



# The Learning Activities Survey: Conceptual and Operational Definitions of Transformative Learning

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# Purpose

To familiarize the audience with the *Learning Activities Survey* and its utility in assessing transformative learning activities and outcomes in diverse learning contexts.



# So What?

**Teaching** or programming for transformative learning

**Assessing** transformative learning

**Conducting research** on transformative learning that is rigorous and reliable.

Responds to call for more application of the theory and instrument in diverse learning contexts

Taylor, 2007; King, 2009



# Objectives

- ♦ Audience will understand transformative learning theory (TLT), its origins, elements, and applications.
- ♦ Audience will be able to accurately distinguish transformative learning from other forms of knowing.
- ♦ Audience will be able to identify and select relevant approaches for measuring transformative learning.
- ♦ Audience will feel confident in their ability to use the Learning Activities Survey to assess transformative learning in their sphere of influence.



# Transformative Learning Theory

## Definition:

Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs... that will guide to action.

## Criteria:

Change in meaning schema and/or meaning perspective

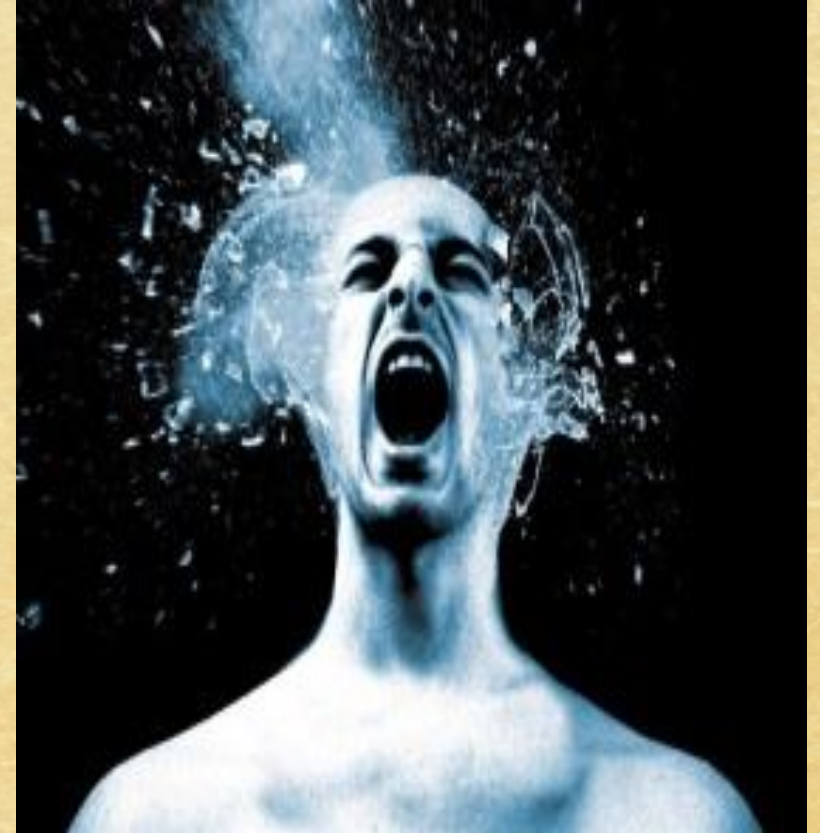


Mezirow, 1996; D'Amato & Krasny, 2011, p. 239



# Phases of Transformation

1. experience a disorienting dilemma
2. undergo self-examination
3. conduct a deep assessment of personal role assumptions and alienation created by new roles
4. share and analyze personal discontent and similar experiences with others
5. explore options for new ways of thinking





# Phases of Transformation

6. build competence and self-confidence in new roles
7. plan a course of action
8. acquire knowledge and skills for action
9. try new roles and assess feedback
10. reintegrate into society with a new perspective

Mezirow, 1978; Coghlan & Gooch, 2011, pp. 716-717

# “It Could Happen to You”

Take a minute or so to reflect and consider whether or not you have had a transformative experience:

What was the context?

What was the experience?

What was the result?

Share your experiences with each other and with the group



# Origins and Evolution

## Original Study:

- ♦ Adult women re-entry into academia and the workplace
- ♦ Observed patterns in learning and developed the ten phases

## Evolutions and Add-ons:

- ♦ A holistic approach
- ♦ 11<sup>th</sup> Phase – Relationships

Mezirow, 1978; Kitchenham, 2008



# Contexts

- ♦ **Higher Education** (Traditional Classroom, Study Abroad)
- ♦ **Medicine** (Chronic Illness, Suicide Bereavement, Acquired Injury)
- ♦ **Veteran Re-entry**
- ♦ **Parks, Recreation, and Tourism** (Experiential Education, Travel)
- ♦ **Women in Crisis** (Women offenders)
- ♦ **Social Activism** (Sustainable community development, environmentalism)



# Pop Quiz

- ◆ What is TL (definition)?
- ◆ How does it happen (phases)?
- ◆ Can you identify it (exemplars)?





# Breakout Groups

Identify which scenario or response embodies or characterizes transformative learning as opposed to some other form of learning or knowing.

# Measuring Transformation

To date, primarily qualitative... abstract, elusive qualities and nature of construct lend itself to that.

Efforts to operationalize and quantify...

- ♦ Pre- and Post-Outcome Change
- ♦ Deep reflection scale

Cheney, 2010; Kember, 2009; King, 2009



# The Learning Activities Survey

## Development

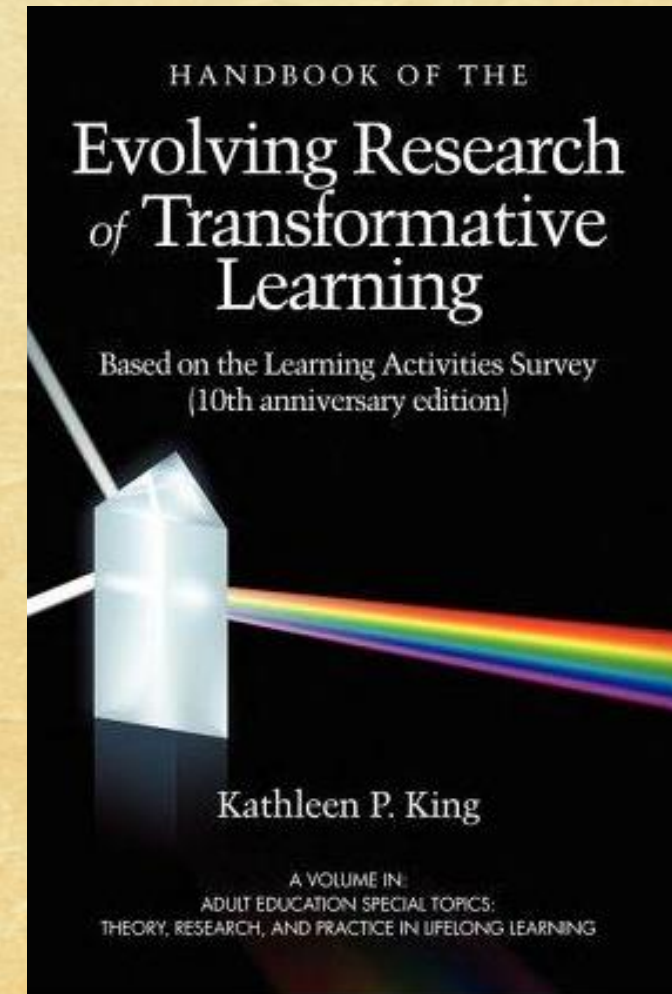
Pilot Test, Expert Review, Psychometrics

## Construction

Part 1: Measures Phases and Outcome

Parts 2 & 3: Identifies and Assesses Learning Activities that contributed to Outcome

Part 4: Relevant Demographic Information





# Analysis

## Four Points to Identify and Distinguish Transformation

- ◆ Identification: Items 1, 2, 3, and 5 (A mix of phases, binary confirmation, open-ended explanation, and life events).
- ◆ Scoring: PT Index = 1, 2, 3
- ◆ Descriptives, Correlations

## Considerations

- ◆ Correlation, not causation
- ◆ Sequential Explanatory Design



# Contextual Variations of the LAS

## Approved and Unapproved adaptations

- ◆ No Likert Scales
- ◆ Context Specific Jargon Variations

# Follow up Interviews

## Why it is important?

- ◆ Test understanding and interpretation of the data
- ◆ Richness and depth

## What is the approach?

- ◆ Strategic or Random Selection
- ◆ Identify Critical Incidents



# Limitations

Do you see any limitations with this tool?

Does it seem to have face and construct validity?

Based on your current understanding of the theory and tool what would you do to improve it?



# Now What?

**Curriculum Development:** What activities could you incorporate to promote transformative learning activities in the classroom?

**Classroom Evaluation:** How would you implement the LAS to assess transformative learning in the classroom?

**Action Research:** How will you use the theory and instrument to conduct rigorous and quality transformative learning research?

**Program Planning:** How will you translate curriculum to non-traditional and programmatic settings?

Ethical Dilemma: Preparation for Transformation



# Summary

**Did we meet our objectives:**

1. What is transformative learning?
2. Can you tell the difference?
3. How has it been measured?
4. What is the LAS? How can I make it work for me?

# Questions



1. Thinking about your educational experiences at this institution, check off any statements that may apply.
- a. I had an experience that caused me to question the way I normally act.
  - b. I had an experience that caused me to question my ideas about social roles. (Examples of social roles include what a mother or father should do or how an adult child should act.)
  - c. As I questioned my ideas, I realized I no longer agreed with my previous beliefs or role expectations.
  - d. Or instead, as I questioned my ideas, I realized I still agreed with my beliefs or role expectations.
  - e. I realized that other people also questioned their beliefs.
  - f. I thought about acting in a different way from my usual beliefs and roles.
  - g. I felt uncomfortable with traditional social expectations.
  - h. I tried out new roles so that I would become more comfortable or confident in them.
  - i. I tried to figure out a way to adopt these new ways of acting.
  - j. I gathered the information I needed to adopt these new ways of acting.
  - k. I began to think about the reactions and feedback from my new behavior.
  - l. I took action and adopted these new ways of acting.
  - m. I do not identify with any of the statements above.

2. Since you have been taking courses at this institution, do you believe you have experienced a time when you realized that your values, beliefs, opinions or expectations had changed?  Yes  No

*If "Yes," please go to question #3 and continue the survey.*

*If "No," please go to question #6 to continue the survey.*

3. Briefly describe what happened.

4. Which of the following influenced this change? (Check all that apply)

Was it a person who influenced the change?  Yes  No

If "Yes," was it... (check all that apply)

- Another student's support
- A challenge from your teacher
- Your classmates' support
- Your teacher's support
- Your advisor's support
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Was it part of a class assignment that influenced the change?

Yes  No

If "Yes," what was it? (check all that apply)

- Class/group projects
- Verbally discussing your concerns
- Writing about your concerns
- Term papers/essays
- Personal journal
- Self-evaluation in a course
- Nontraditional structure
- Class activity/exercise of a course
- Internship or co-op
- Lab experiences
- Deep, concentrated thought
- Personal reflection
- Personal learning assessment (PLA)
- Assigned readings (PLA)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Was it a significant change in your life that influenced the change?

Yes  No

If "Yes," what was it? (check all that apply)

- Marriage
- Change of job
- Birth/adoption of a child
- Loss of job
- Moving
- Retirement
- Divorce/separation
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Death of a loved one

5. Thinking back to when you first realized that your views or perspective had changed, what did your being in school have to do with the experience of change?

6. Would you characterize yourself as one who usually thinks back over previous decisions or past behavior?  Yes  No

7. Which of the following have been part of your experience at this institution? (Please check all that apply.)
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Another student's support            | <input type="checkbox"/> A challenge from your teacher     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Your classmates' support             | <input type="checkbox"/> Your teacher's support            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Your advisor's support               | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Class/group projects                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Verbally discussing your concerns |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing about your concerns          | <input type="checkbox"/> Term papers/essays                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal journal                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-evaluation in a course       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nontraditional structure of a course | <input type="checkbox"/> Class activity/exercise           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internship or co-op                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Lab experiences                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deep, concentrated thought           | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal reflection               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal learning assessment (PLA)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Assigned readings                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                         |  |

Which of the following occurred while you have been taking courses at this institution?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Change of job |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Birth/adoption of a child | <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of job   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Moving                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Retirement    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce/separation        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Death of a loved one      |  |

8. Sex:  Male  Female

9. Marital Status:  Single  Married  Partner  
 Divorced/separated  Widowed

10. Race:  White, non-Hispanic  Black, non-Hispanic  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Hispanic  Asian or Pacific Islander

11. Current major:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Allied Health                | <input type="checkbox"/> Nursing  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Science/Engineering                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Science             | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Sciences (Education, Psychology, Sociology) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Arts/Liberal Studies |   |

12. Prior education:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> High school diploma/GED | <input type="checkbox"/> Masters degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Associates degree       | <input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelors degree        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____   |

13. How many semesters have you been enrolled at this institution? \_\_\_\_\_

14. Age:  Below 21  21-24  25-29  30-39  
 40-49  50-59  60-69  Over 70

*Thank you for completing this questionnaire!*



### FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS—HIGHER ED

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_

This interview is part of research that included the survey you took. The research is about the experiences of adult learners. We believe that important things happen when adults re-enter school and learn new things. Only with your help can we learn more about this. The interview should only take half an hour to complete, and your responses will be anonymous. Thank you in advance for being part of this project; your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

The interview questions are designed to gather further information about the topics covered in the original survey, so some of them may sound familiar to you.

1. Thinking back over your education at your institution, have you experienced a time when you realized that your values, beliefs or expectations had changed?

2. Briefly describe that experience:

3. Do you know what triggered it? If so, please explain.

4. Which of the following influenced this change? (Check all that apply)

a. Was it a person who influenced the change?  Yes  No

b. If "Yes," was it...

Another student's support  Your teacher's support

Your classmates' support  Your advisor's support

A challenge from your teacher  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

c. Was it part of a class assignment that influenced the change?

Yes  No

d. If "Yes," what was it?

Class/group projects  Verbally discussing your concerns

Writing about your concerns  Term Papers/Essays

Personal journal  Self-evaluation in a course

The format of the course  Class activity/exercise

Internship or co-op  Lab experiences

Deep, concentrated thought  Personal reflection

Assigned readings  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal learning assessment (PLA)

e. Or was it a significant change in your life that influenced the change?

Yes  No

f. If "Yes," what was it?

Marriage  Divorce/separation  Death of a loved one

Loss of a job  Change of job  Retirement

Moving  Addition of a child  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

g. Perhaps it was something else that influenced the change. If so, please describe it:

5. Describe how any of the above educational experiences influenced the change:

6. What could have been done differently in the classes to have helped this change? What specific activities?

7. Thinking back to when you first realized that your views or perspective had changed:

a. When did you first realize this change had happened? Was it while it was happening, mid-change, or once it had entirely happened (retrospective)?

b. What made you aware that this change had happened?

c. What did your being in school have to do with it?

d. What did you do about it?

e. How did/do you feel about the change?

8. Do you have any questions?

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Interviewer comments: