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Transformative Learning Theory as Applied to Worship Studies

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by

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Abstract

Despite extensive research regarding the application of Transformative Learning Theory in adult education, there is very little literature promoting applying these principles and practices within Christian Worship Studies. Transformative Learning Theory is an educational theory that researches and promotes perspective-changing teaching and learning. Structured educational opportunities and spiritual development through Christian worship both have the potential to be life-altering events in human experience. In each of these dimensions of learning, the final result may include a change in perspective which then leads to modified behaviors. Transformative change occurs in the life of the learner. This qualitative research study explores the effectiveness of Transformative Learning Theory as an approach to teaching Christian Worship Studies to adult lay students. Guided by the scholarly literature and research in the areas of Transformative Learning Theory, Christian Education, and Worship Studies, and in harmony with scriptural teachings regarding worship and spiritual formation, this study seeks to investigate and apply the principles and practices of Transformative Learning Theory to the teaching of Christian Worship Studies. Practical application is made possible by developing and including sample teaching materials and methods that demonstrate the utilization of the researched principles and practices. Further, this study may encourage educators to delve into the evolving field of Transformative Learning Theory in additional areas of education as they pursue their own transformative experiences.

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Thank you, and much love to my husband Brian, who walks closely with me through every joy and every challenge. As in all things, you have been my partner, best friend, and steadfast supporter throughout this research and writing process. I thank God for the life we have together.

I offer my deepest thanks to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for the transformative influence of Christian worship and education in my own life, and like the Psalmist, I continue to pray:

> Show me your ways, Lord,
> teach me your paths.
> Guide me in your truth and teach me,
> for you are God my Savior,
> and my hope is in you all day long (Psalm 25:4-5 New International Version).

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Chapter One

Adult learners come into educational environments with systems of knowledge firmly embedded in their approach to life and learning. These areas of knowledge certainly include acquired facts and skills. Nevertheless, they also incorporate personal perspectives developed throughout a lifetime of social and cultural experiences that impact how adults perceive the world and their interactions with it. When adult learners encounter new viewpoints and positions through educational opportunities and life experiences, that alternate information causes them to question and perhaps even revise personal perspectives. As a result of this perspective change, life practices and habitual behaviors are modified as learners actively apply their new perspective to their choices and activities. This sequence of events demonstrates *transformative learning*.

In 1978, sociologist and educator Dr. Jack Mezirow published an article in *Adult Education Quarterly* urging "the recognition of a critical dimension of learning in adulthood that enables us to recognize, reassess, and modify the structures of assumptions and expectations that frame our tacit points of view and influence our thinking, beliefs, attitudes, and actions."[1] This foundational belief prompted the development of a unique theory for adult education. It is the endeavor of this theory to understand and promote transformative experiences for students in a variety of contexts. For over forty years, Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory has continued to evolve as educators and theorists research and recommend applications of transformative learning concepts for adults in higher education, the workplace, and the community. *The Handbook of Transformative Learning* demonstrates the versatility of this approach to adult learning in the following:

> Theorists and researchers write about rational *or* extrarational processes, a focus on individual change *or* a focus on social change, autonomous learning *or* relational

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[1] Jack Mezirow and Edward W. Taylor, eds., *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education* (United States of America: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 18.

learning. . . It may be that for one person in one context; transformative learning is a rational endeavor; for that same person in another context, it could be emotional and intuitive; in some contexts, social change may need to precede individual change, and in another context, individual transformation drives social transformation, and so forth. The outcome is the same or similar – a deep shift in perspective.[2]

In addition to traditional school environments, teachers and researchers in various alternate settings apply the principles and practices of Transformative Learning Theory. As just a brief sampling, the April 2022 *Journal of Transformative Learning* issue includes articles regarding applying Transformative Learning Theory to teaching abroad, professional identity among medical laboratory students, workplace diversity, and community-engaged projects.[3] *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice* include content regarding the use of Transformative Learning Theory in nurturing soul work, forging a planetary worldview, learning through sustainability, organizational change in the workplace, storytelling, artistic expression, and transformative learning online.[4] *Worship Studies* is one of the diverse contexts in which the theory, research, and practice of Transformative Learning Theory may have practical and effective applications for adult learners. Christian educators who consider this approach will find many resources for incorporating Transformative Learning Theory in course design and delivery.

The concept of transformation resonates with Christian believers due to scriptures such as, "Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:22-24 Revised Standard

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[2] Edward W. Taylor and Patricia Cranton, eds., *The Handbook of Transformative Learning* (United States of America: John Wiley & Sons, 2012),3.

[3] John Tagg, ed., *Journal of Transformative Learning* (University of Central Oklahoma, n.d.), https://jotl.uco.edu/index.php/jotl/about.

[4] Taylor and Cranton, *The Handbook of Transformative Learning*.

Version)." Be renewed. Put on a new nature. This renewal is transformative learning. Worship is considered by many to be an essential element of transformative experience in Christian development. As such, a pedagogical approach to teaching Worship Studies and the preparation of worship leaders rightly seeks to promote transformative learning. Additionally, Worship Studies must also preserve the distinct nature of Christian education. The authors of *A Theology for Christian Education* offer this guidance for the application of learning theory to areas of Christian education:

> If Christian education is to preserve its Christian distinctiveness, then it must be a theological discipline; and if it is to be educational, it must be a social science discipline. It is through the thorough integration of theology and the social sciences on a paradigmatic level that a consistently Christian theory of education will be achieved and the benefits of such a union realized.[5]

With this guidance in mind, prioritizing Christian theology and seeking areas of conceptual compatibility, this qualitative research study will research applications of Transformative Learning Theory for use in the development and delivery of Worship Studies classes for adult learners.

Background

Transformative Learning Theory is "a process that leads to a deep shift in perspective during which habits of mind become more open, more permeable, more discriminating, and better justified."[6] Patricia Cranton further clarifies transformative learning: "When people critically examine their habitual expectations, revise them, and act on the revised point of view,

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[5] James R. Estep, Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg R. Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2008), 41.

[6] Patricia Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide to Theory and Practice*, Third edit. (United States of America: Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2016), xii.

transformative learning occurs."[7] How might this transformative learning occur? When first theorizing about perspective transformation in adult learners, Mezirow observed ten phases in personal transformation. These phases are fundamental to understanding the development and practice of Transformative Learning Theory. Though presented numerically, the phases may occur in a different sequence. Mezirow presents the ten phases of transformation as follows:

1. Experiencing a disorienting dilemma;
2. Undergoing self-examination;
3. Conducting a critical assessment of internalized assumptions and feeling a sense of alienation from traditional social expectations;
4. Relating discontent to the similar experience of others – recognizing that the problem is shared;
5. Exploring options for new ways of acting;
6. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles;
7. Planning a course of action;
8. Acquiring the knowledge and skills for implementing a new course of action;
9. Trying out new roles and assessing them;
10. Reintegrating into society with the new perspective.[8]

Observation of this process in adult learning led Mezirow to develop his theory regarding transformative education and how educators might create a learning environment that encourages and enables deeply impactful learning, resulting in a new frame of reference or modified habits of the mind. Mezirow's original ten phases are "a phased and often transformative process of meaning becoming clarified through expanded awareness, critical reflection, validating discourse, and reflective action."[9]

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[7] Patricia Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide to Theory and Practice*, Third edit. (United States of America: Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2016), 15.

[8] Mezirow and Taylor, *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education,* 19.

[9] Jack Mezirow, "Learning to Think Like an Adult: Core Concepts of Transformation Theory," in *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice*, ed. Edward W. Taylor and Patricia Cranton (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 89.

Clarifying meaning through critical reflection is considered a central focus of Mezirow's philosophy of adult education. He writes:

> Adult education may be understood as an organized effort to assist learners who are old enough to be held responsible for their acts to acquire or enhance their understandings, skills, and dispositions. Central to this process is helping learners to critically reflect on, appropriately validate, and effectively act on their (and others') beliefs, interpretations, values, feelings, and ways of thinking. Our human need to understand our experience, the necessity that we do so through critical discourse, and the optimal conditions enabling us to do so freely and fully provide a foundation of philosophy of adult education.[10]

Mezirow expressly indicated that educators in adult learning contexts are the primary audience for his theory. Additionally, he asserts that his intent is an idealized model for a learning process that is applicable in various cultural settings:

> Transformative learning is also a reconstructive theory. Its focus is on adult learning, and its primary audience is adult educators. As a reconstructive theory, it seeks to establish a general, abstract, and idealized model that explains the generic structure, dimensions, and dynamics of the learning process. Also, it does not undertake a definitive cultural critique, but it attempts to provide the model-constructs, language, categories, and dynamics-to enable others to understand how adults learn in various cultural settings.[11]

Based on Mezirow's description of an educational theory focused on transformative adult learning experiences in various cultural settings, this research study interprets those settings to include valid applications for Christian education in the area of Worship Studies.

Literature regarding the transformative qualities of worship often points to the New Testament scripture, "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18 New International Version)." While scripture alone is authoritative

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[10] Jack Mezirow, "Learning to Think Like an Adult: Core Concepts of Transformation Theory," in *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice*, ed. Edward W. Taylor and Patricia Cranton (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 89.

[11] Mezirow and Taylor, *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education, 21*.

in Worship Studies, many authors have expounded on the transformative nature of Christian worship. Referencing the worship of the Hebrew people, Edith M. Humphrey writes, "The Old Testament prophets understood participation in a realm, company, and action proximate to the holy God as leading to transformation: repentance, cleansing, healing, and purpose, all given by the Lord."[12] Michael Walters writes of worship in contemporary settings, "Worship is reality therapy. To truly worship God is to align ourselves with the truth about God, self, and the world . . . Worship changes the way we see ourselves, the way we see God, and the way we interpret the world. Worship changes us."[13] Bob Kauflin writes, "As we behold the Lord's glory, the Spirit of God is at work to *transform* us into the image of God's Son. This is one of the primary reasons we gather – to behold and be changed."[14] Kauflin continues with a list of six ways that worshiping God may transform the worshiper. This list states that worshiping God should make us humble, secure, grateful, holy, and mission-minded. The final item in Kauflin's list asserts that worship changes lives.[15]

Believing that spiritual formation and transformative life change are essential components of Worship Studies, Christian educators must consider how to make transformative learning part of their course design and delivery. Educational theories and practices that encourage transformative learning experiences within the guidelines of scriptural truth have significant value for Christian education. The theory, research, and practice of Transformative Learning

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[12] Edith M. Humphrey, *Grand Entrance: Worship on Earth as in Heaven* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011), 43.

[13] Michael Walters, *Can't Wait for Sunday: Leading Your Congregation in Authentic Worship* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2006), 43.

[14] Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* (Wheaton: Sovereign Grace Ministries, 2008), 143.

[15] Ibid, 144-149.

Theory hold promise for providing a learning environment and pedagogical model in which

transformative learning may occur. Although this educational theory offers much that is useful, it

is important to note that for Worship Studies to remain a distinctly Christian area of education,

the application of Transformative Learning Theory must emphasize Christian content and

worldview. *A Theology for Christian Education* by Estep, Anthony, and Allison states:

> We cannot worship what we do not know and understand. In fact, the more we know about God and what he has done on our behalf, the more we are motivated and led to worship him for who he is and for his goodness to us. So the end of theology is not the acquisition of mere head knowledge. The goal rather is heart transformation . . . In essence, educational methods should follow out of theory based on the social sciences but ultimately grounded in our theology.[16]

Problem Statement

Despite extensive research regarding the application of Transformative Learning Theory

in adult education and in co-curricular settings, there is very little literature promoting the

application of these principles and practices within Christian Education. Additionally, there is an

apparent absence of any research connecting Transformative Learning Theory within the specific

context of Worship Studies for adult lay students. Much has been written about the

transformative nature of adult education, and much has been written about the transformative

nature of Christian worship. Still, very little has been written to critically reflect upon areas of

connection or divergence between the two. Though there appears to be conceptual compatibility

between transformative learning and transformative worship, educators have few resources to

recommend applying the practices and principles of Transformative Learning Theory within the

context of Worship Studies. Too little attention has been given to the necessity of transformative

learning in preparing adult lay leaders as they worship and become worship leaders who

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[16] James R. Estep, Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg R. Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2008), 22.

recognize the transformative influence of Christian worship. James K.A. Smith, author of

Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works, expresses it this way:

> Christian worship is *more* than its content and means more than it says. Worship that intends to be formative - and more specifically, worship that intends to foster an encounter with God that transforms our imagination and hence sanctifies our perception - must be attentive to, and intentional about, the aesthetics of human understanding . . . Christian worship should send us out with new knowledge and information, as well as a renewed feel for the world, a transformed "practical sense."[17]

Purpose Statement

This study affirms worship and the study of worship as an important context for transformative learning and explores the effectiveness of Transformative Learning Theory as an approach to teaching Christian Worship Studies to adult lay students. Structured educational opportunities and spiritual development through Christian worship both have the potential to be transformative events in human experience. In each learning context, the final result may include a change in perspective, leading to modified behaviors. These changes in the habits of the mind and active practice indicate that transformative change has occurred in the learner's life. Transformative Learning Theory is a highly researched and actively practiced approach to adult education. In harmony with scriptural teachings regarding worship and spiritual formation, educators may apply principles and practices of Transformative Learning Theory to the teaching of Christian Worship Studies. In her book, *Teaching That Transforms: Worship as the Heart of Christian Education,* Debra Dean Murphy writes, "To admit the integral connection between knowledge and actions, between learning and bodily practice, is to recognize that Christian worship is the site at which our formation and education are initiated and completed (insofar as

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[17] James K.A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, *Cultural Liturgies, Vol 2.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 175, 178.

they can ever be complete)."[18] Philosopher and theologian James K.A. Smith writes, "The

renewal of the church and the Christian university – a renewal of Christian worship and Christian

education – hinges on an understanding of human beings as "liturgical animals," creatures who

can't *not* worship and who are fundamentally formed by worship practices."[19] For Christian

educators, researching and applying a proven education theory that is conceptually compatible

with theological truth and transformative learning is essential. Ellen Marmon's article,

"Transformative Learning Theory: Connections With Christian Adult Education," published in

the *Christian Education Journal,* affirms, "What Mezirow identifies as a learning theory both the

Hebrew people and the early Christians experienced as reality."[20] Statements like these and the

growing academic research and literature regarding the theory and application of Transformative

Learning Theory indicate that this approach is compatible with a Christian worldview and may

be successfully applied within Christian Worship Studies.

Significance of the Study

Though Mezirow did not initially propose spiritual applications for his theory, later

Transformative Learning Theory researchers have explored the idea of the soul and the impact of

spirituality in transformative learning.[21]

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[18] Debra Dean Murphy, *Teaching That Transforms: Worship as the Heart of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004), 103.

[19] James K.A. Smith, "*Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works,*" *Cultural Liturgies, Vol 2.* (Baker Academic, 2013), 3.

[20] Ellen L. Marmon, "Transformative Learning Theory: Connections With Christian Adult Education," *Christian Education Journal* Series 3, no. 2 (2013): 424–431.

[21] Edward W. Taylor and Patricia Cranton, eds., *The Handbook of Transformative Learning* (United States of America: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 231.

Nadira Charaniya, one contributor to *The Handbook of Transformative Learning*, writes:

A feature of a cultural-spiritual perspective of transformative learning is that what transforms is usually multidimensional. When one's spirituality and one's culture are invited guests at the table, they become an inherent part of the transformation. Participants at the table are transformed in terms of how they see the world, how they see their own identities, and how they see their role in the world.[22]

For Christian educators, the key to that cultural-spiritual application of Transformative Learning Theory is a commitment to a biblical understanding of how transformation occurs. The vital link for filling the gap between research in Transformative Learning Theory and application to Christian Worship Studies is illustrated in the following quote from *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* by James K.A. Smith:

"And this is how worship works: Christian formation is a conversion of the imagination effected by the Holy Spirit . . . As the Son is incarnate-the Word made flesh meeting we who are flesh-so the Spirit meets us in tangible, embodied practices that are conduits of the Spirit's transformative power."[23]

The Holy Spirit transforms the believer in the process of Christian formation. With this understanding in mind, the educational concepts of Transformative Learning Theory may be appropriately applied while teaching Worship Studies within a biblical frame of reference and with a teaching approach that is compatible with a Christian worldview. In Christian thought, transformative change is not solely the work of an individual learner's process of experience, reflection, and action to become more fully self-directed and self-empowered. For the worship educator, the participatory and guiding role of God, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is a unique and necessary philosophy in applying transformative learning theory. Scripture teaches,

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[22] N. Charaniya and J. West Walsh, "Adult Learning in the Context of Interreligious Dialogue: A Collaborative Research Study Involving Christians, Jews, and Muslims.," 2001, http://digitalcommons.nl.edu/diss/15.

[23] James K.A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, *Cultural Liturgies, Vol 2.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 14-15.

"Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-18 Revised Standard Version)." The old passes away, and the new comes, and all this is from God. These are distinctly Christian teachings regarding the transformative human experience of a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.

Christian education must place a central focus on these truths. Otherwise, it cannot be rightly defined as Christian. The pedagogical design of a Christian Worship Studies course may apply the principles and practices of Transformative Learning Theory. Still, the primary focus must be a Spirit-led transformation that points to God's will and purpose for the student. Christian educator, James E. Loder, Jr., stresses the role of the Holy Spirit in transformative Christian education.

> To set transformation in the context of creation's contingent relationship to God is to see that all created forces, including socialization and naturalistic transformation, are in need of redemptive transformation through the mediation of Christ . . . only through the eyes of faith in Jesus Christ can we recognize the ontological priority of transformation over any other force in the universe. By faith we know that the pattern of this force, operative throughout creation, is analogous to the pattern by which all creation is renewed, and will be redeemed, by the *Spiritus Creator*.[24]

The study of Christian worship's theology, history, and practices must include the opportunity for spiritual formation. By understanding the role of Jesus Christ as a mediator and of the Holy Spirit as the agent of change in Christian transformation, educators may apply the core concepts of Transformative Learning Theory to course design and delivery for adult students of Worship Studies.

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[24] James E. Loder, *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit*, ed. Dana R. Wright (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018), 14.

Research Questions

Transformative Learning Theory demonstrates areas of conceptual compatibility with Christian education. It may be applied to pedagogical design for teaching worship studies to adult learners by including transformative learning concepts in course design, using transformative learning methods in course delivery, and emphasizing scriptural foundations regarding transformative Christian experience. With this perspective as a foundation, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the areas of conceptual compatibility between transformative education and transformative Christian worship?

RQ2: How can the educational research regarding Transformative Learning Theory be applied to course design for teaching adult lay study courses on Christian Worship?

Hypotheses

Reflecting upon those research questions, the working hypotheses for this study are as follows:

H1: Areas of conceptual compatibility between transformative education and transformative Christian worship include a shared emphasis on personal experience as an essential component of learning, critical reflection as an effective approach to continued personal development, and personal action as evidence of changed perspectives and practices.

H2: Educational research regarding Transformative Learning Theory may be applied to course design for teaching adult lay study courses on the topic of Christian Worship by assimilating the underlying philosophy of TLT, implementing proven TLT pedagogical methods, and prioritizing scriptural foundations regarding transformative Christian experience.

In his 2014 doctoral dissertation, "Exploring the Conceptual Compatibility of Transformative Learning Theory in Accounts of Christian Spiritual Renewal at Wheaton College in 1995,"[25] Richard McLaughlin explores the topic of Transformative Learning Theory as applied to experiences of Christian spiritual renewal. McLaughlin uses a format of four connecting Transformative Learning Theory quadrants: disorienting experiences, critical reflection, rational dialogue, and action. McLaughlin then explores those transformative learning phases through several scriptural illustrations, including a verse-by-verse commentary on Psalm 77, which illustrates a profound change of perspective in an individual believer. McLaughlin asserts that the conceptual compatibility between Transformative Learning Theory and spiritual formation is evident. This research study proposes equally strong compatibility and application between Transformative Learning Theory and pedagogical practices for teaching Christian Worship Studies courses.

Core Concepts

In the continuing development of Mezirow's proposed model for understanding how adults learn, several shared core concepts exist across research in transformative learning experiences and transformative teaching theory. These consistently include individual experience, *critical reflection*, dialogue, and action.[26] Individual experience is the medium in which learning occurs. Critical reflection, considered essential to transformative learning, is how previous experiences and beliefs are examined and revised. Dialogue, a highly emphasized

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[25] Richard J. McLaughlin, "Exploring the Conceptual Compatibility of Transformative Learning Theory in Accounts of Christian Spiritual Renewal at Wheaton College in 1995" (Biola University, 2014).

[26] Mezirow and Taylor, *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education,* 4.

approach in Transformative Learning Theory, provides an opportunity for the learner to assess personal perspectives and habits of mind through the lens of others, thus providing a broader context in which to evaluate self. Action demonstrates the practical application of learning.

These core concepts are summarized in three main themes by Hoggan and Browning, who developed a helpful table based on Mezirow's ten phases of transformative learning. Theme one, "Tumultuous Aspects of Transformation," includes the phases of disorienting dilemma, self-examination, critical self-assessment, and recognition that others have also experienced this process. Theme two, "Exploring the Path Forward," includes exploring options, making a plan, and acquiring needed knowledge and skills. Finally, theme three, "Reintegration," includes trying new roles, building competence and self-confidence, and reintegration into one's life.[27] While these three themes were developed in a community college context, the themes may be applied in the context of Christian education. Additionally, these themes are reflected in the hypotheses of this research study which asserts the belief that areas of conceptual compatibility between transformative education and transformative Christian worship include a shared emphasis on personal experience as an essential component of learning, on critical reflection as an effective approach to continued personal development, and on personal action as evidence of changed perspectives and practices.

The first of these shared elements, personal experience, includes a lifetime of gathered perceptions and what Mezirow described as a "disorienting dilemma"[28] or life event that triggers a time of questioning or reevaluation in the life of an adult. Within scriptural accounts and

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27 Chad D. Hoggan and Bill Browning, *Transformational Learning in Community Colleges: Charting a Course for Personal Success* (Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2019), 41.

28 Mezirow and Taylor, *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education,* 19.

Worship Studies, any encounter between an individual and God may aptly be described as a disorienting dilemma. This personal experience of encountering God necessarily prompts a response from the individual.

The second shared element, critical reflection, includes reevaluation, dialogue with others, and revision of perceptions or habits of the mind that may occur. These responses are evident in scriptural accounts of worship experiences as individual worshipers reflect on their experience of an encounter with God. Christian educator, Michael J. Anthony, adds to our understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in developing critical reflection. He writes, "The Spirit applies the Scriptures to our needs, but guidance goes beyond that to areas of critical thinking . . . the scribes and Pharisees lacked a deeper understanding of God's Word that the Spirit can provide for us. Sometimes solving complex moral and ethical decisions requires the application of seemingly conflicting verses, and this is where the Holy Spirit guides us and directs us to the correct interpretation and application of the Scriptures."[29]

Personal action, the third shared element of transformative worship and transformative education, is demonstrated in Mezirow's final phases, "building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships" and "reintegration into one's life based on conditions dictated by one's new perspective,"[30] which apply revised perceptions through modified life practices. These patterns are evident in spiritual formation.

One clear example of conceptual compatibility between transformative worship and transformative learning is demonstrated in Acts chapters three and four. After receiving the Holy

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[29] Estep, Anthony, and Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education,* 160.

[30] Mezirow and Taylor, *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education*, 19.

Spirit at Pentecost, Peter and John are jailed for teaching and ministering in the name of Jesus. Their testimony and actions impacted thousands of people during a brief window of time. When Peter and John are called upon to answer to the rulers, elders, and teachers of the law, the transformative nature of their faith is evident. Scripture records, "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished, and they noted that these men had been with Jesus (Acts 3:13 New International Version)." In this example, transformative change in the lives of Peter and John is triggered by personal experience with the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Peter and John have experienced the disorienting dilemma of encountering the Holy Spirit. They have reflected upon the claims of Christ and modified their perceptions regarding the nature of Christ, their relationship to God, and their own roles and responsibilities in the world. They then demonstrate this transformative change through action. Local authorities noted and commented on the depth and impact of the apostles' transformative experience. Several of Mezirow's phases of learning can be recognized in the apostles' experiences. Mezirow uses the phrases "disorienting dilemma," "self-examination," "critical assessment of assumptions," and "exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and action."[31] All of these phases of learning are demonstrated in this scriptural passage.

The core concepts, themes, and phases described above demonstrate strong conceptual compatibility with a scriptural approach to transformative learning experiences. Transformative Learning practitioner, Patricia Cranton, affirms the possibility of spiritual application. She writes, "The process can be *rational* (cognitive), *extrarational* (e.g., intuitive, spiritual,

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[31] Mezirow and Taylor, *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education*, 19.

relational, and emotional), and/or focused on social change and social justice."[32] Theologian

Gregg R. Allison expresses a similar thought in different terms. He writes, "Though human

beings cannot be compartmentalized into intellectual, emotional, volitional, and physical

components (as is commonly done), and though the holistic nature of human creatureliness calls

for educating people in their entirety, the complex composition of human beings still demands

attention to both material and immaterial realities."[33] Rational and extrarational, material and

immaterial, are factors that strongly apply in Worship Studies.

Vicki Wiltse, author of the paper "Transformative Learning in Religious Education

Contexts," writes:

> Learning and knowledge construction are about the whole person, and attending to
> spirituality means honoring this. Thus, a spiritual approach to education engages learners
> in various domains: the rational/cognitive, the affective, the symbolic/spiritual, the
> somatic, and the sociocultural. When all the dimensions of a person are engaged, learning
> becomes holistic, and this increases the possibility that learning will be transformative. In
> particular, when one is addressing issues of power, race, class, and gender, one is
> engaging subjects that are very emotional for people. Personal and social change will not
> occur if the primary educational methods focus on the use of rationality and critical
> thinking. One must engage people's hearts, spiritualities, and life experiences.
> Due to this, a holistic approach is strongly recommended for transformative learning.[34]

One example of a holistic approach to education is demonstrated through Bloom's

Taxonomy which identifies three learning domains. These are cognitive (acquisition and

application of knowledge), affective (feelings, values, appreciations, enthusiasm, motivations,

attitudes), and psychomotor (physical movement, tasks, coordination, and motor skills).[35] For

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[32] Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide to Theory and Practice,* xii.

[33] Estep, Anthony, and Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education,* 190.

[34] Vicki Wiltse, "Transformative Learning in Religious Education Contexts" (Claremont, 2009), 36.

[35] Charlotte Ruhl, "Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning," *SimplyPsychology*, last modified 2021,
https://www.simplypsychology.org/blooms-taxonomy.html#author.

transformative learning to be most effective, the educator will promote experiences that include

aspects from each of those three learning domains.

As an illustration, a pianist demonstrates psychomotor learning in how they physically

touch the piano and cognitive learning when reading a musical score competently. The pianist

demonstrates affective understanding through their ability to communicate emotional and

aesthetic values through musical performance. Through their musical education and experiences,

all three learning domains are developed in the pianist and subsequently demonstrated through

performance. A holistic design of a Worship Studies course should intentionally incorporate all

three learning domains. Development in the cognitive domain may be encouraged by studying

scripture, church history, and worship practices. Worship Studies may include the psychomotor

domain through experiences of the physical actions of worship and service. Equally important,

Worship Studies must acknowledge the affective nature of spiritual formation. This learning

domain closely relates to spiritual formation through developing values, appreciation, and

motivation. All three of these learning domains apply to Worship Studies and benefit from the

teaching and evaluative methods of Transformative Learning Theory.

For example, learning through critical reflection, self-evaluation, dialogue with others,

and developing an action plan to implement new or changed perspectives may all be applied.

When writing about the interdisciplinary perspective on the various applications and settings for

transformative learning, Elizabeth Tisdell shares this insight:

> There are likely many times in one's life when one has transformational experience that are
> integrative to transform one's *thinking*. But there are likely few instances of an epochal shift
> that transforms one's *being* and *identity*. In these instances the "form" that transforms involves
> multiple domains on a significant level – emotional, rational, physical, and perhaps spiritual as
> well."[36]

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[36] Elizabeth J. Tisdell, "Themes and Variations of Transformational Learning: Interdisciplinary
Perspectives on Forms That Transform," in *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and
Practice*, ed. Edward W. Taylor and Patricia Cranton (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 26.

In Worship Studies, the spiritual applications of Transformative Learning concepts and themes are evident in multiple and diverse biblical encounters between God and humans. These include, but are certainly not limited to, the stories of dramatic transformation in the lives of Jonah, Paul, and Mary, the mother of Jesus. In these examples, an individual experiences a disorienting encounter with God and reexamines their assumptions, options, and course of action for the future. For some, these transformative events are specific moments in time. For others, transformative change occurs throughout a series of events. A critical theological understanding unique to Christian education includes the scriptural teaching that God initiates these transformative encounters. The distinction to be made by Christian educators who apply the principles and practices of Transformative Learning Theory is a scriptural understanding of the Holy Spirit's essential role in guiding the worshiper's experiences, reflections, conclusions, and actions. What, then, is the role of the Christian educator? James Loder, the author of *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit*, asserts:

> Teachers at all levels are called to enable and encourage their learners to enter into the transformational process at whatever stage connects them to it . . . More importantly, teaching-learning experiences governed by the Holy Spirit affirm both the spiritual power that is already at work in learners and teachers but also the need for the human spirit to continue to find its true creative energy in the Spirit working in concert with their human spirit toward redemptive transformation.[37]

This research study proposes that a Christian educator, through the thoughtful design and delivery of a Worship Studies course, can encourage the likelihood of transformative learning experiences and that specific practices demonstrated by practitioners of Transformative Learning Theory may be applied to achieve this end.

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[37] Loder, *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit, 283*.

Definition of Terms

Transformative Learning: An active process of learning that encourages seeing new things, seeing old things differently, and re-conceptualizing mindsets.[38]

Transformative Learning Theory: A process by which previously uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs, values, and perspectives are questioned and thereby become more open, permeable, and better validated.[39]

Worship Studies: A curriculum that emphasizes Christian worship's biblical, cultural, and theological aspects.[40]

Pedagogical Practices: Practical application of method and theory of teaching.

Critical Reflection: A reasoning process in which one examines a statement, a belief, and/or an experience for meaning, purpose, and/or authenticity.[41]

Rational: In accordance with reason or logic.[42] In terms of Transformative Learning Theory, this relates to the cognitive domain of learning.

Extrarational: An approach to reasoning which includes imagination, intuition, emotion, and soul work.[43] In terms of Transformative Learning Theory, this relates to the affective domain of learning.

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[38] "Journal of Transformative Learning (JoTL)," https://jotl.uco.edu/index.php/jotl.

[39] Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide to Theory and Practice, 2*.

[40] "Why Choose Our Online Worship Degree?," *Liberty University*, https://www.liberty.edu/online/music/bachelors/worship-studies/.

[41] Jack Mezirow, "On Critical Reflection," *Adult Education Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (1998): 185–198.

[42] "Oxford English Dictionary," https://www.oed.com/.

[43] Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide to Theory and Practice, 44*.

Chapter Summary

Transformative learning occurs in many different contexts. Adult education is one area where learners experience information and events that lead them to reevaluate and revise previously developed perspectives and practices. Within a Christian worldview, worship, as a spiritual practice in which we draw near to God, is also a context in which perspectives and approaches are reevaluated and modified. Through purposeful development of curriculum, educators have the opportunity to promote and enhance the possibility of transformative learning experiences. For educators who lead adult learners in the study of worship, Transformative Learning Theory, a highly researched and proven educational theory, has broad areas of conceptual compatibility with Christian education. Core elements of this approach include the importance of individual experience, critical reflection, dialogue with others, and personal action. This theory offers a deeper understanding of adults' learning and provides practical pedagogical applications for course delivery and design.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

In order to complete a thorough literature review that addresses the full scope of this thesis paper, this chapter presents relevant topics in the following four categories: (1) Transformative Impact of Worship, (2) Background and Fundamental Principles of Transformative Learning Theory, (3) Application of Transformative Learning Theory in Various Secular Settings, and (4) Application of Transformative Learning Theory in Spiritual Formation and Christian Education. Research in these areas provides the fundamental knowledge necessary to determine conceptual compatibility between transformative education and transformative Christian worship and to propose the practical application of Transformative Learning Theory in Worship Studies.

Transformative Impact of Worship

Amongst Christian scholars, scripture is the primary literary resource for understanding the transformative impact of worship. A fundamental text linking worship and transformation of the worshiper is, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by renewing your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:1-2 New International Version)." Citing this scripture, David Peterson, educator and theologian, describes worship as life orientation. "Worship theology expresses the dimensions of a life orientation or total relationship with the true and living God . . . Worship in the New Testament is a comprehensive category describing the Christians' total existence. It is

coextensive with the faith-response wherever and whenever that response is elicited."[44] Peterson asserts:

> The preaching of the gospel is designed to bring about a consecrated lifestyle that will enable believers to glorify God, by word and deed, wherever and whenever they can. This view of worship highlights the importance of the family, the workplace and leisure activities as the sphere in which to work out the implications of a genuine relationship with God.[45]

This concept of worship as transformative for the worshiper's life requires a comprehensive understanding of worship as a faithful response to God, which integrates all life activities. In this context, the definition and understanding of worship should not be confused with a liturgical order of worship for corporate services or misinterpreted as praise music preceding a liturgical service. Those are elements of worship, but a comprehensive view of worship expressed as life orientation encompasses far more than these select corporate acts of gathered believers.

J. Michael Walters, former chair of the Department of Religion and Philosophy at Houghton College, also wrote of the transforming power of worship. He states:

> Christian faith is a relationship that will radically transform every aspect of human life. . . at the center of this lifelong transformation stands worship-the adoration of God and submission to Him. While true worship begins with the redemption and restoration of a human being to fellowship with God, that is not the end of the story, nor was it ever intended to be. Salvation brings a person into a transforming worship relationship with the Creator. That worship relationship stands behind God's salvific acts on our behalf. When we choose to humbly submit to Him, learn His ways, and obediently serve Him, our lives will be transformed, lock, stock, and Visa card. Such is the power of worship.[46]

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[44] David Peterson, *Engaging With God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 18.

[45] Peterson, *Engaging With God: A Biblical Theology of Worship, 188*.

[46] Michael Walters, *Can't Wait for Sunday: Leading Your Congregation in Authentic Worship* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2006), 194.

Like Peterson, Walters embraces a definition of worship that extends beyond the corporate worship service or Sunday morning liturgy. As a scriptural foundation for this comprehensive view of worship, Walters references, "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Colossians 3:17 Revised Standard Version)." Additionally, he points to a scripture quoted by Jesus, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me (Mark 6:6 Revised Standard Version)." Walters explains, "This underscores the fact that worship is faith expressed in obedience and adoration *in all of life*. To relegate worship to Sunday only is to subvert God's redemptive intention to transform our lives."[47]

"Worship is a journey of transformation."[48] Constance Cherry, author of *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services,* supports this statement through a study of Luke 24:13-15, a biblical passage often referred to as "The Road to Emmaus." Cherry notes that much dialogue occurred between Jesus and these disciples as they walked along the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

> When you look at the entire story, you see that Jesus succeeded in weaving the dialogue into something much more significant than mere conversation. There was a transformation in the disciples that took place over time as a result of the whole conversation. Their encounter with Jesus was not a journey just because they were traveling the same road together. Rather, their encounter was a journey because they progressed spiritually-from their place of origin (grief and confusion) through necessary terrain (explanation of the Scriptures) and, finally, to their destination (recognizing the Lord in the breaking of bread.)[49]

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[47] Walters, *Can't Wait for Sunday: Leading Your Congregation in Authentic Worship, 195-196*.

[48] Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 28.

[49] Ibid., 27.

A disorienting dilemma is followed by reflection and dialogue with others, resulting in a new perspective. Note the similarity of these three phases of progression, as described by Cherry, to those observed and recorded by Mezirow in his transformative learning research. In addition to observing these phases of learning, Cherry extends this illustration of a transformative journey to include the worship practices of the Hebrew people. Their worship experiences are described as "a holy experience of travel, community, sacrifice, and return. It was all a part of the worship ritual."[50] Cherry points out that the journey is an essential part of worship and recommends that contemporary worshipers remember that "Christian worship is a *sustained* encounter with God-a journey from our pace of origin (physically and spiritually) through meaningful acts of worship as a community to transformation from having been in God's presence."[51]

Richard Foster, author of *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, includes "change" as one of the fruits of worship and boldly asserts, "If worship does not propel us into greater obedience, it has not been worship. To stand before the Holy One of eternity is to change . . . In worship, an increased power steals its way into the heart sanctuary, an increased compassion grows in the soul. To worship is to change."[52] This statement strongly correlates with II Corinthians 3:18, which speaks of the change made in those who contemplate the glory of God. The New International Version expresses this as "transformed into his image." The Revised Standard Version is translated as "changed into his likeness." The New Living

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[50] Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 27-28.

[51] Ibid., 28.

[52] Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 173.

Translation expresses this transformative impact with the following phrase, "And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image."

John MacArthur, author of *Worship: The Ultimate Priority,* observes four results when God's people worship in the way that God requires. (1) God is glorified, (2) believers are purified, (3) the church is edified, and (4) the lost are evangelized.[53] Using 2 Corinthians 3:18 as a foundation, MacArthur elaborates on the connection between worship, the edification of the church, and transformation. He writes,

> Edification does not mean we feel better; it means we live better. The Lord purges, purifies, and builds up the church. As the saints come together to worship the Lord, they become stronger both collectively and individually, and a transformation takes place . . . If the corporate worship in the church leaves people unchanged, the church is not really worshiping. If what goes on in the church service does not propel the saints to greater obedience, call it what you will, it isn't worship. Worship always results in transformation, and the church is edified by it.[54]

Donald S. Whitney, like Richard Foster, includes worship as a spiritual discipline in his book *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life.* Whitney writes of the transformative impact of worship: "The worship of God is an *end* in itself because to worship, as we've defined it, is to focus on and respond to God. No higher goal or greater spiritual pleasure exists than focusing on and responding to God. But worship is also a *means* in the sense that it is a means to godliness. The more we truly worship God, the more – through and by means of worship – we become like Him."[55]

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[53] John MacArthur, *Worship: The Ultimate Priority* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012), 191-193.

[54] Ibid., 193.

[55] Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 114.

Worship Is A Verb: Eight Principles for Transforming Worship by Robert E. Webber discusses corporate worship and liturgy as events in which divine presence and action prompt spiritual formation. He stresses that God speaks and acts in worship and that worship is an act of communication from above. Webber draws attention to three areas of transformative impact. First, "Worship is a continuation of the salvation event; it has the effect of changing our lives, of forming us into the new creation, of giving shape to our Christian worldview and of determining our patterns of ethical behavior."[56] Second, through scripture and preaching, "Worship sets the world in order, educates me about my place in it, and inspires me to understand God's ways of dealing with me and with his people."[57] Third, the words and deeds of corporate worship cause us to become more Christ-like. "Worship not only presents Christ, it causes Christ to be formed in my life . . . To be formed by worship is to take on the characteristics of Christ, to be shaped by his presence within."[58]

Robbie Castleman, author of *Story Shaped Worship: Following Patterns From the Bible and History,* strongly advocates for the importance of corporate worship and specifically recommends a sevenfold liturgical pattern. Castleman reminds us that God's glory is the primary emphasis of worship. Even so, she points to the transformative impact of worship upon the worshiper as a consequence of God-pleasing worship.

> Worship that glorifies God is worship that transforms the worshiper. If our chief end is the glory of God manifesting itself in a joyful, right and unending relationship with God, then God's chief end is the redemption of those created to bear his image and likeness.

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[56] Robert E. Webber, *Worship Is a Verb: Eight Principles for Transforming Worship* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1992), 104.

[57] Ibid., 105.

[58] Ibid.

Worship focused on God's character and integrity, radically reordering the worshiper's life.[59]

James Smith, Christian educator, philosopher, and author of *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, draws a strong correlation between Christian worship's purpose and Christian education's purpose. He writes, "While the Christian university and the church are different institutions, they have the same end, the same goal; to draw the people of God into union with Christ in order to thereby shape, form, equip, and prime actors – doers of the Word."[60] Smith additionally affirms that Christian spiritual disciplines and liturgical practices are more than just a means for personal renewal, "They remake the world because they transform the perception of the people of God who not only inhabit the world differently but inhabit a different world, a world constituted as God's creation."[61]

Like Mezirow, Smith recognizes in each learner an accumulated body of knowledge and gathered experiences which then inform and shape their worldview. Smith writes:

> The 'horizons' of experience (my background expectations) are not something I have to consciously invoke or 'think about' in order to constitute my world; they are operative without thinking. I am regularly 'making sense' of my world on a register that has nothing to do with logic or even 'knowledge' as usually defined . . . My 'background' is precisely that buildup of possible ways of construing the world that I have inherited and imbibed from others. Actually, even more strongly, my 'background' is the buildup of habits and inclinations that dispose me to regularly construe my world in certain ways.[62]

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[59] Robbie F. Castleman, *Story-Shaped Worship: Following Patterns from the Bible and History* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 113.

[60] James K.A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, *Cultural Liturgies, Vol 2.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 6.

[61] Ibid., 167.

[62] Ibid., 50.

Extending this concept of a lifelong formation of worldview to incorporate the shaping

and equipping influence of worship, Smith writes, "Christian worship is, in some sense, construal

training; it is a divine encounter that should, over time, effect 'background' transformation by

reshaping my horizons of constitution."[63] Smith argues for the liturgy of Christian worship as a

place where believers are transformed through immersion into the story of God, reconciling

Himself to the world through Christ.

> We need to learn the true Story 'by heart,' at a gut level, and let it seep into our
> background in order to then shape our perceptions of the world. And that happens
> primarily and normatively in the practices of Christian worship – *provided that* the
> practices of Christian worship intentionally carry, embody, enact, and rehearse the
> normative shape of the Christian story. This opportunity-and qualification-should be
> occasion for a new intentionality and reflection about the shape of Christian worship, not
> just as an arena for our expression but as the formative space that sanctifies perception.[64]

Like Webber, Castleman, and Smith, Debra Dean Murphy prioritizes worship as the

center of Christian education. Murphy appeals for the use of the term "catechesis" in the

exploration of worship as Christian education. She argues that catechesis has historically

signified "the deep unity between Christian formation and worship, between discipleship and

doxology."[65] On the other hand, she points out that "Christian education" is a term "rooted in the

schooling model of modern pedagogy, with its emphasis on classroom instruction, teaching

techniques, theories of human development, and the designing and implementing of curricula."[66]

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[63] James K.A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, *Cultural Liturgies, Vol 2.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 51.
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[64] Ibid., 163.

[65] Debra Dean Murphy, *Teaching That Transforms: Worship as the Heart of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004), 10.

[66] Ibid., 11.

With Murphy's preferred terminology in mind, her emphasis on worship as transformative

learning is made clear in the following quote:

> Catechesis, historically, has been about the reshaping of identity and the transformation
> of the self into the likeness of Christ. The catechumenate of the early church was an
> endeavor in such transformation, an attempt at an intentional, ongoing, communally
> centered, liturgically driven transformation of persons so that they might become icons of
> the risen Christ . . . When there is a clear understanding between those who lead worship
> and those who are teachers and catechists that their respective efforts are mutually
> informing, worship can be conducted so that it is more intentional about its power to
> shape, form and transform.[67]

Murphy makes a strong case for corporate worship as a central location for

transformative learning. In her chapters "Proclamation and Response: The Formative Power of

Word and Water" and "Thanksgiving and Communion: The Formative Power of Prayer and

Eucharist," corporate practices of scripture reading, preaching, baptism, confession, prayers of

the people, thanksgiving, and communion are all explored as settings for spiritual formation and

transformative life experiences.   These acts of worship are examined for their ability to impact

"a community's capacity for envisioning an alternative way of being, doing, seeing, and living in

the world."[68]

Daniel I. Block, author of *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of

Worship*, refers to the nineteenth chapter of Leviticus while reflecting on holy living as an act of

worship. In this passage, the Lord gives Moses a list of regulations for the Hebrew people. It

begins with the statement, "You must be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy (New

Living Translation)." Block further develops the importance of holy living by exploring New

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[67] Debra Dean Murphy, *Teaching That Transforms: Worship as the Heart of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004), 218-219.

[68] Ibid., 147.

Testament scriptures that echo and reaffirm the "abiding significance"[69] of the teaching given in

Leviticus. The transformative impact of a worshipful commitment to holiness living is

demonstrated through observable behaviors. Block concludes his reflections with some concrete

examples.

> Those who have been redeemed recognize that all of life is to be an expression of worship and that God delights in wholehearted and full-bodied holiness . . . Those who have died with Christ consider themselves dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. They put aside anger, malice, slander, and abusive speech. They stop lying to one another. They lay aside the old Canaanite self with its abominable practices and put on hearts of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and brotherly love to all, even our enemies. Those whose burdens have been lifted by Christ bear each other's burdens and forgive each other as the Lord has forgiven them. The time has come for the Word of God to transform them into holy images of Christ.[70]

Ulrich Becker, professor of theology and religious education and past director of the

Office of Education in the World Council of Churches,[71] proposes the value of an educational

model in which the church is a learning community with worship and liturgy at the center of an

integrated Christian education process. The context or place of learning is the faith community

instead of a traditional school setting. In this context of community, a teacher-as-student and

student-as-teacher dynamic is recognized. Dialogue and shared experience are incorporated.

Transformative Learning practitioners also recommend these characteristics. In order to reflect

the unique qualities of the Christian faith, Becker emphasizes the interrelationship of belief, life,

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[69] Daniel Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 96.

[70] Ibid., 99.

[71] Ulrich Becker, "Biblical Vision for a Learned/Learning Community and Some First Consequences for the Educational Ministry of the Church," in *Theological Education & Theology of Life: Transformative Christian Leadership in the 21t Century, A Festschrift for Dietrich Werner*, ed. Atola Longkumer, Po Ho Huang, and Uta Andree (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2016), 283.

and teaching. He also proposes a philosophy of learning that is unique in educational circles. He asserts that learning occurs in three ways, (1) learning by teaching, (2) learning by sharing, and (3) learning by participating.[72] To clarify, learning by teaching is defined as "intended and therefore initiated and fostered by special contents, methods."[73] Learning by sharing is informal learning that may occur in a setting such as a worship service, seminar discussion, conference, or family group. Learning by participating is defined as non-formal learning, which occurs when "suddenly a problem or an insight occurs and demands reflection, answer, reaction."[74] This quote reflects a phase in the learning process in which the learner is faced with a new experience or information that causes them to question, reflect, and respond. It also indicates that Becker's philosophy has clear areas of compatibility with Transformative Learning Theory.

Becker further proposes that learning by sharing and participating takes place more frequently and is more effective than learning by teaching. He writes, "We have to take the task of community building as seriously as we have taken, so far, the development of methods, the preparation of lectures or lessons, the formulation of goals of learning, etc."[75] Believing this to be the case, Becker advocates for more attention and energy to be placed on informal and non-formal community learning contexts within the church.

> Traditionally, education and also theological and Christian education has fostered individualism and personal gain. Learning in community while always needing to be personally meaningful, is trying to foster community values such as participation, cooperation and solidarity. People no longer learn for themselves, but together with

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[72] Ulrich Becker, "Biblical Vision for a Learned/Learning Community and Some First Consequences for the Educational Ministry of the Church," in *Theological Education & Theology of Life: Transformative Christian Leadership in the 21t Century, A Festschrift for Dietrich Werner*, ed. Atola Longkumer, Po Ho Huang, and Uta Andree (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2016), 32.

[73] Ibid., 32.

[74] Ibid., 32.

[75] Ibid., 31.

others, and with a view to the needs and possibilities of their own environment and of the whole inhabited world. No question that the Christian community, in its worship, liturgy and in its entire life, can provide an important structure for such kind of learning.[76]

Becker's emphasis on worship and liturgy as the central context of the Christian learning community and on the parallel Transformative Learning themes of experience, questioning, reflecting, and responding within the context of the community, provide solid support for the compatibility of these two approaches within Worship Studies.

Each of the resources examined here supports the concept of Christian worship as a transformative act for the worshiper. While some authors focused on corporate worship, and others focused on an individual lifestyle of worship, each concluded that glorifying and worshiping God results in transformative change. Scriptural passages reveal this truth and are used to support the conclusions of the scholarly work represented in this portion of the literature review. The next part of the literature review will focus on the background and foundational principles of Transformative Learning Theory to support the hypotheses that there is conceptual compatibility between transformative worship and transformative adult education.

Background and Fundamental Principles of Transformative Learning Theory

When researching and summarizing the background and fundamental principles of Transformative Learning Theory, it is most appropriate to begin with the work of Jack Mezirow, the originator of Transformative Learning Theory. Mezirow introduced this theory in a 1978 publication entitled "Perspective Transformation," published in *Adult Education Quarterly.* In a 2009 publication, Mezirow reflected on his original article and the origins and principles of his

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[76] Ulrich Becker, "Biblical Vision for a Learned/Learning Community and Some First Consequences for the Educational Ministry of the Church," in *Theological Education & Theology of Life: Transformative Christian Leadership in the 21t Century, A Festschrift for Dietrich Werner*, ed. Atola Longkumer, Po Ho Huang, and Uta Andree (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2016), 33.

concept of transformative learning in adult education. He wrote, "The article urged the recognition of a critical dimension of learning in adulthood that enables us to recognize and reassess the structure of assumptions and expectations which frame our thinking, feeling and acting."[77] Mezirow's research base for this concept included a comprehensive national study of women returning to community college after a lapse in their studies. Mezirow's wife, Edee, was a returning college student, and he credits observation of her experiences as both a resource and inspiration for his work.[78] Mezirow provides this definition:

> Transformative learning is defined as the process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) – sets of assumption and expectation – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change. Such frames are better because they are more likely to generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action.[79]

Adding to that definition of transformative learning, Mezirow provides this foundational description of Transformative Learning Theory:

> Transformative learning theory, as I have interpreted it, is a metacognitive epistemology of evidential (instrumental) and dialogical (communicative) reasoning. Reasoning is understood as the process of advancing and assessing a belief. Transformative learning is an adult dimension of reason assessment involving validating and reformulating meaning structures.[80]

Mezirow acknowledges the impact of Paulo Freire's[81] work on conscientization (Brazilian philosopher and educator), Thomas S. Kuhn's[82] work on scientific revolution and

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[77] Jack Mezirow, "An Overview on Transformative Learning," in *Contemporary Theories of Learning: Learning Theorists . . . in Their Own Words*, ed. Knud Illeris (New York: Routledge, 2009), 90.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid., 92.

[80] Ibid., 93.

[81] Albert Atkin, "Paulo Freire," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://iep.utm.edu/freire/.

[82] James A. Marcum, "Thomas S. Kuhn," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://iep.utm.edu/kuhn-ts/.

paradigm shifts (American philosopher and physicist), and Jurgen Habermas'[83] *Theory of Communicative Action* (German philosopher and sociologist), upon the early development of Transformative Learning Theory.[84]   From Freire, concepts regarding "disorienting dilemma, critical self-reflection, and habit of mind"[85] contributed to Mezirow's theory. From Kuhn, influential ideas included "perspective transformation, frame of reference, meaning perspective, and habit of mind."[86] From Habermas, Mezirow gained insight into "learning processes, perspective transformation, meaning scheme, and meaning perspective."[87] Friere, Kuhn, and Habermas influenced the inclusion of those core concepts in Mezirow's educational theory. Further study of Mezirow's writings reveals a continued application of these core concepts in proposed phases of learning and as essential elements in transformative teaching methods.

In chapter one of this thesis paper, an introduction to the basics of Transformative Learning Theory provided Mezirow's distinctive ten phases of meaning within transformative learning. In the late 1970s, Mezirow developed the initial ten phases based on his original research on the transformative learning experiences of women returning to college. It is interesting to note that thirty years later, in the 2009 summary reflection, decades of research and practice led Mezirow to develop, in addition to the original ten phases, a bulleted list of five influencing factors in the transformative learning process. These factors provide an experienced perspective regarding essential elements in the transformative learning process and will help to

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[83] Maz Cherem, "Jurgen Habermas," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://iep.utm.edu/habermas/.

[84] Ibid., 90.

[85] Andrew Kitchenham, "The Evolution of John Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory," *Journal of Transformative Education* 6, no. 2 (2008): 106.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid.

guide educators in the design and educational process of transformative experiences. Mezirow

proposed the following essential elements:

- Reflecting critically on the source, nature and consequences of relevant assumptions – our own and those of others;
- In instrumental learning, determining that something is true (is as it is purported to be) by using empirical research methods;
- In communicative learning, arriving at more justified beliefs by participating freely and fully in an informed continuing discourse;
- Taking action on our transformed perspective – we make a decision and live what we have come to believe until we encounter new evidence, argument or a perspective that renders this orientation problematic and requires reassessment;
- Acquiring a disposition – to become more critically reflective of our own assumptions and those of others, to seek validation of our transformative insights through more freely and fully participating in discourse, and following through on our decision to act upon a transformed insight.[88]

The phrases "instrumental learning" and "communicative learning" used in the list of

essential elements above allude to two major learning domains described by Jurgen Habermas.

Mezirow defines instrumental learning as "learning to control and manipulate the environment or

other people, as in task-oriented problem solving to improve performance."[89]

Mezirow defines communicative learning as "learning what others mean when they

communicate with you. This often involves feelings, intentions, values, and moral issues."[90]

Mezirow offers additional insight into these two domains of learning through the following

explanation, "In coping with the external world, instrumental competence involves the

attainment of improved task-oriented performance. But communicative competence refers to the

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[88] Andrew Kitchenham, "The Evolution of John Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory," *Journal of Transformative Education* 6, no. 2 (2008), 94.

[89] Jack Mezirow, "Learning to Think Like an Adult: Core Concepts of Transformation Theory," in *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice*, ed. Edward W. Taylor and Patricia Cranton (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 77.

[90] Ibid.

ability of the learner to negotiate his or her own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than to simply act on those of others."[91]

Considered through the lens of this research paper, the "essential element" of communicative learning, which, as stated above, may involve feelings, intentions, values, and moral issues, holds particular interest.

In addition to the learning domains mentioned above, Mezirow identifies the essential teaching function of prompting the reassessment of assumptions through reflective discourse. Reflective discourse is a primary technique for practitioners of Transformative Learning Theory. He explains,

> "Discourse, in the context of transformation theory, is that specialized use of dialogue devoted to searching for a common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief. This involves assessing reasons advanced by weighing the supporting evidence and arguments and by examining alternative perspectives. Reflective discourse involves critical assessment of assumptions."

For educators seeking to apply Transformative Learning Theory in a wide variety of settings, an interesting and perhaps liberating possibility is tucked away amidst the many pages of Mezirow's reflections on the importance of discourse. He opens the door of creativity for educators with this statement, "Discourse is the process in which we have an active dialogue with others to better understand the meaning of an experience. It may include interaction within a group or between two persons, including a reader and an author or a viewer and an artist."[92]

The possibilities inherent in that broad view of methods and participants provide many potential applications for creative discourse in educational design. The next portion of the

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[91] Jack Mezirow, "Learning to Think Like an Adult: Core Concepts of Transformation Theory," in *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice*, ed. Edward W. Taylor and Patricia Cranton (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 78.

[92] Ibid.

literature review provides an overview of the diverse applications of Transformative Learning Theory in secular settings.

Applications of Transformative Learning Theory in Various Secular Settings

Recent issues of the *Journal of Transformative Learning* and the *Journal of Transformative Education* reveal the adaptability of Transformative Learning Theory in adult education for both formal and informal settings. These topics include classroom management, professional identity, workplace diversity, civic education, and democratic learning.[93] Additionally, decades of research demonstrate the use of Transformative Learning Theory in settings including workplace education, environmental sustainability programs, international travel experiences, social awareness and community building, storytelling, and artistic expression.

While acknowledging the diversity of applications and settings for transformative learning theory, it is necessary to identify critical factors that accurately distinguish an educational experience as transformative. Patricia Cranton suggests that process and outcome are the key to remaining within the realm of Transformative Learning Theory. She writes:

> A good theory takes into account a variety of circumstances and possibilities while remaining true to the meaning of the theory . . . If I am engaged in transformative learning related to my work, it is perhaps more likely that this process is cognitive and rational. If I am struggling with the death of my son or the complexities of my relationship with a friend, the process may fall more into the extrarational area. Similarly, whether the transformative learning process is an individual or a social justice endeavor depends on circumstances, and both are valid and reasonable ways of engaging transformative learning.[94]

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[93] John Tagg, ed., *Journal of Transformative Learning* (Edmond, Oklahoma: University of Central Oklahoma, 2022) and Cheryl Baldwin, Fergal Finnegan, and Chad Hoggan, eds., *Journal of Transformative Education* (Marietta, Georgia: American Association of Adult and Continuing Education, Sage Publishing, 2022).
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[94] Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide to Theory and Practice, 42*.

Chad Hoggan urges educators to examine learning outcomes as the key identifying feature of authentically transformative education. "Transformative learning refers to processes that result in significant and irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualizes, and interacts with the world."[95] Additionally, Hoggan advises that learning outcomes should be assessed for "depth, breadth, and relative stability."[96] Depth refers to the impact or degree of change. Breadth refers to the number of different contexts in which change is demonstrated. Third, Hoggan expresses a bold definition of "irreversible" change demonstrated with relative stability. He acknowledges that old habits are not easily replaced and that future change is possible. Additionally, Hoggan asserts that temporary change is inadequate for being designated as transformative.[97] With these qualifiers firmly in mind, the following portion of the literature review focuses on recent examples of practices in diverse settings.

A contemporary application of Transformative Learning Theory is found in a setting that one imagines Jack Mezirow would not have predicted in 1978. In 2021, Danielle Terceiro published a paper considering how graphic novels could "facilitate a reorientation towards the other."[98] Citing transformational learning theory as the framework for learning, Terceiro proposes using two companion graphic novels, *Boxers* and *Saints,* created by Gene Luen Yang and published in 2013. These novels feature two young adults on either side of the Boxer Rebellion in China. Terceiro writes, "In *Boxers* and *Saints,* the world views of the protagonists

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[95] Chad D. Hoggan, "Transformative Learning as a Metatheory: Definition, Criteria, and Typology," *Adult Education Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (2015): 57–75.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Danielle Terceiro, "Teaching Compassion for the Other: Parables, Transformations, Boxers and Saints," *Academia Letters* Article 2053 (2021).

are challenged by acts of kindness shown by people from outside their cultural group . . . *Boxers*

and *Saints* could be used as a prompt for students to record real or imagined events in their life,

when they received help from someone unexpected."[99] Terceiro points out the introduction of the

disorienting dilemma through the use of the novels and the opportunity to prompt a critical

reappraisal of ethnocentrism. Terceiro closes with the following: "Deep, empathetic immersion

in a text can pry open cracks to shine imaginative light on transformed ways of 'doing life'

together."[100]

An October 2022 article in the *Journal of Transformative Education* supports applying

transformative learning theory in the professional development of pre-service teachers in

Indonesia. Acting on the belief that experiencing unfamiliar environments fosters transformative

learning, the researchers selected students from three universities to be assigned practice

teaching experiences in remote areas of Indonesia. Students were placed in unfamiliar

communities outside of their ethnic backgrounds. Gathering data from interviews with

participants, researchers reported that student teachers experienced the transformative learning

elements of disorientation, exploring new roles, experiencing reflection, and undergoing changes

in perspective.[101] Additionally, researchers identified three types of change in perspective. These

include "change in the way participants see themselves, change in the way participants see their

relationships with others, and change in the way participants see the world around them." The

researchers conclude that experiencing contrasting localities, such as remote areas of Indonesia,

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[99] Danielle Terceiro, "Teaching Compassion for the Other: Parables, Transformations, Boxers and Saints," *Academia Letters* Article 2053 (2021).

[100] Ibid.

[101] Lufi Kartika Sari et al., "Pre-Service Teachers' Changes in Perspective: A Transformative Learning Experience During Teaching Practice in Remote Areas," *Journal of Transformative Education* 0, no. 0 (2022).

is conducive to transformational learning in professional development. Additionally, they add this specific recommendation regarding the process:

> Reflection in making meaning is more likely to happen after being stimulated by interviews. To ensure the PSTs [pre-service teachers] undergo reflection and can manage their disorientation, a facilitator is necessary. A facilitator in TL [transformative learning] plays a role as a supporter and a guide to help learners to overcome their disorientation and experience reflection.[102]

Education programs for incarcerated students provide multiple examples of Transformative Learning Theory as an effective teaching model for this population of learners. A recently published study was completed at the Puente Grande state penitentiary in Mexico. This study focused on men accused of organized crime and records results related to personal and collective transformation in a context of multifaceted oppression. The author writes, "It also explores the blurry lines between reflection, conscientization, and transformation, inviting us to consider how transformative education relates to social stigma and freedom."[103] Participants provide autobiographical narratives to be published in a literary magazine. One cited benefit of these articles is collecting primary resources for studying organized crime, violence, and punitive punishment in Mexico. However, the texts also "reflect changes in the writers' worldviews, values, personal identities, and sense of freedom"[104] attributed to the transformative learning process.

As stated above, in developing the fundamental principles of Transformative Learning Theory, Jack Mezirow was influenced by the work of Paulo Freire regarding conscientization or

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[102] Lufi Kartika Sari et al., "Pre-Service Teachers' Changes in Perspective: A Transformative Learning Experience During Teaching Practice in Remote Areas," *Journal of Transformative Education* 0, no. 0 (2022).

[103] Rebecca Danielle Strickland, "'Moving the Rubble': Reflection, Conscientization, and Transformative Learning With Men Incarcerated for Organized Crime in Mexico," *Journal of Transformative Education* 20, no. 4 (2022): 379–395.

[104] Ibid.

"consciousness-raising."[105] One key component of this work is freedom from social, cultural, or political oppression through education. The Puente Grande study carries this forward as an important component of their program, stating, "We consider Freire's theory of conscientization as a gateway to Mezirow's theory of transformative learning and contemplate the subjective value of transformative education in an institution designed to deprive people of freedom, specifically in a country dominated by organized crime."[106]

Researchers cite the importance of questioning the underlying assumptions and expectations that influence our beliefs, values, and feelings and how sociocultural factors influence those frames of reference. Personal transformation is difficult to gauge in one isolated assessment that reflects a small slice of an individual's life. This challenge of assessment of transformative learning is worthy of mention. The final paragraph of the Puente Grande report acknowledges this. "I cannot claim that the transformations attributed to this PAR [participatory action research] enable participants to truly free themselves from the cartel or from the social stigma they have acquired. However, I am confident that we will all use this experience to make positive social contributions in one form or another. In sum, the power of education in prisons is undeniable; the opportunity lies in how critical thinking is guided."[107]

The July 2022 issue of the *Journal of Transformative Education* is dedicated to relationships between transformative education and civic education. With an underlying

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[105] Jack Mezirow, "Transformative Learning Theory," in *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education*, ed. Jack Mezirow and Edward W. Taylor (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009).

[106] Strickland, "'Moving the Rubble': Reflection, Conscientization, and Transformative Learning With Men Incarcerated for Organized Crime in Mexico."

[107].Ibid.

emphasis that transformative education has both a personal and a societal dimension, the editors

share historical and contemporary examples of transformative civic education.

> Civic education, understood very generally as educational efforts, practices, and processes that affect people's beliefs, commitments, capabilities, and actions as members or prospective members of communities, needs a theoretical underpinning that recognizes and situates the transformative dimensions of learning. It requires skills and habits such as critical reflection on basic assumptions and premises that guide one's action on the personal, as well as on the social and political dimensions.[108]

Within this issue, the Field Immersion Framework, a pedagogical design for experiential learning

in civic engagement settings, is used in various community scenarios. "The FIF positions

students as explorers in communities grappling with important, unresolved issues and facilitates

deep learning in the affective domain. Immersing students in the field as they experience civic

issues is an emancipatory opportunity for many students."[109]

The framework is designed in four steps. The first, Foregrounding, engages students in

building a foundation for their transformative learning experience through activities focused on

content and processes. The second step is Immersion. "During Immersion, students are steeped

in contentious civic issues in their authentic context. Students engage with diverse stakeholders;

interrogate their new and previous knowledge, perspectives, and beliefs; collaborate extensively

with peers and faculty facilitators; and practice intentional explorations and iterative

reflection."[110] The third step, a core activity in transformative learning theory, is Reflection.

This is described as writing and dialogue challenging students to "make connections among

disciplines, between the familiar and the new, and between university learning and democratic

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[108] Tetyana Hoggan-Kloubert and Paul E. III Mabrey, "Civic Education as Transformative Education," *Journal of Transformative Education* 20, no. 3 (2022): 167–175.

[109] JoEllen G. Pederson and Heather G. Lettner-Rust, "The Field Immersion Framework: A Transformative Pedagogy for Experiential Civic Education," *Journal of Transformative Education* 20, no. 3 (2022): 189–205.

[110] Ibid.

processes in our communities."[111] The fourth and final step of the Field Immersion Framework is Civic Agency, the culminating stage in which students translate their new understanding of civic issues into action. Action is the final assessment of transformative learning experiences. In this setting, the action includes drawing on experiences and evidence gained in the three previous stages to argue a position or raise awareness of specific challenges. Although this Field Immersion Framework is presented as a pedagogical tool for civic education, it is apparent that it could be adapted for use in any experiential learning environment.

Transformative Learning Theory is applied in healthcare professions. In the October 2022 Journal of Transformative Learning, Gregory Hardy and Olive Chapman share results from research in a professional development program for Medical Laboratory Professionals. The study identified vital experiences that affected the development of, or shifted, students' professional identity related to becoming beginning practitioners. In this study, professional identity included how they viewed themselves and others. It also included how they viewed their work and program in the context of a clinical practicum. Students identified four areas that provided a catalyst for reflection and change. These include experiences involving patients, experiences with autopsy, experiences involving mistakes, and experiences related to workplace culture.[112] These experiences in the clinical practicum provide the disorienting dilemma proposed by Mezirow as the first phase of transformative learning. Researchers conclude, "Transformational learning which occurred was the result of events throughout the participants' clinical practicum, and transformational learning was not limited to a single event or moment in time. Instead, the

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[111] Pederson and Lettner-Rust, "The Field Immersion Framework: A Transformative Pedagogy for Experiential Civic Education."

[112] Gregory Hardy and Olive Chapman, "Experiences Contributing to Professional Identity Transformation among Medical Laboratory Professional Students," *Journal of Transformative Learning* 9, no. 1 (2022): 63–79.

participants' identity shift was affected by a collective of reflections, experiences, pre-established

ideas, and concepts formed throughout the educational process."[113]

Transformative Leadership and the use of Transformative Learning Theory are not

necessarily linked endeavors just because they both utilize the vocabulary of

transformation. However, transformative learning theory is applied in professional development

for leadership training. Just as this research paper explores conceptual compatibility and

applications of Transformative Learning Theory to teaching Worship Studies, Shenaz Malik and

Joseph Roberson explored the connections between Transformative Learning and

Transformative Leadership. They suggest that due to the speed of changing technologies in

business, a new paradigm of transformative leadership has emerged and that leadership

development initiatives incorporating transformative learning principles positively impact

executive performance.   In their paper, "Transformative Learning: the future of leadership

development?" they conclude with two areas of compatibility and application. First, they

conclude that the qualities fostered by transformative learning are the same as those required for

effective leadership. They specify integrity, ethics, morals, authenticity, relatedness, and

trustworthiness. This conclusion is based on the belief that transformational leadership requires

a moral compass.[114] It is interesting to note that these qualities are recommended in

Transformational Education as important characteristics for educators who lead transformative

experiences. Patricia Cranton emphasizes this in *Understanding and Promoting Transformative*

Learning: A Guide to Theory and Practice. She writes, "Mentoring is fostered by a relationship

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[113] Gregory Hardy and Olive Chapman, "Experiences Contributing to Professional Identity Transformation among Medical Laboratory Professional Students," *Journal of Transformative Learning* 9, no. 1 (2022): 63–79.
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[114] Shenaz Malik and Joseph R. Roberson, "Transformative Learning: The Future of Leadership Development?" (University of Maryland, 2014).

that encourages trust, openness, personal disclosure, and closeness. The model or mentor displays a love for the subject area, expresses contagious enthusiasm, encourages personal interactions, and is open and authentic."[115]

The second conclusion of Malik and Roberson is that transformational learning principles and practices "apply to organizational development as aptly as they do to personal development. Both individuals and organizations are systems. Each has to adapt to changing circumstances in order to stay on course – to survive, grow, and thrive."[116] A transformative leader has two options for organizational change. The system perspective focuses on the strategies and culture of the organization. The individual perspective focuses on changing the organization by changing individuals within the organization. Transformative change may be directed from either perspective.

Gail Heidenhain proposed a model for using a transformative approach to promote accelerated learning at the 2016 Transformative Learning Conference hosted by the Journal of Transformative Learning. This presenter focused on the "how to" or modeling of a transformative approach to accelerated learning. Heidenhain's pedagogical approach includes five specific steps. The five steps are (1) Learner Preparation Phase, (2) Connection Phase, (3) Discovery Phase, (4) Activation Phase, and (5) Integration Phase.[117] In the Learner Preparation Phase, students begin with activities that encourage them to think deeply about themselves, the topic, and one another. The Connection phase aims to surface participants' experiences with the

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[115] Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide to Theory and Practice,* 82.

[116] Malik and Roberson, "Transformative Learning: The Future of Leadership Development?"

[117] Gail Heidenhain, "Accelerated Learning - A Transformative Approach to Teaching," *Journal of Transformative Learning,* no. 2016 Transformative Learning Conference Proceedings (2020): 5–6.

topic and their thoughts, knowledge, and feelings about it. The Discovery Phase replaces a lecture instruction model with discovery activities requiring students to observe, read, and experiment. Students then analyze, discuss and prepare to present their findings by teaching others. The Activation Phase provides practice in applying skills and building mastery. The Activation Phase may culminate in a capstone activity that allows students to demonstrate their abilities. Finally, the Integration Phase encourages students to reflect on what they have learned, how they contributed, and what they will take with them into the future. Integration activities may occur at the end of each class and the course's end. Using these five phases or steps as a roadmap, Heidenhain recommends reflection, sharing in pairs and small groups, teaching through arts and music, using active and cooperative learning techniques, and focused discussion approaches. Heidenhain concludes with a statement reflecting the adaptability of Transformative Learning Theory to suit the needs of various educational programs. "Using the Accelerated Learning Cycle as a roadmap, teachers have a tool for designing transformative experiences while they develop their students' expertise in their discipline."[118]

Transformative Learning Theory is clearly adaptable to many different adult learning opportunities. This portion of the literature review has illustrated a variety of applications of transformative learning in secular settings. This sampling included examples of teaching compassion for others through graphic novels, an international teacher training setting, consciousness-raising in a Mexican prison population, experiential learning in civic education, development of professional identity in clinical practicums, development of transformative leadership in organizations, and a transformative approach for accelerated learning.

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[118] Gail Heidenhain, "Accelerated Learning - A Transformative Approach to Teaching," *Journal of Transformative Learning,* no. 2016 Transformative Learning Conference Proceedings (2020): 6.
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Applications of Transformative Learning Theory in Spiritual Formation and Christian Education

The previous section of this literature review focused on secular applications for Transformative Learning Theory. This portion of the review delves into applications in spiritual formation and, more specifically, in Christian Education. Mezirow's original concept and application of Transformative Learning Theory strongly focuses on a cognitive and rational approach to learning through critical reflection. One critique mentions, "It is too driven by rationality, with not enough attention to other ways that individuals come to know and learn, such as through emotions, spirituality, or embodied forms of knowing." Later practitioners of Transformative Learning Theory suggest that genuinely transformative change occurs through a more holistic approach to learning.[119]

John Dirkx, author of "Nurturing Soul in Adult Learning," offers a similar critique and states that Mezirow's approach provides "a helpful but only partial understanding of the process of change, self-discovery, and social critique inherent in transformative learning. It represents the way of logos, the realm of objectivity and logic, the triumph of reason over instinct, ignorance, and irrationality." Dirkx proposes that transformative learning also involves personal, imaginative, intuitive, and emotional ways of knowing. He asserts, "Our journey of self-knowledge also requires that we care for and nurture the presence of the soul dimension in teaching and learning."[120] For educators and learners seeking a definition of the term "soul," Dirkx provides the following:

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[119] Tisdell, "Themes and Variations of Transformational Learning: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Forms That Transform."

[120] John M. Dirkx, "Nurturing Soul in Adult Learning," in *New Directions For Adult and Continuing Education*, vol. 1997 (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 79–88.

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 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 soul, we are seeking to live deeply, to focus on the concreteness of the here-and-now.[121]

Elizabeth J. Tisdell suggests that educators must clarify what transformative learning means, "Some people seem to use the term so loosely that it is almost a synonym for learning of any kind, rendering the term *transformative* nearly meaningless."[122] In order to add depth to our understanding of transformative change, she advocates for including multiple ways of learning or knowing in our approach to transformative learning.

As an illustration, Tisdell borrows images and vocabulary from the musical world. Transformation to one's thinking is merely a transposition of the key signature. Transformative life change affects the fundamental theme itself. One is more profound and deep-reaching than the other. Tisdell writes:

> There are likely many times in one's life when one has transformational experiences that are integrative to transform one's *thinking*. But there are likely low instances of an epochal shift that transforms one's *being* and identity. In these instances the "form" that transforms involves multiple domains on a significant level – emotional, rational, physical, and perhaps spiritual as well.[123]

If we are to include spiritual ways of knowing in transformative learning, it is helpful to have a working definition of spirituality. In their article "Claiming a Sacred Face: The Role of

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[121] John M. Dirkx, "Nurturing Soul in Adult Learning," in *New Directions For Adult and Continuing Education*, vol. 1997 (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 79–88.

[122] Tisdell, "Themes and Variations of Transformational Learning: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Forms That Transform."

[123] Ibid.

Spirituality and Cultural Identity in Transformative Higher Education," Tisdell and Tolliver

propose the following seven central components of spirituality:

1. Spirituality is related to a connection to what many refer to as the life force, God, Creator, a higher self or purpose, Great Mystery, or Buddha nature;
2. Spirituality always has a context. As such, it is different from but, for many people, related to religion;
3. Spirituality is about a sense of wholeness, healing, and the interconnectedness of all things;
4. Spirituality is about meaning-making;
5. Spirituality is about a sense of wholeness, healing, and the interconnectedness of all things;
6. Spiritual experiences generally happen by surprise, although it may be possible to create conditions in which such experiences occur;
7. Spirituality is about the ongoing development of identity, of moving toward what many have referred to as their greater authenticity, more authentic identity, or authentic vocation.[124]

The inclusion of the spiritual dimension as an essential element of transformative learning is further developed by Nadira K. Charaniya, who writes, "The spiritual and cultural foundations with which the adult learner enters into the encounter are inherent to the learner's identity and are the stepping-off point for transformation."[125] Rooted in Mezirow's original theory but further developed by her research and observations, Charaniya suggests a three-part sequence to a cultural-spiritual perspective for transformative education. First, "a strong identity is confronted by anomalies and challenges. Second, this identity is then expanded through engagement with experiences that are intellectual, relational, and reflective. Finally, the culmination is a clearer or more pronounced understanding of self and of one's role in the world."[126]

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[124] Elizabeth J. Tisdell and Derise E. Tolliver, "Claiming a Sacred Face," *Journal of Transformative Education* 1, no. 4 (2003): 291–393.

[125] Nadira K. Charaniya, "Cultural-Spiritual Perspective of Transformative Learning," in *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice*, ed. Edward W. Taylor and Patricia Cranton (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2012), 231–244.

[126]Ibid.

Charaniya clarifies that this cultural-spiritual perspective assumes that "one's spirituality is intimately connected with culture" and that "organized communities of faith provide us with inroads to our own spirituality and opportunities for spiritual experiences . . . Thus, the search that one engages in as a spiritual being is influenced by one's culture. The process is a holistic one that involves the integration of all dimensions of the learner."[127]

Tisdell, Dirkx, and Charaniya provide insight into augmenting Mezirow's original theory with a more holistic approach that embraces the importance of spiritual aspects of transformative change in an adult learner's life. Additional researchers and educators provide a Christian worldview for applying Transformative Learning Theory.

Christian educators will recognize elements of Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory in the work of James E. Loder, past Professor of the Philosophy of Christian Education at Princeton Theological Seminary. Loder presents his theory in *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit.* This theory may build upon Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory but also extends above and beyond the realm of Transformative Learning Theory to incorporate distinct Christian beliefs and teachings regarding redemption through Christ and transformation through the work of the Holy Spirit. Loder states, "the aim and purpose of Christian education are to create a Christian style of life in all arenas of human action and history in the power of the Spirit."[128] Loder defines transformation as "a force of universal magnitude."[129] His philosophy of Christian education proposes not only transformation but also redemptive transformation. According to Loder, transformative learning is "the patterned process whereby within any given

[127] Charaniya, "Cultural-Spiritual Perspective of Transformative Learning."

[128] James E. Loder, *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit*, ed. Dana R. Wright (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018),257.

[129] Ibid.,12.

frame of knowledge or experience, a hidden order of meaning emerges with the power to redefine and/or reconstruct the original frame of reference."[130] To differentiate between transformation and redemptive transformation, Loder writes:

> Christianity's answer to the cosmological question of meaning and purpose lies in the contingent relationship between God the Creator and all of creation. This contingency is revealed in the relationship between God and humanity in Jesus Christ, in both his nature and redemptive action. To set transformation in the context of creation's contingent relationship to God is to see that all created forces, including socialization and naturalistic transformation, are in need of redemptive transformation through the mediation of Christ.[131]

Loder shares many areas of conceptual compatibility with Mezirow. Nevertheless, a careful examination of both theories demonstrates both similarity and divergence. While Mezirow noted a ten-phase transformation process in adult learners, Loder suggests a five-step pattern of transformative learning that emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit in transforming the human spirit. Loder's process indicates a process that begins at zero and proceeds as follows: (0) Context, (1) Conflict in context, (2) Interlude for scanning, (3) insight felt with intuitive force, (4) release of tension-restoration of phenomenon, and (5) confirmation or verification and interpretation.[132] Loder's phases of "context" and "conflict in context" fall within Mezirow's phases of individual experience and disorienting dilemma. Loder's "interlude for scanning" and "insight felt with intuitive force" fall within Mezirow's critical reflection and reassessment of assumptions. "Release of tension" correlates with Mezirow's recognition that adult learners benefit from knowing they are not alone in their disorienting experiences. "Restoration of phenomenon" falls within Mezirow's return to action. "Confirmation" and "verification and

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[130] James E. Loder, *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit*, ed. Dana R. Wright (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018, 12.

[131] Ibid.,14.

[132] Ibid., 276-277.

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interpretation," although listed in a different order than Mezirow's phases, fit within Mezirow's

emphasis upon dialogue with others as an essential part of assessing and revising perceptions. In

addition to these phases, Loder recommends a list of five learning tasks corresponding to

developing the phases of transformation. The five tasks include (1) "interpretative learning,"[133]

with an emphasis on learning interpretation and responsible action, (2) "conflictual learning,"[134]

with an emphasis on facing and embracing appropriate conflict with perseverance, (3) "learning

through celebration,"[135] with an emphasis on profound appreciation for the ongoing redemptive

process, (4) "contemplative wondering,"[136] with an emphasis on expectant searching and

exploration of connections and combinations of meanings, and (5) "convictional learning,"[137]

with an emphasis on a change from the ordinary course of life and evidence of profound

significance upon the life of the learner. Several of these tasks have a clear application to

spiritual formation. Loder counsels:

> All of us together as the body of Christ, under his Spirit's unifying intention, constitute
> the learning community of faith that exhibits the transforming life of Christ in and for the
> world . . . Teaching-learning experiences governed by the Holy Spirit affirm both the
> spiritual power that is already at work in learners and teachers but also the need for the
> human spirit to continue to find its true creative energy in the Spirit working in concert
> with their human spirit toward redemptive transformation."[138]
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> Donald Guthrie, a contributor to *Christian Higher Education: Faith, Teaching, and*

Learning in the Evangelical Tradition, supports the importance of the disorienting dilemma as a

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[133] James E. Loder, *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit*, ed. Dana R. Wright (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018, 277.

[134] Ibid., 279.

[135] Ibid., 280.

[136] Ibid., 281.

[137] Ibid., 282.

[138] Ibid., 283.

catalyst for transformative learning. Guthrie uses the term "disequilibrating learning experience"[139] He asks, "What is learning in general if not disequilibrating?"[140] Guthrie notes a three-step process in which faculty guide students through "pedagogical dissonance"[141] experienced through the disequilibrating learning experience. This experience is followed by investigating possible responses to disorientation and encouraging critical reflection. Finally, the individuals and the community practice and habituate new response patterns developed through this learning experience. Like other Christian educators, Guthrie extends this teaching perspective to integrate a Christian worldview. He writes:

> On a regular basis, good teachers find ways to ask themselves and their students (1) how Jesus Christ is bringing disequilibrium into their lives, learnings, and relationship; (2) how to be encouraged that Jesus Christ's ongoing use of life's disorienting dilemma is for our god; and (3) how to redemptively harness and steward pedagogical disequilibrium in teaching and learning activities.[142]

Interestingly, the quote above uses Jack Mezirow's terminology of the disorienting dilemma and alludes to James Loder's concept of redemptive transformation.

Christian educator, Martha E. MacCullough, defines a philosophy of education as "a set of beliefs that has been intentionally examined and accepted as a framework out of which to develop a view of (1) the aim of education, (2) the nature of the student and learning, (3) the role

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[139] Donald C. Guthrie, "Faith and Teaching," in *Christian Higher Education: Faith, Teaching, and Learning in the Evangelical Tradition*, ed. David S. Dockery and Christopher W. Morgan (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 161
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[140] Ibid., 160.

[141] Ibid., 161.

[142] Ibid., 161.

of the teacher and teaching, and (4) the nature and purpose of the curriculum."[143] The unique

distinction of Christian education is made clear in her approach.

> "The Christian narrative (worldview) serves as a powerful integrating force to provide meaning to all human endeavors, including learning, as it focuses on the ultimate purpose of human life and connects that purpose to the ultimate purpose of education . . . Glorifying God by manifesting what He is like on earth is a primary aim of life for the Christian. Since the aim of education is connected to the aim of life, the aim of education that follows might be that the student will develop fully as an image-bearer and flourish as God intended, all to His glory."[144]

Within this Christian worldview, MacCullough discusses passive and active learning, two

historical views of education that will impact the development of a teacher's philosophy of

education. The passive concept views human learning as primarily determined by the

environment or forces outside the individual. "The human is simply a reactor to the

environment."[145] The active concept views learning as an inborn process originating from

internal developmental forces. In this view, the environment is "simply a location for natural

unfoldment."[146]

In addition to those two views, MacCullough proposes another view strongly aligned

with Transformative Learning Theory. The third view is interactive learning. This view blends

elements of active and passive views of learning. Interactivists believe that "humans take in

information from the outside world and try to make sense of it by using their innate capacity to

come to know."[147] MacCullough writes, "Reason would inform one who holds to a Christian

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[143] Martha E. MacCullough, *By Design: Developing a Philosophy of Education Informed by a Christian Worldview* (Colorado Springs: Association of Christian Schools International, 2013), 7.
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[144] Ibid, 28 and 113.

[145] Ibid., 63.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Ibid.

worldview that learning as a process requires inside and outside factors. Furthermore, humans

may construe correctly or incorrectly. Humans can be wrong. Ongoing assessment, new

information, and opportunities to reorganize and change are vital in learning."[148] The ability of

the learner to reevaluate prior experiences and perspectives, or as MacCullough expresses, to

assess, reorganize and change, is potentially transformative.

Further developing this thought, MacCullough promotes a four-element teaching method

for interactive learning. (1) Engage the mind (internal). (2) Provide new information (external).

(3) Create student processing activities (internal and external). (4) Assess learning (internal).

Transformative Learning Theorists correlate these teaching elements with the core elements of

individual experience, critical reflection, dialogue, and action. Engaging the mind and providing

new information fit within the realm of individual experiences. Student processing activities fit

within critical reflection and dialogue with others. Revised perceptions, or learning, would be

assessed through actions that reflect a change. MacCullough indicates the conceptual

compatibility between God-pleasing education, interactive learning, and transformative learning

when she writes:

> In cognitive interactive learning, the strengths of both content-centered and student-centered approaches are recognized and integrated into a more robust approach that seems to fit the way God intended humans to learn. Teachers who are serious about promoting learning in their students will invite conversation about the potential of approaches that are built upon the interactive nature of humans. Advocates see learning as a unified process involving content and experience, knowing and doing, and information for change. Learning is transformational.[149]

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[148] Martha E. MacCullough, *By Design: Developing a Philosophy of Education Informed by a Christian Worldview* (Colorado Springs: Association of Christian Schools International, 2013), 67.

[149] Ibid., 79.
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When pausing to evaluate common themes amongst transformative education practitioners in spiritual settings, the most vital recurrent theme is the firm belief that true transformation in an individual's life must be holistic. Rational critique alone does not typically result in lasting life change. Transformative learning is a process of self-discovery and change that integrates all dimensions of the learner. These dimensions involve multiple ways of knowing, including personal, imaginative, emotional, extra-rational, and spiritual components.

Chapter Summary

In order to summarize the literature review provided in this chapter, it is helpful to return to the research questions addressed in this study. First, what are the areas of conceptual compatibility between transformative education and transformative Christian worship? Second, how can the educational research regarding Transformative Learning Theory be applied to course design for teaching adult lay study courses on Christian Worship? The four areas of literature review include the transformative impact of worship, the fundamental principles of transformative learning theory, and applications of transformative learning theory in both secular and spiritual settings. The insights gathered through this literature review support the argument that the core concepts of transformative learning theory exhibit conceptual compatibility with a scriptural approach to transformative learning. Additionally, this review supports the proposal that a Christian educator, through thoughtful design and delivery of a Worship Studies course, can promote transformative education and assist their students in these experiences.

Chapter Three

Methods

Guided by scholarly literature and research in Transformative Learning Theory, Adult Education, Christian Education, and Christian Worship Studies, this qualitative study identifies possible applications of the principles and practices of Transformative Learning Theory to course design and delivery for adult learners in Christian Worship Studies. Qualitative study, as described in *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process* by Rudestam and Newton, is the selected approach for this research study:

> The term 'constructivism' is a name for the epistemology associated with the view that what people may consider objective knowledge and truth are a result of perspective. For the constructivist, knowledge is not 'found' or 'discovered' from existing facts but constructed as the invention of an active, engaging mind . . . Qualitative methods are usually linked to a constructivist theory of knowledge because qualitative methods tend to focus on understanding experiences from the point of view of those who live them.[150]

This approach resonates with the purposes of this research study. Due to this, the following qualitative methods described by *Surviving Your Dissertation* apply to this research study.

- Data expressed in words
- Inductive
- Naturally occurring and contextual
- Holistic view of phenomena
- Interested in subjectivity
- Emphasis on description, exploration, search for meaning
- Researcher participates and collaborates
- Text analysis[151]

Applying these qualitative methods, the research process described below provided a written record of historical data on the concepts, critiques, development, and various contexts of

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[150] Kjell Erik Rudestam and Rae R. Newton, *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Contecnt and Process*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2007), 35.

[151] Ibid., 38.

Transformative Learning Theory. The literature review emphasized a biblical understanding of worship as a spiritual and transformative practice. Through comparison and critical reflection, the researcher worked to discover and reveal areas of conceptual compatibility or incompatibility in the domains of transformative learning and transformative worship. The literature review prioritized a holistic view of the context and phenomena influencing the ongoing research in areas of pedagogical practices and possible applications of Transformative Learning Theory for Christian education in Worship Studies. Additionally, to "focus on understanding experiences from the point of view of those who live them,"[152] the researcher participated and collaborated with students in naturally occurring adult education settings to draw on personal experiences, interactions, and observations. The insights gathered through these authentic teaching and learning events guided the interpretation of the gathered data and aided in the practical development of teaching materials based on the research findings.

Research Procedure

With the proposed research question in mind, the researcher gathered and examined scholarly literature in the fields of Transformative Learning Theory, Adult Education, Christian Education, and Christian Worship. Sources, including books, journal articles, thesis and dissertation papers, magazine articles, and web resources, were considered for reliability, expertise, and original contribution to this study. Research and literature published within the past ten years received the highest priority. The researcher gathered materials to examine for evidence of conceptual compatibility and incompatibility in the study of Transformative

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[152] Kjell Erik Rudestam and Rae R. Newton, *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Contecnt and Process*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2007), 35.

Learning Theory as a philosophy of education with possible applications for teaching Christian

Worship Studies. Based on this review and analysis of the literature and informed by personal

experience as an educator in adult education settings, the researcher developed proposed

applications of Transformative Learning Theory to course design and delivery for adult lay study

courses in Worship Studies.

The first comprehensive presentation of transformative learning as a fully developed

theory was Mezirow's (1991) *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning.*[153] Many

researchers and educators have elaborated on this original theory and continue developing and

applying Mezirow's theory in various curricular and co-curricular settings. Primary resources

for exploring ongoing work in the field of Transformative Learning Theory included scholarly,

peer-reviewed articles such as those found in *The Journal of Transformative Education*

(JTED)[154] and *The Journal of Transformative Learning (JoTL).*[155] Additionally, the researcher

consulted works such as the 2012 *Handbook of Transformative Learning*[156] edited by current

leaders in Transformative Learning Theory, Edward W. Taylor and Patricia Cranton.

Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher

Education,[157] edited by Jack Mezirow and Edward W. Taylor, is another valuable collection of

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[153] Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, ed. Jossey-Bass (San Francisco, 1991).

[154] Chad Hoggan and Ferga; Finnegan, eds., *Journal of Transformative Education* (SAGE Journals, n.d.), https://journals.sagepub.com/home/jtd.

[155] John Tagg, *Journal of Transformative Learning*.

[156] Taylor and Cranton, *The Handbook of Transformative Learning*. (United States of America: John Wiley & Sons, 2012).

[157] Mezirow and Taylor, *Transform. Learn. Pract. Insights from Community, Work. High. Educ.* (United States of America: Jossey-Bass, 2009).

essays representing the work of multiple authors. Many of these articles were helpful to this research.

Qualitative researchers refer to the snowball effect in a literature review. The resources cited by previous researchers often direct the researcher to additional content. One source leads to another, and individual flakes of information compile to become a growing "snowball" or body of resources and information. Current issues of professional journals have been instrumental in this regard.

The researcher examined perspectives in Christian Education and Worship Studies from sources such as *Christian Education Journal,*[158] various biblical commentaries on the subject of worship, and texts such as *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the* Spirit by James E. Loder,[159] *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*[160] by Constance Cherry, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*[161] by James K.A. Smith, and *Called to Worship: From the Dawn of Creation to the Final Amen*[162] by Vernon Whaley. Recent theses and dissertations accessed through research databases provided by the Jerry Falwell Library of Liberty University added to the researcher's understanding and conclusions.

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[158] John D. Trentham, ed., *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry* (SAGE Journals, n.d.), https://journals.sagepub.com/home/cej.

[159] Loder, *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit*.

[160] Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*.

[161] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).

[162] Vernon M. Whaley, *Called to Worship: From the Dawn of Creation to the Final Amen* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009).

Finally, the researcher has drawn upon personal experiences in teaching and curriculum development. First, fifteen years of full-time teaching and curriculum development in a community college provided insight and experience into adult education in a secular setting. Second, developing and delivering the curriculum for "Worship Studies," a course that is one component of the ministerial certification available through the American Baptist Churches of New York State, provided recent experience in a formal Christian education setting for adults. Instructor experience, interaction with students, observation, reflection, and development of course materials provided this research study's final component.

Chapter Four

Two research questions directed the literature review above. The first considered evidence of conceptual compatibility between transformative education and transformative Christian worship. The second reviewed possible pedagogical applications of Transformative Learning Theory when teaching adult lay study courses on Christian Worship. This chapter of the research paper focuses on developing an informed and thoughtful answer to those questions by applying the resources and knowledge gathered in the literature review and by researcher participation in adult education settings.

Research Findings

Transformation is a bold claim. Thesaurus.com provides a list of interesting synonyms for "transformation." These include conversion, metamorphosis, renewal, alteration, and radical change.[163] According to Merriam-Webster, a transformative experience causes or is able to cause "an important and lasting change in someone or something."[164] As revealed in the literature review, researchers and authors in worship practice and those in the field of education lay claim to the possibility of transformative change through their disciplines. Worship has the potential to be transformative in the life of an individual. Education also has the potential to be transformative. For the educator who teaches the topic of Christian worship, this presents the compelling possibility of a dual transformative event for students. Is it possible that education and worship combined in one curriculum have unique potential for conversion, metamorphosis, renewal, alteration, and radical change? That also could be a bold claim. For Christian educators,

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[163] "Thesaurus.Com," last modified 2022, https://www.thesaurus.com/.

[164] "Merriam-Webster.Com," accessed December 27, 2022, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary.

the first step in exploring the possibility of transformative learning should be confirming that the examined method's educational theory, principles, and pedagogical practices are compatible with scriptural guidance. Before adopting any of the principles and practices of Transformative Learning Theory, Christian educators must be diligent in answering the question, "What are the areas of conceptual compatibility between transformative education and transformative Christian worship?" That is the first research question addressed in this study.

In the literature review, numerous examples supported the concept of transformative experience. Though it may seem obvious, it is essential to highlight that a primary area of conceptual compatibility between transformative education and transformative Christian worship is the fundamental belief that people can and do, change. Jack Mezirow wrote, "Because this theory particularly addresses the interest of adult education . . . it assumes the perfectibility of human beings when this refers to improving our understanding and the quality of our actions through meaningful learning."[165]

In order to highlight the conceptual compatibility between transformative education and transformative worship, this chapter provides two comparative tables. On the following page, please note that Table 4.1: Definitions of Transformative Learning and Table 4.2: The Source of Transformative Change provide side-by-side comparisons of the work of Jack Mezirow, the pioneering educational philosopher who first developed Transformative Learning Theory, with the work of noted philosopher and Christian educator, James E. Loder. Table 4.1 illustrates that both Mezirow and Loder advocate for the possibility of transformative learning.

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[165] Mezirow, "Learning to Think Like an Adult: Core Concepts of Transformation Theory, 76."

Table 4.1: Definitions of Transformative Learning

Mezirow	Loder
"Learning that transforms problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change."	"The patterned process whereby within any given frame of knowledge or experience, a hidden order of meaning emerges with the power to redefine and/or reconstruct the original frame of reference."
Jack Mezirow and Edward. Taylor, eds., *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education* (United States of America: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 22.	James E. Loder, *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit*, ed. Dana R. Wright (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018), 12.

The divergence between Mezirow and Loder occurs when describing the fundamental source of transformative change. Compare their statements found in Table 4.2: The Source of Transformative Change.

Table 4.2: The Source of Transformative Change

Mezirow	Loder
When ideological and social circumstances permit, we have a natural capacity to act rationally. In seeking the meaning of our experience, we engage in mindful efforts to learn, accepting others as agents with interpretations of their experience that may prove true or justified, validating contested beliefs and understandings through reflective discourse, and assessing supporting reasons to arrive at a tentative best judgment – as opposed to resorting to tradition, authority, or force to make a judgment.	When socialization is taken to be dominant, then all transformations get their historical significance and systematic meaning from the equilibration context in which they occur. When transformation is dominant, then it is clear that all socialization is unto transformation, preparatory to the emergence of a higher but hidden order in keeping with God's action in the world. In neither case is one force separable from the other. And in every case they are inextricably intertwined.
Jack Mezirow and Edward. Taylor, eds., *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education* (United States of America: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 29.	James E. Loder, *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit*, ed. Dana R. Wright (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018), 13.

Mezirow asserts that in the correct ideological and social circumstances and accepting others as agents of change through reflective discourse, humans have a natural capacity to act rationally. His statement indicates that natural human capacity is the source of transformative change. Loder does not deny the human impact of rational discourse and societal influences in transformative change, but he asserts God's will as the dominant transformative force in Christianity and Christian education. Comparing these two statements provides an understanding of their conflicting views regarding the primary source of transformative influence.

Loder asserts that God's action in the world is inextricably intertwined with human transformation.[166] Although this spiritual application is evident in much of the literature regarding the transformative nature of Christian worship and education, it is absent from Mezirow's theory. Some have criticized Mezirow for leaving little room for religious faith in his pedagogical approach. He writes, "As there are no fixed truths or totally definitive knowledge, and because circumstances change, the human condition may be best understood as a continuous effort to negotiate contested meanings."[167] These assertions differ from the Christian belief that God provides truth and definitive knowledge. A course in Christian Worship Studies will work from the foundational belief that God's Word is truth. In a prayer for his disciples, Jesus asked, "Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth (John 17:17 Revised Standard Version)." A modern paraphrase states it this way, "Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth (John 17:17 New Living Translation)." Despite this area of disagreement over Mezirow's philosophy regarding fixed truth, the flexible and adaptable nature of Transformative Learning

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[166] Loder, *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit,* 13.

[167] Mezirow, "Learning to Think Like an Adult," 73.

Theory itself is demonstrated through the many ways it is applied in adult education, including areas of spiritual formation and Christian education.

As stated previously, as a hypothesis for this research paper, key areas of conceptual compatibility between transformative education and transformative Christian worship include a shared emphasis on personal experience as an essential component of learning, critical reflection as an effective approach to continued personal development, and personal action as evidence of changed perspectives and practices. Several researchers have condensed Mezirow's original ten phases of transformation into fewer stages of change or development. These contributors represent perspectives from both spiritual and secular research settings. Each has reduced their list of vital transformative phases to three to five components. Based on information gathered in the literature review, this research paper includes Table 4.3, "Adapted Approaches to Mezirow's Ten Phases of Transformative Learning," which compares several of these reduced-step adaptations of the learning phases as developed by transformative learning educators.

While examining Table 4.3 below, note the presence of all three of the key areas of conceptual compatibility mentioned in the hypothesis. It is interesting to consider the implications of slightly different terms and the nuances that may come with them. The four columns on the following page alternately identify the first phase of transformative learning as "Tumultuous Aspects," "Anomalies and Changes," "Disorienting Experiences," and "Conflict." These initial events each bring to mind Mezirow's disorienting dilemmas that may trigger transformative learning. A second area of comparison includes the reflective process as indicated by the terminologies of "Exploring the Path," "Experiences that are intellectual, relational, and reflective," "Critical Reflection and Rational Dialogue," and "Insight." The inclusion of phases of personal action is demonstrated through the use of terms such as

"Reintegration," "Action," and "Proving Out." Table 4.3 includes the work of secular

educational theorists and Christian educational theorists. The research findings indicate that all

of the focus areas for conceptual compatibility are present.

Table 4.3: Adapted Approaches to Mezirow's Ten Phases of Transformative Learning

Hoggan/Browning: *Three Core Concepts of Transformative Learning*	**Charaniya:** *3-StepTransformative Sequence, Cultural-Spiritual Perspective*	**McLaughlin:** *Four Quadrants of Transformative Learning*	**Loder:** *5-Step Transformative Sequence*
Tumultuous Aspects of Transformation	A strong identity is confronted by anomalies and challenges	Disorienting Experiences	Conflict
Exploring the Path Forward	This identity is then expanded through engagement with experiences that are intellectual, relational, and reflective	Critical Reflection Rational Dialogue	Interlude Insight
Reintegration	The culmination is a clearer or more pronounced understanding of self and of one's role in the world	Action	Release and Restoration Proving out the insight again and again – in every register of behavior
Chad D. Hoggan and Bill Browning, Transformational Learning in Community Colleges: Charting a Course of Personal Success (Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2019), 41.	Nadira K. Charaniya, "Cultural-Spiritual Perspective of Transformative Learning," in The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice, ed. Edward W. Taylor and Patricia Cranton (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2012), 231.	Richard J. McLaughlin, "Exploring the Conceptual Compatibility of Transformative Learning Theory in Accounts of Christian Spiritual Renewal at Wheaton College in 1995," Christian Education Journal 12, no.2 (2015): 338.	James E. Loder, Education Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit, ed. Dana R. Wright (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018), 167.

In addition to the information provided by the table above, the following paragraphs further address the three focus areas for conceptual compatibility suggested within the hypothesis. These passages prioritize providing a scriptural perspective for further determining conceptual compatibility.

Personal experience, the first key area, is fundamental to Transformative Learning Theory and is what makes this theory an approach explicitly directed to adult learners. Adult learners have acquired a wealth of prior knowledge and life experience, which shape their perceptions of the world. Transformative change occurs when an adult modifies previously held beliefs and changes their behaviors to reflect the adoption and application of new or adjusted habits of the mind. Transformative learning events are often triggered by a disorienting dilemma or challenge that causes learners to reconsider their perspectives and actions. Ellen Marmon addresses this in her 2013 article in the *Christian Education Journal*. She writes:

> Whether experienced as a process over time (an Emmaus Road perhaps) or an event (maybe a Damascus Road), cognitive, emotional, and spiritual disorientation give people pause; they begin to review what it was they believed in the first place and why that belief does not fit any more in their transforming frame of reference. Paul, Priscilla, and Timothy are examples of New Testament teachers who addressed moral, spiritual, cognitive, emotional, and volitional dilemmas in new believers. Those men and women who became followers of "The Way" found themselves reevaluating their whole lives in light of the kingdom of God. Jews and Gentiles alike had to unlearn nearly as much as they had to learn to become and stay disciples of Jesus Christ.[168]

The second key area of conceptual compatibility between Transformative Learning Theory and Worship Studies is a shared perspective on the importance of critical reflection in forming and developing perspective transformation. Critical reflection in transformative education may also be described as critical or reflective thinking. "Critical Reflection and

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[168] Marmon, "Transformative Learning Theory: Connections With Christian Adult Education," 427.

Transformative Learning," an article by Carolin Kreber, provides this helpful summary.

"Common to all approaches is the intent to offer context in which participants are encouraged to

identify the assumptions underlying their meaning perspectives or habits of minds that give rise

to how they interpret particular situations, subject those to critical scrutiny, and explore

alternatives."[169] In the literature review, critical reflection is nearly always included by authors

as a core element of Transformative Learning Theory, but do we have scriptural guidelines or

examples that indicate the conceptual compatibility of critical reflection as an approach for

Christian Education and Worship Studies? "Jesus' Questions in the Gospel of Matthew:

Promoting Critical Thinking Skills," a recent article in the Christian Education Journal, provides

a solid affirmative answer to that question. The author writes:

> This research aimed to analyze the effectiveness of Jesus' questions in promoting critical
> thinking skills in the Gospel of Matthew. The research method used is qualitative with a
> document analysis approach. There are 48 sample questions of Jesus used in this
> research. The results show that Jesus' questions in the Gospel of Matthew consistently
> accomplish the criteria of high-level thinking questions because Jesus often uses
> questions at the level of analysis (79%) and comprehension (77%), and these questions
> effectively promote the audience's critical thinking skills.[170]

Personal action is the final key area of conceptual compatibility suggested by the research

hypothesis. Patricia Cranton, a noted leader in current developments in Transformative Learning

Theory, comments:

> Indeed, if transformative learning involves a deep shift in perspective, as is maintained
> by most writers in the field, it seems it would be difficult not to act on such a change.
> People being different from each other, not everyone might go out and join protests or try

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[169] Carolin Kreber, "Critical Reflection and Transformative Learning," in *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice*, ed. Edward W. Taylor and Patricia Cranton (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2012), 330.

[170] Z.A. Dami, F. Alexander, and Y.Y. Manafe, "Jesus' Questions in the Gospel of Matthew: Promoting Critical Thinking Skills," *Christian Education Journal* 18, no. 1 (2021): 89–111.

to make changes in an organization, but I would think that some change in behavior would be evident. If we see the world differently, we respond to it differently.[171]

As with the concepts of personal experience and critical reflection in the paragraphs above, confirmation of compatibility with Worship Studies is found in the pages of the *Christian Education Journal*. In her article, "Learning That Transforms: For the Sake of His Kingdom," Rhonda McEwen emphasizes the importance of action as an essential step in the transformative learning process. She writes:

> From a Christian faith perspective, transformative learning provides more than just an effective educational methodology. It is an intentional effort at reframing our minds, hearts, and actions so that they are in closer alignment with the ethical principles and practices of God's kingdom. In Scripture, education is an active process, and there is a vital relationship between learning and doing. The content of what is learned should take hold in one's life and result in a difference in one's behavior.[172]

McEwen offers support for this assertion with a passage from the New Testament.

> Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it - they will be blessed in what they do (James 1:22-25 New International Version).

The first question addressed by this research project asked, "What are the areas of conceptual compatibility between transformative education and transformative Christian worship?" The research findings confirm that key areas of conceptual compatibility between transformative education and transformative Christian worship include a shared emphasis on personal experience as an essential component of learning, critical reflection as an effective

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[171] Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide to Theory and Practice*, 131.

[172] Rhonda M. McEwan, "Learning That Transforms: For the Sake of His Kingdom," *Christian Education Journal* 9, no. 2 (2012): 347.

approach to continued personal development, and personal action as evidence of changed perspectives and practices.

After first considering the question of conceptual compatibility, the research findings now focus on the second research question, which expands connections that may be helpful in effectively applying the principles and practices of Transformative Learning Theory to the development and delivery of courses on Christian Worship.

How can the educational research regarding Transformative Learning Theory be applied to course design when teaching adult lay study courses on Christian Worship? This research question, and the related hypothesis, focus on the role of the educator in developing a Transformative Learning Theory approach for designing and delivering a Worship Studies course. The hypothesis states that educational research regarding Transformative Learning Theory may be applied to course design for teaching adult lay study courses on the topic of Christian Worship by (1) assimilating the underlying philosophy of Transformative Learning Theory, (2) implementing proven Transformative Learning Theory pedagogical methods, and (3) prioritizing scriptural foundations regarding transformative Christian experience.

What is the nature and aim of Transformative Learning Theory? To add clarity and organization to the findings regarding the assimilation of the underlying philosophy of Transformative Learning Theory, it is helpful to consider this abbreviated definition from The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. "Philosophy of education is the branch of applied or practical philosophy concerned with the nature and aims of education and the philosophical problems arising from educational theory and practice."[173] Primarily, the nature of

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[173] Harvey Seigel, D.C. Phillips, and Eamonn Callan, "Philosophy of Education," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (The Metaphysics Research Lab, Dept. of Philosophy, Stanford University, 2018).

Transformative Learning Theory is its focus on adult learning that results in a demonstrable change. The theory aims to develop and apply educational practices which assist in that effort. Becoming a practitioner of Transformative Learning Theory requires understanding and assimilating this underlying philosophy or deeply held belief, which then guides the mindset, goals, outcomes, and practices of educators as they apply this approach. These components of theory and method address the first component of the hypothesis stated above.

Effective educators understand that filling teaching and learning with disconnected lectures, activities, and tasks without a guiding purpose becomes busyness without purpose. The teaching philosophy should guide teaching practice. Edward Taylor confirms the need to thoroughly understand the philosophy that shapes Transformative Learning Theory in order for an educator to effectively implement the core elements and pedagogical methods in their teaching.

> It is important to recognize that these elements are not a series of decontextualized teaching techniques or strategies that can be applied arbitrarily without an appreciation for their connection to a larger theoretical framework of transformative learning theory . . . It is the reciprocal relationship between the core elements and the theoretical orientation of transformative learning that provides a lens for making meaning and guiding transformative practice. To engage in the application of these core elements without some awareness of a larger theoretical orientation and its underlying purpose is not transformative learning. It is rudderless teaching, with no clear goal or purpose.[174]

Simply adopting a philosophy of education will not maximize the potential of Transformative Learning Theory in educational practice. Patricia Cranton cautions that embracing Transformative Learning Theory may require that the transformative educator first experience a teaching transformation of their own. "If we are to foster transformative learning

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[174] Edward W. Taylor, "Fostering Transformative Learning," in *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education*, ed. Jack Mezirow and Edward W. Taylor (United States of America: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 5.

among our students, it is important that we experience and model the process ourselves."[175]

Many Transformative Learning Theory practitioners point out the necessity of adopting a modified approach to teaching that is more learner-centered and in which the educator serves as a guide and mentor rather than an authoritative dispenser of knowledge. In her paper, "Transformative Learning in Religious Education Contexts," Vicki Wiltse comments,

> Educators can serve as mentors on the journey. The primary task of mentors is to engender trust by listening well and deeply. They listen to students' stories and seek to understand how their lives are moving, what their questions are, and how education fits into these. While at first students tend to want their professors to be authorities who are in control, eventually they want to see more of their mentors' humanity. Trust is integral to the three distinct activities of mentors: supporting, challenging, and providing vision. Mentors provide support and encouragement throughout the journey by affirming the validity of students' present experiences, promoting the development of voice, emphasizing students' positive movements, and modeling new ways of making meaning.[176]

Modeling the process is possible through the application of pedagogical methods. This points us toward the second component of the hypothesis, which states that educational research regarding Transformative Learning Theory applies to course design for teaching adult lay study courses on Worship Studies by implementing proven pedagogical methods from Transformative Learning Theory.

Pedagogical methods often travel well from one discipline to another. In the literature review provided in chapter two, several transformative learning practitioners in various areas of expertise have recommended methods, activities, or learning tasks that they have implemented. The following table, "Recommended Approaches to Transformative Learning," provides a tool

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[175] Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide to Theory and Practice*, 139.

[176] Vicki Wiltse, "Transformative Learning in Religious Education Contexts" (Claremont, 2009), 28.

for comparing the approaches of Loder, MacCullough, Hoggan-Kloubert and Mabrey, and

Heidenhain.

Table 4.4: Recommended Approaches for Transformative Learning

Loder: *Five Learning Tasks*	**MacCullough:** *Four-Element Teaching Method for Interactive Learning*	**Hoggan-Kloubert and Mabrey:** *Field Immersion Framework*	**Heidenhain:** *Accelerated Learning Cycle*
Interpretive Learning	Engage the Mind	Foregrounding	Learner Preparation
Conflictual Learning	Provide New Information	Immersion	Connection
Learning Through Celebration	Create Student Processing Activities	Reflection	Discovery
Contemplative Wondering	Assess Learning	Civic Agency	Activation
Convictional Learning			Integration
James E. Loder, *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit*, ed. Dana R. Wright (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018), 280.	Martha E. MacCullough, *By Design: Developing a Philosophy of Education Informed by a Christian Worldview* (Colorado Springs: Association of Christian Schools International, 2013), 77.	Tetyana Hoggan-Kloubert and Paul E. III Mabrey, "Civic Education as Transformative Education," *Journal of Transformative Education* 20, no. 3 (2022): 167–175.	Heidenhain, "Accelerated Learning - A Transformative Approach to Teaching.:2016 Transformative Learning Conference Proceedings," *Journal of Transformative Learning* (2022).

While assessing the table above, consecutively connecting steps sequentially from one

grid to an adjacent grid is not helpful. Two authors adopt four steps, and two adopt five steps.

However, note the parallels scattered throughout the chart. For example, three of the four

approaches begin with establishing the readiness of the learner to engage with the material. In one instance, this is "engaging the mind." In a second instance, readiness is approached by "foregrounding." In a third instance, readiness is labeled "learner preparation." The similarity is evident. An instructor of a Worship Studies course could readily implement this concept of preparing the learner to receive the intended knowledge or skill. One instructor of worship observed for this research study refers to this process as "priming the pump."

Table 4.4 reveals a second area of similarity in related concepts such as processing activities, immersion, civic agency, activation, and integration. All reflect the importance of personal experience and active participation. These holistic and experiential transformative learning approaches hold promising possibilities within a Worship Studies context.

A final observation regarding Table 4.4 is the shared emphasis on reflection. This core element of Transformative Learning Theory is thoughtfully expressed here by James Loder as "contemplative wondering." Martha MacCullough recommends that her final step of assessing learning involves "student expressions of construed understandings,"[177] a method that provides another approach to reflection. The Field Immersion Framework openly applies "reflection" as the third step in that process. Interestingly, the Heidenhain Accelerated Learning Cycle incorporates reflection in the first two steps of Learner Preparation and Connection. Students are encouraged to think deeply and express their thoughts, knowledge, and feelings in the early steps of that process. All four approaches examined in Table 4.4 provide foundational transformative learning methods that may be applied to Worship Studies.

While considering the implementation of pedagogical methods, it is interesting to note that each of the ten phases of transformation originally proposed by Mezirow begins with an

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[177] MacCullough, *By Design: Developing a Philosophy of Education Informed by a Christian Worldview,78.*

action verb (experience, undergo, conduct, relate, explore, build, plan, acquire, try, reintegrate.)[178] These measurable actions give educators a generous helping of additional possibilities for planning experiential activities that support transformative learning. Activity-based and learner-centered experiences facilitated by a mentor who includes ample opportunity for dialogue and reflection is a model recommended by many transformative learning educators and is an approach that will work well for an adult lay studies course on Worship Studies.

As indicated at the beginning of this paper, there is an apparent absence of scholarly literature directly linking Transformative Learning Theory and Worship Studies courses for adult lay students. However, resources are available that link Transformative Learning Theory with spirituality and Christian Education.

In his book *Transformative Learning: Educational Vision for the 21st Century*, Edmund O'Sullivan asserts, "I believe that any in-depth treatment of 'transformative education' must address the topic of spirituality and that educators must take on the concerns of the development of the spirit at a most fundamental level. Contemporary education suffers deeply from its eclipse of the spiritual dimension of our world and universe.[179]

What would be some recommended methods for applying this belief that transformative education must address spirituality? Tisdell and Tolliver write,

> By helping learners engage on the personal, cultural, structural, political, and artistic/spiritual levels, we believe there is greater chance that education is transformative both personally and collectively, for both learners and educators, although there are always limits to the extent that an educational experience can be transformative either individually or societally. But by continuing to draw on different modes of knowledge production to inform our educational work, including drawing on spirituality through the

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[178] Mezirow and Taylor, *Transform. Learn. Pract. Insights from Community, Work. High. Educ.*, 19.

[179] Edmund O'Sullivan, *Transformative Learning: Educational Vision for the 21st Century* (University of Michigan: Zed Books, 1999), 259.

use of symbol, art, and music, there is more of a chance for learning to be transformative.[180]

Note the emphasis on symbols, art, and music. These are all historical elements of worship and may be drawn upon to maximize the collaborative and transformative nature of education and worship.

Brent Laytham advocates for the inclusion of classroom worship in theological education in his article "Let Us Pray: Classroom Worship in Theological Education." Worship Studies, as one component of theological education, may incorporate Transformative Learning principles and practices through worship experiences.

> As pedagogy, classroom worship does four things. It focuses teaching and learning on God, and fosters theological dispositions necessary for sustaining that attention. Second, it rightly positions the entire class in dialogical relation to the divine Thou, in communal relation to each other, the larger church and the wider world, and in personal relations that risk transformation. Third, it frames theological education as an integrative practice of faith and learning. Finally, it invites teachers to know their students as whole persons and students to trust their teachers as spiritual guides.[181]

In 2019, Dr. Detra Bishop, an African American pastor, published her study, *Adult Religious Education as Transformative Learning: The Use of Religious Coping Strategies as a Response to Stress*. One hundred twenty-six women from Protestant churches in southeast Mississippi participated in Bishop's study. While this study had multiple components, Bishop shared these thoughts regarding implications for transformative learning in this specific setting:

> The researcher believes the dynamic transcendence of religious involvement to be conducive to perspective transformation. The experiences common to worship and other activities in the participating African-American churches were lively and thought provoking. Parishioners were not passive onlookers. They were actively engaged in various elements of worship and learning – the type of engagement that promotes critical

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[180] Tisdell and Tolliver, "Claiming a Sacred Face, 389."

[181] Brent Laytham, "Let Us Pray: Classroom Worship in Theological Education," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 13, no. 2 (2010): 110–124.

reflection (as evidenced by the questions and discussion that followed) . . . This assessment of transformative learning supports this researcher's belief that experience in adult religious education creates an atmosphere that could lead to critically analyzing one's typical way of thinking or behaving . . . Therefore, the holistic nature of adult learning in various religious settings can serve as a catalyst for facilitating change – change as a result of critically re-assessing one's values and beliefs.[182]

In addition to the literature review, the research question regarding pedagogical applications was examined through participation and collaboration with students in naturally occurring adult education settings. These personal experiences, interactions, and observations obtained through authentic teaching and learning events provided insight into the learning process and guided the interpretation of the gathered data. While the specific approaches and activities included in this teaching experience will be covered in more detail in chapter five as recommendations for course development and delivery, a brief narrative is included here.

In 2022, the American Baptist Churches of New York State provided a twenty-hour course entitled "Worship" as one component of their lay study program. "Worship" is one course in a leadership development program designed to certify lay pastors. Through the design and instruction of this course, interaction with students, and reflective assessment of outcomes, this researcher gathered insight into the effectiveness of several pedagogical methods recommended by Transformative Learning practitioners. Transformative learning methods and activities that were especially useful in prompting students to reconsider their habits of mind and various approaches to worship practices included (1) the educator as the facilitator of a co-directed (teacher and learner) process,[183] (2) nurturing of a cohesive learning group in which members

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[182] Detra Bishop, *Adult Religious Education as Transformative Learning: The Use of Religious Coping Strategies as a Response to Stress* (Bloomington: WestBow Press, 2019),50-51.

[183] Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide to Theory and Practice*, 81.

support one another,[184] (3) fostering reflective thinking through group dialogue and weekly journal entries,[185] (4) supporting student action through the design of activities and assignments,[186] and (5) in addition to a cognitive approach, validating an extrarational approach to learning.[187] All five of these recommendations come from noted Transformative Learning practitioner Patricia Cranton.

In addition to these five recommended practices, direct parallels can be drawn between the design of the ABCNYS Worship course and the work of Chad Hoggan and Bill Browning in *Transformational Learning in Community Colleges: Charting a Course of Personal Success.* Their "Three Core Concepts of Transformative Learning"[188] were helpful for this educational setting. As noted in Table 4.3 above, Hoggan and Browning adapted Mezirow's original ten phases to a more manageable three core elements. Though Mezirow's original ten phases of transformative learning provide depth and detail, from a practical perspective, the reduction to three core elements is more manageable and realistic when teaching a ten-week course of just two hours a week. Hoggan and Browning suggest "Tumultuous Aspects of Transformation," "Exploring the Path Forward," and "Reintegration." While recognizing these phases of transformative learning, how then does a teacher facilitate this high-impact educational experience? For this ABCNYS Worship course, the course instructor planned to incorporate

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[184] Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide to Theory and Practice*, 125.

[185] Ibid., 51-53.

[186] Ibid., 130-131.

[187] Ibid., 39.

[188] Hoggan and Browning, *Transformational Learning in Community Colleges: Charting a Course for Personal Success,* 41.

elements of Transformative Learning Theory with the work of noted researchers in Christian Education.

Additionally, the instructor noted that the four-fold worship order presented by Constance M. Cherry in *The Worship Architect: a Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*[189] could be modified to work compatibly with a four-element teaching outline. While considering the educational possibilities of the four-fold worship format of "The Gathering," "The Word," "The Response," and "The Sending," the instructor of the ABCNYS Worship Course then asked the following questions. (1) If the four-fold approach is appropriate for corporate worship, might it also be appropriate for a class on the topic of worship? (2) Could we model worship order through course design and delivery?

Cherry advocates for a sequential, four-step worship order for corporate worship services. Although Cherry uses the terminology of four-fold worship, she prefers the descriptive phrase "Gospel Order"[190] of worship and points to New Testament scriptures and historical practices of the early Christian church to support her argument for this four-phase approach to the worship order. Similar approaches have been developed and practiced throughout the history of Christian worship in the traditional liturgies of the church. Closely aligned with the Reformed Tradition, Constance Cherry is a founding faculty member of the Webber Institute for Worship Studies. The Institute articulates a core value of being "evangelical in nature and ecumenical in outlook, embracing and serving the whole church in its many expressions and variations of the Christian faith, particularly articulated by the consensus of the ancient Church and its guardians in the

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[189] Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*.

[190] Ibid., 62.

traditions of Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, the Protestant Reformation, and the Evangelical awakenings and heritage."[191]

Many streams of worship history and tradition contribute to the four-fold worship order. In light of this, it is interesting to consider that a four-fold "Gospel Order" of worship may also apply to a lesson outline or format for a worship course.

Consider Table 4.5: Four-Fold Worship Order and Four-Element Teaching. This three-column comparison, found below, indicates alignment or parallels between Cherry's recommended four-fold worship order and the four-element interactive teaching model of Martha MacCullough (as previously seen in Table 4.4). Additionally, the last column provides the teaching format used by the instructor of the ABCNYS Worship course.

Consider the alignment of concepts. In the top row, "The Gathering," "Engage the Mind," and "Gather and Focus" all provide time and space for the worshiper or the student to prepare in mind, body, and spirit to participate in learning or to receive spiritual or academic content. The "Field Immersion" method in Table 4.4 above refers to this step as "Foregrounding." The "Accelerated Learning Cycle" refers to this as "Learner Preparation." Gathered wisdom from various educators in diverse settings suggests that preparing the learner to receive new content is a worthy inclusion for any course outline or format.

Educators have often placed priority on new content and assessment. In agreement with Transformative Learning Theory, the table below suggests that preparation and reflection are equally essential steps. These steps apply in worship and in education.

"Mission, Vision & Values," *The Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies*, last modified 2023, accessed February 13, 2023, https://iws.edu/.

Table 4.5: Four-Fold Worship Order and Four-Element Teaching

Four-Fold Worship Order (Constance Cherry)	Four-Element Teaching (Martha MacCullough)	Four-Fold Teaching Approach (Loueda Bleiler)
The Gathering Creates a spatial opportunity for worshipers to be gathered in time, place, spirit, and unity.	**Engage the Mind** A motivation element designed to engage the mind toward the lesson at hand.	**Gather and Focus** Begin each class session with discussion of a "Worship Quote" (see appendix) from various Christian authors.
The Word God offers us a word that His gathered community is now ready to hear.	**Provide New Information** Requires students to get new information from an outside source.	**Introduce New Content** Include both teaching and participatory research. Prioritize biblical principles and practices of worship.
The Response Communicate our response to God as a result of having heard and received His word in worship.	**Create Student Processing Activities** Make connections with prior knowledge. Generalize, draw conclusions, practice or use a new skill.	**Reflect and Respond** Encourage thoughtful reflections, personal experiences, and relevant examples. Examine and perhaps modify previously held habits or opinions. Facilitate non-threatening expressions of agreement or disagreement.
The Sending God blesses us to bless the world in Christ's name. We depart with the blessing bestowed so that we can succeed in doing what we agreed to do in the response to the Word for the glory of God.	**Assess Learning** Use student expressions of constructed understandings as feedback on whether students are "getting it."	**Apply** Provide opportunity for application of new knowledge or skill. (Student written statement of "Theology of Worship." Student evaluation of diverse worship practices. Student design and presentation of corporate worship services.)
Cherry, Constance M., *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*. 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), pgs. 67, 84, 117, 130.	Martha E. MacCullough, *By Design: Developing a Philosophy of Education Informed by a Christian Worldview* (Colorado Springs: Association of Christian Schools International, 2013), 77-78.	Bleiler, Loueda. Lesson Format, ABCNYS Worship Course, (2022).

For the ABCNYS Worship course, students completed and submitted a weekly reflection response. Of the many words submitted throughout the ten-week class, the following comments indicate that the emphasis on the inclusion of both dialogue and personal reflection was effective and appreciated. While preserving anonymity, it is still possible to share several student responses here:

- Chapter Thirteen made me reflect a lot on my worship life.
- Over the past ten weeks, I have learned my set thinking was often in error, and I was coming from another planet.
- Ha! I just gave some deep inner reflection to you and didn't even realize it until after I reread it!
- Thank you for allowing us the communications with each other – for the most part, we kept on task.[192]

Although it is unlikely that the instructor of a ten-week course will have adequate opportunity to assess transformative change in a student's life or practices, this informal feedback provides initial insight for assessing a pedagogical approach's effectiveness.

Prioritization of scriptural foundations is the final element included in the hypothesis regarding practices of Transformative Learning Theory as applied to course design for Worship Studies. Research supporting this statement is difficult to find in mainstream literature regarding Transformative Learning Theory. However, it is found in scripture, theology texts, and scholarly writings in Christian Education and Worship Studies. This final element of the hypothesis also links back to the first research question regarding conceptual compatibility between Transformative Learning Theory and Worship Studies. If an educational theory's principles and practices are incompatible with scriptural teaching, then that theory is incompatible with teaching a Christian Worship course.

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[192] Loueda Bleiler, *Student Submissions, ABCNYS Worship Course, 2022* (2022).

Richard McLaughlin wrote, "Christian epistemology is merely stating that knowledge is not just a matter of gathering that which we can find along a horizontal plane. In fact, on a vertical plane, the Bible claims that knowing and fearing God is the very beginning of knowledge and wisdom (Prov 1:7; 9:10)."[193]

Christian theologian David Peterson writes, "Throughout the Bible, acceptable worship means approaching or engaging with God on the terms that he proposes and in the manner that he makes possible."[194] If God determines the terms and manner of acceptable worship, He also determines the terms and manner of acceptable approaches to Worship Studies. Peterson adds:

> Christians of every tradition need to be regularly exposed to the breadth and depth of the Bible's teaching on worship and to understand how it relates to evangelism, edification, faith and obedience. Above all, they must come to grips with the New Testament perspective that acceptable worship is an engagement with God, through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit – a Christ-centered, gospel-serving, life-orientation.[195]

Christian educators must prioritize the authority of scripture when incorporating Transformative Learning Theory or any educational theory when teaching Worship Studies. In support of this statement, it seems pertinent and appropriate to recall a passage from Isaiah that Jesus quoted while speaking to the Pharisees. "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men (Mark 7:6-8 Revised Standard Version)." A creative paraphrase for worship educators might read, "Do not just talk about authentic worship. Demonstrate it by keeping your heart close to me and by honoring my Word above the musings of educational theorists."

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[193] McLaughlin, "Exploring the Conceptual Compatibility of Transformative Learning Theory in Accounts of Christian Spiritual Renewal at Wheaton College in 1995, 13."

[194] Peterson, *Engaging With God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*, 283.

[195] Ibid., 293.

Summary

As seen above, the research findings indicate significant areas of alignment between the theory and practice of Transformative Learning theorists and the work of Christian educators. This alignment points toward conceptual compatibility and practical applications. In one recent example, we have evidence of the conceptual compatibility of Transformative Learning Theory methods with a Christian worldview. When joined, these approaches effectively emphasized high-impact learning experiences and provided a Worship Studies course format for adult lay students. Going forward, what implications, applications, and limitations are made evident by examining the research findings? Chapter five addresses those questions.

Chapter Five

Research Summary

The qualitative research completed for this project focused on the following questions:

RQ1: What are the areas of conceptual compatibility between transformative

education and transformative Christian worship?

RQ2: How can the educational research regarding Transformative Learning

Theory be applied to course design for teaching adult lay study courses on

Christian Worship?

The findings reflect that in addition to the fundamental belief that adult learners can

experience transformative change, areas of conceptual compatibility include a shared emphasis

on personal experience as an essential component of learning, critical reflection as an effective

approach to continued personal development, and personal action as evidence of changed

perspectives and practices. The expertise and academic writings of multiple practitioners of

Transformative Learning Theory support this hypothesis.

Additionally, the findings reflect that with priority placed upon scriptural foundations

regarding transformative Christian experience, the philosophy and methods developed through

the use of Transformative Learning Theory in a wide variety of settings are promising and

possible adoptions for course design when teaching adult lay study courses on the topic of

Christian Worship.

Significance

In three New Testament passages, the Apostle Paul highlights teaching as one of the gifts

given to some Christian church members and used for the good of all. The first few verses of

Romans 12 tie together concepts of using the spiritual gift of teaching as a living sacrifice of service and an act of worship as we honor the instruction to reject conformity to the world. We are to seek transformation so we can discern God's perfect will. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul uses physical imagery to describe the church as a group of individuals who together form the body of Christ. Each part of the body has value and function. Notably, some, but not all, members are appointed as teachers. In Ephesians 4, Paul writes, "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13 New Revised Standard Version)." Within Christian education, these scriptures emphasize the significance of teaching and the study of teaching for the building up of the church.

Researching and implementing the best possible practices of promising methodologies holds great significance for Worship Studies, Christian Education, and the church. This study provides an in-depth examination of one teaching method that may enhance the effectiveness of transformative learning experiences for educators and students of Worship Studies. We also have evidence, as shared above, of the effectiveness of the principles and practices of Transformative Learning Theory as a pedagogical tool for approaching adult education with a unique emphasis on transformative change. We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit to work transformation through Christian worship. Christ appoints teachers to serve his church as the Holy Spirit works transformative change. Preparation for service through educational research is an act of worship that equips teachers to serve faithfully in this ministry for which they are gifted and called.

Limitations

There are numerous quantitative and qualitative studies on Transformative Learning Theory as a pedagogical method for adult learning. Although the settings for these studies are truly diverse, very little of the research included in this study demonstrates direct application to Worship Studies. The Worship Studies course sampled here for teaching method and student response initially indicates positive results. However, it represents just one educational setting with limited opportunity to assess long-term transformative change. Additional observation and assessment of Transformative Learning Theory applied within Worship Study settings would be advantageous.

Measurable summative assessment of substantive change is challenging and is perhaps even a limitation of Transformative Learning Theory. Genuinely transformative change often involves internal and extra-rational factors that are not readily measured quantitatively. Transformative change as the result of a learning experience is best demonstrated over the long term, and many educational settings do not provide that extended time frame. However, thoughtful and creative Transformative Learning practitioners are regularly developing assessment tools that are appropriate for their particular settings.

Recommendations

Worship Studies Content

A theological understanding of scriptural principles guides worship and the study of worship. Potentially transformative study of worship begins with knowledge of God's plan for worship as revealed in His word. Evaluate all questions of historical practice, worship leadership and participation, worship order, and worship elements through the lens of biblical teaching.

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The ABCNYS Worship course in this research study dedicated the first five of ten sessions to a topical study of worship as revealed in scripture. This dedication of time and content places emphasis and priority on biblical principles. Encountering God through His word may provide the disorienting dilemma, disorienting experiences, conflict, or otherwise tumultuous aspects of transformation described in the chapters above. Additionally, students often experience areas of dilemma, disorientation, or conflict when exploring the worship practices of other times and cultures. Questions arise that promote thoughtful reflection and sometimes spirited dialogue.

The ongoing study of scripture, worship history, and worship practices provides ample opportunity for students to absorb new knowledge and dialogue with others as they deliberately reassess their current philosophy and practices in corporate worship. Finally, each student designs and presents a service of corporate worship that reflects their understanding of the theology, order, elements, and practices of worship. For many, this demonstrates a substantive change from prior worship experiences.

The recommendations above include disorienting experiences, critical reflection, rational dialogue, and action as described by many Transformative Learning Theorists and are succinctly included in McLaughlin's "Four Quadrants of Transformative Learning," as found in Table 4.3 above.

Worship Studies Lesson Format

The "Four-Fold Worship Order"[196] advocated by Constance Cherry and described in Table 4.5 above is an appropriate and impactful model for building a lesson format for a

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[196] Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*.

Worship Studies course. Four-Fold Worship includes "The Gathering," "The Word," "The Response," and "The Sending." This study recommends modifying the "Four-Fold Worship Order" with the inclusion of Transformative Learning Theory principles and practices to establish a "Four-Fold Teaching Approach." This recommended four-element lesson format, included in Table 4.5 and used for the 2022 ABCNYS Worship class, utilizes the stepwise approach of "Gather and Focus," "Introduce New Content," "Reflect and Respond," and "Apply."[197]

In these four-fold models, the first component of worship is a time of gathering and focus. Students, like many worshipers, also need time to gather and focus. Though kept brief, this initial contact with the instructor and other students, "Gather and Focus," prepares the learner to receive and absorb the following lesson content. The ABCNYS 2022 Worship Course began each lesson session by reading and responding to various quotes regarding worship. These quotes, compiled by the instructor, are provided as an appendix to this research paper.

Second, the worship component of "The Word" emphasizes hearing scripture and receiving teaching. Likewise, the second component of the Worship class, "Introduce New Content," focuses on receiving teaching and actively participating in seeking information. Receiving new content and seeking knowledge may constitute half to three-quarters of a lesson session. Although this provides a teaching or lecture component by the instructor, it is wise to include opportunities for students to engage in this learning process actively. The ABCNYS Worship course included frequent opportunities for students to read and search scriptures for worship applications.

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[197] Bleiler, *Course Outline, ABCNYS Worship Course, 2022*.

Following "The Word" or "Introduce New Content," worshipers and students are given opportunities to reflect and respond. In worship, this third component may include singing a hymn, giving tithes and offerings, participating in The Lord's Supper, sharing joys and concerns, or various other responses to the message received. In a worship studies class that incorporates Transformative Learning practices, this third component is a good time for dialogue, critical reflection, and reassessment. Like the instruction and new content component, this "Reflect and Respond" portion of the lesson uses a significant segment of the class time. In addition to leaving ample time for receiving new content, instructors should provide time for absorbing and reflecting on that content. Transformative learning experiences require time for thought. Student responses often include observations, questions, clarification, and sharing thoughts and examples. However, make room for the response to include interrogation, challenge, or rebuttal. Transformative learning can be a complex and perhaps emotional process. Additionally, this response component allows the creative practitioner to incorporate art, music, theater, and creative writing activities. Within Christian Education and Worship Studies, consider utilizing an act of worship as an appropriate and meaningful response.

Finally, "The Sending" in a worship setting often includes a blessing or benediction upon the gathered worshipers as they disperse to serve and bless others as they have received God's blessing. Much like "The Gathering," this portion of a worship service is often brief. As in "The Sending" component of a worship service, it is appropriate for a worship instructor to pray with and for the students as they bring the class session to a close. In addition to this blessing, the spirit of "The Sending" in worship implies action going forward. The action step is often the most authentic assessment of transformative change in the worship philosophy and practices of a student of Christian worship. Incorporating an action step is an essential component of

Transformative Learning and is included in "Apply," the fourth component of the "Four-Fold Teaching Approach."

"Apply," the final step of the "Four-Fold Teaching Approach," includes the assignments for the following week. For example, the ABCNYS Worship course included weekly reading assignments and written reflections regarding the week's content. In further assignments, students applied the knowledge, insights, and skills gained through the Worship course to develop a philosophical statement reflecting their understanding of worship theology. Students participated in diverse worship practices and traditions and offered thoughtful evaluations of those experiences. Finally, they designed and presented a service of corporate worship that could be used in their own place of worship.

Role of the Educator in a Worship Studies Class

Transformative Learning practitioners advocate for key instructor characteristics beyond the expected educational responsibilities of course design and delivery, instruction, management, and assessment. An atmosphere of trust, honesty and mutual respect between student and instructor enhances the correct setting and tone for transformative learning. As recommended in the research findings above, it is necessary for educators also to facilitate, nurture, foster, support, and validate. A caution often provided in the literature regarding Transformative Learning Theory is that instructors carefully respect boundaries of influence and avoid any instance of manipulation in the transformative process. The educator provides opportunities for transformative change but is not responsible for transformation. From the perspective of Christian education, educators submit to the leadership and transformative power of the Holy Spirit in the life of each believer.

Assessment of Transformative Learning

Transformative change can occur in a moment. An older man and lifelong smoker quit cold turkey. His niece asked him, "Why now? After all these years?" He shared the disorienting dilemma of standing in a grocery line behind an emphysema-afflicted customer with an oxygen tank in tow. A momentous change occurred. An evident transformation was observed. For many, the redemptive act of salvation through Christ provides a specific moment in time when transformative change is marked and noted even by casual observers. However, demonstrable and high-impact transformative change is unlikely to be easily measured in an educational setting such as a Worship Studies course. In this instance, the learning experiences are most likely to be stepping stones on the way to transformative change. Jack Mezirow originally suggested ten phases in transformative learning. In the ABCNYS lay studies program, the Worship course is one step toward certification for lay ministry. There are many other areas of knowledge and skill to progress through. Perhaps it is enough for an educator to facilitate, nurture, foster, support, and validate a student through just one phase. That in itself is an honorable endeavor.

Worship Studies require the accumulation of knowledge and the ability to demonstrate skill. There are many quantitative ways to assess student achievement in those areas, and instructors in formal education settings should do so. However, assessing progress through phases of transformative change can be challenging, and this recommendation focuses on that aspect. Rather than trying to place a quantitative measure on phases of transformative change, consider adopting the qualitative method described in chapter three of this paper. As a reminder, this is an approach that is verbally communicated, inductive, naturally occurring, contextual,

holistic, interested in subjectivity, and emphasizes description, exploration, and the search for meaning. This recommendation would likely be disappointing if the hope were for a formula that would provide a final grade percentage or a system for distributing data on a bell curve. Those methods may be effective in other areas of learning but are not useful for assessing transformative change.

Scripture indicates that Christians grow to become more like Christ as they learn and mature in their faith. Along the way, growth phases like those recorded by Mezirow may be observable and measurable. However, the final assessment of this progress may not occur within the timeframe of a given course or program. Managing the assessment of student achievement of content mastery is more manageable than assessing for transformative life change. Despite that challenge, Christian educators should seek to promote progress through transformative stages for their students.

Final Summary

At the end of an academic year, graduating students of a community college were asked to complete an anonymous survey regarding their experiences at this place of learning. One of the questions asked the graduates if any college employee had been especially helpful to them in their educational experience. A student responded by naming one particular professor and stating, "This professor changed my life." That is high praise. It also reminds us that the mission of education is far greater than the content objectives of any one discipline or program of study.

Transformative Learning Theory is a philosophy and method of teaching that holds forth the possibility that the purpose and potential of educational experiences for adult learners are far more significant than just becoming knowledgeable and competent in a discipline or skill area.

Jack Mezirow's original ten phases of transformation never designate a specific field of study. This lack of specification is why Transformative Learning Theory is applicable in diverse settings. It encourages and observes significant personal change through educational experiences that trigger self-examination, critical assessment of internal assumptions, exploring new options, building competence and self-confidence in new roles, planning a new course of action, and implementing that new plan. Educators may facilitate progress through these transformative phases in any area of adult learning.

In Worship Studies, students explore the theology and history of Christian worship. They may also develop skills in designing and leading corporate worship events. However, those skills are not the highest goal. As individuals pursuing knowledge of God and God's plan for worship, the highest goal is to know more of God and, through the redemptive work of Christ and the continuing transformative work of the Holy Spirit, to become more like Him. That is transformative Christianity.

The Holy Spirit provides the gift of teaching and appoints individuals to serve the church with that gift. Transformative Learning Theory is one tool to utilize in the work of teaching. A Christian educator may apply the principles and practices of Transformative Learning Theory to Worship Studies and, through those proven methods, help to pave the way for transformative learning experiences. For each believer, we are confident "That he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:6, New International Version)." As Christian educators in Worship Studies and as practitioners of Transformative Learning Theory, we hope to contribute in some way to that good work.

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Appendix A

Worship Is…

The following quotations record various perspectives on the definition of worship. Short excerpts such as these were used in the ABCNYS Worship Course 2022 as discussion prompts for the "Gather and Focus" component of the "Four-Fold Teaching Approach" recommended in this research paper. (See Table 4.5: Four-Fold Worship Order and Four-Element Teaching)

- Christian worship is built upon, shaped by, and saturated with the Word of God. Scripture should inform our prayers, form our sermons, and transform our singing (*Matt Boswell*).[198]

- Worship is the expression of a relationship in which God the Father reveals himself and his love in Christ, and by His Holy Spirit administers grace, to which we respond in faith, gratitude, and obedience (*Constance Cherry*).[199]

- Worship is the language of love and growth between believers and God. Evangelism is the language of introduction between those who believe and those who don't. To confuse the two, and put on worship the burden of evangelism, robs the people of God of their responsibility to care about the neighbor, defrauds the believer of transforming depth, and steals from God the profound praise of which He is worthy (*Marva Dawn*).[200]

- Worship is the human response to the divine initiative (*Richard Foster*). [201]

- Worship is our response to the overtures of love from the heart of the Father. Its central reality is found "in spirit and truth." It is kindled within us only when the Spirit of God touches our human spirit. Forms and rituals do not produce worship, nor does the disuse of forms and rituals. We can use all the right techniques and methods, we can have the best possible liturgy, but we have not worshiped the Lord until Spirit touches spirit (*Richard Foster*).[202]

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[198] Matt Boswell, ed., *Doxology & Theology: How the Gospel Forms the Worship Leader* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2013), 11

[199] Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services,* 28.

[200] Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 124.

[201] Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth,* 158.

[202] Ibid., 158-159.

- I often define worship as the "response of all I am to the revelation of all He is" (*Daniel Henderson*).[203]

- Worship is *entry*. It is entry into something that is not primarily of our own making. Worship is entry into an action, into a company, into a reality that is ongoing and bigger than we are. When we worship, we are joining, or are joined to, something cosmic (even supercosmic!) and something transhistorical. This "something" into which we enter is not ours in the first place, but belongs to God, who issues his invitation to us. The worship into which we have been invited, the company into which we have been welcomed, and the holy place that has been opened to us are indeed grand – things beyond our unaided sight, hearing, or imagining, that "God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9) (*Edith Humphrey*).[204]

- Worship is responding to God's own invitation, that we should see more and more clearly who God is, hear more and more clearly what he is saying, be more and more thankful about his mighty actions, and *enter* more deeply into his communion with us and his care for the world. It is to be thrilled at the wonder of it all, to be astonished and silenced by the weighty glory of God-among-us, and want it never to end. It is, in the word of Reepicheep, that unlikely psychopomp mouse from *The Chronicles of Narnia*, to come "further up and further in" and to know that his life is never-ending and always deepening for those who are joined to Christ Jesus (*Edith Humphrey*).[205]

- Worship is to celebrate reality as it truly is, placing at the center, or rather acknowledging at the center, the only real One from whom all good things come. It is to respond completely and in truthfulness to the One who is All-in-all and Truth itself (*Edith Humphrey*).[206]

- Worship is a rhythm of revelation and response. We see something magnificent (revelation) and then we respond in adoration (response) (*Matt Papa*).[207]

- The worship of the living and true God is essentially an engagement with him on the terms that he proposes and in the way that he alone makes possible (*David Peterson*).[208]

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[203] Whaley, *Called to Worship: From the Dawn of Creation to the Final Amen*, xv.

[204] Humphrey, *Grand Entrance: Worship on Earth as in Heaven,* 3-4

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[205] Ibid., 17.

[206] Ibid.

[207] Matt Boswell, ed., *Doxology & Theology: How the Gospel Forms the Worship Leader* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2013), 65.

[208] Peterson, *Engaging With God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*, 20

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- Acceptable worship is an engagement with God, through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit – a Christ-centered, gospel-serving, life-orientation (*David Peterson*).[209]

- Christian worship is primarily a site of divine action (*James Smith*).[210]

- To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God (*William Temple*).[211]

- Worship is the communal gathering of God's people in which we glorify God for his person and actions (*Sandra Van Opstal*).[212]

- Worship is reality therapy. To truly worship God is to align ourselves with the truth about God, self, and the world (*Michael Walters*).[213]

- Worship is a multi-relational event. It concerns the vertical relationship between God and the worshipers, but it also involves the horizontal relationships between the worshipers themselves (*Michael Walters*).[214]

- Worship is faith expressed in obedience and adoration *in all of life*. To relegate worship to Sunday only is to subvert God's redemptive intention to transform our lives (*Michael Walters*).[215]

- That's what worship is, our fitting response to who God is and what He has done for us (*Michael Walters*).[216]

- To worship is to party in the face of the Beast (*Michael Walters*).[217]

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[209] Peterson, *Engaging With God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*, 293.

[210] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works,* 15.

[211] Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth, 158.*

[212] Sandra Maria Van Opstal, *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 16.

[213] Walters, *Can't Wait for Sunday: Leading Your Congregation in Authentic Worship*, 43.

[214] Ibid., 190.

[215] Ibid., 196.

[216] Ibid.

[217] Ibid, 213.

- Worship is reality therapy in the best sense of the term. It is where we retreat from a world that views what we do as escapism so that we may be infused with a true picture of who God is and who we are in relationship to Him. To come together with people of like faith and worship is to have our eyes adjusted so that we can go into the streets and tell others how the world looks from God's vantage point. To do less is to fail in our worship (*Michael Walters*).[218]

- Worship is the God-centered focus and response of the soul; it is being preoccupied with God. So no matter what you are saying or singing or doing at any moment, you are worshiping God only when He is the center of your attention. But whenever you do focus on the infinite worth of God, you will respond in worship as surely as the moon reflects the sun (*Donald Whitney*).[219]

- The word *worship* descends from the Saxon word *weorthscype*, which later became *worthship.* To worship God means to ascribe proper worth to God, to magnify His worthiness of praise, or better, to approach and address God as He is worthy (*Donald Whitney).[220]*

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[218] Walters, *Can't Wait for Sunday: Leading Your Congregation in Authentic Worship*, 199.

[219] Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life,*106.

[220] Ibid., 103-104.