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autoethnography and personal narratives**

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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

GLOBAL CONSCIOUSNESS: THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF LOVE  
AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AND PERSONAL NARRATIVES

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Donia Newman

December, 2009

June Schmieder-Ramirez, Ph.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Donia Newman

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to us all on the path of life's journey. This dissertation is a celebration of freedom to express one's voice and celebrates the human spirit of us all and the transformative power of love.

I dedicate this dissertation to my family and friends and those supportive on this dissertation journey which has been a transformative part of the journey of life.

This dissertation is also dedicated to the amazing faculty, students and staff of a majestic institution of learning whom have been incredible in providing the transformative learning environment to all and are committed to making a difference in the lives of others on a global scale.

To Khalil, and Alia, my children, I love you with all my heart. I am so very proud of both of you and are truly incredible. This is dedicated to you both as you are on your own transformative learning journey. Your creativity inspired me and is woven in this dissertation. Khalil, you suggested I check out *Across the Universe* and is included as part of this learning journey. Alia, your breathtaking photography of nature inspires me and especially the rose imagery is woven in this dissertation journey as well.

Khalil, your creativity and musical abilities are soulful and awe inspiring. You are so very gifted in many ways. Way to go with the honors program at college. I wish you the very best and know that you can make your dreams come true as you have visionary talent.

Alia Zain, your name means heavenly beauty which you live up to yet you are so much more than that as you are dynamic, creative, and very bright and work hard towards your goals in life. I am truly blessed you are my children and this passage is for you both from *The Prophet* by Khalil Gilbran (1923):

.....Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's

longing for itself. They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you yet they do not belong to you,

You may give them your love but not your thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,

For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.

For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and he bends you with his might that his arrows may go swift and far.

Let your bending in the archer's hand for gladness.

For even as he loves the arrow that flies, so he loves also the bow that is stable.

(p.17)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the supportiveness of all the faculty and staff of the Graduate School of Education and Psychology who made this dissertation possible with their dedication, talent and commitment to provide an exceptional learning environment to facilitate transformational learning. The Pepperdine learning community prepares students for lives of meaning, purpose and service to others.

I am appreciative of the faculty, staff and students of all three degree programs. I am honored to have had a chance to be part of this incredible learning environment.

This dissertation explores my learning journey with Pepperdine University. I am truly appreciative of the supportiveness of my dissertation committee in exploring this learning journey with me and culminating in the completion of this dissertation. There were many voices on the path of this learning journey.

I want to thank Dr. Hibbs the Director from the Clinical Psychology master's degree program and the faculty of the Clinical Psychology Program. Thank you to all the faculty for the master's in Administration Program and Dr. Paull for providing such an excellent class on ethics. Thank you to Dr. Bentley for extending my learning in education and asking me to facilitate a seminar in the masters program in Administration.

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Thank you Dr. Mark Allen for introducing transformational learning in your class and for being on my comps committee. Thank you Dr. Cara Garcia for being on my comps committee and for your contributions on this dissertation path. I appreciate the supportiveness of Dr. Eric Hamilton of my pursuing an autoethnography and encouraging me to explore creatively on what he described as a powerful journey. Thank you Dr. Margaret Weber and Dr. Kent Rhodes for your supportiveness in my progression of this dissertation towards completion.

I am truly grateful of the supportiveness of my dissertation committee to be a part of this transformational learning journey culminating in the completion of this dissertation. Thank you very much Dr. June Schmieder-Ramirez for invaluable insights and suggestions toward the completion of this dissertation. Thank you very much Dr. John Fitzpatrick and Dr. Laurie Walters for being a part of my dissertation committee. I feel very grateful to have such an amazing dissertation committee for this dissertation journey.

Pepperdine University is a very special unique majestic institution of learning. It to me symbolizes a circle of connectedness and dedication to making a difference in the world. The motto of Pepperdine University is Freely Ye Received, Freely Ye Give. I am blessed to have received such a great education here and will strive to continue to make a difference in the lives of others. While the dissertation journey has come to an end the journey for Pepperdine students is not over after the completion of a degree. The connection with Pepperdine University lives on in our hearts and is a gift of



transformative learning that stimulates, mind, heart and soul in the ever evolving journey of life.

## VITA

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## ABSTRACT

The central theme of this dissertation is the transformational learning journey with Pepperdine University utilizing the research method of autoethnography personal narratives. Autoethnography is bold, yet vulnerable, genuine and authentic. It provides a heartfelt and soulful invitation to create a dynamic relationship between storyteller and the reader to share the lived experience and personal reflections of the researcher.

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore my transformational learning journey with Pepperdine University utilizing theoretical framework of transformational learning. The top five elements of transformational learning are as follows: critical reflection, communication, soulful qualities, feelings and affect transformation and freedom and emancipation.

This study explores three personal narratives as follows: Personal Narrative of Organizational Leadership which explores reflections in Organizational Leadership, Personal Narrative of Education which explores reflections in education and Dissertation Dialogues: Andragogy of the Expressed which explores reflections in the dissertation journey.

This study explored the thematic connections with autoethnography as a transformational research method, transformational learning and the threads of my personal story to weave a beautiful tapestry of consciousness for the conceptual discussion. The transformational learning journey with Pepperdine University also weaved well metaphorically with the lyrics from the Beatles inspired movie *Across the*

*Universe*. This study also explores the difference that makes a difference in the world which is the transformative power of love.

My conclusions to my transformational learning journey explored via autoethnography personal narratives as a method and utilizing transformational learning as theoretical framework can be summarized as follows: Pepperdine University provides a supportive learning environment to foster critical reflection. Critical reflections lead to transformational learning. Communication is an important component of the transformational learning process. Transformational learning literally changes one in ways that are significant and involves soulful qualities. Transformational learning is an ongoing life journey and involves feelings and affective transformation. Transformational learning involves freedom and emancipation. In freely sharing my perspective, the best way I can articulate what transformational learning feels like is to make an analogy to spiraling constructivist circles which as one learns and grows is an evolving heightened consciousness.

## Chapter 1

### Issue

The central theme of this dissertation is the Exploration of the Transformational Learning Journey with Pepperdine University. I have a unique perspective and story to tell as I have explored the transformational growth process by choosing to pursue 3 degrees at Pepperdine University having obtained a master's degree in Clinical Psychology, master's degree in Educational Administration and submitting this dissertation toward the fulfillment of the Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership. The research method most highly suited to share my story of transformational growth is autoethnography. According to Denzin, Lincoln and Rolling (2006):

Autoethnography operated within the interstices- and blurs the boundaries-between individual reflexivity (auto), the transcription of collective human experience (-ethno-), and writing as a form of inquiry (-graphy) that does not merely “write up the research but itself is the method of discovery.” (p. 427)

Autoethnography is also referred to as personal narratives as well. Autoethnography is bold yet vulnerable, genuine and authentic. At its best, it is a heartfelt and soulful invitation to create a dynamic relationship between storyteller and the reader to share the lived experience and co-construct meaning and significance of the lived experience and personal reflections of the researcher. I lay bare the authentic and genuine experiences of my lived experiences and invite the reader to embrace and connect with the reading in an interactive sense-making experience. Autoethnography takes courage, heart and soul to make a connection with readers and is truly transformational as a method of research. In

a personal interactive dialogue on the subject of autoethnography according to Ellis and Bochner (2006):

The last thing I want is for autoethnography to be tamed. I respond. Autoethnography shows struggle, passion, embodied life, and the collaborative creation of sense-making in situations in which people have to cope with dire circumstances and loss of meaning. Autoethnography wanted the reader to care, to feel, to empathize and to do something, to act. It needs the researcher to be vulnerable and intimate. Intimacy is a way of being, a mode of caring and it shouldn't be used as a vehicle to produce distant theorizing. (p. 433)

This dissertation will explore with passion and enthusiasm my personal reflections on the transformational learning journey with Pepperdine University and invites the reader to fully open one's heart, mind and spirit in sharing this journey with me. I have been inspired and experienced transformational growth as a part of this journey. I gratefully welcome the readers to make personal sense and meaning in the co-constructive and dynamic I- Thou relationship as I will share with you and you open to the possibilities of making personal connections, insights and personal reflections through a shared voyage together in collectively exploring this dissertation and my personal story.

I have a multi-disciplinary perspective as I have background and training in education, educational administration and organizational leadership. My professional experience is diverse and includes being a partner in an investment banking firm, having taught at the graduate level in education, having been a featured presenter at leadership conferences, and supervised graduate level students providing individual, group and family therapy in a residential treatment facility with children.

I truly believe learning and growing as a person is a life long journey. This dissertation format of writing a personal narrative allows free expression of my personal learning journey and for the reader to make connections.

I was inspired by a speech recently including the concept of hybrids. Any person who has experience and education in multiple disciplines could be considered a hybrid.

Personal narrative is a form of scholarly writing and research that allows one the unique opportunity to share one's own personal story in a genuine and authentic way and to be able to make learning connections and thematic analysis of the learning journey of life.

Additionally, as addressed by Burnier (2006):

Personal writing is hybrid in character, in that it blends and combines an individual's personal story with his or her scholarly story, It is writing that is not strictly scholarly, because it contains the personal, and yet it is not strictly personal because it contains the scholarly. Indeed, personal writing in this way seeks to erase the false dichotomy between the scholarly and the personal. Within these texts, the actual scholar is embodied and present, as he or she examines closely the personal, political, and scholarly situations that have shaped his or her life. (pp. 412-413)

There is a famous quote of Patrick Henry in which he ended a speech on March 23, 1775 as cited on the website The History Place with the words, "Give me liberty or give me death" (p. 1). As I have conducted extensive readings in the methods of autoethnography personal narratives as a research method this statement rings true. It allows an intellectual forum without tyranny. It unshackles the "I" in scholarly writing. Robert Nash wrote a transformational book on scholarly writing entitled *Liberating Scholarly Writing the Power of Personal Narrative*. According to Nash (2004), "Ralph

Waldo Emerson once said that is impossible to utter even two or three sentences without letting others know where you stand in life, what you believe and which people are important to you” (p. 24).

Writing as a personal narrative is indeed a liberating and powerful experience. I fundamentally assert that if I have been trained to be able to be a leader of organizations that the development of an original voice is crucial. Having people in an organization know where you stand on matters and your core character values and personal beliefs inspires trust to effectively accomplish organizational objectives. As cited in Covey (2006) in *The Speed of Trust the One Thing That Changes Everything*, “Self-trust is the first secret of success...the essence of heroism” (p. 46).

I choose to trust myself in the process of sharing this learning journey with you the reader. I freely trust in the process of extending my personal story to you as reader to make whatever meaning and take away any inspiration you may have from our personal connection interactively with the exploration of transformation of learning together. It is important to me to have an optimistic view of life. Extending trust is part of that process for me. As cited in Covey (2006), “Trust men and they will be true to you, treat them greatly and they will show themselves great. -Ralph Waldo Emerson” (p. 222).

I must confess a personal bias, I love Pepperdine University. I am inspired by its mission and vision. Love and kindness are best when given away so this autoethnography is my gift to the reader. According to Pepperdine University (2007) the motto of Pepperdine University is “Freely ye received, Freely give” (p. 1). It to me symbolizes a complete circle. A circle of love, kindness, community, hope, faith, vision, mission and purpose to make a difference in the world through our thoughts words, and actions. I feel



truly blessed to have found a scholarly method to communicate authentically and genuinely on the intellectual, emotional and spiritual dimension of living a life of service to others to make a difference in the world. I will share with you one of my favorite poems to frame my personal story. It is entitled *The Road Not Taken*, by Robert Frost as cited on the website Poem Hunter:

The Road Not Taken

Two Roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry that I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;  
Then took the other just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,  
Though as for that passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,  
And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.  
I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I - -

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference. (p. 1)

Scholarly personal narrative writing is an important form of scholarly research and has meaning and significance for self and others to make constructive sense of. According to Gormack (as cited in Nash, 2004):

A serious life, by definition, is a life one reflects on, a life one tries to make sense of and bear witness to. The age is characterized by a need to testify. Everywhere in the world women and men are rising up to tell their stories out of the now commonly held belief that one's own life signifies. (p. 23)

Henry David Thoreau wrote a book that inspired me greatly entitled *Walden Pond*. Additionally, according to Thoreau as cited on the website The Quotations Page, "The mass of men lead quiet lives of desperation" (p. 1). Henry David Thoreau authentically shares his lived experience in a cabin on Walden Pond and reflects on his experiences. It is a powerful and evocative personal narrative that deeply touched my soul. I have walked the path at Walden Pond myself. I find comfort and the opportunity to reflect being connected with nature. Before commencing the writing of this dissertation I took many long contemplative walks in nature. Being in nature allows one the opportunity to connect with one's soul and listen with intent and wonderment. I feel the spiritual energy present in living things. Nature is majestic. Henry David Thoreau contemplates the reason for wanting to embark on his self described "experiment in living." According to Thoreau as cited on the website *The Quotations Page*:

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential

facts of life, and see if I could not learn from what it had to teach, and not when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. (p. 1)

Henry David Thoreau reflected considerably on his experience at Walden Pond and made some very profound conclusions in his personal narrative that he shared with the world for all to benefit from his insights. According to Thoreau as cited on the website World of Quotes: “If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away” (p. 1).

I value and appreciate your taking time and energy to join me in this learning journey of the exploration of the transformational learning with Pepperdine University. I made a choice in the road of life and chose Pepperdine University and as Robert Frost so eloquently stated again repeated as cited on the website Poem Hunter, “Two roads diverged in a wood, and I – I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference” (p. 1).

The decision to choose Pepperdine University to attend was a spiritual and emotional experience. I was in a car as a passenger enjoying the sunset and spectacular ocean views on Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu. My senses were mesmerized by the breathtaking scenery. All of a sudden I felt a warm and spiritual powerful feeling. It shocked my senses and I felt a spiritual light. I suddenly looked to the left and saw buildings to the left of the roadside. It was Pepperdine University. I felt the connection and was inspired to complete my master’s degree in Clinical Psychology which was the beginning of my transformational learning journey with Pepperdine University.

As a young child I loved the movie the Wizard of Oz. I watched it many times with wonderment and amazement. I believe life is a journey and it is important to follow the yellow brick road and learn the lesson of life as it unfolds. As an adult, I had the great pleasure of reading a book by Green entitled *The Zen of Oz Ten Spiritual Lessons from Over the Rainbow*. I will share with you several excerpts from this beautifully written inspiring book. Green (1998) interprets the meaning of the Wizard of Oz from a Zen perspective. It is a heroine's journey.

According to Green (1998):

Glinda the good witch of the North, is clearly a Zen master. She sets Dorothy on the Yellow Brick Road to spiritual enlightenment. When Dorothy, The Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion let go of their conscious yearning and free their minds to function spontaneously and in harmony with the cosmos, brains, heart, and courage flow easily and effortlessly. Ultimately, Dorothy attains satori, the Zen experience of "awakening." She finds her true Self, her higher consciousness, her ultimate Oneness with the cosmos, her home. (p. 18)

Pepperdine University has felt like home to me. It is a place of mission, vision and purpose to make a difference in the world. It is a community of learners with a commitment to love and service to make the world a better place by preparing individuals the opportunity to enhance oneself to make a significant positive difference in the world. There is a passion and commitment to living lives of purpose and service to others. Green discusses the concept of "inner spark" as symbolically represented by the ruby red slippers Dorothy wore. According to Green (1998):

You are born with an inner spark. This inner spark gives you a potentially radiant

character and the capability of knowing, loving, and connecting with the spiritual communing with the creative intelligence of the universe. You are endowed with infinite potential for goodness and greatness. (p. 33)

As a child, I actually liked it when the Scarecrow was awarded the “Doctorate of Thinkology”. I humbly offer my personal learning journey for the reader to connect with and find your own unique connection with my personal story. I am very inspired by the writings of Thich Nhat Hanh who was nominated for the Nobel Prize by Martin Luther King, Jr. In his eloquent, heartfelt and mindful book entitled *True Love A Practice for Awakening the Heart* he encourages one to have an open heart and be mindful in the moment. According to Hanh (2004):

Mindfulness is like a light, enabling concentration to really be there, and that also makes it possible for us to look deeply into the heart of things. From this deep looking is born deep vision, understanding. Mindfulness brings concentration, understanding, love, and freedom. (pp. 51-52)

Additionally according to Hanh (2004):

Albert Camus wrote a novel, *The Stranger*, in which his character, Meursault, is condemned to death. Three days before his execution, he is able for the first time in his life to touch the blue sky. He is in his cell, he is looking at the ceiling. He discovers a square of blue sky appearing through the skylight. Strangely enough, a man of forty years of age is able to see the blue sky for the first time. Of course, he had looked at the stars and the blue sky more than once before, but this time it is for real. We might not know how to touch the blue sky in such a profound way. The moment of

awareness Camus described is Mindfulness: Suddenly you are able to touch life.

(pp. 16-17)

I have been touched and moved by my transformational learning journey. I freely and abundantly share my personal learning journey with you. I hope that it touches and enriches your life. In the process of revealing my personal journey I hope to inspire others to share their unique personal stories and lived experiences to enrich and touch the world. According to Thoreau as cited on the website The Quotations Page, “Things do not change, we change” (p. 1).

### *Purpose*

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore my transformational learning journey with Pepperdine University. The theoretical framework I will use is transformational learning. The top five elements of transformational learning are as follows:

1. Critical Reflection.
2. Communication.
3. Soulful Qualities.
4. Feelings and Affect Transformation.
5. Freedom and Emancipation.

This will be conducted using the research method of autoethnography also referred to as personal narratives. Nash made some important points regarding scholarly personal narratives as also referred to by Nash as SPN. According to Nash (2004):

SPN is about giving yourself permission to express you own voice in your own language, your own take on your own story in your own unimitatable manner. SPN is

your grand opportunity to practice listening to the sound of your own voice. Find your special sound and style and you will find your story. (pp. 24-25)

In autoethnography, personal stories are told in the personal voice. The reading and reflecting on personal narratives is reminiscent of the famous quote as cited on the website Heart Quotes, “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts” (p. 1). Nash discusses the circular nature of constructivist nature of personal narrative writing. It was a powerful experience to read dissertations and journal articles written from an autoethnography personal narrative method. I do agree that the sum is greater than the parts in this method of research. According to Nash (2004):

Each of us is both constructivist and constructed. The stories we construct then turn around and construct us and we them...forever. I call this the constructivist circle.

Locate the personal story of the truth teller, and you will go a long way toward locating what the truth teller really means by “truth.” (p. 36)

Additionally, according to Nash (2004):

If you want to locate the important whys of your life then write an SPN. SPNs will help you explore all the relevant contingencies in your context of meanings. This is what Socrates’ dictum “know thyself” really means. Says who? Says me. And this, for what it is worth, is my truth, framed in large part, by my own contingencies. (p. 40)

The exploration of my transformational learning journey is best shared via the research method of autoethnography personal narratives. According to Ellis and Bochner (as cited in Pennington, 2007):

Social scientists recently have begun to view themselves as the phenomenon and to write evocative personal narratives specifically in their academic as well as their

personal lives. Their primary purpose is to understand the self or some aspect of a life lives in a cultural context....Readers too take a more active role as they are invited into the author's world, evoked to a feeling level about the events being described, and stimulated to use what they learn to reflect on, understand and cope with their own lives. (Shelton, 1995), and to write from an ethic of care and concern (Denzin, 1997, Noddings, 1984; Richardson, 1997). (Ellis & Bochner, 2000 p. 742). (p. 96)

The purpose of this dissertation will utilize a transformational method of research of autoethnography personal narratives to explore the transformational learning journey with Pepperdine University. It will allow me to share my personal story of transformational learning. It will allow the reader to make personal connections and insights and to reflect on one's own journey in life.

### *Significance of the Study*

I experienced significant transformational learning as part of my educational learning journey with Pepperdine University. I find it highly valuable to reflect on the transformational learning process and construct personal meaning and make sense and connections with the transformational learning process.

Autoethnography personal narratives pushes the boundaries of scientific methods to make significant contributions in many academic disciplines. It adds significant value to the process of inquiry about human experience and phenomenology. W.M. Roth has written a powerful book entitled *Bold Visions in Educational Research Autobiography and Autoethnography: Praxis of Research Method*. In respect to science and phenomenology Roth (2005) asserts:

Phenomenologic thought begins with the assumption that we are always already part



of the social and material world, as bodies among bodies, shot through with meaning. From a phenomenological perspective, the aspect of the world which individuals perceive and towards which they orient their actions, is always and already transparent (understood). Any hope of coherence between the (scientific) knowledge of ourselves and our idiosyncratic experiences in the world require that both sides, science, the external (inter!) subjectivity and personal experience (inner subjectivity) are pushed. Scientists of all brands- including the Princeton physicist Piet Hut and the neurophysiologist Francisco Varela- have begun to suggest that we can overcome the epistemological problems raised by the observer/observed and mind-body dichotomies by drawing on first person methodologies...Among these first person methodologies auto/biography and auto/ethnography can furnish descriptions of experiences that phenomenological methods attempt to investigate in deeper structures. (p. 9)

The major significance of this study is the ability to explore my personal story of transformational learning and make learning connections and insights on transformational learning. Autoethnography personal narratives offer the opportunity to explore the process of transformation and change and invite others to act and to promote change. According to Roth (2005), "Autobiography is inherently about change, growing up, moving about" (p. 93).

This method is important as it allows one to reflect on soulful transformation. Hawkins (as cited in Roth, 2005) discusses the analogy of a rose in a mirror to the process of personal soulful reflection:

The ancient Hindu philosophers expressed a definition of human nature by using the metaphor of the mirror. In the Baghavat Gita, there is a marvelous image of the soul

which is said to be the “reflection of the rose in a glass.” Like most religious philosophy, this one is concerned with death and consolation. The theory of immortality in this philosophy is expressed by saying that when death occurs, you take away the mirror but the rose is still there. This image seems to me a very powerful one...it emphasizes the thing I want to talk about, which is you can’t dissociate the person from the world he lives and functions in and that you can somehow measure the person by the degree of his involvement in that world. The soul is not contained within the body but outside, in the theatre of its commitments. (p. 205)

The significance of this study is the reflection of my rose in the mirror. Rose imagery is powerful for me. My personal backyard is my roses in the mirror. I have in the center of my garden in stone a fountain (a circle) a symbol of connectedness and there are four paths-mind, body, soul, spirit, that extend from the fountain and the whole garden is bounded by the “path” of life. Essentially, designed symbolically as a circle in the center from which four paths extend yet are connected to the path of life. So it looks like a circle in the middle with four lines extending like the north, south, east and west points on a compass with a square on the outside that connects with the four directions and connects the path of life. It then forms four “squares” outside the circle interconnected by the paths. In each square are four rows of four rose bushes, 16 in each square to a combined total of 64 rose bushes all red. It is my tribute to soul and love.

I wear the symbols of four paths connected by a circle in the middle as a uniquely designed pendant around my neck that is dear to me. It is also reminiscent of the imagery of a Celtic cross. The creation of the Celtic cross is commonly interpreted as merging two perspectives and traditions much like autoethnography blends the personal voice

with the scholarly voice to create a new way of being that is very symbolic and represent two opposites joined as one. According to Wilde (2004):

Although this ancient symbol was first found engraved on artifacts dating from 10,000 BC, it is said that St. Patrick made the first Celtic cross in the fifth century AD.

According to legend, he was shown a sacred standing stone marked with a circle to represent the moon goddess. Patrick made the mark of a Latin cross through the circle and blessed the stone. This was the lunar power of the old religion absorbed into solar Christianity. The emblem – a kind of Celtic yin-yang symbol – symbolizes the harmonious and dynamic union of opposites. (p. 113)

The significance of this study is how my gift of my personal stories rings true to you as a form of self expression that offers the reader to make personal connections and insights and inspires the reader to reflect and consider one's own deeply unique journey in life. Transformation is a powerful concept to reflect upon.

My background is Celtic in nature. The Celtic tradition is rich with storytelling of journey of enlightenment while describing their voyages of discovery. According to Wilde (2004):

The Celtic Journey- There is a tradition of immranna- stories of sea voyages in which the hero visits enchanted islands, each of which with its own supernatural inhabitants or qualities, usually including one inhabited by seductive women. These tales often have a spiritual significance as well as being exciting and entertaining. They are an example of how the Celtic imagination entwines two or more threads of meaning into one story, in order to disguise and yet adorn the truth. From the Voyage of Bran....

Do not fall into the bed of sloath, Let not intoxication over come you; Begin a voyage over clear sea, and perchance you may reach the land of women. (p. 10)

Welcome to the land of my womanhood and personal narrative. I will tell my unique story of transformation of my learning journey and feel that extending trust, heart, soul and spirit in this mystical voyage of discovery together we will co-construct significance in this study and celebrate the human spirit of us all in telling our own stories to create a collective understanding of self and others in the journey of life and enlightenment.

Ultimately, the significance of this study is in honoring the significance of human spirit and the collective celebration of each person's unique life story and the journey of transformation. The analogy presented was one of a kaleidoscope. According to Austin (as cited in Ellis and Bochner, 1996):

One of the most important qualities endemic to the development of close friendship and love is the capacity to "celebrate the other." (Sampson 1993). As writers from Mead (1934) to Bakhtin (1981, 1986) have emphasized the essence of who we are, what we think, and how we talk is contingent largely on the others we celebrate. The celebration of others through dialogue bends back upon us reflexively, sustaining, altering, or transforming our comprehension of ourselves and our social world. (p. 206)

Scholarly personal narrative writing in the autoethnographical method transform the meaning of events. According to Nash (2004), "Scholarly personal narrative writing is meant primarily to benefit readers, touch readers' lives by informing their experiences, by transforming the meaning of events, and in Gornick's telling phrase, by delivering wisdom" (p. 28).

My study is significant if it touches your mind, heart and soul and facilitates contemplation of one's own life's journey. According to Nash (2004) in regards to the significance of the scholarly voice of personal narratives:

You are a scholar if you are willing to play with ideas. You are a scholar if you can build on the ideas of others. You are a scholar to the extent that you can tell a good story, instructive story. You are a scholar if you can capture the narrative quality of your human experience in language that inspires others. You are a scholar if you can present your story in such a way that, in some important senses it rings true to human life. You are a scholar if you can help your readers to reexamine their own truth stories in light of the truths that you are struggling to discern in your own complicated life story. You are a scholar if you have passion for language and writing. You are a scholar if you are driven to understand what makes yourself and others tick. You are a scholar if you can feel and think at the same time. You are a scholar if you are willing to allow your students, and your readers, to enter your heart as well as your head. You are a scholar if you can help your students to realize that their lives signify, that they matter more than they will ever know. (p. 46)

Autoethnography personal narratives are very significant in that they offer the opportunity to share one's own unique story to transform perspectives of self and others and offer a significant opportunity for change. Anyone's personal story is unique, meaningful and significant. I will share with you mine and hope to inspire you to reflect on yours.

### *Assumptions*

1. Autoethnography personal narratives allow for telling a personal story in one's

original voice.

2. It is an interesting and worthwhile endeavor to tell one's own personal story as an autoethnography personal narrative.
3. Each person has a unique story to tell and reflect upon.
4. Utilizing autoethnography is a useful method to share and reflect on transformational learning.
5. The readers' of autoethnography personal narratives share in the journey of reflection of the personal story.
6. Autoethnography personal narratives allow the reader's to make connections with the personal story and to reflect upon their own personal stories.
7. Creating an autoethnography personal narratives is a transformational process as well as being a reader of autoethnography personal narratives.
8. Both the writer and the reader co-construct meaning in an interactive connection with the personal story.
9. It is important to open one's mind, heart and soul to make meaningful connections with autoethnography personal narratives.
10. Writing an autoethnography personal narrative takes courage, willingness to be vulnerable and open, passion, genuineness and authenticity.
11. Every person has a unique story to tell and autoethnography personal narratives allow for the free expression of one's personal story to reflect upon.
12. Transformational learning is a life long journey.
13. I am grateful for the supportiveness of my dissertation chairperson and committee in exploring this journey of autoethnography personal narratives with me.

14. My learning journey with Pepperdine University is transformational and worthy of reflecting upon as an autoethnography personal narratives.

### *Definitions*

In this study I will utilize the following definitions autoethnography (also referred to as personal narratives) and transformational learning. According to Denzin et al. (2006):

Autoethnography operated within the interstices- and blurs the boundaries between individual reflexivity (auto), the transcription of collective human experience (-ethno-), and writing as a form of inquiry.(-graphy) that does not merely write up the research but is itself a method of discovery. (p. 427)

Nash made some important points regarding scholarly personal narratives. According to Nash (2004):

SPN is about giving yourself permission to express your own voice in your own language, your own take on your own story in your own unimitatable manner. SPN is your grand opportunity to practice listening to the sound of your own voice. Find your special sound and style and you will find your own story. (pp. 24-25)

Transformational Learning according to Merriam (1993), “In short, transformational learning shapes people; they are different afterwards in ways both they and others can recognize” (p. 47).

### *The Need for Personal Reflection of Transformational Learning*

I feel a strong value and benefit in personally reflecting on the transformational learning journey with Pepperdine University. I have a unique story to tell as I have experienced significant transformational learning. Mezirow asserts that it is important to

reflect on learning. According to Mezirow (1997), “Self-reflection can lead to significant personal transformations” (p. 7).

Pepperdine University prepares students for lives of purpose and service to others. It is important for me to reflect upon my learning in this autoethnography personal narrative. It has value to positively impact the quality of interactions one has as a leader of organizations in making a significant positive difference in the lives of others to engage in this autoethnography personal narrative. According to Nash (2004):

Why might you ask, is personal narrative writing important to educators and other Helping professionals? ...Good teaching, good helping, and good leadership are, in one sense, all about story telling and story-evoking. It is the mutual exchange of stories that professionals and scholars are able to meet clients and students where they actually live their lives. It is the mutual sharing of our personal stories, particularly in the willingness of professionals to listen to the stories of others, that we make the deepest connections with those we are serving. It is in our stories that we, as professionals, and they, as students, can actually profess what we believe and hear what others profess to believe. Our stories get us closer to God, ethics, morality, justice, wisdom, love, hope, suffering and most of all, what constitutes personal and professional meaning for all of us. (p. 2)



## Chapter 2

### Methods

This chapter shall address autoethnography personal narratives as a research method to be utilized in this study. First, I will discuss that autoethnography is a qualitative method and discuss the nature of qualitative research. Secondly, this study will address that autoethnography personal narratives emerged from an ethnographic tradition. Thirdly, the methods of autoethnography personal narratives will be explored as pertaining to the research method utilized in this study.

According to Reed-Danahay (as cited in Pennington, 2006), “Autoethnography has been traditionally used as a method of qualitative inquiry” (p. 96). According to Denzin and Lincoln (as cited in Creswell, 1998):

Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of the phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts-that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives. (p. 15)

Additionally according to Creswell (1998):

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explores a social or human problem. The

researcher builds a holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a naturalistic setting. (p. 15)

Creswell (2003) discusses the interpretive nature of qualitative research:

Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive. This means the researcher makes an interpretation of the data. This includes developing a description of an individual or setting, analyzing data for themes or categories, and finally making an interpretation or drawing conclusions about its meaning personally and theoretically, stating the lessons learned, and offering further questions to be asked (Wolcott, 1994). It also means the researcher filters the data through a personal lens that is situated in a specific sociopolitical and historical moment. One cannot escape the personal interpretation brought to qualitative data analysis. (p. 182)

Additionally, according to Richards and Morse (2007), “All qualitative research seeks understanding of data that are complex and can only be approached in context” (p. 47).

Autoethnography emerged from an ethnographic tradition and is utilized across many academic disciplines. According to Richards and Morse (2007), “Ethnography provides a means of exploring cultural groups” (p. 53). Additionally, according to Richards and Morse, “Ethnographic research explores phenomena within cultural contexts from an emic perspective, or from the perspective of the members of the cultural group involved...Ethnography is always conducted in the natural setting, of the field” (p. 54).

Autoethnography seeks understanding of lived experiences and reflections by writing and reflecting about one's own lived experience and reflections. According to Richards and Morse (2007):

Whereas the basic tenets of traditional ethnography place the researcher in an

ambiguous position by necessitating his or her being both a part of the group and a distant observer, autoethnography legitimates the researcher's use of his or her own experience. (p. 58)

In preparation for this dissertation, I read several books on qualitative methods and seven books specifically about autoethnography also referred to as personal narratives as a method. There is currently a multidisciplinary interest and research focus on autoethnography personal narratives as a method. When I conducted research on investigating autoethnography as a method I found over 171 dissertations explored using autoethnography personal narratives that specifically referenced autoethnography as included as part of the title of those dissertations. In addition, there were numerous journal articles across academic disciplines and diverse topics explored using autoethnography personal narratives.

For specific articles and books regarding autoethnography personal narratives the following citations were useful in learning about autoethnography personal narratives and the diverse topics covered utilizing this method: Atkinson (2000); Baker (2001); Banks and Banks (2000); Bochner and Ellis (2006); Borawski (2007); Burnier (2006); Chin (2007); Clough (1997); Defrancisco, Kuderer, and Chatham-Carpenter (2007); Derrick (2006); Ellis (1996); Etorre (2006); Evans (2007); Foote (2006); Foster, McAllister, and O'Brien (2006); Garza (2008); Gingrich-Philbrook (2005); Holbrook (2005); Hughes (2008); Jago (2006); Jamise (2007); Menley (2005); Olson (2004); Pennington (2007); Pugh (2006); Vidal-Ortiz (2004); and Vryan (2006).

The reading of other autoethnographies did influence my writing of this dissertation in the following way. Each writer told a personal story in their own unique way. None were

alike. All were written from the author's own perspective telling one's own story.

Additionally, I wanted to include these citations so that others reading this dissertation could be inspired to write their own personal narratives. I do believe reading the personal narratives of others inspired personal reflection to write one's own story. This list is a gift to the reader to be able to get a sense of diversity and uniqueness of each person's personal narrative.

Autoethnography as a method of research according to Ellis and Bochner (as cited in Chang, 2008) are "Autobiographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with the cultural descriptions mediated through language, history and ethnographic explanation" (p. 46). Additionally, according to Ellis and Bochner (as cited in Chang, 2008) autoethnographies are also referred to as personal narratives.

As previously mentioned in definitions section of this paper on page 17 according to Denzin et al. (2006), autoethnography means: "Autoethnography: (auto) individual reflexivity (-ethno-) the transcription of collective human experience and (-graphy) the writing as a form of inquiry" (p. 427).

According to Ellis (2004):

Autoethnography refers to writing about the personal and its relationship to culture. It is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness... Usually written in first person voice, autoethnographic texts appear in a variety of forms- short stories, poems, fiction, novels, photographic essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing and social prose. They showcase concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness. These features

appear as relational and institutional stories affected by history and social structure, which themselves are dialectically revealed through actions, feeling, thoughts and language. (pp. 37-38)

Ellis (2004) further states, “Of course, all autoethnographic writing occurs after experience” (p. 116).

Additionally, according to Ellis and Bochner (as cited in Bochner and Ellis, 2002):

Autoethnography is connecting the personal to the cultural until the distinctions between the personal and the cultural become blurred” (Ellis and Bochner 2000: 738-39). While autoethnographers write about themselves, their goal is to touch “a world beyond the self of the writer” (Bochner and Ellis, 1996: 24). In short,

autoethnographers enact the basis assumption of interpretive, qualitative social science that one cannot separate the knower from the known (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

Here, however, the known is the knower’s experience. (p. 174)

I personally approach the process of this autoethnographic personal narrative study with awe and wonderment. I am inspired by the opportunity to express myself freely, abundantly, creatively, soulfully and with passion and enthusiasm. I have found the method to express the rhythm of my soul to make personal sense and meaning in my life’s journey in my experience with Pepperdine University.

I contemplated quite fervently which method of research would be most expressive of what legacy I want to share with the world. I did not want to simply conduct a study to earn my doctorate. I wanted to find meaning, purpose and significance in the process, to learn something new and inspire others in the process.

I am glad that I found my most eloquent voice of creative transformational sense-making in this research method that allows me the ability to tell you my story and to reflect upon the transformational journey with Pepperdine University.

In order to communicate with heart and soul about my personal connection with a university with heart and soul I chose this method that is truly a transformational research method that allows one the ability to speak with heart, soul, passion, courage and convictions about one's unique personal transformative voyage of life.

I thought long and hard about taking on this endeavor of boldly and vulnerably sharing my personal story. I was deeply touched by the words of wisdom of all the scholars advocating on behalf of the merits of writing an autoethnography personal narrative. According to Lamott (as cited in Nash, 2004):

My students ask, "so why does our writing matter?" Because of the spirit I say.

Because of the heart. Writing and reading decrease our sense of isolation. They deepen and widen and expand our sense of life, they feed our soul. When writers make us shake our heads with the exactness of their prose and their truths, and even make us laugh about ourselves or life, our buoyancy is restored. We are given a shot at dancing with, or at least clapping along with the absurdity of life. (p. 159)

In contemplating the courage of conviction to write a dissertation from one's own original voice about one's one personal story I am truly inspired by Emerson (as cited in Nash, 2004), "What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us" (p. 75). I choose to choose the leap in faith to share my story with you. According to Campbell (as cited in Nash, 2004), "As you go the way of life, you see a chasm. Jump. It is not as wide as you think" (p. 75).

### *Data Collection*

The data for this autoethnography personal narrative is the data of my lived experience. For this study, I will include personally revealing narratives. Chapter 3 for this study will include the data I will share for this study. According to Ellis (2004) autoethnographic data can take many forms. According to Ellis (as cited in Burnier, 2006) “Autoethnography is a more flexible and fluid form of scholarly writing that allows for a great deal of variation among its practitioners” (p. 414).

Additionally according to Chang (2008), “Themes adopted by self-narrators are as diverse as the authorship is wide” (p. 38). For this study, I will include the following data for Chapter 3: Personal Narrative of Organizational Leadership, Personal Narrative of Education and Dissertation Dialogues: Andragogy of the Expressed.

These narratives are personal reflections on organizational leadership, education and dissertation dialogues. These personal narratives comprise the data for this study. I choose to include personal narratives in organizational leadership, education and dissertation dialogues because they were very important aspects of the transformational learning journey with Pepperdine University. Chapter 4 will provide a conceptual discussion of transformational learning theory. Chapter 5 will provide conclusions.

Psychology is a part of my everyday human interactions. I choose to focus on personal narratives of organizational leadership, personal narratives of education and dissertation dialogues for this study.

Since a dissertation is a published document, an important aspect of autoethnography for the writer to consider is to choose the level of self disclosure one is comfortable with.

This is a personal decision unique to each individual. Years later, one should be comfortable with the level of disclosure one chooses.

*Coming to Terms with Personal Narratives of My Transformational Learning Journey with Pepperdine University*

For the purposes of this study I will identify what the personal narratives will comprise for this study:

Personal Narrative of Organizational Leadership: This personal narrative of organizational leadership will comprise my personal reflections on the development of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group.

Personal Narrative of Education: This personal narrative will provide my personal reflections on my philosophy of education. This personal narrative will also provide my personal vision of educational excellence. Additionally, this personal narrative will also provide my reflections on teaching a course to prepare educators to work with special needs students.

Lastly, I will present Dissertation Dialogues: Andragogy of the Expressed: This personal narrative will provide my personal reflections on dissertation dialogues and will be in the form of a short impressionistic story.

An additional point to make is that I use the terms personal narratives and personal reflections interchangeably as terms to describe my personal story. My personal reflections comprise my personal narratives. I personally reflect and share with you the reader.



### *Validity And Reliability of The Study*

According to McCaskill (2008):

Qualitative data analysis requires the organization of data into categories, identifying patterns, or relationships among the categories. The categories and patterns emerge as the data is collected. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). “In classic terms, sociologists and anthropologists have shown us that finding the categories and the relationship patterns lead to completeness in the narrative.” Janesnick, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; (p. 17).

According to Ellis and Bochner (as cited in McCaskill, 2008) “Since we always create our personal narrative from a situated location, trying to make our present, imagined future, and remembered past cohere, there’s no such thing as orthodox reliability” (p. 17).

Autoethnography refers to authenticity as a way to review personal narratives.

According to Nash (2004) “Personal narratives writing is true when writers work hard to make personal meaning of the raw material of their day to day experiences in a way that readers believe it” (p. 27).

According to Nash (2004) there is simply no definitive answer as each person’s story is unique and there is a value in simply sharing one’s story with the reader:

There is just no way around it. No matter how convinced, brilliant, or enlightened you are, you can’t avoid people asking you the following questions: Says who? Where are you coming from? Why? So What? Why should it matter to me? Sorry dear readers. The long and short of it is I need to know your story and you mine. Truth starts and ends there, both for you and for me. There is no exit. Sartre is right. (p. 39)

Additionally, according to Nash (2004), “In matters of narrative truth, there is only interpretation, perspective, point of view, and personal preference... Truth and reality are infinitely interpretable. So to is the notion of validity” (p. 41).

According to Ellis (as cited in Roth, 2005):

A story’s validity can be judged by whether it evokes in the reader a feeling that the experience is lifelike, believable and possible; the story’s generalizability can be judged by whether it speaks to the reader about their experience. (p. 238)

Futhermore, Ellis (2004) asserts:

In autoethnographic work, I look at validity in terms of what happens to readers as well as to research participants and researchers. To me, validity means that our work seeks verisimilitude; it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable and possible. You can also judge validity by whether it helps readers communicate with others different from themselves or offers a way to improve the lives of participants and readers and even your own. (p. 124)

The data was categorized in terms of personal reflections in organizational leadership, personal reflections in education, personal reflections on dissertation dialogues and then discussed in terms of themes in the Chapter 4 conceptual discussion and insights and conclusions are discussed in Chapter 5. According to Bochner and Ellis (as cited in Ellis, 2002) “A valuable use of autoethnography is to allow another person’s world of experience to inspire critical reflection of your own” (p. 220).

#### *Limitations of Autoethnography*

According to McCaskill (2008), traditional validity, reliability and generalizability were discussed as the author referenced as not applicable to autoethnography. This study

involves sharing my own personal narratives with the reader. They are my personal reflections on my own lived experiences which allows the reader to make one's own connection with the narratives presented. One of the limitations cited by Bochner, Ellis and Wilkins (as cited in Foster, McAllister and O'Brien, 2006) is the following, "The process of autoethnography further requires the researcher to be willing to experience vulnerability, recall previous experiences and emotions, and to be able to reflect upon and articulate them in an evocative way" (p. 49). Additionally, according to Tierney (as cited in Foster, et al., 2006), "As a form of interpretation, it does not allow us to understand completely, the inner life of another. It is simply an interpretation of such" (p. 49).

### *Next Steps*

Chapter 3 which proceeds next are my personal narratives in organizational leadership, education and dissertation dialogues. They comprise my personal story to share with you. As I share them with you with courage, vulnerability and with an open mind and open heart I request that you receive them accordingly.

My story is my gift to you and hope that it inspired others to share their personal stories and for the readers to make personal connections and insights. It would be my hope and joy that the reader have the opportunity to reflect on one's own unique transformational journey in life.

My background is Celtic in nature. The Celtic tradition among many other cultures connects with the power of three. According to Wilde (2004):

The Celts thought, spoke and wrote in threes. Three pronged statements called triads...encapsulated Celtic wisdom and history in a form that the bards could

remember, recite and pass on to their successors. In folk tales, the hero or heroine is often granted three wishes, the triple goddess, and god arise in many forms; and underlying all this is the magic secret about three.- it is the first number after one!

Because the first moment you see one and two there is three, which is the relationship between them. This is the mysterious third force which seems invisible but makes all the difference. (p. 56)

I honor the relationship between myself I and the reader Thou to create the I - Thou relationship to create our third force of shared meaning together. I will share with you a beautiful excerpt from the Celtic tradition regarding the sacredness of sharing at the soul level in friendship, connectedness and universal love and understanding.

According to O'Donahue (1997):

Anam is the Gaelic word for soul and cara is the word for friend. So anam cara in the Celtic world was the "soul friend". In the early Celtic church a person who acted as a teacher, companion, or spiritual guide was called an anam cara...With the anam cara you could share your innermost self, your mind and your heart. This friendship was an act of recognition and belonging...The anam cara is god's gift. Friendship is the nature of God. The Christian concept of god as Trinity is the most sublime articulation of otherness and intimacy and the interflow of friendship... The anam cara brings epistemological integration and healing. You look and see and understand differently. Initially, this can be disruptive and awkward, but it gradually refines your sensibility and transforms your way of being in the world. (pp. 13-16)

Thank you for joining me in this journey. Next, chapter 3 are my personal narratives on organizational leadership, education and dissertation dialogues.

## Chapter 3

### Personal Narratives

Chapter 3 will present three personal narratives. First, Personal Narrative of Organizational Leadership will be presented. Secondly, Personal Narrative of Education will be presented. Thirdly, Dissertation Dialogues: Andragogy of the Expressed will be presented. These personal narratives tell my personal reflections on the transformational learning journey with Pepperdine University.

#### *Personal Narrative of Organizational Leadership*

The purpose of this personal narrative of Organizational Leadership is the reflections on the development of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group that targets lower to middle market companies to provide sell-side advisory and capital raising services. Sell-side advisory services are services to help clients to with the process of selling their companies. Capital raising services are services to assist clients with raising funds for their companies.

There is currently a shortage of companies poised to target lower to middle market businesses to provide sell-side advisory and capital raising services.

The purpose of this personal narrative is to reflect upon the development of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group that targets lower to middle market companies to provide sell-side advisory and capital raising services.

My role is as co-founder and partner of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. This personal narrative will focus on the development of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group to target lower to middle market companies to provide sell-side advisory and capital raising services.

This personal narrative will integrate my personal reflections on the coursework from Pepperdine University's Doctoral Program in Organizational Leadership in the course content areas of Ethics and Society, Leadership of Human Endeavor, Adult Learning Theory, Communication and Information Technology, Management of Human Resources, Legal, Economic, Social-Political Theory, Marketing and Publicity, Consultancy, and Transforming Organizations in a Global Community. These personal reflections are part of the transformational journey with Pepperdine University.

*Personal Reflections on the Historical Background of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group Emergence From Consultancy*

The task in the Consultancy class gave me a powerful challenge. I was asked to find a leadership project to be involved in on a consultancy basis.

My focus was on working with development of a proposal to fund a project. That experience was transformational in that it firmly thrust students into a leadership role and developing a leadership project of significance.

This stimulated my interest in consulting and developed a passion for consulting with organizations to make a significant positive difference. This led to focusing on private consulting with CEOs (Chief Executive Officers) of corporations.

My experience includes having taught at the graduate level and have been a featured presenter at leadership conferences. Prior experience also includes having been a director of a clinical internship program in which I supervised graduate level interns in working with children in a residential treatment facility providing individual, group and family therapy services.

Additionally, my prior background and training prior to enrollment in the doctoral program in Organizational Leadership was the following: a B.S. in Education, M.A. in Clinical Psychology and M.A. in Administration in the Educational Leadership Academy with both masters degrees attained at Pepperdine University.

I truly believe in the mission of Pepperdine University. That is why I chose to complete two masters degrees there and pursue my doctoral studies as well. I have learned and experienced so much personal growth and transformation as part of the Pepperdine learning community.

The Pepperdine University Course Catalog 2007-2008 states as follows according to Pepperdine University (2007):

The Organizational Leadership concentration is designed to develop individuals who have the knowledge and capability to take on leadership roles in a variety of settings. It was created to provide an environment where educators can advance their leadership skills while sharing ideas and experiences with businesses and academic professionals. The program has applications to community colleges, liberal art colleges, and comprehensive universities, as well as business and other organizations engaged in training and development, life-span learning, healthcare and adult occupational education. (p. 111)

Prior to the development of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group, I was involved in consultancy with another investment banking group involved in a major transaction in the food sector. The investment banking firm provided sell-side advisory services to the client and executed the sale of the client's company. The client believed the company to be worth no more than \$100 million dollars. After providing sell-side

advisory services to which my involvement was in a consultancy basis, we were able to examine a variety of methods to maximize the profitability of the company and greatly maximize the value of the company. After spending months of providing sell-side advisory services and consulting to maximize value of the company, it eventually sold for over \$180 million dollars dramatically exceeding the expectations of the clients.

Investment banking is an industry that piques my interest. It is an industry that could certainly benefit from an ethical and principle centered leadership perspective. As will be developed in further in this personal reflection, sell-side advisory clients are in need of ethical and principle centered leadership in the guidance of executing transactions to maximize value to clients and to significantly make a difference in the lives of others.

After completing the highly successful transaction with the food company that greatly exceeded the client's expectations, it provided inspiration to continue involvement in investment banking. It presents an opportunity to make a significant positive difference in the lives of others and maximize value to clients.

It is an important role to help clients sell their companies or raise funds for clients. One can make a significant positive difference in the lives of the clients by helping clients receive maximum value of companies when sold or to help clients raise funds for their companies. By providing ethical and principle centered leadership, one can help companies get the most value for their companies when sold. Also, in raising capital adhering to ethical and principle centered leadership helps clients to accomplish their capital raising goals.

The successful completion of that project was not without challenges. Since the field of investment banking is highly confidential, this personal narrative will not name the



name of the client or identify it in any way nor will the narrative list all the challenges faced in this project.

Suffice to say, that a learning outcome in this project was that my convictions of highly ethical principles and a principle centered leadership style can make major contributions in the field of investment banking to target the lower to middle market companies in providing sell-side and capital raising services.

I shared my deeply held ethical principles and principle centered leadership style and conviction to make a significant positive difference in the lives of others and maximize values for clients with the partner of the investment banking firm in my role as a consultant.

After the successful completion of that highly successful transaction, a new vision was created between that partner in the firm and myself to create a new company based on principle centered leadership and commitment to ethical principles. The new firm that was created was Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. My current business partner is a former Board of Visitors member of Pepperdine University's Seaver College in addition to being former faculty at University of Southern California's Entrepreneurial Studies Program and has been a former CEO of food companies amongst many other leadership positions.

In summary, this personal reflection addressed the historical background of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group emerging from consultancy. The consultancy project at Pepperdine University stimulated a passion for consulting. Being involved on a consultancy basis led to working on a consultancy basis on an investment banking deal. This led to forming Capital Partners Investment Banking Group which is founded on

principle centered leadership and a commitment to ethical principles. It is important in an organization to create a shared mission to accomplish organizational objectives. Next, I will personally reflect on ethics.

### *Ethics*

It is important in formulating a mission for an organization to first look closely at one's own deeply held personal and ethical convictions before trying to create an ethical platform with others. My personal reflection on ethics will provide an overview of my own personal ethical values which ultimately led to the development of the mission for Capital Partners Investment Banking Group which will be explored in this personal narrative.

One of the most powerful experiences that was encountered as part of my educational experience at Pepperdine University was the formulation of a personal mission statement. It is exciting and empowering to contemplate one's core values, roles and personal mission. My personal reflection on ethics will share with you the personal mission that was created. It is important for one to strive to live in accordance with one's personal values and mission. Covey makes an analogy to a personal mission statement and the self evident truth contained in the Declaration of Independence. According to Covey (1989):

A personal mission statement based on correct principles becomes the same kind of standard for an individual. It becomes a personal constitution, the basis for making major life directing decisions, the basis for making daily decisions in the midst of circumstances and emotions that affect our lives. It empowers individuals with the same timeless strength in the midst of change. (p. 108)

I personally found the experience of writing a personal mission statement liberating, and a very empowering experience. Change is a constant in the journey of life and having a personal mission based on core character values helps one to navigate one's voyage in the path of life. One does not always have control over the challenges one encounters in life. Having a core set of character values reflected in a personal mission statement helps facilitate choosing one's response to life circumstances and to develop one's own choices in the path of life.

My personal reflection on ethics will explore my commitment to making a difference in the lives of others. This reflection will provide below a summary of my personal ethical values and mission so that connections and congruence can be identified between my life's plan and my personal reflections in this personal narrative.

#### *Values*

1. Honesty
2. Integrity
3. Kindness
4. Compassion
5. Commitment to Life-Long Learning as a Growth Process
6. Respect Self and Others
7. Value Diversity and Variety of Perspectives
8. Acceptance
9. Creativity and Adventure
10. Being Present in the Moment

*Life Roles*

1. Mother
2. Investment Banker
3. Doctoral Student in the Ed. D in Organizational Leadership Program
4. Friend
5. Self

*Personal Mission Statement*

My life is committed to valuing honesty and integrity. Through my interactions with others, my role will be to diligently work to build interpersonal relationships that are powerful and authentic in an atmosphere rich in kindness, compassion and acceptance and commit to challenging myself to enhance my personal best efforts in all interpersonal relationships and personal endeavors. My life's purpose is to make a significant positive difference in the lives of others.

*Ethical Decision Making Framework*

My personal mission statement provides an ethical decision making process to guide my leadership and personal endeavors. My ethical principles led to the formation of the mission of Capital Partners Investment Banking group which will be addressed in this personal narrative. My personal reflections on ethics will expand upon my process for ethical decision making.

One needs to contemplate and formulate one's own personal ethical decision making process before expanding to developing a mission for an organization. According to Covey (1990), "Principle-centered leadership introduces a new paradigm- that we center our lives and our leadership of organizations and people on certain 'true north'

principles” (p. 17). Covey further asserts, “Principles apply at all times in all places. They surface in the form of values, ideas, norms and teachings that uplift, ennoble, fulfill, empower and inspire people” (p. 18).

In my role as a partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group, it is critically important to be able to demonstrate personal integrity and ethical behavior. It is also beneficial to be able to have team members in our firm to engage in critical reflection of their value structure and ethical decision making process. My role is as one of two partners in the firm. The two partners, provide leadership for Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. We also have strategic alliance partners who are aligned to come together on specific projects and tasks and advisory board members who have certain expertise to be available in an advisory basis.

Investment banking groups need to be able to advocate for their client’s needs and demonstrate ethical behavior. I will identify my personal ethical viewpoint. It will serve to guide the ethical and principle centered leadership work that I choose to engage in as a partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group.

My personal belief is consistent with Frankl (2000) in that individuals have the freedom and responsibility to freely choose their own response in any given situation. Frankl, in his profound account of his personal experience in a concentration camp, discussed the role of human dignity. Despite the daily atrocities that he had to endure in daily existence in the concentration camp, this experience significantly impacted his views of human existence. A 1991 reader survey for the Library of Congress that asked readers to name a book that made a difference in your life found Frankl’s book, *Man’s Search for Meaning* among the ten most influential books in America.

Frankl (2000) asserted that no matter what situations and circumstances one has to face, an individual has the freedom and responsibility to choose one's own response to situations and circumstances in everyday living. This is especially important to keep in mind in the high pressured, high stakes involvement in investment banking field. It is very important to keep centered in one's own deeply held ethical principles to keep issues in perspective and to operation from one's ethical platform from a place of integrity.

Covey was inspired by Frankl's book *Man's Search for Meaning*. Covey (1990) in *First Things First* discussed the space between stimulus and response. Basically, it is similar to Frankl's view that even though we do not have control of certain external events we have the freedom and responsibility to choose our own response to the situation. It is critical to operate from an ethical perspective as investment banking is based on maintaining client trust throughout a transaction and to build solid business relationships based on trust.

Engler (1999) discussed that existentialism focuses on contemplating one's own existence. Engler further asserts that existentialism focuses on the individual's personal reflections of the nature and purpose of one's own existence. The concepts of Engler regarding existentialism are very similar to the ideas set forth in Frankl (2000) as both choose to assert the concept that each person has the freedom and responsibility to choose a response to situations and to find meaning in life. Engler discussed the importance of being genuine and authentic.

In order to have referral sources feel comfortable to refer new clients and for clients to be comfortable to execute a transaction it is important to be authentic, genuine and ethical and have personal integrity. It is the basis of being able to form powerful,

dynamic and synergistic business relationships to accomplish organizational objectives. If we are what we do then being ethical is a state of being that clients in the business community will respect and be comfortable doing business together and place trust to receive sell-side advisory services for selling or assisting with capital raising for their companies.

Covey (1990) advocates an abundance mentality. There is a fundamental question that is a popular expression. Is your cup half empty or half full? The answer one has to that question varies if one is a pessimist or has an optimistic point of view.

From my point of view, having a positive view of life the cup is more than half full, it is overflowing. Having the freedom to choose a response to any given circumstance is empowering and leads to an optimistic viewpoint. There is always hope if one has the personal power to choose one's own response to circumstances of life.

Frankl (2000) asserts that no matter what the circumstances are one has the freedom to choose a response to any given situation. There is always the possibility to make a positive choice even in challenging circumstances. Having a positive attitude is an important component of principle centered leadership. This lends well to the investment banking field as there is an abundance of deal opportunities. Every company could consider the possibility of selling at one point or another so there are tremendous deal opportunities available to explore.

My personal belief is that individuals construct meaning from the individual circumstances in their lives and their reactions and perceptions of events. Having a positive abundance mentality is crucial to success in investment banking as ethical

conduct, confidence and competence and exceptional execution of transactions lead to success.

My ethical decision making model is based on exercising personal leadership in the formulation of my core values and striving to live in congruence with my ethical principles. The writings of Covey's (1994) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Covey's (1989) *First Things First*, and Covey's (1990) *Principle Centered Leadership* was very impressive and inspiring.

Reading and reflecting on Covey's concepts lead me to create a personal mission statement which is my ethical decision making framework, my guiding principles from which one can make ethical decisions on a daily and long term basis. It is important to strive to live life in alignment with one's core personal values. When facing an ethical issue, one can strive to make sure that one's actions are in congruence with one's personal mission which acts as a compass to guide one through the ethical decision making process.

#### *Integration of Ethical Principles in My Role as a Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group*

It is important that my personal mission statement guides all roles in my life including my professional role as a partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. I want to have congruence between my principles and my actions in daily living including my professional role. As much as possible I strive to walk the talk. In reflecting on this ethical issue it has been my commitment to the following approach to working with aligning my ethical principles in my role as Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group.



My ethical orientation to life and my role as a Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group has been derived from my personal mission statement. It is my process to make decisions and live according to my personal mission statement and strive to live congruently with my ethical principles. My personal approach is not to try to impose my values on others.

From my ethical frame of reference, the individual constructs meaning and makes choices that are unique to the individual. There is a freedom and responsibility to make choices. Albert Camus, an existentialist who won the Nobel Prize for Literature contemplated decision making in his book *Exile and the Kingdom*. Camus (2007) asserted that no decision is a decision in and of itself. It is the decision not to choose. This thought process of Camus asserts that when facing difficult ethical dilemmas that even deciding not to choose has certain implications as that is a choice in and of itself.

Sometimes there are projects that we choose to pass on for a variety of reasons including ethical reasons. It is important to critically reflect on one's ethical perspective in deciding which projects to commit to. Ideally, my goals are to focus on opportunities that are win-win in nature where the buyer and seller are both benefiting greatly from the transaction. Additionally, it is important to evaluate if there is an opportunity to make a significant positive difference and maximize value for the client.

This task of identifying my ethical orientation is helpful. It clarifies and reinforces my thinking. My personal viewpoint is to have been consciously aware of my ethical approach since taking undergraduate courses in psychology. It was further refined when advanced coursework in Clinical Psychology was pursued. It was developed much further

with my graduate work in Administration in the Educational Leadership Academy and the doctoral coursework in Organizational Leadership.

My personal perspective is to have further refined my ethical principles in the development of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. My personal perspective is to base my understanding of my ethical approach to my direct sensory experiences and my intuition and my phenomenological perspective and by observing my emotional responses to situations.

It is interesting that when taking the Myers Briggs my responses indicated being in the category of ENFP. I am considered extroverted and guided by my feelings and perceptions according to the Myers Briggs assessment.

My training in leadership and clinical psychology is very helpful in the field of investment banking. Clients respond well to a clear leadership vision of how to execute their transaction successfully. The reason a background in clinical psychology is helpful is that there are generally strong emotions that surface in the course of contemplating selling their business or raising capital for expansion. Helping clients through the transaction on an emotional level is a very important component of executing successful transactions.

According to Northouse (2001):

The word ethics has its roots in the Greek word ethos, which means customs, conduct, or character. Ethics is concerned with the kind of values and morals an individual or society finds desirable or appropriate. Furthermore, ethics is concerned with virtuousness of individuals and their motives. Ethical theory provides a system of rules or principles that guide us in making decisions about what is right and wrong and

good or bad in a particular situation. It provides a basis for understanding what it means to be a morally decent human being. (p. 250)

Additionally, according to Northouse (2001):

In regard to leadership, ethics has to do with what leaders do and who leaders are. It is concerned with the nature of leaders' behavior and their virtuousness. In any decision making situation, ethical issues are either implicitly or explicitly involved. The choices that leaders make and how they respond in a given situation are informed and directed by their ethics. (p. 250)

Ethics are not just about facing critical ethical choices. Ethics involves the way you live your life on a daily basis and how you demonstrate personal integrity. Altruistic behavior is looking out for the needs of others regardless to the consequences to self.

It is very critical in my role as Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group to form trust with clients. Investment banking is an industry where there are significant ethical issues that arise in the course of executing successful transactions. It is very critical to have personal integrity and be ethical in building trusting relationships with clients when providing sell-side advisory and capital raising services.

In the leadership role of Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group it is critical to demonstrate ethical behavior and to be able to address the complexities of ethical issues presented in working with clients providing sell-side advisory and capital raising services.

In summary, the reflections on ethics addressed my personal ethical values. It also identified my personal mission statement and ethical decision making framework to guide ethical decision making. My personal reflections on the Formation of Capital

Partners Investment Banking Group Mission Statement shall address developing a Mission Statement for Capital Partners Investment Banking Group based on ethical principles.

*Formation of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group Mission Statement*

This personal narrative shall address my personal reflections on the formation of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group Mission Statement. The importance of forming a mission statement involves curricular concepts that were addressed in coursework at Pepperdine University in the Ed.D. program in Organizational Leadership. Mission statements were part of the curricular content of Ethics and Society, Leadership of Human Endeavor, Transforming Organizations in a Global Community and Marketing and Publicity. I will address importance of the mission statement of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group as part of my personal reflections on marketing and publicity as well.

The formation of the mission statement of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group evolved from critical reflection of important concepts learned in the doctoral program in Organizational Leadership. I will identify the curricular concepts concerning mission statements and discuss the formation of the mission statement for Capital Partners Investment Banking Group.

It is important to have a passion for a vision in order to create something of meaning, purpose and value and strive to make a significant positive difference in the lives of others. According to Covey (1994) in *First Things First* discussed the importance of passion of vision in creating empowering mission statements. According to Covey:

Vision is the best manifestation of creative imagination and the primary motivator of

human action. It's the ability to see beyond our present reality, to create, to invent what did not yet exist, to become what we not yet are. (pp. 103-104)

Covey (1994) shares two profound accounts of how passion of vision helped people to survive challenging circumstances in life. According to Covey:

Victor Frankl, an Austrian psychologist who survived the death camps of Nazi Germany, made a significant discovery. As he found within himself the capacity to rise above his humiliating circumstances, he became an observer as well as a participant in the experience. He watched others who shared in the ordeal. He was intrigued with the question of what made it possible for some people to survive when most died. He looked at several factors-health, vitality, family structure, intelligence, survival skills. Finally, he concluded that none of these factors were primarily responsible. The single most important factor, he realized was a sense of vision- the impelling conviction of those who were to survive that they had a mission to perform, some important work left to do. Survivors of POW camps in Vietnam and elsewhere have reported similar experiences: a compelling, future oriented vision is the primary force that kept them alive. (p. 103)

In the formation of the mission of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group it was important to reflect on the concepts of Covey (1990) in the formation of a mission statement. Covey makes an analogy between the Constitution of the United States and writing a mission statement. According to Covey:

A written mission corporate constitution can be a priceless document for both individuals and organizations. As Thomas Jefferson said about the constitution of the United States: "Our peculiar security is in the possession of a written

Constitution”....In writing a mission statement, you are drafting a blueprint, raising a standard, cementing a constitution...A mission statement focuses your energies and let’s you enjoy a sense of orientation, being, purpose...if you operate from your statement of mission and values, your life is not buffeted by outside forces, In fact, your focus will begin to shape the events of your life. (pp. 288-289)

Additionally, according to Covey (1990), “A corporate mission statement provides meaning for the enterprise...Meaning is the essential ingredient in modern time to organizational success” (p. 291). Given critical reflection of my own personal mission statement and core character values, it was actually a rather simple process to formulate a mission statement for Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. The first step was finding the right synergy with a business partner with like-minded ethical and leadership principles.

Bridges (1991) discussed the importance of clarifying and communicating a purpose in the timing of new beginnings. Bridges discussed the opportunities that new beginnings provide. According to Bridges, “The point is not that such symbolism contributes to success, but simply that it conveys a message that reinforces the new identity being established in the new organization’s beginning” (p. 63). A mission statement is important on a symbolic level bringing together meaning and purpose in a new beginning. Additionally, according to Bolman and Deal (1997), “Conversely, more skilled symbolic leaders understand that situations of challenge and stress can serve as powerful opportunities to articulate values and build a sense of mission” (p. 291).

Once my business partner and I shared our ethical principles it was clear we were on the same page in terms of a highly ethical approach to business. We discussed our ethical

point of view and then decided to develop an investment banking group together as partners and base our mission statement on mutually established ethical principles. A commonality in our personal mission perspectives was the concept of making a difference in the lives of others.

According to DeCenzo and Robbins (1999):

The strategic planning process in an organization is both long and continuous. At the beginning of the process, the organization's main emphasis is to determine what the business is in. This is commonly referred to as developing the mission statement.  
(p. 130)

Additionally, Hamel (2000) formulated some questions to ask when forming a mission statement. "Ask yourself: What is our business mission? What are we becoming as a company...What is our dream? What kind of difference do we want to make in the world?" (p. 72)

My business partner and I decided to use making a difference in the lives of others as the common element in the core of our mission statement and reviewed how to align that with the professional involvement in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group.

Choosing to make a difference in the lives of others is based on core character values. According to Covey (1989) in *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* emphasized the importance of a mission statement. According to Covey:

The key to the ability to change is a changeless sense of who we are, and what you are about and what you value. With a mission statement, we can flow with the changes...Once you have that sense of mission, you have the essence of your own proactivity. You have the vision and values which direct your life. (p. 108)

In investment banking there is non-stop change but having core character values and a mission is a constant.

The Mission Statement for Capital Partners Investment Banking Group (n.d.) is as follows:

*Mission Statement of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group*

Capital Partners Investment Banking Group is dedicated to making a difference in the lives of others by delivering exceptional results and maximizing value for our clients.

We are an investment banking firm with a deep commitment to excellence with the utmost integrity and professionalism. Our team of highly capable experienced professionals strive to meet and exceed our clients' expectations. (Capital Partners Investment Banking Group, para. 1)

Many of our clients have expressed to us directly that they chose our firm to handle their transactions based on our commitment to helping people and to our ethical approach and commitment to excellence to deliver exceptional results for our clients.

According to Covey (1990) "The principle centered approach to leadership is transformational because it gives people the conviction that they...are a function not of arbitrary personalities but of timeless, correct principles, particularly if principles are embedded in the mission statement" (p. 300).

A mission statement is a powerful vehicle to accomplish communicating what our organization is all about. The mission statement of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group inspires trust and we back it up with our actions in working with



clients from an ethical perspective. Next, I will address my personal reflections on Principle Centered Leadership.

### *Personal Reflections on Principle Centered Leadership*

This section will provide an overview of Principle Centered Leadership by Stephen Covey. This approach to leadership will be utilized in my role as partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. It is my perspective to find this method of leadership to be a very beneficial model of leadership in my role as a partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. It is a model of leadership that is congruent with my ethical orientation. My leadership perspective is in alignment with my ethical principles.

Covey (1990) makes the following important points regarding principle centered leadership: He makes an analogy between the laws of the farm and principle centered leadership. According to Covey:

The only thing that ensures over time is the law of the farm. According to natural laws and principles, I must prepare the ground, put in the seed and cultivate, weed, and water if I expect to reap a harvest...The law of the harvest governs. Natural laws, principles, operate regardless. (pp. 161-162)

### *Principles*

According to Covey (1990):

Principles are self-evident, self-validating natural laws. They won't change or shift. They provide true north direction in our lives when navigating the streams of our environments. Principles apply at all times in all places. They surface in the form of values, ideas, norms, and teachings that uplift, ennoble, fulfill, empower, and inspire people. (p. 19)

Additionally, according to Covey (1990), “Correct principles are like compasses, they are always pointing the way. And if we know how to read them, we won’t get lost, we won’t get confused or fooled by conflicting voices and values” (p. 19).

According to Covey (1990) there are certain characteristics of principle-centered leaders as follows:

“Characteristics of Principle-Centered Leaders

1. They are continually learning.
2. They are service oriented.
3. They radiate positive energy.
4. They believe in other people.
5. They lead balanced lives.
6. They see life as an adventure.
7. They are synergistic.
8. They exercise for self-renewal.” (pp. 33-38)

*Principle-Centered Power*

Covey (1990) states:

Principle centered power is rare. It is the mark of quality, distinction, and excellence in all relationships. It is based on honor, with the leader honoring and the follower choosing to contribute because the leader is also honored. The hallmark of principle-centered leadership is sustained, proactive influence. (p. 104)

### *The Power and Peace of Principle-Centered Leadership*

Covey continues to emphasize the importance of operating from our principles in the exercise of leadership. He suggested that this is even more important when facing complex problems.

### *The Peace of the Results*

Covey discussed that when we live in a state of personal integrity we feel at peace and balanced. He emphasized the acceptance as a key value. According to Peck (as cited in Covey, 1994):

Life is difficult. This is a great truth, one of many great truths. It is a great truth because once we know that life is difficult then life is no longer difficult. Because once it is accepted, the fact that life is difficult no longer matters. (p. 285)

Heifetz (1994) maintains that leadership can occur from many positions. One can lead from a formal leadership position or from less structured informal structures of leadership.

I think that an important component of leadership in my role as a Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group is in the quality of interpersonal relationships that one forms. Principle centered leadership emphasizes being service oriented, radiating positive energy and believing in people. With principle centered leadership, it is possible to create powerful authentic and empowering relationships with clients providing sell-side and capital raising services in my role as a Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group.

It is my perspective to agree with concepts of Covey (1990) in his book, *Principle Centered Leadership*, that personal integrity is key in building trust in forming positive

working relationships to create a shared vision to accomplish organizational goals and objectives. Creating personal power in an organization is best accomplished from an attitude of stewardship or service to others through staying in congruence with your personal values and principles.

It was an important decision to pursue my doctoral work in Organizational Leadership to further my development of leadership skills to enhance my abilities to provide services to benefit others. I am committed to making a significant positive difference in the lives of others and maximizing value with clients.

Being a partner at Capital Partners Investment Banking Group provides a tremendous opportunity in a leadership role. It provides the opportunity to engage in leadership in executing in the transactions with clients. Helping a client sell his or her company or raise capital for a company is a leadership position. It is critical in my role to operate from a principle centered and ethical perspective in my leadership role.

The leadership opportunities in investment banking are vast. Not only are you a leader in execution of projects with clients, there is an opportunity to lead a team of professionals on accomplishing organizational objectives. I will explore team building as well in this personal narrative.

There are many ways in which leadership is a part of my role as partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. In addition to leading within the organization Capital Partners Investment Banking Group with team members to facilitate organizational objectives, we are also involved in leadership working with clients in projects. We are also involved in leadership interaction with strategic alliance partners and other prominent members of the business community. We are involved in

collaborative projects and cross-referral of business and interacting to share expertise in a variety of leadership opportunities.

The background and training learned at Pepperdine University in the area of Organizational Leadership has been extremely helpful in interacting in a leadership capacity in my role as Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group.

This personal narrative addressed principle centered leadership in my leadership role as partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. Next, I will address my personal reflections on team building.

#### *Personal Reflections on Team Building*

Capital Partners Investment Banking Group has been able to form an impressive team of individuals to accomplish our organizational objectives. We very carefully have selected team members for their alignment with the mission statement of Capital Partners and the experience and character values they bring to the organization. We have strategic alliance partners who have expertise in a variety of areas and many other highly talented business professionals.

We have a unique perspective in team building in that as we are developing we have been able to attract many very seasoned business professionals with a variety of skill sets and professional backgrounds and experiences to accomplish our organizational objectives. We also appreciate the significant contributions of our interns from major business schools and MBA programs who demonstrate excellent critical thinking and involvement with the firm.

We are unique in that we are not your typical investment banking group with seasoned investment bankers who appoint junior associates to execute many aspects of a project.

We tend to have our interns and associates be actively involved in business development attending business networking events and locating new clients.

We provide a learning community model so that everyone learns and reflects on current trends in the marketplace to be very able to be adaptable and flexible in a changing marketplace. We can make decisions in real time that reflect current market realities and deliver solutions to clients that fit ever-changing circumstances. A good example of this is the current credit crunch. There is currently a shortage of credit for deals so it is highly important to prioritize funding for highly credit worthy deals. We are targeting lower to middle market companies that are highly credit worthy in the current economic market while many other investment firms are still adjusting to try to address this reality.

According to Katzenbach (1993):

Strong personal commitments to one another's growth and success distinguish high performance teams from real teams. Energized by this extra sense of commitment, high performance teams typically reflect strong extensions of the basic characteristics of teams: deeper sense of purpose, more ambitious performance goals, more complete approaches, fuller mutual accountability, interchangeable as well as complimentary skills. (p. 79)

At Capital Partners Investment Banking Group we operate as a high performance team. In reviewing the literature on team building, as we are a relatively new organization with highly skilled professionals, what we do as team building is what is referred to in Bolman and Deal (1997) as the "Commando Unit" (p. 82).

We operate with a small elite group of high trained professionals and have the flexibility to adjust our structure and roles according to the task at hand. According to Bolman and Deal (1997), “Many teams never learn the lesson of the commando team: Vary the structure in response to changing tasks and circumstances” (p. 96).

For example, we have a variety of team members who can convene to work together depending on the task and circumstance. We are unique in that we partner with associate partners with specific expertise in a given industry or professional training background. Depending on the nature of the project we might have an individual with CFO experience and former CEOs with industry experience specific to the industry of the client. These team members bring their collective experience together to successfully respond to the task and circumstance of a given project.

This Commando Unit model detailed in Bolman and Deal (1997) works very effectively to allow us to swiftly and decisively develop solutions for a client based on the unique individual needs of the client and convene a team with background and expertise uniquely tailored to address the client’s needs in a given transaction.

At Capital Partners Investment Banking Group we do match group structure for task performance for various projects. According to Bolman and Deal (1997), High performance teams have the following characteristics:

1. High performing teams shape purpose in response to a demand or an opportunity placed in their path, usually by higher management.
2. High performing teams translate common purpose into specific, measurable performance goals.
3. High performing teams are manageable in size.

4. High performing teams develop the right mix of expertise.
5. High performing teams develop a common commitment to working relationships.
6. Members of high performing teams hold themselves collectively accountable.

(pp. 92-94)

In summary, in our teamwork at Capital Partners Investment Banking Group we follow the model of high performance teamwork as outlined in Bolman and Deal (1997). In addition, we do utilize the commando unit of leadership in that we do match group structure for task performance. Next, I will address my personal reflection on issues of management of human resources.

#### *Personal Reflections of Management of Human Resources*

At this stage of development with Capital Partners Investment Banking Group human resource management is relatively simple as we are a boutique investment banking group. We have two partners, myself and my business partner.

In addition, we have interns working for the learning experience of being part of our organization. We have had extensive interest from interns from various universities including students from business schools and MBA programs.

The other aspect that makes human resources somewhat easy to manage at this point is that as an investment banking group we operate on a retainer basis with clients and on a success fee basis. For example, a success fee is earned with the completion of a successful transaction.

We have associate partners who work with us on an independent contractor basis to work collaboratively on projects in which each team member has particular expertise to contribute to the transaction. According to DeCenzo and Robbins (1999):



Contract workers, subcontractors and consultants (may be referred to as free-lance individuals) are hired by organizations to work on specific projects. These workers, typically very skilled, perform certain duties for an organization. Often their fee is set in the contract and is paid when the organization receives particular deliverables.

Organizations use contract workers because their labor costs are then fixed, and they don't incur any of the costs associated with a full-time employee population. (p. 48)

At Capital Partners Investment Banking Group we clearly identify timelines and tasks for project completion. Each team member receives a contract specifying the percentage of the success fee earned and clear criteria of the task each person is responsible for. Clear expectation for performance makes human resource management relatively manageable. We work with very independent, self-motivated, team members on an independent contractor basis on transactions that are confidential.

At Capital Partners Investment Banking Group we embrace the constant dynamic of change in the field of investment banking and develop responses based on challenges and opportunities. Each sell-side advisory project or capital raising project is unique. In my role as partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking group I must help our team members adjust and adapt to changes and in essence act as a change agent. According to Stolovitch and Keeps (1999):

Professionals who are responsible for getting other people to accept change:

1. Show respect. Treat the targeted users and other stakeholders as you would like to be treated: with understanding, honesty and respect.
2. Create a team. Work with an implementation team: only the simplest intervention can be handled by one person working alone.

3. Get support. Develop a relationship with at least one person outside the system with whom you can talk when things get rough.
4. Be realistic. Accept the realities and limitations of the project and your role in it.
5. Plan. Develop an implementation plan that accounts for the four dimensions of the change situation- the change itself, the targeted users, the power network, and the organizational system. (p. 257)

According to Stolovitch and Keeps (1999) one of the greatest challenges facing companies externally is globalization. “Perhaps the single most important external factor today is globalization. Organizations that in the past dealt predominantly with one culture, one language, one government’s regulations, and one nation’s customers are now adjusting to multiple languages, cultures, governments, and markets” (p. 256).

In my role as partner at Capital Partners Investment Banking Group I strive to form an internationally multi-lingual group of global professionals to address international opportunities in providing sell-side advisory and capital raising solutions for our clients.

In summary, in our teamwork at Capital Partners Investment Banking Group we do operate on a retainer fee and success fee basis. Team members work on projects on an independent contractor basis. We have a varied mix of professional expertise to successfully work on projects in a globalized marketplace. Next, this personal narrative will address my reflections on the issues of legal, economic and social-political considerations.

*Personal Reflections on Legal, Economic and Social-Political Considerations*

In the development of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group it is important to take into account the legal, economic and social-political considerations in conducting business.

*Legal Issues*

In the course of doing business in investing banking many legal issues come into consideration. In order to form an agreement to execute a transaction with clients and perform under contracts many legal forms need to be utilized including retainer fee and success fee agreements, notices of nondisclosure (to protect confidentiality) and notice of non-circumvent agreements.

According to Wolfe, Dow, Dobson and Nesteruk (1995):

Classic contract theory is a way of thinking about contract law. This theory sees a contractual agreement usually based on an exchange of promises. Generally, classic contract theory is expressed this way: contract formation takes place when there is mutual intent that the exchange of promises be accompanied by legal consequences. Mutual intent is found when there is evidence of an offer (a promise) made by one party; acceptance (a return promise that mirrors the first promise) made by another party; which both reflect a detriment and benefit to the parties (called the "consideration"); and that both parties must have legal capacity (usually, be legally capable of a contract, e.g., be over eighteen years old in most states); the agreement must be free from mistake, fraud or events that destroy the integrity of the agreement; it usually must be evidenced by a writing and if this is so,

then a court will award one of several measures of upon a breach of the promises.

(pp. 205-206)

It is important in the role of partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group to have an understanding of contracts in executing successful transactions with clients.

Additionally, Wolfe et al. (1995) further contends in regards to contract formations:

Determining when a contract is formed is a concept at the core of all judicial thinking about contract law. Usually, when inquiring about the formation of a contract, courts will say that it is the evidence of the parties' intent that decides the matter. If the parties intended to be bound by the exchange of promises, then the court will find a contract. Courts will not look into the individual minds of the parties to determine this intent, but will look at the evidence and ask: What would a reasonable person believe the intent of the party was given the evidence? This is called the objective theory of contracts. (pp. 206-207)

In my leadership role as a partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group it is important to make sure that legal issues are attended to properly including contracts. In addition, it is highly important to receive sound legal advice from attorneys on matters of law pertaining to transactions and business issues. Since investment banking is highly confidential, suffice to say that addressing the legal and contractual aspects of transactions is highly critical. Each transaction needs to be explored in terms of the unique legal and contractual issues.

### *Economic Issues*

Capital Partners Investment Banking Group provides sell-side advisory services and assistance in capital raising. It is important to address the economic issues involved in the

execution of transactions with clients. It is important to find the right financial solution for each client's unique needs.

### *Social-Political Considerations*

In dealing with the complex issues involved in investment banking as one raises funds for an organization for sell-side transactions or capital raising, there are many social-political considerations to address. Many times even within an organization there can be multiple viewpoints on a given issue. Sometimes there are issues that involve multiple organizations, the local community and even international issues. Frequently, in a given transaction it is important to look at factors in how to resolve all parties forming an agreement to work together to find a solution that is agreeable to all parties.

According to Fisher and Ury (1991):

Negotiation is a method to get what you want from others. It is a back and forth communication designed to reach an agreement when you and the other side have some interests that are shared and others that are opposed. (p. xvii)

In my role as Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group it is important in the process of working with clients to form agreements that are win-win in nature for all parties that also build relationships with clients and meet the client's needs. According to Fisher and Ury (1991):

Every negotiator has two kinds of interest: In the substance and in the relationship.

Every negotiator wants to reach an agreement that satisfies his substantive interests.

That is why one negotiates. Beyond that, a negotiator also has an interest in his relationship with the other side....At a minimum, a negotiator wants to maintain a working relationship good enough to produce an acceptable agreement if one is

possible given each side's interests. Usually, more is at stake. Most negotiations take place in the context of an ongoing relationship where it is important to carry on each negotiation in a way that will help rather than hinder future relations and future negotiations. In fact with many long term clients, business partners, family members, fellow professionals, government officials, or foreign nations, the ongoing relationship is far more important than the outcome of any particular negotiation. (pp. 19-20)

In my role as Partner in Capital Partners it is important to build great relationships with clients and develop solutions that all parties are in agreement upon and are win-win transactions for all parties.

Buyers and sellers in transactions may have different points of view and it is important to find shared interests as a basis to forge ahead with finding a way to reach an agreement that is a win-win scenario for both parties. According to Fisher and Ury (1991):

The method of principled negotiation developed at the Harvard Negotiation Project is to decide the issues on the merits rather than through a haggling process focused on what each side says it will and won't do. It suggests that you look for mutual gains whenever possible, and that where your interests conflict, you should insist that the result be based on some fair standards independent of the will of either side. The method of principled negotiation is hard on the merits, soft on the people. (p. xviii)

The focus of the work of Fisher and Ury is very applicable in any organization and especially in my role as Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. The focus of the negotiation is as they described in Fisher and Ury (1991) *Getting To Yes*:

*Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In.* According to Fisher and Ury, the focus of principle-centered negotiation is as follows:

1. The Problem: Don't Bargain Over Positions
2. The Method: Separate the People From The Problem
3. Focus On Interests, Not Positions
4. Invent Options For Mutual Gain
5. Insist on Using Objective Criteria
6. Yes, But.... What If They Are More Powerful? (Develop Your BATNA- The Best Alternative To A Negotiated Agreement
7. What If They Won't Play? (Use Negotiation Jujitsu)
8. What If They Use Dirty Tricks? (Taming The Hard Bargainer). (p. table of contents)

The techniques and strategies identified by Fisher and Ury (1991) are very useful in addressing getting to agreement with more than one party in a situation where there is some shared opportunities for mutual gain. It is a process to try to address forming win-win agreements and is particularly beneficial in my role as Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group.

In summary, this personal narrative addressed the legal, economic and social-political considerations in my role as Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. I provided an overview of contract law and our use of various contracts. This personal narrative identified that there are various economic issues to consider in executing transactions with clients to meet their financial needs. Additionally, the techniques of principled negotiation were identified as helpful in working with the social-political

considerations in creating win-win scenarios in executing successful transactions. Next, I will address personal reflections on Adult Learning Theory: Transformational Learning Theory.

*Personal Reflections on Adult Learning Theory: Transformational Learning Theory*

This personal narrative shall provide an understanding of transformational learning and discuss its relevance in educating clients of sell-side advisory process and steps and issues in selling companies. Transformational learning theory is very helpful in allowing clients to engage in critical thinking and make informed decisions regarding transactions in investment banking based on transformational growth. The issues involved in selling a company are complex and transformational learning theory provides an excellent framework to foster critical thinking on the complex issues involved.

According to Knowles (1998), “Traditionally, we have known more about how animals learn than about how children learn; and we know much more about how children learn than about how adults learn” (p. 18). According to Merriam (1993), “In short, transformational learning shapes people; they are different afterwards in ways both they and others can recognize” (p. 47). Transformational learning theory addresses how facilitated learning experiences change and transform the learner. It provides clients with the opportunity to have learning experiences as part of sell-side advisory services and reflect on learning and make meaning out of unique learning experiences.

At Capital Partners Investment Banking Group we work with owners of companies selling their companies or raising capital. Our clients are very bright and self-directed individuals. Transformational learning theory provides a useful framework for designing sell-side advisory consultation services.



In my role as Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group, transformational learning theory fosters my ability to engage the clients in critical thinking and transformational growth in the complex issues contemplated in selling companies or raising capital. It provides a useful approach to help clients to transform their thinking to be able to help them execute transactions successfully. For example, a client may not realize that a competitive bid process may be helpful to maximize value in selling their companies. Additionally, a prospective client may not understand the complexities of valuations of their company and may be willing to sell company for far less than it is worth prior to a valuation process. Additionally, the client may not understand the complexities of all the stages of sell-side advisory services. Also, clients may be willing to consider a low ball offer and need to understand how we can add value to their process of selling their company or raising capital to maximize value in the transactions.

Transformational learning allows potential clients to be able to critically reflect on new learning as part of our sell-side advisory and capital raising services and transform their thinking and make decisions based on changes to frame of reference based on new insights. According to Mezirow (1997):

Transformative learning is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference.

Adults have acquired a coherent body of experience-associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses-frames of reference that define their life world.

Frames of reference are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences. They selectively shape and delineate expectations, perceptions, cognitions and feelings. (p. 5)

Additionally, according to Mezirow (1997):

A frame of reference encompasses cognitive, conative, and emotional components, and is composed of two dimensions: habits of mind and a point of view. Habits of mind are broad, abstract, orienting, habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting influenced by assumptions that constitute a set of codes. These codes may be cultural, social, educational, economic, political or psychological. Habits of mind become articulated in a specific point of view- the constellation of belief, value, judgment attitude and feeling that shapes a particular interpretation. (pp. 5-6)

In my role as a partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group one interacts in an advisory consultant role educating clients about options on complex issues as part of sell-side advisory services. Transformational learning theory provides support for helping client engage in critical thinking and offer opportunities for paradigm shifting as clients change their frame of reference based on new insights. According to Mezirow (1997):

We transform our frame of reference through critical reflection on the assumptions upon which our interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind and point of view are based. We become critically reflective of the assumptions we or others make when we learn to solve problems instrumentally or when we are involved in communicative learning. We become critically reflective of assumptions when reading a book, hearing a point of view, engaging in a task oriented problem solving (objective reframing) or self-reflectively assessing our own beliefs (subjective reframing). Self-reflection can lead to significant personal transformations. (p. 7)

At Capital Partners Investment Banking Group we strive to educate clients to be able to contemplate the complex issues regarding the sale of their business or capital raising

issues. At Capital Partners Investment Banking Group we provide sell-side advisory services and capital raising services to be able to encourage clients to think critically about what they want from executing transactions and incorporate new insights into their professional practice.

According to Mezirow (1997), “As we move into the next century and more technologically sophisticated industry and service sectors, work becomes more abstract, depending on understanding and manipulating information rather than merely acquiring it. New forms of skills and knowledge are required” (p. 8).

According to Mezirow (1997):

Transformative learning is not an add-on. It is the essence of adult education. With this premise in mind, it becomes clear that the goal of adult education is implied by the nature of adult learning and communication: to help the individual become a more autonomous thinker by learning to negotiate his or her own values, meanings and purposes rather than to uncritically act on those of others. (p. 11)

In my role as partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group, facilitating a transformational learning environment for clients to contemplate and make decisions based on critical thinking and transformational growth is highly important in having clients make decisions that work for them to address their unique situations.

In summary, clients of Capital Partners Investment Banking will certainly benefit from a transformational learning approach to providing sell-side advisory services and capital raising services. Next, I will address my reflections on education program development.

### *Personal Reflections on Education Program Development*

This personal reflection shall address instructional design and development as applied in my role as Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. Instructional design and development is an integral part of providing sell-side advisory and capital raising services provided to clients.

Tyler (1949) discusses the importance of curriculum that is designed with the following components:

1. Educational Purpose
2. Educational Goals
3. Educational Objectives
4. Learning Experiences That Facilitate the Attainment of Learning Objectives

At Capital Partners Investment Banking Group, we create confidential sell-side advisory consultation services with a clear educational purpose aligned with goals and objectives and learning experiences that help clients make informed decisions regarding transactions that meet their unique needs.

Hunter (1971) emphasized the importance of designing instruction that facilitates students' ability to integrate and transfer learning from one situation to apply learning to other experiences. In providing confidential sell-side advisory consultation services with clients, it is important for clients to be able to critically reflect on insights and transfer the skill to be able to make decisions in the real world and take action steps towards the execution of actions towards the unique financial solutions for the client.

In summary, this personal reflection addressed Tyler's 4 components of curriculum design and discussed designing sell-side advisory consultation services for clients. This

personal reflection also addressed Hunter's emphasis on designing learning experiences that facilitate transfer of learning. This personal reflection discussed the importance of designing sell-side advisory consulting services that allow clients to critically reflect and transfer learning to be able to make decisions to facilitate execution of transactions. Next, I will address my personal reflections on communication and information technology.

*Personal Reflections on Communication and Information Technology*

In my role as Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group, communication and information technology plays an important part in the work with team members in our group and with interacting with business professionals and clients.

Facilitating effective communication is critical in my role as partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. Whalen (1996) makes the assertion that communication is symbolically sharing one's personal experience and states, "Communication is the fabric from which our society is cut and with which it is bound together...Communication is the central and most important part of human activity" (p. 13).

In working with clients and team members in my role as partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group it is important to communicate effectively and based on the passion for our mission as an organization. Having a passion for one's message in communication is important according to Whalen (1996):

Facts alone will not sell. Ideas that sit flat and dull on paper will not move people to act. You must find methods to overcome the inherent inertia that hold people to the status quo, that binds them to their chairs, cursed by inaction. The surefire method that

will move them is your faith, belief, courage, and excitement; in short your passion.

(p. 1)

The focus of Whalen (1996) on principles for effective communication is similar to the Principle Centered Leadership principles of Covey (1990). According to Whalen, “The purpose of communication must be win-win working for a common good” (p. 3).

At Capital Partners Investment Banking Group we strive to create win-win communication and structure oral communication effectively with clients towards execution of successful transactions.

In every moment, with every breath, and every part of who one is, we live, walk and talk our own personal integrity. It is as simple as looking in one’s eyes into one’s soul to see who and what we represent. I live the path of love and kindness. I welcome the I-thou encounter of soulful interaction to create meaningful, powerful, significant interpersonal connectedness to move forward to make a difference in the lives of others. To me, that represents being fully alive, awake and aware as a human being.

Personal integrity is a critical component in effective communication. It is very important to build trusting relationships with clients to execute successful transactions. Whalen (1996) discussed the importance of credibility in effective communication. “The most important factor of a communicator’s effectiveness is credibility. Your credibility can be managed through the messages you send during your business relationship: messages about who you are, what you believe in, and your attitude toward your audience” (p. 2). These concepts of Whalen are similar to those of Covey (1990) in which leaders base their actions and words on a principle centered approach to leadership.

Integrity and a core commitment to ethical principles is a crucial component to effective communication in my role as partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group.

In presenting effective communication in my role as partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group it is important to reflect upon time honored principles of effective communication. According to Whalen (1996), “The Greeks discovered that the three pillars upon which persuasive communication is built are logos- logic and reasoning, pathos-emotional ideas, appeals to the human being and ethos—the speaker’s reputation and personality” (p. 139).

In working with clients it is clear that effective written communication conveys important information. Effective oral communication with clients directly in person is a powerful method of reaching consensus and moving forward on projects.

There is that I- thou moment where you share authentically with a client and they share with you. Clients authentically share their story, what they need to move forward to fulfill their dreams and goals. I need to listen and respond to find a common ground to launch a process to accomplish organizational objectives. Whalen (1996) asserts that oral communication is the most important form in business communication. According to Whalen:

Through oral communication we transmit the meaning behind our words through tone of voice, facial expressions, body posturing, and that magical energy we get from each other. Symbols are building blocks of communication. We give symbolic meaning to everything in our world. (p. 35)

Preskill and Torres (1999) asserts that learning organizations are in a constant state of change. According to Preskill and Torres, “It is generally believed that three forces are

working to create these changes. They are globalization, workforce demographics and technology” (p. 4). Additionally, according to Preskill and Torres:

Technology is also facilitating learning through the use of online tutorials, database searches, computer conferences, electronic bulletin boards, electronic mail, performance support systems and electronic dialogues. These informal learning tools enable users to obtain information when they need it and provide real-time communications regardless to geographic location. Space and time have become invisible to learning. (pp. 5-6)

Investment banking involves use of technology. There are software programs we use to analyze financial data, identify business opportunities and manage client projects electronically. The internet has many resources for my role as partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group including being able to research information for clients and providing information on trade associations and business networking opportunities. According to Woolever (2005), “If you have access to the internet, you can add to your research capabilities by searching electronically from your computer” (p. 39).

At Capital Partners Investment Banking Group we have team meetings to communicate regarding client projects, business development and issues that arise in involvement in transactions. We utilize email, personal meetings, videoconferencing, and phone conferences to keep up with client and team member contact. Woolever (2005) discussed the issue of using technology to track status of team members in regards to collaborating electronically on projects. According to Woolever:

In many situations today, project teams are composed of members from across the state, across the country, or across the globe. These teams can’t meet in person to



conduct business, but they can collaborate via electronic methods. Several techniques and technologies are available to facilitate such collaboration. You can circulate documents and ideas sequentially through email: you can use sophisticated groupware software programs to circulate documents...you can use teleconferencing systems to allow participants to see or hear one another as well as share displays on computer screens. (p. 151)

In my role as partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group I facilitate team members staying in communication as to status of where they are in projects. Each project identifies tasks and timelines for task completion. Regular communication is a very important part of our success in executing transactions with clients.

The internet has many resources for my role as partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group including being able to research information for clients and providing information on trade associations and business networking opportunities. According to Woolever (2005), "If you have access to the internet, you can add to your research capabilities by searching electronically from your computer" (p. 39).

According to Woolever (2005) there are considerations in developing and designing a website including "making the purpose clear...making it easy to reach you...make your site easy to navigate...give the user enough information" (pp. 393-394). Additionally, according to Woolever :

Graphics convey many messages: they can reach the audience's intellect as well as emotions. With a single illustration, you can relate what might otherwise take several pages of text to say. Because graphics communicate in so many ways- via color, design, and size- they are powerful tools that should be used wisely. (p. 90)

My business partner and I developed a website working with a graphic arts designer on the images and website layout we wanted that is accessible to clients and business associates which conveys information about the services we provide. Our website is a powerful communication tool that provides useful information about our firm.

In summary, in my role as Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group, communication and information technology plays an important role in working with team members, in executing transactions with clients and in networking in the business community. Next, I will address my personal reflections on marketing and publicity.

#### *Personal Reflections on Marketing and Publicity*

In my role as partner, marketing and publicity is a very important component in the development of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. According to Henry (1995), “Marketing public relations is a comprehensive, all encompassing, public awareness and information program or campaign directed to mass and specialty audiences to influence increased sales or use of an organization’s product or services” (p. 3).

In the development of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group it is critical that we get awareness in the community about our services we offer as part of our business development efforts to increase clients using our services and to increase awareness of members in the business community to refer clients or work collaboratively with us on joint projects.

Henry (1995) discusses targeting certain markets and industries for lists, databases and resources for client development to target marketing and publicity efforts. In my role as partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group it is important to use a variety of

methods to increase client awareness and members of the business community of our services that we provide.

Many of our team members are leaders in industry and have a vast network of contacts in their industries. For example, a former CEO and CFO in the food sector would have a wide array of contacts and relationships in that area. Our team members contact members in their network and also make new contacts to promote the services we offer.

In addition, in my role as Partner at Capital Partners Investment Banking Group I identify key trade associations, contact people and trade shows to attend. Business networking at events such as trade shows has lead to new clients and to gets our name and brand out there to the potential clients and to members of the business community who refer business to us or partner on transactions.

There are very useful databases with contact information and information about companies. Directly writing to or establishing contact via phone has been helpful in targeting new clients. When we have reached out to introduce ourselves to companies and advised of our sell-side advisory services we have been able to follow-up with an in person meeting with those interested in selling their companies or raising capital and created new clients.

In my role as partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group it is a very important component of business development and marketing to reach out and meet members of the business community to be able to let them know about the services we provide so that they might consider referring business to us or find opportunities for a strategic alliance relationship. We have developed very powerful strategic alliance relationships with prominent members of the business community.

At Capital Partners Investment Banking Group, we reach out to meet other investment banking groups because some groups have projects that either they can provide expertise to us in the execution of a transaction or we can help them with expertise with the execution of one of our projects. In addition, since we focus on lower to middle market companies many larger investment banks come across deals that are below the deal size they like to work with and it provides an opportunity to be a referral source to Capital Partners Investment Banking Group for such deals.

A great source for referrals for deal flow is attorney and CPA firms providing services to companies. In my role as Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group I make it a high priority to meet attorney and CPA firms and introduce our services we offer and it has been a significant component to business development and marketing.

In addition, in my role as Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group I research events that are relevant to target forming networking relationships in the business community and to meet prospective new client contacts as well. Our team members are advised of a number of events to be able to attend to meet prospective new clients and to develop networking relationships in the business community.

Capital Partners Investment Banking Group has received publicity for the services we have offered. Our firm was featured in Business Week and we continue to evaluate a variety of opportunities to communicate the services we offer to clients.

As a partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group I chose to develop the brand of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. I chose to focus on how to differentiate ourselves from other investment banking firms. According to Harris (1998):

Positioning is at the heart of every successful integrated marketing communications

program. It is the guidepost for the development of IMC (integrated marketing campaign) programs in which advertising, promotion, and public relations messages are cohesive, cumulative and mutually reinforcing. Positioning is a way companies and brands are perceived by consumers relative to the competition. (p. 27)

In my role as Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group we have significantly differentiated ourselves from the competition based on our ethical and principle centered leadership orientation. Our mission statement reflects our commitment to making a significant difference to the lives of others while delivering exceptional results and maximizing value to clients. By positioning ourselves as referenced by Harris (1998) based upon our ethical and principle leadership orientation it differentiates us from the competition.

According to McKenna (as cited in Harris, 1998):

McKenna believes that positioning should involve three interlocking stages: product positioning, market positioning, and corporate positioning. In the first stage, product positioning, a company must determine how it wants to fit in the competitive market. In the second stage, market positioning, the product must gain recognition in the market. In corporate positioning, the final stage of the process, companies must position not their products but themselves. (p. 28)

At Capital Partners Investment Banking Group at stage one we have differentiated ourselves based on our mission statement. Clients have sought us out because of our commitment to ethical principles and commitment to making a significant position difference in the lives of others. We are definitely not a typical investment banking

group. We care deeply about our clients and strive to create unique financial solutions that provide win-win scenarios to our clients in transactions.

At stage two we have definitely gained recognition in the market. Clients seek us out based on referral and our reputation for ethical principles and principle-centered leadership. We are very much out there at tradeshow and significant business networking events. Our team members have a vast network of contacts and we are known in the industry.

In the third phase of positioning we have positioned ourselves not the products. Clients come to work with us based on who we are and what we represent. Our ethical and principle centered leadership principles are respected in the business community. We have strategic alliance partnership relationships with prominent members of the business community.

Our team members are committed to excellence in maximizing value to clients and make a significant positive difference in the lives of others. Our commitment to our values via our mission statement has been instrumental in our success with clients and our reputation for excellence, ethics and integrity. According to Harris (1998):

Values-led business is based on the idea that business has a responsibility to the people and to society that makes its existence possible. More all encompassing and therefore more effective than philanthropy alone, values-led businesses seek to maximize its impact by integrating socially beneficial actions into as many of its day today activities as possible. In order to do that, values must lead and be right up there in the company's mission statement, strategy and operating plan. (p. 204)

In summary, this personal reflection addressed the importance and various strategies of marketing and publicity in the development of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. Additionally, this personal reflection addressed the development of branding and positioning for Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. This personal reflection addressed the importance of values-led business model in which we incorporated values of organization in the mission statement and branding and positioning of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. Next, I will address my personal reflections on transforming organizations in a global community.

*Personal Reflections on Transforming Organizations in a Global Community*

This personal reflection will focus on my personal reflections of the efforts of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group involves itself in transforming organizations in a global community. In my role as Partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group we are confronted on a daily basis with change as a constant state of being in providing sell-side advisory and capital raising services to clients. In a way, if you embrace that change is a constant then it can be taken as a given and operate as an organization from the mission statement of the organization. According to Bridges (1991), “It has become a truism that the only constant is change. The Greek Philosopher Heraclitus commented on it 2500 years ago” (p. 69).

Bridges (1991) further states:

Nonstop change demands a new mindset. That new mindset requires a very serious transition, as the old expectations are painfully abandoned and a very difficult journey is made through the neutral zone before any viable new beginning is in sight.... It isn't enough to inspire people with vignettes of companies that are said to be doing these

things. You have to manage the big transition from the old assumptions and expectations of isolated piecemeal change to the new ones. (p. 75)

Investment banking is a field that is full on non-stop change. It is important to keep an eye on the big picture of organizational objectives aligned with the mission statement to embrace and respond to the constant changes in the marketplace.

It is relatively clear if one is aligned with the mission statement of the company to be able to embrace and respond to changes in the marketplace and respond accordingly.

According to Bridges (1991):

Stability through change demands clarity about what you are trying to do. There is no reason to make an adjustment unless there is something to adjust. So a time of continuous change as exists today, puts a premium on knowing what you are trying to accomplish. What is the mission of whatever it is that you manage- whether it be a small team of hourly workers or a multi-national corporation. (p. 76)

What contributes to Capital Partners Investment Banking Group's success is that we are not focused on beating the competition. There are an abundance of deals out there. The key to our success in engaging clients and execution of transactions is the response we have to challenges. Investment banking is a challenging, ever changing field as economic circumstances are in constant change as are the kinds of deals and financing in the marketplace. At Capital Partners Investment Banking group we strive to offer our clients sell-side advisory services and capital raising solutions that are responsive to the unique challenges of our clients. According to Bridges (1991):

In fact, a world of nonstop change offers only short term victories to those organizations that set out to beat the opposition. The long-term advantage lies with



those organizations that focus on the environment as a whole, not just on the competition. We are in one of those periods of evolutionary shift, and becoming preoccupied with the competition is short-sighted. It is not by competing but by capitalizing on change that today's organizations will survive...The key to capitalizing on change lies in understanding and utilizing the cycle of challenge and response. (p. 81)

According to Hamel (2000), "Industry revolutionaries take the entire business concept, rather than a product or service as the starting point for innovation. Revolutionaries recognize that competition is no longer between products and services, it's between competing business concepts" (p. 15).

An example of a challenge is the tightening credit available for deals. We have responded by examining lower to middle market deals and working with distressed companies as well to assist them in their capital raising needs. In addition, many companies are global and we are working on international strategic partner alliances for deal flow. Our team members are culturally and ethnically diverse and we have team members that speak other languages and some are foreign-born. The diversity of cultures, languages and traditions provides Capital Partners Investment Banking Group a diverse perspective to be able to respond to global challenges and opportunities internationally to provide sell-side advisory and capital raising services in the global community.

In summary, this personal reflection addressed transforming organizations in a global community. In my role as partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group it is important to be responsive to the globalization of the marketplace and to bring culturally and ethnically diverse team members together to address challenges and opportunities in

finding financial solutions in the ever-changing global business community. Next, I will provide a personal reflective summary of Development of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group.

*Personal Reflective Summary of Development of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group*

The doctoral coursework in Organizational Leadership greatly prepared me for this leadership endeavor of development of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. I am grateful for the coursework in Organizational Leadership that has prepared me to take this leadership role as partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. The coursework is transformational in that it prepares students to be leaders in a variety of organizations.

This personal narrative has focused on my leadership role in the development of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. I identified my ethical values and principles and how that led to the formation of the company and the mission statement was developed. My leadership style was articulated which is Principle Centered Leadership. I discussed how the course in consultancy led to my involvement in a consultancy project that eventually led to the development of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. The importance of teamwork in the development of our organization was identified. We operate as a commando unit, a highly trained team with flexible organization for successful execution of specific purposes.

This personal narrative also addressed the aspects of management of human resources that were identified and our use of contracts and project tasks and timelines for team members to work together on execution of transactions. I reviewed the role contracts and

legal and political considerations are involved in providing sell-side advisory and capital raising services for clients.

In addition, this personal narrative addressed the role of transformational learning theory in the development of sell-side and capital raising services to clients and discussed the development of confidential consultation to educate clients about sell-side advisory and capital raising services.

This personal narrative further addressed the importance of communication and information technology in working with clients, team members and networking in the business community.

The strategies to market and publicize services of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group to clients and to deal referral sources was identified. In my leadership role as partner, I also reviewed the way we approach constant change in the marketplace by responding to the challenges in the global community.

The journey of taking doctoral coursework at Pepperdine University in Organizational Leadership has been a transformational voyage. I started as a doctoral student and am now applying what I learned as a partner in Capital Partners Investment Banking Group.

I thank the faculty of Pepperdine University for my doctoral education that prepared me for this leadership role in the Development of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. The faculty have been most generous with time, talent, and commitment to the development of leaders of organizations.

As the motto of Pepperdine University states, “Freely ye received, freely ye give.” I will not forget the kindness, wisdom and giving of the Pepperdine University learning community. As an organizational leader committed to making a significant positive

difference in the lives of others I will continue the mission of Pepperdine University in giving to others as I was blessed to receive here.

Next, I will provide a personal narrative reflecting on education and the development of a graduate level course in education.

#### *Personal Narrative of Education*

This personal narrative will provide my personal reflections on my philosophy of education. This personal narrative will also provide my personal vision of educational excellence. Lastly, this personal narrative will also provide my personal reflections on my development of a graduate level course and my personal reflections on teaching a course to prepare educators to work with special needs students.

#### *Philosophy of Education to Utilize in Role of Teaching a Graduate Level Course in Education*

This personal narrative will reflect on my personal views on education in the reflecting on the development of a graduate course in education. My role will be to help teachers develop effective skills in working with special needs students.

Children bring to the learning environment unique perceptions, experiences and world views. My prior background as a teacher supports the following approach to working with students. It is important to understand how students perceive reality, join in a deep connection and understanding of their experience, understand their goals, wishes and aspirations and work towards fulfillment of their potential. I believe all children have self-actualizing potential.

As facilitators, teachers guide, coach and assist children in the process of becoming. Throughout the process of active exploration and making choices, children will progress

in self-discovery. Teachers can assist in the empowerment process by providing a supportive and nurturing environment that allows the freedom to explore choices and encourages individuals to take personal ownership and responsibility for their choices.

It is important to create a thinking meaning centered classroom learning environment that meets the individualized needs of all learners. Teachers work to facilitate students' use of complex thinking skills, problem solving and the use of multiple strategies in lessons that have real life applications that allow students to transfer skills across the curriculum.

It is important to support and engage all students in learning. Teachers need to design lessons that provide the opportunities for all students to make meaningful connections with the curriculum. Teachers need to be skilled in and provide remediation and gifted enrichment to meet the needs of all learners. It is critical to keep in focus the end in mind which is self directed learners making choices, exercising autonomy and students actively engaged and enthusiastic about learning.

With my background in education, clinical psychology and organizational leadership I can make significant contributions in teaching graduate courses. My ethical orientation, world view, philosophy of education, psychology (very existential, humanistic, child centered, developmental) supports the notion that students make significant learning gains when they are actively involved and engaged in the learning process.

Students who take ownership of their learning and the learning environment who utilize the freedom and responsibility to explore learning opportunities make powerful connections that transfer into lifelong learning outcomes. The teacher's role is to be a coach facilitator guide.

As a teacher, one can provide the informal embedded structure that allow children to learn important content, concepts, skills while allowing them to exercise choice, decision making in a developmental exploration continuum. Teachers can explore concepts in a high interest, thinking, meaning centered context.

I feel that children learn a great deal from their social interactions with others. As a teacher, if one wants students to experience significant personal growth the teacher needs to model and demonstrate a personal commitment to growing as a person and as a professional working with families.

I have made many choices that support my commitment to growth in working with teachers to support student learning that have shaped my approach to education. I bring my own perceptions to my current practices in working with teachers to support student learning. I operate from a child-centered developmental humanistic approach to facilitating personal growth. These formative experiences guide me in the reflecting on the role of teaching at the graduate level in education to support working with teachers to develop skills to work with special needs student to support student learning.

Upon personal reflection, I don't view teaching in a static way. I will always continue to try to improve and enhance my abilities in personal endeavors and interactions with others. I have been very active in seeking opportunities to stretch my learning as a professional. I have a keen interest in working with teachers, children and families in facilitating social, cognitive, emotional and physical development of children. I have approached this interest from a variety of approaches working to expand my knowledge and training in elementary education, special education, and working in clinical

counseling settings. I have chosen to work with a variety of age groups to increase the flexibility of my skills in working with students with diverse abilities and backgrounds.

Skills needed for students to attain academic success and preparation for a technologically advancing society and workforce are changing. It is critical that teachers provide students with skills in the area of problem solving and critical thinking. The process is as important as the content. Children need to learn how to approach learning tasks from a variety of perspectives. Teachers need to provide students with opportunities to explore tasks with real world applications and teach skills that transfer across the curriculum.

Teachers need to have a clear understanding of learning goals and use this knowledge to guide educational planning for each student. The teacher utilizes a diagnostic-prescriptive model to meet the needs of students. Curriculum flows from the ongoing formative assessment of students' needs. Additionally, teachers have a responsibility to share this rich data with parents. Parents need to be kept informed of continual progress, learning gains of their child to continue to facilitate the home school partnership in the each child's individual development.

Teachers create an effective and engaging learning environment. The learning environment should be vibrant, well organized and facilitate student learning through the classroom setup. The environment should be designed to facilitate collaborative learning and active engagement in the learning process.

Teachers need to strive to create an engaging attractive environment that facilitates student learning and collaborative work. I think that it is important for students to have a sense of classroom as community and to feel at home in their classroom. Teachers need

to assess with students the nature of the work they want to accomplish and set up the room accordingly.

Students learn by doing. The environment should facilitate student empowerment and active learning. The classroom management and behavioral expectations should enhance a smooth running and supportive atmosphere. Classroom routines, rules and procedures should be jointly developed with students.

Teachers need to have a thorough understanding of the area that they are teaching. This would include both content knowledge and the process of transmitting this information and conceptual understanding to students. It should be at an in depth level. The teacher should be able to teach content across curricular areas and make connections to real life applications and life long learning goals.

Teachers need to have a solid base of content knowledge and strategies to convey content to students. Teachers need to use a wide array of instructional methods and materials for students to make meaningful connections with the curriculum. Teachers need to continually learn additional methods and strategies to enhance their effectiveness with students.

Subject matter can change. I feel it is critical to teach students critical thinking strategies, problem solving, and learning to learn strategies in our technologically advancing society. Students need to be empowered to be in charge of managing their own learning journey. The possibilities are vast.

Teachers need to value and honor the diversity of students' interests, learning styles, backgrounds and their unique prior knowledge that they bring to the learning experience. Teaching strategies need to be in alignment with the bigger picture. What is the purpose?



What are the important tasks at hand here? What should students take away from this experience? What are the life long learning outcomes, relevance of this curriculum?

Teachers need to evaluate the relevance of the curriculum they utilize with learners. Teachers have a one year window of opportunity to influence, challenge, empower, and extend the learning of their students. Ideally, children should be excited to engage in learning tasks and feel safe to take risks and explore new areas of growth.

In reflecting upon teaching at the graduate level in education, I can choose to utilize my philosophy of education as a guide to assist in the work with teachers to support student learning. I can choose to facilitate critical reflection of each graduate student's unique teaching style and help them to develop and expand on their own orientation and approach to working with special needs students.

#### *Personal Reflections of Vision of Educational Excellence*

In reflecting upon the role of teaching at the graduate level in education, it is important to have a vision of educational excellence. A vision of educational excellence provides an excellent framework to guide my involvement as a professional educator. It is critical to be able to formulate a clear vision of what we are striving for in terms of educational excellence and working with students. I will share my vision of educational excellence that will be utilized is useful in reflecting upon the role of teaching at the graduate level in education to help educators to enhance skills in working with students. Graduate students can critically reflect upon their own unique perspectives pertaining to educational excellence.

I believe that children learn best when actively engaged in learning tasks that are personally meaningful which allow them to draw upon their own prior experiences and

knowledge. Children learn a great deal through their interactions with other children. I view the teacher's role is as a facilitator, coach, guide in the learning process. Teachers will assist students in structuring a positive learning environment that addresses the needs and interests of all students. Teachers will include a wide variety of teaching strategies to meet their students' needs. Teachers will provide individualized assistance to each student in their individualized educational program. I believe that open communication and partnership in the educational process between parents and teachers can greatly enhance a child's school experience.

In my vision of schools that meet the needs of all learners, there are many components that are crucial to creating a community of learners actively engaged in the learning process. All staff will strive diligently to provide a supportive and nurturing atmosphere that addresses the individualized needs of all students. The students will have the opportunity to be in a learning environment which actively promotes the following concepts:

*Active involvement in meaning centered learning activities.* I believe that children learn best when actively engaged in learning tasks that are personally meaningful which allow them to draw upon their own prior experiences and knowledge. Children learn a great deal through their interactions with other children.

*Role as facilitator.* I view the teacher's role is as a facilitator, coach, guide in the learning process. Teachers will assist students in structuring a positive learning environment that addresses the needs and interests of all students. Teachers will

demonstrate a wide variety of teaching strategies to meet the student's needs. Teachers will provide individualized assistance to each student.

*Open communication and parent involvement.* I believe that open communication and partnership in the educational process between parents and teachers can greatly enhance a child's school experience.

In my vision of schools that will meet the needs of learners the following components are crucial to creating a community of learners actively engaged in the learning process:

*Emotional climate.* Children feel a strong sense of emotional security, that they are valued and special, that their ideas matter and they are important.

*Individual support and guidance.* All children are supported and encouraged in their academic, social and emotional growth.

*School as a community of learners.* Children feel a strong sense of community where students, parents and administrators and support staff work together as partners in the educational process.

*Leadership opportunities.* Students have the opportunity to participate in leadership opportunities to enhance their sense of responsibility, personal power, choice-making abilities and sense of self worth.

*Problem solving and conflict resolution.* Students have the opportunity to learn how to effectively work together and to utilize problem solving skills and conflict management techniques.

*Staff enthusiasm and commitment to professional growth.* Teachers are committed, enthusiastic, highly skilled and have a deep desire to continue professional growth. The teachers demonstrate highly effective teaching and classroom management strategies.

*Best of theory and practice.* Teachers demonstrate understanding of the principles of learning and brain based research on learning acquisition. The best of theory and practice is reflected in their daily lesson plans and long range planning.

*Celebration of diversity.* The school atmosphere encourages a celebration of diversity.

*Technology and critical thinking focus.* Technology and teaching children to learn how to learn, metacognition, teaching critical and higher thinking skills are an integral part of the school program.

#### *Reflections on Instructional Design*

This personal narrative in education will provide my personal reflections on instructional design in terms of designing a graduate level class in education for teachers to learn skills to work effectively with special needs students.

The tenants of curriculum design and instruction covered in my doctoral coursework has been very helpful in constructing a graduate class in education. Tyler, (1949) discusses the importance of curriculum that is designed with the following components:

1. Educational Purpose
2. Educational Goals
3. Educational Objectives

#### 4. Learning Experiences that Facilitate the Attainment of Learning Objectives

*Educational purpose.* The educational purpose of the course that I designed for teachers to increase skills in working with special needs students is to facilitate acquisition of in depth conceptual understanding of special education course content and the student attainment of effective strategies in working with special education students.

*Goals of the course.* The course was developed to facilitate the students' understanding of special education and to be able to integrate and apply the knowledge they gain in the course in their professional work with special needs students. Students will be able to enhance their effectiveness in instructional strategies in working with special needs students. Teachers will apply their increased awareness in their design and implementation of instruction with students. The material covered is complex. The focus will be to make the material accessible and understandable to the students and to assist them in making learning connections and learning transfer to their own work.

*Learning experiences: integration of learning and implications for professional practice.*

According to Hunter (1971) it is important to design curriculum that facilitates students to be able to positively transfer learning from one situation to another situation in an integrated manner. This course was designed to guide students and facilitate making learning connections and personal transfer of course content integrating with their professional practice to their own teaching styles and strategies. The purpose is to have students make connections to their own understanding of teaching and learning with

special needs students and integrate their acquired learning on current practices of teaching.

In summary of this personal reflection in education, the doctoral coursework I have taken at Pepperdine University in Organizational Leadership has provided an excellent foundation for teaching at the graduate level in education in special education to help teachers develop effective teaching strategies in working with special needs students. The graduate professors have provided a stimulating learning environment that has fostered critical thinking and critical reflection.

The coursework I have taken has provided me with the ability to critically reflect on my educational vision and philosophy of education and to critically reflect on both to create a course in special education at the graduate level to help teachers to develop skills in working with special needs students and enhance service delivery to these students. With the vision, knowledge and strategies learned at Pepperdine University I will further my mission to make a difference in the lives of others.

#### *Dissertation Dialogues: Andragogy of the Expressed*

This personal narrative will comprise my personal reflections of dissertation dialogues and will be presented as a short impressionistic story.

#### *Planting Seeds*

Prior to starting my dissertation, I attended a lecture on qualitative methods. While I took a course previously in this area, it was refreshing to hear more about qualitative methods. A wide variety of qualitative methods were shared in an engaging presentation. I had an idea going into the dissertation process of doing a quantitative study. I was interested in one qualitative method that seemed fascinating to me. Autoethnography was

discussed and that one doctoral student did an autoethnography study at Pepperdine. I left the lecture with a curiosity to learn more about that method. Learning new ideas is analogous to planting seeds. Some bloom in interesting ways.

### *On the Path*

You never know what experiences on the path of life will lead to new adventures. There were many voices on the path of this dissertation. Each voice added to the experiences of moving forward in this dissertation journey a bit like intellectual mosaics. There was my study and the interactive dialogic experience in the dissertation journeying.

### *Awareness*

Knowing that anytime one undergoes a dissertation journey it is a process of focusing on a chosen path. I thought to myself, all you can do is be in the moment and do your best to communicate your vision and story in the process. Pepperdine University is an amazing learning community that stimulates not only intellect but heart and soul as well.

### *Breathe*

There are interesting moments in the path of one's process of a transformational learning journey. Pepperdine is a place where one is lifted up in the process of becoming. I remember many occasions of learning breakthroughs where faculty have been present and fully in the moment and helped one through the process of learning. I remember an experience whereby I was responding in an intellectual forum and someone looked at me very directly and said "breathe" and smiled intently. I focused on the eye contact and took a deep breath and gazed back. It focused me further on my story. I actually smiled and laughed. It made me at ease. Additionally, a Pepperdine voice asked questions that

facilitated my telling my story. There are so many alumni, student, faculty and student stories about the stewardship of facilitating transformational growth.

### *Celebration of Life in the Moment*

When you can celebrate life in the moment, to breath, smile and have laughter, life is more joyful, purposeful and relaxed. It is one thing to talk about it and in the Pepperdine experience we are adept at living it in the moment. Questions help us to get at the heart of the matter. Frequently we are asked to share vignettes and our thoughts and feelings in the learning journey.

### *Gratitude*

Luckily, I passed my comprehensive exams and was able to move on to working on my dissertation. I am grateful to the experience in my oral examination experience. I did not know the experience would be fun. What I learned is that it is important to be your self and share one's story.

### *Fun*

I reflected on that experience as I did think that doing research and completing a dissertation could be a fun experience. As life is what you make of it, I thought that it would be important to choose a topic I had passion and interest in to make this not only a learning experience but one that would be enjoyable and memorable as a journey.

### *Trust*

Highly important in the process of finding the right match for a dissertation chairperson and committee members is in the formation of trust. Rather clear in the process is to chose to have trust in the dissertation journey as a process and in choosing to develop trust in communication in the progression of the dissertation journey.



### *I-Thou Encounters*

Eyes are the windows to the soul and I am very observant. I felt the importance of developing good working relationships in the dissertation journeying to be of importance in this journey.

### *Insights*

As I reflected deeply on the factors to me that were important in this learning journey I came up with the following three concepts:

1. Let's have fun.
2. Let's learn something new.
3. Let's grow and reflect on new learning experiences.

### *Dynamic Conversations*

I was delighted in the dissertation journeying and the voices on the path of this transformative experience. I am grateful for all the supportiveness that I have received on this path. Since this story is impressionistic, I will share with you my impressions and imagery of the dissertation journey:

Dynamic

Direct

Non-Linear

Aware

Present

Mindful

Engaging

Fun

Intelligent

Thoughtful

Spirited

Intense

Reflective

Bold

Refreshing

Purposeful

I will share with you some of my impressions of how it felt to be engaged in this dissertation process.

Clarity

Vision

Road Map

Journey

Momentum

Velocity

Acceleration

Learning

Enjoying

Experiencing

Sensing

Perceiving

Creativity

Imagination

Expanded Awareness

Celebrating

Becoming

Creating

Growing

Feeling

Active

Intensity

*Zen*

A zen master does not tell you which path to take. This dissertation journeying facilitated reflection of the path that I wanted to embark upon. You only do this once so you should choose what you are passionate about to study was an idea that was communicated to me. I did create my own path and studied something I wanted to learn more about. I appreciated the spirit of inquiry on the path of being open to learning something new together and part of the dissertation journey.

My dissertation has been a very interesting endeavor with the complexities of writing from a lived experience. Pepperdine is a supportive learning environment to dissertation students which helps facilitate the progression through all phases to the preliminary exam. I choose to immerse in this study as it seemed to be a good way to experience a method of lived experiences and reflection.

*Inspiration for Change*

Shortly after my enrollment in the dissertation process and starting the dissertation journey, I went to a meeting for which the theme was inspiration for change. There was a speech that was inspiring. The concept of hybrids, transformation and change was discussed.

*Walking the Talk*

It is one thing to talk about change and another to actively promote and facilitate change. Since integrity is the congruence between thoughts, words and actions I am glad that I had the chance to talk about autoethnography.

I thought to myself, I wonder what the response will be to autoethnography? I engaged in a dialogue. I spoke of my interest in exploring the transformational learning journey with Pepperdine University as an autoethnography personal narrative.

I looked intently to the speaker. I was impressed with the precision, intensity and clarity of the response. There was a discussion in which someone started to tell me about a dissertation written as a novel about a personal developmental journey. I was told that it would be an interesting journey.

*Wow*

Wow, personal developmental journey novels as a dissertation! What I took from that conversation was a desire to pursue my interest in autoethnography personal narratives as a method. I was inspired by the speech about change and transformation. I was inspired to start my doctoral dissertation journey.

### *Scaffolding*

My dissertation conversations were instrumental in the preparation for the preliminary oral exam process. It is not so much what was said which was very helpful, it is more about the courage and conviction towards student learning breakthroughs and growth. I had conversations and was helped with probing questions to help me to articulate what I was trying to express. I appreciate pushing boundaries to explore breakthroughs in learning.

### *Concurrent Journeying*

I was inspired that while I was working on my dissertation as an autoethnography personal narratives of the transformational learning journey with Pepperdine University that the President of our university was on a journey as well. Posted on the university website was the Route 66 Dialogues. It included a daily journal reflecting on dialogues on the road and included music and blogging of responses to his journeys as well. There was even a music playlist for the road and photo imagery of the experience.

I did post an entry to the journal response on Day 8 of the road trip. It is interesting and refreshing to see leaders of organizations being open to dialoguing with others in the road of life in this way. A great deal can be learned by reflecting on dialogues with others.

The president of our university sent me a note and thanked me for the poem I sent *The Road Less Traveled*, by Robert Frost which as he mentioned was one of his favorites. He indicated that my dissertation is on a topic that moves him and that he is very interested.

I greatly appreciate that while I am sure he is very busy he took the time to respond. I appreciated the thoughtfulness of that and I did enjoy reading the Route 66 Dialogues, photo imagery and the postings of people reflecting on the journey.

*Setting the Stage: Welcome to the Orchid Jungle*

According to Shakespeare as quoted on the website E Notes, “All the world is a stage and the women and men merely players” (p. 1). I wanted to create a special feeling and visual frame of reference for the preliminary oral exam. I reflected on all the autoethnographies I read and on the process of writing mine. I noticed that each one was unique as all flowers are as well. I wanted to create a beautiful visual metaphor. I set the scene with three gorgeous orchid plants to frame the story I would convey at the prelims. I placed the orchids at the end of the table to frame the powerpoint presentation on my dissertation journey. I viewed sharing the story as a celebratory ritual and an opportunity to engage in collaborative journeying.

*Collaborative Journeying*

At the preliminary exam we had a chance to explore something new. After I gave a presentation, we all engaged in collaborative dialoguing. Part of the process of the prelims also involves the doctoral student stepping out and the committee collaboratively dialoguing further. I passed the prelims with some modifications and this Dissertation Dialogues: Andragogy of the Expressed is one the outcomes of the collaborative process of the committee.

### *Self Expression*

Writing is useful as a form of self-expression to communicate effectively with others. I began working on the changes requested by the committee. There was an interesting discussion and I had a very engaging communication on this dissertation journey. I talked about autoethnography personal narratives as a method and it was mentioned an award winning doctoral dissertation by Sameshima (2007), *Seeing Red: A Pedagogy of the Parallax: An Epistolary Bildungroman on Artful Scholarly Inquiry* which as someone mentioned was about a personal developmental journey.

### *Transformational Learning*

It was also discussed what my dissertation could contribute to the understanding of the doctoral experience of students and thematic connections to the research of transformational learning. The research in the area of transformational learning can help adult educators understand the transformational learning process as well as to help adult educators provide adult learning experiences to facilitate transformational learning.

### *Effective Communication*

There was a dialogue on this dissertation journey about language and communication. I shared my perspective that communication is about sharing one's message to others in a way that others can understand. It is important to communicate simply, directly and take the complexities and communicate them in the simplest of language to allow for all to be able to understand what you are striving to communicate. While I have an extensive vocabulary, am highly verbal analytical, I enjoy the opportunity to take complex ideas and simplify as much as possible to convey messages in communication.

Great scholars and writers have advocated for communicating simply complex ideas and have shared that it is harder to do than using excessive jargon that not all understand. There is even a government mandate for the use of plain language in governmental agencies to help facilitate communication with others.

*Inspiring Quotes from Great Minds*

In reflecting on writing this autoethnography personal narrative in accessible language, I take comfort in the words of great writers and scholars in this endeavor.

According to the website Plain Language:

Simplicity is the ultimate form of sophistication.

Leonardo da Vinci

Any fool can make things bigger, more complex and more violent. It takes a touch of genius- and a lot of courage- to move in the opposite direction.

Albert Einstein

The finest language is mostly made up of simply unimposing words.

George Eliot

You don't write because you want to say something, you write because you have something to say.

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Out of intense complexities intense simplicities emerge. Broadly speaking, the short words are the best, and the old words when short are the best of all.

Winston Churchill



The chief virtue that language can have is clearness, and nothing detracts from it so much as the use of unfamiliar words.

Hippocrates

Think like a wise man but communicate in the language of the people.

William Butler Yeats. (p. 1)

Next, Chapter 4 will provide a conceptual discussion. Chapter 5 will provide conclusions.

## Chapter 4

### Conceptual Discussion

#### *Introduction*

When critically reflecting on the data of Chapter 3 Personal Narratives of Organizational Leadership, Personal Narrative of Education and Andragogy of the Expressed: Dissertation Dialogues, the theory that emerges to shed light on the process of learning that would best reflect my learning journey with Pepperdine University is transformational learning theory.

This chapter shall provide a conceptual discussion. Autoethnography personal narratives tell a personal story and this chapter will provide a discussion of themes that emerge. I will make thematic connections in the literature of transformational learning and autoethnography personal narratives as a transformational method. The conceptual discussion will be woven with the threads of my personal story and make connections with threads of transformational learning weaving a beautiful tapestry of consciousness.

This chapter will also make connections to lyrics from the Beatles inspired movie Across the Universe. The transformational learning journey with Pepperdine University weaves well metaphorically with the lyrics of Across the Universe. I will also discuss what is the difference that makes a difference. Chapter 5 will provide conclusions and include insights gained in the study.

#### *Across the Universe*

My transformational learning journey with Pepperdine University spans metaphorically across the universe. The lyrics of the song Across the Universe by the Beatles as found on the website Stylyrics discuss the concept of words, thoughts and

feelings spanning across the universe. The song further mentioned that nothing would change one's world (p. 1). What is true for me as part of this learning journey is that transformational learning changes one's world. Having a transformed global perspective on striving to make a difference through one's thoughts, words and actions is transformational.

My learning perspectives have expanded to a "global consciousness." We are all part of this world. We are all connected. I was asked what is the difference that makes the difference? The answer of course would be love. Love is the transformative force that makes a difference in the lives of others.

My name connects with the theme of Across the Universe. My first name Donia means different things in different cultures. In Gaelic it means rules all, in Italian it means lady and in Farsi it means the world etc. What makes the most significant positive difference in the world is to be kind, loving and be the difference that makes the difference through our thoughts, words and actions. Pepperdine University prepares students for lives of purpose, service and leadership. It is a circle of kindness, compassion and service to others. I am inspired by the lyrics of the song All You Need is Love as cited on the website Stylyrics as it very much connects with love as being the difference that makes a difference (p. 1). The movie, Across the Universe has many inspiring scenes with beautiful creative imagery including one of my favorites which is the final scene of the movie that features the song All You Need is Love. I highly encourage you to check it out. The lyrics are amazing and connect with the concepts of this study.

I freely honor Pepperdine with my thoughts for this conceptual discussion of the themes that emerge from the narratives of this study. Pepperdine provides a

transformational learning environment. Gandhi once said as cited on the website Brainy Quote, “Be the change that you want to see in the world” (p. 1). The Who had a great song Let My Love Open the Door with the lyrics as cited on the website Stylyrics, “Let My Love Open the Door to Your Heart” (p. 1). This conceptual discussion celebrates love as a transformative force to make a difference in the lives of others. Reflecting on transformative learning allows one to critically reflect and let the light shine through. It transforms not only mind but spirit and heart as well.

As I was looking at the themes that emerge it is about being fully alive and awake and living life to the fullest with mindfulness and liberating perspectives. There are five themes that emerge to share in this chapter as follows:

1. Critical Reflection.
2. Communication.
3. Soulful Qualities.
4. Feelings and Affect Transformation,
5. Freedom and Emancipation.

Lastly, I will present Implications For Adult Education.

### *Transformational Learning*

Transformational learning theory provides the best approach to understanding the transformational learning journey with Pepperdine University for this autoethnography personal narrative. As previously provided under the definitions section according to Meriam, (1993), “In short, transformational learning shapes people, they are different afterwards in ways both they and others can recognize” (p. 47).

*Setting the Stage for Journeying Through the Conceptual Discussion*

The literature in the area of transformational learning is fascinating and engaging. I am inspired that our university recently had a faculty conference retreat with the focus on transformational learning which is the focus of this study. I do feel that setting an enjoyable theme metaphorically makes this journey engaging for the reader so let's begin with a metaphorical connection with For the Benefit of Mr. Kite which is a Beatles song as cited on the website Stylyrics.

Since this journey is written in a lived method style let's just say that tomorrow I look forward to attending the Blue and Orange Madness event at Pepperdine University's campus in Malibu that has spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean on a beautiful campus. It is an annual celebration of school spirit. My autoethnography personal narratives is about the transformational learning journey and there are certainly many great "Blue People" at Pepperdine so I thought I would let the metaphorical reference to the song For the Benefit of Mr. Kite be the intro to our journey across the universe into the world of transformational learning. Having fun allows one to connect in a meaningful and engaged way in learning experiences as we journey in this chapter together.

To enhance the fun of this journey and be a part of this lived method experience together I highly recommend viewing the movie Across the Universe which features the songs of the Beatles as also referenced in this chapter. One could view the scenes for each song of the Beatles referenced here in this chapter. Listening to the songs, reflecting on the creative and artistic imagery can help further learning connections in this chapter and be an interactive fun sense making adventure.

So for enhanced fun with your DVD loaded with the movie Across the Universe on the song For the Benefit of Mr. Kite let's begin. Here we go on our journey together with the songs by the Beatles! For the Benefit of Mr. Kite can be found on the website Stylyrics (p. 1). Writing a dissertation and the learning journey connect with the lyrics to this song which discuss the complexities of developing a creative endeavor with extensive preparation and including oneself personally in the process.

### *Transformational Learning Theory*

Transformational learning theory has made significant contributions to the understanding of adult learning and has developed some concepts about the adult learner and facilitating adult learning experiences. Transformational learning theory addresses how facilitated learning experiences can change and transform the learner. It provides students with the opportunity to have learning experiences, reflect on learning and make meaning out of their unique experiences.

Transformational learning presents a paradigm shift from the traditional perspective towards a progression to the post-modernist perspective. According to Sokol (1998):

Adult education has moved beyond what Freire (1970) described as the 'banking model' of teaching in which educators make deposits of information into the empty vaults of students' minds. Transformative learning theory is based on the premise that we all have perspectives derived from our experiences, thoughts values and insights. (Mezirow, 1991). We create meaning out of what has happened. Adult educators create meaning out of their experiences as practitioners and learners. As transformative learners, they question perspectives, open up new ways of looking at their practice, revise their views, and act based on new perspectives. (p. 1)

Transformational learning theory seeks to provide learning opportunities to facilitate transformational growth. Transformational learning can stimulate change and personal transformation. It seeks to impact both the cognitive and affective domains.

Transformational learning can provide personal breakthroughs in thought process and may involve affective, social and emotional growth and transformation.

### *Post-Modernism*

Kegan, (as cited in Mezirow, 2000) discussed five increasingly complex epistemologies. He identifies post modernism as the most increasingly complex perspective. According to Kegan (as cited in Mezirow), post-modernism can also be described as the self-transforming mind. He considers it to be trans-system and trans-complex and is dialectical, inter-institutional and self transformational. According to Kegan (as cited in Mezirow), the object is “abstract system ideology, institution relationship-regulating forms, self-authorship, self-regulation, and self-formation” (p. 63). In simple language, it is about dialogue, interaction and personal transformation.

One interacts with institutions and others in dialogue and one grows in the process through self-transformation and authorship. As Pink Floyd lyrics speak metaphorically of the traditionalist perspective in the phrase, as cited on the website Lyrics Mode, “All in all we are just another brick in the wall” (p. 1). This would seem to connect with perpetuating status quo and homeostatic balance in institutions. Post modernism forges on with dialogue, interaction and personal transformation and self authorship. As Jim Morrison asserts in the first song of the first album for The Doors as cited on the website Song Facts it is important to, “break on through to the other side” (p. 1). The lyrics

encourage one to break through barriers and conventions towards a liberated and heightened consciousness.

From critical reflections of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* springs forward “Andragogy of the Expressed.” “Andragogy of the Expressed” is a concept that came to me in a dream and formed my impressionistic thought process for the dissertation dialogues. Dialogues can inspire and be a catalyst for transformation and growth. It is empowering to express oneself.

I read a review about a book entitled *The Last Lecture*, written by a professor who was battling with cancer who suggested that brick walls are meant for all those without the determination to break through. Post modernism provides a conceptual schema of a way to tear down the wall that divides us to create constructed meaning and original authorship. It is not only a method of inquiry, it is also a pathway to higher consciousness and transformational breakthroughs.

Technologies and a global marketplace allow one to exponentially grow in heightened global consciousness and global dialogues. In reaching out to others across diversity of viewpoints and cultures we change and grow in so many ways. The horizon is vast with an inquiring mind, open heart and soulful pondering.

### *Educational Environment*

Transformational learning theory seeks to provide learning opportunities to facilitate transformational growth. Transformational learning can stimulate change and personal transformation. It seeks to impact both the cognitive and affective domains.

Transformational learning can provide personal breakthroughs in thought process and may involve affective, social and emotional growth and transformation.



### *Critical Reflection*

Transformational learning presents an “intellectual revolution” to transform our perspectives and set our minds free to form our own perspectives based upon critical reflection of transformative learning experiences. Autoethnography personal narratives as a methodology is transformational as well as it explores telling one’s own story in one’s own unique way and reflecting on the themes that emerge. Transformational learning is powerful and allows you to freely reflect on your own perspective on issues. If one wants to change the world one can start with oneself and reflect on transforming self and to be inspired to makes a significant positive difference in the lives of others. The lyrics from the Beatles song Revolution discuss changing the world and freeing one’s mind. Freedom is precious. Liberating perspectives lead to personal transformations. Personal transformation can lead enhanced perspectives in making a difference in the lives of others. The lyrics of the Beatles song, Revolution, are cited on the website Stylyrics (p. 1).

Transformational learning takes place through interactive discussions. The role of the educator is to foster critical thinking and facilitate critical reflection. Learning activities are structured to maximize student and faculty interaction and engagement in challenging critical thinking tasks. According to Mezirow (1998):

The role of the adult educator, however is to foster the kind of personal transformative learning that results in each learner making an informed decision to take effective appropriate action. This is what education is about. It is about helping learners to think, judge and learn- to act- with greater insight, not to prescribe what they think and learn. (p. 2)

### *Frames Of Reference and Habits of Thought*

Mezirow (1998) articulated the importance of dialogue and critical reflection. It is important in the process of thinking about issues to be open to the process of examination of one's thought process and beliefs. According to Mezirow:

Finding mutual understanding and common ground and the articulation and exchange of ideas, grievances, and claims as well as the possibility of consensus are all benefits of discourse. The best safeguard against a "reactionary frame" of reference is provision for continuing, open, critical reflection and discourse on the sources, assumptions, and consequences of every problematic belief. Freire has demonstrated how an educator can precipitate problem posing and critical reflection. (p. 1)

Mezirow (1998) defined what frames of references are made of and how frames of references impact how we learn. He also discussed the transformational learning process.

According to Mezirow:

...our received frames of reference are composed of assimilated codes, social norms, ideologies and language games. These frames of reference are the way that culture shapes the way we learn. We are embedded in these set of assumptions and expectations. Transformative learning is about emancipating ourselves from these taken for granted assumptions about social being. It involves bringing the sources, nature, and consequences of this received wisdom into critical awareness so that appropriate action – including social action – can be taken. (p. 1)

Mezirow (1997) discusses and contrasts aspects of transformational learning which include habits of mind, points of view and frames of reference. According to Mezirow:

Frames of reference are primarily the result of cultural assimilation and the

idiosyncratic influences of primary caregivers. Habits of mind are more durable than points of view. Points of view are subject to continuing change as we reflect on either the content or process by which we solve problems and identify the need to modify assumptions. This happens whenever we try to understand actions that do not work the way we anticipated. (p. 1)

### *Reflective Judgment*

Mezirow (1991) discussed the research of King and Kitchener regarding reflective thinking. Kitchener identified seven stages in reflective judgment that constitute a developmental progression. It is at the highest state at stage seven that is categorized as reflective judgment. According to Mezirow, “Kitchener designates as ‘reflective judgment’ the mode of justification that characterizes Stage 7 of her model” (p. 126).

Additionally, according to Mezirow:

Kitchener goes on to write, “The sequence described in reflective judgment model implies that before an individual reaches the point at which his or her thinking can be called ‘reflective’...he or she must have passed through six prior steps or stages in which he or she holds assumptions about reality and knowledge which are not compatible with reflective thinking.” (p. 127)

The research of Kitchener (as cited in Mezirow, 1991) discusses the implications for adult education of these stages of reflective thinking:

Her finding of the existence of stages of development of epistemic meaning perspectives is provocative both for its instructional implications for adult educators and for the suggestion that a qualitatively superior perspective can serve as an educational objective. (p. 128)

Additionally, according to Mezirow (1990) there are certain characteristics of learners at the most advanced stage of reflective thinking, “Stage Seven. Although individuals at this stage believe that knowing is uncertain and subject to interpretation, they also argue that epistemologically justifiable claims can be made about the better or best solution to the problem under consideration” (p. 165).

### *Mindfulness*

I love the lyrics to song of the Beatles, Strawberry Fields as cited on the website Stylyrics (p. 1). It addresses the issue of living mindfully. The lyrics discuss the concept that it is easy to live mindlessly with eyes closed. To live mindfully is a challenging developmental transition that can occur through transforming perspectives. It is about being aware, awake and fully present in the moment. I adore metaphoric abductive reasoning and the use of symbolism to convey meaning.

Since this is an autoethnography, I will share as previously mentioned in the narratives my backyard is symbolic. There are four garden squares of roses and in the center is a circular fountain from which the four squares are bound by four paths, mind, body, soul and spirit. The rose gardens are abundantly filled with everblooming strawberry plants so there are strawberry fields forever.

Mindfulness is a nice concept to reflect upon in a soulful garden of red roses. The strawberry plants nourish the red roses and I kid you not I have never seen roses so content that at this moment some of them are as tall as 8 feet tall. I simply cut the blooms that are faded. They “scaffold” much like learning does and stimulates new growth. My spirits are much lifted when I walk into my soul garden, enjoy the roses, bring some roses into my home and enjoy the delicious strawberries. There are more than one can eat and

the cats in the neighborhood seem to enjoy them too. I was surprised one morning to see a cat relaxing in the sun and eating strawberries.

One of the critical aspects of transformational learning is the mindfulness of learning which is self-reflective in contrast with mindlessness which is not reflective. Mezirow (1991) discussed this issue:

Reflection as Mindfulness. Habitual action is called 'mindlessness' by psychologist Ellen Langer (Yussen, 1985, p. 267-285), who defines this term as a routine reliance on categories and distinctions already formed. She contrasts this approach with "mindfulness," or being fully engaged in making distinctions and creating categories. Mindfulness is described as being aware of content on multiple perspectives. It is what transformation theory calls reflective action. (p. 114)

Mindfulness has positive benefits to the learner. According to Mezirow (1991):

Langer has found that mindfulness on the job can increase productivity, satisfaction, flexibility, innovation, and leadership ability (1989, p. 133). Among the aged, it is significantly related to greater activity, independence, confidence, alertness, vigor, sociability, and length of life. (p. 86)

### *Critical Incidents*

Transformational learning can take place after a significant event. It can for example be a profound realization of the preciousness of life after the death of a loved one or a survival of a major traumatic life event such as cancer. Critical events can provide the opportunity to review life choices and reflect on next courses of actions. According to Sokol (1998), "Transformative learning usually takes place following a 'trigger event' and is fostered by critical discourse and reflection" (p. 1).

There is mixed thought on whether or not there is a triggering event for transformational learning. According to Mezirow (2000), “Transformations in habits of mind may be epochal, a sudden dramatic, reorienting insight, or incremental, involving a progressive series of transformations in related points of view that culminate in a transformation in habit of mind” (p. 21).

#### *Transformation Change Process*

There are aspects of transformational learning that impacts stimulating reflection on culture and facilitates students’ insights into their own thoughts, beliefs and value systems. Transformational learning theory encourages educators to work with students to facilitate growth in the area of critical thinking, evaluation of one’s unique frame of reference and review their actions and decisions in light of their newfound critical reflection of past assumptions and beliefs.

#### *Connections to Critical Reflection and Autoethnography Personal Narratives*

Autoethnography personal narratives is a transformational research method that connects well with transformational learning. Autoethnography personal narratives allows one to tell one’s own story in one’s own unique way and critically reflect upon transformational learning. It further contributes to transformational learning as one reflects upon transformational learning one can further deepen the transformative learning metacognitively. Critical reflection of critical reflections on learning deepens the learning experience. According to Cohen and Piper (as cited in Mezirow, 2000) it leads to original thinking:

I found the voice I never used. I tapped into a part of myself that had been asleep for so long. I discovered that I could create theories myself...We add a narrative theory

that suggests that we create meaning through recounting our life events in a narrative form. Images of transformation give us rich linguistic metaphors for human experience. (p. 205).

Autoethnography allows the researcher great freedom in telling a story. Each person's journey in life is unique. Critically reflecting on transformational learning is a possibility within that genre of research. One can also chose to be creative and blend life and art and strive towards changing the world. According to Jones (as cited in Denzin, 2006):

Autoethnography is a blurred genre...a response to the call...it is setting the scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections between life and art...making a text present...refusing categorization...believing that words matter and writing to the moment when the point of creating autoethnographic texts is to change the world. (p. 420)

Autoethnography is a powerful method of transformation to be able to critically reflect upon transformational learning and not only be the researcher but let one's critical reflections be the data of the study. According to Burnier (2006):

Autoethnography particularly offers a way to situate the self within the research process and its written product, by making the self the object of research and by developing a "reflexive connection between the researcher's and participants' lives." (p. 410)

### *Connections with Critical Reflection and My Personal Narratives*

My personal narratives involve critical reflection of learning which is a fundamental component of transformational learning. In the Personal Narrative of Organizational Leadership I critically reflected on the transformational learning that occurred in my

doctoral coursework in Organizational Leadership that subsequently led to the development of Capital Partners Investment Banking Group to which I am a partner in the firm.

In the Personal Narrative of Education, I critically reflected on my perspectives on education which included my philosophy of education to utilize in my role of teaching a graduate level course in education, personal reflections of vision of educational excellence and reflections on instructional design.

The third narrative, Dissertation Dialogues: Andragogy of the Expressed focused on critical reflections of impressionistic images of the dissertation dialogues in the dissertation journey.

What all three narratives connect with transformational learning is that they all involve critical reflection. Autoethnography personal narratives are a transformational opportunity to critically reflect on transformational learning. Critical reflection is a theme that emerges in all the narratives and is crucial aspect of transformational learning which can be expressed in the autoethnography personal narratives method.

### *Communication*

Communication is an important component of transformational learning. It reminds me metaphorically of the lyrics from the song of the Beatles, With a Little Help From My Friends as cited on Stylyrics (p. 1). There is a suggestion in the song that we learn from one another and can help one another by communicating and listening to each other in shared dialogue.

Transformational learning takes place through student faculty interaction and dialogue. Students have the ability to communicate and express ideas and formulate



thoughts and share them with others in an interactive learning format. According to Pietrykowski (1998):

One of the signal contributions of Habermas to a participatory educational theory and practice is to be found in his theory of communicative rationality. Habermas moves the Enlightenment (modernist) project – that of tracing a path to human freedom and emancipation from systems of coercion and repression- forward by carefully examining the basis of rational action in the world. He finds there are two forms of human rationality: instrumental and communicative. The former is goal oriented and predicated on explanation and control. Communicative action is aimed at understanding. The goal of understanding is thought to be implicit in the desire to communicate. (p. 2)

### *Self Reflection and Dialogue*

Communication is how we convey meaning to others. It allows one another the opportunity to express ourselves to others and hear the perspectives of others as well. It is about sharing our unique voice to express one's thoughts and feelings. According to Mezirow (2000):

Discourse is the forum in which “finding one's voice” becomes a prerequisite for free, full participation. (Kegan, 1994) writes that the two greatest yearnings in human experience are to be included and to have a sense of agency. Of course, agency is ultimately intimately dependent on others and one's inclusion in discourse. Discourse always reflects wider patterns of relationship and power. (p. 11)

Communication involves interactions with others. We are all connected in the dialogue which reminds me of the lyrics of the Beatles Song, I am the Walrus as cited on the

website Stylyrics (p. 1). Communication brings us all into connection and together with each other.

*Finding One's Voice: Contributions from the Women's Movement*

Finding one's voice is an important component of transformational learning. It is critical in the process of transformational learning to think for oneself and find one's own original voice.

Writing an autoethnography personal narratives study further enhances finding one's voice. The method distinctively involves telling one's own story in one's own unique way in one's own voice. It is a method that is powerful, transformational and liberating. It allows one's voice to be expressed which reminds me of the lyrics from the song of the Beatles, Let It Be. It is a method of liberation and freedom of speech in scholarly writing. Only I can be able to reflect on my own thoughts and share in my original unique voice in this methodology. The lyrics from the Beatles song, Let it Be are cited on the website Stylyrics (p. 1).

The women's movement contributes significantly to encourage all to find one's own voice, dialogue as a method of self-expression, awareness, to gain insights and ultimately for consciousness raising.

From silenced voices women chose to boldly begin to self reflect and share with each other their experiences including oppression. They choose to dialogue on the personal experiences of their lives and engage in inquiry and in the process raise their consciousness.

The women's movement has made considerable contributions to transformational learning theory. According to Hart (as cited in Mezirow, 1990):

To write about consciousness raising is to write about an experience of personal and social transformation that pulsates with the joy and pain of subversive power...Twenty years later the explosiveness of women trying to find their own voice has been transformed into a formidable body of feminist theory...Consciousness raising reckons with the internal and external effect of power, which precisely make it a form of emancipatory learning entailing the processes of critical reflection and self reflection and involving a transformation of meaning perspectives. (p. 47-48)

Additionally, Hart (as cited in Mezirow, 1990), "Women made themselves visible and broke the 'culture of silence' (Friere, 1970), by coming to together and talking" (p. 49). Hart (as cited in Mezirow), further discusses the contributions to transformational learning theory of consciousness raising:

Two major principles governed the methods and procedures of consciousness raising and determined its content: Concrete, lived experiences was the primary or "original" source to be "checked out". (Sarachild, 1978), and the experiences that were shared and discussed had to be essential in the sense of contributing to an illumination of the nature of female oppression. (p. 53)

### *Constructivist Developmental Psychology and Expanded Consciousness*

Constructivist developmental psychology and transformational learning theory contributes to the understanding of expanded consciousness. Expanding one's consciousness is integral to both perspectives which are constructivist in nature.

According to Kasl and Elias (as cited in Mezirow, 2000), "Mezirow, Kegan and Bennett are constructivists...From a constructivist perspective, human growth is the reconstruction or transformation of systems of meaning. All three theorists believe in the

evolution of consciousness” (p. 230). Additionally, Kasl and Elias (as cited in Mezirow) explore further expanded consciousness in transformational learning:

Transformational learning is the expansion of consciousness in any human system, thus the collective as well as the individual. This expanded consciousness is characterized by new frames of reference, points of view, or habits of mind as well as by a new structure for engaging the system’s identity....Transformation of the structure of consciousness is facilitated when a learner is confronted with a complex cultural environment because effective engagement with that environment requires a change in the learner’s relationship to his or her or the group’s identity. (p. 233)

### *Individuation*

There are aspects of Individuation Theory as described by Jung that contributes to the understanding the critical reflective component of transformational learning. According to Cranton (as cited in Mezirow, 2000):

Jung (1921) 1971, p. 448 defines individuation as “the process by which individual beings are formed and differentiated; in particular, it is the development of the Individuation, therefore is the process of differentiation, having for its goal the development of the individual as being distinct from the general collective psychology. Individuation, therefore is the process of differentiation, having for its goal the development of the individual personality...Individuation takes place as we break from that collective and come to collectively question the habits of mind of which we have become unaware. Jung described individuation as a life long journey.” (p. 189)

Additionally Cranton (as cited in Mezirow, 2000) discusses transformational learning and individuation in regards to the goals of adult education:

One goal of adult education, and transformative learning in particular is individuation, the development of the person as separate from the collective, which in turn allows for the person to join with others in a more authentic union. If people run with the herd, if they have no sense of self separate from others, there is no hope for finding one's voice or having free full as being distinct from the general collective psychology.

Individuation, therefore is the process of differentiation, having for its goal the development of the individual personality...Individuation takes place as we break from that collective and come to collectively question the habits of mind of which we have become unaware. Jung described individuation as a life long journey. (p. 189)

I agree that individuation is a life long journey and transformational learning is powerful in the life long process of individuation. Having the ability to express oneself freely in one's own voice advances the journey. I definitely don't run with the herd. This study is unique and distinct. It is my own story in my own voice. My love for Pepperdine University is here to stay. Pepperdine University provides a supportive learning environment that promotes transformational learning. I am a Pepperdine girl with a Pepperdine story to tell. The Beatles song, Girl brings this message home metaphorically as cited on the website Stylyrics in which the question of whether anyone would listen to one's story is addressed (p. 1).

#### *Connections with Communication and Autoethnography Personal Narratives*

Autoethnography Personal Narratives allows one free speech to freely communicate one's personal story with the reader. It is a powerful form of transformational research. It

allows one to use one's own original voice in sharing one's story and reflections with the reader. It allows for one to communicate with the reader and share one's story in a way that is unique and distinct from other research methodologies. According to Vyrant (2006):

Just as traditional ethnographer's immersion within the naturally occurring realities of others allows much deeper, richer and more complete understanding than is possible via other methods such as survey research, autoethnography enables access to vital aspects of human experience that cannot be accessible using other available methods. (p. 407)

Autoethnography Personal Narratives allow one to communicate in an accessible manner and to inspire the reader. According to Foster, McAllister, and O'Brien (2006):

There have been many instances of autoethnography in qualitative research where writers have claimed specific benefits from using the method. One of its foremost benefits is that the genre allows another person's experience of and in the world to inspire the reader to reflect on their own experiences...Autoethnographic writing can serve to make a person's lived experience accessible to others and further understanding of a particular issue...(p. 48-49)

Autoethnography is about communicating one's own journey in one's own distinct unique way to convey this story to others. According to Baker (2001):

The author argues that this turn toward ethnography allows for research that engages scholarly passion, enabling the researcher to effect change...You heard me. You heard me all the way. I have a strange feeling you heard me before I started. You heard me

to my own story. You heard me to my own speech. –Nelle Morton, *The Journey is Home*. (p. 395)

*Connections Between Communication and My Personal Narratives*

All three personal narratives had a theme that emerged from transformational learning in common. All three narratives were written in my own voice in which I told my own stories in my own unique way. Developing the ability to communicate one's own original thinking is a crucial aspect of transformational learning.

I shared my genuine authentic perspectives in all three narratives. Autoethnography allows one the freedom to tell a story using one's own voice. This is a powerful method of research as the reader can have the opportunity to reflect on the genuine perspectives of the researcher in this method. As Jung asserts that individuation is a life long journey, my personal narratives certainly have helped on the path of individuation and I have found my scholarly voice in the process. Everyone's autoethnography is unique as everyone's journey in life is unique. Autoethnography personal narratives allows me the freedom of speech to share the rhythm of my own soul in the path of transformational learning and growth.

Dialogue and communication is an important process in transformational growth and as part of this dissertation journey. I critically reflected on the dialogue in this dissertation journey. I reflected on the importance of communication in developing Capital Partners Investment Banking Group. I also reflected on the importance of communication in the education narrative as well. There is a fundamental human need to find meaning in life experiences and transformational learning facilitates enhanced communication capabilities in finding one's own voice.

### *Soulful Qualities*

Transformational learning makes one's soul feel alive. It makes your soul come out to play. The Beatles song Dear Prudence comes to mind when contemplating the soulful aspects of transformational learning as cited on the website Stylyrics (p. 1).

Dirkx (1997) maintains that a comprehensive understanding of transformative learning involves an awareness of the self through spiritual, emotional and mythological dimensions of experience. He states that this is rooted in a consciousness of soul.

According to Dirkx:

When soul is nurtured in adult learning, the assumption is that the unconscious represents the primary source of creativity, vitality and wisdom. The everydayness of the learning environment is valued and attention is paid to its intellectual, socioemotional and physical aspects. Learning through soul requires that a more central role is given to imagination and fantasy in instructional methods and content. (p. 1)

Dirkx suggests that learning can be facilitated with the use of metaphor, story, images, art, music, film and poetry. Additionally, according to Dirkx (1997) there is an importance placed on the affective domain and in fostering compassion for others in a global context:

Soul is more than a psychological attribute, more than attending to feelings in learning. It is seeing the world and its suffering through our own experiences of emotions. (Sardello, 1992) Soul beckons to a relationship between the individual and his or her broader world. Our emotions and feelings are a kind of language for helping us to learn about these relationships. Viewing our experiences through soul draws our



attention to the quality of experiencing life and ourselves, to matters of depth, values, relatedness and heart. Soul has to do with authenticity, connection between heart and mind, mind and emotion, the dark as well as the light. When we are attending to matters of the soul, we are seeking to live deeply, to focus on the concerns of the here and now. (p. 3)

Dirkx (1997) further suggests that learning activities to facilitate transformational growth be constructivist and experiential in nature. According to Dirkx, “Constructivist active, and experiential forms of teaching and learning, marked by high levels of uncertainty, ambiguity, contradiction and paradox, invite expressions of soul” (p. 3).

According to Dirkx (1997), it is important to create a learning environment that is nurturing to the soul:

To nurture soul is to recognize what is already inherent within our relationships and experiences, to acknowledge its presence within the teaching and learning environment, to respect its sacred message, to give it space and consideration, and to provide it a voice through which to be heard. When we nurture soul in adult learning, we assume the unconscious represents the primary source of creativity, vitality and wisdom within our lives is the source of life itself. We recognize how the deeper aspects of our individual and collective unconscious come to express themselves. We encourage deep engagement with the unconscious through imagination, creativity and intuition...We need an attitude of caring for our souls and the souls of our learners.

When nurturing soul, we are cultivating, watching and participating in growth. (p. 4)

The importance of creativity for soulful transformation is very important. It allows one to make one's own soulful connections with transformational learning. I liked the lyrics

from the Beatles song Because as cited on the website Stylyrics (p. 1). This song reminds me of being mindful in the present moment and to approach life with awe and wonderment. Love is universal, timeless and a transformative force in the world.

### *Metaphors and Transformational Learning*

Transformational learning includes learning and dialogue with the use of metaphors. Learners can construct meaning and communicate in dialogue with others with the use of metaphors. Learning and constructing meaning in this way involves a method of learning different from hypothetical deductive reasoning. Learning and creating meaning with metaphors involves metaphorical abductive reasoning. Metaphors help to understand and make connections with creating meaning and communication with others. According to Mezirow (1991), “Metaphors are the tools of communicative learning” (p. 80).

Additionally, Mezirow states:

Problem Solving by Metaphorical-Abductive Logic. The logic of communicative learning is metaphorical abductive, as distinct from the hypothetical-deductive logic of instrumental learning. It moves from the concrete to the abstract rather than from the abstract to the concrete. In communication, we try to understand what someone else means “abductively”, that is, by drawing upon our experiences to explain theirs.

Abduction explains what may be, deduction what must be, and induction what actually is operative. (Hanson, 1981). (p. 85)

Mezirow (1990) discusses the powerful influence of metaphors in the transformational learning process:

Metaphors are important because they exert forceful, immediate, unobtrusive influence over our lives. Embler (1966, ix) states: “Cultural beliefs, ideas, casual

assumptions are embedded in figurative language about the human condition.” As a form of language, metaphors are without doubt the most powerful form of persuasive rhetoric....Metaphors provide perspectives that define how we construe meaning. Their power comes through the way they frame meaning and reinforce perspectives through bundling visual and other sensory characteristics attributed to a primary subject. (p. 310)

Metaphors can be very seductive and persuasive and are powerful in constructing and communicating meaning. According to Mezirow (1990) regarding use of metaphors, “Because of their capacity to persuade, seduce and socialize us to their selected perspectives, metaphors deserve primary consideration in any learning process that attempts to assist us in critical reflection” (p. 310).

Metaphors allow one to communicate with a sense of agency, creativity, freedom, imagination and intuition. Metaphorical communication and metaphorical-abductive reasoning does allow for freedom and liberation in enhanced consciousness in learning and in dialogue with others. According to Mezirow (1990):

Metaphors also are important for transformative learning because they provide us with the capacity as agents to make sense of the universe, sort out perceptions, make evaluations, create and adventure in meaning and guide our purposes. They have the capacity to empower and emancipate as well as to seduce....Creating metaphors is an act of naming the world and thus it is an act of power. (p. 311)

Metaphors provide an opportunity for dialogue and interaction. According to Mezirow (1990), “Transformative learning is enhanced through dialogue and active participation. Metaphors are important to that process because they require active involvement and

special effort on the part of the hearer in the search for meaning. Metaphors assume dialogue and discourse” (p. 311).

Creating one’s own metaphors is an important component of the transformational learning journey. According to Mezirow (1990):

Creating our own metaphors contribute to our emancipation not only in our pilgrimage for personal meaning but also collectively in the interpretation of popular culture and the creation of counterhegemonies against social forces that oppress, maintain social injustice...Metaphor analysis leads to action based on new meaning perspectives. (p. 312)

Metaphors are helpful in exploring the unknown with the use of imagination and intuition. According to Mezirow (1990):

Imagination is indispensable to understanding the unknown. We imagine alternative ways of seeing and interpreting. The more reflective and open to the perspective of others we are, the richer our imagination of alternative contexts will be. Intuition also can play a central role in identifying a strange experience. Intuition refers to immediate recognition of the experience’s meaning or significance without going through the process of intentional analysis. Intuition can guide us when we encounter the unknown, suggesting that metaphoric analogies and directions for abductive thought. (p. 83)

I was recently very inspired to hear a speech by the author Erwin Raphael McManus at Pepperdine University. He spoke of soulful transformation in his speech. He mentioned the key to communication is to have something to say. He talked about having a great life

and having something to say. He discussed the role of mentors as not about beating others up for who they are but lifting them to who they are becoming.

He talked about engaging in dialogue. He indicated that things are boring when not connected to your life. He discussed that heroic leadership lives inside of everyone. He discussed nothing meaningful is boring. He indicated a lot of people may hate you as you move towards the light. He discussed helping people to become present and wide awake.

He discussed the importance of listening to people's stories. He talked about the fundamental human condition to be heard, to be known and to have someone pull the best out of you. He discussed mentoring as dialogue. I discussed in my study that Pepperdine is a place that feels like home. He shared that a home is place where there is no one afraid to express one's self. He discussed a vision that we all moving forward all connected. If you have not had a chance to read Erwin Raphael McManus's book, *Wide Awake the Future is Within You*. I will share three inspiring passages from this book. According to McManus (2008):

You have been entrusted with a great gift. Whether you realize it or not, your life is God's gift to you and to the world. Within you he has placed all you need to create the life that exists only in your dreams. Not to mention that he himself lives within you. This is at the core of your creative energy. God is the source of all creativity of all beauty, of all that is good in the world. He placed the potential for all that is in you. Greatness does not happen in a vacuum and neither does the future. (p. 171)

McManus (2008) further asserts:

You are a creative being. You are at the core a spiritual being, and your spirit is creative by nature. Creativity is the natural result of spirituality. This is why every

human being has the creative potential. Yet your creative potential will only fully be expressed in relationship to the creative God who made you creative. (p. 172)

Additionally according to McManus (2008):

Creativity is the natural result of spirituality. When you are alive, you will create and it will be breathtaking and life giving. You are an instrument of the good and the beautiful and the true. You create not simply because you can but because you care. You are inspired by the prospect of a more beautiful world and are fueled by a passion that cannot be contained. You create because you must. You cannot sit back and simply watch life happen. The hero within you has been awakened and you are activist. For your life is a creative act! (p. 176)

#### *Connections Between Soulful Qualities and My Personal Narratives*

Autoethnography personal narratives allows one to express the rhythm of one's soul. It allows for free expression of soulful transformational growth. Creativity is a critical component of soulful transformational growth. It is a process of metaphorical abductive reasoning. Use of metaphors, poems, music, inspiring ideas etc. allow one to be moved in the transformational process and to move others through the creative process of creating within the lived method genre of autoethnography personal narratives.

What all three personal narratives have in common with transformational learning is the connection with soulful transformational growth. When your soul is nurtured in transformational learning it comes out to play with creativity, imagination, and vision. Soulful transformation makes one feel alive and excited to be on a life long transformational journey. Pepperdine University provided an excellent environment to nurture soul in the transformational learning process.

### *Feelings and Affect Transformation*

Transformational learning theory addresses the importance of feelings and the affective domain. Transformational learning activities will facilitate changes in emotions and feelings. Transformational learning theory strives for critical reflection in both the cognitive and affective domain. Transformational growth will include affective and cognitive growth. This reminds me of the Beatles song, Hey Jude as cited on the website Stylyrics (p. 1). This song reminds me that we can always choose to make a sad song better. We always have the freedom to choose to make things better. We have a sense of agency and purpose when we choose to strive to change the world and make it better.

### *Emotional Intelligence*

Emotional intelligence is an important prerequisite of transformational learning. The personal emotional qualities suggest that are important to be able to participate effectively in dialogue and transformational learning are as follows according to Mezirow (1991):

Effective participation in discourse and in transformative learning requires emotional maturity- awareness, empathy, and control- what Goleman (1998) calls “emotional intelligence” – knowing and managing one’s emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing emotions in others and handling relationships – as well as clear thinking.  
(p. 11)

Additionally, according to Mezirow (2000):

Goleman elaborates emotional competencies for each of these dimensions of emotional intelligence. Major social competencies include empathy, (understanding others and cultivating opportunities through diverse people and political awareness)

and social skills, adeptness in getting desired response from others, Self regulation includes self-control and trustworthiness, maintaining standards of honesty and integrity. (p. 11)

### *Connections Between Gestalt Theory and Transformational Learning Theory*

Gestalt theory presented certain problems in human inquiry. Transformational learning theory pick up on the questions of gestalt theory and builds scaffolding to address these issues. According to Mezirow (1991):

Gestalt psychology theorists, like Popper, viewed learning as a problem-solving activity. They defined a problem as a difficulty in achieving a goal. The basic idea of their learning theory was that a gestalt is changed under the pressure of a problem so that the substance previously making up the gestalt forms a new one. The problem was seen as an incomplete gestalt, and the solution was the “closure” of the gestalt. The process of altering a gestalt was called an insight. Insight involved a “recentering” of a gestalt such that a problem situation was redefined to include the problem’s potential solution. (p. 39)

A fundamental question seemed to arise as to how gestalts change. According to Mezirow (1991) transformational learning theory addressed this major issue:

Berkson and Wetterston note that Gestalt psychologists did not solve the problem of how Gestalts change. It is precisely this consideration to which transformation theory addresses itself....Popper and transformation theorists agree that our efforts to understand the world generate the continuous testing of our most fundamental assumptions, not merely the testing of our attempts to extend our knowledge. (pp. 40-41)



*Connections Between Feelings and Affect Transformation and Autoethnography Personal Narratives*

Carolyn Ellis wrote about illness and death in *Final Negotiations* and discussed the emotional aspect of the writing journey and about sharing one's emotional journey with the reader. According to Clough (1997) who discussed *Final Negotiations*:

Indeed Ellis writes autoethnographically because it allows her to “talk about how I felt” and “how much my own emotional experiences influenced what I saw” (1995a, p. 7). But Ellis does not only want to write about her emotions. She also wants to coax the reader “to be open to your feelings as you take this narrative journey” (1995a, p. 9), she also wants reading autoethnography to be a personal and emotional therapeutic event for her readers. (p. 96)

Additionally, autoethnography deals with issues of compassion as cited by Etorre (2006), “Autoethnographies augment empathy on multiple levels including interactions between authors and participants as well as reader and story (Bochner and Ellis, 2002)...Ellis's (2000: 273) optimal concern is, I want to think and feel with my story” (p. 158).

Writing an autoethnography can evoke emotions in the reader and encourages both the writer and the reader to reflect on their experiences in life. According to Foster et al. (2006):

The use of subjective language that evokes emotions and responses in both the reader and the writer therefore encourages both to reflect upon the meanings of the lived human experiences. (Kawalilak & Dudley 2002). In autoethnography, the very act of writing becomes a way of being and knowing (Foley, 2002). (p. 49)

### *Connections Between Feelings and Affect Transformation and My Personal Narratives*

Writing an autoethnography and reflecting on transformational growth in the affective domain is a powerful experience. Autoethnography personal narratives is about expressing oneself in one's own voice. It is exciting and transformative as a research methodology. It allows one's light to shine through to inspire others.

I noticed my own personal reaction to reading many autoethnographies was that I was personally inspired to reflect on my own story. Autoethnography as a research method is a beacon of light in scholarly research. It allows one to convey with heart, soul, intellect and emotions one's unique transformative journey in life.

My autoethnography personal narratives are connected to feelings and affective transformation. One transforms in the process of learning. I now have a "global consciousness" in terms of striving to make a difference in the lives of others. I realize now how connected we all are in the global perspective. I have reflected that love is the transformative difference that makes a difference in the world. Our compassion, kindness, thoughts words and actions is a transformative force in the world.

### *Freedom and Emancipation*

Freedom to reflect on prior assumptions and utilize critical thinking strategies is an important component of transformational learning. Transformational learning is liberating and leads to greater freedom and sense of emancipation from previously limiting beliefs and assumptions. It empowers learners to engage in critical reflection and to be able to make decisions based on new insights. There is a song by the Beatles,

While My Guitar Gently Weeps that reflects on the sadness of someone trying to control another person and celebrates freedom from oppression as cited on the website Stylyrics (p. 1).

According to Mezirow (1998):

Emancipatory values may be educational as well as social and political. They are inherent in the process of learning – in the goal of and understanding that is more inclusive, differentiating, critically reflective, and integrative of experience. They are also inherent in the ideal conditions of discourse. These conditions are implicit in the nature of human communication: accurate and complete information, absence of coercion, ability to weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively, and open and empathic to alternative points of view, ability to be critically reflective of assumptions, equal opportunity to participate, and willingness to accept a tentative best judgment until new information is available. (p. 1)

Sokol (1998) discusses Habermas's ideas that there are three kinds of knowledge.

According to Sokol:

Habermas's 1971 three kinds of knowledge have become a framework for understanding learning. Instrumental knowledge is oriented towards casual laws and regularities...Communicative (or practical) knowledge includes our understanding of each other and the social norms within which we live and work – what creates a good group ambiance within an educational setting. Emancipatory knowledge is empowerment – increased self-awareness and freedom from constraints. (p. 1)

Mezirow (1998) discusses cultural change and transformational learning within the context of cultural action and critical reflection. According to Mezirow:

Social movements are potentially powerful agencies for transformative learning and for social change. But social movements come and go. What makes them possible is cultural change, meaning transforming prevailing cultural paradigms or collective frames of reference. This involves cultural action to build ways of thinking that make social movements and other forms of social action possible. This process is one of critical reflection on assumptions of which conventional understandings through discursive inquiry, and taking reflective action. (p. 1)

Freire contributes to a greater understanding of facilitating freedom and emancipation in learners. Mezirow (1998) recognizes the contribution of Freire in understanding freedom and emancipation as part of the transformational learning process. According to Mezirow, “There are many dimensions to empowerment and emancipation. Freire has shown us how educators can work with adults to help them to recognize ways they are being oppressed” (p. 2).

The concept of freedom is a fundamental aspect of autoethnography personal narratives as a method. The song Come Together by the Beatles describes it well as cited on the website Stylyrics in discussing the importance of being free and also to be able to connect with each other as free individuals (p. 1).

Mezirow (1998) discusses the notion of the activist role of educators. Educators can facilitate social action. According to Mezirow:

Adult educators are never neutral. They are activists committed to support and extend the cultural canon, social practices, institutions and systems that foster fuller, freer participation in reflective discourse, transformative learning, and reflective action. Transformative theory deals with how individuals may be empowered to free

themselves from unexamined ways of thinking that impede effective judgment and action. (p. 2)

Inglis (1998) stressed that students should become aware of social structures and reflect on that awareness. According to Inglis:

I believe that for people to learn to be free they must develop a knowledge and understanding of the structures within which they as individuals have been constituted. Without an ongoing realistic critical analysis and resistance to these structures, there is no freedom. (p. 1)

### *Self Directed Aspect*

Transformational learning places a strong emphasis on the self directed nature of transformational growth. It is very student centered in that students are very involved in the learning process and take a very active role in their education. Transformational learning places a great deal of responsibility for learning outcomes on the student.

According to Pilling (1997):

In self directed learning, learners determine, investigate, and evaluate their needs. When considering needs, the learners must reflect on his or her learning processes. When this reflection process moves beyond simple questioning and becomes more critical, the potential for transformative learning exists. Indeed, in order to learn how to be self-directed, students go through a process of development that often must be transformative- they change their way of thinking about learning. No longer are they recipients of a teacher –directed process: they are responsible and accountable for their own development. (p. 5)

An important component of transformational learning is the self directed nature of transformational learning. Learners explore topics that are meaningful and significant for the learner and the adult educator is a facilitator in the transformational learning process.

Mezirow also placed an emphasis on the self directed nature of transformational learning and the facilitator's role. According to Mezirow (1997):

In fostering self-direction the emphasis is on creating an environment in which learners become increasingly adept at learning from each other and at helping each other and at helping each other learn in problem-solving groups. The educator functions as a facilitator and provocateur rather than as an authority on subject matter. The facilitator encourages learners to create norms that accept order, justice and civility in the classroom and respect and responsibility for helping each other learn, to welcome diversity; to foster peer collaboration; and to provide equal opportunity for participation. The facilitator models the critically reflective role expected of learners.

(p. 3)

### *Autonomy*

Transformational learning theory stresses the importance of facilitating autonomy in learners. The goal is to encourage critical reflection and the ability to form decisions based on review of existing frames of reference and reflecting on new ideas and constructs that are learned. Students who have the ability to use their critical thinking skills in new situations will be able to make more informed decisions based on an analysis and reflection on situations and assumptions. It will lead to increased autonomous actions and choices. According to Mezirow (1997):

Thinking as an autonomous and responsible agent is essential for full democracy and

for moral decisionmaking in situations of rapid change...Autonomy here refers to the understanding, skills, and disposition necessary to become critically reflective of one's own assumptions and to engage effectively in discourse to validate one's beliefs through the experience of others who share similar values. (p. 7)

Baumgartner (2001) discusses Mezirow (2000) which suggests the situational contexts of transformational learning and issues of social interaction and power relationships.

According to Baumgartner:

Mezirow in his most recent work (2000)...Learning occurs in the in the real world in complex institutional, interpersonal, and historic settings (and) must be understood in the context of cultural orientations embodied in our frame of reference...He realizes that there are 'asymmetrical power relationships' that influence the learning process...Last Mezirow acknowledges that social interaction is important in the learning relationship. (p. 2)

### *Power*

Mezirow suggests that students should be empowered to understand and utilize their personal power in the learning process. They should also be aware of how social controls may be oppressive and how it may interfere with their learning process. Mezirow (1998) states:

Learners should be able to see and understand how power operated in their lives. This requires a competence and a commitment to read and interpret social life in terms of a struggle for power. We can suggest new ways of seeing, including understanding more about the way power has become oppressive in our lives. We can help oppressed people learn to take appropriate forms of social and political action. (p. 2)

### *Emancipation Through Self-Reflection*

Self reflection is liberating and empowering. According to Mezirow (1991) in discussing the contributions of Habermas to emancipatory learning:

It is in the interest in the knowledge resulting from self reflection, including interest in the way our history and biography have expressed themselves in the way we see ourselves, our assumptions about learning and the nature and use of knowledge and our roles and social expectations. (p. 87)

The ability to self-reflect is liberating and transformational on many levels. According to Mezirow (1991), “The emancipation in emancipatory learning is emancipation from libidinal, linguistic, epistemic, institutional, or environmental forces that limit our options and our rational control over our lives but have been taken for granted or seen as beyond human control” (p. 87).

Emancipatory learning is free from coercion. A learner has the freedom to self-reflect and that person’s feelings and transformational journey is unique. According to Mezirow (1991):

One cannot become emancipated through indoctrination. However, learning to understand our individual historical and biographical situation more fully contributes to the development of autonomy and responsibility in deciding how to define our problems and the course of action that is most appropriate under particular circumstances. (p. 88)

### *Connections with Freedom and Emancipation and Autoethnography Personal Narratives*

I was greatly inspired by the book by Robert Nash, *Liberating Scholarly Writing The Power of Personal Narratives*. In this book, he argues the tremendous value in writing



scholarly personal narratives on freedom's path. Who said dissertations need to be boring? One can share a scholarly story and reflect upon transformational learning in a way that is emotionally engaging, creative and soulfully present. Why not let your soul sing, dance and come out to play fully alive and awake? Individuals learn best when engaged in meaningful and meaning centered learning activities connected to their life experiences. One can be scholarly and soulful and share a story that can move others in the process. Nash (2004) makes the claim, "to be a good scholar is to be a lover" (p. 46). I do agree that loving life and being committed to make a difference in the lives of others is a transformative force for positive change. According to Nash:

So here is where I stand on 'scholarship' right now: it's all about loving ideas so much that we are willing to play with them, to take chances with them, to express our passions about them, to deliver them in some fresh, new ways, to nurture and care for them...I myself can best show my love for ideas by using stories about myself...as a way to deliver these ideas...Telling stories is my way of expressing my love for thinking. (p. 48)

Nash (2004) discussed autoethnography as the most serious form of scholarship possible. As I can personally attest to, writing an autoethnography is an intense but personally transformative, emotionally and soulfully powerful endeavor. An autoethnography is about writing from one's own voice. It is a distinctly original piece of work in that each person's story and reflection is unique. I have been inspired by the original stories I have read as autoethnography personal narratives and will freely share

my story with the reader as well. According to Nash in regards to scholarly personal narratives:

This is a work that actually enlarges the notion of “serious scholarship” to include the most important voice in scholarly writing, the author’s. In SPN, the writer is as much the message as the message itself. How can the two ever be separated? Who was it that said that it’s not only the song that matters, it’s the singer. It’s not just the words, it’s the music. It’s not just the writer’s text, it’s the writer’s context, pretext, and subtext. By the way, the last sentence, though not as lyrical as the sentences that precede it is mine. It’s my postmodern way of making music. SPN writing...is one way for you to find your own special music to do the “serious scholarship”...(p. 53)

Additionally Nash (2004) makes reference to Thoreau:

In more poetic terms, Henry David Thoreau once said that somewhere that the squeaking of the pump sound as necessary as the music of the spheres. In other words, your little squeaks have the power to carry equal weight with the cosmos’s music. It all depends on your vantage point, your self confidence, and your power of discernment. Thus, I say, let your stories squeak in all their splendor. They will teach, but only if you have the courage to put them into words, to narrate them with pride and enthusiasm. (p. 54)

Additionally as cited in Nash (2004):

If you want to write you can. Fear stops most people from writing, not lack of talent, whatever that is. Who am I? What right have I to speak? Who will listen to me if I do? You’re a human being, with a unique story to tell, and you have every right. If you

speak with passion, many of us will listen. We need stories to live, all of us. We live by story. Yours enlarges the circle. (p. 52)

*Connections Between Freedom and Emancipation and My Personal Narratives*

Autoethnography personal narratives is all about freedom of speech, freedom to share your own story your own way and to freely express the rhythm of your soul. Your story is your personal gift to other freely given, freely received. There is tremendous freedom and empowerment in expression one's own voice. Autoethnography personal narratives is a praxis of liberty.

We are born free and this method of research is a transformational research method to allow one's own freedom to flourish in scholarly writing. An interesting thing happens when one chooses to write in a method that supports freedom. One develops one's own unique scholarly voice and engages in self authorship and original thinking. It allows your soul to come out to play. It allows you to share who you are and what matters to you to inspire others to do the same.

*Implications for Adult Education*

Facilitating transformational learning is about nurturing intellect, emotions and soul in learning. It is about being the difference that makes a difference in the lives of learners. It comes from the heart and it is a gift of kindness, compassion that lasts a lifetime. It is about a caring commitment to help students experience transformational growth. It does not let one down. It lifts one up to who we are becoming. Transformational learning experiences are a gift of kindness from educators who deeply care about students learning. Creativity and making a difference with others is part of the path of love which

is path of God. It reminds me of the lyrics of the song by the Beatles called Don't Let Me Down as cited on the website Stylyrics (p. 1).

Mezirow makes distinctions between adult education and working with children. He maintains that there are distinct considerations when designing curriculum for adult learners. Transformational learning involves examining one's prior assumptions and beliefs as part of the learning process. As such, it involves critical thinking and critical reflection in order to achieve transformational growth. According to Mezirow (1997):

Transformative learning requires a form of education very different from that commonly associated with children. New information is only a resource in the adult learning process. To become meaningful, learning requires that new information be incorporated by the learner into an already well-developed symbolic frame of reference, an active process involving thought, feeling and disposition. The learner may also have to be helped to transform his or her reference to fully understand the experience. Educators must assume responsibility for setting objectives that explicitly include autonomous thinking and recognize that this requires experiences designed to foster critical reflexivity and experience in discourse. (p. 4)

Mezirow (1997) further asserts an important commentary on transformational learning. It is not an alternative strategy but a comprehensive approach to adult education. According to Mezirow:

Transformative learning is not an add-on. It is the essence of adult education. With this premise in mind, it becomes clear that the goal of adult education is implied by the nature of adult learning and communication: to help the individual become a more autonomous thinker by learning to negotiate his or her own values, meanings and

purposes rather than to uncritically act on those of others. Critical reflection, awareness of frames of reference, and participation in discourse become significant elements in defining learning needs, setting educational objectives, designing materials and methods, and in evaluating learner growth using non-traditional methods such as portfolios. (p. 5)

### *Relevance of Theory to Modern 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Needed*

Transformational learning is very relevant to the skills needed in modern society. In a time of rapid change, transformational learning theory offers students the ability to engage in critical thinking and critical reflection. These skills are critical in this technological fast paced world we live in. According to Dirkx (1997):

In this information age, rapid shifts in careers, advancing technologies, increasing diversity within our population and dramatic fluctuations in the personal contexts of our lives draw attention to our need for life long learning....This struggle for meaning, the need to feel and be authentic with ourselves and one another and to realize a more just social order, is the focus of several strands of research and theory referred to as transformative theories of adult learning. (Clark, 1993) As reflected in the works of Mezirow (1991), Cranton (1994), Daloz, (1986) and Friere (1970), transformative learning represents a heroic struggle to wrest consciousness and knowledge from the forces of unconsciousness and knowledge from the the forces of unconsciousness and ignorance. (p. 1)

Mezirow emphasizes the importance of transformational learning theory's relevance to developing students to be effective in the workplace. According to Mezirow (1997):

The common presumption is that the essential learning required to prepare a

productive and responsible worker for the twenty first century must empower the individual to think as an autonomous agent in a collaborative context rather than to uncritically act on the received ideas and judgments of others. Workers will have to become autonomous, socially responsible thinkers. (p. 3)

### *Summary*

Transformational learning theory facilitates critical thinking and critical reflection. Transformational learning can occur in an educational environment that allows students to actively and experientially engage in review and analysis of assumptions, thoughts and beliefs and values. Through critical thinking and critical reflection, students will be able to formulate a transformational frame of reference to make autonomous decisions. Transformational learning involves facilitating cognitive and affective growth. It empowers individuals to have greater freedom and emancipation to be able to engage in independent and autonomous behavior and decisionmaking.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions

This chapter will provide conclusions to this autoethnography personal narrative. A voice on the path of this journey pointed out that endings are beginnings. I would add that life is meant to be lived to the fullest while enjoying, and deeply experiencing the journey not just the destination.

#### *Embracing A Lived Method Of Research*

Writing an autoethnography personal narrative is a lived method of research. One writes about one's lived experiences. It involves experiential transformation and reflection of mind, body, soul and spirit. I highly recommend the journey for anyone who truly wishes to be open to critically reflecting on experiences of life and to feel the synergy and heightened awareness of what it is like to write from a lived experience of inquiry. Impressions that come to mind are freedom, creativity, passion, intensity, liberating, soul searching, spiralling, and evolving. It involves collaborative journeying with the researcher and reader in constructing meaning.

#### *Significance*

I found the experience of writing and reflecting on this autoethnography personal narrative to have significance to me personally. Autoethnography personal narratives are considered significant in that every person is unique in their own ways. Each person has a story to tell and in sharing stories with others, not only is it transformational for the writer, it also opens the possibility for the reader to make connections that are unique to the individual and for the reader to contemplate his or her journey in life as well.

### *Pondering: Choosing a Path of Inquiry*

When contemplating what type of research to explore for my dissertation I chose to travel the path of autoethnography personal narratives. Why? is a question one might ask. To answer that question I reflect back to the assumptions I posed at the beginning of this journey of exploring autoethnography personal narratives. Below I will provide my assumptions which I proposed at the beginning of my dissertation journey.

### *Assumptions Revisited*

1. Autoethnography personal narratives allow for telling a personal story in one's own original voice.
2. It is an interesting and worthwhile endeavor to tell one's personal story as an autoethnography personal narrative.
3. Each person has a unique story to tell and reflect upon.
4. Utilizing autoethnography is a useful method to share and reflect on transformational learning.
5. The readers of autoethnography personal narratives share in the journey of reflection of the personal story.
6. Autoethnography personal narratives allow the readers to make connections with the personal story and to reflect upon their own personal stories.
7. Creating an autoethnography personal narratives is a transformational process as well as being a reader of an autoethnography personal narrative.
8. Both the writer and the reader co-construct meaning in an interactive connection with the personal story.



9. It is important to open one's mind, heart, and soul to make meaningful connections with an autoethnography personal narrative.
10. Writing an autoethnography personal narrative takes courage, willingness to be vulnerable and open, passion, genuineness and authenticity.
11. Every person has a unique story to tell and autoethnography personal narratives allow for the free expression of one's personal story to reflect upon.
12. Transformational learning is a life long journey.
13. I am grateful for the supportiveness of my dissertation chairperson and committee in exploring this journey of autoethnography personal narratives with me.
14. My learning journey with Pepperdine University is transformational and worthy of reflecting upon as an autoethnography personal narrative.

### *Major Findings*

Writing an autoethnography personal narrative is a transformational learning experience in itself. It allows for critical reflection of transformational learning. I have always communicated with metaphors and now know something new which is that it is considered metaphorical abductive reasoning.

I also learned why perhaps I was drawn to write an autoethnography personal narrative in the first place. I contemplated which methods of research to choose. I reflected that there are always multiple perspectives on research issues and I wanted to explore a method in which I could engage in my own critical reflection and choose a method suitable for this endeavor.

According to Kitchener's Stages of Reflective Thinking, Stage Seven is the final advanced stage called Reflective Judgment. The theoretical constructs of transformational

learning asserts as one engages in critically reflective thinking there is no way to turn back to previous ways of thinking once one's perspectives have been transformed. I view transformation as a life long spiralling constructivist circles of ever-evolving heightened consciousness.

Autoethnography personal narratives allow the researcher free expression to write one's own story in one's own unique way. It is a method of self reflection and discovery which further accelerates the ongoing transformational journey.

Autoethnography personal narratives is a transformational method in this regard as metacognition of metacognitive thoughts allow one to reach, extend, learn and grow even further. Transformational learning is constructivist in nature. Transformational learning is liberating. One is not fenced or boxed in by hegemonic status quo perspectives. Transformational learning is part of the postmodernist perspective that leads to original thinking and self-authorship.

### *Conclusions and Reflective Insights*

As a result of conducting this autoethnography personal narrative of the transformational learning journey with Pepperdine University, I have conclusions that fit into the theoretical framework of transformational learning and reflective insights to share.

#### **Conclusions:**

1. Pepperdine University provides a positive supportive learning environment to foster critical reflection. Critical reflections lead to transformational learning.
2. Communication is an important component of the transformational learning process.

3. Transformational learning literally changes one in ways that are significant and involves soulful qualities.
4. Transformational learning is an ongoing life long journey and also involves feelings and affective transformation.
5. Transformational learning involves freedom and emancipation. In freely sharing my perspective, the best way I can articulate what transformational learning feels like is to make an analogy to spiralling constructivist circles which as one learns and grows is an evolving heightened consciousness.

Reflective Insights:

6. Once one begins the road of transformational learning there is no turning back. It is the path of my continued quest for life long learning and sharing transformational insights in making a difference in the lives of others.
7. Follow your intuition, passion and bliss and trust exploring the journey.
8. The sum is greater than the parts in exploring transformational learning.
9. It takes a learning community to launch and nurture a dissertation journey.
10. It was inspiring to engage in dynamic collaborative dialogues.
11. It was exciting to learn something new together in this dissertation journey and have fun in the co-constructed meaning perspectives
12. I greatly value the participation of my dissertation chairperson and committee in support of this endeavor.
13. I am enriched from having participated in a lived method of inquiry and sharing this experience with such a talented and dynamic committee.
14. The end of this journey is yet just another beginning for adventures yet to come.

### *Contribution to Understanding of Adult Education*

The theory of transformational learning as outlined in Chapter 4 contributes to the understanding of adult education in understanding of the transformational learning process. My three spiralling stories give a view of one person's narrative perspective of transformational learning journey. The point of writing an autoethnography personal narrative is to go on a journey to heightened self reflection and consciousness and in the process tell a story that can be shared with others. The reader takes from the experience whatever feelings and insights that surface as well as the reader is encouraged to reflect on one's own unique journey in life.

### *Trilogy*

My learning journey with Pepperdine University represented a trilogy of degree programs beginning with Clinical Psychology master's program, a master's in Administration and culminating toward the completion of this doctorate Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership.

### *Strengthening Students' Lives for Purpose Service and Leadership*

It has been a remarkable voyage of transformation. Pepperdine University, from my experience, walks the talk of preparing students for lives of purpose, service and leadership. If you listen to the many stories of the alumni and fellow students in which there is a great diversity of paths and life experiences there seems to be a common element. We are committed to making a difference in the lives of others through our thoughts, words and actions.

For this journey of my dissertation, I trusted if I followed passion, enthusiasm and trusted in the journey all would come together on this transformational learning journey

as I believe everyone has the potential to make one's dreams come true. It is important to have faith, hope and optimism.

### *Three Wise Sages*

I am honored to have three wise sages for my committee members who have unique and diverse backgrounds to share expertise, wisdom and collaborative dialogue in this dissertation journey. I am awe inspired by collaborative dialoging to share meaning perspectives in this dissertation journey.

This journey involved exploring a method that was new to us and construct meaning collaboratively. I feel truly grateful to my dissertation chairperson and my committee in allowing me the freedom to choose my own path of inquiry and to support me in this endeavor. Facilitating a student finding one's own topic of interest to explore and supporting the student in the journey of discovery is the essence of transformational learning and the central goal of adult education as exemplified in my personal experience in this process.

### *The Power of Three*

Three is a powerful number across cultures and religious traditions and is time honored symbolically. There is the story, the readers reflecting on the story and the third force which is shared collaborative dialoguing.

### *Symbolic Imagery*

Throughout this dissertation journey symbolic imagery came to me in dreams which I will share with you. While I was contemplating which method to choose I dreamed about Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz. The scene that surfaced was when she began her journey of following the yellow brick road. I reflected that the dissertation and my educational

experiences at Pepperdine were a journey and it led me to want to explore reflecting on that. Another step was in finding a dissertation chairperson. I dreamed about the book I read about soulful guides. In the morning, I reread *Anam Cara*. My dissertation chairperson who agreed to help me on this journey is an Anam Cara in every sense. I let my intuition be my guide and was very happy that the new Associate Dean chose to lend his expertise to this endeavor as well. I trusted my dissertation chairperson with the selection of another committee member who I am appreciative is on board with this adventure as well. It gave us all the opportunity to explore this method of inquiry together.

### *Celtic Imagery*

While my background is Celtic in nature, I must confess it was not until I started this voyage of self-discovery that vivid dreams of Celtic imagery came to me while writing this autoethnography personal narrative. I found that interesting and explored some books in that area as well. While in the preliminary orals, I was asked something regarding my transformational learning. The imagery that came to mind in the moment that I expressed was one of triadic spiralling evolving consciousness. That is the best way I can come to describe how it feels. I have told three tales of spiralling evolving consciousness. I have had dreams of triple spirals.

### *Starry Reflections*

My favorite painting, *Starry Night* by Vincent Van Gogh has triple spiral imagery. The home I live in had a bathroom that needed remodelling. I designed it myself. My home is a reflection of my inner spirit. I choose to create a garden in front best described as country French gone wild as the jasmine grows on the French gothic picket fence

enclosing the front yard which never needs to be mowed. I let it grow natural and wild as a natural labyrinth as jasmine encircles Tuscan blue rosemary which encircles French lavender which encircles 33 First Prize rose bushes. It is a small ecosystem which is home to a fair number of happy bees and butterflies abundantly blissful with the vast nectar. My bathtub is oversized and I specifically designed it myself. The house is all white and the bathroom from ceiling to floor is all black. The house is reminiscent of the symbolism of yin-yang.

The point in this imagery will unfold. The bathroom is tiled with all black granite. When you close the sliding door which is also framed in black granite it reflects light. When you drain the oversized tub mysteriously it forms imagery reminiscent of the Starry Night painting forms in the water in spirals. Symbolically my whole yard is composed of spirals as I have pink roses in front and all red in the backyard which are all spiralling in shape in bloom. Spirals can be found almost anywhere for example, the Galaxy, DNA, and in nature, seashells, etc. They are abundant.

#### *Human Quest for Searching for Meaning*

Ok, So why am I sharing this? It is important symbolically as an example of humans' never ending quest and search for meaning. It is a timeless ever evolving consciousness to look for meaning in life's experiences. I dreamed I would share three stories with you. I wrote two and dreamed the third would emerge as part of this journey. I was not surprised when asked to write dissertation dialogues as that is the third story to share in this voyage.

### *Dreaming of Three*

So today, I am completing the conclusions for this non-linear journey of discovery and reflection. How can I honor the voyage and make connections to the fundamental human condition of searching for meaning in existence? It is a tall order but here I go! For what it is worth here are my thoughts that came to me in dream form last night to which I added reflection and pondering today.

### *Life is a Journey*

All of life is a journey. As we live, grow experience life we transform as we reflect and construct meaning of life events. We create our own path. I will share with you in this phase of the conclusions my reflections on heightened consciousness I reflect can be symbolized by three spiralling circles.

### *Spiral Symbolism*

Since sharing my ideas at the preliminary exam about three spiralling circles of evolving consciousness, I have dreamed of it repeatedly at night since. This morning I was curious what that meant. While I was writing last night, I happened to have the movie King Arthur on as a backdrop while typing away. I happened to glance over during a battle scene and noticed that there were Celtic female warriors in the battle scenes and their bodies were adorned with blue spirals. Out of natural curiosity, I went on a Google adventure and ended up learning about the symbolism of Celtic triple spirals and about the symbolism of spirals in other cultures and religions.

### *Symbolic Spiral Journeying*

Since triple spiralling concentric circles of evolving consciousness is how I imagined transformational learning to feel like as a lived experience, here is what I learned in



exploring concluding comments for this tale of 3 stories written in a lived method style. I will end with my lived experiences today as my gift to you the reader. One of the components of this journey is a shared vision of having fun in this process. I hope you find this interesting. I certainly did. My conclusion in contemplating conclusions is that there are no final definitive conclusions in transformational learning as there is simply more spiralling journeying in the path of life.

### *Triple Spiral Symbolism*

As cited on the website Triple Spiral Info, “The power of One is about strength and courage...The power of Two is about interaction and creativity The power of three is about collaboration and community” (p. 1).

Interesting to note in this journey was that the third narrative came from the power of three (my three committee members) to share the collaboration and community of dialoguing in this dissertation journeying.

Rumi spoke of dialoguing as cited on the website Triple Spiral Info, “Out beyond ideas of rightdoing and wrongdoing, there is a field. I will meet you there” (p. 1).

### *Newgrange Triple Spirals*

The ancient burial site dates back 3000 BC. There is an entrance stone that guards the site and on it are triple spirals. On the winter solstice, the center of the chambers fills with light. Many consider the symbolism of the triple spiral to represent birth and rebirth of season and people and to celebrate life and time. As cited on the website Free Celtic, “When early man observed the beauty of nature’s spirals its not surprising that it would become a potent symbol for creation and growth” (p. 1).

Additionally, as cited on the website Celtic Art:

In the Neolithic world, passing a spiral barrier (like the entrance stone to Newgrange in Ireland) the initiate is led into an inner sanctuary that was the necessary passport in the journey of the sacred dance, through the labyrinth to the sacred realms beyond the center. The labyrinth creates and protects the still centre. Allowing entry to knowledge only in the correct way, through initiation. Before the knowledge can be imparted, old preconceptions must be discarded and the traveler must re-enter pre-formal state of the womb. At the centre, there is complete balance: the point where Heaven and Earth are joined. The descending gyre of Heaven is the materialization of spirit into matter, maintaining a state of balance, in the initiate inwardly and outwardly- in a state of perfect being. In the sacred dance, we mirror the macrocosmic order of the heavens, the gyratory movement representing the whirling of the stars above the fixed earth. As we wind, we create within ourselves a still centre and apprehend the being of the universe into being, as we unwind, we turn our spirit back to its divine source. The early Celtic saints continued this tradition using a rock cavity for meditation and prayer. (p. 2)

### *Symbol of Power*

The Celtic Triple Spiral had symbolism as an archetypal symbol of power. A vast number of the Celtic tales, legends and myths are about journeying. Symbolically, birth, life and death are represented in the ever spiralling triple spirals.

### *Symbol of Rising Consciousness: Spirals of Life*

As cited on the website Celtic Art:

These can be seen as reincarnation of life-form(s) the progress's as one's thinking

becomes more spiritual. The early Christian monks who had absorbed some of the teachings of the pagan druids knew of the spirals of life. It was only at a much later date that this ancient knowledge was deleted from the teachings of aspirants, and, Celtic knowledge put on the back burner. Ancient writings of the Sanskrit call this thought energy, and waking consciousness, Kundalini the fiery serpent. (pp. 2-3)

### *Triple Goddess*

Across many cultures is the symbolism of the triple goddess. In the Celtic tradition the Celtic Triple Spiral symbolized the triple goddess. In the ancient Celtic tradition, the triple goddess represented the maiden, the mother and the crone. It symbolizes the cycle of life from birth to life to rebirth and is also connected with the lunar cycle. According to the website Wikipedia:

Maiden: The maiden represents enchantment, inception, expansion, the promise of new beginnings, birth, youth and enthusiasm.

Mother: The mother represents ripeness, fertility, sexuality, nurturance, fulfillment, stability, power and life.

Crone: The crone represents wisdom, repose, death and ending. Like the moon which waxes once again after the new moon like in the year, when spring always follows winter. The crone is an end, but she is always followed by the maiden once more. It is death and rebirth, representing the common pagan belief of reincarnation as well as the renewing cycles of the moon and the year. (pp. 4-5)

### *Depth Psychology*

Carl Jung suggested that symbols appear to individuals in their dreams when the conscious mind cannot yet fully express but can be felt. I had recurrent dreams of triple

spirals while completing this autoethnography personal narratives. I wanted to seek some understanding of this, as to me, the dreams indicated that the triple spirals are about ever-evolving consciousness my feeling and experiences concerning transformational learning.

According to Campbell in regards to Jung as cited on the website One Woman's Mind:

Jung discovered recurring symbols among differing peoples and cultures unaffected by the boundaries of time and space. He called these shared symbols archetypes which are irrepressible, unconscious, pre-existing forms that seem to be part of the inherited structure of the psyche and can manifest themselves spontaneously anywhere, at any time. (Storr, 415). Joseph Campbell, world renowned scholar and mythologist, referred to these synchronous symbols as mythic images lying at the depth of unconscious where man is no longer a distinct individual, but whose mind widens out and merges into the mind of mankind, where we all are the same (Campbell, p. 186).

(p. 1)

### *Archetypal Symbols*

According to Jung, as cited on the website One Woman's Mind, "Symbols come from the forgotten depths if they are to express the deepest insights of consciousness and the loftiest intuitions of the spirit, thus amalgamating the uniqueness of the present day consciousness with the past of humanity" (p. 1).

### *Spirals: Symbolic of Spirituality and Soul*

According to Jung as cited on the website One Woman's Mind spirals are symbolic spiritually:

The spiral is the most widely recognized and repeated archetype used to symbolize our inner and outer journey to God and the self. Spirals symbolically represent a passage

into the collective unconscious and then back into the world renewed with a greater psychological understanding of how we are and why we are here. This journey further provides what Jung called the transcendental function of the psyche by which we achieve what should be our highest goal: the realization of the potential of our individual self (Jung, p. 149). The spiral symbolizes our soul, our essence, remaining the same while experience deepens and elevated our egos, or personalities, simultaneously. The center of a spiral is the center of the Self as it goes through the forward movement of time, yet never loses the essential spirit of its origin. Ascending spirals represent the reconciliation of the old order (unconscious) with some element of new creation (conscious); (Jung, 225). The unfolding of the spiral is the soul incarnate unfolding itself time and again throughout our lives. (p. 2)

### *Endings are Beginnings*

A voice on the path of this journey shared with me that endings are beginnings. As my story that I share with you is coming to a close, I thank you for sharing the journey with me. Let's take a moment to breathe, reflect and celebrate life. I wish you the best in all the wonderment on the path of life in your journeys! Since a picture is worth a thousand words here is an image reminiscent of the transformational learning journey. As a rose rises upward to the sky and reveals its petals, transformational learning is an ever blooming, evolving, spiralling journey.

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