in the shadow of his insistence. And with their support my head came up, my shoulders back, my breath deepened and defiance replaced fear. I became angry, and I fought back.

Moving through the scenarios brought up strong feelings as though the scenarios themselves were real. In this and other simulations, my sensations,

emotions and actions brought memories of times I had suppressed my true feelings. I began to remember times of feeling powerless, fearful or uncomfortable. I remembered dozens of times when I felt I could do nothing, or when the edge of fear crept over me, or when someone had said something hurtful and I hadn't said anything. I remembered situations I had blocked out as well as times when I hadn't acknowledged my feelings. Perhaps the actions and movements of the scenarios brought up unconscious emotions which then triggered specific memories. Perhaps the memories triggered the emotion.

According to LeDoux (1996) there are two kinds of memory in an emotional situation. There is the implicit emotional memory and the explicit memory about an emotional situation. The former is governed by the amygdala system and the latter by the hippocampal system. A stimuli or a "trigger" for an important memory will likely activate both systems leading to a conscious memory of the event as well as an emotional memory accompanied by the feelings, physiological changes and behaviours associated with the event (p. 202). Thus, the body is involved in the interpretation of a past event. It is also involved in calling up the memory by sensing or creating the initial stimuli.

Movement itself may be enough to stimulate emotional memories, and thus play a part in transformative learning. Restak (1984) explains that any simple movement involves millions of nerve cells throughout both hemispheres (p. 19). Neural communication between various areas of the brain, including those involved in motor control and behaviour, is necessary for any function. The frontal lobes are connected to all areas of the brain and thus play a role in cognitive, physical and emotional responses (Stuss, 1988). This suggests an interplay, at a neural level, of motion, emotion and cognition. My own experience and research in brain physiology both suggest that movement, cognition and emotion are integrally linked through experience.

I had frozen at the sight of other women fighting their guts out. I had frozen at their stories. These were other women's stories, with little or no relevance for me. I had frozen at their stories and their fights because in my life I had frozen when my own story was unfolding and I didn't know how to take control of it. Breath melted me from the inside out, movement from the outside in. I had started the class as a training exercise. Now through movement, voice, and breath, emotions arose and I began to associate with my own experience. I had been fighting an intellectual fight for other women. Now I had to fight for myself. I discovered my own source of pain and found that I did have something to do with these other women.

Releasing

anger is not part of who i am
i am hurt, wounded, victimized, depressed, stressed
how could you treat me that way?
but i am not angry
i only hate myself

Anger was the emotion I had most successfully blocked for many years. I discovered my anger through fighting, moving and breathing. My immersion into somatic experience allowed me to remember the times I had been defeated. In class, the floodgates to all the anger I had ever suppressed or displaced opened up. I was allowed to be angry here, encouraged even. Understanding my anger, where I held it in my body and how it affected both my emotional and physical well-being, was a primary step in being able to release it.

At the start of the third day we were asked to talk about what we had been taught about anger and expressing it. I was not allowed anger when I was a child.

My father was frequently angry and expressed it in fits of rage. His normal talking voice was loud and commanding, but when he yelled I shrunk from his authority. I would hide in my room when possible and when not, I would retreat inward and stare at the floor until it was over. He was the only one in the house who was allowed to be angry and obedient docility was demanded of all. I suppressed my own mounting rage for years until he died. It wasn't until a group of women were cheering my unfettered expression of anger that I realized I even possessed any!

Not being aware of one's emotions is not uncommon. "I think it is obvious that many people have anesthetized a huge portion of their feeling self. To show strong emotions is rarely considered an acceptable form of behaviour in our society, while paramount importance is placed on self-control" (Chopra, 19 p. 216). Experiments show about one in six people have a pattern of tuning out unpleasant emotions (Weinberger, 1990, cited in Goleman, 1995, p. 76) and others, known as alexithymics lack the skill of knowing what they are feeling, even though it might be quite intense. This typical Freudian defence mechanism comes at the cost of self awareness and ability to choose to change. According to Goleman (1995) an unconscious emotion becomes conscious when it registers as such in the frontal cortex (p. 55). But what can facilitate this?

When I was finally given this permission to be angry, I began to realize how much of it I had stuffed down and held onto for those many years. I had so much stored up anger that it leaked out in all my relationships without me even realizing it. When boyfriends transgressed my rules of relationship I would become "hurt". All of the hurt, pain, poor me wretchedness I had experienced with boyfriends was disguised anger. I thought of all the relationships anger had ruined. When I suffered from depression I read that it was anger turned inward, but I had no idea of how that statement applied to me. At the same time I

complained that my body was betraying me for the symptoms it presented me with, mainly nightmares, insomnia and headaches. I was angry at my body, but I now understand that my body was trying to tell me that I was angry. I thought about how my life's path had been influenced by my unresolved anger. It had not been safe to be angry at people I knew, so I became angry at the state of the world, capitalism, imperialism, bosses, male chauvinist pigs. I let this "legitimate" anger define me without understanding its true source and considering what impact it would have on my life.

Men are traditionally associated with reason and women with emotion. Jaggar (1989) points out that in controlling their emotions men may go to the extremes of repressing emotions, failing to develop emotionally, or even losing the capacity to experience many emotions. Their lacking awareness of emotional responses frequently results in their being more influenced by emotions, rather than less (p. 158). Women, on the other hand are more free to express emotion and thus more able to identify their emotions. However, there are certain emotions which girls and women are often not encouraged to express, including anger. If Jaggar is correct in her assessment of the effect on men of their control of their emotions, it may mean that a woman is more influenced by the anger she represses than if it was acknowledged.

On the third day we did our "personal scenarios". We customized a scene where the "mugger" would portray a character of our choice. He could be an abuser from our past; where we could replay a scene of the abuse but have it turn out differently. He could be an "internal mugger"; negative messages we are oppressed by, like I'm not good enough. He could be something we were afraid of. Through the class, women had been naming their abuse. In the personal scenarios, women were reliving their worst nightmares, fighting back and winning. Memories of abuse and tears were pouring out. Some stories I began to

identify with. These were women's stories of feeling victimized or hurt when someone took advantage of their kindness, naiveté and lack of boundaries. They named them: rape, abuse, assault. Then it was my turn.

I asked the mugger to play the boyfriend who raped me when I was 15. During the mugging I allowed myself to return to that night, to be 15 and to remember the feelings of that night. I was back in the yellow Toyota in the parking lot at Stanley Park. I talked to the mugger as I would have, being polite, explaining that I didn't want to have sex, asking him to please take me home now. I was nervous and uncertain about what I should do. When it was clear that he wasn't going to listen to my requests I felt the anger slowly surface. But instead of stuffing it down, as I might have done in the past, my vision focused and my ears rang and I permitted myself to get mad. I heard other women cheering me on and I no longer felt alone.

After my mugging I could not remember what I had done. I ran grinning, back to where the group of women were waiting for me. When I reached them I leapt in the air and shouted in celebration. For a brief moment a wave of the old pain of betrayal washed up, but I pushed it away. It felt unnatural at first to be celebrating what had been an act of defiance and anger. But I celebrated feeling and expressing my full range of emotions. I had gotten used to suppressing my anger years ago, and now I could get used to feeling and acknowledging it. At the end of the day, I felt like I had dealt with Fred and I resolved never to let the memory of him ruin another moment of my life.

At the beginning of my re-enactment with Fred I had similar sensations and emotions to those I had years ago, but I did not reproduce the same behaviour. Replaying this event allowed me to come to closure with it. Awareness of my anger was a step to consciously dealing with it. Through the

expression of appropriate anger, I was able to become aware of all my unconscious anger.

My body, free to protect itself unencumbered by old messages, enacted the feelings that were sanctioned and supported. I felt I had a right to say no and to back it up if necessary. Celebrating the righteous expression of this anger made it acceptable, something to look at, rather than hide away and pretend it doesn't exist. Physically recreating a scene where I had felt only shame, and sanctioning a new emotional response, gave me the opportunity to fully connect—physically, cognitively and emotionally. Whereas I had understood that night as forced sex, I had never attached that charged word 'rape' to it. Nor had I allowed significant feelings of anger over it. By moving through the scenarios, I came to recognize the power of my pent-up rage. I tried this emotion out on other memories, discovering its true objects. Through the course, I was able to successfully access my anger, and move my body in response to that chosen emotional response, over and over again. I fought using my anger at a time it was appropriate to do so — when under attack. I feel as though I am now conditioned to defy infringement, abuse of power and danger. My active expression of anger gave it validity, supported by the women who helped me.

Through a combination of feeling and expressing it, I was able to interpret and name it. By naming it I can make a choice about it. Instead of covertly turning it on myself, unknowingly letting it seep out to poison relationships, or colour my entire world view, I bring my emotion out into the full light of day and use it when I needed it. I no longer am defined by anger, but am able to use it when necessary. Now, when I feel anger, I am able to recognize it and examine whether it is justified and if so, explore what to do about it. By learning how to direct my anger at an appropriate target I am no longer controlled by the emotion, I control my use of it. In this way I am no longer a hostage to my own

anger, neither unaware of its effects on me, nor unable to control its expression. By bringing my anger out into the open, the symptoms I once experienced no longer dominate my life.

In the conceptual frameworks of Gestalt, Reichian and Bio-energetic therapies, emotional traumas are held in the body which become part of a total pattern of use. Changing the patterns of use in the body can unlock these energy blocks and allow emotional healing to take place (Gelb, 1981, p. 32). Reich believed emotions are rooted in somatic processes. He encouraged patients to intensify a bodily tension to help increase awareness of it. By intensifying it he was often able to elicit an acute form the emotion which had been bound by the chronic form of tension (Murphy, 1992, p. 410).

Alexander technique, a somatic therapy with impressive advocates including Dewey and Huxley, re-educates in the use of the body to make changes to the whole self. Dewey claimed that "all of the psychic complexes have their basis in organic discoordinations and tensions with compensatory flabbiness" (cited in Gelb, 1981, p. 31). And Huxley, following on Dewey said, "If you teach an individual first to be aware of his physical organism and then to use it as it was meant to be used you can often change his entire attitude to life and cure his neurotic tendencies" (cited in Gelb, 1981, p. 31).

Successful reinterpretation of a past event changes the interpretation of current events. This is transformative learning. The resources I needed to do this came through building new emotional and physiological responses to my memories. Reinterpreting my life and finding new responses to events to come meant a fundamental shift in my sense of self. I came to the class as an unaware victim with suppressed anger, and left a celebrating victor able to access another emotional dimension.

Strengthening

Powerlessness had always felt normal. But not until Model Mugging did I confront my sense of powerlessness, and access the courage needed to build my sense of self-worth.

Powerlessness, as a psychological construct, might usefully be defined in opposition to personal power. My own definition of personal power includes agency—a sense that I have the ability to make a difference; self-esteem—a sense of regard for my self; self-confidence—a sense of belonging; self-love—a sense of love for my life and a willingness to make sacrifices for my growth. Feeling powerless involves a deficit of these qualities. Personal powerlessness may also be distinguished from political or social powerlessness, although they may be related. No doubt some men as well as women experience low self confidence and self-esteem. Perhaps this is a state of being required of most people by power relations in order to maintain hegemony. But these are issues for another paper.

I discovered in Model Mugging that most of my anger stemmed from a sense of powerlessness cultivated while growing up. I was powerless to express my feelings, powerless to stand up to my father, powerless to make my own mistakes, powerless to make decisions and stand by them, powerless to feel good enough. And although as an adult my parents no longer had authority over me, I still felt powerless, a feeling I longed to overcome.

My personal sense of powerlessness came from my particular experiences. But these experiences occurred within a particular set of power relations around gender and authority. This is most clearly manifest in the power of the threat of physical violence men have over women. In Model Mugging I became aware of the low-level fear I experienced every day. This simmering, subtle anxiety, possibly present in most women created an enormous physiological and emotional stress which I buried beneath safety precautions, denial or bravado.

It is perhaps not surprising that my search for a sense of personal power led me to physical practices, including self defence and martial arts. My inability to assert myself fully, a symptom of feeling powerless, had taken me down some further disempowering paths, particularly with men. I took a course in my mid twenties where we learned some defensive moves and practiced these on each other. At the end of a six week program we each broke a board as proof of our power. At the time I was delighted by this act, but it didn't affect my core sense of powerlessness. A few years later I took up Aikido, a beautiful Japanese martial art. Some days in class I was barely able to hold back my tears at my sense of inadequacy. I saw the power of spirit others could extend through their bodies. I began to realize that I was afraid of whatever natural power I might possess. I was afraid to express strength, confidence and clarity; physically and emotionally.

My main motivation for taking Model Mugging was a hope that through it I might be able to overcome my fear of power—others' and my own. At the graduation I had witnessed, part of what made me feel stunned was the foreigness of the power these women were expressing. It did not fit in with my conception of what was possible for ordinary women, or for myself. During the course my own sense of power was slow to emerge. When Michelle called me from the group of women to participate in a mock mugging, I came out eyes cast down. I did not look at her, I did not look at the mugger. I did not look up, ready to take on my challenge.

Powerlessness is more than a cognitive state of mind, it is a physiological and emotional state. Its possibility rises out of particular power relations and becomes embodied through significant acts with significant emotion attached to them. It is not merely reasoned, but is visceral. Eyes cast down was how I greeted my father's rage or inquisition. Looking away, both literally and figuratively was a deeply ingrained response when dealing with challenge, confrontation or other

uncomfortable situation. I felt small and compacted and developed rounded shoulders. I felt squeezed tight, sipping air in small doses. In groups of people I often felt like a caged animal, furtive and anxious. Others who demonstrated power made me nervous, and I avoided them. These responses and sensations had a great impact on my sense of self and what I felt I was capable of. My body held my anger for many years.

In Model Mugging I was able to short circuit these responses through learning new skills in a highly-charged emotional setting. When I was attacked in a mugging, I responded as though it were a real attack, with intense physical sensations, including perspiration, increased heart rate, shaking, flushing, and dissociation. These physiological reactions were associated to fear and anxiety. In powerlessness my response to these emotions was to look down or turn away, my legs would get weak, and I would push or struggle.

In talking about the body's response to authority, Hanlon Johnson (Body, 1983) documents ways our bodies are shaped by the individuals and institutions that train us. What Hanlon Johnson calls "shrinking before authorities" is a muscular response to a threat long since past. This muscular response shapes how we behave in the face of authority, and thus, our identities. According to Reich, this response is widespread and marks the incapacity of our civilization to experience true freedom. "The social incapacity for freedom is one of the most important basic preconditions of every genuine fight for freedom" (Reich, 1970, p. 346).

Women, in particular, are trained to be obedient to the supposed superiority of men. And while on one level, equality must be built on communication and respect, we must also overcome Reich's "physiological incapacity for freedom". Bordo (1989) argues that through the pursuit of an everchanging, homogenizing, elusive ideal of femininity....female bodies

become what Foucault calls 'docile bodies,'—bodies whose forces and energies are habituated to external regulation and subjection (p. 14). We must overcome the training which renders us flaccid in the face of authority. As little girls we learn facial movements, ways of holding our hands and postures that manifest our roles as adjuncts to men (Hanlon Johnson, 1983, p. 76).

In learning the technical skills of fighting, I was compelled repeatedly to respond differently to these sensations and emotions. My Model Mugging training had me facing the confrontation, setting boundaries, resisting, yelling and kicking. I soon began to develop a belief that my fear and anxiety do not have to immobilize me. My fear didn't completely disappear, but what I was prepared to do about it did. I began to be comfortable facing the mugger—the problem. As the physical training continued feelings of anger, determination, commitment began to enter into my fights. I was learning to turn fear and anxiety into more powerful emotions. I was reframing my perception of the physiological responses to being attacked. This freedom in turn has liberated my body. All the deep physiological effects of this negative emotion including tension are released through my body. I no longer look down, shrink or hold my breath.

In time I was able to access these more powerful emotional states each time I felt the physical sensations which used to immobilize me. When I was given permission and encouraged to be physically and emotionally powerful I gained a sense of personal power I never had. Not because my powerlessness stemmed from not knowing how to fight, but fighting was a vehicle to learn to recondition my nervous system. I now feel bigger and more expansive. I look challenges in the eye. My breath is deeper and stronger. And I have an increased sense of connection to people and environment.

While society trains us to have emotional responses which support the dominant social order, hegemony is not complete when we experience what Jaggar (1989) calls 'outlaw emotions'. 'Outlaw emotions' are responses outside of the conventionally acceptable response (Jaggar, 1989, p. 160). When unconventional emotional responses are experienced by individuals they may feel confused, unable to name their won experience or doubt their sanity. "When certain emotions are shared or validated by others, however, the basis exists for forming a subculture defined by perceptions, norms, and values that systematically oppose the prevailing perceptions, norms, and values" (p. 160). Outlaw emotions enable us to perceive the world differently from its conventional portrayal. These emotions may precede conscious recognition that the dominant myth is not telling the whole story. "Only when we reflect on our initially puzzling irritability, revulsion, anger, or fear may we bring to consciousness our 'gut-level' awareness that we are in a situation of coercion, cruelty, injustice, or danger" (p.161).

Where other attempts to capture a sense of power had failed, Model Mugging worked. My self defence and Aikido were controlled physical practices with some cognitive content, but little emotional load. In Model Mugging the combination of physical, emotional and cognitive worked together to form a powerful learning experience. What's more, these lessons became deeply engrained. "The brain uses a simple but cunning method to make emotional memories register with special potency: the very same neurochemicals alerting systems that prime the body to react to life-threatening emergencies by fighting or fleeing also stamp the moment in memory with vividness" (Goleman, 1995, p20). In Model Mugging I was able to construct a poignant parallel with daily experience. In the realistic fights I was able to fully associate emotionally with the

experience, making it explosive and deeply memorable. In this context I was able to cognitively make sense of my experience, generalizing to everyday life. Even though I was rationally aware that I was in a classroom setting, I reacted emotionally and physiologically as if the attacks were real. After a mugging I would feel shaky and disoriented as though I had actually been assaulted. Usually it was up to me, how much to emotionally associate with the mugging. Only once did I experience being transported back to the scene of my assault where I dealt with it in what seemed like real time. The more I associated and made it real, the more power I was able to access, and the more I built myself a foundation of power. I noticed too that some of the strongest fights came out of women who only a moment before had been in tears, or maybe still had tears in their eyes. These women refused to be defeated. It didn't matter how small they were when they connected to a source of power far greater than the size of their muscles. These women were connecting to the embodiment of their personal history.

Turning

I always thought of myself as a feminist, championing the rights of women to choose their own destiny. However, paradoxically, I never consciously chose my own. It was only in my late twenties that I realized how buffeted I was by emotional storms, how vulnerable to nuances in my environment. I thrived on crisis, creating one if one didn't arise out of circumstance. In crisis I could react allowing me to avoid being proactive in my own life, for myself or for the benefit of others. It was as though my life controlled me rather than me choosing my own course through life. I came to realize my failure to commit to myself a number of years ago, but I didn't know how to change it. This changed however

when I acted, in what some part of me must have identified as a life and death situation.

On the fourth day of the Model Mugging class we began with a general discussion about commitment. We were asked to identify what it would take for us to commit 100 per cent to ourselves. We were asked to identify what thoughts or feelings would help us make this commitment. I was at a total loss. I told the class I had no idea what it meant to be this committed to myself or how to be committed. Michelle assured me that if I needed to I would be able to commit 100 per cent to myself, and that in the moment of crisis I would know what I needed to do.

During a routine exercise I had the sensation of being struck in the chest. My head tingled as it does when I am beginning to realize something upsetting. Several years earlier I had made a choice I deeply regretted and had not forgiven myself for. As punishment I had prevented myself from feeling significant joy, freedom, or happiness. I realized the one I was most angry at was myself. I breathed. I knew that I needed to reestablish love for myself and give myself joy. I needed to forgive myself for making a mistake. As these emotions swam around inside of me, class continued. Someone was talking but I felt only the imperative that I must find a way back through forgiveness to myself. I remember feeling these feelings, and fighting the mugger. My forgiveness came through fighting the mugger. The more I fought for my life, the more I expressed love for myself. For what better way to express love for one's self than to save one's self from death? The very act of voluntarily putting myself in a space where I could defend myself was an act of ultimate love. My actions embodied a message to myself, declaring 'you are worth loving'.

Well into the day we were told in the next set of muggings we would be tapping into the source of commitment we had identified. They would start with

us pinned on the ground. We had already successfully fought off the mugger from this disadvantaged position. We knew how to wait for an opening in this situation and once it appeared, how to explode full force into fight. However this time the mugger would be impervious to pain. He was on drugs or was psychotic and we would have to deliver four or five knock-out blows before we would be safe.

When my turn came I lay on the mat, nervously waiting for him to attack. His hand slapped the ground beside my head and my eyes snapped open. Instantly adrenaline flooded my system and I felt my heart pound against the floor where I lay face down. His hands pinned my wrists to the ground and he was making threats, but I wasn't listening. I was thinking I knew I had to fight, it was only a matter of when. I took several deep breaths to prepare. He let go of my wrist for an instant. At first I didn't notice, but soon I seized the moment to start yelling and kicking.

I jabbed his eyes and rolled him off me enough to thrust my knee up between his legs. He was momentarily incapacitated so I pushed away and got some distance from him. But he was coming back at me and I kicked him again and again. I don't know how long this went on. He wouldn't give up. My kicks seemed to be having no effect as each one got weaker than the last. He was still coming back at me, but all my strength had drained out of me. I felt like I was having one of those dreams where I am running and falling and getting up but falling again. I had a terrible sense approaching despair. My life was a hologram and this moment was one tiny shard — a concentrated replica of my day to day sense of impotence.

Time slowed and I began to deliberate — perhaps I should just give up. After all, this is only a simulation and I would not really be hurt. I considered telling the instructors that I'd had enough now, thank you very much. But even

as I thought this, the mugger was crowding and attacking me. I realized the significance of what I was considering, for the mugger was not going to go away unless I made him, and Michelle was not going to let me off the hook. More importantly, giving up meant sacrificing and giving up on my life; giving my life over to the environment without a fight. And as I recognized the situation as an extension of a common pattern I knew I had to make a choice: I could continue to be a victim or I could take my life back by fighting back.

From where she stood behind me, I heard Michelle say, "This is the time to tap into your inner power". She was speaking to my shadow, that part of me that had been subsumed. She, and the other women in my class, gave my shadow the courage to emerge — to be born kicking and screaming. Where I had been utterly exhausted a moment ago, I found the strength to fight. My vision focused and my body was filled with the power of my conviction. The mugger became those tendencies in myself I wanted freedom from. I finished him off with two good kicks to the head and Michelle blew her whistle to signal the end of the fight. I shakily got up, went to my attacker's head and shouted "Look, Assess, No!" I ran to my classmates and together we yelled "911". Then I celebrated the victory — not only over the mugger but over my own resistance and lack of clarity. I chose my interpretation of my actions. I was opening up to feel as though I deserved to benefit from my decisions, and a dedication to fill my life with whatever I wanted in it.

In the experience of this physical and highly-charged moment, I was able to extrapolate to the larger issues in my life — to the moments of decision which help define me. The metaphor worked to change my sense of self from uncertain to committed to my life. The reason this metaphor had such power was that it was bound with emotion and movement. That moment is seared into my memory and I will probably never forget it. I know what is possible and I know

what I am capable of. Not only did I feel intensely the consequences of being uncommitted, but I was able to move and to act out commitment. My body felt that commitment, I felt the emotional satisfaction of it, and I interpreted the moment to have far-reaching effects.

Bandura, the Stanford University psychologist best known for his work on social learning theory and self-efficacy, has studied a variety of learning methods to increase a sense of self-efficacy. He concludes that performance-based procedures (like Model Mugging) are the most powerful for effecting psychological changes (Bandura, 1977, p. 191). This is because persistence in activities that are subjectively threatening, but are in fact relatively safe, produces further enhancement of self-efficacy through experiences of mastery. They are found to both promote behavioural accomplishments and extinguish fear arousal. Repeated success in performance raises mastery expectations. And even occasional failure can add to the sense of self-efficacy when it is later overcome by determined effort, as one finds through experience even the most difficult obstacles can be mastered by sustained effort (p. 195).

Furthermore, having people physically engage is more effective than having them symbolically engage in a learning method, and requires less time. In measuring people's physiological reactions to anxiety-producing events, Bandura reports performance-based procedures, also called participant modeling, eliminate autonomic responses to both imagined and actual threats, whereas symbolic procedures reduce autonomic responses to imagined but not actual threats (p. 196). In participant modeling, successful performance is the primary vehicle of psychological change. Bandura also stresses the importance that the participant method be 'powerful', by which he implies emotionally evocative. Goleman (1995) and LeDoux (1996) agree that powerful emotions aid in learning and remembering significant events.

Even more interesting is that an increase in self-efficacy gained through participation in a specific learning event tends to generalize to other situations where feelings of inadequacy exist. As such, improvements to functioning transfer not only to situations similar to those in which training took place, but to those substantially different . Physical experiences provide a metaphor from which to generalize. "Metaphors can be very convincing to the mind, and once the mind is convinced, reality gets stuck, like a river frozen in winter and unable to flow" (Chopra, p. 94). We think in symbols and metaphors which is what allows the type of generalization described by Bandura. Escaping the pain of one situation by changing behaviour may cause one to wonder if the pain of other situations might similarly be alleviated by adopting new beliefs and changing behaviour accordingly. For as Goleman (1985) argues, neural pain mechanisms embody patterns that operate in our psychological and social life (p. 29). If escaping pain is a driving force for humans, generalization of this sort could be a useful coping mechanism. Again though, it seems that emotional intensity afforded by the metaphor was at the root of its success.

The power of the physical engagement was to bring into focus the common emotions which most often prevented me from acting on my own behalf. Through the metaphor of the mugger I was able to fully connect with the consequences of doing what I always do. This 'life and death' struggle was more than a metaphor for the struggle between actively choosing life or letting it slide. The conscious mind can rationalize away the importance of taking action, but another part of the mind is actively engaged in a fight for life. While in this state of chemical bombardment I had the opportunity to do something about the fight at hand, and by extension the struggle for my life. The turning point was the moment of choice. Faced with the choice between life and death we almost always choose life. I chose to act powerfully and immediately. This engrained in

me the power of acting on my own behalf, when acting is most difficult, and made me familiar with the satisfaction of acting when giving up is what I most want.

Throughout the course I became more habituated to fighting, and before each mugging I would imagine what I was fighting for. I fought for other women against injustice. I fought for the affirmation and love I deserved. I fought for my future, full of joy and fulfillment. I fought for my mother. And in these muggings, the mugger was a metaphor for any obstacle that stands in the way.

Stretching

I discovered in Model Mugging I never really did believe in women in spite of my feminist proclamations. When I saw the Model Mugging graduation, I remember looking over the women in the group and thinking that they were all young and fit. I now know that in fact the women were somewhat diverse in age and fitness. In my own class on the first day I surveyed the women and my heart sank. They seemed much more like real women. Some were over 40, some large, one was tiny. Even some who were under 40 didn't look particularly athletic. I began to imagine our graduation. It would be a joke, I thought! These women were not up to the degree of physical intensity we would encounter in this class. My distress increased as I heard them tell their stories. Several of them seemed so broken as though life had beaten them down and they would never recover. I wondered if some of those things had happened to me would I be back, trying still to be whole.

I wasn't comfortable with women and felt somewhat threatened by them. I had few female friends preferring instead male friends. I knew better how to relate with men because I had my sexuality as a tool. Instead of learning to develop intimate friendships I shared my body with them. With women, I didn't

have a tool. I had a hard time finding words at the start and end of class when we were invited to speak to each other about our feelings. We were instructed to call the other women in the class. I hoped for answering machines. I didn't know how to have a girlfriend, to share feelings or get support. I never found men to be particularly good confidants and so when things were emotionally difficult, I tended to isolate. In class I compared my abilities to those of the other women. There were one or two, I wasn't sure, were they better fighters than me? I tried harder.

I wonder now if my distrust of the other women's ability to defend themselves was a distrust of my own body as a vehicle of protection and aggression. I had not fought back before when I was physically or verbally attacked. Was my inability to be intimate with other women characteristic of a woman limited in her own womanhood? Did not believing in other women mean I did not believe in myself as a whole human being? I always had a difficult time being autonomous from males. Could it be that in spite of my vehement support of women's equality I had actually bought into class a deep belief that we are 'just women'? In learning how to fight I realized my sense of self as a woman was reflected in the way I understood and related to other women — and it was lacking.

According to Jaggar (1989), whatever our sex, we are likely to feel contempt for women. "The emotional responses may be so deeply rooted in us that they are relatively impervious to intellectual argument and may recur even when we pay lip service to changed intellectual convictions" (p. 159). This contempt I shared between myself and other women. Even being a 'feminist' did not change this. It was not until I touched my source of femininity—of being in my own power as a woman, my power embodied—did this change.

My sense of self, is reflected in and shaped by both how I perceive my body — body image; and how my body animates who I am — body projection. My body image is who I sense myself to be as I interact with my environment. It is my internal sense of self. My body projection is how I tell others who I sense myself to be. It is my sense of self externally projected. They are interwoven and affect changes in each other. Both have conscious and unconscious elements.

My body image involved a non-conventional femininity. I liked to think of myself as active and believed myself to be fairly frail. I always identified with my own sensual nature as a woman and my body was important to fulfilling my desires. The most important use I had found for my body was sexual. My body image as primarily sexual was strongly supported by social communication. I found I had embraced this definition of my body and felt built for loving, not for fighting.

In Schilder's (1970) study of body image he found definition of the body summarized a person's psychological history and expressed her involvement in a social world. In other words, the body image does not conform to what might be called objective standards. What I experience as my body exists entirely within my life experience. He found people's body image shrinking and expanding, and exchanging elements with the environment (p. 214). As Schilder put it, "we are not only acting as personalities but we are also acting with our bodies. We live constantly with the knowledge of our body" (p. 201).

My body projection also communicated my sensual nature. Every gesture, my posture, the way I move, the tilt of my head, the way I hold my hands, all of this has been carefully constructed to reflect my sense of self. I, perhaps more than some, rejected many nuances of this culture's femininity. Yet my token rebellion was against only surface manifestations of how bodies are shaped. The answer to the fundamental question — "what are female bodies good for?" had

been provided. My sense of self had only to communicate that answer through my body.

For Freud, the body is defined according to the significance attached to it. In the past I may have said my shoulders are for carrying the weight of the world, and my body is betraying me by getting sick. I might declare my body is for pleasure-sharing or for protecting my life. The signs my body emits are expressions of my deepest secrets.

My body is not simply the result of my individual reality and personal history. My body image and projection are shaped from the coaxing, training, and force of the ideology through which I move. Mauss (1973) calls the various ways flesh is shaped "techniques of the body", after discovering and documenting marked physical differences manifested in different cultures (p. 70). Hanlon Johnson (1983) characterizes the body as an artifice or community project which visibly reflects the values of that community. Shaping the flesh is a crucial element in the organization and maintenance of power (p. 67).

My sense of self, as reflected in body image and projection, and indicated by how I think of other women, is socially constructed in relations of power. "...power relations have an immediate hold upon (the body); they invest it, mark it, train, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs" (Foucault, 1975, p. 25). As Foucault asserts, the body is a force useful to power relations only if it is productive and subjected. This is what he calls the "political technology of the body"(p. 26). As a woman's body, mine was constructed for reproduction, to be dependent on the male for protection. This is its useful function. Through my participation in this political technology I enjoined in the subjugation of my own body and those of other women to the purposes of power.

The instrument through which power relations of society are able to control bodies is through the soul, roughly equivalent to sense of self. It is who I am from all that has made me. Within my soul my body is constructed. It is, in Foucault's terms, the effect and instrument of a political anatomy: "The soul is the prison of the body" (1975, p. 30). The presence of a soul means that power does not have to be applied to the body from the outside. We apply to ourselves. The soul penetrates, occupies, mobilizes, animates and gives the body consciousness, conscience and meaning (Sheridan, 1980, p.219).

Women knowing how to fight, effectively and viciously, is illegitimate knowledge in this society. The knowledge this embodied power entails is too far outside traditional notions of femininity to be readily accepted by most. Images of women fighting brutally and effectively are shocking. Perhaps violence in general still has shock value, but we seem to be much less shocked by male violence against women, judging by the relative toleration of it, than we are by the idea of a woman shattering a man's foot. The reactions to women learning to fight back range from hostility to indifference. People express fear of marauding gangs of women looking for violence; many deny women can do it; women often deny they can do it.

Difficult to accept in others, illegitimate knowledge evokes a crisis in those who try to gain it for themselves. It took me a long time to reconcile myself to gouging at someone's eyes, or smashing a man's groin. Learning how to fight goes against what this society value as qualities and actions appropriate for females to cultivate, such as caring, compassion, passivity, indirectness, soothing, placating, nurturing, and politeness. In Model Mugging I learned that placating hands could instantly cause bodily harm if necessary. I began to feel the new awkward role of fighting off unwanted sex. It was confusing and disorienting. In class I was taking on a new archetype by shedding for the moment my costume of

lover and donning that of warrior. I reflected on how alien it was to me, both the conceptual role of a warrior and the acting embodiment of it.

To make up for my lack of intimacy skills and to assist in what I perceived as our class's faint hope for success, I determined to "play full out." I cheered hard and loud, involving my whole body in support of each woman's success. I celebrated each victory with gusto. I was supporting these women in gaining illicit knowledge to change their sense of self. But as I cheered until my voice was hoarse and clapped until my hands were raw, a curious thing began to occur. Being the ultra-maniacal cheerleader for the other women was my way of transferring my support and energy from myself to them. And by incessantly cheering for them, when my turn came I already had the support record playing. I was so habituated to supporting these women that I automatically began to support myself. Even when cheering for them, I was cheering for myself as a woman with much in common with these other women. This sharing of support broke down the barriers I had erected between myself and them. The group became a "we" — not so much through talk, but through using our bodies in ways that supported each woman's new use of her body.

When I learned how to fight I threw a wrench in the social machinery that shaped me. Each time I say no, and am able to back up my words with a kick I am striking out against the political technology that has shaped my body. In doing so I learn, through my body, I am good for something else. In learning how to fight, even for our lives, we are fighting, not only against years of conditioning, but also against the very power relations which make rape possible. We are saying, "our bodies will not be controlled".

By stretching the use of our bodies in this way we stretch our identities. By learning how to fight, I subvert that which would define and limit me; I have

taken control of a tiny part of my soul. Within this prison I struggle to break free from marching in a straight line. I reach behind me, bend low, stretch out in front with my sights ever higher. As I do so, my prison stretches and expands with me. I learn the concept of warrior as I live it. I feel the love of sisterhood as it embraces me. By stretching my body I can stretch the thoughts that confine me. I become changed. I know, because I have deeply felt my ability to choose, that I am a lover and a fighter, but not a victim.

I stand with my sisters in a circle. We wrap our arms around each other and hold our heads high. I look into the eyes of these women, these warriors, these lovers and see in them the same desire I have: to be whole and stretch my prison walls. We yell no: to abuse, to shame, to silence, to letting fear stop us. We yell yes: to ourselves, to love, to winning, to strength. We stomp our feet in defiance and in joy. We are warriors in a circle of love.

Searching

As I used my body in this strange way I became aware of how my attention came into sharp focus, then blurred as I retreated into a trance, only to snap into focus again. On one day the mugger had me pinned to the ground and while he was talking to me, my attention left and I was no longer aware that he was telling me to turn over, or that he had let go of my hands. I was out of my self, my attention drifting aimlessly above my body. Then something would shift and I again felt where his body was, heard his voice, and saw my opening. The defocus/focus, like the lens of a camera being played with by a child, was unsettling. And interesting.

Goleman (1985) describes the trade off we make between awareness and anxiety which he calls an organizing principle for human life (p. 21). Whether immersed in a dream-like trance in daily life or dissociating in a highly-charged

fight with a mock assailant, diminished awareness is a form of "waking sleep at the margins of awareness" (p. 21). Goleman explains that to expand these margins we must first notice how it is that we are asleep (p. 22).

I found my body trying to awaken me, and I began to listen in a way I never had. "Through the socialization process children are taught to be suspicious of, and blind to, bodily sensations — thereby becoming estranged from aspects of their own individuality " (Fisher, 1974, p. 11). And, one might add, their reality. Sensations, which form a conduit to the unconscious, are a gateway to expanded awareness and creative change. As Fisher points out, honouring and appreciating the cues, sensations, and half-formed feelings that are the precursors of new ideas is necessary for creativity (p. 141).

When the class was over I began to realize that although I never noticed it before, the experience of having my attention detach from my body was common to me. The sensation I was having in Model Mugging class seemed related to other everyday states such as drifting off, thinking about a subject unrelated to the present moment, thinking about moments in the past or what might occur in the future. In an attack, and in life, it means missed opportunities and being robbed of full awareness for my own ability to act, because I am in a trance. Their opposites, being present to the moment and being in my body have the quality of being fully awake, engaged, and alive. I began to realize that I was not fully integrated — where mind and body are part of the same learning organism, working in concert. I felt a gap between my mind and body, and began to wonder if this was perhaps not part of my social training. My experience was telling me that these two entities had been separated during my life and I needed to bring myself back to whole.

I found through learning how to fight that I was able to become more aware of my body, and of my presence in it. When my attention drifted I found

myself endangered. Each time I faced the mugger I had to come back to my body or risk allegorical death. Each mugging was a training for grounding experience in my body. In moments of dissociation, coming back to my body, my breath, my voice, immediately brings me back to the present. When the fight was over I had the sensation of being fully alive, like a wild animal, alert and vibrant. This quality of life I later realized is available to me at all times.

Long after I've taken the course, I am more tuned in to each moment and able to appreciate what it had to offer. I still have a long way to go, but the difference between my ability to be present now compared to what it had been is significant. I have laid a groundwork for fully living moment to moment. Instead of responding to what has been in the past or what might happen, I am better able to respond to each moment as it presents itself. This awareness begins with being in my body, being aware of its presence in the environment.

I begin with my breath; is it shallow or deep? I turn my attention to my posture; am I stiff or relaxed? I scan my limbs; are they tense or loose? I check in with my face; is it relaxed or contorted? I realize my environment; am I comfortable here? I assess from where I am embodied; what is happening? Do I need to act? My awareness of the world moves outward. I begin with my body and spiral out to my womanhood, to my society, to my world. My assessment of authority, truth, reason, is defined in a dialogue with every part of me. My self includes my body — that part separated from my mind that I must struggle to reconnect with.

At the opening circle of the second day we were invited to talk about what signals our body gave us when our boundaries were being crossed. I didn't understand what the instructors were getting at at first. Michelle explained that we all get physical clues that tell us something is wrong, somewhat akin to gut instinct. I remembered time after time when I felt strange, uncomfortable, scared,

nervous, uncertain, wary, panicky, hesitant, weak. Memories of fear poured in and how it had limited my life, particularly in nature where I most wanted to feel safe. When I closed my eyes and re-visited these moments I did remember sensations of weak knees, sweaty palms, upset stomach, flushed face, constricted throat, tunnel vision, ringing in my ears. Yet in those moments, as my body was screaming at me that something was not right, all these signals were over-ridden by the voice of my disconnected mind saying "I won't say anything because: he's only joking; if I ignore him he'll stop; I want him to like me so...". The space around me was ripe for invasion because it was not protected by a willingness to listen to my embodied wisdom. I didn't know what boundaries were until that day. I wasn't taught to honour with language my sensations and emotions. I didn't have words for them so I ignored and forgot them. Instead, I listened to the words I knew: the words of reconciliation and placation.

When I learned to honour my sensations and emotions, acknowledging them as part of my wisdom, I immediately became safer in the world. In Model Mugging I had the opportunity to practice a heightened sense of body awareness. Each mock attack was preceded by a flood of sensation. I learned to become aware of these sensations and to identify them with danger. In this state, over and over, I behaved in a way that was necessary to be safe. I now possess an automatic heightened sense of awareness of my body telling me something is not right. I have learned to listen in stereo to all the music of my being. Now, instead of being confused in situations where my body is emitting signs to get safe, but my mind, stuffed with the wisdom of patriarchy, is saying stay and smile, I can separate myth from reality. While feeling, thought, emotion—self—is shaped by society, the amygdala alerts me to the presence of danger, unmediated by other influences.

Before thoughts can assess an event, the amygdala may already have given us a 'felt sense' of something wrong and mobilized the body for action (Goleman, 1995, p. 16). Learning to listen to signals of danger has spread to an increased awareness of many kinds of bodily signals. As I practice awareness and listen to the signals of my body, I integrate more completely with myself. The more I practice listening to the messages I receive from my body, the more I discover the wisdom I embody throughout. Maslow saw life as a process of choices where at each point there is a choice toward growth or a regressive choice toward fear. The choice toward self actualization involves knowledge of the self: in all its aspects. One way this can be accomplished is by perceiving the subtleties of facts by listening to one's inner voices and letting oneself be directed from within.

As I have come to know myself better, to explore my hidden emotions and discover my embodied knowledge, I have transformed my sense of self, changed my perception of the world and begun to make my mark upon it. I stand up for what I believe in. I remind myself that courage is a choice. I take the risk that will make a difference. And I care for myself as I would my own child. I moved from being terrified of my own energy and power to fully owning and embracing it, thus changing my sense of self. I went from being someone who was far from living her dreams and visions to being more of who I always thought I was, but was afraid to express. I became someone who believed she could make a difference, rather than someone overwhelmed by the odds we face in the twentieth century. I have found hope in the world through a belief in myself. I always believed in the possibility of being powerful without perpetuating violence. Only when I felt it, did I embody it, did I understand it, did it transform my sense of self. And I have come to understand transformative learning as a commitment — to grow, change and participate in contributing to positive change in the world.

It is possible to have an emotional response to a memory of a situation not consciously remembered. LeDoux shows that the amygdala can throw the body into an emotional reaction before the neocortex, the seat of the rational mind receives a signal (LeDoux, 1996, p. 15). "This bypass seems to allow the amygdala to be a repository for emotional impressions and memories that we have never known about in full awareness" (Goleman, 1995, p. 18). Replaying an emotional event like a rape allows one to remember their true emotional reaction, in spite of how the rational mind may have sanitized it over the years.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

> The seeds of transformation and resistance are always present in discourses and practices in the form of possible corporealities that either are submerged by the current prescription and enforcement of other ones or are not yet articulated. (Schatzki and Natter 1996, p. 9)

This chapter will summarize this study's findings regarding the embodiment of transformative learning. It will explicate the basic assumptions and conclusions formed through my narratives. Those salient patterns, themes and tendencies which emerged from the data will be reviewed. I then return to Mezirow and how his conception of transformative learning might be enhanced by the paradigm of embodiment. A review of how meaning perspectives are socially constructed and embodied is presented, followed by the implications of embodiment on the goals of transformative learning.

While Mezirow's contribution provides valuable insight into learning and change, a more embodied view of transformative learning needs to be developed to better reflect the lived reality of change. Only by recognizing and understanding the affective, kinetic, and somatic implications of learning can we become effective educators. A fuller understanding of these aspects of learning provides clues into knowing what makes people move through a challenge by choosing to adopt new meaning perspectives, rather than maintaining the status quo or crumbling from the experience. It can also help us develop ways to facilitate learning.

Summary of Narratives

This study takes a small step toward the goal of developing an embodied conception of transformative learning by recognizing the importance of the body, and somatic experience, and the inter-relation between thoughts, feelings, emotions, and body in transformative learning. Out of this study certain statements about the embodied nature of transformative learning were made through reflection, and supported by literature in the fields of psychology, medicine, sociology and education. This section lists those statements which can contribute to the formation of an embodied conception of transformative learning. They are then elaborated upon and a discussion of embodiment follows.

Statement 1

Using the body can help bring to awareness and facilitate the expression of suppressed emotion.

Statement 2

Emotion and action deepen learning.

Statement 3

Body image and body projection are expressions of self.

Statement 4

Conditioned physical and emotional responses shape sense of self.

Statement 5

Dissociation is the disembodiment of experience.

Statement 6

Survival signals manifest physiologically and are experienced as a 'gut instinct' signaling a threat to self.

These statements provide a sample of the ways in which the embodiment of meaning perspectives manifests in learning. They contribute to a re-examination of Mezirow's critical reflection and rationality, paving the way for an embodied conception of transformative learning.

Breath, voice, gesture, expression and movement are ways we express beliefs, including those about ourselves. They express our emotions and our thoughts which represent our beliefs. Just as emotion is felt and expressed through the body, so the body facilitates the creation of emotion. Emotional habits can emerge into awareness through physical action. This discovery provides the impetus to resolving and transforming these habits through appropriate reflection and action. Changing physical habits can also bring about a change in emotional habits. This may not become conscious until after the emotional habit, and thus belief system which supported it, is changed. Critical reflection can bring a deeper understanding to this change.

Significance of a transformative learning event is more deeply appreciated when emotion is attached to it. The unconscious mind, also known as the emotional mind, is where conditioning occurs. Beliefs are conditioned habits of mind. When emotion accompanies a change of thought or physical pattern, the belief pattern more completely changes. Research has shown that memory of a learning event is more deeply engrained when emotion is attached. Teaching methods which use action-based and emotional experience can be highly effective in facilitating transformative learning.

Body image is how we feel ourselves to be in our body. Body projection is the physical being we express to the world. Body image and body projection exist in a dialectal relationship where the transformation of one can mean the transformation of the other. With transformative learning we can change beliefs which support and are supported by our physical sense of being and the way we

appear to others. Said another way, sense of self is expressed physiologically and has a physiological effect. Beliefs are embodied and expressed through emotional and cognitive patterns or habits, which are expressed through posture, movement, gesture, expression and experienced somatically. Body image and body projection are expressions of belief systems, or meaning perspectives. Sense of self is thus constructed emotionally and physiologically, as well as cognitively.

A transformed sense of self can emerge through reconditioning physical and emotional patterns. A cognitive reinterpretation can lead to a choice to recondition limiting patterns. Reconditioned habitual actions and feelings can also lead to new cognitive understanding.

Dissociation is the disembodiment of experience. The extreme form of dissociation often occurs in a crisis and is experienced as detaching the body and emotions from awareness of the situation. One can literally watch their bodies from an elevated position, or simply leave until the body is out of danger. But dissociation also regularly manifests as a trance-like state, daydreaming, not listening fully, or living dispassionately from one's head. Dissociation robs us of our full intelligence. Integration of our intelligences can lead to a fuller sense of self. By integrating body, mind and emotion—connecting to one's embodied wisdom—intuition, creativity and connection to others and to the earth can flourish. Being aware of the embodiment of beliefs is a basic condition of self awareness. Being unaware of, ignoring or doubting bodily signals robs us of our full intelligence. Basic survival signals are also often ignored, demonstrating a low trust level of bodily wisdom. Learning to distinguish between basic survival instincts and disempowering impulses is a key challenge in accessing and using this wisdom.

Critical Reflection

My own experience supports Mezirow's proposition that critical reflection and rational discourse play an important role in transformative learning. I also found Boyd and Meyers (1988) discernment — a commitment to an altered way of being with one's self in the world — more accurately describes parts of that learning. The development of a theory of transformative learning would benefit from the integration of reflection and discernment.

In Mezirow's conception of transformative learning, reflection on the premise of assumptions leads to a questioning of beliefs. A great deal of my learning was based on critical reflection: of self, as when I discovered my own lack of commitment to myself; of social codes, as when I changed my relationship to other women; of the nature of knowing, as when I found the wisdom I embodied. I also spent significant energy reflecting on my emotions, feelings, body image, body projection—how my beliefs and attitudes are embodied. Part of my learning in these instances was based on reflection on the premise of previous assumptions—the key condition for Mezirow's perspective transformation.

Critical reflection alone does not tell the whole story of transformative learning. While pure logic may lead to similar conclusions by different people, physiological and emotional responses will impart a different signature to any analysis. Goleman (1995) shows us that emotions have been found to be indispensable to carrying on the normal functions of life, most notably decision-making. Studies of people who have lost the use of certain emotional functions also loose their "gut feelings" and have nothing to guide them in choosing between objectively undifferentiated options (p. 53). Relying on cognitive reflection is a limiting strategy when it comes to choosing new meaning perspectives about our selves. We literally rely on somatic experience to guide

us. When highly-charged emotions are present, they have priority in awareness over thoughts, and when we attend to them, are powerful motivators of future choices (LeDoux, 1996, p. 19).

Discernment, the process outlined by Boyd and Meyers (1988) attends to an awareness of feelings, images and symbols to discern questions of identity based upon these alternative sources of meaning. Rather than a more conscious control of the environment the outcome of discernment is a greater internal sense of control of one's own meaning-making process. This involves a commitment to an altered way of being with one's self in the world. Discernment can then be transmuted into transformation through action in the world and on one's self.

Rationality

Mezirow's concept of rationality is operationalized through discourse as common meaning is sought in the social realm and a dialectic begins to shape new understandings which are tested for validity. In my experience, my interaction with the other women in the course was a crucial and indispensable aspect of what allowed me to change. Other women showed me the possibility, they told me their stories and made me realize I was part of them, they supported my emotions and my strengths, they heard my yells and yelled along with me, and they heard my words as I worked out what my experiences meant to me. This was particularly important in the setting of learning how to fight since, as I have argued, this is not socially legitimate knowledge for women. In the context of learning these taboo skills, Habermas' 'ideal speech community' needs to include active support to transcend the psychological barriers. Freedom from coersion is simply not enough. In Model Mugging, new meaning perspectives

were validated through our common emotional struggle, and fighting back became legitimized within our restricted discourse community.

However, problematic in Mezirow's conception of rationality is that he specifically says that knowledge is always propositional.

> For Habermas (1971), rationality is predicated upon the facts that knowledge has a propositional structure and that beliefs can be represented in the form of statements...Knowledge is expressed explicitly in linguistic utterance and, as such, it may be criticized as unreliable or assessed as valid. The rationality of an expression depends on the reliability of the knowledge it embodies. (Mezirow, 1996, p. 25)

This interpretation of rationality, as a strictly cognitive and linguistic activity is consistent with Mezirow's view on perspective transformation as primarily a cognitive and linguistic activity. Mezirow is emphasising the propositional aspect of knowledge, and neglecting the skills, dispositions and techniques which may not be translated into propositional knowledge.

There can be no doubt that rationality is a key feature of learning. And an embodied conception of transformative learning would contain an embodied conception of rationality. Jaggar (1989) points out that what is meant by "rational" is not consistently agreed upon. "The western tradition as a whole has been profoundly rationalist, and much of it history may be viewed as a continuous redrawing of the boundaries of the rational" (p. 166). Van Manen (1990) argues that the human sciences now require a broader notion of rationality than the intellectual, logical notion often implied. Van Manen argues for the need to maintain a rational foundation in the human sciences—to strive for common understanding. "Human science is rationalistic in that it operates on the assumption that human life may be made intelligible, accessible to human logos or reason, in a broad or full embodied sense" (p.16). Van Manen goes

further to describe how this embodied rationality would operate. He says subtlety and sensitivity are needed to describe the basic and preverbal aspects of 'lifeworld' such as the experience of lived time, lived space, lived body, and lived human relation (p.18). To describe the embodied perceptions, beliefs, and relations, requires sensitivity to their influence. And to transform them requires more than critical reflection—an intellectual approach to understanding them. It requires an openness to communication between cognition, emotion, feeling, movement, and communication of the self with others.

Rationality is often positioned in opposition to bodily senses, emotion, intuition and creativity. Yet all these may be said to be rational when rationality is conceived as that which gives order and meaning to experience. Rationality itself is an important aspect of transformative learning. An embodied conception of transformative learning would not reject the importance of rationality, nor limit it to propositional knowledge. Communication may be entirely rational without being entirely verbal.

I have only touched on some of the issues around rationality, without doing justice to the complexity of the meaning of the word or providing a full understanding of its role in transformative learning. Clearly further research which would come up with a working definition of rationality, which would be consistent with an embodied conception of transformative learning. Such a definition would position emotion, intuition, creativity, sensation, movement and other non-verbal forms of communication as rational knowledge. It would also view discourse, not merely as the exchange of words, but as the sharing of knowledge embodied in practices, institutions, and bodies.

Perhaps his gender is one reason why Mezirow's conception of transformative learning is so cerebrally-centred. Women's bodies are marked in a radically different way than men's. We never escape the knowledge that we are

sexualized creatures. The sexualization of women's bodies seeps into every 'conversation'. Mezirow comments that he became interested in transformative learning from watching his wife go through this process. As women we never forget that the male gaze is upon us. Perhaps if Mezirow had experienced and described his own experience he would have been more conscious of the embodied elements of transformative learning.

Toward an Embodied Conception of Transformative Learning

While emotions, and thoughts are often considered as separate domains of reason and affect, I would like to suggest a paradigm for transformative learning of embodiment where both are expressed through communicative practices. Beliefs, attitudes, habits—meaning perspectives—are expressed through our embodiment of them in movement, body projection, voice, language, gesture, and expression. And these communicative practices themselves are embodied as part of our intersubjective world.

Bordo (1989) explains how the "cultural body" is both represented and shaped. The intelligible body is the scientific philosophic and aesthetic representations of the body, and the useful body is the ways in which the body is trained, shaped, obeys and responds. "The intelligible body and the useful body are two arenas of the same discourse; they often mirror and support each other..." (p. 26). McLaren (1991) calls the 'body/subject' terrain of the flesh in which meaning is inscribed, constructed, and reconstituted. It is the site of embodied subjectivity (p. 150). Schatzki (1996) refers to Bourdieu's account of habitus to show how social order is embodied through practical belief and practical sense which are schemes inscribed on the body (p. 4). Brian Fay (1987) argues that learning is not simply a cognitive process but a somatic one as well in

which "oppression leaves its traces not just in people's minds, but in their muscles and skeletons as well" (p. 146).

Mezirow defines meaning perspectives as habits of mind which are conditioned and cannot be tried on, the way one might try on a meaning scheme. But physiological and emotional habits also embody meaning. Movement, posture, emotion and intuition too, may be considered "habits of mind" embedded in the categories defined by social discourse. To the degree that any concept can be embodied, it exists in discourse. Movement and posture are manifestations of publicly-shared discourse. Bodies are shaped by social discourse, and the experience of body is the effect of social discourse on the body.

An embodied conception of transformative learning would recognize the embodied nature of all habitual beliefs. A meaning perspective might be called an embodied set of habits—of thought, feeling, emotion, movement. As Hanlon Johnson says: "...our belief systems are distilled from our flesh" (Hanlon Johnson, 1983, p. 65). When a new physiology or an emotional response changes it is no less transformative to sense of self as when a cognition changes.

Emotions are linked to cognition and soma through the beliefs which support them and the way we experience them in our bodies. Similarly, thoughts and judgments are supported by emotions. Nussbaum (1995), in her essay on the role of emotions in judgment, shows how emotions are an embodiment of beliefs because higher emotions are based on evaluation. Emotions contain a cognitive dimension in that they enable the agent to perceive a certain sort of worth or value (p. 64). Nussbaum argues that the abstract vision of life of the calculating intellect is short-sighted and undiscriminating, "unless aided by the vivid and empathetic imagining of what it is really like to live a certain sort of life (p. 68). Emotions, she argues, are an integral part of this more comprehensive

vision. Furthermore, they motivate appropriate action, an important condition for transformative learning.

Just as movement, gesture, posture, and expression embody and communicate meaning perspectives, language itself is embodied. Peter McLaren (1991) makes the argument that language through symbols and metaphors are physiognomic and is just as much a part of our bodies as muscles and bone. The body both incorporates ideas and generates them in a dialectical process where language intensifies bodily powers and extends them (p. 154).

Through learning to defend myself, I became aware of what some of my assumptions were, about myself, women, the other various roles I had, and about the environment that spawned them. Like any other "crisis", a powerfully emotional and physically engaging moment, Model Mugging was an opportunity to come face to face with many challenges and act through them. In this way, perspective transformation came about through both reflection and discernment, by thinking, feeling and acting. My assumptions were revealed to me, in the moment, through sensation and transformed through action. This is because meaning is constructed, not only cognitively, but physically and emotionally as well.

Transformation is a cognitive, emotional and physiological experience. We cognitively construct new meaning from our social roles, contextualize these within our culture, and effect change outside ourselves. It is an emotional experience where new feelings are associated with events, circumstances and truth claims. It is physiological, both as we literally move into our new sense of self and through our new social roles. Each part, emotional, physiological and cognitive, works as a catalyst and a reinforcement for the others. This is what an embodied conception of transformative learning would recognize.

McLaren (1991) argues for the creation of embodied knowledge that can help us to articulate a vision and a praxis in order to liberate others, to help them relocate meanings and their bodies (p. 152). He calls this 'refleshment,' "where we can assume self-consciously and critically new modes of subjectivity hospitable to a praxis of self and social empowerment" (p. 162).

Bordo (1989) and McLaren (1991) both make the case for the body as a site of resistance to the prevailing cultural and moral hegemony (McLaren, 1991, p. 150). "I view our bodies as a site of struggle, where we must work to keep our daily practices in service of resistance to gender domination, not in the service of 'docility' and gender normalization" (Bordo, 1989, p. 28). Schatzki and Natter (1996) too call for a resistance against embodied cultural norms.

> Insofar, for instance, as culture grips, shapes, and constrains the female body, women's liberation is at least partly an issue of freeing these bodies from certain sociocultural tentacles and opening up realms of greater self-determination and corporeal molding....In such cases as these, social and political transformation entails, among other things, the loosening, shedding, and transformation of embodied ideals of femininity, masculinity, nationality, race, and class. It thus calls for ensembles of activity, experience, presentation, discourse, and even physicality that confound, undermine, and present alternatives to enjoined and enforced combinations. (p. 11)

As Schatzki (1996) points out, it is not bodies alone which are shaped and molded, but the body/subject—individuals and their identities—sense of self.

Implications for Practice

Throughout this thesis I have focused on the implications of experience for a theoretical conception of transformative learning. In this section I would

like to explore a few of the implications of this research for the role of the adult educator, and for my own practice as a Model Mugging instructor.

Pietrykowski (1996) argues that rather than striving for undistorted communication, the goal of learning might be to become aware of the domination and control in our lives. He suggests an approach where "Educators can help to identify the multiple sources of power that are linked to knowledge construction, suggest alternative meanings and help develop critical competencies oriented at these diverse micro-technologies of power" (p. 94).

Becoming aware of how all the relations of power have helped shape us is emancipating by providing greater choice in our lives, within power structures and toward changing them. The embodiment of power relations is one crucial source of this knowledge and a site for transformation. To achieve this, Herbert (1990) argues for body practices to be an important part of emancipatory social practice which include the rational, emotional and intuitive aspects. Awareness of our bodies, emotions and the relationship between them can greatly facilitate this goal. To do this, Halling and Goldfarb (1991) advocate a healing path which includes dialoguing with one's bodily sense — listening to the body and to be receptive to what it knows. Overcoming the nihilism of the West, they say, entails a return to the body as a means for recovering a sense of wholeness and value (p. 319).

The work available to those who strive for the greatest understanding possible, is in integrating and experiencing life from every part of one's being. This difficult task involves imagining the possibility of reconnecting to embodied knowledge, listening to one's physiological survival signals, becoming aware of somatic intelligence, connecting to one's emotional wisdom, and learning to live from that place of integrated presence. Alfred North Whitehead said that humans are continually in search of a feeling of unity or harmony, and

this feeling in experience was seen to be a guiding ethical principal. Maslow described the fully functioning, healthy person as one who is evolving toward "an ultimate holism" (Lee, 1988, p. 130), where all reality is experienced as a single unity which could be perceived from various angles. He called this kind of experiencing " holistic perception" (Lee, 1988, p. 25). An essential element of learning is healing the division between abstract ideas and sensual experience.

As adult educators engaged in facilitating the transformative learning experiences of others we must first of all be aware of how meaning perspectives are embodied. Teaching is an art where we collaborate with the student to create the most beautiful meanings possible. Much of our facilitation of learning is through acute observation, guesswork, trial and error, testing, challenging. This we do in complete cooperation with students who are prepared and open to learning. We simply apply the best of our skills and the student supplies a willingness to learn in conjunction with us. Trust is crucial. The more sensitive we are to the nuances of a student's embodied meaning perspectives, the better a position we are in to work our craft.

In my own practice of teaching self defence I am in a special position to become intimately familiar with women's belief systems very quickly. These are communicated, not only through words, but through all the expressions of embodied meaning explored earlier, such as expression, gesture, posture, movement. I work with all the information provided. And I have at my disposal all the tools inherent in teaching the mastery of a physical skill with great emotional load.

For example, in working with a student I use what they have written about themselves, what they say in circles, what the quality of their voice is, how they interact with the other women, how they hold themselves, how they listen to me, if they ask for what they want, how they approach the scenarios, how they

behave while watching other women—and all of this before a simulation even begins. From these observations I am able to make many accurate predictions about the woman's psychological state. I can then test these predictions and provide appropriate support. During simulations I perceive how aggressive they are, if they face the obstacle or turn away, their posture under stress, their voice quality, how they respond to coaching, how quickly they move, which part of their body predominates in standing fights and in ground fights, how they approach the spectre of fear, how adrenaline affects their movements and emotional state, what their reaction to intrusion is. These are just some of the elements I am able to assess as I guide a student through the process of learning how to fight, and possibly learning about herself.

Some of the tools at my disposal for challenging behaviours which limit students' self defence effectiveness, and which may have broader implications, are: how I physically position myself relative to them, modeling appropriate behaviours, telling them what I am noticing, helping them to cognitively reframe a belief, manually helping them move their bodies in an appropriate way (with permission), slowing down a fight to make the moves more conscious, choosing the order of the simulations so that a student strong in one skill might be a model for a student whose skill is still building in that area, altering the mood or energy of the class in various ways, encouraging mutual support and bonding, giving permission for feelings to be openly expressed, helping them come to present as they watch the mugging, presenting grounding exercises, 'anchoring' positive feelings with each victory, bringing a dissociated student back to present, getting them to identify what might be holding them back, reminding them what to watch for during a fight, asking if there are any parallels between an aspect of their fighting and an aspect of their life, encouraging them to fight against 'internal muggers', asking them what this

means for their life, pointing out the discrepancies between what they thought and what they now feel or perceive. The "mugger" exercises his skills by deciding on the kind, intensity, and length of attack, the words to use in the verbal attack. We both use our perception and intuition to decide what is would be most helpful for this particular woman at this particular time.

The extensive training provided to any instructor of the Model Mugging family of courses means already that the facilitation of these courses is highly-professional and competent. However, doing this research has given me a keener understanding of the vast differences between women in their embodiment of beliefs. In addition to becoming more observant and making more extensive use of the tools mentioned above, this research has led me to change several elements of the course design. I have expanded the reflective component of the course to help women come to a greater understanding of her own embodied meaning-making process. I now strongly suggest journaling as a reflective practice to draw out and make explicit meaning which may be unconscious. I encourage women to focus on what their bodies tell them, and what their fighting style or emotional reaction might tell them about their embodied beliefs. When the class is over, I encourage journaling and reconnecting with classmates to reflect on and discuss how learning fighting skills has had an impact on daily life. In class the way I phrase explanations has changed to be more metaphorical, recognizing how meaning is embodied in the images of other physical occurrences. I also use a process of visualization at the end of a series of simulations to encourage the connection between the fights and broader personal and social issues.

In Model Mugging there is a clear link between beliefs and behaviour. Specific teaching practices will vary for different types of learning. Each educator must begin with the understanding that meaning perspectives are embodied.

They must ask themselves how the embodiment of belief shows up in the type of education they facilitate. They must recognize that transformation of meaning perspectives occurs not just by critical reflection, but by moving through new ways of relating to the world and other people. And finally, they must take an inventory of the methods they have available to them to help students bring into awareness the embodiment of their beliefs and how they might facilitate their change.

Implications for Further Research

This research was limited in at least three ways. First, it focused on the experience of only one woman. Second, it provided an incomplete account of transformative learning theory. Third, it gave only a sampling of the literature which theorizes on and illuminates ways in which beliefs are embodied.

To further build on an embodied conception of transformative learning, the experiences of many more people, in a variety of learning environments would continue to search for the relationships between feeling, movement, cognition, emotion, and transformation.

The idea of transformative learning, although it may not be called such, is older than Mezirow and adult education. A thorough review of the idea throughout history would be illuminating. It might be interesting to compare the development of this idea to the development of the idea of the mind. This might provide some explanation as to why the current conception of transformative learning is primarily cognitive.

As just the small sample of literature presented in this thesis shows, the idea that beliefs are embodied and bodies are shaped, is growing in currency. The implications of this literature for learning and teaching is tremendous and

should be fully explored to bring the field of adult education out of the mind/body dualism into a more integrated, holistic approach.

Closing Remarks

In this thesis I have tried to reconcile my own experience of transformative learning with Mezirow's conception of this sphere of learning so important to adult education. My own experience was a hot-blooded, emotionally-loaded, somatically-poignant, and critically-reflective assault on embodied beliefs about myself, my culture and ways of knowing. In the thesis I presented a clear picture of Mezirow's conception of transformative learning, especially as it relates to transformation of sense of self. I then delved into the transformation of my own sense of self, paying particular attention to those experiences which reflect the embodiment of knowledge. The narratives, constructed from memory of personal experience supported by a diverse literature, serve to illustrate the particularities of embodied knowledge and how transformation occurs through embodied beliefs and practices. I have just touched on some of the salient themes for an embodied conception of transformative learning, and my hope is that this line of inquiry will be pursued by other students of this important area of adult education.

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